

IK

i

f

e

a

s

Sahana Udupa (München)

## Is nationalism politics-as-usual?: WhatsApp, disinformation 'services' and renewable ingenuity of online abusers

In this talk, I will examine an assemblage of infrastructures, practices and actors of digital media that constitutes contemporary forms of right-wing nationalism in India. The key focus is on what is defined as "bhakt business" – actors who navigate nebulous networks of patronage, brokerage, idolatry and ideological affiliation. They are the digital nouveau riche, who have turned their social media skills to move up the political ladder for monetary gains, social status or the sheer joy of experiencing political participation. Departing from explanations that see these actors as self-aggrandizing strategists – which they are partly are – the talk will open up a range of analytical angles to understand their practices – from online affective loops and masculine showmanship to meticulous work of building up followers and livelihood options, all set within a volatile terrain of new promises unleashed by digital networks. I locate this problematic at the intersection of data capitalism, digital practice and political propaganda. Building on the theory of extreme speech (Udupa & Pohjonen 2019; Udupa 2019), ethnographic field data, and a virtual dive into a nationalist WhatsApp group, the talk will show that contemporary nationalism is non-exceptional. It is mainstream, it is politics-as-usual, with dire consequences for those that it excludes.

**Sahana Udupa** researches and teaches digital politics, online extreme speech, news cultures, media policy and urban politics. She is Professor of Media Anthropology at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU Munich), where she leads a five-year research project on digital politics funded by the European Research Council: [www.fordigitaldignity.com](http://www.fordigitaldignity.com). She is the author of *Making News in Global India: Media, Publics, Politics* (Cambridge University Press, UK, 2015) and co-editor of *Media as Politics in South Asia* (Routledge, London, 2016, with S. McDowell). Her most recent publications include, "Extreme speech and global digital cultures" (special section in *International Journal of Communication*, with M. Pohjonen 2019), "Nationalism in the digital age: Fun as a meta-practice of extreme speech, *International Journal of Communication*, 2019) and "Millennial India: Global digital politics in context" (*Television and New Media*, online first, with S. Venkatraman & A. Khan). More publications on [academia.edu](http://academia.edu).

**Institutskolloquium Wintersemester 2019/20 (Leitung: Matthias Krings)**

**Wann?** Dienstag, 10. Dezember 2019, 18:15-19:45 Uhr

**Wo?** Hörsaal 14 / Großer Übungsraum (Raum 01-715), Forum 7, Becherweg 4, 1. Stock,

**Weitere Informationen:** [www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de](http://www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de)

ifeas

Institut für  
Ethnologie und  
Afrikastudien



JOHANNES GUTENBERG  
UNIVERSITÄT MAINZ