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A Space for Tolerance: Responses to Other Religious Groups in Medieval Indian Literature

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4:15pm
Bowden Hall 323
Emory University

Dr. Granoff examines stories from India's classical religions, Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, that describe encounters between individuals of different religions. In some stories the clash of faiths leads to a clash of arms; in others it leads to public debates held in the court of the king in an effort to resolve the conflict and convert the errant party to the one true belief. In still other stories debate is not sufficient to determine which side in fact espouses the truth; that can only be done by a display of miracles. Debates, battles, miracles, all serve a common purpose—to convert participants and bystanders to the true faith and eradicate the losing religion. Encounters between different religious groups can also be private; in some stories a husband and wife must settle their religious differences, sometimes by violent means, sometimes with the aid of a miracle. While the stories of conflicts between adherents to different religions are in the majority, there are also other stories that have a very different message and that create a space for shared religious practice.