

**Dheepa Sundaram (she/her/hers)**

Curriculum Vitae

Department of Religious Studies, University of Denver  
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I acknowledge that the University of Denver sits on the unceded, ancestral tribal lands of Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indigenous People.

Professional appointments

Assistant Professor of Hinduism and Hindu Studies, University of Denver (2018-present)

Assistant Professor of South Asian Religions in Department of Religious Studies, College of Wooster (2017-2018)

Visiting Assistant Professor of Hinduism and Hindu Studies in Department of Religious Studies, University of Denver (2016-2017)

Postdoctoral Research Scholar in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies, Columbia University in the City of New York (2015-2016)

Lecturer, South Asian Summer Language Institute at University of Wisconsin (Summer 2014)

Visiting Assistant Professor of Sanskrit and Hinduism in Department of Religious Studies and India Studies, Indiana University (2013-2014)

Lecturer/Instructor in Department of Religious Studies (2012-2013) and Linguistics (Sanskrit Instructor) at University of Illinois (2002-2012)

Education

PhD, Comparative Literature, University of Illinois, 2014

Dissertation: Aesthetics as Resistance: *Rasa*, *Dhvani*, and Empire in Tamil “Protest” Theater

Committee: Michael Palencia-Roth (Chair), Rajeshwari Pandharipande (Thesis Adviser), Jim Hansen (English), Indira Viswanath Peterson (Mount Holyoke College, Tamil).

MA, Comparative Literature, University of Illinois, 2010, \*also completed requirements for MA in English, 2009\*

BA, Comparative Literature, Religious Studies, Indiana University, 2000

Publications

“Instagram Your Durga Puja!” Social Media, Hashtags, and State-Sponsored Cultural Marketing” in *Digital Hinduism*, Ed. Xenia Zeiler (University of Helsinki), Routledge, November 2019.

*The Purāṇa-s Reader*, Eds. Dheepa Sundaram (University of Denver) and Deven Patel (University of Pennsylvania) (forthcoming), Cognella Academic Publishing, September 2021.

Book Review: *Impersonations: The Artifice of Brahmin Masculinity in South Indian Dance*. By Harshita Mruthinti Kamath. University of California Press, 2019. xi+225 pages. \$34.95 (paperback) invited review, forthcoming in March 2021 in *Journal of American Academy of Religion (JAAR)*.

Book Review: *Śiva's Saints: The Origins of Devotion in Kannada according to Harihara's Ragaḷegaḷu*. By Gil Ben-Herut. Oxford University Press, 2018. ix, 276pp. ISBN: 978-0-19-087884-9 invited review, forthcoming in June 2021 in *Journal of Asian Studies (JAS)*.

### Works in Progress

*Globalizing Dharma: Branding Hinduism in the Virtual World*", monograph in preparation for Rutgers University Press.

"Yoga-Preneurs: Neo-tantric Instrumentalizing of the Body and the Laments of Lost Hindu Market Share", special issue on Digital Tantra Ed. by Xenia Zeiler and Sravana Borkatakya-Varma in *International Journal of Hindu Studies* (refereed) (forthcoming)

"Cultural Nationalism and the Making of a Hindu *Rashtra*: Reinventing of "Secular" in Modi's India", submitted by invitation to *Religions* (refereed), under review.

Review Essay on *Peace Love Yoga* (Andrea Jain), *Inhaling Spirit* (Anya Foxen), and *White Utopias* (Amanda Lucia) invited by Critical Research on Religion Journal (refereed), in progress.

"Devadasis as Aesthetic Travelers", in progress for *Modern Sanskrit Literature*, Eds. Charles Preston, Finnian Gerety, Laurie Patton, Routledge.

### Awards, Grants, and Fellowships

April 2021	-Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) grant from the University of Denver to develop podcast on race, social justice, and religion (\$1,000)
	-Professional Opportunities for Research (PROF) grant from University of Denver to complete monograph research (\$20,000)
March 2021	Provost Award (University of Denver) for Outstanding Teaching
February 2021	<i>Sacred Writes</i> Public Scholarship Fellowship (\$1,000)
January 2021	Interfaith Youth Core Curriculum Award (\$500)
September 2020	Interfaith Youth Core Racial Equity Award (\$1,000)
August 2019, 2020	Recognized as Faculty Career Champion (nominated by student)
August 2019	Internationalization Grant for Faculty Exchange with DU Strategic Partner UKZN (\$6,000)
January 2019	Principal Investigator for Institutional Doctoral Network Grant for JDP student experience
March 2018	Wabash Early Career Teaching in Religion and Theology Fellowship (\$5,000)

October 2017          Ohio Five Colleges Mellon Digital  
Scholarship Grant (\$2,000)  
Summer 2010          Foreign Language Area Studies  
(FLAS) Fellowship for Tamil.

Public-Facing Scholarship and Media Appearances

[Interview](#) with Sarah Regan for mindbodygreen.com on concept of “samādhi”, March 11, 2021

["Video Lecture on Durga Puja and Social Media"](#), online course content in Dr. Xenia Zeiler's "Durga Puja and the Diaspora" for the University of Helsinki, November 2020.

["Reclaiming Mahisasura, Durga Puja, and Bengali Identity Politics"](#) for “Durga Puja Mystery Game” produced by Xenia Zeiler, University of Helsinki, September 2020

[Interview](#) with Sarah Regan for mindbodygreen.com on concept of OM, July 15, 2020

[Interview](#) with Sarah Regan for mindbodygreen.com on yoga symbols, July 14, 2020

[Interview](#) for “Ping” with Anna Vošalíková on digital religion in South Asia (podcast produced through Czech Public Radio and Public Radio International), January 10, 2020,

[Interview](#) for “Bad with Money” with NYT best-selling author Gaby Dunn on Hinduism and Money (podcast produced in Los Angeles), January 8, 2020

["Amma the "Hugging Guru"](#) for thereligiousstudiesproject.com, November 16, 2018

["Traditions of Ganesha Chaturthi"](#) for the Denver Art Museum, September 18, 2018

Conference Presentations, Panels Organized, and Invited lectures

Spring 2021    -Invited lecture for Gender and Women Studies at the University of Denver, “Hate Mail/Male: Negotiating Online Intimidation in Social Media Spaces”; May 12, 2021

-Invited talk at University of Calgary in course on Hinduism and Popular Culture; “Globalizing Hinduism Through the Digital Diaspora”, April 9, 2021

Fall 2020      -“Integrating and Negotiating the Globalizing of Religion in the Mobile Video Game *Florence*” presented in an Exploratory Session titled “Why Video Games Matter for the Study of Religion” with Owen Gottlieb, Rochester Institute of Technology at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in Nov-Dec 2021 \*conference was virtual due to COVID-19

-Discussant on Book Panel for *Peace Love Yoga* (Andrea Jain), *Inhaling Spirit* (Anya Foxen), and *White Utopias* (Amanda Lucia) at the American

Academy of Religion Nov-Dec 2020 \*conference was virtual due to COVID-19

-Invited workshop on “Digital Tantra” organized by Sravana Bortaky-Varma (Harvard University) and Xenia Zeiler (University of Helsinki) (Nov 6 2020)

-Invited talk titled “Cultural Nationalism and the Making of a Hindu *Rashtra*: Reinventing of the “secular” in Modi’s India” presented as part of panel titled “Caste, Indigeneity, Region, and Settler Colonialism in Modi’s India” hosted by the Center for South Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (October 29 2020)

-Invited talk titled “Durga Puja in Digital Contexts” for University of Helsinki, Finland (August 2020)

Summer 2020 -“Producing Virtual Belief Communities: Babri Masjid and Legalizing Hindu *Rashtra* (rule)” will be presented on a panel titled “Criticism of Religion in Media” as part of the biennial meeting of the International Society for Media, Religion, and Culture (ISMRC). \*postponed to Summer 2021 due to COVID-19

Spring 2020 -Invited discussant for Islamic Cyber Spirituality conference (April 2020) \*postponed to COVID-19

-Invited participant in Post-AAS workshop on digitizing texts and reviewer of a digital platform being developed for digitizing sacred texts (March 2020)

-Organized and participating as a discussant on panel titled “Neoliberal Networking and the Making of Cultural Communities through Mediatized Platforms” (AAR-Regional Conference for Plains States and Mountain West, Omaha, NE) (March 2020) \*postponed due to COVID-19

-Internationalization Grant from DU to participate in a faculty exchange program with DU strategic partner University of Kwa-Natal Zulu (UKZN) in Durban, South Africa which involved teaching a seminar, giving a keynote lecture, visiting local religious sites, and traveling and speaking on auxiliary campuses (April-May 2020). \*postponed due to COVID-19

--Participant on invited panel titled “Before, Beside, Beyond: Nonwestern and Indigenous Knowledge Traditions in the University” through the University of Denver Writing Program (Jan 16, 2020)

Fall 2019 -“YouTube Yogis, Neo-Tantric Healing Practices, and a Twofold Sanitization of Yoga” (presented on panel titled “Digital Tantra” through the Tantric Studies Unit at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting, November, 2019)

-Intersectional Hindu Studies Seminar Invited Participant (American Academy of Religion annual meeting, November 2019)\*  
\*ongoing through 2024 AAR

-Organized panel titled, “Digital Piety, Networked Theology and the Making of Digital South Asian Religious Communities” and presented “Weaponized Ritual: Tyrannical Hashtags and the Making of a Politically Branded Hinduism” (Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, October 2019).

-Co-organized Roundtable with Anand Venkatkrishnan (University of Chicago) titled, “Academic Caste System: Race and Gender in South Asian Studies” (Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, October 2019)

Spring 2019 -Co-organized panel with Andrea Stanton (University of Denver) titled “Smartphone Piety: Social Media, Apps and the Making of Digital Devotional Publics” and presented “Apps as Epistemes: The Making of Digital Hindu Publics” (AAR-Regional Conference for Plains States and Mountain West, Omaha, NE, March 2019)

Fall 2018 -“Globalizing Darśan: Hindu Soteriology and the Making of a Hindu Brand” (Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, October 2018)

-“E-conomy of Hindu Ritual” (Cyberspace Conference, Brno, Czech Republic, November 2018).

-“The Study of Religion in the Neoliberal Marketplace of Devotional Publics” AAR Preconference titled “Globalizing the Study of Religion” organized by Carl Rashke (University of Denver, November 2018)

Summer 2018 -“Digital Darśan: The Virtual Marketplace for Hindu Soteriology” (Conference at the Digital Humanities Institute at the University of Victoria, BC, Canada, June 2018)

-Co-organized Panel with Andrea Stanton (University of Denver) titled “‘There’s an app for that!’ Social Media Spirituality and Virtual Soteriology” and presented “Instagram Your Durga Pujo! A Social Media Experience of Durga Pujo” (ISMRC Biennial Meeting, at the Center for Media, Religion, and Culture at University of Colorado, Boulder, CO, August 2018)

Fall 2017 -“Language of the Sacred” Poets, Saints, and Mystics in South Asian Religious Traditions” -Invited Lecture in *Fall Academy of Religions* organized by Chuck Kammer at College of Wooster, Wooster, OH, September 2017

-“Epics, Orality, and the Primacy of Sound” presented on an adhoc panel on

- performance traditions in South Asia (Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, October 2017)
- Spring 2017 -Discussant for panel “Hindu Traditions” (AAR-Regional Conference for Plains States and Mountain West, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO)
- “Youtube Yoga and Ritual on Demand: The Virtual Economy of Modern Hindu Soteriology” (Invited lecture in *New Scholars Forum* at the University of Denver, Denver, CO May 2017)
- Fall 2016 -“Orality and Performance in South Asia” (“New Scholars” lecture series, University of Denver, October 2016)
- “Irish Conversants? The Connaught Rebellion and the Problematic Nationalism of Annie Besant and James Cousins” (Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, October 2016)
- Fall 2015 -“Aesthetics as Resistance: *Rasa*-consciousness and Tamil ‘Protest’ Theater” (Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, October 2015)
- Fall 2014 -“Imaging/Imagining the Nation in W.B. Yeats’s *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and Swaminatha Sarma’s *Pāṇapuratu Vīraṇ*” (Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, October 2014)
- Fall 2009 -“*Rasa*-consciousness: Aesthetic Memory as Personal Redemption in Kālidāsa’s *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*” Southern Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting, University of Arizona, Tuscon, AZ, September 2009)
- Fall 2008 -“Conquest, *Rasa*, and Personal Redemption in Kālidāsa’s *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*” (Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, October 2008)
- Spring 2008 -“Traveling to the ‘Center’: Self-made/making Myths of Authenticity in Alejo Carpentier and VS Naipaul” (American Comparative Literature Association’s Annual Meeting, Long Beach University, CA, April 2008))
- Fall 2007 -“An ‘Abjectified’ Okonkwo: The Possibility of a Postcolonial Subject in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*” (Southern Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting, Auburn University, Auburn, AL, October 2007)
- “Cracking Communities: Religious Territorialism during Partition” (Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, October 2007)
- Spring 2007 “The Writer’s Gaze: A Postcolonial Journey through the English Landscape in VS Naipaul’s *The Enigma of Arrival*” (Literary Odysseys-CU-Boulder Graduate and Early Career Scholar Conference, March 2007)

### Language skills

Sanskrit: Advanced Reading, Writing, and Translation skills

Tamil: Advanced Speaking, Fluent Reading and Writing Skills

French and German: Research competence

### Service (elected and appointed positions at the University of Denver)

Member of panel discussing Spiritual Leadership and Interfaith Work

Member of panel discussing Asian American Communities and Race for Diversity Summit

DU Culture of Respect Advisory Committee, member (Jan 2021-Jan 2022)

Title IX Advisory Committee, member (July 2020)

Tenure and Promotion Committee, member (Winter 2020)

Designed and Taught Community-Engaged Learning Winter Interterm Course in Dharamsala (December 2019)

6 Independent Study students for Department of Religious Studies and DU-Iliff Joint Doctoral Program (Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Summer 2020, Winter 2021)

DU-Iliff Joint Doctoral Program Mentoring committee, member (2019)

Contribution titled “Mentoring Across Difference” for Joint Doctoral Program’s

Mentoring Manual (April 2020) Joint Doctoral Program Admissions committee, member (Winter 2019, Winter 2020)

Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Faculty/Committee member (2018-present)

Advanced Seminar Curriculum committee, member (University of Denver) (2018-2021)

Gender and Women Studies Executive committee, member (University of Denver) (2018-2021)

### Public Service outside of DU (Volunteer and Professional Service Outside the Academy)

Taught 3 courses for Osher Life-long Learning Institute (OLLI) (Winter/Spring terms 2021)

Guest Lecture Video Series on the Myths of Yoga and the History of Modern Postural Yoga for Authentic Movements Yoga Teacher training program (March 2021)

Guest Lecture Series on the History of Yoga and Sanskrit for Bodhi Yoga Academy (Summer 2019, Summer 2020\*) \*virtual due to COVID-19

Guest Speaker on Tamil identity and scholarship for Denver Tamil Sangam’s Diwali Celebration (November 2019)

Textbook Consultant on South Asian religion, culture, and history for McGraw-Hill (2019-present)

Guest Speaker on “Hinduism” at Christ Church United Methodist, Denver, CO (Feb 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

Guest Speaker at Solidarity Service at Temple Sinai Denver (Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018)

Guest Speaker on “Hindu Beliefs and Traditions” for an event promoting women’s education called “Faith: Believing Together” moderated by Sandra Dixon (University of Denver)

(October 2018)

Participated in Reading Partners Program to read with a local high school student (February 2020) \*postponed participation due to COVID-19

### Professional Service and Elected Positions

Translation Consultant (Sanskrit) for Academic Language Experts (aclang.com) (November 2020-March 2021)

Reviewer of abstracts for Association for Computers and the Humanities annual meeting

(ACH) (2019, 2021)

Reviewer of abstracts for Annual Meeting of the Association of Internet Researchers (AOIR) (2020, 2021)

Reviewer for *Ecumenica* (December 2020)

Reviewer for *South Asian Popular Cultures* (December 2020)

Reviewer for *Routledge* (November 2020)

Invited to give webinar at AAR pre-conference seminar on teaching Hinduism inclusively for K-12 teachers (Oct 23, 2020)

Reviewer for *Religions* (2018, 2019, 2020)

Reviewer for International Journal of Hindu Studies (2018, 2019, 2021)

Designed and presented a webinar titled “Formulating a Research Problem/Question” with R.D. Perry (University of Denver) for UKZN Winter Doctoral School (July 2020)

Mentor for Doctoral Colloquium for Association of Internet Researchers Doctoral Colloquium (2020)

Co-Chair, North American Hinduism Steering Committee, AAR (2021-2024)

Member, Religions in South Asia Steering Committee, AAR (2020-23)

Member, Religion, Media, and Culture Steering Committee, AAR (2020-21)

*Professional Association Memberships*

American Academy of Religion (AAR)

American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA)

Association of Internet Researchers (AOIR)

International Society of Media, Religion and Culture (ISMRC)