

*The Great Adventures of Gulbadan*

# VAGABOND PRINCESS

"An astonishing work by  
one of the most exciting  
historians writing today."

—REZA ASLAN

*Ruby Lal*

S W E D I S H  
COLLEGIUM  
for ADVANCED STUDY

*Vagabond Princess:  
The Great Adventures of Gulbadan*

**RUBY LAL**

will present her new book  
*Vagabond Princess: The Great Adventures of Gulbadan*  
(Yale University Press, 2024)

Discussants: **ARTHUR ASSERAF** & **HANNAH FIELD**

Wednesday, 29 May 2024, 4:15 p.m.

Venue: the Green Room/Library on the 4th floor of Linneanum, SCAS, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala  
The event will be followed by a reception.

Situated in the early decades of the magnificent Mughal Empire, this first ever biography of Princess Gulbadan offers an enthralling portrait of a charismatic adventurer and unique pictures of the multicultural society in which she lived. Following a migratory childhood that spanned Kabul and north India, Gulbadan spent her middle years in a walled harem established by her nephew Akbar to showcase his authority as the Great Emperor. Gulbadan longed for the exuberant itinerant lifestyle she'd known. With Akbar's blessing, she led an unprecedented sailing and overland voyage and guided harem women on an extended pilgrimage in Arabia. Amid increasing political tensions, the women's "un-Islamic" behavior forced their return, lengthened by a dramatic shipwreck in the Red Sea.

Gulbadan wrote a book upon her return, the only extant work of prose by a woman of the age. A portion of it is missing, either lost to history or redacted by officials who did not want the princess to have her say.

*Vagabond Princess* contemplates the story of the missing pages and breathes new life into a daring historical figure. It offers a portal to a richly complex world, rife with movement and migration, where women's conviviality, adventure, and autonomies shine through.

**RUBY LAL**, Former SCAS Fellow (2020-21) & Professor of South Asian Studies, Emory University, Atlanta  
**ARTHUR ASSERAF**, Pro Futura Scientia Fellow, SCAS & Associate Professor of History, University of Cambridge  
**HANNAH FIELD**, Fellow, SCAS & Senior Lecturer in Victorian Literature, University of Sussex