Announcing

The Mohini Jain Presidential Chair in Jain Studies

Tuesday, February 21, 2017
5–5:30 p.m. Reception
5:30–6:30 p.m. Lecture
Presentation Room, UC Davis Welcome Center

Maitreyi's Moment: Multiple Identities and the Study of Indian Religions

In a 21st century Sanskrit retelling of a story in the ancient Upanishads, the female sage Maitreyi has a dilemma: how can she discuss the sacred origins of the universe with her husband and at the same time be loyal to her co-wife, Katyayani? Maitreyi's moment of decision raises the critical question: how can we think constructively about religious identity in the contemporary world?

One way is to examine present and past instances of the dialogical constructions of identities in India. Face-to-face conversation and dialogue are defining features of Indian texts, rituals, and practices. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Islam are all multi-vocal religions. Their doctrines, practices, and institutions have never had only one voice of authority, and dialogue has been a shared tactic for negotiating different and contesting interpretations within each tradition. Dialogue continues to be an integral aspect of Indian religions, and may well be a resource in the midst of current debates about religious pluralism and identity.

LAURIE L. PATTON became the 17th president of Middlebury on July 1, 2015. An authority on South Asian history, culture, and religion, Patton earned her BA from Harvard University in 1983 and her PhD from the University of Chicago in 1991. Patton joined Middlebury after serving for four years as dean of Duke University's Trinity College of Arts and Sciences and as the Robert F. Durden Professor of Religion. From 1996 to 2011, Patton served on the faculty and administration at Emory University. Patton began her career at Bard College, where she was assistant professor of Asian religions from 1991 to 1996.

Free and open to the public

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