

Oration for Ritula Shah, being awarded Hon DLitt

To be delivered on Thursday 17 January 2019, 11am, by

Chancellor Baroness Cathy Ashton

Those of us who listen to BBC Radio 4's flagship news programme, *The World Tonight*, will be familiar with the voice of this morning's honorary graduand, taking us through the day's events, helping us make sense of an often less than sensible world. I am delighted to introduce the award winning BBC journalist and broadcaster, RITULA SHAH.

Ritula Shah studied history here at Warwick in the late 1980s. It was here that she cut her teeth as a broadcaster, presenting programmes on the student radio station, W693, often working late into the night, learning the tools of her trade. It was, she says, this 'formative experience' that propelled her into a career in

broadcasting. Immediately after graduating, she joined the BBC Radio 4 production team based in Birmingham as a trainee producer. After working in regional TV news, she joined the *Today* programme as a producer and output editor in 1991. In 1999, she became one of the launch presenters of the BBC World Service programme, *The World Today*, broadcasting throughout the night. On Radio 4, she has presented *Woman's Hour* and *Any Questions* and the Saturday edition of the news programme, *PM*, as well as making radio documentaries. Since 2013, she has been the lead presenter of *The World Tonight*; its focus on international affairs means that she has presented the programme from all over the world, including Brazil, Jordan, India, China, and the USA.

Radio 4 is, in a sense, Ritual's natural home: she says she has always listened to the station – she woke up with Jack de Manio and Listened with Mother (I wonder how many members of this Congregation are now beginning to feel nostalgic!). She is acclaimed for her breadth of knowledge of both international affairs and British politics, and for her intellectual curiosity that results in in-

depth conversations with her interviewees. She is not an aggressive interviewer (she's been praised for her 'non-shoutiness') but one who, having done her research, is persistent but polite, always allowing her interviewees space to put their points of view or tell their stories. This was particularly evident in *One to One*, a series of radio programmes she made in 2013, where she interviewed people whose lives had involved some form of renunciation, one of the central tenets of her own religious background, Jainism. In these days of 'fake news' and media hysteria, hers is a calm, intelligent voice, that also injects a welcome note of warmth and humour into the news at the end of the day.

In 2011, Ritula won the Media Professional of the Year at the Asian Women of Achievement Awards, and in 2013 she was awarded the GG2 Media and Creative Arts Award. She is a trustee of the International Institute for the Visual Arts and an ambassador for the British Asian Trust. As a Warwick alumna, she has kept in touch with her department, happy to engage with current students. In 2017, we were delighted to welcome her to the 50<sup>th</sup> celebration of our Venice programme, which continues to provide history and history of art students with

a unique opportunity to live and study for a term in Venice; Ritula says of her own Venice term: 'It's hard to explain to anyone who didn't do this course quite how wonderful it was as an educational experience.' We are also grateful for Ritula's offer of ongoing support for the Warwick in Venice programme. It is a great pleasure to welcome Ritula back to Warwick today for the award of her second Warwick degree.

Chancellor, in the name of the Senate, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*, RITULA SHAH.

614 words

