

Dharma Academy of North America (DĀNAM)

**DANAM 2026 Theme: Imagination & Intention:
Thinking about the Future through Story, Philosophy & the Social/Spiritual
Reforms**

SESSION 4: Provincializing Pluralism: Difference and Diversity in South Asian Traditions

Editors: Brian Black (University of Edinburgh) and James Madaio (Czech Academy of Sciences)

November 21, 2026, Saturday, 9:00 AM-10:30

Description

How have South Asian traditions responded to plurality and difference? The question lies at the center of this collection, inviting us to challenge established conceptions of pluralism and understand South Asian ways of thinking about difference, diversity, and 'the other'. This diverse collection is the first in-depth treatment of the many ways South Asian traditions theorize plurality. Bringing together case studies across South Asia's distinctive religious landscape, it marks a significant contribution to re-thinking pluralism in the 21st century.

Chair: Kristin Scheible (Reed College)

Panellists:

Arti Dhand (University of Toronto)

Oliver Freiburger (University of Texas)

Loriliai Biernacki (University of Colorado)

Gil Ben-Herut (University of South Florida)

Ana Funes Maderey (Fairfield University)

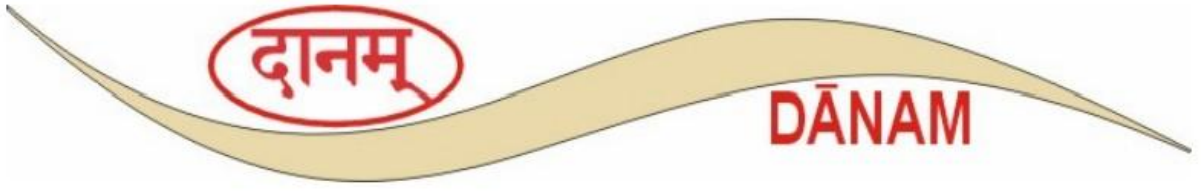
Laurie Patton (American Academy of Arts & Sciences)

Amir Hussain (Loyola Marymount University)

Respondents:

Brian Black (University of Edinburgh)

James Madaio (Czech Academy of Sciences)



Bios

Kristin Scheible is Thomas Lamb Eliot Professor of Religion and Humanities in the Religion Department at Reed College. She is author of the book *Reading the Mahāvamsa: The Literary Aims of a Theravāda Buddhist History* (Columbia University Press, 2016) and co-editor of *The Buddha: A Storied Life* (Oxford University Press, 2024).

Arti Dhand is an associate professor at the University of Toronto, Department for the Study of Religion. She specialises in the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, Hindu ethics, gender issues in Hinduism, and religion and sexuality.

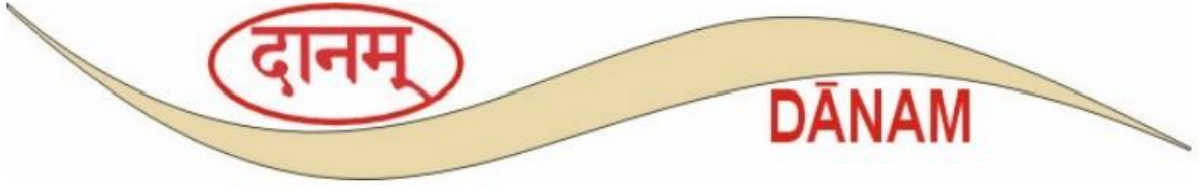
Oliver Freiburger is Professor of Asian Studies at University of Texas at Austin. His primary research interests include the history of Buddhism in South Asia, asceticism, religious boundary-making, and comparison in the study of religion.

Loriliai Biernacki is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Her research interests include Hinduism, the interface between religion and science, and gender. She is author of the books *Renowned Goddess of Desire: Women, Sex and Speech in Tantra* (Oxford, 2007) and *The Matter of Wonder: Abhinavagupta's Panentheism and New Materialism* (Oxford, 2023).

Gil Ben-Herut is a Professor in the Religious Studies Department at the University of South Florida. His research interests include premodern religious literature in Sanskrit and Kannada, South Asian bhakti (devotional) traditions, translation in South Asia, and programming in Digital Humanities.

Ana Funes Maderey is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Fairfield University where she teaches Asian Philosophies and East-West Comparative topics in Philosophy. Her research seeks to establish dialogues between phenomenology, feminism, and notions of bodily self-awareness in the Indian philosophical traditions of Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Vedānta Advaita, and Jainism.

Lauri Patton is President of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. She served as President of Middlebury College from 2015 to 2024. She is the author or editor of eleven



books and more than seventy articles in the field and has translated the classical Sanskrit text *The Bhagavad Gita* for Penguin Classics.

Amir Hussain is Professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, where he teaches courses on religion. He has published over 60 book chapters and scholarly articles about religion. He served as President of the American Academy of Religion in 2023.

Brian Black is Honorary Fellow in the School of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh. He is author of the books *In Dialogue with the Mahābhārata* and *The Character of the Self in Ancient India: Priests, Kings and Women in the Early Upaniṣads*. He is co-editor of five books, including *Provincialisng Pluralism: Difference and Diversity in South Asian Traditions*.

James Madaio is Head of the Department of South Asia at the Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague and a Research Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. He is Editor of the *Journal of Hindu Studies* (Oxford University Press) and Regional Editor (Indic traditions) of Bloomsbury Academic's *Introductions to World Philosophies* book series.