



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI
SHORT ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Thesis Title:

Hermeneutics as a Methodology in the Inter-Cultural Dimension of Philosophy of Consciousness with Reference to Buddhism and Vedanta

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SHORT ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the application of the hermeneutical methodology in the intercultural dimension of the philosophy of consciousness. The theories of textual meaning that are evolving from the hermeneutical movement more appropriately applied in various fields of academic disciplines, such as postmodernist reading, feminist studies, psychoanalysis, ecology, and many others. However, its methodological application in cross-cultural dialogue is yet to emerge. Keeping that in mind, the present research identifies an area of possible cross-cultural discourse.

The thesis explains the hermeneutical understanding in two ways- first hermeneutics as a methodology to understand the cross-cultural discourse, and secondly, tracing the hermeneutical roots in the Indian tradition. From the Indian tradition, the study explores the Advaita Vedanta concept of consciousness. Vedanta, for example, keeps room for hermeneutical disclosure of layers of meaning behind the smooth visible surface. However, the most distinctive feature of Advaita Vedanta philosophy of Sankara is that it not only introduces its non-dualist position, but it also has a unique way of interpreting the Upanishads and revealed the scriptures. In order to

better approximate, this study explores some modernist positions and their translation of traditional Indian philosophical concepts into the terminology of the modern western world and their aspirations toward universalization and pluralism. They tried to interpret the Advaita Vedanta philosophy in a way that is acceptable to all. The neo-Vedantic philosophers give it a different turn by making some fusion with other cultures. Among them, some tried to merge it with Buddhism while some other with the western philosophical tradition. Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Tagore, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan all attempted to blend Advaita Vedanta with other cultures. However, their method of interpretation comes very close to the hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer. As Heidegger regarded Being as the ultimate reality, similarly in the Advaita Vedanta philosophy also by keeping Brahman in the highest position, they tried to make a fusion of horizon, like Gadamer. Keeping this view in mind, the scope of the study widens to include the Heideggerian hermeneutics with some comparative notes with Vedanta and Buddhism.

The overall objective of the thesis is to throw light on ‘hermeneutical understanding,’ which keeps room for an ontological dimension in hermeneutics, which freeing ourselves from the methodologism. It ensures the fact that understanding became a transaction between the creative consciousness of the author and the purely reproductive consciousness of the interpreter.