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**NEO-HINDUISM AND ITS VIRTUAL SACRAL GEOGRAPHY**

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| If India appeared in the man's life it is the point of no return.  (proverbial wisdom)  The true explorer looks not for the new lands but for the new look on them.  (Merlin, the 5th century A.D.) |

**Summary.** Some issues in the Study of Neo-Hinduism in the Virtual Space are evident, the Network of the denominational Landscape (for example, Hindu and Vishnu one) is emerging, and a Virtual Sacral Geography of Religions in the space of the secular Mass-media is available.

**Keywords:** Virtual Sacral Geography of Religions, Hinduism, Vishnuism, Mass-media, World Wide Web.

The concepts “sacral geography”, “mythological geography”, “symbolic geography” become ever more congruent facts in the modern society. In the context of global out-migration the phenomenon of territoriality is relativated, and the world in and of itself begins to take the traits of the outer order. Such concepts as “religious/ecclesiastical geography”, “media representation of religious landscape”, “geography of religions in the mass media”, “space localisation of religious beliefs and practices” are engaged in the research of the wide-spreading of the religion with its presented method of the sacralisation of the natural and social space.

The sacral geography includes the conglomerate of places, landscapes, reserves, temples, castles, dislocation of sacred sites for purposes of pilgrimage. Certainly, the activity of the Neo-Hindu sects are lightened by many amicable, neutral and hostile web-sites, but, unfortunately, in consequence of the size of this article we cannot analyse their influence on the perception of its direction in the digital space. It is necessary to remember that in the Global Web the perception of the Neo-Hindu sects like ISKCON largely depends on the existence of the Hindu religions there. Our object is to lighten the virtual sacral geography of the Hinduism on the Internet.

If to analyse how the sacral geography is represented on the Internet then it is might be said that it is still feebly marked, in other words, there are the lack of the forums and debates on this theme. Nowadays, it is commonly known that the fact of such absence influences the representation of religions, confessions, denominations in the Global Web and their missionary activity effectiveness. At the moment the Neo Hindu and the Vishnu’ believers in particular have the lack of knowledge, skills, means, practice and necessity to well organise the Internet-pilgrimage, though the other confessions like the Catholics have far more developed online field of the representation of their own doctrines. On the other hand, the online space, especially the English-speaking one, represents a lot more information and facts about the Vishnu’ believers in comparison with the Russian-speaking ones and all the more than the Ukrainian-speaking segments of the Global Web.

Nevertheless, the web-casts of the kirtans from the known sacral sites and ashrams are slowly becoming ever more regular, the ekadashi video festivals and the Vishnuism movement video archives work (ones of the successful projects are krishna.ru and veda.madia.ru). Apart from the said, the sacral space of Vishnuism is presented in the web by the sites about the temples, its spiritual Masters and preachers, by the information about the Vishnuism’ social networks, the Vishnuism’ forums, the blogs of its followers, and there is more information in English than in Russian or Ukrainian. In the Hindu and the Vishnuism’ Internet the sacral atlas of India is reflected with the means of the Internet-radio and the Internet-TV, Vishnuism’ torrent-trackers, broadcasting of the temple programs, search engines on Vishnuism’ sites, electronic libraries of Vishnuism’ literature, audio- and video-archives, Vishnuism’ radio stations, lecture and music transmissions.

For virtual traveling across the Hindu relics it might be needed the web guide, it is offered the following: guide “Lonely Planet” (lonelyplanet.com), “The Rough Guide” (roughguide.com), “Naturalnirvana” (naturalnirvana.com), the travel section in the encyclopedia “WIKI” (wikitravel.org), the web site on the Ministry of Tourism of India, the project “Templenet” (templenet.com) that is dedicated to the Hindu temples, the forecast site “Wunderground” (wunderground.com), the known book The Wonder That Was India by A. Basham [1], sites of the Embassies of Russian Federation and Ukraine in India and the Embassy of India in Russia and Ukraine etc.

“Sacred Routes of the Planet” and “sacral geographical encyclopedias” are reflectional topics on the site “India in Russian, Encyclopedia-Guide about India, travelling and the way to yourself” (<http://indonet.ru/>). The virtual tours across the Indian towns are on the site http:/indonet.ru/travelguide. It is offered the virtual tour across Deli (<http://indonet.ru/india/Delhi-virtualnyi-tur>), moreover, every sight is represented by various panoramas in 3D, the multimedia drawing also provides the virtual tour to Pattadakal, Sanchi, Amritsar, Goa, Ajanta, Agra, Hampi etc.

On the site it is offered the interactive guide map “India in Russian” with the similar description of the sights, photos and its transport (<http://indonet.ru/india>[)](http://indonet.ru/india)/). The maps of India and its states are presented on the site <http://indonet.ru/category/karta-indii>. This community of the India nerds functions in the social networks VKontakte, Facebook, Twitter, Coogle+. In its turn, the news of Indonet spreads through RSS, the forum “All About India” works as well. The photo-essay concerning the temple of ISKCON in Puna with the involvement of the president of India was posted in the social networks (for example, Facebook http:/www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.583198475026745.135609.100000097925463&type=1).

The virtual tours in 360-degree virtual reality are also represented on the site <http://indiavrtours.com/hyderabad/index.html>. A presentation “India” consisting of the information about the geography, hydrology, state structure, population, culture of the country is offered on the resource <http://mygeography.ru/presentations/India>. In particular, the sacral space of Hinduism is formed by functioning of the web forums on the theme: “Jyotish” (Vedic Astrology), “Transcendental Meditation”, Varahamihira for learning Jyotish”, “Vegetarianism and Ayurveda” etc.

The topic of religious tourism, sacral places of Hinduism and seven sacral towns are presented on the site http:/www.tour-salon.ru/asia/india/religion/holy\_places.html. Here can be found the map of India, the guide in the coordinates map/satellite, relief (<http://www.loveyouplanet.com/india/>), the virtual tours across India (<http://indiavrtours.com/>), Indian holidays and festivals are transmitted, the virtual tours to the fortresses, palaces and exotic places of India are taken as well. The maps of India, divided by states, excursions and video about India are spread on (<http://www.extrav.ru/India/maps_of_india.php>[)](http://www.extrav.ru/India/maps_of_india.php)/). The interactive map of Goa with marked sights and interesting places, GPS-navigation system around Goa and the forum about Goa are represented on the recourse <http://ogoa.ru/menu/maps/>.

The Russian fund of transpersonal psychology and the International Noosphere Institute offer to travel across “the power places” of India. The sacral places of India are considered in relation of geosophy and geophilosophy in the works of Eugene Faidysh, it is given the classification of “power places” and “places of power map”, “empire cosmography” and “new cartography of the world” [2].

The sacral places in Hinduism are the places of holding the Vedic ceremonies first of all like agnihorta, homa, yajna, ancient Vedic technical skills, improvement of planetary influences on the individual life, that creates the stable connection with fundamental powers or laws of nature. By virtue of the ceremony special structure it is reached the entity of individual conscious with the exterior space and the macrocosm.

The sacral geography of India can be denoted by the concept of tirtha that literally means “bridge” that is the bridge between the sky and the earth. Many pilgrimages of the country are familiar with an ancient poem “Kashi, Kanchi, Maya, Ayodhya, Mathura, Dvaravati are seven places giving freedom”. Among the main sacral places of India it is detached Vishnu shrines such as: Tirupati, Haridwar, Badrinath, Srirangapatna Srirangam, Allahabad, Guruvayur, Trivandrum, Muktinath; Rama shrines: Ayodhya, Rameshwaram, Chitrakut, Panchavati; Krishna shrines: Mathura, Vrindaban, Puri, Dvaraka, Udupi, Mayapur, Kurukshetra, Pandhapur.

It is also offered the virtual map of the capital and different regions of India, pilgrimage's itineraries, blogs and photo-galleries, video-collections and documentary films connected with the sacral places of India and other countries, which are visited every year by millions of pilgrimages, for example: “The Pilgrimage to Himalayas”, (“The Journey To The Top of the World”, 2006), “Kumbh Mela. The Greatest Demonstration Of The Belief In The World” (2008), “The Mother of Gang, The Voyage Along The Sacral River (2005), Muktinath, Video-prikrama across Govardhanu, Mayapur, Vrindavan. India, Jaiour, Vrindavan “The Masters of India and their ashrams” (2012) (5 episodes). It is the multi-episod film about the Masters of India, saints, enlightens, avatars, guru, and their ashrams, about the places where they were used to hold and still holding the satsangi and their places of burial.

As it was noticed that only India that is rich in traditions can offer the Internet-pilgrimage with the help of 3D-visualization, but in this context it is necessary to differentiate the concepts “religious pilgrimage” and “religious tourism”. It may be noted that the attitude of many confessions to the religious tourism is less amicable and tolerable as contrasted with the religious pilgrimage. In contrast to the pilgrimage, the religious tourist can be allowed to neglect some taboo prescriptions (prohibition on alcohol, tobacco, certain ascetism in various fields, etc.) and turning to the the internationally recognized values of the religious freedom this question is still keeping discussed.

Taking into account the psychological phenomenon of identity crisis, the modern man will not be able to chose the role for visiting India: religious tourist or pilgrimage. Nevertheless, while organizing the tours, excursions and pilgrimages, any kind of such informing is almost absent on the Internet. The directors and presidents of ashrams could take into consideration that there are thousands of the travellers in the world who can invest their money in various projects of Hinduism.

The best and the most ideal example of the representation of Vishnuism in the cyberspace is the hi tech site of the Temple of Vedic Planetarium (<http://tovp.org/>) with its extremely impressive and informative presentation on Youtube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhs9bvGKZ6E&feature=you.be>) and with its gallery of videos (<http://tovp.org/ru/media-gallery/videos/>).

It is known that Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir that it the Temple of Vedic Planetarium or the main center of ISKCON is situated in the Western Bengal where Chaitanya Mahaphabhu, the founder of Gaudiya Vishnuism’ tradition of Hinduism, was born. The founder of ISKCON wanted this the biggest temple to become the Vedic Planetarium, or the Temple of Understanding. It is considered that this Temple-Planetarium will challenge the modern explanation of organization of the Universe, show the scientific basis of the Veda, and help to prevent the spreading of the modern atheism. The Institute of Vedic Cosmology will be established at the Temple, it will continue to research and discuss the conception of the Universe organization.

Building of the Temple of Chaytaniya Mahaphabhu is the most expensive and ambitious projects of Srila Phabhupada. The temple was established in accordance with the tradition of the sacral architecture. The Planetarium will allow its visitors to make a journey to different corners of the cosmic creation. Beginning from the lowest planets the visitors will be able to pass through the sphere of the Earth and then, through the higher planetary systems before going out the edge of the material cosmos and reach the highest abode of Krishna.

Srila Prabhupada desired to found the town where people from all over the world could go there and live in accordance with the Vedic traditions. It is believed that this model will be studied by the visitors from different levels with the help of escalators, that it will demonstrate the aspects of the Vedic science and their meaning for the human civilisation:

* description of the Vedic cosmology; screens showed the mathematical and scientific ground of the planetary model that has the form of a chandelier;
* Vedic library and research center;
* works of Michael Baigent (Drucatarma Prabhu) from the book “Ancient Traces” as well as the archeology of the Vedic era;
* info-centers, described the falseness of the theory of the Arian invasion that makes an attempt to minimize the meaning and age of the Vedic culture;
* scientific basis of the concept of the intelligent design;
* Vedic social science and social organization;

Accept the Temple of Vedic Planetarium, the building of the Vedic Cultural Center and Radhi-Madhava's Temple (Moscow) can be considered as the one of the distinguished variants of Vishnuism representation in the cyberspace. It is shown in the video-mode with the slideshow, the exterior of the Center is also represented in the 3D-visualisation and in high quality (<http://project.veda.ru/gallery/materials/>). On the site <http://project.veda.ru/gallery/appearance/>\_ it is offered to scroll the photos of the lot, the miniature of the temple, and its 3D-visualisation. On the resource of this project it is also put the information about the Vastu, Vedic architecture and life space organization (http:/veda.ru/blog/vastu\_shastri). The project “We are building the temple” (http:/project.veda.ru/) can be noted as well. Particularly, the sacral space of Vishnuism is organized by transmitting of the sacred worship from the Temple of Krishna in Moscow ([www.vedamedia.ru/live](http://www.vedamedia.ru/live)), lectures, programs, festivals and holidays.

Among the projects that can come under Hinduism and Vishnuism we can underline the following: “Gitagrad is a web portal of the Vishnuism believers’ settlement” ([http://gitagrad.org.ua](http://gitagrad.org.ua/)); the informative portal concerning the Eco-living and the culture of varna-shrama “Green House. Ecology, building, natural materials, alternative energy” (<http://green-dom.info/>); “Vishnuism believers’ settlement Kukuika” (http:/kukuika.ru/); “The settlement of the third millennium – the web portal about the Green revolution: life on the earth and the low-rise building (<http://www.poselenie3000.ru/>); “Vishnuism believers’ Dobromysh” (<http://vkontakte.ru/club26331922>); the advice “House according to Vasta” (<http://domvastu.com.ua/>), “Permaculture – is the frame of design” (<http://community.livejournal.com/perma_culture/>) (permaculture is the treatment of designing of the environment, found on the correlations that are found in natural ecosystems and argued against the using of the chemical fertilisation, using poisons against pest animals, necessary ploughing etc.).

Consequently, the certain problem of studying Neo-Hinduism and in particular Vishnuism in the online space is clear, far-reaching studying of religious landscape is hindered because of the limited or absent opportunities of investing the projects of far-reaching geographycal mapping of the sacral objects. In one respect, it leads to the formation of the web faith based landscape (for example, for Hinduism and Vishnuism believers’), in the space of the secular MSM it is formed its own media geography of religions. In the other respect, it means that the different religious organizations and movements are represented in the media space inhomogeneously, their image, frequency, attention scope of the tabloids and channels to different confessions and events of religious life vary.

The sacral places of Neo-Hinduism and Vishnuism are becoming more and more dislocation, though at the present the quality of the sites and resources leave much to be desired due to its modest representation of blogs, forums, covering information, excursion opportunities, correlative prices of the relevant confessional field.

In consequence of the reviewed topic about the asymmetric language representation of the information about the Hinduism and Vishnuism believers 's life the new question arises: why does the principal information is not presented in Russian and, in particular, in Ukrainian but in Hindi and English? As the matter of fact, in the postmodern age of the informational globalisation, virtualisation, multimedisation and digitalisation the significance of the brand, project, advertisement, PR if the religious life becomes obvious. Researching the conceptual correlation of the concepts “advertisement – missionary – sponsorship” we can make a suggestion that for religious organizations the savings in the advertisement is ineffective.

But the intelligibility of this problem that is construction of the sacral atlas and the representation of Neo-Hinduism in the Global Web, seems rational. It can be noted that acharya-devotee can provide their sacred worship in the cyberspace as well, create and update the statuses of Vishnuism on the social networks. As an example of the resolution of financial and personnel problems can be mentioned the ISKCON in the USA. Besides that, according to the example of the Catholicism, we can mention the fact that the 13th August, 20013 there already were 8.5 millions of the Internet users watched the posts of Francis I, the Bishop of Rome on Twitter [3]. For this reason, we can wish the same speed to Neo-Hinduism followers to reach the dignified dislocation and representation in the online space.

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**Добродум О.В. Неоіндуїзм та його віртуальна сакральна географія. – Стаття.**

**Анотація.** Певна проблематика вивчення неоїндуїзма в онлайновому просторі очевидна, формується мережевий конфесійний ландшафт (наприклад, індуський і вайшнавский), в просторі світських ЗМІ наявна віртуальна сакральна географія релігій.

**Ключові слова:** віртуальна сакральна географія релігій, індуїзм, вайшнавізм, ЗМІ, Глобальне Павутиння.