A Place for Utopia: Urban Designs from South Asia

a talk by
Smriti Srinivas
Professor of Anthropology; Director, Middle East/South Asia Studies Program, UC Davis

Join us as we listen to Smriti Srinivas, Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Davis, discuss her latest publication is A Place for Utopia: Urban Designs from South Asia.

About the Book:
Exploring several utopian imaginaries and practices, A Place for Utopia ties different times together from the early 20th century to the present, the biographical and the anthropological, the cultural and the conjunctural, South Asia, Europe, and North America. It charts the valency of “utopia” for understanding designs for alternative, occluded, vernacular, or emergent urbanisms in the last hundred years. Central to the designs for utopia in this book are the themes of gardens, children, spiritual topographies, death, and hope.

From the vitalist urban plans of the Scottish polymath Patrick Geddes in India to the Theosophical Society in Madras and the ways in which it provided a context for a novel South Indian garden design; from the visual, textual, and ritual designs of Californian Vedanta from the 1930s to the present; to the spatial transformations associated with post-1990s highways and rapid transit systems in Bangalore that are shaping an emerging “Indian New Age” of religious and somatic self-styling, Srinivas tells the story of contrapuntal histories, the contiguity of lives, and resonances between utopian worlds that are generative of designs for cultural alternatives and futures.

About the Author:
Smriti Srinivas is Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Middle East/South Asia Studies Program at the University of California, Davis. Her other publications include Landscapes of Urban Memory: The Sacred and the Civic in India’s High-Tech City; In the Presence of Sai Baba: Body, City, and Memory in a Global Religious Movement; and The Mouths of People, The Voice of God: Buddhists and Muslims in the Frontier Community of Ladakh.

Thursday, February 11, 2016
4 - 6 pm
10 Stephens Hall (ISAS Conf. Room)

Event is free & open to public. Information at 510-642-3608 or southasia.berkeley.edu