

I am at the [Global Conversations conference](#) at UC Irvine, a Festival of Marginalized Languages where I speak on a 'technology' panel about languages and the internet. Let's blog the event as I walked in, on Thursday morning, October 25 where the South Asia panel had just started when I walked in.

Rita Kothari spoke about the [Shindhi language](#), a "language without a state" in India and Pakistan. The question why certain languages make us uncomfortable is what should concern us, not the marginal state in relation to the dominant language. Because of this uncomfortable feeling the Shindhi language will become a relict of the past. There is a stigma attached to the Shindhi identity that people want to avoid. Rita Kothari collected partition stories and translated them into English. I have to note here that the Shindhi language is -still- spoken by over 20 million people (however, only 2.8 million in India). This is not an insignificant but rather stigmatized language, which is a somewhat other issue, compared to the urgent issue of dying or disappearing languages.

Sudipto Chatterjee spoke about his new book, [The Colonial Staged](#). What are the differences between East and West Bengali cultures? After the 1970s East-Pakistan and West-Bengal seemed suddenly worlds apart. Which is the mask and which is the face? Language or religion? The sixth language in the world, and yet marginalized. The way Chatterjee speaks Bengali is entirely different, when confronted with Bangla-Deshis.

The problematic position of Urdu in India is discussed by Sukrita Paul Kumar. Continuously Urdu and Hindi are being mixed up, with Urdu missing out. Key to this competition between two languages that are essentially one and the same, goes back the question of writing and the Nasta'liq script calligraphy. Urdu, according to Sukrita Paul Kumar, is falling victim of becoming romantized and runs in the 'trap of calligraphy'.

Anita Ratnam speaks [Tamil](#), a language which is alive and well. The language has been very much influenced by the film industry. Leading politicians have been film script writers and actors. Her own accent is supposed to be a bit 'too Brahman' as the leading media culture is based anti-Brahman sentiments. During the lecture Anita Ratnam showed rarely viewed DVD footage of Brahman rituals. She also showed a video of a ritual theatre performance of her native village. A process of reconstruction had to happen in order to bring back the procedures that the (former) ritual temple dancers had to do-an five hours attempt to bring back the temple rituals. It

is now the tenth year of the temple reconstruction performance. In fact it was Anita Ratnam herself who revitalized this 9th century temple rituals that had gone into total disrepair.

The preservation of languages can be romantized. How many of us are using Sufi in the class room, Sukrita Paul Kumar asked. Sudipto Chatterjee pointed in this context at the urban-rural divide.