

IN MEMORIAM

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by Professor Lawrence Cohen
Director, Institute for South Asia Studies

All of us at Berkeley are devastated by the loss of our undergraduate student Tarishi Jain, who was among those killed by



the attackers who stormed a restaurant in the elite neighborhood and diplomatic enclave of Gulshan, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on July 1.

Personally, and on behalf of my colleagues, let me note that we are bereft, that words frankly fail here, and that our hearts go out to all of Tarishi's family and

Tarishi took my class "Introduction to Indian Civilization" and I supported her application for the internship offered by the Chowdhury Center to work on a project in Eastern Bank Limited. We met at great length in spring to discuss her application. She was full of enthusiasm and energy and the aspiration to make a difference in the world, and later when she was awarded the internship she shared her joy with me.

In the class she stood out as a particularly engaged and thoughtful student. She enlivened both the lectures and the discussion section and was always ready to bring her personal experience to bear, challenging both herself and her fellow students to reexamine long-cherished beliefs about South Asian religion and society. Tarishi was particularly adept in bringing the ancient and modern into conversation and making the class relevant to her own experiences of growing up in Bangladesh. Indeed, it was clear that her interest in the class went beyond the academic and was much about understanding her roots and upbringing. She was a wonderfully lively and positive student, and she got excited about many topics we covered in class, engaging with them not only academically but as issues that mattered to her life. She was also very sweet, kind and friendly, and that in a wonderfully self-confident manner.

As the graduate student who assisted me teaching the class wrote: "Tarishi was one of my best students--kind, smart, and with endless potential."

Prof. Alexander von Rospatt
Professor of Buddhist & South and Southeast Asian Studies Studies

friends.

Our hearts go out as well to the families and loved ones of Tarishi's two friends Abinta Kabir and Faraaz Hossain, both students at Emory University, who died with her in the attack on the Holey Artisan Bakery, and to the survivors of all who were killed.

Tarishi, eighteen years old, was an incoming sophomore at the University of California, Berkeley, on a summer internship from the Subir and Malini Chowdhury Center for Bangladesh Studies. The internship placed her at the Eastern Bank Limited in Dhaka, where Tarishi was studying the growth of e-commerce.

Subir Chowdhury, the quality-management strategist, writer, and engineer whose donation and vision launched the Chowdhury Center, said of Tarishi that "she was a very talented young lady with a passion to make a positive difference in the world. It is not just a loss for India or UC Berkeley, but a loss for the world."

An Indian citizen, Tarishi had grown up in many parts of Asia with eight formative years in Dhaka, including high school at the American International School there. Her father had a textile business in Dhaka and was in the city with Tarishi this summer. They were to have left this week for a large family reunion in India. Many concerned and some understandably angry postings I have read over the past hours have claimed Tarishi for India, for Bangladesh, for Hong Kong where we understand her to have permanent residency, and for the United States and Berkeley. One might claim her for a world in which people struggle for value amid different conditions of mobility and belonging.

To think about value, Tarishi was planning on majoring in economics at Berkeley. To think about value, she also studied in the department of South and Southeast Asian Studies on campus, and received rave reviews from faculty there. Professor of Buddhist and South Asian Studies Alexander von Rospatt noted of Tarishi that "she was full of enthusiasm and energy and the aspiration to make a difference in the world, and she was so happy when she won the fellowship." Her Graduate Student Instructor Kelly Powell wrote that Tarishi "was one of my best students: kind, smart, and with endless potential."

Tarishi was very active working with the International Students Advisory Board (ISAB) on campus. Aradhana Sachdev, a student in Molecular and Cell Biology at Berkeley active in ISAB, said of Tarishi that she "was an embodiment of genuine kindness," and her work was "invaluable" to the ISAB as it worked to extend Berkeley's international legacy.

Tarishi was invaluable, in fact, across campus. She was closely involved with fellow Berkeley students spearheading a project clothing line, "EthiCal," producing clothing with the UC Berkeley insignia all the profits of which were used to support micro-lending projects.

The violence in Dhaka this week echoes and amplifies recent violent events of mass killing worldwide—in Baghdad, Istanbul, and Orlando, this past two weeks alone. It extends the particular escalation

ON SEPTEMBER 7, 2016, THE CHOWDHURY CENTER FOR BANGLADESH STUDIES AND THE INSTITUTE FOR SOUTH ASIA STUDIES ORGANIZED A MEMORIAL IN HONOR OF TARISHI JAIN. THE MEMORIAL INCLUDED A GUIDED MOMENT OF REFLECTION LED BY SARWANG PARIKH, A COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE SPECIALIST.

of violence in Bangladesh, which has been beset for the past several years by the murders of public advocates of a range of moral commitments, from religious pluralism and LGBTQ dignity to the study of literature.

Bangladesh has been an urgently important country, since its precarious emergence, far outstripping its physical size, for its role as the site of experiments in government, in health, in education, and in economy. The effect of these experiments—from the management of infectious disease to the imagining of novel forms of national and religious belonging, from the creation of micro-finance to the emergence of an unexpected textile boom—is the subject of critical debate.

The potential of Bangladesh—the possibilities of these experiments, and their limitations, in the context of the economic, political, moral, and environmental transformations of the 21st century—has been at the heart of the mission of the Chowdhury Center. The Center, in a remarkably short amount of time, has galvanized debate on how to link debate on what we often clumsily term "religious" versus "secular" political commitment, on the regulation and development of the textile industry and the condition of textile

I first met Tarishi in October 2015 when she stopped by the ISAS. She was so excited that Berkeley had a Center for Bangladesh Studies and couldn't wait to be part of it. We met again in the spring as she prepared her application for our summer internships and her excitement when she found out that she was accepted. We began to speak more as I planned my own internship in Dhaka. She was so excited to show the Dhaka that she knew to me and was so excited that a fellow vegetarian was joining her in a country with a meat-heavy cuisine. During our orientation, her enthusiasm and passion for the ability to give back to Bangladesh shone through and it was obvious that she would be extremely successful in her internship. Whether it was discussing where to get the best Japanese food in Dhaka or trying to figure out the word for "salt" in Bangla, it was clear that she had a vibrant and fun personality. Her sweet and warm nature was so obvious to all who met her. She emailed me soon after I arrived in Dhaka to ensure that I was being properly taken care of at my guesthouse and that I was managing in a brand new country. Instead of me as the ISAS employee ensuring that our interns were settling in properly, it was Tarishi who felt a responsibility to make sure that I was being taken care of!

Sridevi Prasad
Chowdhury Center Intern, Summer 2016;
ISAS Program & Publications Assistant

We are all very devastated to hear the news about Tarishi Jain. The Berkeley community has expressed disbelief, anger, and an incredible amount of sorrow as we all mourn the senseless death of a young and vibrant student who had so much potential and so much to give. Here at the ISAS, we only knew Tarishi only for a short time, but we were immediately impressed by her focus, dedication, and passion for her work. By all accounts, she was a young woman who cared deeply about others and wanted to make a difference in the world.

Our deepest condolences to her family, friends, and the entire Berkeley community..

Excerpt from Sanchita Saxena's, Exec. Director, Institute for South Asia Studies; Director, Subir & Malini Chowdhury Center for Bangladesh Studies, remarks at the Chowdhury Center Memorial for Tarishi on Sept 7, 2016

labor, on finance and micro-finance, and on public health and Bangladesh's unusual history of large non-government organizations like BRAC focused on health reform.

Extending the vision of Subir and of Malini Chowdhury, the Center was inaugurated by two major lectures, by Sir Fazle Hasan Abed and Professor Amartya Sen. It has brought both established and new scholars, government officials, and social activists to Berkeley, and has brought Berkeley faculty to Bangladesh. It inspired Tarishi Jain, who noted in applying for the Internship Program that it gave her

It is on this dark and difficult day that the meaning of our campus community takes on extraordinary power and importance. For the ties that bind – the values and experiences and aspirations that constitute our community here at Berkeley – are not just activated by our common grief, but become our touchstone as we struggle to comprehend and accept the reality, and finality, of that horrible attack in Bangladesh last weekend.

We have lost a precious member of our community, and we are so much the poorer because of it. Words fail us, even as so many have found eloquent words to express how Tarishi Jain so fully embodied what I believe all of us at Berkeley stand for and share. Tarishi has been described by those who knew her best and loved her most, as a "smart and ambitious young woman with a big heart," who was "easy going with a light hearted nature," and was "sweet and genuine," and as a student who was "full of enthusiasm and energy and the aspiration to make a difference in the world."

Tarishi was a native of India and a citizen of the world. She was someone who had witnessed the effects of poverty and inequality and told friends she wanted to belong to an organization that served the underprivileged and address some of the most vexing issues in South Asia. She was, friends have said, someone who was driven to go back to Bangladesh and help improve conditions in the country. Tarishi was, according to a close companion, "just

the opportunity to return to the country where she had spent eight years, helping her imagine how to bring together economics, industry, and social justice in her career and in Bangladesh.

On the night of the attack, Tarishi had gone to dinner with her friends Abinta and Faraaz to a popular restaurant in Gulshan. The attackers, according to the emerging testimony of survivors, singled out the restaurant as "foreigners" congregated there. The attackers allegedly told restaurant workers that they would not kill Bengalis; a survivor reported that the test of nationalism was the ability to recite from the Koran. Faraaz was told he could be released but elected to stay with his two friends: all three died along with the others singled out for death.

Part of the task of the university and of this Center is to understand with precision and rigor the conditions of this violence, in Dhaka and elsewhere in Bangladesh. Part of the task is to understand how current political and state responses, in Bangladesh specifically, may be tied up to the escalating attacks.

Part of the task is to attend to how the target was, in this case and not as before Bangladeshis who differed in their ethical commitments from their killers. The target was in this case the all too familiar figure of the foreigner. Over the past months, the moral and political threat of the foreigner has marked impassioned debate on "Brexit" in the United Kingdom, and it

ready to take action and make change, "to do everything she could for the people." In short, Tarishi Jain, at the age of 18, was already living a life of meaning and purpose, of dedication to the greater good, to helping others, to making the world a better place. By every measure, here was a life worthy of joyous celebration and profound respect, a bright shining example of the hopes and dreams we have for young people in general and Berkeley students in particular.

Yet, we are gathered together not to rejoice but to mourn a profoundly tragic loss that has diminished us as a campus and global community, which of course includes Tarishi's two friends from Emory University, Abinta and Faraaz, who died with her. I never had the good fortune of meeting Tarishi Jain, but I recognize in all I hear about her how valued a member of our community she had so quickly become, and how genuinely she reflected our values in all she did both at Berkeley and in her work beyond the campus.

Today, our hearts are broken and we stand together in solidarity and support with Tarishi's family and friends. As we do so, we cannot help but ask ourselves how to make sense of the senseless. No words are adequate to express our pain and our grief; no explanations are sufficient to contain the feelings that overwhelm us. And yet, at this most difficult of times, we must also share an ongoing commitment to embrace and emulate all that Tarishi Jain exemplified and stood for.



has marked the rhetoric of Donald Trump and his call for bans and for walls. Each of these sites of public anxiety toward the foreigner are different, radically, from one another, and from the killings in Dhaka, and yet we need to think about them in complex relation. These are our times, and we must mourn with awareness.

In doing so, we might wish to be hesitant and not to rely all too smugly on an easy dismissal of xenophobia or of populism. The challenge for the Chowdhury Center and for the Institute for South Asia Studies, the challenge for all who mourn the violent and cruel loss of Tarishi Jain and of her friends, is to understand far better than we do the specters of our times and how we must struggle to respond.

None of these words, quickly written and of necessity uncertain, can address the aftermath of this violence. We mourn our student and classmate Tarishi, we stand with her family and friends. We stand with our many colleagues and friends in Dhaka touched by this violence. ❖

Compassion. Tolerance. Love. Generosity. Justice. Empathy. For if words do not suffice, our actions and deeds, as individuals and as a community, will celebrate Tarishi Jain's life, we will try and give meaning to this tragic loss and push back against the darkness with the light shed by human kindness and love, as also with the kind of commitment and understanding that Tarishi lived to the full. Even as we cannot rid ourselves of thoughts of her terrible death, let us not forget the real meaning of her extraordinary life, cut far too short, but by no means extinguished as we remember and honor her today.

Nicholas Dirks, Chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley