

## Following 'The Way': Historicizing the Interspace among Indic Religions

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1khH0NJ2Qi9vgHmRnnoSb11mRtswcd03Q>

Panth, matam, dharm, rah, and širāt, meaning 'The Way', are some of the terms used by faith communities in South Asia to define their tradition's path. This conference will explore how these ways were expressed in ritual, belief, and praxis to create distinction. For example, among the 19th century Khōjā of Sindh and Gujarat, the term satpanth 'The True Way', referred to numerous vernacular religious practices that incorporated Vaiṣṇav, Svāminārāyaṇ, Jain, Shia, and Sunni practices within a caste faith. Their liturgical materials originally were written in a caste script in a mélange of dialects from Sindhi, Gujarati, Kacchi, Rajasthani, and Urdu. This liminality was not exclusive to the north, in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka araputami, the Muslim dialect of Tamil in the Arabic script, records the cosmologies and worldview of Muslim merchant communities that intersperses Vaishnava imagery with Arabic vocabulary.

This conference is intended to bring together scholars of the Adivasi, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism to explore how aesthetics, authority, narratives, rituals, and script have been historically shared and divided by faith communities in South Asia. How do we make sense of such heterogeneity that was distant from 'orthodox' literature being produced in urbane Sanskrit and Persian? How did rural religion differ and connect to larger faith communities across linguistic and script divides? Where were ethno-religious boundaries drawn between pragmatic mobile merchant communities and how fluid were they until early colonization? South Asian vernacular religion in local languages is a large untapped historical archive from which scholars can produce incisive microhistories. This is an open call for scholars across disciplines who wish to engage with the themes of endangered/extinct languages and scripts, merchant religion, modern religious identity formation, and the transmission of sacred narratives across the Persianate, Turkic, and Indic worlds.

The conference will be held at the University of Mumbai, Mumbai, January 30-31, 2019. The deadline for the submission of paper proposal is July 31, 2018. Successful applicants will be notified by August 30, 2018. The travel allowances (\$500) as well as accommodation and board will be covered through the 'Khoja Studies Conference'. Send your abstracts to: [khojastudies@world-federation.org](mailto:khojastudies@world-federation.org).

<http://www.khojastudies.org>