

Within the framework of the methodological seminar on the problems of translation and interpretation of philosophical texts The Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Peoples ' Friendship University of Russia invite you to a regular meeting on **February 12, 2021 (Friday) 12.30.**

The workshop session will be held online and will be broadcast on YouTube

### **Programme of the scientific seminar**

- **Professor Purushottama Bilimoria** (The University of Melbourne, Australia, RUDN-University, Moscow)

#### **‘Beyond Philology: Hermeneutical Principles (*ṣad-liṅga*) in the Mīmāṃsā and its philosophy of language, mantras and *devatā***

It is said that philology as a mode of textual archaeology (which began in German scholarship back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century) when applied in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries to Indo-Iranian cultures and thought abetted a romanticization process already in place since Novalis and Herder. Philology of texts marks the beginnings of the philology of cultures, and with textual translation spills gradually into ‘nation’ translation (what Edward Said called Orientalism, and Bimal Matilal called ‘Indologism’). This went hand-in-hand with the discovery of Indian philosophical texts from the end of the eighteenth century that stimulated comparative philology alongside comparative mythology and later comparative religion, but also comparative philosophy (in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century). While there is some overlap with *philosophy* and the history of ideas, their essential aims, methods and ethos are different; this has to be explained.

There is an aspect of human thought and culture that calls for interpretation, explanation, and delineation in ways similar to other aspects of human culture, such as politics, religion, law and economics. It is also an examination of claims to objectivity, truth and falsity of the propositions and doctrines espoused in those traditions. In a paper I recently wrote on Wilhelm Halbfass, I complained that while Halbfass saw himself in the *parampara* of Hegel and other German philosophers, but he

was at heart much more a philologist-cum-Indologist; and while he accomplished great work on Indian philosophical texts, he failed when it came to the deeper philosophical challenges posed within Indian philosophy and their unique insights. He seemed more concerned with reading Indian texts through Gadamerian hermeneutics and asking why Indian philosophers do not engage with Western philosophers or take their questions more seriously (forgetting that some Indian philosophers are trained in both traditions, West & East). Swami Vivekananda had complained that philologists tend to focus more on words, their derivation and etymology (reaching out as it were for dictionaries) than seeing them in the context of the larger texts and the hoary tradition informing their *oeuvres*.

Vivekananda was adverting to the erstwhile hermeneutical methods for interpretation used in the tradition and which have a much older history. A good example of this on which I will focus in this report is the Mīmāṃsā principles called *ṣad-liṅga*, namely, *upakrama-upasaṃhāra-abyāsa-apūrvataphalam-arthavāda-upapatti*. There is some resemblance here to Heidegger's epigraph of the hermeneutical circle, but it is much more, and akin to jurisprudence in law – indeed, Mīmāṃsā was or continues to be widely used in Indian jurisprudential interpretations (even the *Dharmaśāstras* acknowledged that). I would like to dilate on these principles, and move to consider how these also inform Mīmāṃsā philosophy of language, in respect of understanding sentences (drawing on some insights of David Zilberman and parallels in de Saussure, who was likely influenced by Mīmāṃsā linguistics). Then – and a very important discourse – is how this theory fuels an understanding of *mantras* – what kind of linguistic apparatus are they, do they have any meaning, are they *vākyas*, and under which *liṅga* do they fall? Not entirely related to the linguistic theory, the last question is in regards to the status of *devatās*, what kind of *being* or *existenz* are they? The same on the question of *apūrva* (as the remote *adṛṣṭaphala* of the performance of *yajñas*): how are we to understand this rather transcendental trope in the absence of transcendence in the Mīmāṃsā? But here also, I see a merger of the linguistic and the ontological, of being and text, in a hermeneutical open-circle of the *onto-a/theo-logos*.