

[Call for Papers for a Panel tentatively titled, "Vernacular Epics of South Asia: Texts and Contexts"](#)

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

October 20, 2021 to October 24, 2021

Location:

Wisconsin, United States

Subject Fields:

South Asian History / Studies, Religious Studies and Theology

The epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have been major sources of literary productions in South Asia. Whether it be Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsa* or Bhasa's *Uru Bhanga*, or the countless popular televised versions, these stories have interpreted, revised and moulded the epics' legacies and afterlives in accordance with the cultural, social and political concerns of their time and site of production. Much of what is received and remembered is a trickling down of these impactful contributions composed in Sanskrit as well as in the countless regional languages, which in turn shape and inform dominant South Asian sensibilities.

A concerted scholarship on the reception of *Ramayana*, propelled by AK Ramanujan's defining piece '*Three Hundred Ramayanas*', has been instrumental in getting a better understanding of the legacy of the epic in the subcontinent. Mandakranta Bose and W.L Smith's works on the East Indian variants have facilitated not only a better understanding of the epic's reception in the region but also documented the trajectory of the revisions of its key problematic episodes (such as the vanquishing of *Valin*). Paula Richman's works on modern South Indian rescensions and Philip Lutgendorf's study on Tulsidasa's *Ramacaritamanasa* and the lived practices of the epic in North India have given a better insight into the contemporary sentiments about the epic. Similar efforts have recently been made in the case of *Mahabharata* as well, with previous panels being held at UW Madison's annual South Asia Conferences. The most recent ones being on its regional variations (2017) and one on its episodic readings (2019). This panel will be a step in that direction.

Its broad intellectual outline will focus mainly on the *literary evolution and reception of the epics* by critically engaging with the sensibilities and concerns that fuelled the production of these works. Papers may focus on rescensions in Sanskrit as well as regional languages. Some possible themes include-

- Episodic variations across the epics
- Crystallization of Sanskrit traditions in the regional world
- Revisions of problematic episodes
- Gender and Violence
- Exploring Caste through localized frames
- Courtly patronage and literary production
- Reorientation of philosophical concepts

- The epic in Performance: Dance, drama, theatre, recitation and film
- Television of the epics and their discontents
- Folk variations, resistant narratives and counter-tellings
- The oral and the local

As a panel focused on varied multi disciplinary approaches to the epic, Scholars are invited from Cultural Studies, Indology, Religious Studies, Literature, History, Film Studies, Anthropology, Theatre Studies.

If you are interested please send a 150 word abstract to Ujaan Ghosh at ughosh2@wisc.edu or ujaanghosh.0@gmail.com by 1st March. If you want to get in touch to know a bit more about the panel feel free to drop a line as well. I am currently a PhD candidate at the department of Art History in UW Madison, and the organizer of the panel.

If our Panel is selected, you will have to register for the conference by June 30th. More information on the conference can be found in the website: <https://southasiaconference.wisc.edu/>

Looking forward to reading your proposals.

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