



Our new
event
program for
the winter
term 2024/25

Language & Communication

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**BERSAS - the new forum for interdisciplinary
South Asian Studies in Berlin**

Focus on Language & Communication



Dear Reader,

after the successful start of our **BERSAS** project in the summer term 2024 and our first thematic focus on South Asian Urban Studies, we are now turning to the topic of language and communication. With this overarching theme, we are once again keen to present a variety of inter/disciplinary perspectives and methodological approaches to language and communication within the **BERSAS** framework. We are extremely pleased that a number of colleagues with expertise in linguistics, cultural studies and social sciences were immediately enthusiastic about this idea and will be presenting their research and teaching activities in the winter semester.

Our new **BERSAS** event series begins on **Friday, November 1, 2024 (2-5pm)** when we will introduce you to some fascinating film studies perspectives on the topic of language and communication. The afternoon will start with **DR. PRIYAM SINHA** from the National University of Singapore (NUS), whom we welcome as a visiting researcher at the Department of Gender and Media Studies for the South Asia Region (GAMS). Dr. Sinha's stay is funded as part of our cooperation project "BUA-NUS South Asian Studies Initiative" and we look forward to a lively exchange with her during her stay at IAAW. Dr. Sinha's lecture on November 1 is titled "**Scripting Disability: Pitching a Glocalised India and the Politics of Diversifying Content in New Bollywood**" and she will introduce us to the hitherto rarely examined world inhabited and embodied by screenwriters, who have been trying for some time to package very different aspects and contexts of disability in such a way that it appeals to very different local and globally dispersed audiences.

The talk will be followed by a presentation by **DR. SALMA SIDDIQUE**, currently a postdoctoral researcher at the GAMS department, who analyses the comprehensive activities and articulations of film fans as part of her DFG-funded research project "**Nitrate Cities**". The title of Dr. Siddique's contribution to this event is "**Hurt in a Cinematic Way: Controversies, Spectators and Communicating Offense**".



We are more than delighted that renowned filmmaker **SOURAV SARANGI** from India accepted our invitation to join the event on **November 1** and he will discuss “**New Horizons in Non-fiction Storytelling**”. In his presentation, which will be accompanied by video clips, Sourav Sarangi will share his ideas of integrating traditional manual puppetry and digital animation with live action in his upcoming hybrid documentary ***Fair-Home Fairy-Tales***.



The second **BERSAS** event on **November 29 (2-5pm)** will be dedicated to research carried out by members of the Berlin team of the **ERC Synergy** project **DHARMA** and by one of their recent collaborators. The focus will be on various aspects of the theme “language and communication” from a pre-modern (ancient as well as medieval) and early modern perspective, based on inscriptions. **DR. DÁNIEL BALOGH** (DHARMA/IAAW), will discuss the question: “**How come the oldest Indian inscriptions aren’t in Sanskrit?**” His talk will investigate the dynamic sociolinguistic interrelations between Sanskrit(s), Prakrit(s) and so-called Hybrid Sanskrit(s) in the early centuries of the Common Era. This talk will be followed by a presentation on “**The Role of Multiple Registers in Inscriptions from Early Medieval Karnataka**” by **DR. SAMANA GURURAJA** (DHARMA/IAAW). She will explore how medieval epigraphs from the Kannada-speaking region employed the different registers of Kannada and Sanskrit for different purposes. Finally, **DR. ROGER LEE DE JESUS** of the **ERC** project **IberLAND** (Leibniz University Hannover) and **DR. ANNETTE SCHMIEDCHEN** (DHARMA/IAAW) will present the first results of their newly established collaborative work under the title “**Interpreting and Adapting in Colonial Context: a 14th-Century Copper-Plate Charter from Goa and its 16th-Century Portuguese Translation**”.

“Who is ‘we’?” is the key question of our third **BERSAS** event on **December 13**, in which our colleagues from the Department for Southeast Asian Studies and from the Department for South Asian Studies at IAAW, **PROF. CLAUDIA DERICHS, DR. FAIZA MUHAMMAD DIN** and **DR. MONIKA FREIER** will address the question how we imagine ‘us’ and the ‘other/s’ and how our language structures impact group identity. While Dr. Muhammad Din and Dr. Freier will look at this using the example of “HUM” (we/us) in Hindi and Urdu, Prof. Derichs will explain the conceptual framework of this project, in which various Asian and African languages have been examined comparatively. This research and teaching project was realized and funded as part of the BUA exploration project **RePLITO** (Repertoires of Living Together, 2021-24), in which Prof. Derichs has been involved as a Principal Investigator.

Likewise, **DR. FRITZI-MARIE TITZMANN**’s new book on “**Mediatised Solidarity. Media Practices of Contemporary Indian Social Movements**” (HASP 2024) draws on the research she has conducted as a postdoctoral scholar of the RePLITO project between 2021-24. We look forward to celebrating the launch of Dr. Titzmann’s book and to learning more about the central role of visual communication in contemporary social movements in India.

Last but not least, in our concluding fourth **BERSAS** event on **February 14**, 2025, we will address the question of self-representation and communication in the context of migration and emerging diaspora communities. **DR. ARANI BASU** (currently lecturer at Krea University and at the University of Heidelberg) will shed light on the **role of digital media for transnational communication and hometown associations** within the emerging **Indian diaspora in Germany**. **PROF. URMILA GOEL** (currently visiting professor at IfEE, HU) will present a contribution titled “**Rethinking Migration. The impact of (social) media**” and argue that the concept of migration needs to be rethought in light of changing media environments. Finally, in her contribution to this exciting panel, **CHANDRIKA YOGARAJAH** (PhD candidate in Gender Studies, HU) will discuss the **role of rap in the self-representation of Sri Lankan Tamil diasporic identities**.

We warmly invite you to our **BERSAS** events and look forward to numerous stimulating discussions. Any short-term changes will be communicated via the IAAW website, so please keep an eye on these.

With best wishes on behalf of the **BERSAS** team
Nadja-Christina Schneider

BERSAS event series - winter term 2024/25
Focus on Language & Communication

South Asian Film Studies

Perspectives on Language & Communication

Friday, Nov 1
2-5pm
IAAW, room 217

2-3pm (s.t.)

Scripting Disability: Pitching a Glocalised India and the Politics of Diversifying Content in New Bollywood

Priyam Sinha (NUS)

3:15-4pm

Hurt in a Cinematic Way: Controversies, Spectators and Communicating Offense

Salma Siddique (HU)

4:15-5pm

Exploring New Horizons in Non-fiction Storytelling

Sourav Sarangi (NIPKOW Residency Fellow)

Moderation: *Nadja-Christina Schneider (HU)*



**Berlin University
Alliance**

This event is funded by the project
BUA-NUS South Asian Studies Initiative (GAMS)

Contributors and Abstracts

Dr. Priyam Sinha



Dr. Priyam Sinha is a media anthropologist and earned her PhD from the National University of Singapore (2019-24). Her research interests lie at the intersection of gender studies, disability studies, affect studies, production culture studies, critical new media industries studies and the sociology of labour. So far, her work has been published in *Media, Culture and Society*, *South Asian Diaspora*, and *Economic and Political Weekly*, among others. She is also a regular podcast host at the NewBooksNetwork and is committed to strengthening interdisciplinary teaching and public writing on the Global South. In the framework of the BUA-NUS South Asian Studies Initiative, Dr. Sinha will be a visiting researcher at GAMS in Oct-Nov 2024.

Scripting Disability: Pitching a Glocalised India and the Politics of Diversifying Content in New Bollywood

The last decade witnessed a prominent shift in the production cultures of media industries, which impacted global viewership patterns. It compelled filmmaking practitioners in India to conceptualise screenideas that capitalize on India's linguistic, regional and cultural diversity. As a result, screenwriters were expected to adopt and adapt to the dynamic filmmaking processes while catering to audiences' preoccupations that were increasingly informed/ influenced by exposure to global media cultures, Internet-circulated content and platform productions. Drawing on ethnographic data, I foreground what prompts screenwriters to imagine, characterize, pitch and storyboard disability in character arcs garbed in region-centric storylines unique to India. Here, I consider the screenwriter central to how disability is contextualised across Indian settings and produced as a New Bollywood. Thus, this paper journeys into the worlds inhabited and embodied by screenwriters to package disability in ways that can appease local and global audiences.

Sourav Sarangi



Sourav Sarangi is an award-winning film maker from India. He put down his geologist's hammer to pick up a camera and tell stories. Stories that entertained and informed us, stories that transformed our views.

His journey began from Kanthi, a small town in South Bengal, to become a fellow of the Film Independent, LA, in collaboration with The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and now in Berlin with NIPKOW residency fellowship. National and international film festivals in Berlin, Sydney, Dubai, Locarno, Nyon, Yamagata, Guangzhou, Moscow, Goa, Thessaloniki, Busan, Toronto and many more have premiered and awarded his films. Broadcasters and academic institutions found him a large global audience. "I don't follow stories, they live in me," says Sourav.

Exploring New Horizons in Non-fiction Storytelling

Filmmaker Sourav Sarangi (India) shares his ideas of integrating traditional manual puppetry and digital animation with live action in his upcoming hybrid documentary 'Fair-Home Fairy-Tales'.

Dr. Salma Siddique



Salma Siddique is a film and media scholar, specializing in South Asian popular cinema, informal archives, Islamicate screen cultures, fan cultures and immigrant media. She is currently the principal investigator of the research project "Nitrate Cities: Spectatorial Exertions and Film Experience in Urban South Asia", funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (2021-2025) at GAMS. She is author of the book *Evacuee Cinema: Bombay and Lahore in Partition Transit* (2022, Cambridge University Press). Her research has been published in mainstream media as well as peer-reviewed journals such as *Feminist Media Histories*, *Third Text*, and *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*. Since 2022, she is a core editor at *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies*, published by Sage.

Hurt in a Cinematic Way: Controversies, Spectators and Communicating Offense

The presentation will examine illustrative cases of film and media controversies over the past decades, by foregrounding the protests and petitions that articulate hurt sentiments of certain collectives and groups. Beyond determining the veracity of these claims, I am instead interested in the similarity between the form of offending media and the expression of offense by protestors.



Friday, Nov 29
2-5pm
IAAW, room 315

DHARMA & partners:

Language Registers and Communication Strategies as Reflected in Premodern South Asian Inscriptions

2pm (s.t.)

Introduction and book launch: “Self-Representation and Presentation of Others in Indic Epigraphical Writing”

Annette Schmiedchen (HU)

2:10–3pm

How come the oldest Indian inscriptions aren't in Sanskrit?

Dániel Balogh (HU)

3:15–4pm

The Role of Multiple Registers in Inscriptions from Early Medieval Karnataka

Samana Gururaja (HU)

4:15–5pm

Interpreting and Adapting in Colonial Context: a 14th-Century Copper-Plate Charter from Goa and its 16th-Century Portuguese Translation

Roger Lee de Jesus (IberLAND, Leibniz University Hannover) & Annette Schmiedchen (HU)

Contributors and Abstracts

Dr. Annette Schmiedchen



Dr. Annette Schmiedchen is one of the Principal Investigators of the ERC Synergy project DHARMA, being responsible for task-force B (From Deccan to Arakan), based at IAAW. She is an Indologist and a specialist of premodern Indian history and Sanskrit epigraphy. She has a Master and PhD in Indology from Humboldt University and received her Habilitation degree in Indology from Martin Luther University at Halle-Wittenberg. She has focussed on editing the inscriptional corpora of the Maitraka and Rāṣṭrakūṭa dynasties of Western and Central India, studied religious patronage and its legitimization function in Buddhist, Hindu and Jaina contexts, and done research in a previous intercultural ERC project on medieval foundations and endowments.

Dr. Dániel Balogh



Dr. Dániel Balogh is a researcher of task-force B of the ERC DHARMA project based in Berlin since 2019. He is a Sanskritist with a philological background and a current specialisation in epigraphy. He acquired his university diploma in Indology at ELTE, Budapest (2004). He defended his PhD in Classical Antiquities (Sanskrit) at the same university in 2015. He has worked for the Clay Sanskrit Library as an editorial assistant. Before joining DHARMA, he was a postdoc at the British Museum in the ERC Synergy project Asia Beyond Boundaries, working on inscriptions of North India and the Gupta period, with a focus on the Aulikara dynasty. In the ERC DHARMA project, he deals with Sanskrit epigraphic material relevant to the project and works on the digitisation of such material.

How come the oldest Indian inscriptions aren't in Sanskrit?

In the middle of the second century of the Common Era, a courtier of King Rudradāman had an ornately poetic Sanskrit text engraved on a boulder in Western India. Nothing strange about that, because after all, India's classical literary language is Sanskrit, right? Well, not quite: earlier inscriptions are in "Prakrit" languages, which then disappear gradually from the record, and linguistically more archaic Sanskrit replaces them completely by the fifth century or so. Is this course of events really paradoxical, then? This talk will investigate the dynamic sociolinguistic interrelations between Sanskrit(s), Prakrit(s) and so-called Hybrid Sanskrit(s) in the early centuries of the Common Era.

Dr. Samana Gururaja



Dr. Samana Gururaja joined the DHARMA task-force B in December 2021, with a focus on Kannada inscriptions, specifically on those of the royal dynasty of the Kalyāṇa Cālukyas. She has a PhD from the University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on the political implications of filial networks generated by marriage among ruling families and their subordinates in early medieval South India, with a specific focus on the Hoysala dynasty. Her general research interests include the study of inscriptions and courtly literature, expanding notions of rulership and the royal family, and the role of women in constructing filial and political networks.

The Role of Multiple Registers in Inscriptions from Early Medieval Karnataka

Tenth to fourteenth-century inscriptions from the Kannada-speaking region of South India often contain sections in both Kannada and Sanskrit. This presentation explores how these inscriptions employed the different registers for different sections of the composition, taking into consideration questions of local power, political ambition, and intended audience.

Dr. Roger Lee de Jesus



Dr. Roger Lee de Jesus is a postdoctoral researcher of the ERC project IberLAND, hosted at Leibniz University Hannover. He holds a PhD in History (2021), with a thesis on the role of the governor D. João de Castro in the construction of the Portuguese Estado da Índia (1545–1548). His MA (2012) in Early Modern History (University of Coimbra) was a case study on the second siege to the Portuguese fortress of Diu (1546), in India. He is interested in the history of the Portuguese Empire and its presence in Asia from political, social, economic-financial and military perspective, especially in the implementation and adaptation of European institutions and warfare (16th-17th centuries). He is the co-founder of the Portuguese podcast Falando de História.

Interpreting and Adapting in Colonial Context: a 14th-Century Copper-Plate Charter from Goa and its 16th-Century Portuguese Translation (together with Annette Schmiedchen)

It is a well-known fact that thousands of premodern Sanskrit inscriptions engraved on stone or copper must have existed once, and that large numbers of these epigraphs are preserved still today. Many such inscriptions, especially so-called copper-plate charters, record royal endowments for religious beneficiaries. But very often any documentary evidence about the later history of these grants and the religious institutions mentioned therein is entirely lacking and thus their further destiny remains completely in the dark. This paper will present an interesting exception to this general tendency: a Sanskrit copper-plate charter of the Vijayanagara period from Goa dated 1391 and its translation into Portuguese by local Brahmins from 1532, which sheds interesting light on the manner how traditional Indian religious and economic concepts were rendered for the Portuguese colonial administration.

Friday, Dec 13
2-4 pm
IAAW, room 217

Panel and Book Launch

Who is 'we'? / MediatISED Solidarity

2pm (s.t.)

Welcome address and brief introduction of the RePLITO research project

Nadja-Christina Schneider (HU)

2:10pm

Who is 'we'? - Conceptual framework of the research and teaching project

Claudia Derichs (HU)

2:30pm

How do we imagine 'us' and the 'other/s'? 'HUM' and the concept of we/us in Hindi and Urdu

Faiza Muhammad Din (HU) & Monika Freier (HU)

3-3:15pm coffee break

3:15-4pm

Book launch: MediatISED Solidarity. Media Practices of Contemporary Indian Social Movements (HASP 2024)

Fritzi-Marie Titzmann (HU)

Moderation: *Nadja-Christina Schneider (HU)*



RePLITO

Contributors and Abstracts

Prof. Dr. Claudia Derichs



Claudia Derichs, is professor of Transregional Southeast Asian Studies at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin (HU). She has studied Japanese and Arabic in Bonn, Tokyo and Cairo and holds a PhD in Japanology (1994, University of Bonn, Germany). Her research covers gender, religion, and political violence in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, looking particularly at transregional Islamist movements in and beyond the "long 1960s". She is the editor-in-chief of the scopus-listed *International Quarterly for Asian Studies* (IQAS) and works towards new orientations in Area Studies and subscribes to current approaches of epistemic decolonisation in Western academia.

Living together, the feeling of belonging, and social coherence manifest strongly in language. The personal pronoun WE signifies togetherness and commonality. However, not all languages have a pronoun that translates into WE. Some have inclusive and exclusive terms for WE, while others express personal relations with a range of different expressions (oftentimes referring to social hierarchies and normative orders). The seminar "Who is we?" addresses this fact and discusses terms and expressions for WE in Asian languages. It draws from inspirational and explanatory inputs by the language instructures of the IAAW and studies how language influences people's emotional connectivities, i.e. analyses languages' including and/or excluding effects.

Dr. Faiza Muhammad Din



Faiza is a Lecturer of Urdu at the Institute of Asian and African Studies (IAAW), since October 2023. She brings over 10 years of experience in teaching and research, focusing on languages and religion. Her doctoral research delved into the worldview of female madrasa students in Pakistan through discourse analysis. Later she worked on the "Women's Pathways to Professionalization in Muslim Asia" project (2020-23). Faiza's research interests encompass language and literature, gender and religion, eco-theology, social media Islam, and consumer identities within the context of South and South-East Asian Islam.

'Faiza's contribution on the concept of "Hum" is related to her interest in language structures which form the basis for creating and sustaining social institutions.

Dr. Monika Freier



Monika Freier has led the Hindi language and literature program at Humboldt University of Berlin since 2018. She earned her PhD in History from Freie Universität Berlin, focusing on Hindi advice literature in late colonial India. Her research interests include the history of emotions, moral education, religious reform movements in South Asia, and colonialism.

Monika's passion for the topic of "Hum" stems from her deep interest in literature and the emotions tied to languages.

Dr. Fritzi-Marie Titzmann



Dr Fritzi-Marie Titzmann holds a doctorate in South Asian Studies from Humboldt University. She was Assistant Professor of South Asian Studies at the University of Leipzig and Humboldt University. Her research focuses on gender, media and social movements in contemporary India. From 2021-2024, she was a postdoctoral researcher at RePLITO with a project on the mediated communication of solidarity in recent Indian socio-political movements. Since 2024 she is Alliance Manager of the European University Alliance Circle U. at Humboldt University.

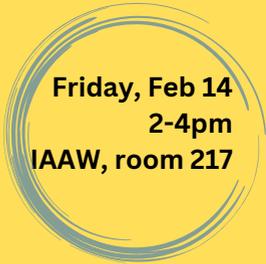
Mediatized Solidarity: Media Practices of Contemporary Indian Social Movements

"Mediatized Solidarity" examines dimensions of solidarity within Indian social and protest movements. For the period from 2014 onwards, it analyses the interplay between media practices, including social media, and the expression and performance of solidarity.

Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider



Nadja-Christina Schneider is currently professor of Gender and Media Studies for the South Asia Region at HU Berlin. She is RePLITO's co-speaker and the HU project leader. In her RePLITO related research activities, her focus is on the role of media and journalism in debates on social cohesion; on alternative/ less publicly visible actors, concepts, and practices of living together peacefully and on equal terms, and on urban studies & the housing question. Her most recent publication is a monograph titled *Reimagining Housing, Rethinking the Role of Architects in India* (HASP 2024, open access). More information at <https://replito.de/team/schneider1>



Friday, Feb 14
2-4pm
IAAW, room 217

Panel and Discussion

**Self-representation and Communication in
the Context of Migration and Emerging
Digital Diaspora Communities**

2-4pm (s.t.)

**Indian Digital Diasporas in Germany and their ‘Hometown
Associations’**

Arani Basu (Krea University/Heidelberg University)

Rethinking Migration. The impact of (social) media

Urmila Goel (HU)

Beats of belonging: Diasporic Eelam Tamil Identity in Rap

Chandrika Yogarajah (HU)

Moderation: *Nadja-Christina Schneider (HU)*

Contributors and Abstracts

Prof. Dr. Urmila Goel



Urmila Goel is a guest professor at the Institute of European Ethnology at the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. Since more than 25 years she is conducting research on migration from South Asia to Germany. Currently she is working on the recruitment of nurses in the 1960s and of butcher apprentices today. More information on urmila.de

Rethinking Migration. The impact of (social) media

Based on research on the migration from South Asia to Germany since the 1960s I argue that the changing (social) media environment requires a transformed concept of migration.

Chandrika Yogarajah, M.A.



Chandrika Yogarajah is an independent documentary filmmaker, sound archivist and researcher. As a political educator, she works on the topics of queer feminism, flight and migration and provides legal counseling on asylum and migration law in Germany and Europe. She holds an MA in Modern South and Southeast Asian Studies from HU. Her focus and interest during her master studies was on film, gender, activism and social justice in Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Transdisciplinary Gender Studies at IAAW, HU. Chandrika's research focuses on intergenerational trauma and experiences of violence of queer refugees in Germany, with a particular focus on queer Tamil refugee generations and their visual cultures.

Beats of belonging: Diasporic Eelam Tamil Identity in Rap

Chandrika examines Eelam Tamil self-representation in rap, showcasing it as a dynamic platform for cultural expression and alternative storytelling. She will analyse the musical works of artists like Navz-47, Rebelle Perle, Shan Vincent de Paul, Subash Nair, and M.I.A. This discussion will explore how their music interweaves themes of identity, violence, trauma, multilingualism, and cross-generational and transregional ties.

Dr. Arani Basu



Arani, a Sociologist with research interests in media-society interface, transnational migration and religion-politics mutuality in India, earned his PhD from the Institute for Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University. Arani is presently writing his monograph titled *Understanding Propaganda: A Study of Indian Media*, to be published by Palgrave Macmillan. Currently, he is teaching at the Department of Media and Visual Anthropology, Heidelberg University, Germany and School of Interwoven Arts and Sciences, Krea University, India.

Hometown Associations, transnationalism, and diasporic identity: Tracing the media(ted) practices of the Indians in Germany

This paper examines the online and onsite diasporic communities emerging from the fast expanding Indian migrants in Germany and traces the role of the hometown associations in forming diasporic, transnational and translocal identities among them.

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BERSAS updates: <https://www.iaaw.hu-berlin.de/de/querschnitt/medialitaet/bersas>

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DHARMA – The Domestication of ‚Hindu‘ Asceticism and the Religious Making of South and Southeast Asia (ERC Synergy Grant)

Prof. Dr. Annette Schmiedchen (annette.schmiedchen@hu-berlin.de)

Department of Gender and Media Studies for the South Asia Region (GAMS)

Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider (nadja-christina.schneider@hu-berlin.de)

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