



CENTER FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

University of
Michigan
Fall 2012
Newsletter

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



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EDITOR:

Zilka Joseph/CSAS

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Downpour 2 (detail); courtesy Mathur / da Cunha

I'D LIKE TO WELCOME everyone—students, community members, staff, and faculty—to the 2012–2013 academic year. Let me take this opportunity to thank Juan Cole for his three years of leadership at the Center. Faced with the particular challenges of this fiscal climate (including unanticipated cuts in federal funding), Juan nonetheless maintained the core mission of the Center: providing a vibrant intellectual hub for the study of South Asia. He was assisted in this task by a tireless staff, a supportive Associate Director, and an executive committee, three of whose members have now completed their service. I would like to extend thanks to Christi Merrill for her service as Associate Director and to executive committee members Meilu Ho and Aswin Punathambekar for their contributions. With their support, the Center had a compelling program of events this past semester, including visits by Professor Tanika Sarkar of the Centre for Historical Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and Harish Kapadia, mountaineer and activist. We also had the pleasure of hearing about the current research of our own Mrinalini Sinha and Tom Trautmann.

This semester we have a diverse program for you that will kick off with a lecture that is sure to make you question everything you thought you knew about India's rivers: Dilip da Cunha of the Parsons School of Design and the University of Pennsylvania will be the first speaker in our scholarly

lecture series (September 7). da Cunha's lecture contributes to our Trehan Theme Year for 2012, "The Environment of India," which commenced earlier with lectures and an international mini conference. Under the theme-year banner, we look forward to welcoming Raman Sukumar of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, in November, who will be speaking about the sacred elephant of ancient India, and we will conclude the theme year with another international mini conference, to be held on November 16, 2012. Our fall program also features Anushiya Ramaswamy (September 14) who will be speaking on translating Tamil poetry and Dalit literature, and Amitav Ghosh, who is a Zell Distinguished International Writer in Residence this fall and will be speaking on December 7. We're also very pleased that our colleague Varuni Bhatia of the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures will be sharing her current research with us in a lecture entitled, "Chaitanya and the Politics of Recovery in Colonial Bengal" (November 30). You'll find complete details of all of these events in this newsletter and updated information on our website (<http://www.ii.umich.edu/csas/>), where you'll also find plenty of other news about the Center and its students and faculty.

As part of our Fall program, we invite you into the world of *dastangoi*, or the art of storytelling, with Mahmood Farooqui, who is one of the world's leading prac-

tioners of this art form. Based in New Delhi, Farooqui will be in residence in Ann Arbor for six weeks this Fall as a "Scholar from the Muslim World" fellow of the Islamic Studies Program. Farooqui is a former Rhodes scholar, historian, filmmaker, and storyteller, or *dastango* (you can read more about him on p.10 of this newsletter). On September 27 he will be performing for us, and on September 28 he will give a lecture on Urdu storytelling in history and practice. I hope you'll take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to participate in a world of storytelling that spans across South Asia, and beyond.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that our Summer in South Asia (SiSA) undergraduate fellowship program continues to thrive. This summer we sent seven UM students to India to work on an array of projects. Please join us on October 19, when the students will share their experiences with us at the SiSA Fellowship colloquium. Our students are doing fabulous things under the auspices of this program, one made possible by the generosity of an anonymous donor.

As you can see, it promises to be an exciting semester for the study of South Asia. Please join us. We'll look forward to your contributions to the conversation.

Farina Mir, Director
Center for South Asian Studies
Associate Professor of History

FACULTY NEWS



AWARDS:

Christi Merrill's translation of *Chouboli and Other Stories* by Vijaydan Detha (published by Fordham Press and Katha) won an AAS SAC Ramanujan Book Prize for Translation (South Asia) at the AAS Conference in Toronto this year. The award is intended to recognize and encourage translations from South Asian languages into English and innovative work that reaches a wide audience.

Mrinalini Sinha, Alice Freeman Palmer Professor of History, was awarded the prestigious Guggenheim fellowship. Her research topic is — Complete political independence: the curious history of a nationalist Indian demand.



Farina Mir's *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010; Delhi: Permanent Black, 2010) was awarded the 2012 Bernard S. Cohn Book Prize from the Association of Asian Studies. The prize recognizes “outstanding and innovative scholarship across discipline and country of specialization for a first book on South Asia.”

Read more at:

permanent-black.blogspot.com/2011/10/farina-mir-wins-ahas-richards-books.html

Aswin Punathambekar won the Best Essay award for “Reality Television and the Making of Mobile Publics” (published in *Real Worlds: Global Perspectives on the Politics of Reality Television*, New York: Routledge, 2010) from the Society for Cinema and Media Studies.

Student News

Robert Poulson-Houser, MA, South Asian Studies, won a Boren Fellowship to India. The fellowship, sponsored by the National Security Education Program, provides up to \$30,000 to US graduate students to bolster their education through specialization in area study, language study, or increased language proficiency.

Poulson-Houser will be studying Urdu, and volunteering in local elementary schools.

Harjeet Grewal, PhD, Asian Languages & Cultures won a Rackham International Research Award to pursue his work on India – “Languages of South Asian devotion: religious thought and experience.”

Summer in South Asia Fellowships 2012

Funded by an anonymous donor, these undergraduate students, from various disciplines, traveled to India this summer to do research:

Nicholas Pilarski, Theatre Arts and Global Media Studies; **Carolyn Yarina**, Chemical Engineering; **Marisa Perera**, Psychology and Spanish; **Eric Ranyal**, Chemical Engineering; **Tessa Adzemovic**, Biochemistry and French; **Rabia Mahmood**, Psychology, Gender & Health; and **Bradley Iott**, Anthropology and Urban Studies.

Congratulations to this year’s Fellows!

We look forward to their presentations at the *Summer in South Asia Fellowship Colloquium* to be held on October 19, 2012. Please come and support our students!

THE THIRD TREHAN THEME YEAR: “The Environment of India” Conference – PART I

A Report on the Trehan Conference

March 9, 2012

By Richard Tucker, Adjunct Professor, SNRE



Ann Grodzins Gold



Ashwini Chhatre

THE THEME OF this year's Trehan Initiative mini conference is "The Environment of India." The first of two sessions was held on March 9, from 2 to 6 pm, at the Center for South Asian Studies. Three eminent scholars from India and the United States presented their cutting-edge research in major addresses. Each presentation was followed by a lively discussion with a large and very knowledgeable audience of the university's South Asia students, faculty and friends. The afternoon ended with a panel discussion and a final general discussion session.

Ann Grodzins Gold, Professor of Religion and Anthropology, Syracuse University, gave the first lecture, "From Snakes' Blood to Sewage: Mythology and Ecology of a Minor River in Rajasthan," in which she drew on her many years of experience in villages and urban areas of Rajasthan to show how socio-economic hierarchies, gender differences and cultural traditions collectively determine society's use of water resources in a semi-arid setting.



Arun Agrawal

The second speaker was **Ashwini Chhatre**, from the Department of Geography, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Professor Chhatre spoke on the “Complex Interdependence and Co-evolution of Environment, Development, and Democracy,” using as a starting point his years of research in rural Himachal Pradesh. His presentation demonstrated the importance of meeting rural people’s needs, if natural systems are to be maintained.

The afternoon’s final speaker was **Mahesh Rangarajan**, Director of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, who spoke on “Conserving Nature as if Democracy Mattered.” Dr. Rangarajan is India’s leading historian of the national parks and wildlife conservation movement, as well as one of India’s most prominent political commentators. He placed the effort to protect the subcontinent’s remaining natural areas in the context of complex political and social pressures around the country. In addition, he answered

Three eminent scholars from India and the United States presented their cutting-edge research.

a number of questions and addressed several issues that arose during the conference and was able to enlighten the audience with information about some of his most recent projects.

Arun Agrawal, Professor, School of Natural Resources and Environment, brought the conference to a close with a brief summation and a panel discussion which he also chaired. We owe him enthusiastic thanks for his major role in planning and hosting the afternoon’s conference.

We look forward to “The Environment of India” Conference— Part II, to be held on November 16, 2012, which will feature three more stellar scholars who will present the most recent research on environmental issues in India. (See page 9.)

Our special thanks and appreciation go to **Drs. Ranveer and Adarsh Trehan** for their generous support of CSAS and for sponsoring these international conferences.



Mahesh Rangarajan



Richard Tucker is Adjunct Professor in the School of Natural Resources and Environment, University of Michigan. For many years his publications centered on the environmental history of India under the British Raj; a collection of his essays is “A Forest History of India,” published by Sage India Press in 2011.

Congratulations to the FLAS RECIPIENTS

2011-2012

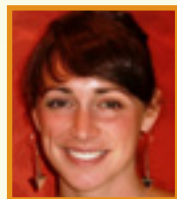


Zain Khan is an incoming MA student in Fall 2012 in South Asian Studies. He graduated from the University of Michigan this year with a Bachelor of Arts degree, with a double concentration in History and Asian Studies. In the MA program, he plans on continuing his studies in Urdu as his language of focus and plans to begin studying Persian or Pashto as well. Zain is interested in studying the history of and exploring ideas of secularism, nationalism, and state-building in modern South Asia. Upon completion of the MA program, he hopes to gain admission to a PhD program in History with a sub-focus on South Asia.



T. Joseph Leach is a PhD student in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures with a focus on Tibetan Buddhism. He will be studying advanced modern Tibetan at UM next year. His research focuses on the visual and material culture of Tibetan

Buddhist communities in the North Indian Himalayan region (Spiti, Ladakh, Zangskar). His goal is an academic career in South Asian religion and Buddhist studies.



Rebecca Bloom is a first-year PhD student in the department of Asian Languages and Culture. Her primary focus is Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhist Art and she will be studying Modern Tibetan language. She has worked for several years at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York and having just completed her MA in Asian Religions at Yale Divinity School, she is now eager to pursue research in the historical development of Buddhist artistic and religious traditions in the Western Himalayan regions of Tibet and India, including parts of the modern states of Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir. Rebecca hopes to examine sacred art-in-context alongside the multiplicity of textual sources connected to religious content and artistic production, thus shedding new light on the early Buddhist heritage of this region, as well as the repercussions of Western Himalayan innovation on the evolution of Tibetan religion and art more broadly.



Jane Menon is a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science, 2012-13. She will be studying Urdu at the advanced level. Jane's research interests lie at the intersection of religion and politics in South Asia. Her dissertation comparing variation in violence among Islamist groups in India and Pakistan has been funded by an NSEP David L. Boren Fellowship and a Rackham International Research Award. Jane earned an MA in Languages and Cultures of Asia from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 2002 and a BA with honors in political science and religious studies from the University of Miami in 1998. Jane plans a career combining university teaching and policy analysis.



Trevor Brabyn is a second-year Master's student at the Center for South Asian Studies, having completed his first year at Michigan plus an intensive summer language program in Urdu in Lucknow, India. His plans are to continue

studying Urdu this year as he finishes his thesis on a pre-modern political culture, seen through chancellery correspondence and other compositions from the late fifteenth- to seventeenth-century Golkonda kingdom seated at today's Hyderabad (India). After graduation, he hopes to join a PhD program and pursue a career as a history professor.

Andrew Haxby

Andrew Haxby is a first year PhD student in the Sociocultural Anthropology program. He has a regional focus on Nepal where he previously studied for two years. For his dissertation fieldwork project, he will be working with Tibetan, Tamang, and Nepali speakers. His project will be a study of changing patterns of ownership and conceptions of property in the Kathmandu Valley. Andrew plans to study Tibetan during his FLAS fellowship period.

FROM TEMPLE TO BOLLYWOOD

Indian Performing Arts Workshop, Language and Culture Festival, Hartland High School



Madhavi Marcia Mai is a Bharatnatyam dancer and choreographer. She trained at Kalakshetra in Chennai with gurus Anandhi Ramachandran and Ambigai. She is a lecturer in the Department of Music, Theater and Dance at Oakland University, Rochester, MI, and artistic director of Sadhana Dance Theater and Sadhana Studio in Ann Arbor, MI. She has a Master's degree in South and Southeast Asian Studies from the University of Michigan.

John Churchville has a degree in Indian Classical music performance from the California Institute of the Arts where he studied tabla under Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri. He currently studies under Pandit Samar Saha from Kolkata, India. He has been performing for the past 25 years, is the founding member of the very popular Indian Music group Sumkali, and music director of both the Ann Arbor Kirtan and Go Like The Wind School in Ann Arbor, MI.

ON FEBRUARY 16, 2012, **Madhavi Mai**, Bharatnatyam dancer and **John Churchville**, tabla player, presented a lively workshop as part of the Language and Culture Festival at Harland School, MI. Thirty-five students participated in the workshop.

Madhavi began by singing a kirtan with Churchville accompanying on tabla and they taught the students the song in the traditional call and response format (the Sanskrit lyrics were on a handout). After listening to and singing the kirtan, the students responded to the experience and a discussion of sound vibration and its relationship to Indian music and dance followed.

Later there was a demonstration of classical Bharatnatyam dance movements, a talk about the origin of the dance and its transformation from temple ritual to theatrical entertainment, brief explanations of the Sanskrit slokas and song that they would be performing. This was followed by a performance of the Dyna sloka and Ganapathy Kauthuvam. Afterwards, Madhavi talked about the wide array of Indian classical, folk and popular dance styles, explaining how the popular Bollywood style evolved. The workshop ended with a "filmi" conclusion with the students enthusiastically joining the dancer on stage to learn a Bollywood Bhangra sequence, with John keeping up his

superb rhythmic accompaniment. After learning the steps, they danced together. The delighted students then asked that they all repeat the dance once more, and they did.

The workshop gave the students an opportunity to learn about the history of dance and music and gain hands-on (feet-on too!) experience of both classical movements and current trends. Special thanks to Madhavi Mai and John Churchville for conducting this exciting and very successful workshop.



PAKISTAN: A CRISIS STATE?

University of Michigan Pakistan Conference

The 2012 Conference was honored to host distinguished guest speakers and panels for this year's Conference with a diverse array of expertise and research interests.



Standing (L-R): Alina Alam, Sharik Bashir, Anoosh Nisar, Asim Siddiqui, Musa Raza, Emad Ansari, Osama Khan, Faisal Masood, Noor Pandit.
Sitting (L-R): Dr. S. Akbar Zaidi, Dr. Nosheen Ali, Prof. John Ciorciari, Amb. (Retd.) Howard Schaffer, Dr. Sadia Saeed, Mr. Zahid Hussain.

ON 24 MARCH 2012, the Pakistani Students' Association hosted the 2012 University of Michigan Pakistan Conference (www.umichpakconf.wordpress.com) – the second student-initiated effort in Ann Arbor aimed at facilitating fresh perspectives and pertinent dialogue regarding issues of governance, diplomacy, Pakistan-United States relations, political development and socioeconomic issues relevant to Pakistan.

The 2012 Conference was honored to host distinguished guest speakers and panels for this

year's Conference with a diverse array of expertise and research interests. **Dr. S. Akbar Zaidi** (Visiting Professor, Columbia University and expert on the political economy of Pakistan) spoke to the audience on political developments and prospects of democratic participation in Pakistan. **Ambassador (Retd.) Howard Schaffer** (Author of "How Pakistan Negotiates with the United States" and Former US Ambassador to Bangladesh) and **Mr. Zahid Hussain** (2012 Pakistan Fellow, Woodrow Wilson Center) debated on Pakistan-United States relations in the context

of Afghanistan. **Dr. Sadia Saeed** (Teaching Fellow, Department of Sociology, Yale University) and **Dr. Nosheen Ali** (Lecturer, Center for South Asia Studies, University of California, Berkeley) spoke on minority affairs – specifically relating to the Ahmadiyya community and sectarian violence from the lens of community participation and education. Facilitating members of the University of Michigan faculty included **Professors John Ciorciari** and **Yazier Henry** from the Ford School of Public Policy.

The day-long Conference was attended by over 60 students, faculty, staff, as well as by members of the wider Michigan community. The event was co-sponsored by the Center for South Asian Studies. For further information on the Pakistan Conference initiative or content of this year's Conference, please feel free to contact psa.board@umich.edu.

Cosponsored by the Center for South Asian Studies.

FALL 2012 EVENTS

- Sept 7: Dilip da Cunha, University of Pennsylvania**
South Asia as a Hydrological Surface/4 pm/Room 1636/SSWB
Cosponsored by the Taubman College of Architecture & Urban Planning and the School of Natural Resources & Environment
- Sept 14: Anushiya Ramaswamy, Southern Illinois University**
Lost without Translation: Telling the Stories of a Silenced People
4 pm/Room 1636/SSWB
Cosponsored by the Fall 2012 LSA Translation Theme Semester
- Sept 27: Mahmood Farooqui, historian and theatre persona**
Dastangoi performance
6 pm/Vandenburg Room, Michigan League
Sponsored by the Islamic Studies Program
- Sept 28: Mahmood Farooqui, historian and theatre persona**
The Revival of Dastangoi: Urdu Storytelling in History and Practice
4 pm/Room 1636/SSWB
Cosponsored by the Islamic Studies Program
- Oct 19: Summer in South Asia Fellowship Colloquium**
Undergraduate Fellows present reports of their research conducted with NGOs in India
4 pm/Room 1636/SSWB
- Oct 26: International Institute Symposium**
Translating Human Rights: Bodies of Evidence
9 am–5 pm/Room 1636/SSWB
- Nov 2: Raman Sukumar, Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore**
Gajatame and Ganesha: The Sacred Elephant of Ancient India
4 pm/Room 1636/SSWB
- Nov 16: The Trehan Theme Year: “The Environment of India” Conference—Part II**
J. Mark Baker, California State College, Humboldt
Shubhra Gururani, York University, Toronto
K. Kannan, State University of New York at Albany
1–6 pm/Room 1636/SSWB
- Nov 30: Varuni Bhatia, Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Michigan**
Chaitanya and the Politics of Recovery in Colonial Bengal
4 pm/Room 1636/SSWB
- Dec 7: Amitav Ghosh, Award winning author and Zell Distinguished International Writer in Residence/TBD**
Cosponsored by the Fall 2012 LSA Translation Theme Semester, the MFA Program and The Michigan Quarterly Review

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MAHMOOD FAROOQUI and the Art of *Dastangoi*

By Farina Mir, Director Center for South Asian Studies, Associate Professor of History

Farooqui is almost single-handedly reviving a traditional performance art of story-telling, *dastangoi*.



MAHMOOD FAROOQUI of New Delhi, India will be in residence in Ann Arbor this September and October as a “Visiting Scholars from the Muslim World” fellow, an initiative of UM’s Islamic Studies Program. Farooqui is a dynamic figure whose range of interests and activities make it difficult to categorize him: he is at once a historian, a theater persona, a filmmaker, and a critic. He might best be characterized as a cultural critic, and he is one with impressive scholarly credentials. His academic training includes degrees from St. Stephens College, Delhi University, Oxford University (as a Rhodes Scholar), and Cambridge University. His scholarly publications include his recently published book of translations (from Persian and Urdu) of documents that provide keen insights into the everyday experience of the Rebellion

of 1857–58 in Delhi, *Besieged: Voices from Delhi, 1857* (New Delhi: Penguin/Viking, 2010).

While in Ann Arbor, Farooqui will be doing research for his current writing project: a study of the late-nineteenth century publication and circulation in India of the forty-six volume *Dastan-i-Amir Hamza*. Farooqui’s project examines the publication of these texts as a crucial moment in the cultural history of modern India, pointing to the interconnections between oral storytelling traditions and print culture. Farooqui will be presenting a lecture on the history and practice of storytelling in the CSAS Scholarly Lecture Series on September 28, 2012.

Farooqui’s scholarly work notwithstanding, he is perhaps best known in India for his film *Peepli Live* (2010), which he co-directed, a scathing critique of post-

liberalization media culture and politics in India. In addition to these impressive accomplishments, Farooqui is also almost single-handedly reviving a traditional performance art of story-telling, *dastangoi*. He has published on this subject, and received awards for his cultural work in this arena. His engagement with *dastangoi* is more than scholarly, however. Farooqui is a performance artist who is reviving this art form through his own practice. His performances have been critically acclaimed, and we are very pleased that he will be performing for us on September 27, 2012. You’ll find complete details on the performance on our website (<http://www.ii.umich.edu/csas/>). This is a unique opportunity to see a traditional art form in a modern guise. As always, all of our events are free and open to the public; we very much hope to see you there!

Anticasteism Workshop –A Report

By **Ram Mahalingam** Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Michigan

A **WORKSHOP** on anticasteism, sponsored by the Center for South Asian Studies, was held on April 6, 2012. It was aimed at teaching undergraduate students about anticasteism and all its complexities in the context of a global world. It was conducted by a panel of interdisciplinary scholars. **Balmurli Natrajan's** (Anthropology, William Patterson University) presentation focused on how caste has been studied in various anthropological accounts. **Shailaja Paik's** (History, University of Cincinnati) presentation focused on the complexities of studying caste in relation to gender and social class.

Ram Mahalingam (Psychology, University of Michigan) discussed psychological research on the study of caste in relation to issues of privilege and power. **Laura Jenkins** (Political Science, University of Cincinnati) discussed how state policies and reservation system have shaped the political mobilization of Dalits in recent years. **Gajendran Ayyathurai** (History, Visiting Professor, William Patterson University) provided a historical account of Dalits' resistance and challenge to social marginality and oppression.

These presentations provided an overview of the complex realities of caste as a cultural category, community identity and a social category. Participants also learned about the similarities and differences between race and caste. Several case studies to understand caste in relation to gender, globalization and social class were presented to workshop participants. The presenters discussed the challenges in developing a critical pedagogy for teaching anticasteism. The workshop made a significant contribution to the study of anticasteism and stimulated interest in understanding the complex dimensions of caste in the era of globalization.



(L-R) Balamurli Natarajan, Shailaja Paik, Laura Jenkins, Ram Mahalingam and Gajendran Ayyathurai



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University of Michigan
1080 S. University, Ste. 3603 | Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1106
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