



South Asia Newsletter

A publication of the South Asia Program, Cornell University

Spring, 2011

Notes from the South Asia Program

Another stimulating academic year draws to a close at Cornell's South Asia Program, where Durba Ghosh (History) and Anne M. Blackburn (Asian Studies) have served as Acting Directors during a research leave in India for Dan Gold (Asian Studies). Dan Gold has been in India this year, writing his book on religious life in Gwalior and doing some filming in the *qasba* of Jahazpur, where his wife Ann Gold is doing her research. It has been a particular pleasure to work with Cornell's South Asia Program graduate students this year. Graduate students conducting research in several of Cornell's colleges (including recipients of Department of Education Title VI Fellowships for language study, see page 5) are affiliated with the South Asia Program. Without them, this year would have been much less fun and less intellectually rewarding. We are indebted to them in many ways. The Program's graduate students helped select visiting speakers, assured a lively presence at our seminar series, and contributed substantially to the annual conference (*Water in South Asia*). On a long, long university day, it is often the conversations with our graduate students that remind us why university teaching remains one of the most exciting and gratifying professions possible, and also what substantial sacrifices these students make as they prepare to join us in the work of teaching and research. They depend on Cornell's

South Asia Program faculty and staff for intellectual development and bureaucratic guidance. They also depend on the Program -- as well as allied International Studies units on campus -- for financial support of their studies and research. The next generation of teachers and researchers in South Asia Studies -- and the well established national network of South Asia Studies programming and research -- is now at risk because of budgetary constrictions on Capitol Hill. The 2011-12 academic year will therefore bring pressing challenges to Asia-related departments and programs around the country as we attempt to protect and expand the study of South Asia across the disciplines.



Painting by Amrita Shergill

We started this year with a flourish made possible by the Rabindranath Tagore Endowment in Modern Indian Literature,

generously supported by Prof. and Mrs. Narahari Umanath Prabhu. Kiran Nagarkar, celebrated for his fiction in English and Marathi, and winner of the 2001 Sahitya Akademi Award, arrived as Tagore Lecturer. He enlivened a crowd gathered at Cornell's Kahin Center, reading and discussing unpublished sections of the sequel to his novel, *Ravan and Eddie*.

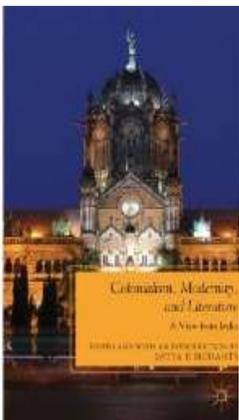
Throughout the long months of winter that make regular mockery of our "fall" and "spring" semesters, Cornell's South Asianists

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How Should We Think About 'Indian' Literature?

by Satya Mohanty

A new book recommends and develops a comparative approach to our vernacular traditions, one that takes us beyond regional insularity and cultural chauvinism.



A few years ago, during his visit to Cornell University, U. R. Ananthamurthy asked a group of professors and doctoral students why vernacular Indian literary texts so rarely receive the kind of careful attention critics give to major texts in European and American literature. Emphasizing the need for extended textual readings as well as cross-regional analysis of the literary traditions in India, he called for textual comparisons that highlight similarities and differences in the way common themes and similar social situations are treated. He argued that several strands of cultural and social influence run through Indian literary texts, strands that are impossible to see clearly if our focus remains confined to the works of any one linguistic or regional tradition.

The new volume *Colonialism, Modernity, and Literature: A View from India* is a response to Ananthamurthy's call. It provides close readings of a uniquely representative work of modern Indian literature and develops its analyses in a resolutely comparative framework. That work is Fakir Mohan Senapati's late-19th century Oriya novel, *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*, the most recent translation of which, *Six Acres and*

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Water in South Asia: Challenges in a Changing Environment

This year Cornell's South Asia Program was delighted to host the Syracuse University-Cornell University National Resource Center Consortium's annual conference, held on 7-8 April 2011. This year's topic, *Water in South Asia: Challenges in a Changing Environment*, followed *The Right to Water* held at Syracuse University in March 2010. We are grateful to the U.S. Department of Education for National Resource Center funding supporting this and other research and outreach initiatives at our campuses, as well as the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, The David R. Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future, International Studies in Planning, and the Cornell University Department of Government. With the gracious support of Cornell Cinema, *Water in South Asia* opened with a rare full screening of *Mother India* (1957, directed by Mehboob Khan), introduced by Prof. Anindita Banerjee (Comparative Literature, Cornell) who highlighted the film's treatment of water and water-related technologies in the lives of three generations of rural Indian agriculturalists.

It was standing room only for most of the conference -- introduced by Prof. Alice Pell, Vice Provost for International Relations at Cornell -- as a full day of research papers and discussion unfolded in the Mann Library conference room. Designed to bring social scientists, scientists, and humanists together in conversation about central problems in water-related research and resource management for South Asia, the conference focused on climate change and water, drinking water, irrigation and agricultural

uses of water, and managing rivers. The conference drew in faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, School of Hotel Administration, College of Engineering, and the College of Arts and Sciences. The panels combined some of the best young talent in geography, city and regional planning, political science, and anthropology -- including graduate students (such as Cornell's CRP Ph.D. candidate Andrew Rumbach, (photo) and younger faculty -- with long-established and well-known scholars such as Shiv Someshwar (Columbia), Daanish Mustafa (Kings College, London) and Cornell's Gilbert Levine, Michael Walter, and Norman Uphoff.



These sessions were accompanied by a week-long poster display prepared by Cornell graduate students, making new research accessible to Mann Library visitors as well as those attending the conference. Lively conversation between researchers from Cornell and Syracuse universities and conference presenters based in England, Canada, and the United States extended well into evening.

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found refuge in our weekly seminar series that brings speakers near and far to present on South Asia-related topics across the disciplines. Highlights of this year's series include: "Fragrant Fame and a Well-Ruled Perfume: Odorous Metaphors of Statecraft in Medieval South Asia" (James McHugh, University of Southern California, Fellow at the Society for the Humanities, Cornell), "Suicides of Farmers and Transgenic Cotton in India" (N. Chandrasekhara Rao, Fulbright-Nehru Senior Research Fellow, Cornell), "Showing South Asia: Indians and Sri Lankans in the Hagenbecks' Human Zoos" (Jonathan Walters, Whitman College), "Renewable Next Generation Biofuels: An Indian Initiative" (Meenakshi Munshi, Department of Biotechnology, Government of India), "Peace and Security in Nuclear Asia" (Zia Mian, Princeton), and "Understanding Tamil Colombo: Urban Life, Ethnicity and the Future in Sri Lanka" (Sharika Thiranaganama, New School for Social Research).

In addition to the Program's weekly seminar it has been a dynamic year for South Asia-related events on campus. In the fall, Cornell Cinema and the South Asia Program co-sponsored a showing of *Peepli Live*, a film that examines the serious problem of farmer suicides through a satirical account of a government scheme to compensate farmers' families. Over a hundred people attended a discussion moderated by Prof. Ron Herring (Government), Hayden Kantor (Ph.D. student, Anthropology), and Prof. N. Chandrasekhara Rao (Fulbright-Nehru Senior Research Fellow). The program also co-sponsored a series of four lectures and a day-long symposium -- *Gender, Violence, and Dislocation in South Asia and the Americas* -- offered in conjunction with a course taught by Prof. Anindita Banerjee (South Asia Program) and Prof. Debra Castillo (Latin American Studies Program). The South Asia Program helped to welcome two honored University Lecturers, Prof. Gananath Obeyesekere and Prof. Tejaswini Niranjana.

Across the disciplines, it was a lively spring for South Asian Studies, thanks to *Unpacking the Nano: The Price of the World's Most Affordable Car* (The College of Art, Architecture and Planning), which brought Prof. Arjun Appadurai to campus; *Water in South Asia: Challenges in a Changing Environment* (South Asia Program, see adjacent article); and *Reconceptualizing the Classical/Folk Divide in Indian Culture* (Minority, Indigenous, and Third World Studies). In an unplanned coincidence with South Asia's strong showing in the cricket World Cup championships (!), the Program helped the History Department to support a visit by Dr. Ramachandra Guha, who offered a delightful lecture on the social history of cricket. Thanks in part to our administrative staff -- Bill Phelan and Durga Bor -- the South Asia Program has broadened its outreach initiatives and continued vibrant arts programming despite an unfavorable financial climate (see related articles). Concerts, South Asia-related visits to regional schools, and our university events all resume in September. We look forward to meeting some of our readers then!

OUTREACH

NESSA (North East Scholars of South Asia)

Our Spring NESSA (North East Scholars of South Asia) meeting, an informal networking group of scholars from around NY State and northern Pennsylvania (email us if you wish to join, nsj1@cornell.edu) was held at Syracuse University in February 2011 and concluded with a performance of Afghan music by John Baily (rubab) accompanied by Dibyarka Chatterjee (tabla).

Local Radio Stations Provide Exposure to South Asian Music

Our outreach to the community has been expanded through the use of radio interviews which has brought increased knowledge of South Asian classical and innovative music to the listeners of WVBR and the newly formed WITH (NPR) radio stations when Tracey Craig interviewed the South Asia Program's guest musicians Vishwa Mohan Bhatt and Subhen Chatterjee (Fall 2010) and Shubhendra and Saskia Rao (spring 2011). The musicians talked about their lives and music and gave musical demonstrations as well.



Music from South Asia at Three Schools in Rural New York State

The South Asia Program has focused its outreach endeavors on rural schools over this past academic year. The visiting musicians who came to Cornell for performances generously agreed to give performance demonstrations at rural schools in the outlying areas. Bhatt and Chatterjee performed this fall in the newly renovated Groton High School auditorium, and sitarist Parvez Shahid Khan with Nitin Mitta on tabla went to Candor Elementary School (photo, left), about 20 miles south of Ithaca. Shubhendra and Saskia Rao lectured and demonstrated classical Indian music with sitar and cello at Dryden High School.

After School Hindi and Kannada Language and Culture Classes

In addition to our focus on rural schools in Tompkins and Tioga Counties, GIAC has been SAP's K-12 partner in Ithaca, NY. The Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC) is located in downtown Ithaca and serves primarily minority and low-income elementary and secondary students. The South Asia Program has been teaching Kannada and Hindi languages and culture to elementary students (2nd-4th grade) with the GIAC After School Program and Hindi language and culture with the GIAC Pre-Teen After School Program. As part of this Program, two *garba-raas* dancers performed for the elementary students at the GIAC After School Program. Native speakers Karan Javaji (Cornell Freshman from India) taught Kannada in the fall and Hindi in the spring, while Arti Bhounsule (Indian graduate student spouse) taught Hindi in the spring to the elementary students. GIAC after-school students learned greetings, counting, introductions, the geography, religion, festivals, arts, and culture of India. In addition, Karan Javaji organized the South Asia display table at the GIAC Asian Heritage Celebration held Friday, March 4th (see photo right). This Fall, Arti also gave an Indian Cooking class demonstration for the Ithaca International Children's Garden (see photo, back page).



CERIS Organizes Summer Institute on Food Cultures



Cornell Educational Resources for International Studies (CERIS) will host an International Studies Summer Institute at Cornell University for middle and high school teachers called "Slow Food/Fast Food: Food Cultures around the World" on June 27 – 29, 2011.

During this cross-curriculum workshop, forty educators from rural New York school districts will engage in activities that focus on integrating substantive world area knowledge in the context of food customs and food production throughout the world. Social studies, family and consumer science and science teachers will listen to faculty

from Cornell University, as well as other nearby colleges and universities, present on various topics related to global food cultures. The goal is to encourage teachers to have a greater understanding of the different regions and cultures of the world through the medium of food while meeting New York State learning standards.

CERIS consists of the outreach coordinators from the Einaudi Center and six associated area studies programs. These programs include the East Asia Program, the Southeast Asia Program, the South Asia Program, the Institute for African Development, the Cornell Institute for European Studies, and the Latin American Studies Program. This Summer Institute is also co-sponsored by the Syracuse University South Asia Center. Contact Information: Nicky Koschmann, Einaudi Center, 607-255-5475, nmk33@cornell.edu.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD



Carrie, far left, Koraput district during a village visit

Carrie Bronsther graduated in 2010 with a B.A. from Cornell University's Department of Government. She is in India from September, 2010 until May, 2011 on a Fulbright Research Grant. Here are her "Notes from the Field":

I arrived in India in mid-August during monsoon season. The winter, if a true Ithacan can really call it that, has passed, and I can feel the oppressive heat slowly coming, which means my nine months in India are quickly approaching their end.

I am in Orissa, India on a Fulbright grant to study the effects of a new rice growing innovation called System of Rice Intensification (SRI). In particular, I am studying the social, economic, and political effects of SRI on women farmers in Orissa and examining if SRI, when promoted through women, can serve as a tool to empower women.

Why SRI? SRI is actually only a set of six steps that seem counter-intuitive to conventional rice farming techniques: 1) Plant young seedlings that are 8-12 days old; 2) Plant single seedlings (1 seedling/hill); 3) Use wider spacing with hills 20-30cm apart in a square pattern; 4) Irrigate intermittently with small applications of water or alternate wetting and drying during growth period (maintain just 1-2 cm of water on fields after plants flower); 5) Use of simple implements (rotary hoe or cono-weeder) that aerates the soil while it removes weeds; 6) Apply as much organic fertilizer as possible.

The set of principles was developed in Madagascar in the early 1980s by Fr. Henre de Laulanie. In 1990, Fr. Laulanie in collaboration with several of his Malagasy colleagues founded an NGO named Association Tefy Saina to promote SRI specifically and rural development in general. In 1994, the Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture, and Development (CIIFAD) began to work with Tefy Saina to introduce SRI to farmers in the peripheral zone around Ranomafana National Park. The farmers around Ranomafana who used SRI principles in 1994-95 averaged over 8 tons/hectare, more than four times their previous yields. Some farmers reached 12 t/ha and one even reached 14 t/ha. The yields the following two years demonstrated that the success was real as averages remained over 8 t/ha.

The most immediate effects of SRI are profound: greater food security; lower costs of production and less need for water (an increasingly scarce input); higher incomes; reduced need for migratory employment; debt relief; and often reduced labor requirements. The benefits of SRI principles have been demonstrated in over 40 countries.

SRI slowly spread throughout India, reaching Orissa in 2003. There are now nearly 30 important research and non-research actors, 24 organizations who work as non-research actors and dozens of other agencies and institutes in Orissa that are promoting or are interested in SRI. SRI is currently practiced by about 17,000 farmers in 17 of the 30 districts in Orissa, and the numbers are expected to increase.

While SRI's more direct impacts, like higher yields and reduced inputs, are well documented, the more subtle effects of SRI are usually only discussed within small circles of SRI actors, meaning they go only casually researched and often undocumented. For instance, the effect of SRI on labor requirements, the ability of SRI to potentially mitigate climate change, how reduced dependency on agri-businesses for seeds and chemical inputs effects farmers are interesting and important topics in SRI cliques but only garner limited proper research.

After speaking with Professor Uphoff in the fall of 2009, I decided to take up a study on these more subtle effects of SRI. I ultimately partnered with several local NGOs to conduct in-depth focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews with women farmers in villages in five districts in Orissa, including Koraput, Ganjam, Cuttack, Keonjhar, and Karanjia to discuss these effects and examine how SRI has generally impacted these farmers' lives.

During my field visits, I have had the opportunity to have frank discussions with women farmers and I would like to share a summary of my interview with one farmer named Golapa Behera from Dangibandha village in Ganjam district. In Dangibandha, I was introduced to about ten women farmers who have been using SRI principles for the past three years as a result of an intervention from a local NGO named Sambhav. Golapa was the clear discussion leader and graciously shared her story with me.

Golapa, 33 years old, attended school until class 5. She lives with her husband, two daughters, and son. It was bluntly explained



Golapa Behera, third from left in the purple sari

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STUDENTS

SAP Congratulates Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship Recipients for 2010-2011 Academic Year



Aimee Douglas is a first-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Anthropology. With the support of a FLAS fellowship she is studying Sinhala in order to acquire language skills critical to her research pursuits in politics and ritual transformation in Sri Lanka.

Alexander Gordon is in his second year of the Anthropology Ph.D. program. He is studying Nepali to aid in his research focus on carbon emissions trading in Nepal and the rise of global carbon finance as a master-frame for mitigating and adapting to climate change.



Christine Hadekel is a second-year graduate fellow at the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs, where she is completing an M.P.A. degree with a focus in International Food Policy. As a FLAS recipient, she is studying Hindi and furthering her regional knowledge of food and agriculture issues in India.

Carl Hansen is in his second year of the Master's degree program in the Department of City and Regional Planning. He is currently studying Nepali and is interested in the implementation of earthquake risk reduction strategies in Kathmandu.



Hayden Kantor is a second year doctoral student in the Department of Anthropology. As a FLAS recipient, he is studying Hindi. He is interested in agriculture and food systems in North India. His research examines the capitalization of agriculture and how this is changing the way villagers in Bihar eat and grow food.

Whitney Lonsdale is a first-year M.S. student in the Department of Natural Resources. Her country of interest is Nepal, and she has been studying Nepali. Her focus is on community level water resource management, gender issues in natural resource management, resilience and adaptation to shifting water availability in middle and high altitude communities.



Raina Mirabueno, class of 2013, is pursuing a M.A. in Landscape Architecture. She is currently studying Hindi and is interested in using design as a cultural celebration of architecture, people and the natural landscape of India.

Kasia Paprocki is a first year Ph.D. student in Development Sociology. Kasia's research interests involve landlessness, NGO development, and agrarian change in Bangladesh. She is studying the Bengali language at Cornell.



BOOK REVIEWS

Continued from front page

a Third, appeared in 2005 (Indian edition by Penguin in 2006). Focusing on literary and cultural analyses, this collection of essays presents a distinct and complex view from the Indian context, but it is a view with wider implications.

The first theme this volume addresses is the relationship between colonialism and sociocultural modernity in the colonized world. The recent scholarship on ‘alternative modernities’ strongly suggests that fine-grained historical, cultural, and philosophical analyses will show how distinctly modern values such as individuality and radical egalitarianism were articulated in contexts other than the capitalist West. Since the so-called pre-modern societies have been looked at through speculative and ideologically distorted lenses, it is likely that a more rigorous, empirically based analysis can drastically revise our understanding of them. Literary and cultural texts – both high canonical and popular or ‘folk’—can play a major role in this revisionary analysis.

The second major theme of the volume concerns the forms in which social critique is articulated in literature, and in particular how they define a literary view from below – the perspective of the lower orders of society, the subalterns – as expressed in literary styles and modes. Comparative analyses reveal, for instance, that the narrative forms Senapati develops, extending some indigenous oral and written traditions, are similar to the forms used by the Latin American writer Gabriel García Márquez, who was challenging – some sixty years after Senapati – the dominance of neocolonial power in his own society in Colombia.

Finally, the volume’s comparative method itself points to a significant theme: the strategic political value of comparison in the study of Indian literature. These essays may suggest to readers non-ethnocentric – and, in the modern Indian cultural context, non-chauvinist – ways of studying Indian literature. They de-emphasise regional literary histories, especially the construction of hoary pasts and glorious traditions, to focus instead on cross-regional clusters of historical and cultural meaning. They attempt in-depth interpretations instead of merely celebrating authors and their works.

Comparative Perspectives

The essays by Jennifer Harford Vargas and Paul Sawyer suggest what a critical comparatism would look like and how we may go on to develop a method to talk about ‘world literature,’ a method that is attentive to national contexts without being limited by chauvinist or cultural-nationalist agendas. Whether it be in the form of a ‘South-South’ dialogue of the kind Vargas suggests, or in the form of a contrast between two differing perspectives on a common moral and imaginative project, which Sawyer develops, this kind of comparative reading takes us beyond the ethnocentric use of comparison that was common in the West during the imperial period. Two other essays provide comparisons of Senapati’s novel with an Assamese and a Telugu text respectively, both from the 19th century, and show how all three works draw on an indigenous modern sensibility. This indigenous Indian sensibility is often wary of the colonial modernity of westernized *babus* while being receptive to many of the positive values for which European culture was also known. Tilottoma Misra compares Senapati’s novel with a satirical prose-sketch, “Fair Without, Foul Within,” written in 1866 by the Assamese writer and scholar Hemchandra Barua. Even though Misra does not suggest this possibility, readers of *Six Acres* will easily recognise Barua’s text as one that must have influenced Senapati: both employ a similar kind of ironic and satirical tone.

According to Misra, Barua draws on a popular performing tradition native to Assam, *oja-pali*, through which, at least since the 15th century, rural audiences had been exposed to a dialogic and critical narrative voice. *Oja-pali* is similar to the Oriya *thia-pala*; in both, a group of five or six performers dance, enact scenes, dramatise themes, and recite poetry, while the lead singer goes on to provide both serious and parodic commentary on the recited texts and contemporaneous subjects, both high and low. It is reasonable to speculate that for Senapati as well as Barua, popular rural performance forms such as *oja-pali* and *thia-pala* provided inspiration for their satirical voices and their anti-hegemonic values; through the rich critical strands of satirical writing these forms embodied, they provided Barua and Senapati a link to a tradition of humour and social critique that predates colonialism by several centuries.

Velcheru Narayana Rao compares Senapati with his contemporary from northern Andhra, Gurajada Apparao. Narayana Rao has been arguing for years that a careful study of pre-colonial Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada literature reveals a robust tradition of modernity in pre-colonial Indian culture, one that has been eclipsed by the assumption that British rule brought modernity to India. Focusing on Apparao's famous 1890s play *Kanyasulkam* (*Girls for Sale*) and Senapati's novel, he shows how both writers provide a counter to the "cultural amnesia" of the *babus* and the upper castes who, under the influence of the new education, "rejected their immediate past in favour of colonial modernity." Narayana Rao goes on to distinguish from this tendency the more complex critical approach of Senapati and Apparao, which he defines as an indigenous and non-colonialist strand of modernity.

Ananthamurthy's Challenge

Ananthamurthy's call – or rather, his challenge – to scholars and critics of Indian literature led to the collaborative work of this volume. The authors' hope is that the close readings and theoretical explorations will inspire more such engagements with important literary works and their multiple contexts. As critical analyses, all these essays depart from the 'colonial discourse' approach that dominated and defined the field of postcolonial studies in the 1980s and 1990s after the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). The essays' emphasis on the subaltern's voice and agency suggests a framework that may be called 'radical humanist,' a framework that departs in particular from aspects of the Foucauldian theory on which *Orientalism* had drawn.

If the arguments about indigenous or alternative modernity are convincing in this one instance, with a focus on one related group of texts, they will also indicate why the sharp conceptual opposition between tradition and modernity is misleading and needs to be rejected. Empirical accounts of the rational basis and social function of indigenous, especially rural institutions, as well as the rich body of ideas contained in folklore and popular forms of dialogic and interactive performance (of which *thia-pala* and *oja-pali* are examples), can reveal robust expressions of the socially progressive values that can be found in rural Indian life. They can also suggest similar possibilities elsewhere in the world.

The readings and analyses in this book are invitations to a critical dialogue, since they are meant to provoke as well as illuminate. They encourage alternative textual interpretations of Indian literature, seek to reinvigorate debates, and open new avenues of cross-disciplinary research in which literary criticism is part of a collaborative project to define the features of the world we – all of us – have inherited from the Age of Empire. This particular 'view from India' may indicate how the study of literature is essential to our varied inquiries into the tangled relationship between colonialism and modernity, as well as into a genuinely democratic postcolonial future.

Satya P. Mohanty is Professor of English at Cornell University. He has edited, and written the introduction to Colonialism, Modernity, and Literature: A View from India, which was published in early March by Palgrave Macmillan, New York. An Indian edition of the book will be published by Orient Black Swan.



Curious young readers at the Jaipur Literature Festival. A new book Colonialism, Modernity, and Literature: A View from India provides close readings of a uniquely representative work of modern Indian literature and develops its analyses in a resolutely comparative framework. File photo

This article first appeared in The Hindu February 22, 2011, and can be viewed in its original version at: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/article1477917.ece>

VISITORS

2010/2011 Humphrey Fellow from Bangladesh, Abdullah Ahmad



This year's Humphrey Fellow from Bangladesh, Abdullah Ahmad, researches community based biodiversity conservation efforts within the government-declared Ecologically Critical Areas (ECAs) of Bangladesh.

The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program was established in 1978 in honor of the late Senator and Vice President to commemorate and carry forward Hubert Humphrey's lifelong commitment to international cooperation and public service. It provides professionals from developing countries an opportunity to enhance their leadership potential and managerial skills. The specialized non-degree programs designed for Humphrey Fellows at selected universities are intended to strengthen and develop the Fellows' capacities to assume greater professional responsibilities, to give them an opportunity to broaden their perspectives, and to establish international professional contacts.

Humphrey Fellows are mid-career professionals with a commitment to public service in both public and private sectors. Minimum qualifications include an undergraduate degree, substantive professional experience, demonstrated leadership qualities and fluency in English. Fellows at Cornell are able to shape a personally relevant program of investigation and learning based on a combination of independent projects, internships, field trips, special seminars and consultations with faculty and off-campus experts in their field.

Fulbright Scholar, Dr. Nuthalapati Chandrasekhara Rao



N. Chandrasekhara Rao is a Fulbright-Nehru Senior Research Fellow at Cornell for the 2010-2011 academic year, appointed by the Department of Government and based at the South Asia Program. His home university is Center for Economic and Social Sciences in Hyderabad, India where he is Associate Professor in Economics. His research interests include globalization and agri-food systems -- biotechnology and nanotechnology and development along with development issues of agriculture, poverty reduction and employment. He received his Ph.D. in Economics from Dr. B.R.A.O. University, Hyderabad through the Centre for Economic and Social Studies in 2003.

On Monday, October 18, 2010, Dr. Rao gave a lecture titled: *Suicides of Farmers and Transgenic Cotton in India*, for the South Asia Program's weekly seminar series, where he explained the demographics and history of these suicides as well as the conditions that make the increase yield of Bt cotton possible.

First Students of Dual Degree Programs in India Graduate

The inaugural class of Indian students in two dual degree programs offered by Cornell with India's Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) graduated Jan. 7 on TNAU's campus in Coimbatore, India.

The graduates -- six who participated in a Master of Professional Studies (MPS) program in plant breeding, and six who participated in the MPS program in food science -- first studied at Cornell in Ithaca June to December 2009 before completing their requirements at TNAU. Each graduate received an MPS degree from Cornell and a Master of Technology degree from TNAU.

The graduation ceremony was attended by Cornell staff and eight faculty members, including Max Pfeffer, senior associate dean in Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs), and Ronnie Coffman, director of International Programs in CALs; some 40 Cornell students participating in the CALs International Agriculture and Rural Development (IARD) 602 field course; and many TNAU officials, faculty and students. TNAU Vice Chancellor P. Murugesha Boopathi presided over the main event.

"Two interests in particular are common to both TNAU and Cornell," said Pfeffer at the ceremony. "First, both strive to contribute to the development of knowledge that informs our understanding of global agriculture and food systems. Second, TNAU and Cornell have a common interest in advanced pedagogy."

A second cohort of 13 students (six in plant breeding and seven in food science) began their studies last June and will graduate in January 2012.

The degree is designed to give Indian students comprehensive exposure to global food systems, which they might then apply in future employment in nongovernmental organizations, banks, or private or public industries, while some may pursue doctoral degrees, said Coffman. The training is also intended to provide students with the skills to fill a critical need for agriculture and rural development managers who are well versed in global issues and perspectives, he added.

"This program addresses the emerging human resource needs of India's rapidly growing seed and food processing sectors, which are expanding at over 15 percent every year," said K.V. Raman, an IARD and plant breeding professor and associate director of International Programs in CALs. "Several students who graduated from this program are now employed in this sector with good benefits."



TNAU Vice Chancellor P. Murugesha Boopathi greets Ronnie Coffman, director of International Programs at CALS, at the graduation event on TNAU's campus in Coimbatore, India.



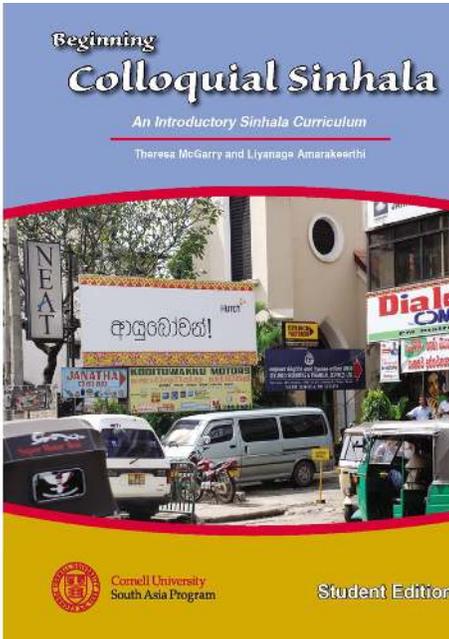
"As a joint endeavor, the TNAU-Cornell MPS is a program with global reach," said Pfeffer at the ceremony. "Certainly the interactions between Indian and American students can play a role in laying the groundwork for the proliferation of a global perspective on agriculture and food systems." The ceremony was covered extensively in India's major newspapers and television broadcasts.

The program has been funded by a five-year, \$3 million grant from the Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust through the Cornell-Sathguru Foundation for Development, and a matching contribution of up to \$1 million from the foundation, which promotes education, agriculture, technology transfer and rural development.

By CHRONICLEONLINE staff writer Krishna Ramanujan. This article first appeared in the January 24, 2011 issue of CHRONICLEONLINE: <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/Jan11/TNAUGraduation.html>

PUBLICATIONS

Beginning Colloquial Sinhala: An Introductory Sinhala Curriculum *by Theresa McGarry and Liyanage Amarakeerthi, 2010*



The South Asia Program's most recent publication, *Beginning Colloquial Sinhala: An Introductory Sinhala Curriculum*, by Theresa McGarry and Liyanage Amarakeerthi, will be available for purchase this summer. Those interested in doing so can contact nsj1@cornell.edu for ordering details. This curriculum includes a student textbook, teacher's guide, and audio-visual materials for teachers and students. Students intending to use the materials for self-study should purchase both the student and teacher materials.

“The curriculum is well-conceived and carefully and sequentially laid out; ...after completing the course students would have a high basic level of knowledge appropriate to a first year of language study and equivalent to that charted out in the existing standard works, with the addition of a more developed level of functional fluency—and a lot more fun— than the earlier materials aimed to produce. ...[I] am happy to endorse it as a project which has successfully re-invented the teaching of colloquial Sinhala for 21st century non-Sri Lankan learners. The course it envisions will engage teachers and students alike, leaving the latter with a solid basis in the language upon which they will be able to build whatever Sinhala-speaking contexts they subsequently encounter.”

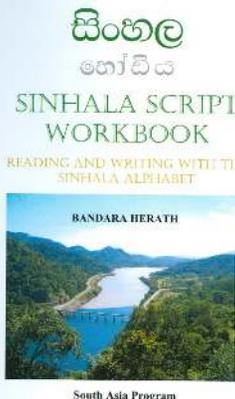
— Dr. Jonathan S. Walters, Professor of Religion and George Hudson Ball, Chair in the Humanities, Whitman College

About the authors:

Theresa McGarry has been a language teacher since 1987 and was a Peace Corps volunteer in Sri Lanka from 1994 to 1997. She holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of South Carolina. She is currently Associate Professor in the Department of Literature and Language at East Tennessee State University, specializing in second language acquisition and sociolinguistics.

Liyanage Amarakeerthi has a Ph.D. in Literary Studies from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. Previously, he taught Sinhala at Cornell University. He was awarded the best novel prize for *Atawaka Putthu* at the Sri Lankan National Literary Festival in 2008.

Sinhala Script Workbook: Reading and Writing with the Sinhala Alphabet *Bandara Herath, South Asia Program © 2009, 51 pages, \$10.00*



This workbook introduces the student to the Sinhala alphabet, guiding him/her in learning the Sinhala characters and sound combinations represented by those characters. This text provides the foundation for more advanced study of Sinhala reading and writing. After completing this workbook, students will be able to construct simple sentences in Sinhala script. To purchase this book, please send a check or money order made out to Cornell University to: South Asia Program, 170 Uris Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853-7601. For a complete list of all available SAP publications, please go to: <http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/SouthAsia/publications/>

FINE ARTS

There Is Only One God and Her Name is Life: Reimagining Kabir

This year the Ithaca community has been privileged to have Indian novelist, playwright, film and social critic Kiran Nagarkar in our midst. Kiran has been chosen by Ithaca College (IC) to be the International Visiting Scholar in Honors for the 2010 - 2011 academic year. Nagarkar's visit has been funded by the Scholar-in-Residence program of the Fulbright Commission along with Ithaca College School of Humanities and Sciences (see front page for Nagarkar's activities with SAP at Cornell). He is the author of several novels in both Marathi and English, best known for *Ravan and Eddie*, *God's Little Soldier* and *Cuckold*.

With a generous grant from Cornell Council for the Arts and funding from the Martin Hatch Fund and Ithaca College's Academic Project Grant, Jewish Studies Program, Honors Program and Department of Anthropology, a group of dancers and musicians decided to utilize Nagarkar's visit and literary expertise to create a multi-disciplinary performance featuring the author reading from his famed novel, *God's Little Soldier*, focusing on the "novel within a novel" expressing the author's interpretation of the fourteenth century poet-saint, Kabir. The name of this performance was *There Is Only One God and Her Name is Life: Reimagining Kabir*, which was performed Saturday, May 7, at Ithaca College's Hockett Family Recital Hall in Whalen Center. The Sunday, May 8 performance was held at Cornell's Schwartz Centre for the Performing Arts in the Class of '56 Dance Theatre as part of the four-day "Locally Grown Dance Festival" hosted by the Dance section of Cornell's Department of Theatre, Film and Dance. Nagarkar's oratory skills were masterful, bringing to life his interpretation of Kabir, the sentiments of which were echoed in interludes of music and dance.

The music was expertly composed and arranged by violinist and IC Music Dept. alumnus and CU Theatre and Dance musician, Max Buckholtz, who was joined by CU Law School Prof. Chris Seeds on keyboard, IC Anthropology Prof. Denise Nuttall on tabla, IC student and accomplished musician, Lucas Ashby on electric cello and IC Music Dept. alumnus Mark Wienand on flute. The dances consisted of original choreography by IC Dance Department Prof. Lindsay Gilmour and CU Dance Instructor Durga Bor, who performed as well. They were joined by IC dance students Shaina Ung, Audrey Pincus, Lillian Stameyand and Katie Henly.



Left to right: Max Buckholtz, Durga Bor, Lucas Ashby, Denise Nuttall, Kiran Nagarkar, Lindsay Gilmour and Chris Seeds

East Marries West, Sitar/Cello Couple Thrills Audience



On April 13, 2011, in Barnes Hall Auditorium, sitarist Shubbendra Rao joined forces with his wife, Dutch cellist, Saskia de Haas and tabla player, Biplab Bhattacharya to create an evening of sheer musical magic.

The evening began with *raga* Janasammohini and progressed to *raga* Mishra-Kafi, both set in *tintal* or a sixteen beat rhythm cycle. The *ragas* were rendered in the strictest classical form, consisting of *alap*, *jor* and *jala* with great musicianship and virtuosity on the part of both husband and wife. The second half was playfully executed, with an elaboration on both an Irish and Scottish piece which evolved with the treatment of an Indian *raga*, as did the second composition based on a Greek folk tune.

This concert was sponsored by the Cornell Chapter of the Society for the Promotion of Indian Culture and Music Among Youths (SPCIMACAY) with cosponsorship from the South Asia Program, the Student Assembly Finance Commission, and the International Students Programming Board.



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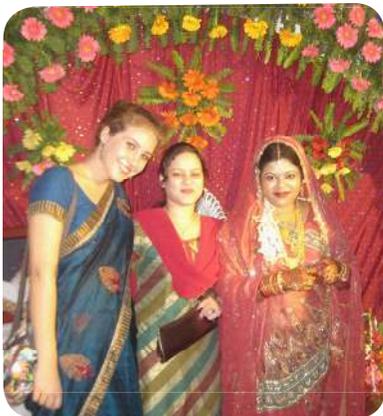
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to me that Golapa's husband is a "useless drunkard" who does not make important household decisions, leaving Golapa as the sole provider for her family. One of her daughters has already dropped out of school, while her other two children still attend. Her family owns 40 decimals of mostly upland land, which she finds difficult to plow because she is responsible for the labor herself and she does not own a pair of bullocks.

When she first decided to practice SRI principles three years ago, her husband critiqued her but allowed her to proceed as it was her responsibility to feed the family. In many interviews, I have found that those individuals who initiate SRI principles face severe resistance from their family members and are often mocked by neighbors. Golapa overcame the resistance and implemented SRI principles on three decimals of land the first year. After the first year, Golapa was confident about SRI principles because she had increased her yields. She used SRI on eight decimals her second year and ten decimals her third year.

While the tangible benefits of SRI are fantastic, namely decreased inputs and increased yields, I find the subtle effects of Golapa's story most interesting. On her own initiative, Golapa taught her brother about SRI principles and how to operate its simple tools. In front of a group of men from the village where she grew up, she taught her brother about the new innovation. She said at first she was nervous, but she became more comfortable and confident and "didn't worry about them [the men]." SRI therefore served as a means for Golapa to both improve the agricultural productivity of her land and save her money as well as provide her an opportunity to act as a teacher and build confidence.

SRI is not a panacea to gender inequality, food insecurity, and poverty, but I have talked with farmers personally and they have told me that it significantly improves paddy productivity and saves farmers money. And more than that, it seems that when SRI is promoted through women, it offers a tool to simultaneously empower women by giving them a tool to teach their male counterparts and demonstrate their decision-making and farming capabilities



*At my friend/colleague's wedding,
 November, 2010*



SAP volunteer Arti Bhounsule teaches children how to prepare alu chaat using vegetables from the International Children's Garden project initiated by Cornell Corporate Extension

Congratulations to Abnet Mengistu



The SAP staff would like to wish our student assistant, Abnet Mengistu, good luck with all her future endeavors. Abnet has been with us during this academic year, and will receive an undergraduate degree from the Department of Government in the College of

Arts and Sciences. Her future plans include a short hiatus in the Netherlands after graduation followed by a two-year paralegal position beginning in August in New York City and then on to law school. We enjoyed working with her and value her contribution to SAP and hope she drops us a line from time to time.

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