

May 17-18, 2023

ITEM 206-1012-R0523

**Request for Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of English on Ruth Vanita;
University of Montana-Missoula**

THAT

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Professor Ruth Vanita from the faculty of The University of Montana, the faculty wishes to express its appreciation for her twenty-five years of dedicated and valued service to the University and the State of Montana by recommending that the rank of Professor Emeritus be conferred upon her by the Board of Regents of the Montana University System.

EXPLANATION

Professor Ruth Vanita earned her Ph.D. at Delhi University in 1992 and began teaching there as an Assistant Professor in the same year. In 1997, she moved to Missoula and joined the faculty of The University of Montana, working first as Associate Professor in the Department of Liberal Studies and Women's Studies (1997-2002), then as Professor in the Department of Global Humanities and Religions (2002-19), and finally as Professor in the Department of English (2019-22). During these years she also held visiting appointments at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, University of Michigan (1999); at the Center for Disciplinary Innovation, University of Chicago (2011); and at Cambridge University (2015-16).

Professor Vanita was an engaged and demanding teacher all these years. She taught a wide range of courses, including courses on Shakespeare, Modern British Literature, and Contemporary Indian Cinema, but above all she taught courses in her fields of expertise: the literature of women, gender and sexuality in different literary traditions, and the comparative study of eastern and western literary and religious traditions. "Goddesses East and West," "Talking to God: the Bhagavad Gita," and "Same-Sex Unions in Western and Indian Literary Traditions" were among the most popular courses she taught at the university. She provided a great many students with their first imaginative encounter with Indian religious and literary traditions. She helped beginning and advanced students alike see questions of gender and sexual orientation in a deeply historical perspective.

Professor Vanita's teaching was inseparable from her wide-ranging scholarship. She is one of the most prominent humanist scholars to have worked at the University of Montana in the last few decades. She published eight scholarly books, including her recent *The Dharma of Justice in the Sanskrit Epics* (Oxford, 2022), as well as a novel and book of poems. She translated into English eight works of Indian literature written in Hindi. She published dozens of articles in academic journals, and dozens more in books edited by other scholars. She gave many invited lectures at universities around the world, including Berkeley, Chicago, Cambridge, and Delhi. She is as well-known in India as in the United States for the reach and depth of her scholarship. We are extraordinarily lucky to have had her at The University of Montana all these years.

Professor Vanita was a committed member of our larger university community. She served a term as Director of Global Humanities and Religions (2016-18). She founded and directed the South & South-East Asian Studies program (2010-2022), bringing a number of guest scholars, musicians, and dancers to campus. For years, she worked to bring Fulbright scholars from India to teach the Hindi language at the university. She continues to serve on the editorial board of the journals *South Asian Film and Media* and

Sexuality Studies Quarterly. Her engagement with a larger community of scholars and teachers has been immense.

The English Department is pleased to recommend Dr. Vanita for emeritus status.

ATTACHMENTS

None