



**Vikas Kumar** teaches economics at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru. He studied metallurgy at IIT Kanpur and economics at IGDR Mumbai and the University of Hamburg. Before joining Azim Premji University, he was with the Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy at the National Law School, Bengaluru.

His research interests include Political Economy of Conflicts and Statistics, Law and Development, Economics of Religion, and Indian History. He is working on a book on the relationship between development policies, identity politics, and government statistics in Nagaland.

### Situating Sarala Das's Mahabharata in the Story Space that is India

While it would be naïve to claim that mythology is divorced from the socio-economic milieu in which it originates, the factual seriousness with which it is treated in some of the present debates is moot. We propose to read Sarala Das's *Mahabharata* not in relation to its purported socio-economic/historical context, i.e., the "Mahabharata era" or the fifteenth century Odisha, but in its narrative context. We read it as part of a larger conversation within and across families of overlapping narratives with none of them being the master narrative. In this world of overlapping stories originality is not stark difference let alone radical rupture, but an innovative variation. No story is more or less original than the others as all of them are variations of a shared narrative frame. We use the story of Sakuni to illustrate the implications of this mode of reading mythology and argue that the Sarala Mahabharata could be read as a Prison-revenge story. We also suggest that the overlapping stories help us re-conceptualise India as a story space, where shared narrative frames have circulated over a long period of time.



Mythical creature Navagunjara

## Know Your Culture



Archaeological Sciences Centre  
Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar  
Palaj, Gandhinagar 382355

<http://www.iitgn.ac.in/>  
<http://asc.iitgn.ac.in/>

## Symposium

# Regional Mahabharatas



Venue: Academic Block 1/002  
Date: 13.09.2016  
Time: 10 AM to 1 PM



**T.S. Satyanath** is a former professor in the Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi. His areas of interest include Comparative Indian Literature, Translation Studies, Folklore Studies and Cultural Studies and he has published extensively in these areas. He has a masters degree from Bangalore University specializing in folklore and M.Phil. in Linguistics and Ph.D. in Comparative Indian Literature from the University of Delhi. Satyanath has held visiting positions at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA, University of Georgetown, Guyana and Kannada University, Hampi. He is associated with Delhi Comparatists, a group of faculty and students involved in comparative studies, transmediality and interdisciplinary on the campus of the University of Delhi. He is a member of the executive council of Comparative Literature Association of India and a member of International Comparative Literature Association.

### Mapping Vikramarjuna Vijaya

Vikramarjuna Vijaya (c. 941 CE) is a mahakavya (epic) written in Kannada by Pampa (902–975 CE), a Jaina poet and is based on the story of the Sanskrit Mahabharata of Vyasa. Pampa was a court poet of Arikesari II, a western Chalukya feudatory of the Rashtrakuta king Krishna III (939 – 967 CE). Pampa also wrote another epic, *Adi Purana*, the life story of the first Jaina tirthankara, Vrishabhadeva. Both epics have been written in the champu style, a mixture of verse and prose. He also mentions that his two epics deal with *laukika* and *jinagama* respectively. Despite Pampa declares that his version is based on that of Vyasa, he has deviated significantly in several aspects. The most prominent one being making Arjuna as the hero of the epic and hence crowning him as the king, Subhadra the queen royal and equating Arjuna with his patron Arikesari. Some of the changes look problematic while some stand as testimony for the brilliance of the poet. Within the background outlined here, the talk attempts to address the following issues.

1. River valley based agrarian system, ritual kingship and writing culture.
2. Mapping the text within the cosmopolitan and vernacular writing cultures.
3. Locating Vikramarjuna Vijaya as a pluralistic epistemology.

4. Historical component in the first canto of the epic.
5. Spatial aspects of the epic and poet.
6. Treatment of the character of Karna in the epic.
7. Formalistic aspects of the text.
8. The problematic of modifications in the text.
9. The Kirata and Arjuna episode in the text and its trans-mediality.



Gangadharam Inscription, which makes a mention to Pampa's work, *Vikramarjuna Vijaya*



**Srinivas Reddy** is a scholar, translator and musician. He trained in classical South Asian languages and literatures at Brown University and the University of California, Berkeley. His publications include Krishnadevaraya's Telugu epic *Amuktamalyada: The Giver of the Worn Garland* and Kalidasa's play *Malavikagnimitram: The Dancer and the King*. His fresh translation of Kalidasa's *Meghadutam* is due out in early 2017. Srinivas is also a concert sitarist and has given numerous recitals around the world. He now lives in Gujarat and teaches at IIT Gandhinagar where he is Assistant Professor of South Asian Studies.

### A Hundred Grains of Rice: Mahabharata Stories in Telugu Cinema

This paper explores two regional stories from the Mahabharata that found popular expression in Telugu cinema and other performative genres. Neither the torturous tale of Shakuni's imprisonment at the hands of Kurus, nor the light-hearted tale of Abhimanyu's romance with Shashirekha can be found in the canonical Mahabharata of Vyasa. Both episodes do, however, find widespread expression in a variety of forms throughout many parts of south-central India, a swathe stretching from Maharashtra, through the Deccan to coastal Andhra, and up to Orissa.

The 1957 classic *Mayabazar* remains one of the all time favourites of golden-era Telugu cinema. It tells the story of Shashirekha, the daughter of Balarama and Revati, and her clandestine marriage to her cousin Abhimanyu. This sub-story of the central Mahabharata narrative, based on the 1928 play *Shashirekha Parinayamu* by Malladi Venkatakrishna Sarma, cleverly depicts the whole episode without including any of the five Pandava brothers. Later, the 1966 *Shri Krishna Pandaviyam* directed by NTR, with himself double-starring as Duryodhana and in his inimitable role as Shri Krishna, begins with the early history of Gandhari's dubious marriage to Dhritarashtra and goes on to position Shakuni as the radix causa of the entire Mahabharata war.

Through these two fascinating stories, this presentation hopes to interrogate and complicate the elementary bifurcation of classical vs. folk while highlighting how 'regional' tales cut across linguistic, geo-cultural and genre-based boundaries.



Abhimanyu and Subhadra Meet Ghatotkacha