



What's past is prologue

The humanities is a set of academic disciplines that study society and culture. These are disciplines that help us understand the values of different cultures, history and how it is made, and how works of art are produced.

Prof. Ananya Jahanara Kabir is a scholar of the humanities. Her work is primarily concerned with the historical elements in how we define our spaces in the present. She does this through analyzing literature, cinema, dance and other work that have been strongly influenced by conflict or deep traumas that people in particular areas have suffered. These include the influence of colonial rule, disputed territories, and the slave trade.

Prof. Kabir's book, *Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir*, explores how images of the disputed region of Kashmir as a place of beauty, coveted and fought over, have come to dominate the imaginations of postcolonial Indians and are resisted and responded to by Kashmiris. She conducts this investigation through photographs of the landscapes, films and documentaries made about the Kashmir region, stories, poetry, visual art, and other creations of both Kashmiris and non-Kashmiris.

In her book, *Partition's Post-Amnesias*, Kabir examines the impact of Partition on writers,

artists, and other creative intellectuals in the subcontinent. Partition in this case encompasses the linked events that led to the formation of the nation-states of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh in 1947 and 1971. She examines how generations of families who have lived through the trauma of Partition create and re-create meaning out of that trauma, including those who didn't directly experience the events of 1947 and 1971. Kabir's work demonstrates that these big political events have lasting effects on subsequent generations of the families that lived through them which generate cross-border networks and affections beyond the nation-state.

Prof. Kabir's current project, *Modern Moves*, studies the music and dance cultures of various African and African-diasporic communities worldwide. She examines how events such as colonial oppression and slave trade have led to the creation of music and dance with African roots in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds, that are then enjoyed globally by people often with no ethnic or racial connection to the African continent. The study aims to find the deep connections between historical experiences of trauma, pleasure as resistance, and modernity and the idea and embodied memory of 'Africa'.

