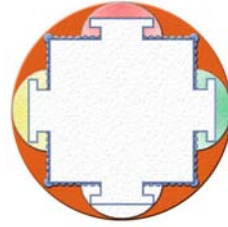


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Global Renaissance Series
Completing the Global Renaissance: The Indic Contributions

February 13, 2002

Dear colleague,

Greetings for the Tibetan New Year of the Water Horse (February 13)!

As you already may know, the Columbia Center for Buddhist Studies and the Infinity Foundation have been inaugurating a long-term series of conferences (some regularly in connection with academic meetings such as AAR, APA, AAS, etc., and some independently) and publications entitled the “Global Renaissance Series.” The first of these will be on “Completing the Global Renaissance: The Indic Contributions,” to be held Wednesday, July 24 through Monday, July 29, 2002 in New York.

Our view is that “the Renaissance” is both poorly understood and still incomplete. We have already articulated this view in some detail in regard to the role of the Indic traditions in the completion of the renaissance, in the Mandala of Indic Traditions on the Infinity Foundation website. In case you are unfamiliar with the essays there, please consult on the web at:

http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/indic_mandala_frameset.htm

If you have a difficulty accessing the internet, we would be happy to send you a pdf file or a hard copy summary of the main introductory essays on the four approaches or “gates” to the Indic traditions: Inner Science, Traditional Knowledge Systems, History, and Society Today.

We are inviting you to participate in this initial conference because our study of your work leads us to believe that you share some or all of our central ideas and the main intentions of the series – most importantly that “The Occident” (sometimes “the North”) and “Modernity” are neither intellectually superior nor civilizationally more “advanced” or “developed.” Many scholars who do not share the conventional idea of the intellectual and civilizational “superiority” of “the West” tend to be unaware of colleagues who share their dissidence in whole or in part. We therefore think it will be highly valuable to have a meeting of minds – along with the occasional stimulating clash of differences – on the long-term agenda of making a “global civilization” thinkable.

This initial conference – or really a small colloquium of no more than forty scholars – will focus on Indic contributions to the coming Global Renaissance. Its main purposes will be:

1. To critique the tacitly or overtly presumed intellectual superiority of the West so as to put the dialogue between the Indic and the Western on an equal footing (while at the same time avoiding a reactionary triumphalism from the Indic side);
2. To critique negative stereotypes of Indic traditions, assessing the damage such stereotypes cause, and to consider measures to counteract them;
3. To heal the breach between the Vedist and the Buddhist perspectives within the self-understanding of Indic civilization, in order to restore this civilization to its full dimensions;
4. To develop the materials for a deeper appreciation of the crown jewel of Indic civilization, its Inner Sciences (*adhyātmavidyā* – including philosophy, psychology, epistemology, linguistics, and so forth), as supporting and supported by the Outer Sciences (“traditional knowledge systems”) and as crucial to creative revisions of history and society, and to develop styles of presenting these sciences as extremely commensurable with and highly valuable to the rebalancing and furthering of contemporary science in the global context.

In particular, we are keenly interested to hear your views on the paradigm shifts you think necessary in your own field, and on what you think would be the ideal agenda for systematic investigation, publication, and dialogue over the coming decade, in order to involve mainstream academia in the process of completing, rather than resisting, the coming Global Renaissance. In your field of specialty, what is missing in the conventional approach to the meeting of civilizations? What are the structural, procedural, or attitudinal obstacles to better incorporation of non-Western and traditionally time-tested arts and sciences?

We realize that it is a bit late, in our academic way of scheduling, to ask you to prepare a finished paper for this conference. However, what we hope to learn is your own formulation of your own central thesis and arguments for a new way of approaching the key issues in your field. Thus, we expect you can easily prepare a detailed outline of the main message to share with us in advance and then verbally lead a discussion with the group on it. We would earnestly request a copy of at least a rough outline or statement draft in electronic format as soon as possible, so we can post it on the website for others to peruse well ahead of time. We will be happy to then post revisions and more detailed updates as you send them, with an expectation that a somewhat more formalized draft can be posted by June 15. From that, we would expect a finished paper to be completed by the end of summer, for publication by the Center/Foundation.

We will cover your travel expenses (round-trip ground transportation and/or 14-day advance-purchase economy air transportation) and hospitality at the conference.

Looking forward to a favorable reply at your early convenience. Please RSVP to Tom Yarnall at ty37@columbia.edu, (914) 428-7054, or 149 Davis Avenue, White Plains, NY 10605.

With all best wishes – sincerely yours,

Rajiv Malhotra
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Robert Thurman
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Conveners, Global Renaissance Colloquium