

## News Item

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### Conference of the Asian and Comparative Philosophy Society of Australasia

For some years, Dr Puruṣottama Bilimoria (of the School of Humanities, Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria 3217) has been devotedly running a skeleton society of Asian and Comparative Philosophy with a mailing list and a newsletter. Now it is becoming a corporeal entity, with flesh and sinew, having had an inaugural meeting and a conference which were agreed on all sides to have marked an auspicious beginning.

The conference, which enjoyed sponsorship from the Asian Studies Council and Deakin University Foundation, was held on September 23 and 24, 1990 at St Mary's College, University of Melbourne. It was felicitously able to follow on from, and partly to share enrolment with, the Phenomenology and Social Philosophy conference, which ran from September 21 to 23; one plenary session was common to both conferences delivered by Professor J. N. Mohanty from Temple University in Philadelphia.

The conference had an international cast, with speakers from New Zealand, India, Canada, and the USA; also there were speakers from the ANU, New England and South Australia as well as around Melbourne. Papers given reflected a considerable diversity of research interest, but at the same time the questions which followed each delivery showed that the divergent interests were not isolated compartments; various themes (particularly the theme of cultural dialogue between different civilisations) recurred again and again, and the discussion was general.

Perhaps the study of Asian philosophies, which are mostly lodged in a religious institutional framework, has an identity problem, not clearly belonging to any one traditional discipline. If so, that is no bad thing—it makes for a richness of perspectives and for the freshness of multi-disciplinary enquiry. It can move freely between nebulous generalisations and the full rigour of specialised textual criticism, picking up insights at all points on the way. The conference, at any rate, covered a wide spectrum, with Indian belief systems strongly represented, as might have been expected, but with valuable Sinological contributions, and a number of papers addressed to general questions of east-west cultural contact.

Though it is a mechanical exercise, a bare listing of the topics of papers may be a good way as any to exhibit their variety: truth theory in Neo-Mohist Philosophy (Keruo Ren); the relation between Indian and Western philosophies (J. N. Mohanty); Maori ethical systems (Roy Perrett); self-inquiry, in relation to Western philosophy and Sankara's thought (Mishka Jambar); Tamil Saiva Siddhānta philosophy (Raja Jayaraman); the Taoism of Confucius (Paul Rule); technology, multiculturalism and the Third World (Don Ihde); the life of Nāgārjuna (Ian Mabbett); the religious background of Buddhist logic (Eli Franco); cross-cultural philosophising (J. G. Arapura), and Hinduism in nineteenth-century Bengal (Ajoy Lahiri). A workshop on integrating Asian philosophy in mainstream curriculum was also successfully held.

At a business meeting on the second day, an interim committee was elected to draft a constitution for the society, and there is every prospect that the society will act as host for the next conference of the international Asian and Comparative Philosophy Association with which it is associated. This is likely to be in 1992. (It would be tempting to say that the society has thus acquired both an *ātman* and a *tao*, but for the fact that the *ātman* is supposed to be illusory, and the wise do not speak of the *tao*.)

Participants came away with a strong sense that something of value had been achieved, for it has so far been but rarely that people with this particular combination of interests have been able to meet and talk in Australia.

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### **International Religious Studies Congress, Melbourne, 1992**

An international congress for religious studies and biblical studies is being organized for July 12-17, 1992, to be held in Melbourne. Various learned societies and associations of religion and theology, notably the American Academy of Religion, Society for Biblical Literature and the Australian Association for the Study of Religion, will be participating in the congress. Dr Greg Bailey (Religious Studies, La Trobe University) informs us that there will be a number of panels organized in the congress which should be of interest to members of our society - in particular: Buddhism and Deconstruction, Anthropology and Philology in Indian Religion, Philosophy of Religion, and General panels on Hinduism, Buddhism and Chinese Religions.

Offers of papers and further enquiries may be directed to:  
Kent H. Richards, 1992 International Congress, 2201 South University Blvd,  
CO 80210, USA. FAX: 303/733-6985. The deadline for paper proposals is  
September 15, 1991.

### **IXth World Sanskrit Congress in Australia, 1994.**

Two delegates from Australia present at the VIIIth World Sanskrit Conference in Vienna last August were requested to consider hosting the next World Sanskrit Conference in Australia. The invitation was accepted and arrangements are being made for the IXth World Sanskrit Conference to be held in Melbourne in January 1994. An announcement-brochure will be posted out shortly to members of our society as well.

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