



Women's and
Gender Studies
Program



UNIVERSITY OF
DETROIT MERCY
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You are invited by CLASA and the ISO to attend a series of special lectures by...



Dr. ASHA MUKHERJEE,

Professor and Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, and founder Director of the Women's Studies Centre, Visva-Bharati Central University, Santiniketan, West Bengal, India.

Tuesday, Feb. 19, 4 p.m.: The History of Jainism and the Moral and Social Implications of Jaina Logic. Co-sponsored by the Philosophy Department.

Thursday, Feb. 21, 11:20 a.m.:
Women, Dharma and Social Justice in India: Utopia and Reality. Co-sponsored by Women's and Gender Studies.

Thursday, Feb. 21, 4 p.m.:
Rabindranath Tagore on comparative study of religions. Co-sponsored by the Department of Religious Studies.



These events are free and open to the public. Sponsored by Carney Latin American Solidarity Archive (CLASA). The series is co-sponsored by the International Services Office and other groups have co-sponsored the particular talks listed above. University of Detroit Mercy McNichols campus is at 4001 W. McNichols Rd., Detroit MI 48221. Free secure parking. For more information contact Dr. Gail Presbey at 313-993-1124, or presbegm@udmercy.edu. See: <http://udmercy.edu/clasa>

SUMMARIES OF DR. ASHA MUKHERJEE'S UPCOMING TALKS at UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT MERCY – McNICHOLS campus

Tuesday, Feb. 19, 4 p.m., Commerce and Finance (C and F) 138: The History of Jainism and the Moral and Social Implications of Jaina Logic. The presentation aims at arguing against the often maintained view that Jaina and Buddhist philosophy emerged as a reaction against the Brahmanical doctrine of caste and other social evils, and the erroneous historical assertion that Jainism is an offshoot of Buddhism and Hinduism. Instead Dr. Mukherjee will explain that Jainism is neither an offshoot of Buddhism nor of Hinduism but precedes them both. It is also argued here that starting from the logical thesis of Anekantavada which is mainly concerned with the right knowledge, we reach Syadvada via Nayavada. But to ascertain correct knowledge one has to make personal efforts. A practical code of conduct has been provided in this system. The five vows compulsory for them are Satyam, Ahimsa, Astayam, Brahmcharya and Aparigraha. Anekantavada is the guiding principle of our outlook and thought, the doctrine of open mindedness, comprehending of a thing from different point of views, non-absolutism at metaphysical level and ahimsa is our regulative principle of conduct an expression of anekantavada at the ethical level, a principle of respect for life, recognizing equality in all human beings and rejection of any kind of domination of one over the other.

Thursday, Feb. 21, 11:20 a.m., Commerce and Finance (C and F) 138: Women, Dharma and Social Justice in India: Utopia and Reality. The concern for gender justice and women rights has been extremely important area in Indian Constitution right from the Independence. At the same time, Dharma is extremely important, and it has both descriptive and prescriptive contents; the way things are and the things ought to be- the nature of man and the obligations or duties. Dharma can be understood in its various connotations, including religion, human dignity, metaphysical foundation of human rights, customary morality, reflective morality, justice, law, consideration for the other, etc., which are essentially related with each other. While examining how dharma is practiced in Indian society as part of gender justice, one finds a paradox between an urge to change and accept Western progressive and democratic values and yet this change has to be rooted in the past glory of Indian society. This paradox influences to a large extent the way the women's questions are developed. This presentation draws on contemporary ethical theories such as Martha Nussbaum's "capabilities" approach as well as ethics of care to understand contemporary burdens and opportunities facing women in India. We find two conflicting images of women in India, making it impossible for women to fulfill either image. She wants some space to be treated as human being, a dignified person who would have power to decide to be and to do, and for this she would have to constantly face a struggle, often very difficult. The Constitution of India provides gender equality right from its Independence in 1947; still, gender justice remains unrealized in India.

Thursday, Feb. 21, 4 p.m., Lansing Reilly Parlor: Rabindranath Tagore on comparative study of religions. Study of religion describes, analyzes and compares how certain human beings do in fact express their faith in terms of particular scriptures, religious figures, sacred rituals, community solidarity, etc. — and how all these explicitly religious phenomena may relate to other aspects of people's lives. It also aspires and addresses the questions to be even-handed, objective, based on evidence that may be checked by any competent inquirer, and non-committal on claims to divine revelation and authority. It is in principle comparative, not in a judgmental evaluative sense, but in terms of describing and analysing comparable elements or phenomena from various religious traditions, using the same criteria in each case. The paper begins with a brief report on the study of religion in the context of India and presents in detail Rabindranath Tagore's (1861–1941) views on the need, an objective and philosophy behind the comparative study of religion. As Tagore observes, when studying religion one usually chooses among two alternative approaches: to do research on the secret text or to study the rituals. Tagore accepts fully none of them and instead suggests to rediscover how human aspiration for transcendence works in practice, how it sustains the individual — often marginalized by the power of institutionalised religion — and society, and how it generates new cultural forms. For Tagore, the essence of religion lies in the will to transcend the limit of the self-centered being towards an ideal of perfection — which he calls divinity of Man. His understanding of the "religion of Man", as he puts it, is discussed in the major part of the paper.

More about Dr. Asha Mukherjee: She has been teaching philosophy at Visva-Bharati, Central University, Santiniketan, India since 1981. She has her M.A., M. Phil and PhD from Rajasthan University, Jaipur Rajasthan, India. Her Ph.D. was on "Logic of Imperatives and its Significance in Moral Reasoning" under Professor Daya Krishna. She was a Fulbright Post-Doctoral Fellow during 1984-85 at Indiana University, Bloomington, US and was associated with Professor Neri-Hector Castaneda. She has attended many national and international conferences, delivered lectures in several foreign universities in various capacities.

Her areas of specialization are Logic, Analytic Ethics, Applied Ethics, Jaina and Buddhist Philosophy, Academic Study of Religion and Gender Studies. She has edited a number of books including *Civil Society in Indian Cultures*, (Co. Edited), RVP, Washington, 2001, *Cognition, Man and the World: Jaina Philosophical Papers* (Ed.) Kalinga Pub. Delhi, 2004, and *Conditioning and Empowerment of Women*, (jointly with Kumkum Bhattacharya) Gyan Pub., Delhi, 2004. Edited as Guest Editor, volume No. 28 of *Labrys*, *Feminisms in India* jointly with Tania Navarro Swain, Brazil www.labrys.net.br, 2016 and also Edited as Guest Editor, Volume, 6.1. *Academic Study of Religion in Asia*, *ARGUMENT*, Jointly with Ake Sander, 2016. She is invited to edit a special volume of *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research (JICPR) on Feminist Thought* beside forthcoming collections of essays: *Tagore on Women and Creativity* and *Rights of Women: Legal and Social Dimensions* (jointly with Shahnaz Begam). Dr. Mukherjee has published more than 70 articles in Indian and international journals and anthologies.