

# Spotlight

## Faculty Researcher Profile

### Faculty of Arts - Asian Studies

## Hearing the Voices of the People

### Snapshot

Dr. Kamala Nayar is a faculty member specializing in South Asian Studies at KPU who is committed to interdisciplinary inquiry. With an interest in ethnic studies, especially in relation to Canadian society, Kamala's research has made significant contribution to scholarly literature surrounding the social, cultural, political, and economic conditions of minorities. As well, her research proves to be an asset in the classroom, as it is able to draw students into lectures by offering real life field stories and ethnographic narratives.

### Key Research

Using social anthropology and textual analysis as her two main streams of focus, Kamala's research surrounds contemporary South Asian communities in Canada, and the history of Indian religions.

Past social anthropological research:

- In *The Punjabis in British Columbia: Location, Labour, First Nations, and Multiculturalism* (2012), Kamala documents the social and cultural transformations and adaptations Punjabi communities in BC experience, due to economic hardship caused by a decline in the forestry and fishery industries. In order to accomplish this research, Kamala interviewed 100 individuals about their second migration experience from the Skeena region to BC's lower mainland, and how this transition affected their identities and experiences in Canada.
- *The Sikh Diaspora in Vancouver: Three Generations Amid Tradition, Modernity, and Multiculturalism* (2004) highlights the Sikh community in the context of mainstream Canadian society. Again, Kamala interviews over 100 individuals in order to understand the beliefs, attitudes, behavioural patterns, and traditional customs and values of three Sikh generations. (She discovers the greatest catalyst for change within the community, its youth.)

Dr. Kamala Nayar



Past textual studies:

- In *The Socially Involved Renunciate: Guru Nanak's 'Discourse to the Nath Yogis'* (2007), Kamala explores Sikh tradition and religion by analyzing the *Siddh Gosht* composed by Guru Nanak. She, along with Jaswinder Singh Sandhu, provides an English translation of the philosophical text while highlighting theological and ethical practices of the *Siddh Gosht* and Sikh teachings.
- Kamala's *Hayagriva in South India: Complexity and Selectivity of a Pan-Indian Hindu Deity* (1999) looks at the 'Sri Vaihava History' of Hayagrīva since the 14th century C.E. and how mythology can intentionally adapt to serve theology. Kamala's study draws on the consistency of certain religious symbols and imagery despite a god's changing status due to a sect.

## Impact of Research

Kamala Nayar's research is helping to build a stronger, less ethnocentric narrative that is more inclusive of unique cultural identities and minorities. Moreover, as an instructor and researcher, Kamala is enhancing the quality of education for both students and the scholarly community. By giving a 'voice' to otherwise misunderstood ethnic enclaves, Kamala's research should impact future Canadian policy at the national, provincial and municipal levels.

## What's Next?

Kamala Nayar's future research plans include:

- Pursuing research on Indian religions and the environment, with a focus on population and consumption in both the historical and contemporary contexts.

## Check out Kamala Online:

- *The Punjabis in British Columbia: Location, Labour, First Nations, and Multiculturalism*  
<http://www.mqup.ca/punjabis-in-british-columbia--the-products-9780773540705.php>
- *The Socially Involved Renunciate: Guru Nanak's 'Discourse to the Nath Yogis'*  
[http://books.google.ca/books/about/The\\_Socially\\_Involved\\_Renunciate.html?id=W7fKwGV6mBkC](http://books.google.ca/books/about/The_Socially_Involved_Renunciate.html?id=W7fKwGV6mBkC)
- *The Sikh Diaspora in Vancouver: Three Generations Amid Tradition, Modernity, and Multiculturalism:*  
<http://www.amazon.com/The-Sikh-Diaspora-Vancouver-Multiculturalism/dp/0802086314>
- *Hayagriva in South India: Complexity and Selectivity of a Pan-Indian Hindu Deity:*  
<http://www.abebooks.com/9789004137301/Hayagriva-South-India-Complexity-Selectivity-9004137300/plp>

