

# Raj Balkaran, Ph.D.

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## EDUCATION

- 2015 Ph.D., Religion, University of Calgary  
External Examiner: Greg Bailey, La Trobe University
- 2012 American Institute of Indian Studies  
Academic Year Sanskrit Language Program, Pune, India.
- 2010 MA, Religion, University of Toronto  
South Asian Studies Collaborative Program
- 2007 BA (Hons), University of Toronto (Victoria College)  
Major: Religion. Minors: English, History, South Asian Studies.

## TEACHING

### Continuing Studies Course Instruction

2020-present

Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies (online)

- “Hindu Philosophy: Vedanta and Samkhya”
- “India’s Epics: Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa”
- “Indian Mythology: The Purāṇas”
- “Three Short Upanishads”
- “The Bhagavad Gītā”
- “The Greatness of the Goddess”
- “The Mahabharata”

2021-present

The Indian Wisdom School (online)

- “Sanskrit Sound and Sense – Intermediate Grammar (ongoing)”
- “Textual Tapestry: Threads of Indian Tradition”
- “Faces of Power: India Goddess Odyssey”
- “Wisdom Goddesses: Ten Tantric Faces of Power”
- “Sacred Sky: Planetary Myths and their Meanings”
- “Sacred Body: Subtle Anatomy and Its Significance”
- “Sacred Sound: Tapping the Power of Sanskrit Mantra”
- “Summoning Śakti: Tapping the Power of the Devī Māhātmya”
- “Guru’s Grace: Traditional Teachings without the Trappings”
- “Shiva Stories: Decoding Myths of Shiva”
- “Goddess Stories: Telling Tales of the Sacred Feminine”
- “Sage Stories: Yogic Wisdom from Ancient India”
- “Vishnu Stories: Inspiring Tales of Divine Descent”
- “The Stories Behind the Poses: Official Companion Course”
- “Realities of Rebirth: Karmic Theory for Spiritual Seekers”

- “Sacred Stars: Exploring Vedic Lunar Mansions”
  - “The Search of Soma: Insights into Attaining the Elixir of Life”
  - “Shakti Mantras: Where Sacred Sound Meets the Sacred Feminine”
  - “Glory to Goddess, Glory to God: Insights from Ancient India and Israel”
  - “Nine Nights of the Indian Goddess: Observing the Annual Fall Festival”
  - “Sacred Time: Tapping the Power of Celestial Cycles”
  - “Yoga Illumined: Ancient Insights from the Gītā and the Yoga Sūtras”
  - “Righteous Rāma: Visions of Virtue in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa”
  - “Mahābhārata Morality: Querying the Ethics of India’s Great Epic”
  - “Śakti Sādhana: Awakening the Sacred Feminine”
- 2024 Cosmic Kaleidoscope (online)
- The Sanskrit Soundsystem – Introductory Sanskrit
- 2022 Embodied Philosophy (online)
- “Yoga Stories of Ancient India”
- 2022 Yogic Studies (online)
- “Devī Māhātmya: Glory of the Goddess” (2022)
  - “Yoga and Hindu Mythology” (2020)
- 2010-2020
- School of Continuing Studies, University of Toronto
- “Wisdom Traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism”
  - “Approaches to Meaning, East and West”
  - “The *Bhagavad Gītā* and Beyond”
  - “Telling Tales: Myth, Meaning, Modernity”
  - “Goddesses around the Globe”
  - “Psychology of Myth”
- 2016-2018
- Power of Myth (online)
- “Faces of Power: India Goddess Odyssey” (online)
  - “Durgā: Principle of Power and Protection” (online)
  - “Myths of the Mother” (online)
  - “Human Nature in the Indian Epics”
- 2017 Storytelling Toronto
- “Goddess Stories”
- 2010 Wonderworks, Toronto
- “Faces of Fertility: Goddesses and Water Worship in the Ancient Nearest”
- 2010 Renaissance Yoga and Ayurveda, Toronto
- “Encountering the Māhāvidyās: Visions of the Feminine Divine”

### **Undergraduate Course Instruction**

- 2023 Lethbridge University
- “Myths of India” (online)
- 2022 Lethbridge University
- “The Hindu Tradition” (online)
  - “Goddesses of India” (online)

- “Myths of India” (online)
- 2020 University of Calgary
  - “Religious Perspectives on Death and Afterlife” (online)
- 2017 Toronto Metropolitan University
  - “World Religions” (2 classes)
- 2014 University of Calgary
  - “Popular Hinduism”

### **Undergraduate Guest-Lecturing**

- 2024 Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto, Nov 25.
  - Introduction to Hinduism
  - “The Greatness of the Goddess”
- 2024 School of Education, State University of New York, Apr 10.
  - Philosophy of Education
- 2024 Religious Studies, Nazareth University, Feb 7.
  - Women and Goddesses
- 2023 Religion, University of Hawaii, Jan 17.
  - Rituals and Practices: “Yoga Rituals”
- 2022 Religious Studies, Colgate University, Oct 18.
  - India
- 2022 Religious Studies, Colgate University, Oct 18.
  - Senior Seminar on Religion
- 2022 Religious Studies and Philosophy, Bethany College, Sept 8.
  - Intro to Yoga and Meditation
- 2019 Dept of Dance, Texas Woman’s University, March 5.
  - South Asian Dance Forms
- 2017 Dept for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto, Jan 11.
  - The Rāmāyaṇa
- 2017 Dept for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto, Jan 23.
  - Karma and Dharma in Indic Traditions
- 2017 Dept for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto, Nov 17.
  - The Mahabharata
- 2016 Dept for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto, Jan 26.
  - Introduction to South Asian Religions
- 2015-2022
  - Dept for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto
    - “Introduction to Hinduism”
    - “The Mahābhārata”
    - “Introduction to World Religions” (2 occasions )
- 2011-2014
  - Dept of Religious Studies, University of Calgary
    - “The Nature of Religion
    - “World Religions–Western” (2 lectures)
    - “World Religions–Eastern” (4 lectures)
    - “Scripture and Religions” (2 lectures)

- “Introduction to Hinduism” (4 lectures)
- “Popular Hinduism” (4 lectures)
- “Hindu Narrative Literature” (2 lectures)
- “Comparative Mythology”

### **Undergraduate Teaching Assistantships**

- 2011-2013 University of Calgary, Department of Religious Studies  
2013 RELS 203: World Religions  
2012 RELS 203: World Religions  
2011 RELS 307: Popular Hinduism  
2007-2009 Nipissing University, Department of Religions and Cultures  
2009 RLCT 1025: Introduction to World Religions  
2008 RLCT 1025: Introduction to World Religions  
2007 RLCT 1025: Introduction to World Religions  
2007-2010 University of Toronto, Department for the Study of Religion  
2010 RLG 206: Introduction to the Buddhism  
2009 RLG 206: Introduction to the Buddhism  
2008 RLG 205: Introduction to South Asian Religions  
2007 RLG100: Introduction to World Religions

### **Undergraduate Educational Podcast Series**

- 2017-2018 Religious Myths and Worldviews, University of Calgary

### **Pedagogical Training**

- 2013 Instructional Skills Workshop, Teaching and Learning Centre, Calgary

### **Teaching Interests**

World Religions, World Mythology, Indian Religions, Indian Mythology  
Religion and Ethics, Religion and Narrative, Religion and Popular Culture  
Indian Goddess Traditions, Global Goddess Traditions

## **RESEARCH**

### **Publications**

#### **Books**

- 2022 *The Stories Behind the Poses: The Indian Mythology that Inspired 50 Yoga Poses*. Leaping Hare Press.  
2020 *The Goddess and the Sun in Indian Myth: Power, Preservation and Mirrored Māhātmyas in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. London: Routledge.  
2019 *The Goddess and the King in Indian Myth: Ring Composition, Royal Power and the Dharmic Double Helix*. London: Routledge.

#### **Book Contributions**

- 2024a. Forward. *Devi Mahatmya; translation, commentary, and illustrations by Alisa Lozhkina*. Kyiv: Ruslan Khalikov Publishing, pp. 6-8.
- 2024b. Foreword. *Religious Studies Beyond the Discipline: On the Future of a Humanities Ph.D.*, edited by Russell T. McCutcheon. Equinox Publishing.
- 2023a. “Mother of Shadow, Mother of Light: Battling Demons in Indian Myth.” In *Jung's Shadow Concept: The Hidden Light and Darkness in Ourselves*, edited by Christopher Perry and Rupert Tower. Routledge, pp. 258-261
- 2023b. “Introduction.” *Indian Myths and Legends: Tales and Heroes, Gods and Monsters*. Flame Tree Publishing, pp 18-35.
- 2021 “Arjuna and Acyuta: The Import of Epithets in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.” In *The Bhagavad Gītā: A Critical Introduction*, edited by Ithamar Theodor. Routledge.
- 2019 “The Story of Saṃjñā, Mother of Manu” In *The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Indian Philosophy and Gender*, edited by Veena R. Howard. Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 267-296.
- 2018a “The Safeguard of Sovereignty.” In *Purāṇa Studies: Select Papers from the 16<sup>th</sup> World Sanskrit Conference (Bangkok, 2015)*. DK Publishers, Delhi, p. 67-95.
- 2018b “The Splendour of The Sun” In *Nine Nights of the Goddess: The Navarātri Festival in South Asia*, edited by Hillary Rodrigues, Moumita Sen and Caleb Simmons. State University of New York Press, pp. 23-38.

#### Edited Works

- 2023 Balkaran, Raj, and McComas Taylor, eds. *Visions and Revisions in Sanskrit Narrative: Studies in the Indian Epics and Purāṇas*. Canberra: Australian National University Press. Forward by Wendy Doniger.
- 2019 Balkaran, Raj, and McComas Taylor, eds. *Purāṇic Studies: Proceedings of the Purāṇa Section of the 17<sup>th</sup> World Sanskrit Conference (Vancouver, 2018)*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia.
- 2018 Balkaran, Raj, and McComas Taylor, eds. *Purāṇa Studies: Select Papers from the 16<sup>th</sup> World Sanskrit Conference (2015, Bangkok)*. Delhi: DK Publishers.
- 2018 Balkaran, Raj, ed. “Teaching Tales: Harnessing the Power of Storytelling in the Hindu Studies Classroom and Beyond.” Special Issue of the “Spotlight on Teaching” column of the American Academy of Religion’s online magazine, *Religious Studies News*.

#### Journal Articles

- 2024a Balkaran, Raj and Noor van Brussel. “Mother of Compassion, Mother of Wrath: Reflections of the Hindu Goddess in Mirrored *Māhātmyas*.” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 28, pp. 341–359.
- 2024b Balkaran, Raj and A. Walter Dorn. “Exploring Hindu Ethics of Warfare: The Purāṇas.” *International Review of the Red Cross*, First View.
- 2022 Balkaran, Raj and A. Walter Dorn. “Charting Hinduism’s Rules of Armed Conflict: Indian Sacred Texts and International Humanitarian Law.” *International Review of the Red Cross*, First View, pp. 1– 36.
- 2022a “Patronymic Patterns in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa: The Significance of Manu-Making for the Greatness of the Goddess.” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 27(3).
- 2022b “The Bhagavad Gita and Beyond: Synchronic Strategy for Sanskrit Narrative Literature”. *Religions of South Asia* 15(2): 120-141.

- 2022c “Devī Māhātmya”. In *Oxford Bibliographies in Hinduism*, Ed. Tracy Coleman. New York: Oxford University Press, Jan 12.
- 2021 Synchronic Strategy: Rules of Engagement for Sanskrit Narrative Literature. *Journal of Dharma Studies* 4(2): 199-221.
- 2020 “Avian Artistry: Decoding the Intertextuality between Mahābhārata and Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa.” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 24(4): 199-237.
- 2019 “Visions and Revisions of the Hindu Goddess: Sound, Structure and Artful Ambivalence in the Devī Māhātmya.” *Religions* 10(5), 322. Special Edition: “On Violence: Voices and Visions from Hindu Goddess Traditions,” edited by Patricia Dold.
- 2018 “The Sarus’ Sorrow: Voicing Nonviolence in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.” In *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 26.2: 143-161.
- 2017a “The Essence of Avatāra: Probing Preservation in The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa.” *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 26.1: 25-36.
- 2017b “Joseph’s Journey: Uncovering Israel’s Unconscious.” In *Journal of Genius and Eminence* 2.2: 96-104. Special Volume: “The Hero’s Journey: A Tribute to Joseph Campbell.”
- 2012 Balkaran, Raj and Walter Dorn. “Violence in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa: Just War Criteria Prefigured in an Ancient Indian Epic.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80.3: 1-32.
- 2010 “Justifications for War and Peace Hinduism.” In *The Justifications for War and Peace in World Religions*, edited by A. Walter Dorn, 40–54. Toronto: Defense Research and Development Canada.

## Research Projects

- 2021-2024 Research Collaborator, International Committee for the Red Cross  
Project: “Exploring Convergences Between Hinduism and International Humanitarian Law”
- 2014–2016 Research Collaborator, University of Oslo  
Project: “Navarātri, Navarātra and Durgāpūjā in South Asia and Beyond.”
- 2013-2013 Doctoral Research, University of Calgary  
Project: “Mother of Power, Mother of Kings: Reading Royal Ideology in the *Devī Māhātmya*.”
- 2013 Research Assistant, University of Calgary  
Project: “Textual Processes: Narrative Design, Communal Identity and Authorship in the Inter-textual Dialectics of the Sanskrit Purāṇas.”
- 2012 Research Fellow, American Institute of Indian Studies  
Field Research: Goddess Festival Rituals, and Storytelling (*kathā*) Culture.
- 2012 Research Fellow, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute  
Sanskrit Manuscript Research
- 2010 Masters Research, University of Toronto  
Project: “Violence and Nonviolence in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.”
- 2010 Research Fellow, International School of Jain Studies  
Field Research: Asceticism, Ethics of Violence.
- 2008-2009 Research Assistant, University of Toronto  
Hindu Studies, Dept for the Study of Religion
- 2007-2010 Research Assistant, Royal Military College of Canada

Project: “Justifications for War and Peace in World Religions.”

### Research Grants and Scholarships

2016	University of Oslo IKOS Conference Grant	€550
2012-2015	SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship	\$105,000
2015	University of Oslo IKOS Conference Grant	€550
2015	UofC Religious Studies Conference Grant	\$2,500
2015	UofC Graduate Studies Scholarship	\$4,000
2014	UofC Religious Studies Conference Grant	\$1,000
2014	AAR Regional Student Director Grant	\$500
2014	UofC Religious Studies Conference Grant	\$1,500
2013	AAR Regional Student Director Grant (National)	\$500
2013	UofC Religious Studies Conference Grant	\$1,500
2013	AAR Regional Student Director Grant (Regional)	\$500
2013	UofC Faculty of Graduate Studies Scholarship	\$1,500
2012	UofC Religious Studies Conference Grant	\$1,000
2012	SSHRC Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement	\$6,000
2011	Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship	\$10,000
2011	UofC Faculty Entrance Scholarship	\$3,000
2011	UofC Faculty of Graduate Studies Award	\$500
2011	UofC Religious Studies Conference Grant	\$1,000
2009	ISSJS Research Scholarship	\$5,000
2006	UofT Regents In-Course Scholarship	\$2,000
2000	UofT Bloor Lands Admission Scholarship	\$3,000

### Conference Presentations

- 2024 “Alternative Career Paths in Religious Studies: Roundtable Discussion with Scholar-Entrepreneurs in the Field of Yoga Studies.” American Academy of Religion Online Conference, June 27.
- 2023 “Visions and Revisions in Sanskrit Narrative: Studies in the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas.” Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas, Inter-University Centre, Dubrovnik, Aug 17.
- 2022 “Perspectives on Life Guidance.” Annual Conference, North American Hindu Chaplains Association, Tufts University, Boston, Nov 12.
- 2022 “Self-Employed Scholarship.” Professional Development Roundtable: Pursuing Careers Outside the Tenure Track, 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Oct 22.
- 2022 “Shadow and Light in the Devī Māhātmya.” Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions, Apr 23.
- 2022 “Educational Innovation and Embodied Philosophy,” South Asian Studies Association Conference, Loyola Marymount University, Mar 12.
- 2021 Book Review Panelist: “Rabbi on the Ganges: A Jewish-Hindu Encounter.” Dharma Academy of North America (San Antonio, TX), Nov 19.
- 2020 “Mirrored Māhātmyas in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa.” Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas 9, Dubrovnik (Croatia), Sept 22.

- 2019 “Teaching Hinduism: Frame Narratives, the Goddess, and The Dharmic Double Helix.” Panel: “Moving Beyond ‘Hinduism’ – But How?”. Annual Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions, Tartu (Estonia), June 28.
- 2018 “The Dignity of the Feminine in Ancient Indian Myth.” Parliament of The World’s Religions, Toronto, Nov 2.
- 2018 “Commodifying the Feminine: An Ancient Indian Cautionary Tale.” Parliament of The World’s Religions, Toronto, Nov 5.
- 2018 “Suffering and Sovereignty: Decoding Dharma’s Double-Helix in The Parallel Frames of the *Devī Māhātmya* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*.” (Dept. of South Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison), Oct 12.
- 2018 “How the Goddess Makes Meaning: Uncovering Chiasmus in Ancient Indian Myth.” International Association for Cognitive Semiotics Conference, Ryerson University (Toronto, Canada). July 15.
- 2018 “Birdcalls across Itihāsa: How Birds in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* answer an Epic Riddle.” World Sanskrit Conference (Vancouver, Canada), July 12.
- 2017 “How the Goddess Teaches Hinduism: Decoding Divergent Boons.” American Academy of Religion Annual Conference (Boston, MA), Nov 18-21.
- 2016 “The Sound of the Sarus: Cultural Reverberations in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.” American Academy of Religion Annual Conference (San Antonio, TX), Nov 20.
- 2016 “The Makings of *Māhātmya*: The Greatness of *Sūrya* in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*” Annual Conference on South Asia (Dept. of South Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison), Oct 23.
- 2015 “The Making of a Manu: Unpacking the Interplay between *Devī Māhātmya* and *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*.” Annual Conference on South Asia (Dept. of South Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison), Oct 22-25.
- 2015 “The Splendour of the Sun: Illumining the Passage between *Devī Māhātmya* and *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*.” IKOS Conference (FSHS, Paris) Aug 20.
- 2015 “The Safeguard of Sovereignty: Focusing the Frame of the *Devī Māhātmya*.” World Sanskrit Conference (Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand), July 1.
- 2014 “Framing the Goddess: Telling Tales with Telling Subtales from the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*.” American Academy of Religion PNW Regional Conference (University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada), May 11.
- 2014 “Gandhi, the Goddess, and India’s Ascetic-King: In Response to Veena R. Howard’s *Gandhi’s Ascetic Activism*.” American Academy of Religion PNW Regional Conference (University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada), May 11.
- 2013 “The Merchant, The Margins, and the Measure of Mokṣa: Defending Royal Power in the *Devī Māhātmya*.” American Academy of Religion PNW Regional Conference (Seattle University, Seattle, Washington, USA), May 4.
- 2013 “Power, Periphery and the Greatness of the Goddess: Moving from ‘Sacred’ to ‘Secular’ in the *Devī Māhātmya*.” Annual Graduate Student Symposium (Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Calgary, Canada), Feb 1.
- 2012 “Kings in Exile: The ‘Cutting Edge’ of Peripheral Violence.” American Academy of Religion PNW Regional Conference (Concordia University, Portland, Oregon, USA), May 10.



- 2012 “The Hunt for Ahimsā: Locating Violence in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.” Graduate Student Departmental Colloquium (Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Calgary, Canada), April 24.
- 2011 “Virtue and Violence in the *Devī Māhātmya*: Kingship, Asceticism, and the Greatness of the Goddess.” Conference on South Asian Religions, (Dept. for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto, Canada), September 23.
- 2010 “Virtue and Violence in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*: The Dance of War and Peace.” Research in Religious Studies Conference (Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Lethbridge, Canada), May 1.
- 2010 “Just War Criteria Prefigured in an Ancient Indian Epic.” Master’s Colloquium (Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto, Canada), April 8.
- 2009 “Just Warfare in Jainism.” ISSJS Research Colloquium (International School for Jain Studies, Delhi, India), July 11.
- 2008 “Resolving Rāma: Royalty and Renunciation in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*.” Graduate Student Symposium (Centre for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto, Canada), April 18.

### Language Competency

English (fluent), Sanskrit (reading, translating), French (reading, speaking)

## SERVICE TO PROFESSION

### Service Positions Held

- 2018- Purana Section Convener, 18<sup>th</sup> World Sanskrit Conference
- 2018 Academic Outreach Committee Member, Parliament of World Religions
- 2020-2021 Course Development Board, Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies
- 2016-2020 Ambassador, American Academy of Religion
- 2012-2014 Graduate Student Committee, American Academy of Religion
- 2012-2014 Regional Student Director, American Academy of Religion

### Peer Review

- 2024 Cogent Social Sciences
- 2024 Journal of Dharma Studies
- 2022 Journal of Dharma Studies
- 2022 Bloomsbury Publishing
- 2021 Religious Studies
- 2021 International Journal of Hindu Studies
- 2020 Religions
- 2018 Journal of Dharma Studies
- 2015 Open Theology
- 2013 International Journal of Hindu Studies

### Conference Convening

- 2022 “New Books in Indian Religions Podcast Party.” Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Denver, Nov 18.

- 2021 “The Many Faces of the Hindu Goddess.”  
Online Symposium, Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, March 27-28.
- 2020 “New Directions in Yoga Studies.”  
Online Symposium, Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies.
- 2015 “Religion and Narrative.” University of Calgary
- 2013-2014 Steering Committee Member, “Religious Literacy, Diversity and Transformation Week,” University of Calgary.

### Conference Panel Convening

- 2023 “Visions and Revisions of Sanskrit Narrative: Introducing ‘Purāṇa Perennis 2.0.’”  
World Sanskrit Conference, Canberra, Australia.
- 2018 “India’s Goddess Traditions”: Narrative, Worship, Empowerment.” Parliament of  
World Religions, Toronto, Canada.
- 2018 “Tales Within Tales: The Function of Frame Stories in South Asian Narrative,”  
Madison Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI
- 2017 World Storytelling Day Revival Committee.
- 2017 “Teaching Tales: Narrative and Pedagogy in the Hindu Studies Classroom,” AAR  
Annual Meeting, Boston, MA.
- 2016 “What’s a Māhātmya? Querying Genre in Text Traditions.” Madison Conference  
on South Asia, Madison, WI.
- 2016 “Sounding the Sacred: Sound and Text in Hindu Traditions.” AAR Annual  
Meeting, San Antonio, TX.
- 2014 Special Topics Forum Organizer: “Graduate Training and Scholarly Formation,”  
AAR Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.
- 2014 “History, Philosophy, and Sanskrit Literature.” PNW Regional AAR Conference,  
Calgary, AB.
- 2014 “Book Review: Veena Howard's *Gandhi's Ascetic Activism*,” PNW Regional  
AAR Conference, Calgary, AB.
- 2013 Roundtable: “Grant-Writing 101: Crafting a Successful Proposal,” AAR Annual  
Meeting, Baltimore.

### Conference Panel Moderation

- 2023 “Visions and Revisions of Sanskrit Narrative: Introducing ‘Purāṇa Perennis 2.0.’”  
World Sanskrit Conference, Canberra, Australia.
- 2022 “Emplacing Pasts and Presents.” Canadian South Asian Studies Association,  
Congress of Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, May 12.
- 2021 “Teaching Navarātri and Durgāpūjā: New Strategies & Materials for the  
Classroom.” Navarātrī Seminar. American Academy of Religion Annual  
Conference (San Antonio, TX), Nov 21.

### AAR Graduate Student Roundtable Presentations

- 2017 “Educational Entrepreneurship: Monetizing Your Expertise through Digital Teaching”  
Graduate Student Roundtable Presentation (American Academy of Religion Annual  
Meeting, San Antonio, USA), November 18-21.

- 2016 “Valuing Your Work, Working Your Values” Graduate Student Roundtable Presentation (American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Antonio, USA), November 21.
- 2015 “Dealing with The Dossier: A Proactive Approach to Documenting Your Teaching.” Graduate Student Roundtable Presentation (American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Atlanta, USA), November 21.
- 2014 “Managing Your Thesis: Tools Towards Empowerment.” Graduate Student Presentation (American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Diego, USA), November 23.
- 2013 “How to Thrive in Graduate Studies: The Tips You Won't Find In Your Departmental Handbook.” Graduate Student Presentation (American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Baltimore, USA), November 23.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

### **Podcast Hosting**

- 2024-present *The Indian Wisdom Podcast*
- 2018-present *New Books in Indian Religions* (350+episodes)
- 2016-2018 *The Power of Myth Podcast* (100+episodes)

### **Blog Posts**

- 2021 “Soma and the Sacred Feminine: Reflections from Ancient Indian Myth”  
Chacruna Institute for Psychedelic Plant Medicines, June 31, 2021.
- 2022 “The Story of Self-less Service: Telling Tales from Indian Myth”  
*Give Back Yoga*.

### **Interviews Given**

- 2024 “The Rules of Modern Warfare and Ancient Traditions,”  
Juris-Dictions Podcast, Dec 19.
- 2024 “Raj Balkaran – Sanctity of Stories and Beyond,”  
Living in Alignment Podcast, Dec 18.
- 2024 “On the Stories Behind the Poses with Dr. Raj Balkaran,”  
A Grateful Life Podcast, Aug 19.
- 2024 “Online schools bridge the gap between yoga mat and Ph.D.,”  
Religion News Service, Aug 7, 2024.
- 2024 “War, Dharma and Justice: A Conversation with Raj Balkaran,” *Meru Media*, May 28.
- 2024 “The Ahimsa of War,” *Political Hope Podcast*, Jan 22.
- 2023 “Visions and Revisions in Sanskrit Narrative,”  
*New Books in Indian Religions Podcast*, Nov 21.
- 2023 “Episode 300: Christopher Miller interviews 'New Books in Indian Religions' host Raj Balkaran,” *New Books in Indian Religions Podcast*, Nov 8.
- 2023 “New Books Connects Hindu Mythology to Asanas,” Podcast Stories (Hosted by Jaya Bhattacharji Rose), *Times of India*, June 21.
- 2023 “World Yoga Day 2023: The mythological Stories Behind Yogic Poses, The Importance of Yoga and his New Book,” *Times of India*, June 21.
- 2022 “The Stories Behind the Poses with Dr. Raj Balkaran and Dr. Christa Kuberry”  
*New Books in Indian Religions Podcast*, June 27.

- 2022 “The Stories Behind the Poses with Dr. Raj Balkaran”  
*Susanna Barkataki Live*, June 13.
- 2022 “The Significance of the Devī Māhāmtya”  
*The Yogic Studies Podcast*, March 21.
- 2021 “Narratives, Life and Timeless Wisdom: A Conversation with Dr. Raj Balkaran”  
*Meru Media*, Dec 3.
- 2021 “The Wisdom of Air,” *Cunning Folk Magazine*, Dec 1.
- 2021 Panel Discussion: “Ganesha.” *Beyond Belief*. BBC Radio 4, Sept 6.
- 2021 “Dr. Raj Balkaran (Founder of the Online School of Indian Wisdom)”  
*Kajabi Edge Podcast*, Aug 5.
- 2021 “Raj Balkaran on the Wisdom of Stories (#136)”  
*Embodied Philosophy Podcast*, July 27.
- 2021 “Pandemic Perspectives: A Discussion with Raj Balkaran”  
*The Academic Life Podcast*, May 10.
- 2021 “Jyotisha, with Dr. Raj Balkaran”  
*The Austin Devraj Show*, Apr 11, 2021.
- 2021 “Narratives and the Puranas: A Conversation with Prof Raj Balkaran”  
*Meru Media*, Jan 26.
- 2020 “Puranas and Hindu Mythology”  
*The Yogic Studies Podcast*, October 20.
- 2020 “The Goddess and the Sun in Indian Myth.” *New Books Network*, June 25.  
Podcast Interview by Chris Austin.
- 2019 “The Goddess and the King in Indian Myth.” *New Books Network*, April 17.  
Podcast Interview by Craig Ginn.
- 2018 “When Storytelling Becomes a Pedagogical Tool.” *The Wire*, July 7.  
Newspaper Coverage by Sudhakshina Rangaswami.
- 2018 “Lead with the Destination, Not the Engine.” *Erraticus*, April 17.  
Podcast Interview by Jeffrey Howard.
- 2017 “The Masks we Wear.” *Leslie Feist Podcast*, July 6.  
Podcast Interview by Veronica Simmonds.
- 2017 “Millennial Messenger.” *Victoria College Student Podcast*, Spring Semester.  
Podcast Interviews (multiple) by Arjun Sawhney.
- 2016 “Mythology of Mars.” *CBC Ideas: Generation Mars*, June 7.  
Radio Interview by Stephen Humphrey.
- 2015 “Yoga Then and Now,” *The Nikki Clarke Show*, Nov 3.  
Video Interview by Nikki Clarke.
- 2014 “Ancient Myths for Modern Life” *RED FM (106.7 FM)*, January 28.  
Radio Interview by Rishi Nagar.
- 2011 “Sacred Storytelling.” Blog Interview: *Shivers Up The Spine*, Aug 18.  
Blog Interview by Priya Thomas.
- 2011 “Tales of India.” *Toronto Body Mind*, Jul 27.  
Video Interview by Greg Mount.
- 2011 “Raj Yoga”. *The Lethbridge Journal* (Vol. 4, Issue No. 5.), Mar 3.  
Newspaper Coverage by Jeff Wiebe.

## Talks

The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies

- 2025 “Śakti Sādhana: How Hindus Worship the Goddess,” Jan 27.  
 2024 “Mahābhārata Morality,” Dec 11.  
 2024 “The Sanskrit Sound System,” Nov 7.  
 2024 “Hinduism and International Humanitarian Law,” July 29.  
 2024 “Shakti: The Feminine Face of Primordial Power,” May 25.  
 2024 “The Four Kinds of Karma: Theorizing the Mysteries of the Human Condition,” Feb 25.  
 2023 “Core Hindu Concepts,” Nov 19.  
 2023 “Hymns of the Goddess,” Aug 27.  
 2023 “The Search for Soma,” Feb 17.  
 2022 “Hinduism and Indian Astrology,” Nov 2.  
 2022 “Guru’s Grace: Insights from the Guru Gītā,” Sept 4.  
 2022 “Karma and Rebirth: Exploring Core Hindu Concepts,” Aug 10.  
 2022 “The Feminine Vision of the Devi Māhātmya,” May 18.  
 2022 “Yoga Stories: Telling Tales from India’s Storied Soil,” Feb 27.  
 2021 “Arjuna, Acyuta and the Strategic Structure of the Gītā,” Sept 5.  
 2020 “Tantra and The Goddess: Decoding the Devi Mahatmya,” Sept 19.

Encounter World Religions

- 2024 “Hindu Stories,” Oct 1.  
 2024 “Introducing Hinduism,” Feb 5.  
 2023 “Karma and Rebirth,” Sept 18.  
 2023 “Introducing Hinduism,” Jun 12.  
 2022 “Karma and Rebirth,” Sept 19.  
 2021 “Introduction to Hinduism,” May 3.  
 2020 “The Three Wishes,” July 6.  
 2021 “Introducing Hinduism,” Sept 13.  
 2021 “Introduction to Hinduism,” Apr 19.  
 2021 “Core Hindu Concepts,” Mar 1.

University Talks

- 2025 “A Life Well Lived: Insight from Indic Traditions.” McMaster University  
 2024 “The Glories of the Goddess in Ancient Sanskrit Text.” *California State University Fullerton*, Sept 25.  
 2023 “The Indian Epics and the Dharmic Double Helix.” *Central University of Karnataka*, Nov 30.  
 2023 “The Self-Employed Scholar: Thriving Beyond the Professoriate.” Department for the Study of Religion, *University of Toronto*, Mar 16.  
 2022 “The Spiritual Significance of Diwali.” *McMaster University*, Oct 24.  
 2022 “Yoga Stories of Ancient India,” *Colgate University*, Oct 19.  
 2022 “Karma and Rebirth”, Chapel House, *Colgate University*, Oct 19.  
 2022 “The Greatness of the Goddess,”  
 Women’s Studies, *Colgate University*, Oct 18.

- 2021 “The Syncretic Significance of Indian Spirituality: Reflections from working with Western Seekers.” Dept of Religious Studies, *Michigan State University*, Nov 30.
- 2021 “Teaching the Hindu Tapestry.” Dept of History, *RTM Nagpur University*, Sept 15.
- 2021 “The Mahabharata and the Dharmic Double Helix: Epic Wisdom for Modern Life” (SPARC Project) Dept of Philosophy, *University of Delhi*, Feb 26.
- 2020 “The Self-Employed Scholar: Tips Toward Academic Success.” Alumni Talk, Department of Classics and Religion, *University of Calgary*. November 27.
- 2013 “Hinduism and Interfaith.” Faith and Spirituality Centre, *University of Calgary* Apr 4.

#### Public-Facing Institutions

- 2024 “A Conversation about Hinduism with Dr. Raj Balkaran.” Region of Peel, Oct 23.
- 2023 “Equality, Fraternity and Selfhood: Timely Teachings from Ancient India.” World Multicultural Festival, *Indian Canada Consortium*, Mar 17.
- 2022 “Vedic Wisdom on Mental Health.” *Vishnu Mandir*, Toronto, Oct 16.
- 2022 “Teaching Tales: Tapping the Power of Story.” Radical Teaching Conference, *Embodied Philosophy*, September 16.
- 2022 “Ganesha, Grounding and Yogic Storytelling.” *Embodied Philosophy*, Feb 28.
- 2022 “India’s Epic and International Humanitarian Law.” Hinduism and Humanity Panel, *Indian Canada Consortium*, Feb 27.
- 2021 “Why the Goddess cares about Climate Change.” *Hindu Climate Action*; Sept 30.
- 2021 “A Panel Discussion: What is Spiritual Activism?” Spiritual Citizenship Conference, *Embodied Philosophy*, July 14
- 2021 “The Truth about Tantra.” *Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies* Public Talk, May 1.
- 2020 “Kālī, Karma and Global Transformation.” Friends of the *Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies* Public Talk, Dec 5.
- 2020 “Endless Song.” Interview with Archana Venkatesan, *Sant Jordi Literary Festival*, Apr 23.
- 2020 “Karma, Rebirth, Free Will.” *Centre Place*, Toronto, March 10.
- 2019 “Introduction to Indian Religion.” *Lifelong Learners Mississauga*, Nov 25.
- 2018 “The Endless Sari.” *Woman Unmasked* Art Exhibit, Toronto, Mar 4.
- 2017 “The Entrepreneurial Hero’s Journey.” *Mirasee Online Education*, San Diego. Jun 16.
- 2012 “The Slaying of Demons.” *American Institute of Indian Studies*, Pune, Oct 27.
- 2011 “Stories of the Sacred Feminine.” *Wonderworks*, Toronto, Dec 16.
- 2011 “The Goddess and the Bible II.” *Edgemont Bible Study*, Calgary, Dec 3.
- 2011 “The Goddess and the Bible I.” *Edgemont Bible Study*, Calgary, Nov 5.
- 2011 “The Ferocious Feminine.” *Centre for Women’s Studies in Education*, University of Toronto, October 14.
- 2011 “Healing Archetypes of the Sacred Feminine.” *Spirituality and Healthcare Network*, Toronto, Jun 1.

- 2010 “The Fierce Feminine: Visions and Revisions from Ancient India.” *Wonderworks*, Toronto, Nov 26.
- 2010 “Divine Engendering: Gender and India’s Feminine Divine.” *Sherbourne Health Centre*, Toronto, Mar 31.

### Yoga Settings

- 2025 “The Stories Behind the Poses.” *Earth Yoga*, Hillsborough, North Carolina, Jan 27.
- 2024 “The Decent of the Ganges.” *Bianca Sapetto Yoga*, Los Angeles, Nov 16.
- 2024 “The Stories Behind the Poses.” *Lotus Flower Yoga Collective*, Cleveland, Nov 2.
- 2024 “Teaching Yoga Wisdom.” *The Thread Yoga Collective*, Sept 14.
- 2023 “The Stories Behind the Poses.” *Metta Hot Yoga*, Calgary, May 31.
- 2023 “Yoga Stories of Ancient India.” *Santosha Yoga*, Calgary, May 28.
- 2023 “The Stories Behind the Poses.” *The Thread Yoga Collective*, Jan 4.
- 2023 “Shakti Workshop.” *Yoga Centred*, Hilo, Hawaii, Jan 14.
- 2023 “The Global Goddess.” *Yoga Centred*, Hilo, Hawaii, Jan 15.
- 2023 “Yoga Stories.” *Still and Moving Centre*, Honolulu, Hawaii, Jan 16.
- 2023 “Shakti Workshop.” *Creature Yoga*, Byron Bay, Australia, Jan 21.
- 2023 “The Global Goddess.” *Creature Yoga*, Byron Bay, Australia, Jan 22.
- 2022 “The Stories Behind the Poses.” *Yoga Alliance*, Jul 13.
- 2021 “The Greatness of the Goddess.” *Yoga Alliance*, Oct 6.
- 2013 “Seeing through Elephant Eyes.” *Akhanda*, Toronto, Aug 4.
- 2012 “Kārtikeya’s Lament.” *Akhanda*, Toronto, Aug 12.
- 2012 “The Churning of the Ocean.” *Sānanda*, Toronto, Jun 24.
- 2011 “Lakṣmī: Abundance Incarnate.” *Sānanda*, Toronto, Dec 22.
- 2011 “Uncovering the Unconscious.” *Insite Yoga*, Toronto, Dec 11.
- 2011 “Demons of the Unconscious II.” *7th Chakra*, Calgary, Dec 4.
- 2011 “The Goddess and The Demons.” *Yoga Rituals*, Lethbridge, Nov 26.
- 2011 “Demons of the Unconscious I.” *7th Chakra*, Calgary, Oct 29.
- 2011 “The Goddess and the Saboteur.” *Yoga Rituals*, Lethbridge, Oct 8.
- 2011 “Tales of Power.” Keynote Address, *Yoga Community Toronto*, Aug 21.
- 2010 “Gaṇeśa and the Goddess.” *Sānanda*, Toronto, Dec 29.
- 2010 “Divine Decapitation.” *Renaissance Yoga*, Toronto, Sept 19.
- 2010 “Living Purāṇa.” *Yoga Community Toronto*, Aug 22.
- 2010 “Storytelling and Yoga Philosophy.” *Yoga Community Toronto*, Aug 20.
- 2010 “Durgā: Principle of Power and Protection.” *Yoga Rituals*, Lethbridge, June 7.
- 2010 “India’s Feminine Divine.” *Yoga Rituals*, Lethbridge, May 3.
- 2010 “Hinduism’s Great Goddess.” *Yoga Plus*, Toronto, Apr 18.

### **Yoga Teacher Training Modules**

- 2024 Ashtanga Yoga Hub: “Yoga Philosophy and Mythology” (3 modules)
- 2024 Radiant Spirit Yoga: “The Stories Behind the Poses”
- 2023 The Yoga Space (Perth, Australia): “Yoga Stories.”
- 2023 Yogi Flight School: “Yoga Philosophy,” “Yoga Mythology.”
- 2023 Passage Yoga (Calgary, Canada): “Shiva Stories.”
- 2022 Radiant Spirit Yoga: “Key Stories, Concepts, Teaching Tips”
- 2021 Yoga Lab: “Myths of the Asanas”

2021 Soma Yoga Institute: “Mythic Wisdom for Modern Life”

### **In-Person Retreats Held**

- 2022 Shakti Retreat (Blue Mountain, Canada), June 19-23.
- 2023 Soma (Byron Bay, Australia), January 26-30.
- 2023 Asha Centre (Gloucestershire, UK), April 13-16.
- 2023 Casa Corvo (Novaggio, Switzerland), April 17-20.
- 2023 South Okanagan Yoga Academy (BC, Canada), June 2-4.
- 2023 Chapel House, Colgate University, July 13-16.
- 2024 Casa Corvo (Novaggio, Switzerland), April 12-16.
- 2024 Shakti Retreat (Blue Mountain, Canada), June 2-5.
- 2024 Alchemy Retreat (Los Angeles, CA), Sept 26-29.

## **ADDITIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE**

- 2022-present Chaplain, McMaster University
- 2021-present Founder, *The Indian Wisdom School*
- 2016-present Private Life Guidance Practice (120+ clients)
- 2022 Continuing Education Task Force, Yoga Alliance
- 2018 Enrollment Strategist, *Mirasee* (online education)
- 2017 Community Manager, *Mirasee* (online education)
- 2016-2018 Founder, *Power of Myth* (online education)
- 2012 Research Network Manager, University of Toronto
- 2010-2011 Business Officer, University of Toronto
- 2005-2009 Office Administrator, TBDI Event Management, Toronto
- 2003-2005 Office Administrator, Concentra Integrated Services, Toronto
- 1999-2003 Office Administrator, Toronto District School Board

## **REFERENCES**

References available upon request.