



# **ANIMAL CONSCIOUSNESS CONFERENCE**

**Dharamsala, May 1-5, 2023**

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The problem of animal consciousness is starting to occupy a fundamental position in the scientific and ethical problems of consciousness. Scientifically, this is due to a conceptual shift in understanding the basic essence of consciousness not as a language grounded phenomenon unique to humans, but as a much broader spectrum of subjective feelings, extended into vast domains of the animal kingdom. This changes the picture of the scientific study of consciousness, removing humans from the pedestal of the privileged owner of the subjective experience. Ethically, this conceptual shift is intimately linked to evolution in public awareness of animal consciousness and changes in public policy regarding treatment of animals, their suffering and protection.

Discussing the impact and implications of these critical shifts will be the subject of the Animal Consciousness Conference to be held May 1–5, 2023 in Dharamshala, India. The conference will be a teamwork of a group of international experts in behavioral biology, comparative ethology, cognitive neurobiology, human neuroscience, Buddhist science and philosophy of consciousness to review the latest developments and focus on new directions of animal consciousness research and its ethical implications. The main scientific task of the conference is to review and discuss current advances and challenges in theoretical and experimental studies of consciousness in the animal world, including the empirical criteria for consciousness, its neural mechanisms, the development of consciousness in evolution, consciousness in invertebrates, fish, amphibians, birds, mammals, the specificity of consciousness in humans, and ethical problems, associated with animal consciousness.

Scientists investigating these issues do not often get together, being tied to other scientific communities and their traditional conferences. Therefore, diverse studies of consciousness in different animal species are often developing in parallel today. An organizational goal of the conference is to set the stage for a more regular and representative conferences in the field of animal consciousness research.

This conference emerged from discussions with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and is organized by the Institute for Advanced Brain Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University and Save Tibet Foundation, Office of Tibet, Moscow in cooperation with the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamshala and Foundation for Humane and Responsible Attitude towards Animals “Cat of the Wind”, Moscow. It will include presentations by several outstanding Buddhist scholars, as well as a meeting and conversation of conference participants with the Dalai Lama.

The interest of Buddhism in the problem of consciousness in animals has deep conceptual and ethical foundations. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama explains in his book “The Universe in a Single Atom” devoted to the convergence of science and spirituality “For modern science... the critical divide seems to be between inanimate matter and the origin of living organisms, while for Buddhism the critical divide is between non-sentient matter and the emergence of sentient beings. ... This fundamental difference between Buddhism and science... has significant ramifications, among them a difference in how the two investigative traditions may regard consciousness. For biology, consciousness is a secondary issue since it is characteristic of a subset of living organisms rather than of all of life. In Buddhism, since the definition of ‘living’ refers to sentient beings, consciousness is the primary characteristic of ‘life’”. This division between sentience and non-sentience is so essential for Buddhism because it is primarily interested in the alleviation of suffering and the quest for happiness.

Thus, understanding consciousness in animals is a fundamental issue for both modern and Buddhist science.

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## Program

### April 30, Sunday

Arrivals, Registration.

19:00 Welcome Dinner at Norbu House.

### May 1, Monday

- 06:00 – 07:00 Breakfast at the hotel of stay (Norbu House or Pema Thang).
- 7:00 – 8:00 Proceeding to the residence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Security check.
- 08:00 – 9:00 Meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.  
*Please note that the exact time of the meeting is subject to change. There might be some waiting involved.*
- Right after the meeting – 12:30 Excursion at Namgyal Monastery, main temple of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Short circumambulation (kora) of the holy mountain where His Holiness residence is located.
- 13:00 – 14:00 Lunch at Norbu House.
- 15:00 – 15:30 **OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE**

### **SESSION 1 Consciousness in the Buddhist Science**

- 15:30 – 17:00 **Introduction to Buddhist Understanding of Consciousness**  
*Geshe Lhakdor*, Director of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- Mind and Mental Factors in Buddhist Philosophy**  
*Geshe Ngawang Norbu*, Sera Jey Monastery, Supervisor of the Russian Science and Research Center in Bylakuppe, India.  
*Geshe Thabkhe*, Sera Jey, Director of Sera Jey Education Department.
- Consciousness from the perspective of sutra and tantra**  
*Geshe Lobsang Sangpo*, Ganden Jangtse Monastery, Supervisor of the Russian Science and Research Center in Mundgod, India.

17:00 – 18:00 General Discussion Session – Consciousness in Buddhist Science.

19:00 – 21:00 Conference Opening Dinner at Pema Thang Restaurant.

## May 2, Tuesday

### **SESSION 2 Animal Consciousness: Cases and Boundaries**

07:00 – 09:00 Breakfast at the hotel of stay (Norbu House or Pema Thang).

09:30 – 13:10 Talks – Animal Consciousness: Cases and Boundaries.

09:30 – 10:10 1. *Anindya Sinha*  
National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, India.

10:10 – 10:50 2. *Andreas Nieder*  
Institute of Neurobiology, University of Tuebingen, Tuebingen, Germany.

10:50 – 11:10 Coffee Break.

11:10 – 11:50 3. *Vilakkathala Binoy*  
National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, India.

11:50 – 12:30 4. *Jennifer Mather*  
Psychology Department, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Canada.

12:30 – 13:10 5. *Jonathan Birch*  
London School of Economics, Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method, London, UK.

13:30 – 14:30 Lunch.

15:00 – 18:00 Talks – Animal Consciousness: Cases and Boundaries.

15:00 – 15:40 6. *Lars Chittka*  
Research Centre for Psychology, Queen Mary, University of London, London, UK.

15:40 – 16:20 7. *Martin Giurfa*  
Centre de Biologie Integrative, Université Paul Sabatier of Toulouse CNRS, Toulouse, France.

16:20 – 16:40 Coffee Break.

- 16:40 – 17:20      8. *Alison Hanson*  
Department of Biological Sciences, Columbia University, New York, USA.
- 17:20 – 18:00      9. *Paco Calvo*  
Minimal Intelligence Laboratory, Universidad de Murcia, Murcia, Spain.
- 18:30 – 19:30      Dinner at Surya Hotel (Indian Cuisine).
- 20:00 – 21:00      General Discussion Session – Animal Consciousness: Cases and Boundaries.

## May 3, Wednesday

### **SESSION 3    Animal Consciousness: Concepts and Theories**

- 07:00 – 09:00      Breakfast at the hotel of stay (Norbu House or Pema Thang).
- 09:30 – 13:10      Talks – Animal Consciousness: Concepts and Theories.
- 09:30 – 10:10      10. *Nicholas Humphrey*  
London School of Economics, Emeritus Professor of Psychology, London, UK.
- 10:10 – 10:50      11. *Eva Jablonka*  
Tel Aviv University, Emeritus in History and Philosophy of Science Inst., Tel Aviv, Israel.
- 10:50 – 11:10      Coffee Break.
- 11:10 – 11:50      12. *Walter Veit*  
Department of Philosophy, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK.
- 11:50 – 12:30      13. *Björn Merker*  
Independent scholar, Kristianstad, Sweden.
- 12:30 – 13:10      14. *Konstantin Anokhin*  
Institute for Advanced Brain Studies, Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia.
- 13:30 – 14:30      Lunch at Norbu House.
- 15:00 – 18:00      Speakers Discussion Session – Animal Consciousness: Concepts and Theories.
- 18:30 – 19:30      Dinner at Chonor House (Tibetan cuisine).
- 20:00 – 21:00      General Discussion Session – Animal Consciousness: Concepts and Theories.



## **May 5, Friday**

### **SESSION 5 Animal Consciousness: Ethics and Policy**

- 07:00 – 09:00 Breakfast at the hotel of stay (Norbu House or Pema Thang).
- 09:00 – 10:00 Transfer to the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- 10:00 – 12:00 Discussion Session – Animal Consciousness: Ethics and Policy.
- 12:00 – 13:00 Excursion at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- 13:00 – 14:00 Lunch at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- 14:00 – 16:00 Speakers Discussion Session – Setting program and plans for the future.
- 16:00 – 17:30 Transfer to Gyuto Monastery. Excursion at Gyuto monastery.
- 17:30 – 18:30 Excursion at Norbulingka Institute of Tibetan Culture.
- 19:00 – 21:00 Conference Closing Dinner at Norbulingka Institute of Tibetan Culture.

## **May 6, Saturday**

Departures

## Participants:

- 1 **Prof. Konstantin Anokhin** Institute for Advanced Brain Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia.
- 2 **Prof. Pavel Balaban** Institute of Higher Nervous Activity and Neurophysiology, RAS, Moscow, Russia
- 3 **Dr. Vilakkathala Binoy** National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, India.
- 4 **Prof. Jonathan Birch** London School of Economics, Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method, London, UK.
- 5 **Prof. Paco Calvo** Minimal Intelligence Laboratory, Universidad de Murcia, Murcia, Spain.
- 6 **Prof. Lars Chittka** Research Centre for Psychology, Queen Mary, University of London, London, UK.
- 7 **Prof. Martin Giurfa** Centre de Biologie Integrative, Université Paul Sabatier of Toulouse CNRS, Toulouse, France.
- 8 **Dr. Alison Hanson** Department of Biological Sciences, Columbia University, New York, USA.
- 9 **Prof. Nicholas Humphrey** London School of Economics, Emeritus Professor of Psychology, London, UK.
- 10 **Prof. Eva Jablonka** Tel Aviv University, Emeritus in History and Philosophy of Science Inst., Tel Aviv, Israel.
- 11 **Prof. Masanori Kohda** Graduate School of Science, Osaka Metropolitan University, Osaka, Japan.
- 12 **Prof. Jennifer Mather** Psychology Department, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Canada.
- 13 **Dr. Björn Merker** Independent scholar, Kristianstad, Sweden.
- 14 **Prof. Andreas Nieder** Institute of Neurobiology, University of Tuebingen, Tuebingen, Germany.



- 15 **Prof. Anindya Sinha** National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, India.
- 16 **Prof. Thomas Suddendorf** School of Psychology, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.
- 17 **Prof. Michael Tye** Department of Philosophy, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, USA.
- 18 **Dr. Walter Veit** Department of Philosophy, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK.

## Associate Participants:

- 1 **Vlada Belimova** Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia
- 2 **Olga Ivashkina** Institute for Advanced Brain Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia.
- 3 **Anton Kuznetsov** Department of Philosophy, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia
- 4 **Bembya Mitruiev** Acharya – Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies. Kalmyk Institute for Humanities of the RAS, Elista, Russia.
- 5 **Chechenbai Mongush** Acharya – Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies. Independent translator.
- 6 **Ksenia Toropova** Institute for Advanced Brain Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia.
- 7 **Geshe Tenzin Celon** Lecturer, Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education, Bangalore, India.
- 8 **Ven. Tenzin Tsenlek (Duke Tsering)** Education Director, Tibetan Children's Village, Dharamsala, India.

## Distinguished Scientific Guests:

- 1 **Prof. Alexander Kaplan** Laboratory for Neurophysiology and Neuro–Computer Interfaces, Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia.
- 2 **Prof. Victoria Lysenko** Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences.
- 3 **Prof. Tatiana Chernigovskya** Institute for Cognitive Studies, St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg, Russia.
- 4 **Geshe Jangchub Choden** Deputy Secretary, General International Buddhist Confederation, Delhi, India.
- 5 **Geshe Lhakdor** Director, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala, India.
- 6 **Geshe Lobsang Sangpo** Supervisor of the Russian Science and Research Center in Mundgod, India.
- 7 **Geshe Ngawang Norbu** Supervisor of the Russian Science and Research Center in Bylakuppe, India.
- 8 **Geshe Ngawang Samten** Ex–Vice Chancellor of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, Varanasi, India.
- 9 **Geshe Thabkhe Lodroe** Director of Sera Jey Education Department.
- 10 **Ven. Tenzin Priyadarshi** President and CEO of the Dalai Lama Center for Ethics and Transformative Values at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston, USA.

## Organizers:

- Institute for Advanced Brain Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow.
- Save Tibet Foundation, Moscow.
- Office of Tibet, Moscow.

*in cooperation with*

- Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala.
- Foundation for Humane and Responsible Attitude towards Animals “Cat of the Wind”, Moscow.

## Organizing Committee:

1. **Konstantin Anokhin** Director, Institute for Advanced Brain Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia.
2. **Telo Tulku Rinpoche** Honorary Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Russia, Mongolia and CIS countries.
3. **Geshe Lhakdor** Director, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
4. **Yulia Zhironkina** Director, Save Tibet Foundation, Moscow.
4. **Natasha Inozemtseva** Deputy Director, Save Tibet Foundation, Moscow.

## Special Acknowledgements:

Organizers express their deep gratitude to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his inspiration and advice that made this conference possible.

We are grateful to the Private Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (Dharamsala, India) and its Director Geshe Lhakdor, to Saglabasim Tibetu (Riga, Latvia) and personally Dina Murniece for their tremendous support.

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- **Vladislav Sviblov,**
- **Andrian Melnikov and Galina Kubareva,**
- **Dmitri Volkoff,**
- **Konstantin Shwarts.**

*May the Animal Consciousness Conference–2023 organized with your support and participation help humanity to reconsider our current understanding of sentience and have more compassion to all forms of life.*

## **Some useful information about your travel to Dharamsala**

- Please don't forget to print out your Indian visa (not the email that you received, but the pdf file you can download from <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/StatusEnquiry>). You will need to present it at immigration together with your passport and boarding pass.
- Please print out or save on your gadget your airline tickets (they should be presented alongside with your passport to enter airports in India).
- Checked-in baggage allowance on domestic flights in India is one piece of free checked-in baggage of up to 15 kg, in case your baggage exceeds this limit it's possible to pay for the extra weight at the airport. Hand baggage allowance is 5–7 kg depending on the aircraft.
- We have arranged for transportation to meet you at the Dharamsala airport and take you to your hotel. Please look for the sign “Animal Consciousness Conference”.
- All participants of the conference will be staying at the Norbu House Hotel, McLeod Ganj, Dharamsala, phone: +91 97364 82887; Wangdue Tsewang +91 9736482887.
- Should you need to contact the organizers please send messages via WhatsApp or Telegram to Telo Tulku Rinpoche +7 917 688 59 59, Natasha Inozemtseva +79037645315, Yulia Zhironkina +79096456952.
- Power supply in India is at 220–240 Volts. Sockets are most commonly “Type D” (three round pins in a triangle pattern).
- Dharamsala and Delhi are located in the India Time Zone (UTC+05:30).
- Water in India is not safe for Western tourists. Please drink only bottled or boiled water. Electric kettles and bottled water will be in all guest rooms in the hotel.

## **Security To Enter His Holiness the Dalai Lama Residence**

- All guests will need to process through security the morning of the meeting with His Holiness to enter the meeting location. You must have your badge with you to enter. The badges will be handed out upon your arrival at Norbu House and during the Welcome Dinner on April 30th 7 pm at Norbu House.
- Please be prepared for the cue line and expect a pat down plus all bags being fully emptied and contents inspected. It is recommended that you leave unnecessary items in your hotel room. It is likely that women and men will have separate security lines.
- COVID–19 Rapid antigen tests will be conducted by security personnel.
- Guests are not allowed to pass through the security system with a mobile phone, computer or camera. You will need to turn in these items to security to receive them when you exit. You will be given a claim ticket.

- The photos of the meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama will be taken by official photographers and shared with you.

## **Video recordings during the Conference**

Talk and discussions during scientific sessions in Dharamshala are traditionally videorecorded. You can find many of such important recordings on the Internet. E.g.:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALGKlcfXxcM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQ0CoQyle7Y&t=152s>

Please adjust material of your presentations if necessary.

## **Weather & "What to Wear"**

- The weather in early May in Dharamsala is mild with about +20–25 centigrade during the day and +13–16 centigrade at night. Though it is rather warm period, you should pack and prepare for colder weather – sweater/spring jackets and layers are recommended. It's not the monsoon season yet, but occasional heavy rains are to be expected. Please have an umbrella (if needed it can be bought in Dharamsala) or a raincoat.
- In India it is customary to always have air-conditioning on, so it can be quite cold indoors. We recommend having a light jacket or a shawl with you just in case. Pashmina scarves are a popular item to purchase in McLeod Ganj plus they are useful in keeping the chill off of your neck. Note that in New Delhi it will be considerably warmer.
- Shoes: Wear sturdy, closed-toe walking shoes. Dharamsala, specifically McLeod Ganj, sits at an altitude of 6831 feet/2082 meters. Please keep in mind that it is a mountainous region with walking being the primary mode of travel within the village. Sensible walking shoes/trail runners/sneakers are a must, due to the uneven pavement combined with the road congestion (cars, scooters, pedestrians, cows, dogs, and monkeys).
- Attire: In addition to the above regarding cooler temperatures and sensible shoes, guest attire ranges from nice-casual to business-casual. Jeans are fine when walking around town however not recommended during the meeting with His Holiness. When meeting with His Holiness, it is customary to dress smartly.

## **Places we will visit**

### **Namgyal Monastery and Tsuglakhang (Main Temple of His Holiness the Dalai Lama)**

The Namgyal Monastery is one of the most popular sites in Dharamshala. It is the personal monastery of the Dalai Lama. Namgyal Monastery is responsible for maintaining the rituals and teachings of all the main lineages of Buddhism.

### **Kora (Circumambulation Road) around the Holy Mountain**

This is a sacred path surrounding the Tsuglagkhang Complex (residence of the Dalai Lama and monastery). In this contemplative walk, you will see many prayer wheels and prayer flags as well as stupas.

### **Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA)**

Library of Tibetan Works & Archives began life as a repository for sacred manuscripts rescued during the Cultural Revolution. Today it has over 120,000 manuscripts and books in Tibetan, and more than 15,000 books on Tibet, Buddhism and the Himalayan region in English and other languages. Upstairs is an engaging museum with statues, old Tibetan artefacts and books, and several of complex 3D mandalas in wood and sand.

### **Gyuto Tantric Monastery**

The Gyuto monks are known for their unique tradition of overtone singing which allows them to chant more than one pitch at a time. They were nominated for a Grammy in 2011. Gyuto Monastery showcases a beautiful temple that is often pictured in images of Dharamsala.

### **Norbulingka Institute**

Norbulingka keeps centuries old Tibetan traditions alive in content, form, and process by providing apprenticeships in traditional Tibetan art forms and making Tibetan experience accessible for contemporary lifestyle.