

25th - 29th April 2022

**The Advaita Vedanta Tradition and
the Possibilities for a Hindu
Theology of Liberation**

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology Tirupati



Overview of the Course:

The Advaita Vedanta tradition is traditionally understood as concerned with liberation (mokṣa) and not with issues of injustice in this world. The latter is the concern of liberation theology. Some Advaita interpreters minimize the significance of the world by suggesting that the knowledge of brahman requires and results in the disappearance of the world of diversity. The world is likened to a sense-illusion that we conjure and experience because of our ignorance. When the reality of the world is denied in this manner, it is not consistent for one to be affected by events within it. To respond to the world is to grant reality to the world; it is to treat as real that which does not, in reality, exist. Interpretations like these provide justification for world-renunciation rather than world-affirmation, and have been most strongly and clearly articulated in the many of the monastic and ascetic strands of the tradition. Taken to their extremes, these interpretations make it difficult to take the world and its issues seriously.

Objectives:

- (1) The first objective of this course is to inquire whether the Advaita Vedanta tradition offers resources for the development of liberation theology. Is it fair to describe the Advaita tradition as world-negating and illusionistic? We will do this by examining carefully the fundamental teachings of Advaita about the nature of brahman, nature of the human being and the significance of the world in relation to brahman.
- (2) This critical clarification of the core claims of the Advaita tradition then provides the basis for its second objective. Here, we will apply the core claims of the Advaita tradition to selective contemporary challenges. These include gender injustice, ecological sustainability, social hierarchy and poverty.
- (3) The third objective of this course is to teach students to critically read texts, to formulate their own constructive interpretations and to apply these to contemporary issues of concern. They learn to interrogate the implications of religio/philosophical teachings for our life in the world.

(4) The fourth objective is to encourage students to think about the possibilities for liberation theology in other Hindu traditions.

Course Details

Day 1 (25th April): 3 hours

Topics to be covered: The authoritative sources of Advaita: core Advaita claims about the nature of brahman, self and world.

Day 2 (26th April): 3 hours

Topics to be covered: The human predicament; liberation and the liberated life; social implications of liberation. Hindu exemplars of liberation theology and practice: Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and other teachers.

Day 3 (27th April): 3 hours

Topics to be covered: Advaita patriarchy and homophobia.

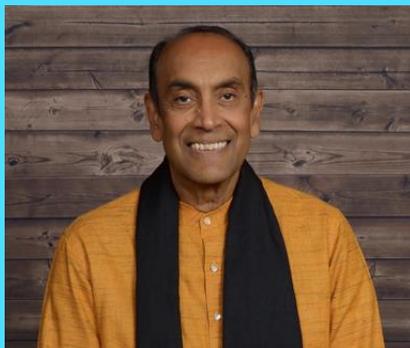
Day 4(28th April): 3 hours

Topics to be covered: Advaita anthropocentrism, racism and social hierarchy.

Day 5 (29th April): 3 hours

Topics to be covered: Advaita and economic justice; peacemaking and reconciliation.

Teaching Faculty:



Anantanand Rambachan is Professor of Religion at Saint Olaf College, Minnesota. He was also Visiting Professor at the Academy for the Study of World Religions at the University of Hamburg in Germany (2013-2017). His books include: *Accomplishing the Accomplished: The Vedas as a Source of Valid Knowledge in Shankara*, *The Limits of Scripture: Vivekananda's Reinterpretation of*

the Authority of the Vedas, *The Advaita Worldview: God, World and Humanity*, *A Hindu Theology of Liberation and Essays in Hindu Theology*. His scholarly interests include: the Advaita (Non-dual) Vedanta tradition, Hindu ethics, liberation theology, and interreligious dialogue. The British Broadcasting Corporation transmitted a series of 25 lectures on Hinduism by Prof. Rambachan around the world.

Prof. Rambachan has been involved in interreligious relations and dialogue for over 40 years, as a Hindu contributor and analyst. He is active in the dialogue programs of the World Council of Churches, and was a Hindu guest and presenter in four General Assemblies of the World Council of Churches. He is also involved in the consultations of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue at the Vatican and currently participates as a Hindu theologian in the Ethics in Action dialogues at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. He also serves as the President of the Board, Arigatou International NY, a global organization advocating for the rights of children and mobilizing the resources of religions to overcome violence against children. He is a member of the Arigatou International Advisory Group. He was recently elected as Co-President of Religions for Peace, the largest global interfaith network.

Course Coordinator

A Raghuramaraju teaches philosophy at the Indian institute of Technology Tirupati. He has published in *Indian Philosophy and Philosophy of Modernity*. He writes a monthly column in the newspaper *The Telegraph* published from Kolkata.



Co-Coordinator

Bharath Kumar is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Tirupati, Tirupati. He works in the areas of Contemporary Indian Philosophy and Political Philosophy.





Registration

The participation fee for taking this online course is as follows:

- ❖ Students: Rs 500/-
- ❖ Faculty members: Rs 1000/-
- ❖ Participants from abroad: US \$ 50



Deadline

- ✓ Interested candidates can fill the google form for which the link is below
<https://forms.gle/4PcS5jkWb9J1zuf68>
- ✓ Last date for receipt of applications: **18th April 2022.**
- ✓ Shortlisted candidates will be intimated by e-mail for registration.
- ✓ For any queries drop an email to bharathk@iittp.ac.in
or call us at +91 8818890591