

# Preaching, Praying, and Helping: Religious Markets in Puri / Odisha

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This case study will deal with religious speeches in an Indian city called Puri. In this city, which is dominated by the great temple of the god *Jagannatha*, there have been monasteries and *ashramas* representing different traditions of Hinduism for centuries. Although there has been a general decline in this monastic tradition, and many institutions have been closed due to lack of funding over the last decades, there are some institutions that are prospering and visible to the public. These include, in particular, the *Govardhana Peetham*, which belongs to the *Shankaracharya* tradition (Isaeva 1993), the neo-Hindu "*Ramakrishna Mission*" (Beckerlegge 2000) and the ISKCON (Bryant / Ekstrand 2013) *Ashrama* in Puri and a very successful temple in the capital Bhubaneswar.

These institutions are present on the Internet, organize regular briefings (*dharma sabha*), organize major public events on various festivals and accompany their instructions with development aid projects and so-called Welfare Activities. The project is intended to examine religious speeches and practices as well as the aims ascribed to oral performances in these three Hindu institutions.

For this purpose, over a research period of twelve months, intensive contacts are established with these institutions, interviews with speakers and believers are conducted, the production, dissemination and consumption of speeches is systematically recorded, speeches and their styles are analyzed, concepts of listening are investigated and the connection of speakers with social projects and international forms of religious dissemination is studied.

Central questions are:

- What are the differences with reference to the texts, the teacher-student-relationship, the form, time and place of religious speeches?
- Are the speeches directed at individual persons or at groups and with which performances should the effect of the speech be strengthened (see Fuller 2001)?
- How are the speeches of religious representatives in the city, for example, on the main street (*Bada Dana*), which is used every day by tens of thousands of pilgrims, with the numerous shops and informal marketplaces containing religious texts, pamphlets and CDs, DVDs, etc.?
- Is the medialization of the speeches decisive for the success of the monasteries and *Ashrama*, or are other factors playing a role in Puri?"