



MONASH University

Monash Asia Institute and Centre for Studies in Religion & Theology

Symposium on Violence, Anger and Demonisation

Saturday 22 September 2007, 1:00 pm

H4 Lecture Theatre

Building 11 (Menzies), Monash University Clayton Campus

Programme

Chair: Dr Trudy Jacobsen, School of Political and Social Inquiry, Faculty of Arts

Session 1 (1:00 - 2:30 pm)

"Cambodian demons under Pol Pot", Dr Peg Le Vine, Monash Asia Institute

"Demonisation of Tantra", Mr David Templeman, Monash Asia Institute

"The power of Untouchable demons", Prof Marika Vicziany, Monash Asia Institute

Break (2:30 - 3:00 pm)

Session 2 (3:00 - 4:30 pm)

"Harnessing the demons within: therapeutic resources for anger management"

Dr Padmasiri DeSilva, School of Historical Studies, Monash University

Book Launch by Dr Craig Hasted, Department of General Practice, Monash University

Explorers of Inner Space by Padmasiri de Silva points out that academia has been dominated by the culture of argument and debate and makes a strong case for "Deep listening as a corner-stone of the emerging interest in contemplative pedagogy and transformative education". In this book, there is also a common thread of existentialist perspectives on the human condition running through the Buddha, Krishnamurti and Kierkegaard. Using this contemplative perspective, Padmasiri will also speak on the therapeutic resources for anger management.

Formerly, Professor & Head of Philosophy/Psychology Department in the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, he held number of visiting positions in USA and Singapore. Currently, Dr Padmasiri DeSilva is a Research Associate at Monash University and is the author of number of books.

Abstracts and Biographical notes about the speakers

Demonization of Tantra

Mr David Templeman, Monash Asia Institute

Certain Indian writers as far back as the 5th century AD. showed a certain hostility towards tantra, as did early European travellers in India and the British Imperialists of the 19th and 20th centuries. Even later scholars of religion were uniformly opposed to its practices until the 1970's. Tantra in one or other of its guises has received a uniformly bad press.

This talk, although acknowledging these early views, focuses mainly on the British and other European reactions to tantra. It suggests that much of the reaction was based upon a fear of loss of the sense of self, either perceived as a loss of sexual / moral restraint or as a dread of 'going native' and becoming lost in a welter of strange practices.

I will use as my sources a wide variety of writings including those of the 17th century. Muslim traveller Mahmud Balkhi and an early 20th century novel by Flora Annie Steel, *The Law of the Threshold*. I will also discuss the wide ranging opinions of scholars as diverse as the staunch supporter of tantra, the British judge, Sir John Woodroffe, as well as its scholarly detractors who demonized it as "a black art of the crudest and filthiest kind."

David Templeman is a PhD candidate at the Monash Asia Institute where he is completing a thesis on the life and times of a 16-17th cent Tibetan Lama. For over 25 years he has published translations of several tantric historical texts as well as articles dealing with Tibetan understandings of tantric origins.



Cambodian demons under Pol Pot

Dr Peg Le Vine, Monash Asia Institute

Dr Peg LeVine has spent many years studying the psychological-magical aspects of power under the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer people at that time were as much 'controlled' by these abstract forces as they were by the power of Pol Pot and his party. Indeed, the separation of the two is typically hard to achieve. Dr LeVine will speak about how this fusion of modern politics and religio-magical authority worked on the hearts, minds and spirit of the Cambodian people.



The power of Untouchable demons

Prof Marika Vicziany, Monash Asia Institute

India's untouchables number some 15% of the total population: today, the 4th largest political party in India claims to be the voice of the 'dalits'. But until fairly recently, untouchables had no power and their social-cultural-economic lives were seriously constricted. They were typically the victims of harijan atrocities perpetrated by

landlords, police, military and indeed all sections of Indian society that sat above them. An analysis of harijan atrocities shows that after all the 'causal' factors have been considered, there remains a residual blind hatred/violence that cannot be explained except by reference to 'demonisation'. The demonisation depends on the widespread belief in India that the untouchables have influential contacts in the underworld, and that by mediating with demons, devils, evil spirits and dangerous magical forces, they can actually protect normal society. There are fortresses in India dating from pre-colonial times wherein stand the bodies of untouchables who were buried alive as a way of ensuring the security of the building. The nature and sources of this complex process of demonisation are discussed by Vicziany, who with Oliver Mendelsohn published *The untouchables: subordination, poverty and the state in modern India*, Cambridge Uni. Press, Cambridge, 1998.

Dr Marika Vicziany is Professor of Asian Political Economy and Director of the Monash Asia Institute at Monash University. She has published some 15 monographs and over 100 articles/book chapters largely about minorities, mass poverty, long term economic development and human security in India, Pakistan and western China.



The Demons Within: Therapeutic Resources for Anger Management

Dr Padmasiri DeSilva, School of Historical Studies, Monash University

In the world around which we live, there is a great deal of discussion about violence, sense of rebellion among young people, self-destructive behaviour and demonisation in inter-group attitudes. But the demon within goes unnoticed. The emotion of anger is at the root of all these issues and we need the time, the leisure and relaxed moments to look at anger. In current therapies that go into anger, mindfulness techniques play a very important role. Society at large is dominated by argument and debates. My presentation has a focus on the value of contemplative education as well as the therapeutic techniques to replace the noise, the stress and strains in our culture with an education that emphasizes “deep listening”, with a focus on the present movement and engaging fully in what we are doing at the moment.



Dr. Craig Hased is a General Practitioner and senior lecturer at the Monash University Department of General Practice. His teaching, research and clinical interests involve mindfulness-based stress management, mind-body medicine, meditation, holistic healthcare, health promotion, complementary therapies and medical ethics. Craig is regularly invited to speak in Australia and overseas on these issues and also teaches in the cancer support programs at the Gawler Foundation, and takes courses at the Petrea King Quest for Life Centre. He writes regularly for medical journals particularly in Philosophy of Medicine and has published two books on these issues entitled, “New Frontiers in Medicine” (Volume 1 & 2) and a third book on mindfulness-based stress management entitled “Know Thyself”. Craig has also been a regular media commentator on these topics.

