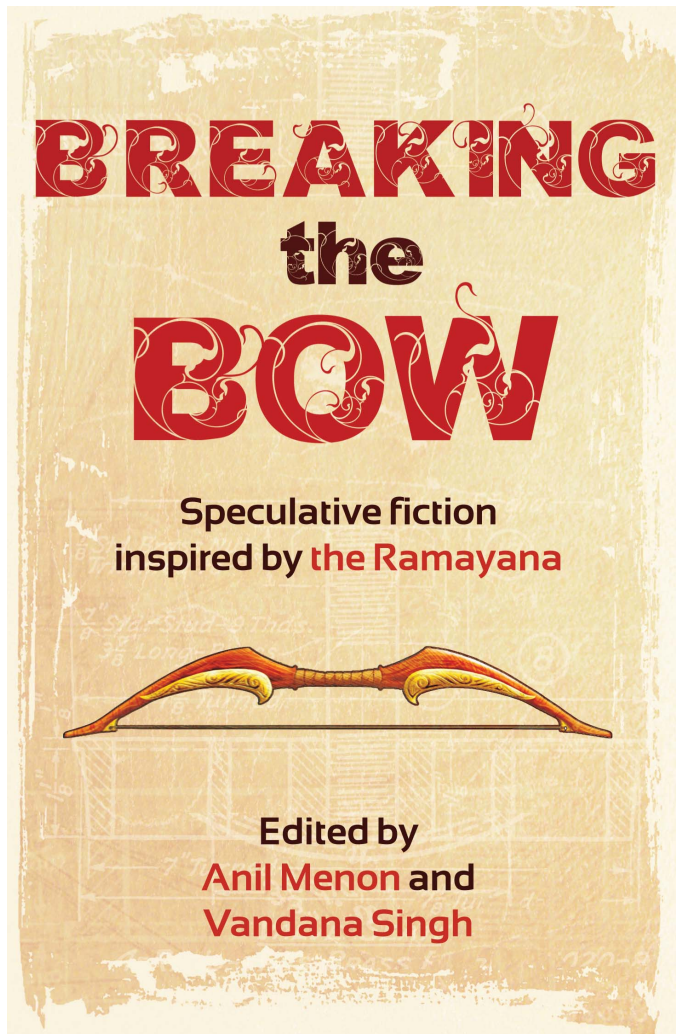


Guest Lecture: Anil Menon

# “Rendezvous With Rama: The Rāmāyaṇa as Speculative Fiction”

Mi. 17.06.2015 \* 12:00-14:00  
Ludwigstr. 31, Seminarraum 427



In speculative fiction, a story's context is also a part of the story, and when writing speculative fiction, an author can play with many other contexts as well: political, psychological, social, anthropological, historical, ethical, and so on. Speculative fiction is thus a literature of ambiguity, interpretation, and surprise. In this talk, we'll examine the *Rāmāyaṇa* (mainly, Valmiki's version) and see if it can be characterized as speculative fiction. As Naiyar Masud's story "Sheesha Ghat" illustrates, it can be tricky to make these decisions. At the other end of the spectrum, we have "The Jaguar's Wife," a narrative with rather improbable events, but which insists on being read as a realist tale. Between the stuttered speech of Masud's child protagonist and the multitude of voices in "The Jaguar's Wife," may be positioned the silent lonely figure of Lord Rama, the man devoted to moral action. I'll argue that it is in playing with the contextual assumption that Text (words, laws, rules,...) can represent the actual world, that the *Rāmāyaṇa* becomes a work of speculative fiction.

The lecture is part of Rita Banerjee's course *Modernity and the South Asian Imaginaire* at LMU. Anyone interested in Modern South Asian Literature or South Asian Art House Film is welcomed to join the Menon's lecture.



Anil Menon's short fiction has appeared in a variety of magazines and anthologies including *Albedo One*, *Interzone*, *Interfictions*, *Jaggery Lit Review*, *LCRW*, *Sybil's Garage*, and *Strange Horizons*. His stories have been translated into Chinese, French, German, Hebrew and Romanian. His debut novel *The Beast With Nine Billion Feet* (Zubaan Books, 2010) was short-listed for the 2010 Vodafone-Crossword award and the Carl Brandon Society's 2011 Parallax Award. Along with Vandana Singh, he co-edited *Breaking the Bow* (Zubaan Books 2012), an anthology of speculative fiction stories inspired by the Ramayana. He has a forthcoming novel *Half Of What I Say* (Bloomsbury, 2015). He can be contacted at [iam@anilmenon.com](mailto:iam@anilmenon.com).