

## Understanding Asia: Gender and Power

# Untruths of the Everyday: Women conversing with patriarchy



(Scan for registration)

**Shivani Gupta**  
(National University of  
Singapore)

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**16:15 – 17:45**  
**X-C3-107**  
Hybrid event

This talk explores how women converse with patriarchy to challenge its ubiquitous power and resist its permanent gatekeeping. The study demonstrates women's everyday resistances through utterances and acts that are neither whole truths nor entirely false to formulate social worlds and produce possibilities that are denied if women adhere to 'patriarchal truths.' Drawing on the relationality and distinctions between imposed patriarchal truths and women's 'small little lies,' I conceptualize the phenomenon of untruths. By using ethnographic anecdotes generated through fieldwork in Banaras, I show that women's untruths are subversive tactics in the everyday. Banaras, also known as Varanasi, is a city in the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The city is known to be the most sacred for Hindus in the world and is renowned for its mystic, timeless, and spiritual characteristics. Reading women's socio-spatial-temporal embodied lives against the popular narrative and rhetoric, the paper asserts women's untruths are a form of capacity to resist and create possibilities for themselves rather than be arrested in subjugation and oppression that is often deemed absolute. The paper uses concepts of wilfulness, decoloniality, and dialectics to comprehend and analyze how untruths become agentive within the everyday while slowly chipping away at patriarchal social and moral order. Thus, women's embodied biographies invoke their subjectivities wherein 'small little lies' exist in defiance of the simplistic binaries, particularly of victims/agents.

**Shivani Gupta** is a feminist anthropologist interested in examining how everyday gendered experiences, in urban settings, are articulated and negotiated by gender minorities through precepts of violence, surveillance, mobilities, fear, morality, and honor rooted in social structures. She uses ethnographic, feminist and phenomenology approaches to investigate social issues of gender, sexuality, violence, urbanism, spatiality, subversions, everyday, and pedagogy.

She is a full-time lecturer at NUS College at National University of Singapore. Currently, She is a visiting faculty fellow at Sciences Po through a fellowship awarded by PRESAGE at Sciences Po and Cité du Genre at Université Paris Cité. Prior to joining NUS College, she was a postdoctoral fellow at the Communications and New Media department, at NUS, on a project that investigated campus sexual violence (including technology-facilitated) in Singapore.. She received her PhD from the department of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, following an MA from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (Mumbai, India) and a BA (Honours) in Political Science from Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University (India).