

**VIDYA-BHAVANA
VISVA-BHARATI
SANTINIKETAN**

*A Special Lecture
26 February 2018 (Monday)
3.00-5.00 pm
Venue: Vidya-Bhavana Meeting Hall*

Lecture Title:

**“Social and Behavioral Scientific ‘way’ to Study Religion,
its Presuppositions, Problems and Topics”**

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Abstract: Historically there have been several shifts of focus within religious studies.

First, *from* what can be called *theology* – normatively, confessional, oriented studies with the intention to find out “metaphysical truths” about the universe – *to* academic *historical studies* of religion (*history of religion*) – the empirical study of the multifaceted religious traditions and their developments, aimed at describing, analyzing and compare the ideas of these different traditions. The sources, the empirical material, for these studies were normally textual documents formulated by the intellectual and religious elite that represented the tradition in question in its “high” or “normative” form.

Secondly, from the historically oriented studies of “high tradition”, textually based religion and religiosity *to* empirical/behavioral studies of “religion as believed and practices” by ordinary, “normal”, “grass-root” people, and how they understand, use and practice their tradition. In this type of studies, the focus is on how religious traditions are understood by, and function for, living people, on the individual and community level; on what is happening in individual minds, in social contacts, and in the life of a society. Or, in other words, the focus is on the functions and roles of religious experiences, rites and observances for individual people as well as for and in social, societal and political events and processes. The latter type of studies can be said to have roughly *three sub-foci*: *one* is centered on *psychology of religion*. *Another* is centered on *sociology of religion*. *And yet another* is *anthropology of religion*.

In this lecture I will sketch how I see the approach to religion (i.e. religious studies) from the point of view of behavioral studies.

ALL ARE CORDIALLY INVITED

**Asha Mukherjee
Principal
Vidya-Bhavana**

**Krishnendu Gupta
Vice-Principal, Vidya-Bhavana**

**Saumya Chakrabarti
Vice-Principal, Vidya-Bhavana**