

South Asia in Translation

Geography, Memory, and Textuality



Image : Decorative map of Asia, 1630, from the digital map collection by Prof. Frances W. Pritchett, Columbia University

Seminar Hall 1 & 2, India
International Centre (Main Bldg.)
New Delhi - 110003

5 & 6
October
2023

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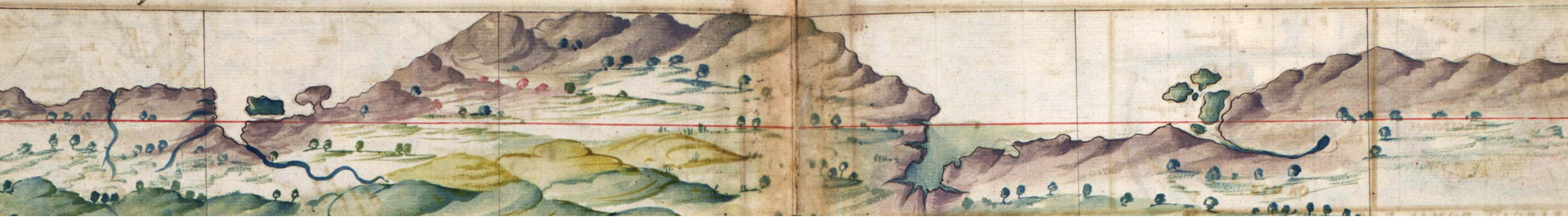
5 & 6 October, 2023

Concept Note

Geographical landscapes are intricately connected with the memories of communities that inhabit them. Simon Schama, in *Landscape and Memory* (1995), writes that “... landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock”. Landscape is a repository of human memory, “obsessions” and cultural imaginations. Landscapes are invested with the memories and aspirations of communities which call them their own. Recent works such as Michael Cronin’s *Eco-Translation: Translation and Ecology in the Age of the Anthropocene* (2017) and *The Camphor Tree and the Elephant: Religion and Ecological Change in Maritime South Asia* (2023), among others, study the impact of texts, translations, and cultural traditions in transforming landscapes and ecologies.

In this context, it is critical to interrogate the textual traditions of South Asia to explore the relationship between geography and memory in the subcontinent. The “translated geographies” of South Asian texts are an excellent site for studying these intersections. The possibilities for such study are varied, from local sacred-text and storytelling traditions and translations into regional languages, colonial translations which provided an alternate topography to the traditions of the subcontinent, administrative documents which imagined and mapped out the region according to a colonial vision, to more recent digital cartographies of the region. These texts and translations are key sites for tracing the manner in which South Asian landscapes and ecologies were transformed.

In this conference, we aim to study South Asia through these themes of translation, geography, and memory and place translation within the framework of the geographical settings in which knowledge and power were transacted. We will attempt to unravel the intertwined narratives of land, conquest, memory, and translation as found in the textual traditions of the subcontinent. This conference will also contribute to an understanding of translation as a key tool in studying the evolving geographies and ecologies of South Asia.



Agenda

Thursday, October 5

Seminar Hall 1 & 2, India International Centre (Main Bldg.), New Delhi

2:00 PM

INAUGURAL

Shailendra Mohan, Director, CILL, Mysore, Dept of Education, Govt. of India

Monika Setia, Associate Country Director, Mittal Institute, Harvard University (Chair)

2:30 PM

KEYNOTE: TRANSLATION AS DESIRE

Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, Poet, Critic, Translator

Vidyan Ravinthiran, Gardner Cowles Associate Professor of the Humanities, Harvard University (Chair)

3:30 PM

PLENARY: WORLDS OF TRANSLATION: Reflections on Some Larger Projects of “Translation“ in the South Asian Context

Francis X. Clooney, Parkman Professor of Divinity, Harvard University (Online)

Vidyan Ravinthiran, Gardner Cowles Associate Professor of the Humanities, Harvard University (Chair)

4:30 PM

HIGH TEA

Friday, October 6

Seminar Hall 1 & 2, India International Centre (Main Bldg.), New Delhi

9:30 AM

PANEL 1: MEMORY, GEO-SPATIALITY, AND TRANSLATION

Avishek Parui, Associate Professor (English), Indian Institute of Technology Madras

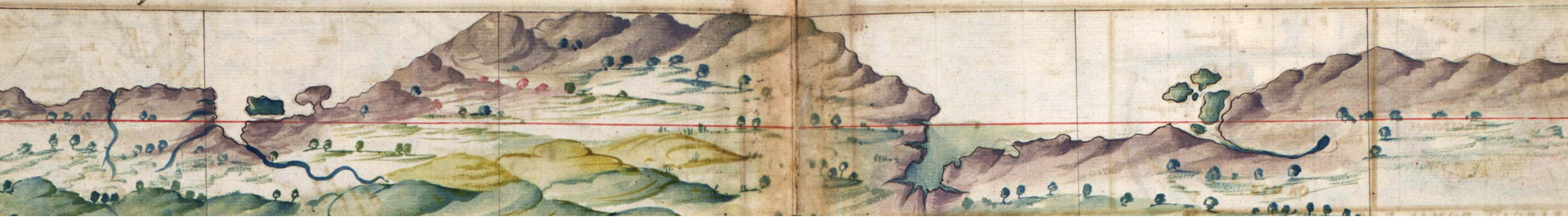
“Memory, Forgetting, and the Translated Text in a Geo-Digital Age”

Rindon Kundu, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Arts, Communication and Indic Studies, Sri Sri University, Cuttack

“Geo-modelling Translation Studies: Interweaving Translation Studies with Geometry and Geography”

Tariq Khan, Officer-in-Charge, National Translation Mission (Chair)





11:00 AM

TEA

11:30 AM

PANEL 2: TRANSLATION, DISPLACEMENT, AND THE POETICS OF LANDSCAPE

Shash Trevett, Poet & Translator (Online)

“A Poetry of Witness: Translating the Trauma of the Sixth Landscape in Tamil Poetry from Sri Lanka”

Umesh Kumar, Assistant Professor (English), Banaras Hindu University

“Translating Displacement, Translating Devastation: A Reading of Adhantar and Ringaan”

Vidyan Ravinthiran, Associate Professor of English, Harvard University (Chair)

1:00 PM

LUNCH

2:00 PM

PANEL 3: TRANSLATION, MEMORY, AND SOUTH ASIAN CARTOGRAPHIES

Chandrani Chatterjee, Associate Professor & Head, Department of English, Savitribai Phule Pune University (Online)

“‘Translating’ the ‘City’: Re-visiting Some Nineteenth century Bengali Prose Fiction”

Sarover Zaidi, Associate Professor of Practice, Jindal School of Art and Architecture

“Motif, Milieus, and Landscapes of Architecture: Poetics and Politics of Space in Bombay”

Annie Rachel Royson, India Fellow, Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute, Harvard University

“Translation, Geography, and Memory in Nineteenth Century India: A Journey through the Landscapes of Yātrik Kramaṇ and Khristāyan”

Avishek Parui, Associate Professor (English), Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (Chair)

4:00 PM

Vote of thanks

4:15 PM

TEA



Speaker Bios

Shailendra Mohan

Shailendra Mohan is Director, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, and a practicing linguist, academician and teacher with more than 19 years of teaching experience at Deccan College Postgraduate & Research Institute, Pune. He has done extensive field work working on various major and minor languages of India. His field of study includes research on an endangered language and a language isolate called Nihali spoken in central India. He also specializes in linguistic studies on Munda languages, a language family spread across India that includes languages like Santhali, Kurux, Kharia, Pnar, Khasi and so on. Prof. Mohan has contributed immensely to language studies in India through his teaching and a long list research papers and books prior to joining CIIL.

Arvind Krishna Mehrotra

A. K Mehrotra was born in Lahore and educated at the universities of Allahabad and Bombay. He is the author of *Nine Enclosures* (1976), *Distance in Statute Miles* (1982), *Middle Earth* (1984), *The Transfiguring Places* (1998), *Collected Poems 1969–2014* (2014), *Selected Poems and Translations* (2019) and *Book of Rahim* (2023), and two collections of essays, *Partial Recall: Essays on Literature and Literary History* and *Translating the Indian Past*. He has taught at the University of Allahabad and has been a visiting writer at the University of Iowa's International Writing Program. He was a Homi Bhabha Fellow, has spent periods of residence at Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, and at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Study and Conference Center. Mehrotra also edited *The Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets* (1992) and *The Last Bungalow: Writings on Allahabad* (2007). He has translated *The Absent Traveller: Prākṛit Love Poetry from the Gāthāsaptasatī of Sātavāhana Hāla* (1991), and *Songs of Kabir* (2011). His translation of Vinod Kumar Shukla's selected poems *The Treasurer of Piggy Banks* is to be published by Literary Activism/Westland in 2024.

Francis X. Clooney

Francis X. Clooney, S.J., is the Parkman Professor of Divinity and Professor of Comparative Theology at Harvard Divinity School. After earning his doctorate in South Asian languages and civilizations (University of Chicago, 1984), he taught at Boston College for 21 years before coming to Harvard. From 2010 to 2017, he was the Director of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard. His primary areas of Indological scholarship are theological commentarial writings in the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions of Hindu India, comparative theology, and the Jesuit missionary tradition. His recent books include *Reading the Hindu and Christian Classics: Why and How It Matters* (University of Virginia Press, 2019), *Western Jesuit Scholars in India: Tracing Their Paths, Reassessing Their Goals* (Brill, 2020), and most recently, *St. Joseph in South India: Poetry, Mission and Theology in Costanzo Gioseffo Beschi's Tempavani* (Vienna, 2022). He is currently finishing a memoir, *Priest and Scholar, Catholic and Hindu: A Love Story*.

Vidyan Ravinthiran

Vidyan Ravinthiran is Associate Professor of English at Harvard University and the author of two award-winning books of verse. His first book of poems, *Grun-tu-molani* (Bloodaxe Books, 2014), was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection, the Seamus Heaney Centre Poetry Prize and the Michael Murphy Memorial Prize. His second, *The Million-petalled Flower of Being Here* (Bloodaxe Books, 2019), won a Northern Writers Award and a Poetry Book Society Recommendation. It was shortlisted for the 2019 Forward Prize for Best Collection, the 2019 T.S. Eliot Prize and the 2021 Ledbury Munthe Poetry Prize for Second Collections. Vidyan is co-editor with Seni Seneviratne and Shash Trevett of the anthology *Out of Sri Lanka* (Bloodaxe Books, 2023), a Poetry Book Society Special Commendation. He is the author of *Elizabeth Bishop's Prosaic* (Bucknell, 2015), winner of both the University English Prize and the Warren-Brooks Award for Outstanding Literary Criticism; a collection of essays, *Worlds Woven Together* (Columbia University Press, 2022); a critical study, *Spontaneity and Form in Modern Prose* (OUP, 2020); and *Asian/Other*, a fusion of poetry criticism and memoir forthcoming from Icon in the UK and Norton in the US.

Tariq Khan

Tariq Khan is Officer-in-Charge of the National Translation Mission, Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Ministry of Education, Government of India. He also works as Lecturer and Junior Research Officer at the National Translation Mission. Dr. Khan received training in Applied Linguistics at the University of Hyderabad. His research interests are in the areas of Psycholinguistics, Humour Studies, Sociolinguistics, Writing Systems, Translation Studies and Inter-cultural Pragmatics. Prior to his appointment at the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Dr. Khan taught at the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies, University of Hyderabad where he also received his M.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics.

Chandrani Chatterjee

Chandrani Chatterjee heads the Department of English, Savitribai Phule Pune University. She has a BA (English Hons) and MA (English) from the Department of English, Jadavpur University, Kolkata and a Ph.D. from Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, IIT Bombay. Her research interests include translation studies, comparative literature, history of the book, gender studies, the Renaissance and Shakespeare studies, among others. She was awarded the Fulbright fellowship to the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 2012-2013 to teach and research Translation Studies. She has also been associated with the NIDA School of Translation Studies, Italy and was invited as Visiting Professor in 2018. Some of her published research has dealt with questions pertaining to translation and genre, trying to understand the transformations that genres undergo in and through translations.

Avishek Parui

Avishek Parui (PhD, Durham, UK) is an Associate Professor at IIT Madras and Associate Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy. He is the author of *Postmodern Literatures* (Orient Blackswan, 2018), *Culture and the Literary: Matter, Metaphor, Memory* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), and is currently editing *The Indian Handbook of Memory Studies* (Brill, forthcoming). He is the Principal Investigator at the Centre for Memory Studies at IIT Madras and founding chairperson of the Indian Network for Memory Studies (INMS). He is the recipient of Charles Wallace Fellowship (2011), University of St Andrews Global Fellowship (2023), and Durham University Institute of Advanced Study Fellowship (2024).

Rindon Kundu

Rindon Kundu has been appointed as the Founder Director of Sri Sri Centre for Translation and Interpreting Studies, Sri Sri University, Cuttack, India. He is also working as an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Arts, Communication and Indic Studies, Sri Sri University. He is currently serving as the Treasurer of the Comparative Literature Association of India (CLAI). He has been nominated as the South Asia Director of International Association Eco-Translatological Research (IAETR). He has recently been elected as the Steering Committee Member of the Translation Committee under International Association of Comparative Literature (ICLA). He has been the recipient of several International Grants, i.e., the Volkswagen Stiftung 2021 Grant; the European Society for Translation Studies Young Researcher Travel Award 2019; the British Academy 2019 Full Grant; International Association of Translation and Intercultural Studies 2018 Bursary.

Shash Trevett

Shash Trevett is a poet and a translator of Tamil poetry into English. She is the author of *From a Borrowed Land* (Smith|Doorstop 2021) and has co-edited (with Vidyan Ravinthiran and Seni Seneviratne) *Out of Sri Lanka: Tamil, Sinhala and English Poetry from Sri Lanka and its Diasporas* (Bloodaxe 2023 and Penguin Random House India 2023). In recent years, Shash has been involved with the Singapore Translation Symposium, the PEN Translates awards in the U.K and the Commonwealth Short Story Prize. She was a Visible Communities Translator in Residence at the National Centre for Writing and is a Board Member of Modern Poetry in Translation.

Umesh Kumar

Umesh Kumar is a literary translator. He teaches in the Department of English, Banaras Hindu University. Apart from teaching courses in British literature, he is a practicing translator who works with Hindi, English, and Marathi. He has been trained at the NIDA School of Translation Studies, Italy, and the British Centre for Literary Translation, the University of East Anglia, UK. He was British Council's Charles Wallace Visiting Fellow at the University of Edinburgh in 2019-2020. His essays and translations have been accepted and published in Routledge/Sage Series, Sahitya Akademi, Translation Today, Contemporary Voice of Dalit (Sage), The Book Review, Indian Literature (Sahitya Akademi), Vani Prakashan, The Hindu, The Economic and Political Weekly, among others.

Sarover Zaidi

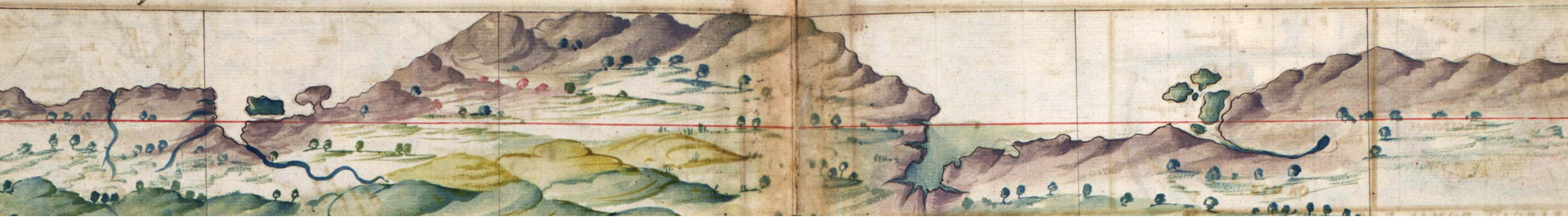
Sarover Zaidi is a teacher, writer, and academic, and has studied philosophy and social anthropology. Her work includes critical theory, anthropology, art, architecture, and material culture studies. She has worked on religious architecture, and urbanism in the city of Bombay and co-ran a site on writing the city. She has worked on rural development, with a focus on health, education, and women's rights, and currently works on carceral cities, religious iconography & modernist architecture in South Asia. She has received fellowships from Max Planck, INTACH, IFA, and Khoj. She also curates a forum on art, architecture, and anthropology, and has previously taught at the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi. She volunteers at the Muslim Women's Forum for the past five years. She teaches at Jindal School of Art and Architecture, O. P. Jindal University, Sonipat, India.

Annie Rachel Royson

Annie Rachel Royson studies literature and her research lies at the intersections of translation, South Asian literature, religious studies, travel writing, and memory studies. She holds a PhD in Translation Studies and Comparative Literature from the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar, India. Her doctoral research was a literary study of *Kristapurāṇa*, a seventeenth-century Marathi poetic text. Her book, *Texts, Traditions, and Sacredness: Cultural Translation in Kristapurāṇa* was published by Routledge in January 2023. She teaches language and literature at the School of Liberal Studies, Pandit Deendayal Energy University, and is an India Fellow, LMSAI, Harvard University.

Monika Setia

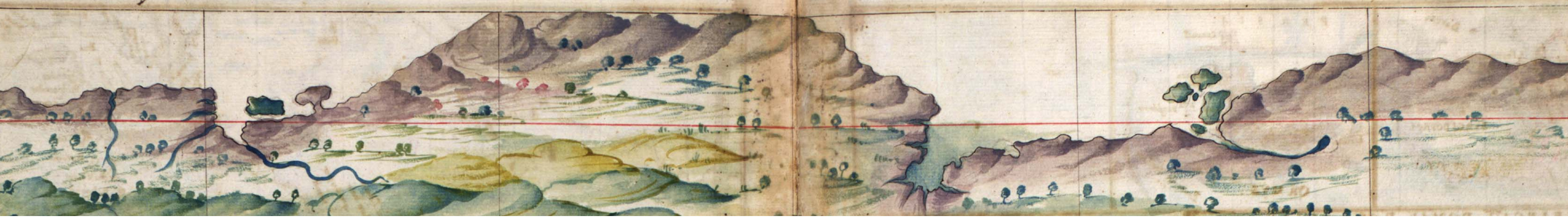
Monika Setia is the India Associate Country Director at the Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute at Harvard University. Monika holds a Ph.D. degree from the College of Health and Human Development at The Pennsylvania State University. She previously headed the Fulbright India Commission (USIEF) office at the U.S. Consulate in Hyderabad. After completing her Ph.D., she pursued postdoctoral fellowship at Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore and then worked as an Assistant Professor with Public Health Foundation of India for more than five years. She has a strong passion for international educational and academic exchanges, personal and professional development of individuals, and academic advising.



The Mittal Institute acknowledges the contribution of all the speakers and organizing committee that included:

- Vidyan Ravinthiran, Associate Professor of English, Harvard University
- National Translation Mission, CIL, Mysore
- Annie Rachel Royson, India Fellow, Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute, Harvard University





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