

# KHABAR

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## CAL & THE SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY: A DESI REPORTER'S PERSPECTIVE

by Ashfaque Swapan

During my two decades from a privileged perch as a reporter for an Indian American weekly, it has been fascinating to watch the ties between a world-class university and a flourishing U.S. minority community evolve into a deepening, mutually rewarding relationship.

Today, Indian Americans are an admired community in the U.S.; Berkeley has a reputation as one of the finest universities in the country. In the past two decades, especially with the founding of an India studies chair and a variety of other activities, the community and the university have considerably grown closer to each other.

The first wave of Indian Americans came to the West Coast — this was over a century ago — at the turn of the 20th century.

Today India is a major global player, its IT prowess is formidable, and many Indians coming to the U.S. bask in that glory.

India's first immigrants faced a very different scenario. They were farmers from Punjab, and the California they came to was an awakening giant, large swathes of it still a sleepy agricultural backwater, with a population not quite ready to embrace a multicultural ethos.

Cal had a *desi* connection even then. Rabindranath Tagore, Asia's first Nobel laureate and a poet-philosopher lionized in South Asia (both India and Bangladesh's national anthems are written by

him) visited Berkeley in 1929. Kartar Singh Sarabha, a hero of the Gadar movement, a remarkably egalitarian group of Indian freedom fighters based in California, was a Berkeley student. He later went back to India to fight colonialism, and was hanged by the British.

The second wave of Indian immigration in the mid 1960s brought in its wake a rush of graduate students, many

of whom subsequently made an eventual successful transition to leafy middle class suburbia.

I remember the time over two decades ago when I first arrived as a graduate student in Berkeley. Indian students were divided into two groups — as I suppose they still are. Fresh arrivals from the old country predominated among the graduate students, while undergraduates had a substantial number of students of Indian descent raised in the U.S..

Berkeley faculty had distinguished Indian scholars even then — off the top of my head

I remember economist Pranab Bardhan, Buddhist scholar Padmanabh Jaini, political scientist Jyoti Dasgupta, earthquake structural engineering whiz Anil Chopra.

From a *desi* viewpoint, one person who played a profoundly significant role in building a sense of community for *desi* students was the redoubtable Hindi instructor Usha Jain, who put generations of Berkeley students through the wringer in her demanding Hindi classes.

Jain was the quintessential *desi* mom — feminine, graceful and affectionate to a fault, but an absolute drill sergeant when it came to Hindi instruction.

Her classes were far more than Hindi instruction, though. It was a marvelous window into the Indian world, its culture, society and heritage, and for *desi* and mainstream students, a wonderful cultural meeting place, thanks to Jain's extraordinary efforts. (Full disclosure: I took Jain's classes, and benefited enormously.) Kausalya Hart did the same for Tamil students.

Some faculty members inspired students and the community into developing a substantive involvement in development issues in the old country — engineering Prof. P.K. Mehta helped found Indians for Collective Action. In addition to the excellent work it did, it had one significant consequence. Sandeep Pandey, then a PhD student of mechanical engineering, founded Asha for

Education, which grew into a huge group of U.S. students supporting basic education projects in India.

Pandey went back to India after getting his PhD and went on to win a Mag-saysay award. He is a full-time activist today.

The Berkeley graduate engineering departments had a substantial share of Indian students by the time I came here in the 1990s. Alongside their engineering degrees, one piquant development was the emergence of Naatak, a theater group. It was founded by Berkeley and

**CSAS AWARDED \$2.4 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDING OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS IN SUPPORT OF SOUTH ASIA RELATED RESEARCH & PROGRAMMING** (for further details see inside)

Stanford Indian engineering students — it continues to be that rare *desi* cultural phenomenon — possibly the only U.S. South Asian theater group that regularly performs plays in Hindi.

Over the past two decades, the Indian community around the university has grown prodigiously — in size as well as visibility and self confidence. In Silicon Valley next door, Indian Americans have joined the movers and shakers of the information technology world.

It was at this time that the community, to both insure the future of South Asian studies as well as to enhance the participation of South Asian academics in the UCB faculty, came up with the idea of establishing a chair focusing on the study of contemporary India at Berkeley. Recognizing this need, Silicon Valley Indian Americans began an effort to raise endowment funds and the South Asians for Collective Action (SACA), a now defunct Bay area group of *desi* lefties in the classic Berkeley mold, began a push for Berkeley to hire Indian academics.

The success of their efforts can be seen in three new endowed chairs — the Indo-American Community Chair in India Studies, the Chair in Tamil Studies, and the Sarah Kailath Chair in India Studies — all established (cont'd p 3)



"Tagore, with Indian Students at Berkeley University." From: *India and Canada: A Journal of Interpretation and Information* (Vancouver, British Columbia), v. 1, no. 4 (Sept 1929)

# A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

by Raka Ray

Dear friends,  
Khabar comes to you after a gap of one year because of the budget cuts that have affected UC Berkeley (and much of the rest of California!). Despite the fact that we had to tighten our belts considerably, we continued to support South Asia Studies at Berkeley and fund our students to the best of our ability.

The good news is that the Center for South Asia Studies did receive a Title VI award to the tune of \$2.4 million over four years. This is the largest amount received by any Title VI center at UCB and I am so grateful to the center staff, led by Sanchita Saxena, for putting us in this position. Continuing with good funding news, CSAS is the proud recipient of a major grant from Kanwal Rekhi which will support a conference on urbanization in India. The conference, called "The 21st Century Indian City: Setting the Agenda for Urbanization in India," will be held on March 23-25, 2011 in New Delhi, India. Finally, in terms of funding for our students, our academic program affiliated with TATA has expanded: In addition to TISES, we now have Tata Study Grants (5k each for three grads and 2.5k each for 3 undergrads) for research on Contemporary India.

Against the backdrop of relentless negative media attention on Muslims and Islam, three centers at UC Berkeley (CSAS and the Centers for Middle East Studies and Southeast Asian Studies) obtained a grant from the SSRC to produce a wonderfully innovative, year-long program on "Islam, Youth and Media" which explored how Muslim youth around the world work with new media, politics and popular culture to find "virtual" communities, promote new agendas and confront stereotypes in the post 9/11 era. We look forward to such fruitful collaborations in the future.

We had the second of our Democracy conferences on India last year as well. In true Berkeley style, this conference on Justice and the Law courted attention and controversy since it highlighted the tension between Maoists and the state in Chhatisgarh (see pp xx). We also had a conference on development issues in Bangladesh, and launched a new Lecture Series in memory of Sarah Kailath with San Francisco's District Attorney, Kamala Harris as the inaugural speaker. Also in 2009 we were fortunate to have the brilliant and gentle iconoclastic scholar Ashis Nandy as our scholar in residence.

Thanks to the efforts of our former staff member Sudev Sheth and program director Puneeta Kala, we have dramatically expanded our programming in the performing arts, with Nautanki performances as well as the Manganiar musicians of Rajasthan two years in a row, and a Kabir Festival capped off with a performance by the 2008 Sangeet Natak Akademi award winner Prahlad Singh Tipanya. In October this year, we are delighted to host the marvelous singer, Shubha Mudgal.

I'm also pleased to announce that we have expanded our repertoire of published materials such that we now publish the proceedings of our major conferences as well as a new series called South Asia Research Notes which highlights the work of our faculty. Please let us know if you would like to receive this material.

Finally – some welcomes and farewells. We are delighted to welcome Tapan Parekh (School of Information) and Saira Mohamed (Law School) onto our faculty, even as we regretfully announce the retirement after 40 years of teaching, of Professor Joanna Williams (please see special section). In addition to her scholarship on the art of South Asia, Professor Williams produced several of the best scholars of South Asian art history in the US today, and has been an ever reliable and generous colleague. We will miss her.

This year we said goodbye to staff members Nadia Hussain, Shweta Doshi and Shaleen Shanbag. We wish them well in their travels and graduate school careers. We welcome Behnaz Raufi as our new Publications and Program Assistant and Cristin McKnight Sethi as our new Outreach Coordinator. Behnaz has a B.A. in South Asian Studies and Anthropology from Berkeley. Cristin is a doctoral candidate in the Department of History of Art at Berkeley. Her research focuses on South Asian art of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She is currently researching her dissertation on global practices of collecting and displaying phulkari embroidery from the Punjab. We are delighted to have both of them at the Center.

As always we hope to see many of you at our events or at the center offices in 10 Stephens Hall. Please check our website: southasia.berkeley.edu for lists of upcoming events, conferences and other South Asia related activities.



From left: Sanchita Saxena, Behnaz Raufi, Puneeta Kala, Raka Ray

**Sanchita Saxena** received her Ph.D. in Political Science (focus on Comparative Political Economy) from UCLA. Sanchita has taught courses in Comparative Politics and on the Politics of Developing Countries at UCLA, UC Davis, and the University of San Francisco. Prior to joining CSAS, Sanchita was the Assistant Director of Economic Programs at the Asia Foundation. This past summer Sanchita was a Public Policy Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars where she conducted research for a book on the effects of trade liberalization on the garment and textile industries in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

**Puneeta Kala** joined as Program Representative. She is an East Asianist who specialized in Japanese studies. She holds one M.Phil and three M.A. degrees with the most recent from Harvard University. She has taught at the University of Vermont and the University of San Francisco and has been involved in a number of programming and fundraising initiatives at Harvard and elsewhere.

**Behnaz Ruffi** joined the Center as Program/Finance Assistant. After receiving her B.A. in South Asian Studies and Anthropology in 2009, she worked as a research assistant for Professor Saba Mahmood of the Anthropology Department. Behnaz's interests include culture, politics and languages of South Asia and she enjoys Urdu literature and poetry. She is enthusiastic about joining the Center for South Asia studies and looks forward to promoting events on campus, especially among the undergraduate students.

**We** are so pleased to have been awarded the Title VI grant. The Title VI award is peer-reviewed by faculty from other universities and we are so delighted that our colleagues across the country have recognized our work in promoting South Asia related research and enhancing awareness about South Asia in the community. These grants are very competitive and our success in this round is a tribute to the strength of our faculty and students engaged in South Asia related studies. We are delighted to be able to continue all the exciting programming that we have planned for the upcoming years as well as start new initiatives.

Sanchita Saxena, Associate Director

## CSAS AWARDED A \$2.4 MILLION TITLE VI GRANT

We are proud to report that CSAS has been awarded a \$2.4 million Title VI grant by the U.S. Dept of Education. This award will not only allow us to continue with our dynamic range of South Asia related research and language programming, but will also, over the next four years, help us launch exciting new initiatives and programs around the following three study areas that we have identified for special focus:

**Pakistan:** Using a variety of fora—including workshops, a large-scale conference, public lectures and film screenings—our spotlight on Pakistan aims to deepen our understanding of the nation and focus on critical, yet understudied developments in Pakistani society, including: the emergence of a pugnacious media, a vibrant Lawyers Movement, and crucial non-governmental work aimed at improving public health and women's rights.

**Water & Sanitation:** The lack of access to safe water and sanitation in large parts of South Asia undermines human health, human dignity, economic

development, and gender equity. Yet many efforts are under way to provide affordable water and sanitation, some with great promise, across India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. CSAS will organize a series of workshops and lectures to highlight both the causes and consequences of inadequate access, but also some of the ways forward.

**The South Asian Novel:** Though there have been a number of studies of the beginning of novel writing—and thus of the process of modernization—in late 19th and early 20th century India, there has been practically no work on the 1910 to 1930s, once novel writing really came into own. If this was the age of Gandhi, fervent nationalism, and non-violence, it was also the age of violence on several other fronts—peasant unrest, communal strife, armed and underground resistance to British rule, Dalit agitations, and the new role that women were beginning to play in the public sphere. We plan to organize a conference that will bring together people working on the novel in Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Malayalam,

Tamil, Urdu and others, amongst them also the first Anglophone novels from the subcontinent.

UC Berkeley has participated in Title VI since its inception in 1959. Funding from Title VI supports core activities across the Berkeley campus, including the operation of regional institutes and centers, language instruction, support for graduate students in a variety of disciplines, public outreach, and library acquisitions in targeted foreign languages. The grant also provides funding for the Foreign Language and Area Studies Program, which supports foreign language acquisition.

The other seven UC Berkeley centers to receive this grant are:

- Center for Southeast Asia Studies (consortium with UCLA)
- Center for African Studies
- Institute of Slavic, East European, & Eurasian Studies
- Center for Middle Eastern Studies
- Center for Latin American Studies
- Institute of East Asian Studies
- Institute of European Studies

### A DESI REPORTERS PERSPECTIVE, CONT'D

(from p. 1)

through the tremendous outpouring of support from the South Asian-American community, as well as in the considerably more diverse South Asian studies faculty at UC Berkeley.

Silicon Valley Indian Americans may be physically and temperamentally more close to Stanford, but it is to Berkeley's enormous credit that a group of Silicon Valley community leaders got together with Cal to organize two extraordinary events. At the risk of ruffling some feathers, I would say that even more than the India Studies chair, these events represent the finest example of how a community and a liberal arts university can come together.

I am referring here to the two conferences hosted in Berkeley by a group of civic minded Silicon Valley professionals called the Foundation for Democratic Reforms in India. It brought together

formidable intellectual resources of a world-class university.

It is my sense that community involvement with the university will continue to be influenced by the resin that binds Cal and all communities—its students. Berkeley now has a vibrant, substantial Indian student contingent—the undergrad (mostly U.S.-raised) Indian students manage to sell out the cavernous Zellerbach auditorium every year with their annual Indus shows where they regale the audience with *bhangra* and *raas garba*. And yes, most of them still want to be engineers, doctors and lawyers.

But deep down there is still a craving to find out more about their roots, to create a connection with the old country through developmental activities. Hindi classes are invariably oversubscribed.

This will continue to bring the community and Cal closer.

How will these ties between the campus and Indian community play out in the future? That's a difficult question to answer, given the protean nature of both the community as well as the campus. Suffice it to say that there is enormous potential for both the community and the campus to benefit. All it takes is a bit of commitment and initiative. *Carpe diem.*

*Ashfaque Swapan has been writing for India-West newspaper, the preeminent weekly newspaper for the Indian American community in the U.S. West Coast, for nearly 20 years. His articles have appeared in The Times of India, Pioneer, The Week, Anand Lok in India as well as the Daily Star and Prothom Alo in Bangladesh. The views are the author's own.*



Protesters ring the audience as Chhattisgarh Director General of Police Vishwa Ranjan (standing, seen from behind) speaks at a conference on justice and law at UC Berkeley. [Sharat Lin photo].

a remarkable who's who of movers and shakers in India, academics from both India and the U.S. to two conferences and discussed issues of vital import to India—how its democracy actually works (or does not), and the quality of its judiciary. (Berkeley being Berkeley, a bunch of loud protesters showed up when the police chief of Chhattisgarh got ready to deliver his speech.)

For me, the events married the best tendencies in the community with the

### GENEROUS GIFT BY KANWAL REKHI TO FUND CONFERENCE ON URBANIZATION IN INDIA



Technology pioneer and philanthropist, Kanwal Rekhi has pledged \$100K towards a CSAS conference on the 21st Century Indian City to be held in New Delhi, India in March 2011.

The 21st century will be an urban century. But it will also be an Asian century with much of this urbanization taking place in Asian cities, especially in India and China. This conference will examine how such urbanization carries with it tremendous potential for economic prosperity, the consolidation of middle-class aspirational lifestyles, growth of civil society and experiments with local democracy. But, such urbanization also presents significant challenges including the degradation of urban poverty and inequality, the inadequacy of infrastructure, and the ecological impact of stifling pollution and increasing carbon footprints. India's rapid urban growth thus presents a call to scholars, policy-makers, planners, and civil society activists to engage with these various potentialities and challenges. The aim of this conference will be to try and set an agenda for research and policy such that the Indian city and its transformations can be better understood and better managed.

## IN MEMORIAM


**SARAH KAILATH**  
 1941 ~ 2008

Sarah was born on February 5, 1941, in a small village in Kerala in South India. With five older brothers, she soon developed the independent spirit that was her hallmark. After she had earned her Bachelor's degree in English Literature, a suitor with a doctorate from MIT came calling. She worried that he didn't speak Malayalam but, completely taken by her beauty and poise, he was able to win her over. Sarah Jacob and Thomas Kailath were married in Kerala on June 11, 1962, and left to make their home in California. After forty years at Stanford University, Professor Kailath assumed Emeritus status in 2003. Tom and Sarah have four children, Ann, Paul, Priya and Ryan. Ann married Tom's student, George Verghese, and they have two children, Deia and Amaya.

Soon after the birth of her third child in 1969, Sarah earned another Bachelor's degree, this time in Education. Her teaching credentials led to jobs in local schools, but an invitation from a friend inspired her to become an entrepreneur and start a retail business—Le Fromage at the Stanford Shopping Center. Thirteen

**THE ANNUAL SARAH KAILATH MEMORIAL LECTURE**  
**WOMEN & LEADERSHIP**

CSAS is proud to announce the launch of the "Sarah Kailath Memorial Lecture," an annual lecture series on the theme of Women and Leadership, in which distinguished scholars and activists from all over the world will address critical social issues. This lecture series has been established in memory of Sarah Kailath (February 5 1941 - October 15, 2008), a long-time supporter of CSAS's mission and activities and in whose name the center holds an endowed chair in India studies called the "Sarah Kailath Chair in India Studies."

Our first Sarah Kailath Memorial lecture was delivered on February 21, 2010 by Kamala D. Harris, the first woman District Attorney in San Francisco's history, as well as the first



Kamala Harris  
 San Francisco District Attorney

African American and South Asian American woman in California to hold the office.

Harris, who served as California Co-Chair of Barack Obama's presidential campaign, was born in Oakland, California and attended the historically African American college, Howard University in Washington, D.C. She received a Juris Doctor (J.D.) from University of California, Hastings College of the Law in 1989. She is the daughter of a Tamil Indian mother, Dr. Shyamala Gopalan, a breast cancer specialist, who immigrated to the United States from Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India in 1960, and a Jamaican American father, Donald Harris, Professor of Economics, Emeritus at Stanford University.

years later, in 1991, when their youngest child was nine years old, Sarah decided to retire to give herself time to develop her many interests, to travel, and to devote to volunteer activities.

In 2003, Sarah was diagnosed with a rare and challenging cancer. Under the care of a dedicated medical team and with the strong support of family and friends, she defied all the odds. She weathered a long series of treatments with characteristic courage, resilience, grace, and faith. She worked hard to settle many issues dear to her, especially the formation of a charitable trust dedicated

to the education and uplift of women and children in India.

Sarah passed away on October 15, 2008, very peacefully and surrounded by her family. A few days earlier, she had marked this passage from Ecclesiastes in her prayer book: "*To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.*"

Though we deeply miss her, her beauty, her smiles, her empathy and generosity, her warmth and good humor, her wisdom and her love, we rejoice in the example and in the wonderful memories and legacies that she has left us.

## IN MEMORIAM

**WITH ADITYA**  
**BY LAWRENCE COHEN**

Through the many years we were together as friends and colleagues at Berkeley, and during time spent together at Point Reyes, in Carmel, in Hawaii, in Philadelphia, and in Delhi, Aditya always could capture and hold a moment with a beautiful couplet, familiar or more often obscure, in his beloved Urdu. So now, as I continue to try to imagine life without his gentle and generous presence, I find myself lacking the words....

I turn to Agha Shahid Ali, another with great love and poetic gifts who died far too young, and through his poems and translations he directs me to Faiz.

*Gul karo shamin, barha do mai-o-mina-o-ayagh*  
*Apne be khwab kivaron ko muqaffal kar lo*  
*Ab yahan koi nahin, koi nahin ayega!*

Blow out the lamps, break the glasses, erase all memory of wine.  
 Heart, bolt forever your sleepless doors, tell every dream that knocks to go away.  
 No one, now no one will ever return.

"But Janab," I hear Adit saying, offering me a far more apposite quotation, and then what would follow would be a flood of elegant, pungent verse, offer-

ing us a way if not of consolation than of some understanding in the face of his loss. Inevitably we would be cooking, whether in his home in Berkeley or later in his beautiful South Philadelphia brownstone. Perhaps a classic dish reinterpreted, perhaps something marvelous from a medieval cookbook, or maybe part of suite of pleasures inspired by Aditya's work on Nazir Akbarabadi, the great poet of the Agra bazaars. We might pause while Aditya would show me an objet d'art that he had picked up, and discuss its provenance. Or we might turn to the pressing scholarly, political, and personal issues of our own era. But with Aditya the present could only be gained through a rigorous plumbing of the possibilities of the past. Through time with him, one was given a sense of the centrality of aesthetic and ethical cultivation to the life of the mind, a gift I cherish.

Aditya grew up in New Delhi and went to the Doon School and Bowdoin College. His was always close to his father, Colonel in the Indian Army, his mother, a homeopathic physician, and his beloved sister Aradhna. Aradhna and her husband Ashwani moved to the New York era and both were tremendous supports to Aditya as he lived through the unexpected illness that eventually led to his untimely death. Aditya received his doctoral training at the University of Chicago in the history of religion. His work there on Indian Sufi

romances and how these helped us reconceptualize the modern relation of Hinduism and Islam led to his translation, with Simon Weightman, of *Madhumalati: An Indian Sufi Romance* (Oxford, 2000). Many scholarly articles, translations, and popular reviews followed. But for those of us fortunate to spend time with him at Berkeley, at the University of Pennsylvania, or at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton where he was recently a fellow, the breadth, passion, and erudition of his interests were most wonderfully displayed in the form of life, and of scholarly engagement, that he worked so carefully to craft, and to share. It has been a year: I miss him terribly.

I end with a reflection from the poet Firaq Gorakhpuri, one that embodies Adit's vision of religion and life as I experienced it: "Real culture is that which embraces the best ideals of the entire human race. Granted, that these ideals are multi-layered. Some layers are observable, some invisible. The awareness of these depths is the true meaning of culture."



Aditya Behl  
 1966 ~ 2009

## SOUTH ASIAN PERFORMING ARTS IN CAL

*a commentary by Professor of South & Southeast Asian Studies, Vasudha Dalmia*



*Vasudha Dalmia, Magis-tretti Distinguished Professor in South & Southeast Asian Studies*

In the last months the Center offered, once again, a wide range of performances to viewers on campus and the wider community in the Bay Area. In the breadth of their offerings- plays, concerts, readings, films, and the variety of modes, 'traditional', musical, spiritual, modern- these presentations reflected in some measure the wealth of forms and practices current in the subcontinent. To speak of just two items from opposite ends of the spectrum: if on the one hand we had Nautanki, a North Indian folk theater form performed by Bay Area artistes, on the other, we were presented with excerpts from plays in English by a well known (South) Indian playwright and theater personality.

To begin with nautanki. Try and imagine the theatre and performance landscape before film and cable TV. An endless spectrum of forms, and I speak only of the North Indian plains, Raslila, and Ramlila, around Krishna and Rama, performed on religious occasions, dance and song sequences (which we know today primarily from the Bombay film), performed in the homes of the wealthy and in temples, story telling in village squares, with and without scrolls, and musical theatre dramatizing well known tales, known variously as Svang, Sangit, Khayal or Nautanki, which kept audiences enthralled through whole nights. These were the forms, from which the urban Parsi or Company theatre borrowed profusely to create its own distinct idiom in late nineteenth century Bombay. But even with the coming of the silent film, the more rural Nautanki and other such vibrant forms would continue to prosper and would go on to inspire and inform the talkies, which would begin to replace all these with time, but in the process borrow heavily from all of them.

We don't know when the Nautanki came into existence; it had many variations and was known by many names, but in one form or the other, it was favorite form of entertainment from the Panjab to the outer reaches of Bihar. Its presence would be documented by British civil servants from at least the mid-nineteenth century on. One of them, Richard Temple, would even transcribe and publish scripts in his collection of tales and legends. Lithography and print would, in fact, lead to the publication of a large number of scripts; some are still in circulation. Nautanki dramatizes well-known tales, taken from romantic ballads, from the epics, from mythology, from Persian romance and local legends. What is common across the many variants is its operatic form, vibrating with lively dancing, with pulsating drum beats and full throated singing. And it dwells unnnhibitedly on moments of high emotion

Before the advent of film, it used to be the single most popular form of entertainment at village fairs and small towns.

However in India today, faced with waning patronage and dwindling state support, as well as the popularity of Indian cinema and cable television, this traditional theatre form is nearing oblivion and is struggling to survive. But all over the world, as traditional and indigenous art forms fade in one place, say, Northern India, they show up in surprisingly far away places, like this one has in Fresno, California. Devendra Sharma, Professor of Communication at California State Fresno, is trying his best to keep this tradition alive. Professor Sharma comes from an illustrious line of Nautanki exponents (his father, the great Pundit Ram Dayal Sharma, is one of the last remaining living masters of this art form) and he himself is a writer, performer and director of Nautanki. In Spring 2009, Professor Sharma staged, for the first time

ever on US soil, a classic of this genre, a nautanki titled "Sultana Daku" which the CSAS, with the co-sponsorship of the Departments of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies, and Music, brought to campus. Though the version presented was abridged, it was a huge success and the campus community responded with great enthusiasm to it. So much so, that this year Professor Sharma and his troupe were invited back with a new nautanki titled "Mission Suhani".

So, if on the one hand we have the phenomenon of a largely English speaking Diaspora reliving a traditional Hindi/Hindustani form but also ready to experiment with it to come to grips with its present reality, on the other we have the reality of a subcontinent whose middle classes struggle with similar exploitations, tragedies, comedies, not only in the many

### A FESTIVAL OF KABIR

*Spring 2009*

CSAS was proud to organize a series of events celebrating the poetry and legacy of the 15th century mystic weaver-poet Kabir, between February 5 and May 1, 2009.

A provocative and challenging figure who can't be pinned down by any religious label, Kabir is admired by Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, secularists, and atheists, as well as by followers of the Kabir sect who claim him as a God. A profound mystic to some, a biting social critic to others, a Dalit hero to others, Kabir is all of these things and much more.

The festival consisted of the screenings of four documentary films on Kabir made by Shabnam Virmani, who has dedicated considerable time in journeying to archive the legacy of Kabir. The result, a series of four documentaries: *Had-Anhad* (Bounded-Boundless), *Chalo Hamara Des* (Come to My Country), *Kabira Khada Bazaar Mein* (In the Market Stands Kabir), *Koi Sunta Hai* (Someone is Listening) compiles some very visible oral repositories of the cultural and political legacy of Kabir in the subcontinent

The festival culminated in a performance by renowned Kabir folksinger, Prahlad Singh Tipanya, who is increasingly recognized as a remarkable exponent of Kabir's music and meanings. He lives in Lunyakhedi village in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. A rural schoolteacher, he began singing in the late 1970s after being attracted by the sound of the folk *tambura*. His rare talent, passion, and insight have caused him to be increasingly recognized as a remarkable exponent of Kabir's music and meanings. Among many other honors, he received the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi award in 2008. Tipanyaji is one of the

main artists featured in Shabnam Virmani's films. Playing the *tambura* (a five-stringed plucked and strummed instrument originally from Rajasthan), and *kartal* (a percussion instrument played with the fingers of the left hand), he took to the stage and expounded on some of Kabir's best-known poetry. Stanford faculty member Linda Hess, who has been translating and writing on Kabir for many years and who has worked closely with Prahlad Tipanya and Shabnam Virmani since 2002, translated the Kabir verses. Even though many in the audience could not understand Tipaniya's rendering of Kabir's verses in the central Indian Hindi dialect, his rich and beautiful voice had the audience mesmerised.

The festival proved to be an opportunity for audiences to experience the joy of Kabir in song, while engaging with the radically transformative power of his poetry. It offered a powerful encounter with the philosophy of Kabir, generating moments of critical self-awareness and reflection on ideas of cultural identity and social divisions, death and impermanence, oral traditions and the nature of knowledge.



*Prahlah Singh Tipanya (2nd from R) and his musical group*

## ARTS, CONT'D (from p. 5)

regional languages but also in English. Poile Sengupta writes plays in English and they revolve around women. As she says in the introduction to Women Centre Stage, her recently published collection of plays: "The six plays in this volume are distinct from each other in structure, theme and style. What is common though is that they all place women centre stage."

Poile Sengupta is a writer of children's literature in English; she started writing columns for children in India's best-known newspapers from 1968 on. She is equally well known as a writer of plays in English. She has her own theatre group, Theatre Club, in Bangalore, has acted in several plays and in the award winning film The Outhouse.

English theatre in India is a relatively young phenomenon. It is related to the 'serious' modern urban theatre in the great colonial cities of Bombay and Calcutta that evolved from at the mid nineteenth century on and was much influenced by models from England. But the plays written and performed there were all in the languages of the region- Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati.

Indian writing in English, and it began happening early, was primarily in the many prose forms that we have become so familiar with today- the short story, the novel. However, particularly after independence, as the Indian middle classes turned increasingly to English, in education and in public and professional lives, the drama of their own lives also began to be played out in English. Not surprisingly then, it is from 1947 that we begin to find



(L-R) Poile Sengupta, her daughter, Anasuya & her husband, Abhijit performing a staged reading of some of her plays.

plays being written in English. It was no longer the language of imperial power alone; it had become officially Indian. By the late 1960s there was a sizeable corpus of plays in English, particularly from Bombay and then later also from Bangalore. And they began to be staged, sporadically, it is true, but ever more on

## GACHER PANCHALI A NATOK BY CAL'S INTERMEDIATE BANGLA CLASS OF 2009

Cal's Intermediate Bangla class of 2009 recently staged an excellent performance of a play titled, *Gacher Panchali* (Song of the Tree: An Arboreal Tale). The play, a musical, was mostly written and directed by Rebecca Whittington, who also wrote its lyrics and music. Sumita Mitra, Farzana Abed, Julie Booth, Anika Tuba, Rita Ganguly, Sumana Moitra and Ballari Mukherjee comprised the rest of the cast and crew. The musical was produced by Chintapukur (Think tank).



Rebecca Whittington & Farzana Abed in one of the scenes of the play.

The musical, based on vignettes from Bangla literature by the greats such as Manik Bandyopadhyay, Ritwik Ghatak, Sukumar Ray, Shakti Chattopadhyay, Jibanananda Das, Shamsur Rahman, to name a few, tells the story of an *asvattha* (banyan) tree in a small village in East Bengal, that was about to be cut down, but was saved at the last minute from the ax after the village folk successfully battled against the evil forces that wanted to chop it down.

The students, though they received support from their instructor, Abhijeet Paul, managed the production almost entirely independently. Rebecca's incredible talent, which shone through in the original music, score and lyrics, combined with the remarkable vocals and performance by the students created a moving and wistful production that was truly an incredible experience as well as a testament to the quality and level of Cal's Bangla instruction.

## NAUTANKI Bringing Back India's Lost Opera

**N**autanki is a folk performance tradition of northern India with vibrates with lively dancing, pulsating drumbeats, and full-throated singing. Thanks to the efforts of Devendra Sharma, Professor of Communication at California State Fresno, the CAL community had the unique and rare pleasure of witnessing not one but two *nautankis*: "Sultana Daku" in Spring'09 and "Mission Suhani" in Spring'10.

"Sultana Daku," a classic of the *nautanki* genre, tells in song and



Cast of "Sultana Daku" with Profs. Vasudha Dalmia & Usha Jain

dance plus lots of comedy, the story of Sultana, the famous *dacoit* (thief) of early 20th century India, who lived in the jungles of Uttar Pradesh with his gang of 300 robbers and his lover, Phoolkanwar and plagued the agents of a colonial government by robbing from them and giving to the poor. A Robin Hood kind of tale, set in colonial India, it is a raucous and heart-touching story of a noble bandit and his triumph over corrupt officialdom.

the urban stage. It would take another couple of decades for such plays to situate themselves yet more squarely in their given cultural contexts- no longer apologetic about writing in an idiom regarded as elite and at least partly alien, but part and parcel of a shared dialogue, of shared concerns and of a shared past.

Poile, her daughter Anasuya, and her husband Abhijit read out from her very

"Mission Suhani," a recent creation of Devendra Sharma's,



Scene from "Mission Suhani"

follows a confident young Indian bride called Suhani, whose new husband has taken her dowry and left her in India. *Nautanki* can and does draw attention to serious social issues through music and humor and this particular one raises a very contemporary social issue relating to immigration, dowry, and domestic violence. It critically examines the phenomenon of bride abandonment by US-based Indian grooms. Such cases have become so common that in India the Indian government has now formally established a special cell functioning under the National Commission for Women (NCW) to deal with the issues of women married to non resident Indians (NRI) and published a guidebook for families planning to marry their daughters abroad. Within the US there are no less than 22 organizations working within the South Asian community to address these issues.

powerful plays to present to us the many nuances of English in middle class homes, its place in domestic interiors as also College English departments, showing up the power of English, its Tamil and Hindi inflections, its diasporic use and misuse, but most of all, its pliability in throwing into relief the world of women, riven by violence and exploitation, from the factory to the home to the office.



Abhijeet Paul (extreme right), lecturer of Bangla at UCB with the cast

## FROM BERKELEY TO BANGALORE

*Nupur Basu, an independent journalist and documentary filmmaker from India who taught the course on 'International Reporting: India' on her semester at Berkeley*



Nupur Basu

The bright pink Japanese magnolias were in full bloom in February when I arrived in Berkeley.

The campus was getting its spring makeover and while everything looked picture-perfect, something was simmering below the surface. I had arrived in the university town, famed for its counter-culture and Vietnam protests of the 60s. Only, I had done so fifty years later, in a globalised 21st century world, facing one of the worst economic recessions in history.

It was a crucial time to be in Berkeley. The severe budget cuts for the UC system had brought the students and faculty on the same page of protests, strikes and mobilisation. Funding cuts of up to 36 per cent for a public university like Berkeley had angered everyone. The more militant ones were indulging in dramatic protests like hostage-taking. Would I get a taste of the old Berkeley of the sixties?

The month of February and March saw innumerable protests culminating in a major strike with hundreds marching to Sacramento shouting: "No Cuts: No Fees: Education Should be Free". It was important to understand what the publicly funded universities like Berkeley in the UC system had meant to America and the world. I learnt to my amazement that 40 per cent of students admitted to UC Berkeley were first generation college-goers. By imposing such massive funds cuts, the government was ensuring that the national treasures that the country had built from its public education system, would be badly dented from now on. The cuts would mean that the first generation college goer, usually from a disadvantaged background, would be hit hardest. So would international students.

But though the protests were building up, one could sense that the mobilisation was not as massive as in the past. Something in this old university's character had changed. The February-March strikes at Berkeley, old timers said, were not a patch on the agitations of the past. Was the Berkeley counter-culture under threat?

I was told that there was a perceptible demographic change in this university town with the inflow of the more conservative Chinese and Asian students. It was even suggested that since these ethnic groups were more career-oriented, they did not want to take ideological positions on public funding and welfare issues. While in the early days the radical

students would mount their protests on Sproul Plaza, the place was now taken up by Chinese drummers belting out martial sounds.

The university town had its share of disturbing images - from mentally ill people camping out in the open in the People's Park (a remnant of the Reagan era when as Governor of California he had ordered that mental hospitals be shut down) and the homeless women and men who lived on the side-walks on Telegraph Avenue with their dogs to keep them warm. Berkeley, I thought, was a strange melting pot of Nobel Laureates (with their special NL designated parking lots) and the innumerable others living on the edge.

Yet there were priceless stories of social mobility that I shall always treasure from Berkeley. One afternoon as I walked down from Euclid and Hearst just outside the North Gate with the Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism, Neil Henry, he waved to one of the passing bus drivers. Most of them were African-Americans and Neil knew them all on first-name terms and had individual stories to tell about them. On this occasion he told me that the driver he had just waved to, had two sons. One of them was studying in Harvard, and the other, in Princeton!

The intellectual delights of a university town are always many and Berkeley provided its share of cerebral activity. Besides listening to some invigorating discussions at the J-School on Africa, Mexico, Cuba and attending some intense soul-searching sessions on the challenges before the media in the West, the other place I was drawn to was the Centre for South Asian Studies, a centre buzzing with interesting talks and presentations. It was here that I picked up the latest nuances of the US view on the Af-Pak crises and what role India could play to resolve it. There were other fascinating insights from mathematics don, David Mumford, about how calculus was in use in Kerala well before Newton.

Besides the world of words, the world of music in Berkeley held many attractions too. The *Noon Concerts* at the Hertz Concert Hall on Wednesdays and Fridays were a perfect example of Berkeley's rich musical tradition. The auditorium would fill up by noon, and then, in true Berkeley tradition, at 12.10, the musicians would take their positions on stage and the music would begin.

The concerts were usually a great way to showcase the talent of the Berkeley Music School. If you were lucky, as I was, you could listen to a piece played on a 17th century violin which had just been restored lovingly by experts. The concerts were short and intense lasting just an hour. Everyone emerged energised after the lunch-hour musical treat.

Then there were the Zellerbach Hall concerts where one watched the legendary Senegalese singer Baaba Maal and Arlo Guthrie of Woodstock fame perform, the latter with three generations of

his family on stage, the youngest being his three-year-old grand-daughter.

Taking in the view of the Bay along with the skyline of San Francisco and the Golden Gate from Tilden Park, sitting in the Rose Garden and admiring the famous pink *Berkeley Rose*, walking in the Marina and watching migratory birds, savouring Berkeley's different cuisines and ice creams, going organic at *Berkeley Bowl* were some of the pleasures of campus life. All of this, done in the company of friends drawn from Japan, Norway, Africa, Germany, New Zealand, Korea, Iraq, USA, Britain, Sweden, India, Nepal and Pakistan, made it even more special.

In the impeccably kept Bancroft archive, there was also the excitement of discovering with my psychiatrist husband that between the entire stretch of San Francisco in California and Tezpur in Assam, India, there were no other mental hospitals in the year 1868 in the world. There was also the sheer joy of handling a rare map of Bangalore, my home city, in the same archive. It showed the assault on the city in 1793 by the East India Company Army led by Lord Cornwallis, who partly redeemed his failure to prevent the American Independence by conquering Mysore! Berkeley and Bangalore were not far apart even 250 years ago, it seems...

Connections between Berkeley and India were everywhere: whether it was to do with *Bharatnatyam* or street signage. We found metal flaps on the university streets with signage stamped 'India' and marvelled at Indian engineering of the old days. We met and spent some great moments with the famous *Kathakali* dancer from

Kerala, K P Kunhiraman, now a sprightly 80 years of age, and his American wife, Katherine, a *Bharatnatyam* dancer, both of



Nupur Basu at the 2010 graduation ceremony at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism.

who have been teaching Berkeley students the joys of Indian dance for the last three decades in their school, *Kalamjali*.

Indian influence is incomplete without talking about food: the *biryani*, mutton *kathi* rolls and *saag paneer* from *Cafe Raj* got the stamp of approval of my students and colleagues. There were also some amazing ambassadors from India I encountered- Harminder Singh, a Sikh cab driver who had the old-world charm of a Jullunderite and a Tibetan waiter working in one of Berkeley's popular Italian restaurants on College Avenue. To my utter surprise, he told me he came from Bylakuppe, a Tibetan refugee camp, 80 miles from Bangalore.

The world is flat, I thought, at such moments. And Berkeley, a true melting pot.

## CS IN THE CITY

Essay written by 2010 Tata ISES intern, Kate Lyons, on her internship experience.

In the United States, distrust of big business is as American as apple pie. At University of California, Berkeley, a far-left college both geographically and politically (A.K.A. Socialist HQ), we are trained to be suspicious of large, multi-national conglomerates such as Tata. Described by America's right-wing as "commie-liberal-pinko-socialist-treehugger-populist-peaceniks", Berkeley students are known to nurture a deep mistrust of white collar corporate thugs; the corporate "man", homo corporatus, is to be disdained for his conspiracy against economic and social equality.

In reality, these stereotypes are distortions of a complex truth. Students are taught to be critical, but it is incorrect to describe all Berkeley students as liberal fanatics, precisely as unfair as characterizing all corporations as menaces to society. Although I was aware of this before I left the US for India to work with Tata on some Corporate Sustainability (CS) initiatives, I still maintained some bias against big business: including considering CS as

a publicity stunt to boost a corporation's image, rather than a genuine effort for significant change. In all honesty, my inner pinko was ready to meticulously dissect Tata, (particularly Tata Teleservices Limited, TTSL) and its "sustainable initiatives" with scathing principled discernment. I was in for a surprise.

Over the past three weeks, I have encountered exceptionally dedicated individuals—people so committed to improving the world they are an inspiration. Every single TTSL CS initiative that I have observed is genuine and effective, all contributing to economic empowerment and sustainable change, rather than



*Kate Lyons with her Tata Teleservices Team in Delhi. (L-R) Jitendra Routray, Sidharth Gaur, Rajiv Narayan (project reviewer), Sangeeta Robinson (project guide), Kate Lyons, Shernavaz Colah (TISES coordinator, Tata Services Ltd.) and Nidhi Kapoor*

the assumed corporate lip-serviced, blunt charity.

Added to this discovery was another realization. When traveling to India, an expectation exists for students to undergo a dramatic philosophical revelation upon arrival, something I failed to encounter. Stepping on the hot, humid, Mumbai tarmac, one is expecting to be swept away by the requisite "Eat, Pray, Love / Shantaram" romanticism of the

Third World that has so recently given the chick lit genre and tourism industry such a boost. My own lack of sudden emotional breakthrough, (or breakdown, for that matter) first made me feel that I would have to add "incorrigible-self-centered-shallow-20-something-materialist" to my previous appellation, but then I had a REAL revelation. This romantic "India experience" is in itself packaged

## UC Berkeley/Tata Academic Programs

CS is proud to announce that the UC Berkeley - Tata academic programs on campus have grown.

In 2008, UC Berkeley and The Tata Group, one of India's largest private sector conglomerates initiatives launched the **Tata International Social Entrepreneurship Scheme (TISES)**. TISES provides students (primarily undergraduates) with opportunities to contribute to community initiative projects of Tata Group companies in India. This year we have secured funding from Tata to also establish the Tata Fellows program for students not necessarily familiar with India. Three awards of \$5,000 each will be given to graduate students and three awards of \$2,500 will be given to advanced undergraduate students to study topics relevant to contemporary India for up to three months.

The **Tata Study Grants** program was established in 2009 by the Tata Sons office in Washington DC at the Center for South Asia Studies, UC Berkeley as well as at two other prominent US universities. The six grants – three senior research grants of \$5000 and three junior research grants of \$2500 – are designed to facilitate scholarly excellence among undergraduate and graduate students interested in pursuing research on contemporary Indian issues. Grant recipients, known as Tata Fellows, are selected by committees formed within each university, and have the opportunity to travel to India to carry out their research.

and forced, commodified and objectified: a sort of nouveau Orientalism that encourages self-righteous self-discovery instead of pompous Western-superiority. Thinking this way misses the larger point, which in itself is more fantastic: India is ordinary. My experience here has shown me how refreshingly approachable India is, and seeing through the cloud of contrived exoticism has revealed a straightforward reality. The same concerns exist here: anxiety for the impoverished, crusade for public awareness, struggle between empathy and apathy. It is counterproductive to concentrate on perceived differences—it is better to celebrate our striking similarities, generating esteem for each other (and all that the other has to offer). This perspective has enabled me to learn a lot from the CS work TTSL is engaged in, and shown me how I can apply the same strategy to programs back home, in making American Corporate Sustainability as real as I have seen it to be in India. *(cont'd on next page)*

## 2010 Tata ISES Interns

**Ryan Ballard** (Major: Anthropology, Minor: Global Poverty & Practice)  
Project: Reach of Health Services of CSS Division of Tata Steel, Jamshedpur.

**Robin Marie Collins**  
(Major: Political Economy, Minor: Global Poverty & Practice)  
Project: Diagnostic study of Livelihood programmes. Project will lead to creation of strategic, operational and financial plans for livelihood initiatives of Tata Chemicals, Mithapur

**Kate Lyons**  
(Major: Linguistics, Minor: Global Poverty & Practice)  
Project: Carbon footprint reduction programs at Tata Teleservices, Delhi.

**Neda Saghafi**  
(Major: Business & Psychology)  
Project: To make a road map for growth of tomorrow's agriculture for Okhamandal keeping in mind environment & economic impacts at Tata Chemicals, Mithapur.

## 2010~2011 Tata Fellows

Undergraduates awarded \$2500 each

**Malia Lee Hunt** (Major: Gender & Women's Studies, Minor: Global Poverty & Practice) for her work in aiding in women's poverty reversal, and women's empowerment efforts in Rajasthan.

**Reya Sehgal** (Major: Theatre, Minor: Global Poverty & Practice) for her project, "Postcolonial Delhi: The Commonwealth Games and the Transformation of Urban Design and Identity,"

**Jacqueline C. Barin** (Major: Public Health, Minor: Global Poverty & Practice) for studying the prevalence of viral hepatitis among pregnant women in Mysore, India.

Awarded \$5000 each

**Zachary Burt** (Ph.D Candidate, Energy and Resources Group) for researching the politics and economics of urban water distribution systems in India.

**Neha Kumar** (Ph.D Candidate, School of Information) to study the adoption of new media for the production and dissemination of folk music in rural India.

**Andrew Hao** (Ph.D Candidate, Cultural Anthropology) for investigating the flows of transnational corporate social responsibility initiatives between contemporary India and China



## BANGLADESH HOPES & CHALLENGES: A BERKELEY CONFERENCE

In a symposium headlined by a stirring speech by Bangladesh's UN envoy, Berkeley academics highlighted challenges and achievements of contemporary Bangladesh. Reprinted with permission from the November 12, 2009 issue of *The Siliconeer*.



(l-r): Ananya Roy, Ahmed Badruzzaman, Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the U.N., A.K. Abdul Momen, Allan Smith, Isha Ray, and Sanchita Saxena

To the chagrin of many a Bangladeshi, and not a few sympathizers of that densely populated nation all over the world—the nation has become a byword for poverty, backwardness and misery in any discussion of international policymaking. To be sure, Bangladesh faces daunting problems, not the least of which is a huge population squeezed in a small landmass that faces a dire threat of global warming which could put even a lot of that precious space underwater. Corruption and political unrest are also facts of life. However, that's not the whole story—far from it. This cash-strapped nation has made considerable strides in female literacy, infant mortality and population control, and is ahead of India in many of these indicators despite a much lower per capita income.

Led by a Bangladeshi diplomat, four experts from the University of California at Berkeley talked about policy areas critical to Bangladesh's growth and development. The keynote address by delivered by Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, Bangladesh Permanent Representative, United Nations. Momen is refreshingly different from a conventional diplomat, and for good reason. A professional diplomat he is not. He is a U.S. college professor with a long-standing record of human rights activism and community engagement which has got him in trouble with intolerant Bangladeshi governments before. He made a compelling case—complete with data and statistics (he is, after all, a college professor by profession)—that democracies invariably perform better than autocratic states in improving economic growth and prosperity. He also talked about Bangladesh's impressive record in terms of socio economic indicators and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's dream of 100 percent literacy. Another issue that was on his mind was the threat that Bangladesh faces due to climate change. He called on Bangla-

(cont'd from previous page)

TTSL has incorporated amazing projects in a community that is comparable to our own; proving that effective and sustainable change is possible. So, I'm proud of my involvement in this large, multinational conglomerate. It's shown me that the inner commie-liberal-pinko-socialist-treehugger-populist-peacenik can fight towards social innovation with the help of the corporate elite, in the urban comfort of the city. Now, THAT is a revolution.

deshis in the U.S. to mobilize support in the U.S Congress for a robust U.S. commitment to battling global warming.

Ahmed Badruzzaman, a scientist with Chevron who also teaches at Berkeley, spoke about the twin challenges that Bangladesh faces in terms of its growing energy needs and climate change. Rising CO2 emissions pose a potent threat for countries like Bangladesh. Increased floods, melting of glaciers and the polar ice cap will lead to a horrendous global scenario of submergence of the Ganges-Brahmaputra, Nile, Mekong and Mississippi basins. The only way to deal with the challenge is mitigation and adaptation, and he suggested the use of alternative energy and transfer of technology from developed countries, which have the wherewithal and skills to cope better. Bangladesh will need to plan for adaptation. Issues that deserve close consideration include introduction of flood resistant rice, building infrastructure to deal with climate refugees due to the rise of sea level. Bangladesh also needs to think regionally, he said, because "climate doesn't know any regional boundaries."

Ananya Roy, a professor of city & regional planning, talked about the remarkable role of non governmental institutions in presenting a "possibility of an alternative model of development." Roy is an author of a book on which studies those who manage poverty and sheds light on how powerful institutions control "capital," or circuits of profit and investment, as well as "truth," or authoritative knowledge about poverty. Such dominant practices are challenged by alternative paradigms of development, and the book details these as well. Using the case of microfinance, the book participates in a set of fierce debates about development - from the role of markets to the secrets of successful pro-poor institutions. While the work of Grameen Bank founder Mohammad Yunus is more widely known, Roy also talked about the substantive efforts of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee or BRAC, founded during Bangladesh's independence movement in 1971 by a visionary development thinker, Fazle Hasan Abed. BRAC and Grameen do a lot more than microfinance, she said. In particular, BRAC's work is deeply informed by the experience of the independence movement, when Abed gave up a corporate career to work in relief work. After independence, that transmuted into development work, and today the two are coupled.

Allan Smith, professor of epidemiology in the School of Public Health, spoke about the continuing crisis of arsenic poisoning in Bangladesh. He called the arsenic crisis the "largest poisoning of a population in history." From December 1996 to January 1997, a three-week survey was conducted by the Dhaka Community Hospital and the School of Environmental Studies. The survey team visited 18 affected districts. Of the 1630 adults and children examined, 57.5 percent of them had skin lesions due to arsenic poisoning. In another study, approximately one-third of the 7364 patients examined had skin lesions due to arsenic. The population of

the 42 affected districts was 76.9 million. These studies do not imply that the entire population is drinking contaminated water. A recent report from the World Bank has estimated that 20 million inhabitants of Bangladesh may be drinking arsenic-contaminated water. The health effects of ingesting arsenic-contaminated drinking-water appear slowly. For this reason, a more important issue than the number of patients who currently have arsenic-caused diseases in the number who will develop these diseases in the future as a result of past and continuing exposure to arsenic. Large numbers of tubewells were installed in Bangladesh approximately 5 to 20 years ago. If the population continues to drink arsenic-contaminated water, then a major increase in the number of cases of diseases caused by arsenic may be predicted.

Sanchita Saxena, associate director of Berkeley's Center for South Asia Studies, talked about the remarkable success of Bangladesh's garment industry. The last several decades have seen Bangladesh's dependence on the garment sector grow significantly. In 1983, there were about 50 garment factories in the country. By 2004, this number had jumped to 4,000. Exports have increased from a meager \$68 thousand in 1968 to \$5.7 billion in 2004. Currently, this sector employs approximately 2.2 million workers, of whom almost 80 percent are women. This sector has created enormous economic opportunities for the country's women, who until the late 1970's were almost non-existent in the labor force. Bangladesh owes much of its success in the global garments and textiles market to the system of quotas that were in place for several decades under the Multi-Fiber Arrangement. After guaranteeing market share to countries for more than thirty years, the MFA was phased out in 2005. All the pundits predicted that once the

quotas were lifted and all WTO members would have unfettered access to the developed countries' markets, many of the "smaller" and less competitive Asian countries, like Bangladesh, would drastically lose market share especially to China. To the contrary, however, the data over the last three years shows that many of these "smaller" countries including Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Pakistan have in fact increased their garments exports to the U.S. and E.U. There is growing convergence among groups like factory workers, owners and the government in terms of what needs to be done, Saxena said. The raise in minimum wage law enacted in 2006 has been implemented in 2008. Benefits to workers in term of wages, health care and child care are improving, and most importantly, workers say everybody is paying more attention to their needs.



A lyrical dance-drama on Bangladesh performed by the Bangladesh Academy of Performing Arts

## PAKISTAN STUDIES AT UCB: LOOKING AHEAD

The University of California at Berkeley is a globally-leading site for the study of South Asia, and one of very few institutions in the United States to offer both undergraduate and graduate degree programs focusing on numerous aspects of this vital region. Pakistan studies is a critical element of South Asia studies and CSAS is strongly committed to strengthening our engagement with Pakistan-related subjects in the years ahead.

Pakistan Studies at Berkeley is a growing field. UCB faculty with a special interest in the region are **Munis Faruqui**, an expert in South Asian Islam and one of the most recent tenure-track professors hired in South Asia Studies at Berkeley. Other faculty members with strong interest in Pakistan include **Saba Mahmood** (Anthropology), **Kiren Chaudhry** (Political Science), and **Atif Mian** (Haas Business School). Additionally, UC Berkeley is also one of the two institutions in the country that houses the Government of Pakistan funded **Quaid-i-Azam Chair in Pakistan Studies**.

### Quaid-i-Azam Chair of Pakistan Studies at UC Berkeley

The CSAS in collaboration with the Government of Pakistan established the Quaid-i-Azam Chair of Pakistan Studies at UC Berkeley in 1999. Named after Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the leader who founded Pakistan and who is known by the title, "Father of the Nation," or "Quaid-i-Azam," the goal of this chair is to encourage increased knowledge of Pakistan in the United States and to help forge better ties between American academics and their counterparts in Pakistan. According to the terms of the chair, the chairholder, chosen from colleges and universities in Pakistan, will have a full-time teaching and research position at UC Berkeley for two years. The funds for the scholar's salary and other expenses are provided by the Pakistan government's Ministry of Education. The first Chair-holder, Professor Tariq Rahman, arrived in the summer of 2004. He taught a course titled "Language and Politics in Pakistan" and was a very welcome addition to our faculty. Unfortunately, he had to return to Pakistan for personal reasons after one year at Berkeley. In 2009, the chair was filled again. Professor Ishtiaq Ahmad Choudhry, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sargodha in Pakistan, became our Quaid-i-Azam Chair for the academic year 2009-10. He taught a course titled "Current Political Trends in Pakistan."

UC Berkeley's Urdu language instruction is one of the best in the country. Urdu has been part of the South Asian language curriculum since the 1960s and language learning opportunities are of-

fered both on campus as well in Pakistan as well as India.

### Urdu Language Instruction in Berkeley

Instruction in Urdu is offered at all levels, from beginning to advanced, with over sixty students annually enrolling in Urdu courses. In addition, CSAS also ran the Berkeley Urdu Language Program in Pakistan (BULPIP). Founded in 1973 and permanently based in Lahore, Pakistan, its purpose was to provide intensive Urdu language training to American students, scholars, and teachers who have research and professional interests in Pakistan, Islam, the Muslim communities of South Asia, and Urdu language and literature. BULPIP provided thirty weeks of Urdu instruction at the program center in Lahore, Pakistan. In addition, BULPIP also fostered cultural understanding through housing students with Pakistani families and through field trips within Pakistan. However, the 2002 State Department travel warning prohibited students from traveling to Pakistan on the program. As an interim measure, the program was run through the American Institute for Indian Studies' Urdu program in Lucknow, India for the last five program cycles. We hope that as soon as the travel warning is lifted, the program will resume and return to Pakistan.

Our collections of publications in Pakistani languages is one of the largest in the world.

### Pakistan related Library Holdings

The UC Berkeley library contains one of the largest collections of publications in Pakistani languages in the world, with over 22,000 books in Urdu, 7,500 in Punjabi, 950 in Sindhi, 700 in Pushto, and 600 in Kashmiri. We are also working towards building our holdings of Persian language materials produced in the pre- and post-1947 period in what is now Pakistan. We anticipate our acquisition efforts to rapidly increase in the coming years thanks to the recent hiring of Adnan Malik—as the head librarian for the entire South Asia collection—as well as a series of faculty-library initiatives to build upon our already strong Pakistan-specific holdings.

Over the years, the Center has continued to strive to create a diverse offering with respect to Pakistan-related programming: Pakistani Journalist and official biographer of Osama bin Laden, **Hamid Mir** discussed the war against the Taliban; **Abid Hassan Minto**, the famous constitutional expert and senior lawyer of the Supreme Court of Pakistan spoke on the Pakistani Crisis and on the current situation in the sub-continent and India-Pakistan Relations; poet, scholar, and archivist, **Ahmed Salim** who visited the Center under the AIPS program, spoke about the Preservation and Promotion of Archives

in Pakistan; and **Huma Yusuf**, the online Feature's editor of Dawn.com, Pakistan's largest English daily, spoke about rising anti-Americanism in Pakistan. Of particular note in our Pakistan related programming, was our year-long focus on "Islam, Youth and New Media." [See article on next page for event details]

CAL also has a vibrant Pakistani Student's Association (PSA).

### The Pakistani Student Association (PSA)

Founded and organized by CAL's Pakistani-American students, the PSA provides the Berkeley community a glimpse into Pakistani culture through their Annual Urdu Culture show, a celebration of the Urdu language in the form of traditional dances, folk music, skits, poetic recitations, delicious ethnic cuisine, and lively speeches by various literary figures. This year the PSA is adding another dimension to their work, fundraising for the victims of the recent Pakistani floods. Recent flooding has left over a third of Pakistan underwater, and the economic and social damage caused by this disaster has been monumental. Through cultural events that will raise both cultural and disaster awareness, the PSA hopes to do as much as it can to alleviate the tragedy inflicting the people of Pakistan.

Looking ahead, CSAS will initiate a campaign to broaden and deepen Pakistan Studies at Berkeley. Our first priorities will be to financially strengthen the Urdu program, raise funds for graduate fellowships (and thereby training the next generation of scholars of Pakistan), and initiate an annual lecture series by prominent scholars working on Pakistan. We also wish to extend our Pakistan-specific programming to engage growing academic and community-based interest in the study of culture, religion, and politics. We look forward to working with supportive individuals and organizations to accomplish these goals.

## SUPPORT THE CSAS

The Friends of CSAS Fund strengthens CSAS by supporting events and research not covered by our Title VI Award. The Fund provides the faculty director with resources to support various Center priorities, such as:

- Fund student summer research projects in South Asia
- Provide scholarships to students from South Asia to attend graduate programs at UC Berkeley
- Support visiting scholars from South Asia to give talks at UC Berkeley and interact with faculty and students
- Host performances and speakers of interest to the wider Bay Area community
- Develop web based South Asian language materials for instruction.

For more information please contact CSAS Associate Director, Sanchita Saxena at [sanchitas@berkeley.edu](mailto:sanchitas@berkeley.edu)

## ISLAM TODAY:

*A year long collaborative program on how Muslim youth around the world are using new media, politics and popular culture to explore their identities, find “virtual” communities, promote new agendas and confront stereotypes in the post 9/11 era.*

For many young people, the post-9/11 world has sparked a new, if not confusing, relationship with their own identities as Muslims. Difficult times have led young Muslims all over the world to try and find answers, connect



*Left to Right Standing Row: Mohamed Abdul Dayem, Haroon Moghul, Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, Huma Yusuf, Muhamad Ali, Wajahat Ali. Left to Right Sitting Row: Puneeta Kala, Sarah Maxim, Sanchita Saxena, Mejgan Massoumi*

with other individuals in similar situations, debate issues, and re-work commonly held notions of Islam. To increase public understanding of Islam, CSAS and UC Berkeley centers for Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian studies organized a series of programs, all supported by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), during the 2009-10 academic year.

The first event, a forum on *New Media & Politics in the Muslim World*, took place on October 15, 2009 at the newly opened David Brower Center, in Berkeley. It brought together five young practitioners, researchers and scholars to discuss the transformations that have occurred following the rapid expansion in the use of technology and new media to talk about political issues and political change in the Muslim world. The speakers included Mohamed Abdel Dayem from the Committee to Protect Journalists; Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, a member of Malaysia's opposition party KeAdilan Rakyat and a recently elected member of Selangor's State Assembly; Muhamad Ali, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at UC Riverside whose research looks at contemporary Islam in Indonesia; Huma Yusuf, the Features Editor of Dawn.com, the website of Pakistan's



*Left to Right: Wajahat Ali, Monis Rahman, Imam Suhaib Webb*

leading English-language daily newspaper Dawn; and Haroon Mughal, a popular U.S.-based blogger about issues concerning South Asia and Muslim Americans (avari.typepad.com). The forum was moderated by Wajahat Ali, Associate Editor of altmuslim.com.

The second forum, a two-day event held

in early March, addressed ways in which Muslim youth are using new media to network and discuss commonly held attitudes and stereotypes about Islam. Imam Suhaib Webb, an American Muslim activist and scholar who maintains a website on Islamic theological issues (www.suhaibwebb.com), kicked off the forum with a public lecture titled, *Virtual Pulpit: Net Mosques, Congregations and Imams*. The talk was held at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley and Prof. Munir Jiwa, director of the GTU's new Center for Islamic Studies, moderated the discussion. The latter half of the forum, titled *Islam, Social Lives, and Online Networking*, was held the following day in San Francisco at the California Historical Society. It brought together young Muslim activists and bloggers to talk informally with audience members in a meet-and-greet social hour before

discussing their work more formally. The speakers included Fatemeh Fakhraie, an associate editor for Altmuslimah.com and founder of Muslimah Media Watch (<http://muslimahmediawatch.org>); Zeba Iqbal, the executive director of the Council for the Advancement of Muslim Professionals and a regular contributor to blogs focused on Muslim issues; Zeba Khan, a social media consultant, writer, and founder of Muslim-Americans for Obama in 2008; and Wajahat Ali, an associate editor for Altmuslim.com, playwright, and founder of Goatmilkblog.com. The program concluded with a panel discussion, moderated by Zeba Khan, featuring two path-breaking Muslim web entrepreneurs: Shahed Amanullah, the founder of Altmuslim.com and Halalfire Media LLC, a network of Islamic-themed websites boasting more than seven million visitors annually; and Monis Rahman, the founder of the matchmaking website Naseeb.com, who now also runs Rozee.pk, a Pakistan-based online jobs site.

The third forum consisted of an arts festival that took place throughout Berkeley in April 2010 and consisted of three parts:

1) An exhibit of contemporary photography and digital art from Iran titled *Tehran: Public Lives, Private Spaces*. Presented in the Alphonse Berber Gallery, a new space in Berkeley, the exhibit ran from March 30-April 10 and consisted of photographs and video installations by Iranian artists born after the 1979 Revolution. The artists included Neda Homayoun Askari, Mehraneh Atashi, Mahboube Karamli, Morteza Khaki, Meysam Mahfouz, Mehran Mohajer, Parisa Taghizadeh, and Parham Tagioff.

2) Three staged readings of *The Domestic Crusaders* were presented at the Durham Studio Theater on the UC Berkeley campus. The play follows the members of a modern Muslim Pakistani-American family as they convene to celebrate the twenty-first birthday of the youngest son. Set against debates and issues concerning Muslim Americans, sparks fly among the three generations, culminating in an intense family battle, as each “crusader”

struggles to assert his or her respective voice and opinions. Ali began writing the play almost a decade ago when he was an undergraduate student at Berkeley. Renowned African-American writer and poet Ishmael Reed championed the play early on, and it has gradually received more attention from the theater community. Notably, in 2009, it was staged in New York at the Nuyorican Poets Café and covered by the New York Times.

3) A film festival titled *Stories from the Muslim World*. The film festival, which took place between April 12-22 at different venues throughout Berkeley, emphasized newer films focused on young people living in Muslim-majority countries and/or films made by up-and-coming Muslim directors. The festival included question-and-answer sessions at relevant screenings with visiting Malaysian filmmaker Zan Azlee, Malaysian film producer Elyna Shukri, Indonesian actress Jajang C. Noer, and Afghan-American director Wazmah Osman.

To learn more about the “Islam Today” program, please visit <http://islamtoday.berkeley.edu>.

Written by Mejgan Massoumi, Program Coordinator & Center Manager, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, UC Berkeley

## TEACH FOR INDIA

What is the best way to approach a nation's education crisis that involves understaffed schools, an alarmingly high student drop-out rate and pitiable spending in the education sector? There may be many different solutions. Shaheen Mistri, founder of the Akanksha foundation, decided that India needed a rigorous movement led by the youth, to tackle this problem of educational inequity.

Modeled on the Teach for America program, Teach for India was started in 2007 with the goal of providing equal educational opportunities for all. Teach for India strives to achieve this educational reform by recruiting outstanding college graduates and professionals to serve as teachers in low income schools as part of a two-year, fully paid teaching fellowship program. In addition to being a valuable teaching experience, the program is designed to hone the leadership skills of the fellows as well as create a group of young, dynamic leaders who will champion long term reform in the Indian educational system, irrespective of the career path they choose.

So join the movement and let us help empower children in India through education.

To learn more please contact UCB Teach for India Campus Ambassadors Ysaswini Sampathkumar at [yasaswini@berkeley.edu](mailto:yasaswini@berkeley.edu) or Sharanya Prasad at [sprasad@berkeley.edu](mailto:sprasad@berkeley.edu) or visit [www.teachforindia.org/index.php](http://www.teachforindia.org/index.php)

### ARE YOU READY FOR A CHALLENGE



**Application Deadlines**  
1st deadline: October 10th  
2nd deadline: November 28th  
3rd deadline: January 9th

## THE 2009 CSAS SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE - ASHIS NANDY

Ashis Nandy on Mass Violence and Social Creativity & Capturing the Voices of India's Partition.



Ashis Nandy with Raka Ray

CSAS was privileged to have Dr. Ashis Nandy, one of India's leading scholars and thinkers, in residence at the Center for South Asia Studies in March 2009.

Dr. Nandy is a political psychologist and social theorist whose path-breaking work has revitalized scholarship on political psychology, the Indian encounter with colonialism, mass violence, nationalism and culture. In 2008, he was listed as one of the top 100 public intellectuals of the world by the magazine, Foreign Policy.

While at the Center, Dr. Nandy, in addition to participating in several campus and community events including giving an interview on KPFA Radio on the attacks on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Pakistan, gave two very well received public lectures.

Dr. Nandy's first lecture, *Coming Home: Religion, Mass Violence and Exiled and Secret Selves*, given on campus on March 3, 2009, focused on India's Partition and the traumatic bloodbath of violence that followed in its wake. As a part of his ongoing interest in genocides in South Asia, Dr. Nandy, for the last 10 years, has led an ambitious project to document the experiences of partition survivors across India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. He and his associates have interviewed more than 1,300 survivors and have conducted about a 100 in-depth interviews. The study led to some very surprising findings, the most unexpected being that more than one-fourth of all survivors said that they owed their survival to somebody from the opposition and that the worst bitterness and rancor about the experience was felt not by the generation that actually experienced the violence by the children and grandchildren of those people.

His second lecture, *States of Mind: India, Pakistan and other States without Nations in South Asia*, delivered at the World Affairs Council in San Francisco on March 9, 2009, discussed the political psychology of nations in South Asia and the challenges of maintaining a nation-state in the region.

Dr. Nandy also led a day-long workshop around the theme of "Violence & Social Creativity." Students mostly from Cal and UCLA presented papers as diverse as "Spatiality of Loss, Violence,

and Memory in District Six," "Japanese Mobilization in Taiwan" and the "French Banlieue Riots" to "Violent Self-making in Mehboob's Aurat" and "Aesthetics of Violence in the Venisamhara of Bhatta Narayana."

Mike Levien, a doctoral candidate in Sociology, interviewed the great scholar. Below is an excerpt from his interview "A Conversation with Ashis Nandy."

**Mike Levien:** I would like to start by asking you about some of the recent burning political issues in India on which you have taken prominent and controversial stances. For example, you have recently been the target of prosecution in Gujarat for your strongly worded critique of the rise of communalism in the state. To what extent do you think that the rise of Hindu fundamentalism and anti-Muslim pogroms, like those in Gujarat in 2002, have contributed to the recent spate of so-called terrorist attacks?

**Ashis Nandy:** Indians would like to think – many Indians would like to think – that the terrorist attacks have nothing to do with Gujarat violence or the Kashmir interaction, but that is living in a fool's paradise. Everybody knows in their heart of hearts that these have had effects, just like earlier pogroms against the Sikhs were one of the main contributing factors to the militancy in Punjab which lasted more than a decade. And I have a suspicion that the effects of these kind of pogroms do not go away quickly, and widen the catchment area for recruitment of terrorists and collaborators.

**ML:** In your quite controversial article the "Obituary of Culture," you say that after Modi and the Gujarat violence, "I'm afraid I cannot look at the future of the country with anything but great foreboding." Is there anywhere in India that you see promising agents of social change challenging the rise of Hindi nationalism and fascistic violence?

**AN:** Yes, I do see lot of young people who are very active and very committed to the idea of communal peace and coexistence. But even more than that, I have tremendous faith in ordinary Indians and their stand in this matter. I think they have repeatedly shown that communal forces can be resisted at the village level, and that they can often even risk their lives to protect their neighbors without the benefit of ornate theories and ideological positions which are palatable to the urbane middle class elite and the academics.

**ML:** That brings me to my next question. You've been an outspoken critic of the secularism of urban, middle class intellectuals in India. If not in secularism, where do you find the discursive basis, if you will, for resisting the rise of Hindu nationalism?

**AN:** It is not my job or responsibility to find discursive places for the Indian middle-class and intellectuals like us. Secularism is probably a reasonable discursive place for us. It is just that it either doesn't reach the Indian popu-

lation or they cannot make heads or tails out of it. It is not one of their categories, and never will be if we have to judge by India's record in the last 60 years. And that is quite understandable.... Secularism is bound to the idea of Western history and the battle between the church and the state carried out over centuries. It is based on the Western experience of communal violence and religious wars, which has nothing to do with India. India doesn't have that kind of structure in its religions. Religion and state are intertwined as well as separate, but by criterion that are part of the cultures of 1 billion Indians, or at least a huge majority of them. And I would suspect that we will gain much more if we use the categories that make sense to people and which have prompted them to risk their lives resisting such violence at the grass roots level, even at times of violent pogroms.

**ML:** So it is your position that there is already bases in "traditional" Indian culture to resist phenomenon like Hindu fundamentalism...

**AN:** Communal violence is still predominantly an urban phenomena. Almost all the riots either begin from cities or are consigned to cities. Only three and a half percent of casualties in riots have taken place in villages, though the rural population of India constitutes something like seventy percent of the Indian population. Thirty percent of urban India contributes ninety-six and a half percent of the deaths in communal violence, which tells you the entire story. Instead of inviting the Indian population to learn from the categories and ideologies of the urban Indians, I suspect urban Indians should go to the village and learn their categories by which they have kept in check communal violence.

**ML:** You think that it's the breakdown of traditional culture within urban centers that allows Hindu fundamentalism to flourish and that allows communal violence to occur.

**AN:** All cultures change. That doesn't mean that they are creating breakdown all the while. Many aspects of Indian culture are under stress, but it doesn't mean that it is collapsing....A hundred TV channels and urban communications of various kinds do not bring down a culture that easily. But after saying that, I must say that the little cultures of India, the cultures that are not pan Indian, but ones which are confined to communities and sectors of the Indian population, they are under tremendous stress and their life support systems in many cases have collapsed. And I suspect that these free floating individuals who have been uprooted and policed out of their cultures and not found a new normative system and have not internalized it—because that takes generations—are a kind of a floating muck available for political mobilization at a massive scale. They are the ones who are looking for readymade packages of Hinduism and Islam which will make sense to them, which will give them meaning in life, and which will give them a false sense of having attained a truth by which they should stand. It is no accident that this is the sector from which many of the suicide bombers and young terrorists have been recruited. (cont'd on next page)



Ashis Nandy with (from left) graduate students Winifred Chang, Kevin Karpiak, Keerthi Potluri, Luther Obrock, & Anupama Kapse

(cont'd from previous page)

**ML:** Talcott Parsons makes a very similar argument in his essay on the rise of Nazism, which he attributes to this kind of social disintegration, atomization, and the great insecurity that comes with it and which prompts people to join movements that provide a very coherent meaning structure. Do you see a parallel...

**AN:** Yes, certainly. And I'm also influenced in this by my reading of similar movements in other parts of the world, not only in Europe.... The only difference is this. In the 1930s, Europe developed much more of a middle class society than what exists in India. So there are certain strengths in [Indian] society which are not yet lost. The people who constitute this kind of free floating muck are still in the minority and quite a small minority, considering the size of the countries in South Asia. And I suspect that ultimately the societies will triumph...and cultures will triumph.

**ML:** Would you argue that the growth of the middle class almost automatically brings with it some form of cultural degradation?

**AN:** No, I don't think so. But in the short

run, yes. In the short run, that experience of uprooting, that experience of being policed out of the meaning system which you have lived...being a part of a floating population that is neither committed to the path of the existing value system nor has found the new value system meaningful, but which you have to nonetheless pay obeisance to, pay homage to, instrumentally if you are to pass for a civilized man in the modern sector, these have their consequences and do need time to get resolved. But fortunately, again, this middle class is small. It's the smaller player in the Indian public life. And the democratic process is continuously marginalizing it. [The] process of democratization will itself reveal new forces which will act against or hurt it.

**ML:** In 1988 article on sati, you said that it is your "critique from within tradition and its counter modernist implications which disturbs many of my critics." Can you say more about how you conceive of this "criticism from within tradition" and how it is different from the kind of criticism that is practiced by secular urban intellectuals?

**AN:** That is difficult to spell out, but on

the whole, if you would allow me to put it very crudely, I would say that I have tried always to link up my interpretations, my analysis, to the categories that are available to the people. I've always provided the benefit of doubt to ordinary citizens who, according to most social science theories, need to be constantly engineered and guided towards the better future because they don't know better. Whether it is the radical theory of the vanguard of the proletariat or the liberal theory of an enlightened elite or even the populist theory of politics where you are constantly hoping that the people will be guided through propaganda and exposure to the right values and will conform to the demands of modern politics and the culture of the nation-state... I think I have always protested against these kinds of social engineering because I have seen over the last 150 years that the maximum amount of violence has been unleashed by this effort.

**NB:** A complete transcript of the interview may be viewed at: [http://southasia.berkeley.edu/images/ML\\_interviews\\_Ashis\\_Nandy.pdf](http://southasia.berkeley.edu/images/ML_interviews_Ashis_Nandy.pdf)



Berkeley Tamil Chair  
George Hart

## THE WORLD IN 15 LINES A Love Poem from Akananuru—a 2000-year-old Tamil Anthology Translated by UC Berkeley Tamil Chair, George Hart

The Akananuru is one of the Tamil Sangam anthologies, composed almost 2000 years ago. It contains 400 elaborate longer poems on love themes and is quite unlike anything in Sanskrit or any other language. The poems are highly conventional -- each belongs to one of five categories that determine the landscape, flowers, animals, and situations of each poem. What makes them especially interesting is the skill with which the poets manage to incorporate suggestion and striking imagery into these highly conventional works.

Translated below is a *mullai* poem, named for the jasmine that blooms on

forest meadows during the rains. As in other Indian traditions, the monsoon season is when lovers should be together; their being apart is a source of suffering for both. Here, the hero has gone off to fight for a king and make money and cannot return to his wife even though the monsoon has started. He is distressed not only because he must be away from her during the monsoon, but that he must spend the night without her.

This is an extraordinary poem in Tamil. One may find many resonances in the image of the buds compared to the useless ends of the conches. Certainly, the simile would seem to contrast the many days the heroine spent waiting in anxious anticipation (the bangles of the conch which will be worn) with the present, where she feels despair as the rainy season when her

lover promised to return is coming to an end (the useless ends of the conch that cannot be worn). It is notable that the poet contrasts objects that the heroine sees (buds, flowers, clouds) or feels (cold, north wind) with the elements of conflict that the hero can only hear at night. There seems to be a contrast between the order (painful because the hero is away) of the heroine's world with the confusion and disorder of the camp where the hero is spending the night. It is also notable that the elements afflicting the heroine are natural, while those tormenting the hero are manmade.

The poem given below, *Mullai* is what the hero says upon seeing the season, or what the hero says to his heart when he has finished his work [away from the heroine].

24  
Looking like the ends of conches left over by a Brahmin  
who has given up his sacrificing and makes bangles instead,  
the buds of *pakanrai* closed tight with curling tips suddenly open  
and bloom in the beautiful drops scattering in the wind.  
5 In these last days of *Tai*, when the cool rains come to an end  
and the north wind hides the light of the rising sun,  
a huge black cloud seems to have stripped the skin from the sky  
as it moves along the emptiness and goes to the south.  
There, in her town, my woman with a bright forehead  
10 has somehow, alone, crossed through the black, cold night.  
But I must be here in this night where the bright bells  
ring with their long tongues on the small-eyed elephants  
with white, blunted tusks whose ornamental rings are broken  
from hitting the gates in guarded walls and arrows thump as they rain down  
15 striking spotted leather shields bound with twine and the royal drum roars out  
with its resounding sound, here in this war camp of a king  
whose strong arm holds a sword that once drawn never returns to its scabbard,  
and his army doesn't sleep in the darkness.  
— *Āvūr Mūlāṅkiḷār*

24  
வேளாப் பார்ப்பான் வாளரந் துமித்த  
வளைகளைந் தொழிந்த கொழுந்தி னன்ன  
தளைபிணி அவிழாச் சுரிமுகப் பகன்றை  
சிதரலந் துவலை தூவலின் மலருந்  
தைஇ நின்ற தண்பெயற் கடைநாள்  
வயங்குகதிர் கரந்த வாடை வைகறை  
விசும்புரி வதுபோல் வியலிடத் தொழுகி  
மங்குல் மாமழை தென்புலம் படரும்  
பனியிருங் கங்குலுந் தமிழள் நீந்தித்  
தம்மு ரோளே நன்னுதல் யாமே  
கடிமதிற் கதவம் பாய்தலின் தொடிபிளந்து  
நுதிமுகம் மழுகிய மண்ணைவெண் கோட்டுச்  
சிறுகண் யானை நெடு நா ஒண்மணி  
கழிப்பிணிக் கறைத்தோல் பொழிகணை யுதைப்புத்  
தழங்குகுரல் முரசமொடு முழங்கும் யாமத்துக்  
கழித்துறை செறியா வாளுடை யெறுழ்தோள்  
இரவுத் துயில் மடிந்த தானை  
உரவுச்சின வேந்தன் பாசறை யேமே.  
-- ஆவூர் மூலங் கிழார்

## FACULTY & GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

**Faiz Ahmed** (Ph.D Candidate, History) received a 2010 Berkeley Empirical Legal Studies Fellowship from the Center for Law and Society at Boalt Hall School of Law, for preliminary research on my dissertation project, "Rule of Law Projects in Afghanistan: The Nizamnama Codes of Shah Amanullah, 1919-1929."

**Asher Ghertner** (Ph.D, Energy and Resource Group) finished his Ph.D and will begin a position in September 2010 as Lecturer (Assistant Professor) of Human Geography in the Department of Geography and Environment at the London School of Economics. His teaching will focus on urbanization and development in South Asia. He has a forthcoming paper on the politics of enumeration and legibility in Delhi's informal settlements that will appear in *Economy and Society* in 2010.

**Alka Hingorani** (Lecturer, History of Art) has recently returned to Berkeley

after several months away, to teach two courses on South Asian art – "The Art of Medieval India in Perspective – 800 to 1500 C.E." and "The Art Object in India: Aesthetic Urge or Religious Impulse." She is also working on a book called "Making Faces: Gods and God-makers in the Kullu Valley," to be published by the University of Hawai'i Press next year.

**Francesca Jensenius** (Ph.D Candidate, Political Science) was awarded the American Institute of Indian Studies junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Designing Political Representation: A Study of the Variation in Context and Consequences of Political Quotas in India."

**Neil H. Joeck** (Adjunct Professor, Political Science) recently moved to Washington DC as the National Intelligence Officer for South Asia. His responsibilities cover Afghanistan to Bangladesh and all points in between.

He previously served in the US Government at the National Security Council in the Office of Proliferation Strategy (2004-2005) and at the Department of State as a member of the Policy Planning Staff (2001 - 2003). Prior to joining the NIC, he was a Senior Fellow at the Center for Global Security Research at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) and an Adjunct Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley (2005-2009).

**Pauline Kolenda** (Visiting Scholar, Anthropology) has a chapter titled "Family Strategies in Khalapur, U.P., over the Twentieth Century: Asha Ram Teacher and His Khandan" in *Histories of Intimacy and Situated Ethnography*, edited by Karen Isaksen Leonard, Gayatri Reddy and Ann Grodzins Gold, published by Manohar, New Delhi, 2010.

**Adnan Naseemullah** (Ph.D Candidate, Political Science) will be leaving Berkeley for a two-year Postdoctoral Fellowship in Comparative Politics at the London School of Economics.

**Gita V. Pai** (Ph.D, South & Southeast Asian Studies) finished her dissertation, "Kingship, Images, and Rituals: A Nayaka Monument in South India, 1635-2009" in May. This fall, she joins the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse as an Assistant Professor of South Asian history.

**Malini Ranganathan** (PhD Candidate, Energy & Resources Group) presented part of her doctoral work titled "The Right to Water as the Right to the City: Spatial Politics and Citizenship Struggles at Bangalore's Urban Periphery" at the "Right to Water" conference at Syracuse University on March 30-31. She also presented her work at a session on water resources technologies, power, and politics at the Association of American Geographers in DC in April. After finishing her dissertation, Malini will start a post-doctoral fellowship in the Geography department at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign later this year.

**Michael Slouber** (Ph.D Candidate, South & Southeast Asian Studies) was awarded a DAAD fellowship to study in Hamburg, Germany for the academic year 09/10. He also presented his research under the title "Garuda Medicine: An attempt to bridge the study of ancient Sanskrit texts and modern ethnography" for a colloquium in Hamburg on December 9, 2009

### UC Berkeley Professor Wins Early Career Award

University of Washington College of Engineering awarded School of Information assistant professor Tapan Parikh its 2010 Diamond Award for early career achievement. This award recognizes outstanding graduates of the UW College of Engineering who demonstrate exceptional achievement during the first ten years of an engineering career. Parikh received his Ph.D. in computer science and engineering from the University of Washington in 2007.



Tapan Parikh

Tapan Parikh is transforming the world's poorest areas by harnessing and translating technology. Parikh has worked in both rural India and Guatemala to address problems that hinder the open market. Working collaboratively with communities, he designs, evaluates, and deploys appropriate information systems that support sustainable economic development.

In India, Parikh realized that the efforts of micro-finance groups suffered from poor paper-based record keeping. He developed cell phone software that allows a user to take a bar code picture. The interface then automatically prompts the user, with voice prompts for the illiterate, to input the numbers. The result is greater transparency, accurate record keeping, and a higher loan success rate. It's a technique he also used in Guatemala, where he retrofitted cell phones so coffee growers can find the best bean prices and document their aid needs.

At the I School, Parikh teaches courses in Social Enterprise using ICTs for International Development, User Interface Design and Development, and Designing Rural Computing Applications. He also helps lead the school's program in Information and Communication Technologies and Development, and led a project in summer 2009 that sent students to East Africa to research the use of information & communication technologies to improve smallholder agriculture.

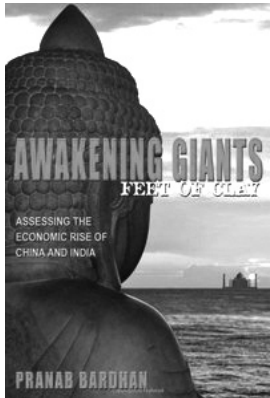
MIT's Technology Review in 2007 named Parikh "Humanitarian of the Year" and a top innovator under the age of 35. He has received Intel and NSF fellowships and in 2008 was recognized as one of Esquire's "Best and Brightest." Parikh is an assistant professor at the School of Information and holds an affiliate appointment in the UW's Computer Science & Engineering department. He has a Sc.B. degree in molecular modeling with honors from Brown University, and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in computer science from the University of Washington.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS BY UCB FACULTY

### **Awakening Giants, Feet of Clay: Assessing the Economic Rise of China and India**

Pranab Bardhan

**A**wakening Giants, Feet of Clay scrutinizes the phenomenal rise of China and India, and demolishes the myths that have accumulated around the economic achievements of these two giants in the



last quarter century. Pranab Bardhan investigates the two countries' economic reforms, each nation's pattern and composition of growth, and the problems afflicting their agricultural, industrial, infrastructural, and financial sectors.

He considers how these factors affect China and India's poverty, inequality, and environment, how political factors shape each country's pattern of burgeoning capitalism, and how significant poverty reduction in both countries is mainly due to domestic factors—not global integration, as most would believe.

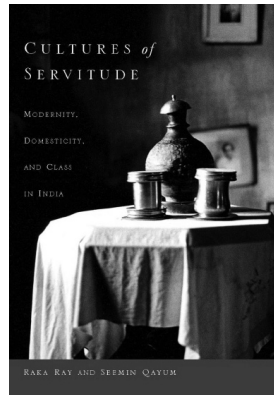
#### **About the Author:**

**Pranab Bardhan** is Professor of Economics at the University of California at Berkeley. His books include *Scarcity, Conflicts, and Cooperation*.

### **Cultures of Servitude: Modernity, Domesticity, and Class in India**

Raka Ray & Seemin Qayum

**C**ultures of Servitude offers an ethnographic account of domestic life and servitude in contemporary Kolkata, India, with a concluding comparison with New York City. Focused on employers as well



as servants, men as well as women, across multiple generations, this book examines the practices and meaning of servitude around the home and in the public sphere, and shifts the conversations surrounding domestic service

away from an emphasis on the crisis of transnational care work to one about the constitution of class.

#### **About the Authors:**

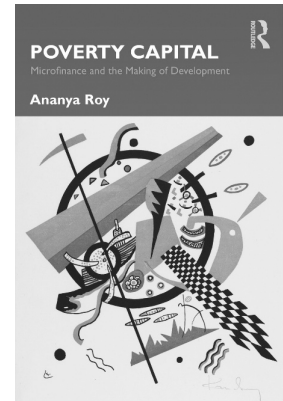
**Raka Ray** is Sarah Kailath Chair in India Studies, Chair of the Center for South Asia Studies, and Professor of Sociology and South & Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

**Seemin Qayum** is a historical anthropologist and the author and editor of works on nationalism, elites, and gender in modern Bolivia.

### **Poverty Capital: Microfinance and the Making of Development**

Ananya Roy

**T**his is a book about poverty but it does not study the poor and the powerless. Instead it studies those who manage poverty. It sheds light on how powerful institutions control “capital,” or



circuits of profit and investment, as well as “truth,” or authoritative knowledge about poverty. Using the case of microfinance, the book participates in a set of fierce debates about development - from the role of markets to the

secrets of successful pro-poor institutions. Based on many years of research in Washington D.C., Bangladesh, and the Middle East, *Poverty Capital* also grows out of the author's undergraduate teaching to thousands of students on the subject of global poverty and inequality.

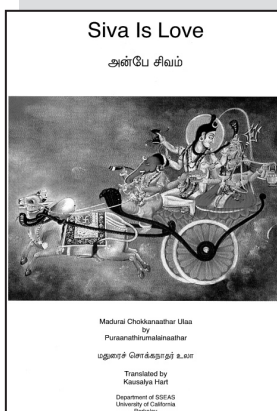
#### **About the Author:**

**Ananya Roy** is Professor of City & Regional Planning and the founding chair of the undergraduate curriculum in Global Poverty & Practice at the University of California, Berkeley.

### **Siva is Love: Madurai Chokkanthar Ulaa**

Translated by: Kausalya Hart

**M**adurai Chokkanadar Ulaa is one of the many religious works composed by the great 17th century Tamil poet, Kumaragurubarar. This work, translated into English and entitled “Siva is Love”



by Kausalya Hart, invokes the greatness of Shiva by describing him, his escorts and the love of seven types of women who see him going in procession through the streets of Madurai. The poem also mentions sixty-four

stories that are told about Shiva in the Tiruvilaiyaadal Puranam. This beautiful poem is a useful source for research scholars in religion, culture and womens' studies.

#### **About the Author:**

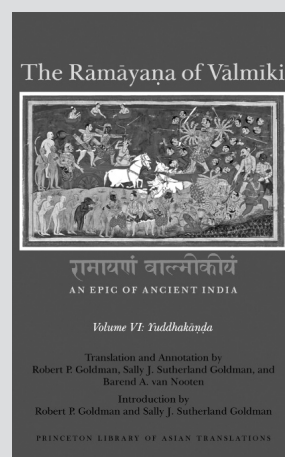
**Kausalya Hart** is lecturer in Tamil at the University of California, Berkeley. Her books include the widely used “Tamil for Beginners.”

### **The Ramayana of Valmiki: An Epic of Ancient India Vol VI ~ Yuddhakanda**

Translated & annotated by: Robert P. Goldman, Sally J. Sutherland Goldman & Barend A. van Nooten

Introduction by: Robert P. Goldman & Sally J. Sutherland Goldman

**T**he sixth book of the Ramayana of Valmiki, the Yuddhakanda, recounts the final dramatic war between the exiled prince Rama, mandated by the arch de-Rama's primary purpose abducted princess Sita. However, the confrontation for the divine mis-incarnation of Lord Visnu restore righteousness to a The book ends with the his true divine nature, his beloved wife, his long-de-Kosala, and his restoration kanda contains some of the and larger-than-life character-world literature. This sixth and translation of the Valmiki Ramayana includes an extensive introduction, exhaustive notes, and a comprehensive bibliography.



the forces of good led by and the forces of evil common Ravana. The hero in the battle is to rescue the and destroy the demon king. tion also marks the turning sion of the Ramavatara, the as a human prince, who will world on the brink of chaos. gods' revelation to Rama of emotional reunion with his layed consecration as king of of a utopian age. The Yuddha-most extraordinary events ters to be found anywhere in volume in the critical edition

#### **About the Author:**

**Robert P. Goldman** is professor of Sanskrit and Indian studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and general editor of the Ramayana Translation Project.

**Sally J. Sutherland Goldman** is lecturer in Sanskrit at the University of California, Berkeley, and associate editor of the Ramayana Translation Project.

**Barend A. van Nooten** is professor emeritus of Sanskrit at the University of California, Berkeley.

## NOTES FROM THE FIELD

### Snakebite Remedies & Learning Nepali

Michael Slouber is a PhD candidate in the department of South & Southeast Asian Studies and was interviewed just after he returned from a year of living in Nepal on a FLAS fellowship. Michael's dissertation project is concerned with the history of snakebite remedies in India and Nepal, and will involve a period of fieldwork for which fluency in Nepali is invaluable.

#### What was your experience of learning in the field?

I have spent the last several years studying languages in Berkeley, and I can vouch for the fact that learning in the field is a much superior, though difficult experience. I lived in the capital city of Kathmandu and studied under a former head of the Ministry of Education, Mr. Laxminath Shreshtha. His instruction style was strict yet encouraging, and involved many guided activities like trips to the market and traveling near Kathmandu.



Michael Slouber discussing ritual practices with Mr. Lila Vishwakarma. Daily blessing by a neighbor in Kathmandu.

songs and loved listening to me read Nepali children's books to her.

Being there as a family forced us to integrate with the local culture and was a good ice-breaker to boot. While walking down the street with my daughter one day, I met Mr. Lila Vishwakarma (pictured) who was also carrying his son. We became friends and I traveled to his village to make inquiries about local snakebite remedies. I learned much from him and he will be an invaluable contact once I return for the actual fieldwork.

In contrast to my experience, I met several Fulbright fellows during my stay who rarely left the Western cafés of the tourist district and had no interest in learning Nepali or forming connections with people in the field. In my view this is a pity; one can social network and keep up on the latest articles anywhere, but this is not why we go to the field.

#### What specific differences did you see between textbook and field study?

Learning a language in the field quickly teaches real usage, which differs considerably from what one can learn in the best textbooks. It affords the opportunity to study a culture and not just a language. It wasn't until I got outside of the Kathmandu Valley and into village Nepal that some key phrases in the language started making sense. A common greeting, "khānā khānu bhayo?" means literally "Have you eaten?" When I first learned this it was just filed away in my mind as a polite greeting I might come across, however when you experience firsthand the rigors of mountain life, the strong bonds people forge as a necessity of survival put this greeting in a whole new light.



Daily blessing by a neighbor in Kathmandu.

#### Can you tell us something interesting about snakebite remedies?

The traditional systems treat by two methods: with herbal preparations and ritually with mantras. In Ayurveda mantras are rarely used, while on the Tantric side both herbs and mantras are employed, with an emphasis on the latter. One major system uses a five-syllable mantra of Garuda, the divine eagle and archenemy of snakes, to effect possession of the practitioner who may then easily banish/destroy the venom. Although I haven't yet conducted the fieldwork for my project, I have seen several similarities in the ritual structures of the ancient and modern traditions. Another interesting point is that many scientific studies published in the last decade support the efficacy of some herbal remedies for snakebite envenomation. This fact poses difficulties to the global health authorities whose agenda involves wholesale rejection of traditional medicine. I find the power struggle for authority in healthcare a fascinating locus that not only reflects wider issues of globalization and loss of ancestral knowledge systems, but which is also relevant to a general audience concerned with healthcare authority issues.

## CSAS EVENTS

### February 9

*Salon to Cinema: Telugu Javali Poems in Colonial South India*  
Davesh Soneji, McGill University, Montreal.

### February 24

*An "Illusion of Permanence": Visualizing Legitimacy in Princely Mysore*  
Janaki Nair, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata

### March 9

*The Saint, the Warlord and the Emperor: Discourses of Braj Bhakti and Rajput Loyalty*  
Heidi Pauwels, University of Washington

### March 10

*Vicious State(s), Virtuous State(s)? The paradoxes of policing in India*  
Anasuya Sengupta, CSAS Visiting Scholar, 2009

### March 17

*Early Modern Science in India: Two Astronomers - Nilakantha and Nityananda*  
Christopher Minkowski, University of Oxford

### April 1

*The Resurgence of al Qaeda and the Taliban in Pakistan*  
Hamid Mir, Journalist, Geo News, Islamabad

### April 2

*Kambuja's Connections with Kanchi and Kampan*  
Vasudha Narayanan, University of Florida

### April 14

*The World in 15 Lines: Love Poems from a 2000-year-old Tamil Anthology*  
George L Hart, U C Berkeley

### April 25 ~ 26

*"Pandi Nadu" - Land of the Pandyas: Fifth Annual Tamil Conference*

### April 28

*INDUSTRY Stories: Audio and visual journeys of Indian Entrepreneurs in the Silicon Valley*

### April 29

*The Pakistani Crisis*  
Abid Hassan Minto, Senior lawyer, Supreme Court of Pakistan

### September 15

*Regulating Islam in Pakistan: The Role of the Council of Islamic Ideology*  
Khalid Masud, Chairman, Council of Islamic Ideology, Pakistan

### September 16

*The Legacy of Son Preference & Daughter Dislike: Perspectives from South Asian Communities*  
Tulsi Patel, Delhi University; Sunita Puri, UCSF School of Medicine

### October 5

*An Evening with Jatin Das*  
Jatin Das in conversation with Dipti Mathur.

### October 16

*The War Against Terror: Five Reasons for the Persistence of Anti-Americanism in Pakistan*  
Huma Yusuf, Features Editor, Dawn

### October 29

*Liberalization and Regulation of Capital Flows: Lessons for Emerging Market Economies*  
Rakesh Mohan, Fmr. Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India

### November 12

*Emerging Bangladesh: Opportunities and Challenges for Bangladesh's Future.*  
Ahmed Badruzzaman, Chevron Energy Technology Co.; Ananya Roy, UC Berkeley; Sanchita Saxena, UC Berkeley; Allan Smith, UC Berkeley

### November 16

*Missing: Youth, Citizenship and Empire after 9/11*  
Sunaina Maira, UC Davis



## CSAS EVENTS

December 2

*Bad Girl with a Heart of Gold: Tracing the journeys of four characters played by Bollywood icon, Helen, in the Hindi films of the 60's and 70's.*  
Anuj Vaidya, Associate Festival Director, 3rd I SF International South Asian Film Festival.

February 11

*Books vs. Bombs?: Humanitarian Development and the Narrative of Terror in Northern Pakistan*  
Nosheen Ali, Stanford University

February 18

*Unraveling Romance in Naipaul's "A House for Mr. Biswas"*  
Gautam Premnath, UC Berkeley

February 21

*The Inaugural Sarah Kailath Memorial Lecture: Women and Leadership*  
Kamala D. Harris, San Francisco District Attorney

March 2

*Defending Common Ground: Human Rights in India and Pakistan*  
Meenakshi Ganguly & Ali Dayan Hasan, Senior South Asia researchers, Human Rights Watch

March 11

*Modi (मोदी) in the Colonial Archive: Towards a Cultural History of Scripts in South Asia?*  
Prachi Deshpande, UC Berkeley

March 15

*Negotiations with the Taliban: Convergences and Divergences in US, Indian and Pakistani approaches to Afghanistan*  
Gautam Mukhopadhyaya, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

March 31

*Math Marching to a Different Drummer*  
David Mumford, Brown University

April 7

*The Bhakti Movement and the Shadow of the Raj*  
John Stratton Hawley, Columbia University

April 7

*Surviving the Dragon: A Tibetan Lama's Life Under Chinese Rule*  
Arjia Rinpoche, former Abbot of Kumbum Monastery in Amdo, Tibet

April 8

*Naxalism, Violence and Development: The Unholy Nexus*  
Kamayani Bali Mahabal, Lawyer & Human Rights Activist

April 12

*Love in the Time of Empire: The Story of Queen Victoria and Munshi Abdul Karim*  
Shrabani Basu, Author

April 19

*No Country for Young Girls?*  
Nupur Basu, Independent journalist and award winning filmmaker

April 22

*Awakening Giants, Feet of Clay: Assessing the Economic Rise of China and India*  
Pranab K. Bardhan, UC Berkeley

April 24 ~ 26

*Kālam: The 6th Annual Berkeley Tamil Conference*

May 3

*Empires of the Indus: The Story of a River*  
Author, Alice Albinia

May 6

*Normal Dreams and Futures: The Articulation of Pyramid Schemes and Deaf Communities in Urban India*  
Michele Friedner, UC Berkeley

## NOTES FROM THE FIELD

### THE NEWARS OF KATHMANDU

Alexander von Rosspatt is Professor of Buddhist Studies and Chair of the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies at UC Berkeley. While his earlier work centered on the doctrinal history of Indian Buddhism, he nowadays specializes in Newar Buddhism. He was interviewed just after he returned from a year of fieldwork in the Kathmandu valley of Nepal studying the Buddhist tradition that survives among the Newars there.

#### How did you get interested in the Newars of Kathmandu?

The Kathmandu valley of Nepal has in the past been shielded from the influences of Islam and British colonialism, and as a consequence harbors Indic religious traditions that have long vanished elsewhere on the subcontinent. Among these is a tantric form of Mahayana Buddhism that reflects the final stages in the development of Buddhism before its gradual disappearance from the Indian mainland in the 13th century. The Kathmandu valley thus affords the possibility to study how this form of Buddhism survives on the ground, how it has become part of the fabric of society, and how it has come to be shaped by the Hindu religious traditions with which it coexists and which it has shaped in turn.

#### What aspect of this tradition do you focus on?

My studies focus on rituals. A particular interest has been the caitya of Svayambhu at the outskirts of Kathmandu. Using Newar and Tibetan historical records and inscriptions, I have studied study how this most important monument of the Newar tradition has been repeatedly renovated over the last 700 years. I had the good fortune to extend this study into the present when a new renovation of the caitya, the first in nearly a hundred years, commenced on the very day that I arrived in the summer of 2008 for a sabbatical research stay. As has often been the case in the past, the principal patron is Tibetan, but this time it is a Tibetan master, Tarthang Tulku, who for the last several decades has been based right here in Berkeley. Even so, as in the past the rituals have been performed by Newar Buddhist priests, and the current renovation has afforded me the possibility to observe many of the rites that I had previously studied only in historical records. This connects with my interest to combine the textual study of ritual manuals with the documentation of actual performances. I have done this during my most recent stay in Nepal for the consecration ceremonies, recording the startling variation in contemporary practice, and tracing these rites back in time to their roots in tantric texts of the 11th and 12th century.

#### Are there are other forms of ritual practice that you study?

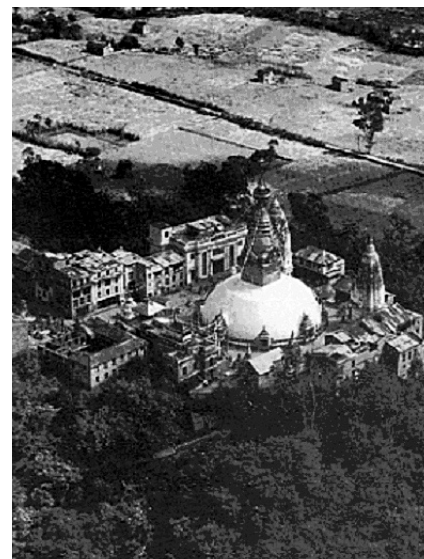
Yes, I have worked extensively on life-cycle rituals and continue to do so. My research in this area centers on a series of very colorful old age rituals that are unique to the Newars.

The first such rite is performed when the celebrant has lived 77 years, 7 months and 7 days. On this occasion, he and his wife are deified and conveyed around their home locality in a colorful chariot procession. Basically the same sequence of rites is performed when one has seen a thousand full months (with roughly 84 years), when turning 88 years and 8 months and 8 days, and finally when turning one hundred. On the latter occasion the elder is seated in a huge earthenware pot made for the occasion. It serves as uterus and after the ritual simulation of the 9 months period of gestation, a hole is broken into the pot and the elder is thus reborn. I have been working on these fascinating old age rites for many years, documenting contemporary practice and studying both modern and historical ritual handbooks. Of particular interest for me is how these rites, which are in origin not specifically Buddhist, have been reworked in a Buddhist idiom and adapted to a Buddhist

framework. This feeds into my more general interest in the dynamics of these rituals, of how they are transmitted over hundreds of years and in the process modified and adapted to changing circumstances.

#### Which other features of Newar Buddhism interest you?

I am also interested in the narrative literature of Newar Buddhism, its depiction in painting and its link to ritual practice. These texts are composed in Sanskrit and as such form the last layer of Buddhist Sanskrit literature. I have worked mainly on the so-called Svayambhu Purana, a text that locates the origins of Buddhism in mythical terms in the Kathmandu Valley. It took shape not long after the disappearance of Buddhism from the Gangetic plane and served to compensate for that loss. I used my most recent stay to study the Purana's depiction in the murals adorning the vestibule of a tantric shrine at Svayambhu.



Aerial Photo of Svayambhu, summer 1955.  
Photo by Ganesh Man Chitrakar (copyright The Ganesh Photo Lab, Kathmandu)



On the sidelines of an old age ritual performed in September 2008 in Kathmandu, Alexander von Rosspatt shares a light moment after having been garlanded and blessed with tikas and sacred threads.

## SPECIAL SECTION

JOANNA WILLIAMS  
A BELOVED PROFESSOR RETIRES

Written by Sujatha A. Meegama, Ph.D.  
Candidate, History of Art, UC Berkeley



Joanna Williams

On the dust jacket of her second book, *The Two-Headed Deer: Illustrations of the Ramayana in Orissa* (1996), Joanna Gottfried Williams states that she was “born in southern Indiana not far from the hamlet of Hindustan,” clearly revealing the sense of humor seen in her lectures and writings as she takes on serious topics in Asian Art. After over forty-years (1967-2010) of teaching at UC Berkeley and a distinguished career in researching and writing on South and Southeast Asian art, Professor Williams will be retiring this coming May.

With a dual appointment in both the Department of History of Art and the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies, Williams is best known for her books, articles, and courses on South and Southeast Asian art. However, her career in art history began at Harvard University with a doctoral dissertation on the Buddhist wall paintings of Khotan (1969). Very quickly, she moved on to researching South Asian art. Glancing at her publications, which are too numerous to list, one sees that her interests have ranged from sculpture to painting to issues such as unfinished images or the “anonymous” Indian artist.

The seeds for her first book, *The Art of Gupta India: Empire and Province* (1982), can be seen in a number of articles that she published in the early 1970s. Moving away from a chronological study, Williams situates her subject matter in tem-

poral, spatial, and social contexts. She writes, “Thus a study dealing with dates alone seems as insubstantial as a loom that has been strung but awaits the woof of place and the pile of social context. It is only from the completed fabric that patterns emerge, which are the proper concern of the art historian” (*The Art of Gupta India*, 5-6).

After taking on the golden age of Indian art in her first book and some of the assumptions written about it, Williams focuses in her second book—*The Two-Headed Deer*—on a group of lesser-known images of the epic poem Ramayana from Orissa. She reflects on the “folk art” status of these paintings, suggesting that this is one of the reasons for their neglect in academia. Questioning the Indian cul-

In celebration of Williams’ retirement, a festschrift, *To My Mind: Essays for Joanna Gottfried Williams*, edited by one of her former students, Padma Kaimal (Ph.D., 1988), will be published as a special *Artibus Asiae* volume

tural binaries of *margi* (mainstream) and *desi* (local), Williams states that her goal is to “make both the rough, gutsy and the refined parts of the Orissan pictorial tradition interesting and accessible to a wide audience” (*The Two-Headed Deer*, 3). Perhaps what is most intriguing in this study is the title, “*The Two-Headed Deer*,” which refers to the famous illusory deer in the Ramayana—the artists of Orissa depict this deer with two heads to show its magical qualities or perhaps to evoke multiple moments in a narrative. This pluralistic vision is a point that Williams brings up again and again: there are many ways to draw and see the world other than through “Renaissance eyes.”

Williams’ interest in the “elite” versus the “folk” was continued in a recent exhibition at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, *Princes, Palaces, and Passion*. In the accompanying catalog—*Kingdom of the Sun: Indian Court and Village Art from the Princely State of Mewar*—edited by Williams, she brings together seventy-five pieces from public and private collections highlighting the importance of seeing and studying both royal and popular art. In her own essay on the “Artists of Mewar,” she challenges the assumption that much Indian art is unsigned and hence anonymous, directing attention to artists who have been overlooked in scholarship on the Mewari artistic tradition.

Williams’ questioning of such dichotomies was most recently celebrated by her youngest crop of Ph.D. students in the form of the dual panels, “*The Marga and Desi in the Art of South Asia: In Honor of Professor Joanna G. Williams*” at the 38th Annual Conference on South Asia at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which brought together such diverse topics as depictions of jataka stories at Amaravati in South India to the *Mohras*, or masks of gods, from the Kullu Valley in the lower Himalayas, and to the popular outdoor commercial site of Dilli Haat in Delhi.

Not only is Williams conversant with the visual cultures of North and of South India (and even Sri Lanka), but she is one of the few Asian art historians who is comfortable discussing the two vast regions of South and Southeast Asia. The dissertations she has supervised range from Khmer temples to modernism in



Joanna Williams with Phad performers at the *Princes, Palaces, & Passion* exhibit that was curated by her at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco

Williams’ books & curriculum vitae speak volumes about her. But to get a more personal view, Sujatha caught up with her over a cup of coffee to ask her about her love of teaching and writing on Asian Art. Below is that conversation:

**Sujatha Meegama:** What have you most loved about teaching at UC Berkeley?

**Joanna Williams:** Well, I’ve had as interesting students here as anyone could ever ask for, students with interesting backgrounds, both American and foreign. And, I feel privileged to have added to the pool of Ph.D.s out there in various ways with very smart people. I love having the odd geology major and the anthropologist, who end up in my classes just because they want to know something about these parts of the world. Eventually they travel there later on and send me a post card! I remember vividly around 1990 getting a postcard from a former student, who had been specializing in Chinese painting, but took a course in Southeast Asian art with me, who sent me a postcard from Borobudur! It was right after there had been a small explosion on the top of the monument and she wrote “don’t worry, it’s all right!”

**SM:** When did you first visit South Asia?

**JW:** I got to South Asia at the ripe age of twenty with a job as an au pair girl. I had begun to study at Harvard and thought, “gee, if I’m going to spend my life working on South Asia, I ought to see this place, and find out whether I’ll enjoy revisiting it.” So, when a job came along as an au pair girl for an American family, who were taking a leave to do something useful in India and who had three children, who didn’t know about the South Asian institution “the Ayah” and thought they had to bring their own babysitter, I was given a free trip to India. I lived in Delhi for the year with them, helped their kids do their homework and things like that. And, had time to travel during vacations: I got to places like Ajanta over Christmas vacation and Rajasthan over some vacation. I visited Sri Lanka on my way home: I decided I want to see all the other places covered in the old textbook that we had at Harvard. I went to see Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura—I got there!

**SM:** Was this during your graduate studies?

**JW:** I had just done one year and filed my M.A. and I was encouraged to write on a Central Asian topic—on the Buddhist interpretation of some of the Central Asian paintings located in what was “Communist China”. In my year in Delhi, I got to see Central Asian paintings that are still preserved in the National Museum, which has a large part of Sir Aurel Stein’s collection, as well as next door, in what’s now the Archaeological Survey’s main office, which has a display of larger pieces. I photographed all the fragments of the Aurel Stein collection, in black and white mostly, and they were part of my Ph.D. dissertation. That was 1965-66.

**SM:** How did you decide to work on South Asia?

**JW:** In those days, Asia was somewhat limited. I couldn’t go to China and hence to Central Asia because of politics. Americans were not able

Indian art, and stone portrait sculpture of the Pallavas and the Colas to Buddhist palm leaf manuscripts. Perhaps, the best example of a project that brings together Williams' love of South and Southeast Asian art is one written by one of her undergraduate advisees, My Ket Chau, for her senior thesis—"The Power of Patterns: Double *Ikat* for Textile Exchange in India and Indonesia—which won the 2008 Library Prize for Undergraduate Research sponsored by the University. My Ket, who is presently the Lifchez/Stronach Curatorial Intern at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, reminiscences on how she was inspired by Professor Williams' commitment to seeing the actual object and the process of production. In her course on Southeast Asian art, Williams invited a Laotian weaver (along with her gigantic loom) to demonstrate to her students the intricate process of weaving textiles!

Even though she freely admits to an old-fashioned preference for slides over digital technology, Williams is fearless in throwing herself into exploring new topics—her recent seminars have ranged from 19th-century photography in South Asia (requiring a field trip to the Getty Collection in Malibu, CA) to Sri Lankan painting, for which she nearly traveled the length and breadth of Sri Lanka, and most recently the problems of archaeological conservation in South and Southeast Asia. Her newest Ph.D. student, Sandra Sardjono, in speaking about this last seminar, says that Williams brought much awareness on the issue of "who owns antiquity." For the seminar Williams had invited an archaeologist from Sri Lanka and two lawyers who specialize on legal ownership of objects. "Bringing real life experience is what makes her and her classes very interesting," says Sardjono.

to travel to China. For my dissertation I had seen as much as possible of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Kashmir, that was near and related. I also saw a fair amount of Central India, because I had been charged with finding the Indian sources for Central Asian paintings. And, I said to myself and not to my professor, "That's hokey! There's no point in calling these Indian sources, things are different in the desert across the Himalayas. I could spend the rest of my life on South Asia proper. It was a wonderful place to visit in the 1960s. On my very first trip, Nehru was Prime Minister. It was a very optimistic time. The memory of Gandhi was fresh. And, the sense of opportunity and richness of unresearched monuments and images was wonderful.

**SM:** You have one of the best slide collections in the world—have you actually been to all these places?

**JW:** Virtually everything that I teach I have seen in the original. I made a point of that—to see things from different angles and to form my own opinions. Context matters tremendously—taking one's own slides that show that context is hard to beat. Scale also I might add matters tremendously: to find out how big or small something is. I often found that the published photographs of these things were devoid of people because the professional photographer wants to do justice to the big image. But there is no harm in having some people there for scale. I have been back to many a site to bring people into my slides.

One of the difficult items to photograph was a very early *linga* from South India, the *Gudimalam linga*. Maybe 2nd CE or maybe even earlier. That was a site in a region where I didn't have my own research as an excuse to be in the region, nor did my research entitle me to work on something that early. At the same time, I desperately wanted to see it and photograph it. Once I was in Madras and thought *Gudimallam* was just up the coast. I hired a car and got to this out of the way site, walked across rice paddy fields to get there, only to discover that lo and behold there was an Archaeological Survey of India attendant there to make sure I did not photograph it because it was not permitted. That time I failed. But, I did get to look at it and talk to local people about what it meant. Then, two years later when I was again in Chennai, I redid the whole trip: hired a car, walked over rice fields to get to the little temple. And, this time I had a permit from the Archaeological Survey of India in New Delhi to take my own original slides. This is a piece of sculpture, a rather amazing one, a very life-like *linga* itself with a large image of presumably *Siva*, holding an axe and standing on a demon, which isn't quite like any other image of him. It has been a subject of much scholarly debate: chronology, style, and iconography. But, we all used the same old black and white reproduction taken by the British in 1925. This was an opportunity to photograph everything he was holding, to photograph the back and the side view, and to question the assumption that it resembled the distantly related early Buddhist monument *Bharhut*. I was able to change my opinion about it and to teach students in Berkeley.

**SM:** What are some other memorable moments from your fieldtrips?

**JW:** After I finished working on Gupta art, I thought to myself "Do I want to be known as the Gupta Girl from California? No, I should work on something different." One of the problems that bothered me about Gupta art was how hypothetical our knowledge of texts and versions of the story that was been used. Shouldn't I work on something still living where I could actually talk to people and observe them, enacting later versions of the material and see how those related to the art of the late eighteenth through early twentieth century. That's how the turn to Orissa happened.

My days in Orissa were rather wonderful because I spoke the local language. I had made an effort to learn it from a local tutor and had to be able to read it for my own work. I could communicate with the villagers, which made it much easier for me to study the *Ramlila* performances in rural Orissa taking place in villages in which all the villagers take the parts and do magnificent productions of this powerful dramatic story. Those were wonderful days. I stayed in a small resthouse above the village of *Dasapala* in central Orissa where no foreigner had been since the days of the British. They were quite interested in me. They accommodated my photography of the *Ramlila*, because I would preserve its memory: "Take our praise, take our *yasha* to the United States of America." I took videos of some of those performances, colorful scenes in which *Ravana* is killed in the early hours of the morning and his great image comes toppling down—a lively object of interest, which I could match up with the palm leaf manuscripts, which is a rather *recherché* obscure subject to be working on. I wondered this as I worked on the palm leaf manuscripts. Is anyone else going to be interested in this ever? I decided that I was interested in it damn it! And, that was enough! To understand the palm leaf manuscripts I had to see all the versions of the story of *Ram* as it was written and depicted, but also played out in the villages of Orissa. That was scholarship and research that was fun!

**SM:** I remember seeing slides of Dylan, your son, playing on the ruins of *Elephanta*—how did he work into all your field trips?

**JW:** He came along, usually happily. Looking back on it now, he remembers it fondly. Sometimes, at the time, he protested. For example, in the 70s when I was visiting small out of the way Gupta temples in *Madhya Pradesh*, his solace was having his little metal cars to play with on the temple. These little cars, known as *Hot Wheels*, traveled all over the Gupta Empire! Eventually, one would get lost at each site. Someday, some archaeologist is going re-excavate those sites, and discover that *Hot Wheels* are associated with the Gupta Empire and that there was some symbiotic relationship between the two! Dylan once drew me a picture of a Gupta temple—it was a little blob in the upper right hand corner of the painting and the whole paper was filled with a wavy line: the road getting there! The journey was most memorable—a long ride to all those out of the way temples. He also drew a picture in school, which his teacher showed me proudly, showing how much imagination he had. It showed a blue man holding up a mountain—I had to laugh when I realized it was *Krishna Govardhanadhara*!

**SM:** What is your advice for future scholars?

**JW:** Go see it! Visit it! And, questions will come to you that way. There's no harm in reading theory from other fields and expanding your own mind in terms of what's possible. But, before you map someone else's theory on to your material, think about what the material itself presents as a problem worth addressing.

**SM:** What are you hoping to research or write during your retirement?

**JW:** There is one project that has been on the backburner for a longtime: there is a need for a textbook for Southeast Asian art history. South Asian art has various books that serve this purpose, but Southeast Asian art is difficult to teach because no book does it all—holds together everything from Burma, to Vietnam, to Indonesia. And, does it well and respectfully rather than treating it as Greater India. Since I do have my own slides and negatives of most of the places involved, even though I am not a Southeast Asian specialist, I might be the person to do such a general book. I'll think about it.

**SM:** What do you most look forward to in your retirement?

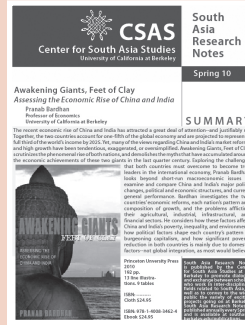
**JW:** No more committees!

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