

# Summer in South Asia

CSAS UNDERGRADUATE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Page 12



CENTER FOR  
SOUTH ASIAN  
STUDIES

# From the Director



*Dear Friends and Colleagues:* Welcome to our new students and faculty and welcome back to our returning and permanent community members! As we go to press the air down in room 1636 (our normal venue for talks and events) seems to still be buzzing with energy from the “Muslim Voices: Traditions and Contexts” conference held in honor of professor Barbara Daly Metcalf, former director of CSAS, president of the American Historical Association, and Alice Freeman Palmer professor of History, on the occasion of her retirement (Sept. 11-13, 2009). The conference brought more than 20 of the world’s foremost scholars of South Asian history and religion—many of them Barbara’s former and current students—for a vigorous and “high octane” series of papers, commentary, and discussion. Professor Francis Robinson, from the University of London, set the tone with a masterful keynote lecture entitled, “Strategies of Authority in Muslim South Asia in the 19th

and 20th Centuries.” Barbara herself was in active attendance and made a number of memorable contributions to the discussion. We all wish Barbara well in this new chapter of her life, though it occurs to me that given Barbara’s seeming inability to slow down even a little on the occasion of her “retirement” that we’ll probably have to get together for another one of these events in twenty years or so. Good luck Barbara, stay in touch, and thank you for all you have done for South Asian Studies over the course of your brilliant career.

Before this newsletter comes out it is likely that another major conference will have already taken place at CSAS. I’m referring to “Old City, New City: Locating the Past in Urban India.” This conference is made possible by the Trehan India Initiative and is part of our first theme year on the Indian city. The conference was designed and organized by graduate students Jane Lynch and Neha Paliwal, both from the department of Anthropology. Other Fall highlights enabled by the generosity of the Trehan initiative include upcoming visits by Calcutta-based political theorist Partha Chatterjee (Oct. 16), and political scientist Leela Fernandes (soon to be a member of the UM faculty!). We are also pleased to welcome Dr. Ravi Sundaram of the SARAI collective in New Delhi (see: <http://www.sarai.net/>) to campus this Fall as a visiting associate professor. Ravi will be teaching a graduate seminar on Indian cities in

a transnational context to a multidisciplinary group of graduate students. It is our good fortune to count him among our community this year.

There are many other lectures and events planned, and you will find a full schedule in the pages of this newsletter. One event I want to particularly draw your attention to, however, is the undergraduate summer fellows symposium, which will be held on October 2. This event takes place annually and provides a wonderful opportunity to hear from our summer fellows about what they learned and did in India. This year we are delighted to be hosting the generous (and anonymous) donor who endowed this highly successful program last year (story on page 12). We’ll keep their name under wraps, but it will be impossible to hide the wonderful effects of their generosity while they’re here: seeing and hearing our fellows narrate what they have gained from the program will make those effects all too evident.

Here’s to a wonderful Fall season ahead, and I hope to see many of you at upcoming Center events. As always, all our events are free and open to the public; we welcome your participation.

DIRECTOR, Center for South Asian Studies  
 ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, International Institute  
 ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, Architectural History and Theory

## IN THIS ISSUE

Faculty Interview .....	3
Ravi Sundaram .....	4
New Students & FLAS Grant Recipients .....	6
Smart Transportation in India? .....	7
New Staff Profile .....	8
Center Activities .....	9
Trehan Theme Year .....	10
Summer in South Asia .....	12
Faculty News .....	14
Summer Teacher Workshop .....	16

Cover image photo of rural West Bengal by Sreyashi Dey

# Faculty Interview .....

## Puninder Singh Jaitla, PhD student in Anthropology, recently interviewed new faculty member in Anthropology, **MICHAEL LEMPERT**

**PJ:** Welcome to the University of Michigan and to the department of Anthropology.

**ML:** Thank you.

**PJ:** Could you tell us a little bit about your interest in Tibetan studies and Anthropology?

**ML:** I began graduate school in the History of Religions studying Indo-Tibetan Buddhist material, so the arc of my graduate career began with Buddhist Studies. At the time I was studying classical Geluk philosophy. I also spent some time in India at some Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. I became very interested in the educational system at these monasteries. One of the most glaring things about the Tibetan Buddhist educational system is the centrality of these twice daily agonistic courtyard debates. I was amazed that this whole spectacular and dramatic dimension to Buddhist education was so understudied. I found myself gravitating towards it; why does this educational system look the way it does? I found that I wanted to know more about Buddhism in practice.

At Penn I did a course in Anthropology with Greg Urban and was immediately hooked. I also studied with Fred Erickson, who has

worked in microethnography, i.e., close analyses of social face-to-face interaction. In his microethnography course we looked at one minute of video data for an entire semester.

At the same time I was taking a course with Webb Keane in linguistic anthropology. I also studied very closely under Asif Agha at Penn. The rest of my career has been in a sense bringing these approaches together.

I'm very committed to the empirical study of discourse and face-to-face interaction while at the same time seriously engaging social theory and avoiding the compartmentalization of certain domains of study like interaction. This is something that is really important to me. I'm especially interested in the discursive practices that make monks and that make educational subjects. I'm also interested in public reprimand and to a lesser degree corporal punishment. I'm interested in sites of socialization. I do video analysis and analyze how these things are structured and how they work, but also how they are undergoing change as Tibetans in India, for instance "modernists" like the Dalai Lama, have taken seriously ideals associated with the modern liberal speaking subject.

**PJ:** For the benefit of those readers who may not be familiar with linguistic anthropology as a discipline, could you give us an idea of what linguistic anthropologists do?

**ML:** In much of its history, not all of it, linguistic anthropology has aspired to glimpse things cultural by way of language, whether that means finding things cultural in grammar, whether it means finding culture through the aperture of distinctive styles, modes of social interaction, or discursive genres.

I think there is a great opportunity to create commerce between the field of South Asian Studies and traditions like linguistic anthropology which empirically study discursive practice. It is a chance to contribute to what Buddhist studies and religious studies look like. For people like me who are interested in alternative and local modernities there are a lot interesting opportunities that come up. There are a lot of people interested in language who are devoting their energies to the subcontinent. Of course, there is a lot of room for further research.

**PJ:** Could you tell us about the other projects that you are working on?

**ML:** Right now I am working on finishing a book on forms of verbal incivility in monasteries and how that is changing. I've recently worked on an article on stance taking and political authenticity in U.S. electoral politics focusing on Presidential candidate John Kerry and the issue of flip-flopping, as well as an article on reconceptualizing verbal taboo in the moral life of language. Some areas of future interest include looking into co-speech gesture and the reconceptualization of imagistic gesturing.

I am currently conducting preliminary research on a project with Yang Ga, who is teaching Tibetan here at Michigan, examining Tibetan primers from the period 1960-1965. One of the things I talk about in my book is how debate has been re-valORIZED as a diasporic pedagogy, as a means for Tibetan refugees to steel themselves against a sort of corrosive pluralism in exile. I want to check out what is happening in these early years to look at the formation of this kind of re-valORIZATION of the exercise of reason into something that is part of the diasporic project.

**CSAS Director, Will Glover had a chat with visiting scholar, Ravi Sundaram.**



**Ravi Sundaram**, co-founder of Sarai and a Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in Delhi, has been appointed Visiting Associate Professor of Urban Planning this fall and will teach "Post-Colonial Urbanism: Indian Cities in a Transnational Context." Sarai is a program of CSDS, one of India's leading research institutes with a commitment to critical and dissenting thought and a focus on critically expanding the horizons of the discourse on development, particularly with reference to South Asia. Dr. Sundaram's residency is sponsored by the Trehan India Initiative.

**WG:** Welcome back to Ann Arbor! I wonder if you kept your warm coat from graduate school?

**RS:** Thanks – happily I am not a stranger to cold weather – I went to graduate school in upstate New York in Binghamton, at a place called the Fernand Braudel Center in Binghamton, which was a history and sociology program, very vibrant at the time, with a clutch of well known scholars: Immanuel Wallerstein, Giovanni Arrighi, Mark Selden, etc. The intellectual atmosphere was electric and non disciplinary, and that more than made up for the weather.

**WG:** When you completed your education you went back to India to work, something that not everyone decides to do. What was it that drew you back and where did you end up?

**RS:** When I went back in the 1990s there were just a small handful of students who returned from the US, while most came back from the UK. For me that was the only thing to do, my life was in Delhi anyway. I first taught for a year and a half in Delhi University and then joined CSDS, where I have been since.

**WG:** Tell our readers something about SARAI, its genesis, who works there, and what kinds of projects you are currently involved in?

**RS:** Sarai is a programme of CSDS that works on media and urban life, but it is much more than that. Sarai brings together scholars and practitioners (artists, filmmakers, architects, activists, urban designers), and initiates projects, public platforms, and experimental forms. We publish books, give fellowships, and collaborate locally and internationally.

A group of us began thinking about Sarai in 1998. This included me and my CSDS colleague Ravi Vasudeven, and three filmmakers forming the Raqs Media Collective : Jeebesh Bagchi, Shuddhabrata Sengupta and Monica Narula. For many months we mostly sat in each other's houses, discussing, writing proposals, over meals and bottles of Old Monk rum. A lot of thinking went into this, as an idea like Sarai was then completely out of the blue: digital media had just arrived, there was little urban research, and we wanted to break free of the limits of the university system and corporate demands on practice. Many people must have thought we were out of our minds.

With luck we were able to raise money, and began in 2000. The setting up of Sarai as a collaborative enterprise of scholars and practitioners to research media and urban life was both a significant innovation and a calculated risk. Sarai's innovation was its attempt to transcend the classic divisions between the university and the city, between scholar, activist and practitioner, as also suggest an open collaborative model borrowed from the free software/open source movement that could disrupt traditional hierarchies of knowledge. As Sarai's experience shows, such a form of collaboration brings in people from diverse social backgrounds into cross-disciplinary encounters. Sarai's gamble in 2000 was to suggest that it was indeed meaningful to work on issues of media, urban life and the public domain, at a time when such issues were hardly on the horizon in India. Hindsight has proved us right. In fact, that mix of urbanization, media life and information, which was intimated by Sarai's founding document in 2000, is now part of any serious thinking about the contemporary.

I try and bring some of these themes into the class I am teaching at Ann Arbor.

When it began, Sarai ran projects on media urbanism, intellectual property law and culture, and free software. We also initiated experimental media labs in three working class areas of

## When it began, Sarai ran projects on media urbanism, intellectual property law and culture, and free software.

Delhi – a project called Cybermohalla. We organized regular conferences on cities, info-war, intellectual property – the list is endless, the web has all the available information. In addition we have participated in creative events: art and architecture Biennalles in Venice, Hongkong, Documenta, etc.

We also publish a series of annual Sarai readers on various themes, The Public Domain, Cities of Everyday Life, Crisis Media, Bare Acts, Frontiers. The Readers are free online, and also sold in shops. The first three Readers are out of print now, and we are going for a reprint. In Hindi we publish the Series called Deewan in collaboration with Vani Prakashan.

Sarai projects today include ones on the urban environment, information society and contemporary fear in cities after media modernity. The coming Sarai Reader is on Fear.

Sarai's experiment in the year 2000 was to anticipate a new public that emerged as a byproduct of the changes in the last decade – a 'public' that is still in formation. These include independent creative persons: independent researchers, artists, designers, software programmers, writers. Using low cost tools and modest means this 'creative' public is a child of globalization. The members of this public are not always part of the institutional world – they write and create in different languages, and are sometimes surprisingly diverse. Since our work was in English and Hindi, and also outside traditional circuits, we offered a platform to this world.

In February Sarai celebrates 10 years and there will be a big event and a big party!

**WG:** I wanted to congratulate you on your new book, *Pirate Modernity: Delhi's Media Urbanism*, which has come out with Routledge this Fall. What is the book about and why did you write it?

**RS:** I mostly wrote the book to reflect on the implications of media proliferation for postcolonial urbanism. This pertains not just to Delhi but probably for many other cities in the non Western world. *Pirate Modernity* moves from a detailed discussion of the technocratic design of the city by US planners in the 1950s, to the massive expansions after 1977, culminating in the urban crisis of the 1990s. As a practice, pirate modernity is an illicit form of urban globalization. Poorer urban populations increasingly inhabit non-legal spheres: unauthorized neighborhoods, squatter camps and bypass legal technological infrastructures (media, electricity). This pirate culture produces a significant enabling resource for subaltern populations unable to enter the legal city. Equally, this is an unstable world, bringing subaltern populations into the harsh glare of permanent technological visibility, and attacks by urban elites, courts and visceral media industries.

This is the emerging world of the contemporary postcolonial city, and *Pirate Modernity* tries to think through its implications.

**WG:** What would you like to do while you're in Ann Arbor this Fall that you simply couldn't do anywhere else?

**RS:** Peace and quiet from Delhi's frenetic urbanism, and soak up Ann Arbor's great intellectual traditions!

# New Students and FLAS Grant Recipients



From left to right: Gurtej Singh, Sean Chauhan, Eric Chu, Lindsay Ahalt, Anna MacCourt. Front row: Nidhi Shrivastava

## The Center for South Asian Studies is pleased to welcome three new students into our MA program:

**GURTEJ SINGH** begins his pursuit of a Master's degree in South Asian Studies this Fall. He graduated from Wayne State University with a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Political Science. Gurtej is broadly interested in the topics of economic growth and development, international relations, and the political economy. He is specifically interested in the relationship between political competition and economic welfare, particularly in India.

**NIDHI SHRIVASTAVA** is an incoming Master's student in South Asian Studies. She earned her Bachelor's degree from the University of Connecticut with a major in English and a minor in India Studies. She has a special interest in South Asian women and their specific issues. Her goal is to become a comparative literature professor and focus her teaching on the women of India. Nidhi also has a strong interest in Indian history from the ancient times up to 1947.

**SEAN CHAUHAN** is a FLAS recipient and first year student pursuing a Master's degree in South Asian Studies. He comes to us with a Bachelor's degree in Spanish language and literature from the University of Florida. Sean has a special interest in linguistics, particularly Hindi and Panjabi. He intends to work in the field of language instruction upon completion of his graduate work. Sean also has a special interest in exploring the less frequently taught languages in the frameworks of politics, social justice, and globalization.

*The U.S. Department of Education Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship provides tuition and a stipend to students studying designated foreign languages in combination with area studies or international*

*aspects of professional studies. The following students have been awarded a FLAS Fellowship for the 2009-2010 Academic Year:*

**LINDSAY AHALT** joins the PhD program in Anthropology this Fall. She received her Bachelor's degree in Anthropology at Kansas State University with an emphasis in Microbiology. Lindsay intends to study medical Anthropology with a focus on cross-cultural health and healing during her studies at the University of Michigan.

**ERIC CHU** is a third year dual degree student in Urban and Regional Planning and the School of Natural Resources. He received a Bachelor's degree in Natural Resources from Cornell University. His current research and academic interests include environmental planning in the face of global climate change. He has conducted research in the middle hills of Nepal focusing on the relationship between community and climate change.

**PUNINDER JAITLA** begins the PhD program in Anthropology this Fall. Punnu received his Master's degree in South Asian Studies at the University of Michigan and his Bachelor's degree in International studies at the University of New Orleans. The study of linguistics is of special interest to him, particularly historical linguistics in contemporary South Asia.

**JANE LYNCH** is a continuing PhD student in Anthropology. She received her Master's degree in Social Science from the University of Chicago and her Bachelor's degree in Anthropology from Columbia University. Jane plans for a career in higher education while currently pursuing advanced level coursework in Hindi and South Asian studies.

**ANNA MACCOURT** is a new Anthropology PhD student this Fall. She received her Bachelor's degree in Anthropology from the University of Chicago. Anna will begin a formal study of Tamil and focus her fieldwork in the South Asia region. She is particularly interested in the dynamics of political systems.

# Smart Transportation in India?

BY SUSAN ZIELINSKI, MANAGING DIRECTOR, SMART  
(Sustainable Mobility & Accessibility Research & Transformation)

**FEW WOULD** contest the fact that India doesn't lead the way on the urban transportation front. Quite the opposite, as more people and businesses move to the cities and more of those people and businesses ply on the roads thanks to their newfound wealth and the motorization that comes along with it. Add to this increasingly insufficient infrastructure and only nascent capacity for new and innovative transportation planning and engineering. And only recent government interest in the urban sphere.

Nevertheless, the potential for India to leapfrog where it comes to smart and sustainable urban transportation is counterintuitively great. Not only because India needs to do something to hold its place as a leading world economy without getting stuck in traffic. But also because it has many of the ingredients needed for 21st century urban transportation innovation (New Mobility).

Rapid urbanization is propelling the emergence of New Mobility globally. As of 2007 half the world lives in city regions, and in the next 20 years or so that figure will climb to 2/3. (81% in the U.S.). The implications and opportunities of this transformation for cities, for transportation, and for business, were the impetus behind the University of Michigan's SMART teaming up with Ford Motor Company

in 2005 to focus on integrated, multi-modal transportation in cities. Since then, SMART and Ford have catalysed pilot "hub network" projects in Chennai, Bangalore, and Cochin, and a pilot is currently being explored in Delhi. This accompanies other pilots in South Africa and now in several US cities.

It might seem odd that one of the world's leading auto makers would want to engage in an effort aimed at curbing the use of single occupancy vehicles. On closer examination however, understanding and developing a new urban market to complement traditional vehicle manufacturing begins to make sense, especially now, not only in terms of future business opportunity, but also in terms of survival.

It is becoming more universally clear that the most commonly pursued transportation solutions don't fully address the increasingly complex human, physical, and political challenges of this urbanizing world. For example, alternative fuels alone, while focused on environmental concerns, do not address the land-use, health, infrastructure supply, or safety implications of strictly single occupancy auto-based approaches. And pricing alone as a disincentive to car use without providing affordable and practical options only adds to the economic burdens of the working poor and elders on fixed incomes.



*D. Dhanuraj and members of his team from the Center for Public Policy Research in Cochin, and SMART partner Gordon Feller of the Urban Age Institute, stand at a 25 acre coconut grove, future site of an integrated mobility hub for Cochin. Photo taken by Sue Zielinski*

In response, there is no shortage of innovation. Rather, a groundswell worldwide goes beyond conventional solutions to develop new services, products, transport modes, technologies, and designs. Unfortunately these innovations are too rarely linked in a way that can provide a convenient, practical door-to-door trip for the user. The next generation of urban transportation is about connecting the dots, bringing diverse innovations together in a way that works better for the user

than the single occupancy vehicle.

What will these new systems look and feel like? Much like our personalized tele-communications portfolios have evolved to connect i-pod, laptop, desktop, search function, GIS, cell phone, and more, the next generation of urban transportation is about seamlessly linking different modes of transportation, services, IT technologies, and designs and infrastructures to provide integrated

## SMART TRANSPORTATION, CONTINUED

“open source” urban transportation portfolios.

Imagine a day, when steps from your door you could enter a vital network of New Mobility Hubs, places that connect a range of transport amenities including buses, trains, streetcars, clean fuel taxis, auto rickshaws, and car share or bike share vehicles, and more. In some regions this is all linked by a cell phone offering real-time traveler information and fare payment.

Aside from benefits to the user, New Mobility offers a range of business and innovation opportunities, and fosters new roles for business and government, moving from Public Private Partnership to a flatter Public Private innovation. It brings all the relevant players to the table from the outset to foster a collaborative problem and solution definition in addition to collaborative implementation. So while the Ford SMART pilot projects aim to address transport challenges locally, they also provide opportunities for local entrepreneurs and businesses to identify and develop inno-

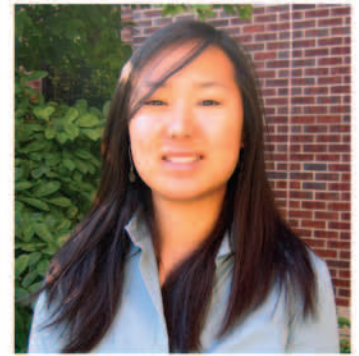
ventions that can be exported globally.

Ford started this journey by transforming its own business model, moving from selling cars and trucks to selling cars, trucks, and global urban mobility (Ford Urban Mobility Networks). But beyond its own transformation, Ford is playing a leading role – along with private sector partners in India - in accelerating the development of an emerging global New Mobility industry that embraces and connects a much wider range of sectors beyond manufacturing, including IT and geomatics, energy and utilities, logistics, real estate and design, finance and venture capital, and retail, tourism and new entrepreneurial services.

As for India, the mix of competitive advantages in the emerging New Mobility industry is hard to beat: strong economic growth despite the global downturn; top notch IT talent and nimbleness; a highly educated workforce within a strong democracy; a passionate, committed, and organized private sector; a passionate and committed

civil society sector; a culture that (so far) values being driven more highly than driving themselves; and probably the widest variety of transport modes in the world. SMART partners in India range from the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and City Connect, to Janaagraha (an NGO), to the Center for Public Policy Research, to Cisco Systems, to Mapunity, the Indian Institute for Competitiveness, and a wide and growing range of other business, government, and civil society leaders. While not without significant challenges, there is a promising future for sustainable, open source transportation (and related business opportunity) in India and SMART and its partners look forward to collaborating and catalysing some of the innovation, research, education, and capacity-building that will accelerate the process.

For more information on SMART, or to work with us, or to register for SMART's upcoming Summit (Moving Minds: the Next Transportation Infrastructure) go to <http://um-smart.org>.



## New Staff Profile

**ESTHER LEE** joined CSAS as our new Administrative Assistant in June 2009. Originally from Connecticut, she spent the past four years in Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan and graduated this past May with a Bachelors Degree in Political Science and Sociology with a focus on International Social Change. During her undergraduate years, she honed in on her passion for law and was able to assist as a liaison between a delegation of judges from South Korea and the Washtenaw County District Court. Her bilingualism and biculturalism allows her to appreciate and utilize international differences to strengthen ties between people of different backgrounds. Her personal interest in global affairs helps bring purpose to her day to day responsibilities on this staff. Outside of the office, Esther is also an active member of her church and has been involved in ministry within the UM, Ann Arbor and international communities, including India She enjoys coffee and music from all around the world, singing, playing guitar and piano, and is an avid sports enthusiast.

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS | South Asia Across the Disciplines

EDITORS: DIPESH CHAKRABARTY • SHELDON POLLOCK • SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAM

Published jointly by the University of California Press, the University of Chicago Press, and Columbia University Press

The first books being published in the series are *Everyday Healing: Hindus and Others in an Ambiguously Islamic Place* (Carla Bellamy), *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* (Farina Mir), and *Unifying Hinduism: The Philosophy of Vijnanabhiksu in Indian Intellectual History* (Andrew Nicholson).

Authors interested in submitting a book manuscript to the series should send an initial inquiry and prospectus to Avni Majithia at [am3190@columbia.edu](mailto:am3190@columbia.edu). All manuscripts should be complete at the time of submission.



# Center Activities

## FALL 2009 SPEAKER SERIES

**September 11, 12 & 13, 2009**

*Muslim Voices: Traditions and Contexts*

A Conference in honor of

**Barbara D. Metcalf,**  
University of Michigan

For schedule and presenters,  
visit: [www.ii.umich.edu/csas](http://www.ii.umich.edu/csas)

**September 16 | 2009 | 5 pm**

*Indian Classical Music*

*Slide Guitar*

Lecture Demonstration

**Debashish Bhattacharya**

Calcutta, India

Burton Memorial Tower,  
Room 506

**September 25 | 2009**

TREHAN INDIA INITIATIVE  
THEME YEAR EVENT

*Old City, New City: Locating  
the Past in Urban India*

An interdisciplinary graduate  
student conference

For schedule and presenters,  
visit: [www.umtrehaninitiative.net/Theme\\_Year.html](http://www.umtrehaninitiative.net/Theme_Year.html)

**October 2 | 2009 | 4 pm**

**Summer in South Asia  
Undergraduate Fellowship  
Symposium**

Presentations of student  
fellowship projects in India  
during summer 2009

**October 16 | 2009 | 4 pm**

TREHAN INDIA INITIATIVE  
THEME YEAR EVENT

*Lineages of Political Society*

**Partha Chatterjee,**  
Columbia University

Forum Hall  
Palmer Commons  
100 Washtenaw Avenue  
3rd Floor, Room 3001

**October 22 | 2009**

*Kathakali Indian Dance  
Workshop and Performance*  
**Shanmughan,** Kathakali  
dancer, *Kerala Kalamandalam,*  
*India* and **V. Kaladharan,**  
Indian dance critic

Master Class  
Betty Pease Studio Theater  
Dance Building, University  
of Michigan  
11:10 am –12:30 pm

Kathakali dance  
performance, with lecture  
demonstration  
Britton Recital Hall  
School of Music, Theatre  
& Dance  
8 pm

**November 6 | 2009 | 4 pm**

*Television, Participatory  
Culture, and Politics: The  
Case of Indian Idol*  
**Aswin Punathambekar,**  
University of Michigan

**November 13 | 2009 | 4 pm**

*Terminal Present: Making  
Art From Either Side of the  
Margin in the 21st Century*

**Kanishka Raja**  
Independent Artist

**November 20 | 2009 | 4 pm**

TREHAN INDIA INITIATIVE  
THEME YEAR EVENT  
*Globalization and Democracy:  
A Theoretical Perspective  
on Inequality and Citizenship  
in Contemporary India*

**Leela Fernandes,**  
Rutgers University

**December 4 | 2009 | 4 pm**

*Friction on the Edge of  
Contemporary Bombay  
Cinema*

**Ranjani Mazumdar,**  
University of Delhi

*Unless otherwise noted, all  
events convene in Room 1636  
of the International Institute/  
School of Social Work building  
located at 1080 South University  
Avenue. All lectures are free and  
open to the public.*

For more information, please  
visit: [www.ii.umich.edu/csas](http://www.ii.umich.edu/csas)

### REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY

**Julia Donovan Darlow**  
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**Andrea Fischer Newman**  
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**Andrew C. Richner**  
Grosse Pointe Park

**S. Martin Taylor**  
Grosse Pointe Farms

**Katherine E. White**  
Ann Arbor

**Mary Sue Coleman (ex officio)**

## Trehan India Initiative Theme Year Graduate Student Research Project Reports / Summer 2009

**My proposed** research examines the conceptualization and contestations of urban space in the public realm by different social groups in Bangalore, India. The contemporary Indian city is transforming rapidly as the state undertakes large urban renewal projects to “modernize”. There is little or no engagement of city dwellers that are affected by these renewal projects or the master planning process. These planning processes particularly challenge the nature of public space which in its normative definition enables civic engagement in city life. As these changes occur, city dwellers re-negotiate the meaning and relevance of the space in their everyday lives. I want to understand how public space is conceptualized by different social groups and also examine the dynamics of civic engagement in urban planning processes. My research explores linkages between concepts of urban planning, citizenship and democracy in the contemporary Indian city.



*Avenue Road in Bangalore. Photo: Salila Vanka*

I propose using qualitative research methods to examine Avenue Road in Bangalore. The ongoing debates and politics of Avenue Road lend themselves well to an examination from the perspective of the public space literature. Avenue Road exemplifies the quintessential Indian commercial street that has an important

role as a site for public life (Appadurai 1987; Chatterjee 1991; Kaviraj 1991; Freitag 1991). This 450 year old street is among 91 streets selected for widening in a government project to improve traffic connectivity across Bangalore. Widening Avenue Road, according to local traders and civic groups, would affect several livelihoods and destroy a street that has city wide appeal as a historical, cultural and commercial centre. In the coming months, I propose spending six months in Bangalore examining the contestations on Avenue Road and how these tie into the broader politics of space in the contemporary Indian city.

**Salila Vanka, PhD Student, Urban & Regional Planning**

**Mumbai, India**, is a dense geographic transfer point of populations; it is the recipient of migrants from the Indian countryside and a place from which Indians travel in search of international work. The laborers who circulate through the city shape both the social geography of Mumbai as well as the city's urban growth. This migration also affects the workers' identities and practices. In order to understand Muslim migration to Mumbai and to the Arabic Gulf nations, I conducted a preliminary site visit to Mumbai, India. While there, I investigated Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that work to support laborers who migrate to Mumbai from other regions of India. I spent time in the NGOs' offices and learned about the various organizations' daily activities and the services provided to migrant workers.

In addition, I visited places where migrants work and met with migrant workers and their employers. I also met with recruiting agents based in Mumbai. I specifically worked with recruiting agents that help place Indian workers in unskilled and semi-skilled positions in Gulf countries. I spent time at the offices of the recruiters and learned the process by which migration occurs. Furthermore, I attended the annual meeting of the India Personnel Export Promotion Council, an association of recruiting agents that acts as a liaison with the Indian government concerning migration laws and regulations. My visits with NGOs, migrant workers, and recruiting agents lays the foundation for my examination of transregional Muslim networks. As my dissertation research continues, I will explore in greater depth how these transregional networks affect the current identity politics of Indian Muslims and the shaping of Mumbai's social geography.

**Andrea Wright, PhD Student, Anthropology and History**

# Trehan Theme Year

**I spent about** ten weeks this summer working in heritage zones in New Delhi, India. During these weeks, I researched INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) archives and met with conservationists, tourist guides, residents and traders in Shahjahanabad, an area that includes Chandni Chowk, Chawri Bazaar, Red Fort, and the Jama Masjid, and partly in Mehrauli (or the Lal-dora area). The focus of my research was on collecting oral narratives about these urban spaces, narratives that by turn glorify their pasts, envision optimistic futures for them, and inform popular notions of contemporary life in Shahjahanabad and, more broadly, in Delhi.

My research made me better understand the significance of legislative acts such as the Rent Control Act in determining who can use space and how they can do so; the power that lies with governing bodies such as the Delhi Development Authority in imagining and enforcing idealistic visions of contemporary urban India; the problems and solutions envisioned by heritage conservation-oriented organizations such as INTACH with regard to “living heritage.” Equally significantly, my conversations with residents and traders in these neighborhoods and the oral histories they narrated threw light on how deeply entangled specific spaces, buildings, material artifacts, and even smells and sounds are with notions of personal and collective pasts, histories, and memories of Shahjahanabad for its occupants. The research raised several pertinent questions about the relevance of heritage conservation, the need for civic codes, and the problems that arise in re-fashioning historic zones in urban areas.

**Neha Paliwal, PhD Student, Anthropology**

**With the support** of a summer grant from the Trehan India Initiative Theme Year, I have been engaged in a historical research project that contributes towards my larger dissertation research. This historical and ethnographic project examines the ways in which non-state actors working in partnership with the Government of India mobilized the handicraft and handloom industries in development planning during the early years of independence. In particular, I have focused on the programming and ideological discourse of the Ford Foundation as a uniquely positioned non-state player during the 1950s and 1960s. Having opened its first office outside of the United States in New Delhi in 1952, the Ford Foundation served as both a grant-making organization and an implementing agency during its first two decades of operation in India. The handicraft and handloom projects undertaken by the Ford Foundation during this period



*Bashindgan-e-Bihar Office, Dharavi, Mumbai. Photo: Andrea Wright*

reveal critical aspects of the developmentalist assumptions with which Ford Foundation officers and Indian bureaucrats were operating. Fitting with the framework of the Theme Year, I am particularly interested in the spatial dimensions of these projects and how the Ford Foundation, together with the government, sought to manage the social, material, and semiotic relations between rural and urban India. Through research at the Ford Foundation Archives in New York as well as two months based in Delhi, speaking with industry experts, visiting archives, engaging with artisans, and meeting with current representatives of the Ford Foundation in India, I have been able to trace key narratives in the production of the hand-worked textile industry in post-colonial India. I will be presenting this work at a graduate student conference entitled *New City, Old City* at the University of Michigan in September as well as the Annual Conference on South Asia at the University of Wisconsin in October.

**Jane Lynch, PhD student in Anthropology**

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# Summer in South Asia

## CSAS UNDERGRADUATE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

**The Center for South Asian Studies** offers a special opportunity to students to chart their own course in India. Thanks to a generous donation to the Center, undergraduate students at UM have an opportunity to design and carry out their own fellowship programs in India during the summer. This fellowship is intended for non-graduating students who have not already spent significant amounts of time in India. The program is designed to be flexible: students tell us what they want to study or work on, design a program to accomplish their goals, and we fund the best proposals to cover most of their costs. As they devise their proposal, the Center assists them in connecting with organizations based in India as well as contacting and working with faculty members affiliated with CSAS.

Students work with CSAS faculty associates while developing their proposals. They reach their project goals more effectively by learning from faculty expertise and ideas. Proposals are accepted from individuals or from groups of no more than two students. The Center selects approximately six applicants and provides each with funding of up to \$3,000 to cover travel and expenses in India.

This program has been extremely successful in providing the students with valuable experiences which not only complement their academic course of study at UM but also provides them insights about a very different region of the world in a hands-on manner. As is obvious from their comments, students greatly value these experiences. The Center stays in close contact with the host organizations in India and seeks their feedback in order to evaluate the usefulness of the students' work with them.

In an exciting development, the donor for this program, who remains anonymous, has recently endowed the program which has been underway for four years now. During each of those years, five to six undergraduate students have traveled to India to complete an internship of their own design with an NGO or other Indian institution. **Largely due to the hard work and excellent quality of student projects to date, our generous Donor has decided to endow the program with a financial gift that will allow it to continue at or above its current level of funding well into the future. Their gift, along with matching funds from President Coleman, represents over a half-million dollar investment in the University, in the Center for South Asian Studies, and in a program that provides a unique and high-quality educational experience for our fine students.**

Past fellowship projects have included the following:

2006: Studying the changing Indian marketing practices during the recent period of economic liberalization; documenting and analyzing urban class, caste, and gender boundaries within

Mumbai through a case study based on a specific architectural project; understanding the mechanisms and intricacies of gay rights activism in north India; researching Indian youth culture through an examination of selected youth volunteer organizations; working with an organization dedicated to advancing the rights of the disenfranchised, including dalits, children, farmers and HIV positive individuals through legal aid and public interest litigation.

2007: Studying the religious and spiritual aspects of health care to compare them to similar aspects of health care in the United States; working with public health researchers conducting research with street children and female sex workers to study the effects of HIV transmission; conducting research for a study on the effects of India's rapid economic growth on disaster mitigation; studying the effects of trauma on children and how grief factors into everyday life at an orphanage; reviewing data from an all-India survey on Indian youths' perspectives on domestic and international politics; exploring the complexities of the lives of self-employed women in the wider Delhi area.

2008: Working within a microcredit program - raising its efficiency and helping with the overall execution of the program; studying the impact of art in community development; analyzing the water quality of lakes that are affected by industrial pollution on the outskirts of Bangalore; health care needs assessment for self-employed women workers through interviews and analysis of pre-existing data; participating in a field research study on Gangetic river dolphins to analyze the chemical water quality, study the food web by collecting field data and efforts to conserve the population.

2009: Researching the effectiveness of targeting women in employment-generating schemes in urban infrastructure in the Kolkata metropolitan area; conducting a market and strategy assessment of the models for serving primary and tertiary healthcare needs of people in rural West Bengal; studying supermarket oriented supply chains in the context of the advent of direct procurement in India and its impact on small farmers in terms of livelihood and welfare; assessing the needs to improve the infrastructure of a hospital in Rajasthan in the areas of safety, hygiene and patient experience; work with disabled children in impoverished areas around Durgapur to teach them simple exercise techniques to improve their physical and psychological conditions; working with a nonprofit organization which provides welfare services, including informal education, to Kolkata's impoverished children; implementing a solar array to power a computer lab in a school in a village north of Bangalore.

## SUMMER IN SOUTH ASIA STUDENT PROJECTS IN 2009

As part of my CSAS fellowship, I worked in coordination with the administration of the Mission Hospital - Durgapur in West Bengal. I drafted a project report estimating the costs of translating the Mission Hospital's business model and services to Dhanbad in Jharkhand, India. The report estimates the relevant costs and appropriate financial projections to determine the payback period for an investment in the region. In addition to the main report, I provided a usability assessment of the current electronic medical record system employed by the hospital and drafted recommendations to streamline staff integration and use.

**Adam Khan, UM Medical School**

My Summer in South Asia fellowship brought me for the month of August to Calcutta, where I volunteered for two NGOs: CRAWL Society and Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, Daya Dan House. Both organizations give relief to the city's homeless children, the former generally reaching out to street environments, and the latter generally removing the children from them. My project was to independently analyze, through my experiences and observations, how the organizations interacted with the city-space of Calcutta. I sought to understand the structures and problems of the organizations both as responding to the environmental conditions of the city, as well as presenting different spatial philosophies of giving. To supplement my observations with a historical background, I read relevant books as well as conducted interviews with the organizations' leaders. Though my analysis raised as many questions as it provided answers, it helped me better understand the nature of poverty, and the many complexities of trying to solve it.

**Caleb Heyman, Departments of History and English**

With the grant from Center of South Asian Study (CSAS), I conducted an exploratory study on supermarket oriented supply chain in Bangalore this summer. The basic goal of my study was to gain detailed observations of different players in the relevant market, learn supermarket procurement methods and find out the advantages and disadvantages each of these players face in the current supply chain. Most importantly, I focused more on the impact of this supply chain on small farmers in terms of their welfare and livelihood. Being associated with SVARAJ, I successfully completed village-level and firm-level interviews and had access to inside information. Finally, I finished a paper presenting my study results. This is also being used as one of the published research articles of SVARAJ. Additionally, I assisted other ongoing projects of SVARAJ as well as refined their new website during the internship.

**Ye Wang, Department of Economics**



*Girls Around Solar Panel, photo by Adhiraj Vable*

During July and August, I collaborated with members in the village of Pavagada to install a solar powered backup system to power a new computer lab at Jnana Bodhini School. Throughout the two months I was there, I worked closely with community members, including my uncle who is a local electrical contractor in Pavagada, to develop a design, find a supplier, and coordinate the transportation and installation of the system. The \$1,400 solar powered battery back up system they installed supplies enough power to drive the three computers for almost five hours when normal grid power fails, and on August 12th, they were treated to the "Welcome" screens of the three newly installed and solar powered computers for the first time.

I will be returning to Pavagada following my graduation in December to expand the project; before I left, I participated in talks to develop a system to power all 20 of the computers at Jnana Bodhini School for the whole school day. Currently, community members and I are looking into pursuing government subsidies and other sources of funding, as well as corresponding with Indian solar suppliers, with the goal of completely freeing the school from its dependence on the unreliable grid for power.

**Adhiraj Vable, School of Engineering**

My project in India was to address the physiological difficulties of a sample of school children with polio and congenital birth defects by incorporating physical activities with simple exercise equipment. I faced many challenges with the difference in languages, village cultures, and the schedules of the other staff at the school. Despite the differences, the response from the children at the school and the surrounding community was overwhelming. I was able to introduce many people to simple stretching and exercise techniques for the first time. Heavy emphasis was placed upon the continuation of the day to day



Working with children with polio and congenital birth defects.  
Photo by Rory Crook

activities and the education of available staff. I was deeply touched and hope to return soon and continue to be of service.

**Rory Crook, Department of Kinesiology**

This summer, I interned at Seva Mandir, an NGO that works for the development of rural and tribal populations in Udaipur, Rajasthan. My given project was to assess the infrastructural needs of a rural hospital, in terms of patient safety, hygiene, and waste disposal. After realizing that the main issue at the hospital was a lack of a significant number of daily patients, I conducted research through village visits and interviews, and provided consultation to the NGO administration on best practices to attract more village patients. With my work, I was able to develop my skills in health management, while feeling like I made a direct contribution to the NGO and to the people it serves.

**Meha Pandey, School of Engineering**

For my project, I assisted a professor at the Institute of Development Studies Kolkata (IDSK) on a component of his research report called "Employment, Empowerment and the State: Targeting of Women in Employment Generation Schemes." This component consisted of interviewing female entrepreneurs in the Kolkata metropolitan area to determine the effect of governmental loans to their businesses and other factors that helped or hindered success in their businesses. One of the most important figures we needed to assess was the family and educational backgrounds the women came from. All in all, the women were not very appreciative of the government's role and those that had successful businesses attributed it to their own initiative and entrepreneurial talent.

**Sairah Husain, Department of Economics**

## Faculty News

Professor **Tom Fricke** is the new Chair of the Department of Anthropology.

Professors **Ashwini Deshpande** (Delhi School of Economics) and **Tom Weisskopf** (Economics, Residential College) will present a paper entitled "Do Reservation Policies Affect Productivity in the Indian Railways?" at a conference on "Affirmative Action in the Labour Market: International Perspectives" (sponsored by the British Academy in partnership with the Nuffield Foundation), to be held in London on November 2-3, 2009.

During the past year Professor **Farina Mir** (History) completed her manuscript, *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab*, which is being published by the University of California Press. She is now working on a project entitled, "Producing Modern Muslims: Muslim Anjumans in Colonial India." Under the auspices of an American Institute of Pakistan Studies Postdoctoral Fellowship, she went to London this summer to do research for this project at the Oriental and India Office Collection at the British Library.

Professor **Arland Thornton** (Sociology) is leading an ambitious project investigating *Ideational Influences on Marriage and Childbearing in Nepal*. This project, funded by NICHD, has initiated a baseline interview with a sample of Nepali family and individuals with the purpose of studying how various values and beliefs influence entrance into marriage and childbearing.

The project began in April 2008 and for the next four years will interview individuals every four months about their behavior, values, and beliefs. This design will permit the researchers to examine the interconnections between ideational factors and family behavior over a five year period.

Professor **Ram Mahalingam** (Psychology) has won the award for Teaching and Mentoring of undergraduate and graduate students from Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI, Division 9, American Psychological Association) in recognition for his outstanding contribution to teaching and mentoring students in social justice related issues at a graduate degree granting institution. The award comes with a \$400 cash prize and an invited talk at the Annual meeting of SPSSI.

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## Faculty Publications

**Tom Trautmann**, Marshall Sahlins Collegiate Professor of History and Anthropology

Trautmann, Tom. *The Clash of Chronologies: Ancient India in the Modern World*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2009.

Trautmann, Tom (ed.). *The Madras School of Orientalism: Producing Knowledge in Colonial South India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009.

**Juan Cole**, Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History

Cole, Juan. *Engaging the Muslim World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

This book has a chapter on contemporary Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as a consideration of India's role in the new global energy crisis.

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### **572138: Undergraduate Fellowships in India**

Through the Undergraduate Fellowships in India program, U-M undergraduate students have an opportunity to design and carry out their own fellowship programs in India during the summer. The program aims to introduce new students to South Asia and give them an opportunity to research and work in the context of South Asia. If your gift is designated for endowment, distributions from the Fund shall be made in accordance with the University's then existing endowment distribution policy.

### **312354: S Asian Studies, President's Challenge for Grad Support**

Purpose: To provide funds for graduate student support. Donations to this fund will receive a 50% match from the University of Michigan President's Challenge, i.e., each dollar donated will be matched by an additional 50 cents from the President's Fund.

### **362651: South Asia Studies**

Purpose: To provide general funding for CSAS programming needs.



## CENTER FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

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### CSAS HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS WORKSHOP IN JULY 2009

**FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS** of the High School Social Studies Teachers Workshop in 2008, CSAS offered another Indian history workshop in July 2009. In Fall 2007, the Michigan Department of Education introduced new World History mandates for a much-revised Social Studies curriculum for high schools in the state. Both the State and local school districts realized that Social Studies teachers would need considerable professional training to teach World History, especially in an exciting, relevant manner. CSAS has been offering the expertise of its faculty to teachers in interactive summer workshops.

In this year's workshop, the first session, **Trade and Networks, 1200 – 1700 CE**, was led by Dr. Stewart Gordon, Senior Research Scholar at the Center for South Asian Studies. It showed how South Asia was connected, both regionally and externally. The presentation included information about the main trade routes and commodities. The caravan trade connected India west to Iran and the Middle East, and north to Tibet, the Silk Road and China. The maritime routes connected India west to Iran and Egypt and east to Southeast Asia and China. Along these same routes passed ideas, religions, brides, slaves, diseases and armies. This vast system worked because of personal networks – intellectual, familial, credit and religious.

The second session, **Indian Empires**, was led by Carla Sinopoli, Professor, Department of Anthropology and Director of the Museum of Anthropology. From the Third century BCE through 1947, greater or smaller portions of India were ruled by imperial powers. In this session, two great empires of India were explored – the Mughal Empire which dominated much

of India from CE 1526 to 1857 and the Vijayanagara Empire of South India (CE 1336-1565), India's last and largest Hindu empire. The presentation focused on the arts, culture, and the military and political organization of these empires in the contexts of both Indian history and broader understandings of imperial states. Images, web links, a bibliography, and summary outlines were provided to the participants.

The third session, **Materials for Teaching South Asian History**, was oriented to the resources available for teaching. It was presented by Jeffrey Martin, the South Asia librarian at the University of Michigan and explored the materials available to social studies teachers and students interested in South Asia specifically, and World History topics more generally. Resources included websites, music, recipes, textbooks, and an introduction to the materials available from the University of Michigan. Special emphasis was placed on the primary source material that may be borrowed from the University and its museums, or accessed as electronic images from the University's websites.

Twenty three high school teachers from various school districts in Southeastern Michigan attended the workshop. Based on feedback from last year's participants, this year's workshop included more hands-on activities which were appreciated by the teachers. As a new feature, break-out, small-group sessions were facilitated in order to provide the teachers opportunities to create lesson plans based on the information from the presentations. Teachers were surveyed at the end of the workshop and the responses indicate that the workshop met its goals successfully.