South Asia Newsletter

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President Lehman on His Recent Trip to India

An interview by Farhana Ibrahim and Karuna Morarji

This summer Cornell University's President Jeffrey S. Lehman (class of '77), ended his 18-day tour of Asia on July 9 with an alumni and parents banquet event in Mumbai and called for further collaboration between Cornell and leading research institutions in China and India. Upon his return, graduate students Farhana Ibrahim (Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Anthropology) and Karuna Morarji (Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Development Sociology), met with the President and conducted the following interview:

Farhana: As this was your first visit to India, what were some of your impressions?

President: This was my first visit to India. I know many people from India and people who have been to India. It was what I expected. People describe India as a place of great contrasts, great juxtapositions, and that is the sense that I had on a first visit.

I recognize that the way I was able to visit India was not typical. I had the opportunity to meet with people who are in positions of national leadership and it was thrilling. And I was treated with such kindness and respect, because of Cornell, that it was quite overwhelming and deeply touching for me. It was really quite a memorable and wonderful experience.

The President poses with Cornell alumni in India.

Karuna: We read that you visited various institutions of technical and higher education. What were some of your impressions of higher education, based on those visits?

President: I visited four different kinds of institutions – on the higher education side. I also was able to visit Infosys and had a chance to meet with Ratan Tata, so there was the business side, the alumni side and then the research and higher education side. Within research and higher education, I met with four institutions:

First we went to the Indian Institute of Science (IISC) in Bangalore. It is situated in a lush campus and we talked about the research that takes place there and the areas of overlap between the work they do and the work we do here at Cornell. There is a broad range of overlap, mathematics, basic computing, life science research and so on. Also in Bangalore, we visited the IIM-B, the Indian Institute of Management at Bangalore. A very different kind of institution, based on the teaching mission and able to attract extraordinarily talented students. One of the inescapable feelings one has as a teacher is that the key institutions in India are able to receive extraordinarily talented students, in part because of India's scale. When you have a country of a billion people and a relatively small number of key institutions, and a deeply meritocratic culture, there is a sense – from the outside – of what an extraordinary opportunity one has to teach these remarkable students. But you also sense – from the inside – that the faculty feel exceptionally fortunate that they are able to work with students of this caliber.

In Mumbai, we saw two other kinds of institutions. At the IIT (Indian Institute of Technology), Bombay, one got the sense that it combines teaching and research; one got a sense of the quality of students and the chance to do cutting-edge research. We saw one of the nanoscience labs with some quite sophisticated equipment and clearly some very talented and accomplished researchers. And then, on Saturday morning, just before we left, we saw the TIFR – the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. I must say I felt as though I had wandered into the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton. There are truly some of the great researchers of the world, especially in Mathematics and Theoretical Physics. And I understand that they also have a campus in Bangalore for Life Sciences Research. There again I had the feeling that the people I was speaking with could easily have been members of the Cornell faculty; many of them were Cornell graduates, and had Ph.D.s from Cornell. I felt at home. And I also felt an interest on the part of the people I met there, in finding ways to promote research collaborators. If there was a structural and institutional way to nurture more random interaction, that might pave the way for more sustained research collaboration. In the end, the goal is to have serious intellectual research collaborations around particular projects.

Farhana: What is the nature of the collaborative venture you propose? What would it mean, for a student studying at an IIT in India and one studying here at Cornell, for instance? What are some of the concrete ways in which you envision this collaboration?

President: Every potential institutional collaboration is unique. There is no universal template that we can apply. So we need to find a way to determine what the optimal match would be. In some instances the optimal match is likely to involve student exchange. That could take the form of students trading places for a short period of time, a semester, or a few weeks. It could take the form of joint

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NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Members of the South Asia Program,

As we wait for news of the snow (which will probably be upon us by the time this newsletter gets into your hands), one thing we can be sure of – there has been enough excitement through the semester to make a quiet snowy winter something to now look forward to.

The Fall semester had its usual run of seminars and other kinds of intellectual activities, to which I will turn in a moment. But perhaps it will be remembered most for its feast of what may be called 'culture'. Films, dance and music; classical and popular; professional and lay; all categories of performance and showings filled up the semester, beginning with a series on *The Changing Face of Indian Cinema* in September. This popular series was nicely complemented by a talk on *Art Deco Picture Palaces in India* – anyone who has grown up in Mumbai or Chennai must have experienced twinges of excited recognition at the slides of Eros, Metro and Sri Krishna Talkies and increased interest in the special architecture that we took so much for granted.

This was only the start of a season of other, more reflective, films that were thought-provoking rather than entertaining. These included *The Final Solution* (which also had a discussion with the director Rakesh Sharma) and the screening of the film, *Dam/Age,* at the 8th Annual Finger Lakes Environmental Film Festival, which was introduced by Prof. Ron Herring.

As for 'live' culture, there was an embarrassment of riches on that front as well. But before mentioning the highly successful 'professional' performances that regaled large audiences, I think a big round of applause is due to the 'local' talent that was showcased on 1 October. Cornell students Shailesh Balasubramanian, Priya Malhotra, Ganesh Ramanarayan, Geetha Shanmugam, Richa Sharma and Riti Singh clearly demonstrated that their years of training in classical music and dance have resulted in skills that have not been dimmed by the demands of academia. It is extremely gratifying that a casual inquiry by Geetha Shanmugam could lead to something that we are now keen to make an annual feature of the South Asia Program in the same way as the Diwali, Bhangra and Garba Raas performances are annual and much awaited events. I look forward to hearing about more classically trained students who are willing to organize a show.

The stage was also dominated by more South Asian professional performers than usual this semester. The Cornell and Ithaca community was treated to a sumptuous flute recital by Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia organized by Asha Cornell, a North Indian classical performance by Grammy nominee Shubhendra Rao (sitar) and Biplab Bhattacharya organized by SPICMACAY, a South Indian classical performance by Padmabhushan Sangeetha Kalanidhi Sri Umayalpuram K. Sivaraman (mridangam), Nemani Somayajulu (jalatharangam), Nagai Sriram (violin), E.M. Subramanian (ghatam) and Mattanar Sankarakutty (chenda), and a Kuchipudi and Bharat Natyam performance by the deer-footed Amrita Lahiri.

Finally, Society for India's much awaited Diwali show was a knockout, as was the annual Garba Raas evening to celebrate Navratri. Various other student groups continued their own cultural activities with the active or moral support of the South Asia Program and we continue to want to be a part of their lives.

Our seminar series continues to thrive, with 'local' talent, both student and faculty, stepping in to present their work during the weeks in which getting outside speakers is more dicey than usual. I am almost grateful to the Ithaca winters in this respect – USAir's uncertainties seem to translate so well into exciting glimpses into the work of Cornell's own researchers.

Finally two pieces of good news for the coming months. First, progress is rapid now in the search for a South Asian historian in the Department of History. Potential candidates are slated to speak in the coming weeks and I hope we will all try to participate in the process by attending some of these talks and maybe even some providing feedback through Prof. Shelley Feldman who has agreed to be the liaison between the South Asia Program and the History department. And secondly, we are now beginning to think about an interdisciplinary conference on *Social and Religious Fragmentation and Economic Development in South Asia* that we would like to organize in the early fall of 2005. Look out for more information on both these matters.

In the meantime, happy holidays, good luck with exams, and many thanks for all your support through the semester.

Alaka Basu

"Veena Players" by Amrita Sher Gill

SAP Reaches Out to Secondary School Teachers

by Anne Stengle, Outreach Coordinator

This past spring, the South Asia Program worked in collaboration with the Institute for African Development, Institute for European Studies, the Latin American Studies Program and the East and Southeast Asia programs at Cornell to offer two International Studies Institutes for secondary teachers. These workshops provide a wonderful opportunity for local and regional teachers, as well as student teachers from the Departments of Education at area colleges and universities, to interact with Cornell scholars about global issues. The content of the day-long program is aligned with New York State global studies curriculum standards and is designed to provide information and resources that teachers can apply immediately in the classroom. In addition, the sponsoring programs also provide handouts of resource lists, primary documents, maps and other materials for teachers to use with their students.

On February 6, 2004, the International Studies Institute focused on *Migration as a Force in Global Change*. For South Asia, Jessica Falcone, Ph. D. Candidate in Anthropology presented, *"Namaste* Uncle Sam: the Hindu and Sikh American Experience". This presentation came out of a yearlong research grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts Religion and the New Immigrants program, where Jessica worked with the Sikh American community in Washington, DC. Specifically, she looked at how that community identified itself and its very public reaction to the events of September 11, 2001. Currently, Jessica is working on a secondary education curriculum module based on this research, which will be available on our website by next spring.

Human Rights: Cases and Solutions was the topic of the March 12, 2004, offering. Professor Muna Ndulo, Cornell Law School and Director for the Cornell Institute for African Development, began the day with a talk on "Constitution-making, Consensus Building and Public Participation in Africa: Lessons from South Africa." The following presentations highlighted how other parts of the world deal with human rights violations, particularly immediately following war or other violent civil unrest. Govind Acharya, Ph.D. candidate in Applied Economics and Management spoke on "The Post Post-Conflict in Afghanistan: Reflections on a New Afghanistan." While he held little hope that human rights violations would end any time soon, his portrayal of personal experiences in that country as the former (and first) Director, Amnesty International office in Kabul, was extremely engaging and of interest to the teachers.

Ithaca Journal reporter Anne Ju attended the afternoon talks and interviewed teachers from Vestal. The Journal published Ju's article March 15: "Local Educators get Global Lesson" (photo courtesy Alice Horrigan, Institute for European Studies).

Area teachers participating in the discussion period of the workshop. (Photo courtesy of Alice Horrigan, Institute for European Studies).

The next International Studies Institute will be held on March 24, 2005. *Dams, Water Rights and Displacement* will be the theme and each area studies program will offer a talk on how this issue manifests in the respective world region. While these institutes are traditionally geared to the global/social/history disciplines, we strongly encourage teachers in the sciences to attend this particular workshop, as we will focus on geography, natural resources and the environment as well. Please note that information on this workshop will be forthcoming on our website, http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/southasia/outreach/

VISITORS

Humphrey Fellow from India, Neeraja Sastry Adidam

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.

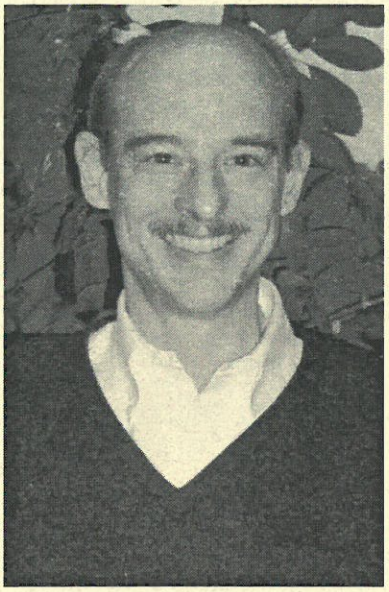
Humphrey Fellows are mid-career professionals with a commitment to public service in both public and private sectors. Minimum qualifications include an undergraduate degree, substantive professional experience, demonstrated leadership qualities and fluency in English. Fellows at Cornell are able to shape 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.

We are pleased to introduce Neeraja Sastry Adidam from India as one of this year's Visiting Humphrey Fellows at Cornell, whose main theme of study at Cornell will be the integrated planning and management of urban and para-urban forests. Adidam asks such questions as what technical aspects of urban forestry should be used to determine site analysis, what is the best physiological basis of species selection, as well as inventory techniques, nursery management, plantation and maintenance techniques? She also asks what should the involvement of stakeholders' role of local communities be in the decision making process, and the integrated activities of different government departments, local bodies and non-governmental organization be in urban forest planning? She is currently in the process of researching budget allocations, i.e. federal, state and local government's role in financing urban forest projects in America as well as learning about American urban forestry laws. Neeraja's final question is, what is the role of international organizations in encouraging urban and para-urban forestry programs in developing countries?

Neeraja is an Indian Forest Service Officer and Divisional Director for the Social Forestry Division. She has Master of Science Degrees in both Botany and Forestry. As a Divisional Director, she is instrumental in the policy implementation for the conservation protection of existing forest areas and wildlife from illicit felling, encroachment and poaching and has handled a staff of more than 200 people on all levels of forest conservation. Students and faculty interested in meeting Neeraja are encouraged to contact her at nsa22@cornell.edu.

Faculty are encouraged to use this excellent source of expertise. Fellows may engage with the Cornell community, for example, as they present seminars or papers, assist in the development of conferences or act as consultants. The Humphrey Program offers all of its participants the distinct privilege of learning and growing through cultural exchange. The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program is sponsored with core support from the United States Department of State under the authority of the Mutual Education and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. The program is administered nationally by the Institute of International Education, 1400 K Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Cornell is one of 15 universities in the United States participating in this Fulbright Exchange.

Cornell Visiting Scholar in Religion/Asian Studies, Professor Kevin Trainor Speaks for SAP's Seminar Series

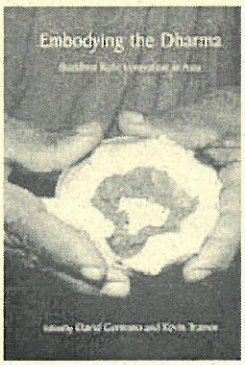


Professor Kevin Trainor (University of Vermont) is a Visiting Scholar in Asian Studies at Cornell during the 2004-2005 academic year. Professor Trainor's research interests include Buddhism in India and Sri Lanka, especially the history of relic veneration and Buddhist ritual practice.

Trainor completed a M.Div. degree in Church History at Union Theological Seminary in New York City and a Ph.D. in Religion at Columbia University; his B.A. in Religion is from Colgate University. His publications include: *Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide* (Oxford University Press, 2004) and *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravada Tradition,* (Cambridge University Press, 1997). *Embodying the Dharma: Buddhist Relic Veneration in Asia,* (edited with David Germano), just published by SUNY Press, examines the practice of relic veneration in a variety of forms of Buddhism. Long disregarded by Western scholars as a superstitious practice reflecting the popularization of "original" Buddhism, relic veneration has emerged as a topic of vital interest in the last two decades with the increased attention to Buddhist ritual practice and material culture. This volume includes studies of relic traditions in India, Japan, Tibet, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, as well as broader comparative analyses, including comparisons of Buddhist and Christian relic veneration.

His largest current project in progress is the study of the Pali *Dhammapada*, which is among the most translated Buddhist texts into European languages; it was first translated from Pali into Latin in the mid 1800's by Fausboll. Trainor describes the *Dhammapada* as "a medium for cultural interaction and exchange". On November 14, Kevin Trainor gave a lecture for the South Asia Program's Brown Bag Seminar Series, entitled "Cultural Appropriations of the *Dhammapada*". He spoke about the significance of verse 183, which in the nineteenth century began to be used as a statement of the essence of the Buddha's teaching in the context of the Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka. The American Civil War Colonel, Henry Steel Olcott, cofounder of the Theosophical Society is credited with perpetuating the Sinhalese Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka. His *Buddhist Catechism* highlighted the importance of verse 183, as did the *Smaller Catechism* compiled by C. W. Leadbeater, his co-worker in Sri Lanka. These texts were used in the Buddhist schools established under the auspices of the Buddhist Theosophical Society. Trainor's talk highlighted the role of verse 183 in the complicated intercultural dialogue that developed between the Theosophists and Sri Lankan Buddhist monks, especially the Rev. Hikkaduve Sumangala.

Professor Trainor is a board member of the Friends of Indian Music and Dance, an organization devoted to bringing musicians and dancers from the performance traditions of India to Burlington, VT. During the 1997-98 academic year he was a Fulbright Senior Scholar attached to the Department of Linguistics at the University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka. He has been teaching at the University of Vermont since 1989.



Trainor describes his approach to the study of religion as "pretty eclectic, drawing on historical, anthropological, and philological methods, as well as interdisciplinary approaches such as gender and ritual studies. I try to place Buddhist texts at the intersection of complex cultural interactions, including ritual practices and gender dynamics." When asked what brought him to Cornell, his response is the great South Asian library collections and the opportunity for collegial discussions with the Asian Studies faculty.

Trainor is joined by his six-year-old son, Andrew, and wife, Anne Clark, who is also a Visiting Scholar at Cornell through the Department of Near Eastern Studies, her expertise being Medieval Christian History. SAP extends to them a very warm welcome.

Dhrupad Master Returns to Cornell for Encore Performance

On **Monday, April 4, 2005, at 8 p.m. in Barnes Hall Auditorium**, SPICMACAY will present, Uday Bhawalkar, one of India's most talented Dhrupad singers, acclaimed by the Western public as well as by Indian classical music connoisseurs. He was born in M.P. in 1966, and started his training in music at the age of eight from his sister. In 1981 he received a four-year scholarship from Ustad Allauddin Khan Sangeet Academy to learn Dhrupad in *guru-shishya parampara,* this was under Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar at the Dhrupad Kendra, Bhopal. He later continued his training under the elder brother of Fariduddin, Ustad Zia Mohiuddin Dagar the renowned Veena maestro. He has been awarded by National Scholarship and Junior Fellowship from the Cultural Department of the Government of India.

Dhrupad is the most ancient style of Hindustani classical music that has survived until today in its original form. The Dhrupad tradition is a major heritage of Indian culture. The nature of Dhrupad music is spiritual, seeking not to entertain, but to induce feelings of peace and contemplation in the listener. The word Dhrupad is derived from *dhruva* the steadfast evening star that moves through our galaxy and *pada*, referring to poetry. It is a form of devotional music that traces its origin to the ancient text of *Sam Veda*. The *Sam Veda* was chanted with the help of melody and rhythm called *Samgana*. Gradually this developed into other vocal style called *Chhanda* and *Prabandha* with introduction of verse and meter. The fusion of these two elements led to the emergence of Dhrupad.

Uday is a remarkable artist, said to be the next great Dhrupad master of India. He mesmerized the audience at his last Cornell performance in 2002, and music lovers should defintiely not miss this performance by this very talented maestro. He will be accompanied on *pakhawaj* (cylindrical drum), by percussion master, Manikrao Munde. The concert is free and open to the public.

Diwali Festival Reveals a Wealth of Talented Cornell Students

by Aarti Reddy

Society for India's (S.I.) annual Diwali show was held in Barton Hall Saturday, November 13, 2004. The show featured dance performances by Sitara, Cornell Bhangra, and Cornell Raas. Musical performances included a unique "East meets West" fusion, SPICMACAY, Cornell's classical Indian music ensemble, and Tarana Hindi a capella group. Sitara dance troupe performed a piece entitled "The Art of Fusion" which included Indian classical, film, hip hop, and modern styles. Tarana a capella group incorporated popular Indian music and American music, singing "Musaafir Hoon Yaaron" and "If you could only see."As one of Cornell's largest cultural shows, S.I.'s Diwali celebration typically draws a large turnout. This year was no exception. The bleachers and seats were filled nearly to capacity, with 1,600 people in attendance.

Cornell's award-winning Bhangra Team

S.I.'s fashion show

Highlights of the show include performances by Society for India sponsored dances. SI members choreographed and organized four dances that incorporated a range of genres, performed to popular Hindi music such as *Tumse Milke* and *Yeh Ladki Hai Allah.* In addition, S.I. also sponsored a fashion show, which showcased traditional and modern Indian clothing for both men and women. The male and female bhangra teams each performed separate numbers, and as customary of every Diwali show, the "mixed" bhangra team closed the evening to thunderous applause.

President Lehman's Visit...an Indian Perspective

by Anuj Bhagwati

Cornell alumni and friends across years, colleges, and cities were delighted by a brief visit by a Cornell team lead by President Lehman to India. The team included Vice President Inge Reichenbach, Vice President Thomas Bruce, Dean AAP Professor Porus Olpadwala, Professor Michael Tomlan, President Lehman's wife Kathy Okun and two of their daughters.

Team Cornell's sojourn included a stop at Infosys, an information technology company, co-founded by Cornell trustee N. R. Narayan Murthy, and a meeting with Ratan Tata '59, Chairman of the Tata Group, one of India's largest and most respected industrial houses. The team visited leading academic institutes such as the Indian Institute of Science, the Indian Institute of Technology, and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research - at all of which Cornell alumni play important roles. We particularly hope these visits will foster closer academic ties between Cornell and India. A hundred alumni and friends of Cornell from across India, including Mr. Tata and Mr. Murthy, enjoyed an evening reception in Bombay (Mumbai), which gave all a chance to spend time with the visitors. President's Lehman short speech, talking about Cornell's role as in the world and university initiatives, was truly inspirational.

We strongly believe that this visit will have long-term effects. At a general level, we hope it will help the university understand the world's largest democracy. We hope it will bring about fruitful research partnerships. The interest created in the media should enhance Cornell's image. The reception has catalyzed a strong alumni response. Already, a small informal alumni meeting in Bangalore took place, and a lecture series is planned at the end of the year. The university and alumni's rich involvement in multi-faceted activities in India is a pleasant surprise to all - it cuts across colleges, and also across the academic sphere, the corporate world, the government and the non-profit segment.

All these, we hope, will play a part in enriching the lives of the Cornell community and so many others.

President, con't from front page

The President addressing Cornell alumni in

degree initiatives. It can also take the form of faculty exchanges. Ultimately the faculty interaction has a pay-off if it leads to collaborative research. And that means finding a puzzle, a problem, a challenging issue to study together. The question is, how can each institution bring its resources together to facilitate the right kind of collaboration.

Karuna: Based on the institutions that you visited in India it seems that there is an emphasis on science, technology and management in this collaboration. Would you agree?

President: In the suggestions that I received to see on a first visit, these were all institutions that were identified as world class institutions where there are possibilities for developing a nexus of collaboration. But it wasn't intended to exclude the possibility of other kinds of institutional collaboration. I did ask about what other institutions I should have included had I had more time, and I did get some suggestions.

***Karuna*:** What could an extension of institutional programs between Cornell and institutions in India mean for the South Asia Program and for those of us working in the social sciences?

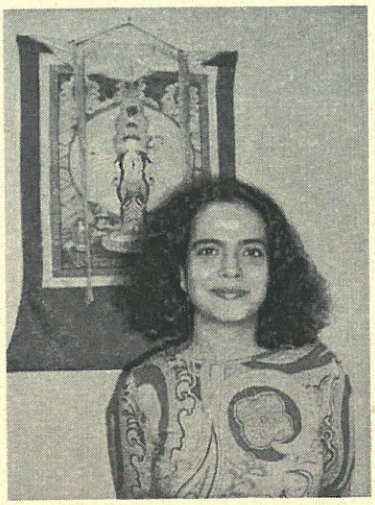
President: One of the messages I've been trying to use my position as president to convey is the importance of preparing this next generation of students to live in a very different kind of world, one where national boundaries have much weaker significance than they did a hundred years ago. And so I talk about the importance of nurturing a transnational perspective on the human condition, a perspective that prepares students to be comfortable with mobility in a world where social phenomena such as the nation-state have significance but a very different kind of significance than they once had. To do that requires strong Area Studies Programs, and what I hope is that people engaged in research, teaching and study within those programs will recognize—as I'm sure they do—the significance of the project not only for the intellectual disciplines that touch most immediately upon their territory but also for the academic community as a whole.

I think that boundaries that are coming down are not only national, but also boundaries that tended to clump disciplines, to some extent artificially, into humanities, social sciences and sciences. To some extent it is a mistake to ask the question that would have been asked fifty years ago, which is, 'what do the humanities have to say about the relationship between India and the US?'. It is still important to ask 'what does history have to say?' or 'what does physics have to say?', but the aggregations seem artificial. We are moving to an intellectual landscape in which individual disciplines continue to be extraordinarily important because they do have distinct methodological traditions that define them and lead us to different kinds of insights about issues and problems. We're going to see a different kind of flowering of collaborations around particular problems where different disciplines are brought to bear on them. So when I think about both the project of nurturing a transnational perspective on what it means to be human, and about the possibilities for collaborations around the world, I think every discipline has a great deal to contribute.

***Farhana*:** There has been a lot of debate in India recently about the elite status and structure of institutions such as the IIT's and IIM's. Cornell also has particular symbolic capital in India, not least because its alumni have been extremely successful. So I was wondering if by adding the brand 'Cornell' to already elite institutions, if it might not further up the competition and craze around getting admission into these institutions in a country where there is already a strong emphasis on elite higher education over other forms of education?

President: I don't have enough knowledge and expertise about India to be able to venture a strong answer to that question. But let me say this: I am sensitive to the fact that Cornell as an institution has an impact when it moves in the world. It is impossible for Cornell to move silently on little cats' feet around the planet, so we always have to think carefully of the impact of our activities. When we decided to open a campus of our medical college in Qatar, we thought very carefully not only about the phenomenon of medical education, but also about the impact of bringing a university with a tradition of co-education and religious freedom into a part of the world where these were new ideas. In the 'Bridging the Rift' initiative, where we are doing life-science research on the border between Jordan and Israel, we are aware that it is science, but also has a larger geo-political significance. I would say, we always want to start with thinking of the intellectual questions of what we do best, we can't start with thinking of ourselves as a political actor. We have to ask 'where are the natural possibilities for intellectual partnership?', and then 'are there other reasons that might caution against going forward with those kinds of partnerships?'. What you say suggests that there might be, but they probably wouldn't ward me off. They would be very significant if we were to think about opening a campus, but not in terms of the kinds of partnership facilitation that we're talking about. India is so big, and even though Cornell is significant, we're not that big.

Introducing new SAP/Com Lit Faculty, Anindita Banerjee



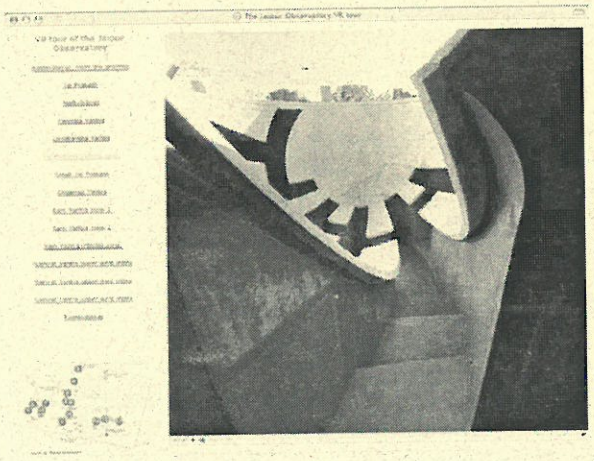
The South Asia Program's faculty and staff would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest faculty member, Assistant Professor, Anindita Banerjee, who is teaching a Comparative Literature course: COM L 386, *Literature and Film of South Asia*, a survey of literary and filmic texts from the area encompassing present-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Discussions are organized around issues such as nation and narrative; historiography; secularism and religious nationalism; gender; marginalized and diasporic identities. All texts and films are in English translation or subtitled. Though focused on the twentieth century, the course engages epic and folkloric discourses in context. Authors to be studied range from canonical figures of Rabindranath Tagore, M. K. Gandhi, Ismat Chughtai, and Sadat Hasan Manto to contemporary literary pioneers such as Mahasweta Devi, Kishwar Naheed, U.R. Ananthamurthy, and Taslima Nasreen. Films include auteur and independent cinema, Bombay potboilers, and documentaries.

Professor Banerjee was born in Patna, India, and raised in Dhanbad. She did her undergraduate work at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, where she received a B.A. in Russian Studies. After working for the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi, she returned to school, and in 2000, received a Ph.D. from the University of California at Los Angeles in Slavic Languages and Literatures, with a thesis on science and technology in turn-of-the-century Russian fiction. When asked what perpetuated her interest in Russia, she answers that she is fascinated by cultures whose identity is caught up in the geopolitical and ideational divide between East and West; both India and Russia, although their location and history are very different, struggle with this issue.

She has a particular interest in Russia's contact with various parts of Asia, including South Asia. Her current book project is a cultural history of the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Anindita has written on the wealth of travel literature by Russians about India, who came as early as the late-15th century. She spoke of a merchant, Athanasius Nikitin, who spent more than three years there before the larger wave of European travelers arrived on the scene, as well as the account called *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan*, through which Madame Helena Blavatsky, the famous founder of the Theosophical Society, popularized India among Russian and English-speaking audiences in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Anindita's research interests also include contemporary Indian cinema, especially its role in the formation of national and religious communities.

SAP Art Professor Launches Web Site

Associate Professor Barry Perlus recently launched a web site featuring his multimedia project on the Jantar Mantar, the 18th-century astronomical observatories built in India by Sawaii Jai Singh II. The observatories incorporate numerous buildings of unique form, each with a specialized function for astronomical measurement. These structures with their striking combinations of geometric forms at large scale, have captivated the attention of architects, artists, and art historians world wide, yet remain largely unknown to the general public.



The Jantar Mantar multimedia project presents the observatories through a variety of media and information sources, making it possible to explore and learn about these historic sites through interactive panoramic "VR" photographs, time lapse sequences, and 3D models as well as articles, drawings, and historic texts. The project is ongoing, and will continue to expand as new features are added during 2005. The project can be seen at www.jantarmantar.org

For Professor Perlus, the multimedia project provides an opportunity to work creatively with a subject that touches both science and art. His goal is to make www.jantarmantar.org a virtual museum and study center providing multiple resources for exploring the observatories in depth.

For more information contact Barry Perlus at bap8@cornell.edu

FACULTY BRIEFS

Alaka Basu, Department of Sociology and South Asia Program, published, (with R. Stephenson), "Is a little learning never a dangerous thing? Maternal education and the proximate determinants of infant and child mortality", *Social Science and Medicine*, forthcoming, 2004. (with S. Amin), "Popular perceptions of Changing Health and Mortality: Evidence from a Qualitative Study", *Population Studies*, 2004. "The Squabble that never ends: Religion and fertility in the census of India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 39, no. 39, 2004. "Towards an understanding of the emotions of the population of 2300", in United Nations, *Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Population to 2300*, New York, UN Population Division, 2004. (with G. Koolwal), "Two notions of female autonomy and their implications for reproductive health" in *ORC Macro*. "A Focus on Gender: Collected Papers using DHS data", Washington, D.C,. *Macro International*, 2004. "Reproductive Health Advocacy" in E. Braunstein and S. Atwood (eds), *Trade Liberalization and Reproductive Health*, International Center for Research on Women, Washington, D.C., forthcoming. She also presented (with G. Koolwal) a paper on "Female Autonomy and Reproductive Health" at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, Boston, April 2004, and gave the keynote talk to the Middle East Reproductive Health Working Group, American University, Beirut, August 2004.

Anne Blackburn, Department of Asian Studies, traveled to Sri Lanka last summer, undertaking archival research for her next book, *Horizons Not Washed Away: Buddhism, Colonialism, and Modernity in Lanka.* With support from the NRC grant, she also purchased materials to develop the Sinhala collection in the Kroch Asia Library. During Fall 2004 she is a Fellow at the Society for the Humanities, teaching a new course "The Classical in Colonial Asia," and completing two articles related to the book project.

Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, Department of Government, has coedited a book with Raka Ray (Sociology, Berkeley) forthcoming in spring, 2005, *Social Movements in India: Poverty, Power, and Politics* (Rowman and Littlefield). The book comes out of a conference held at Berkeley and cosponsored by Cornell that brought together scholars from India and North America working on social movement politics. Chapter authors include Cornellians, Anuradha Chakravarty, Ron Herring and Neema Kudva in addition to India-based scholars, Amita Baviskar, Gopal Guru, Mary John, Gail Omvedt, and Tanika Sarkar. Additional contributors include Patrick Heller (Brown) and Vivek Chibber (NYU). Katzenstein is a fellow this year at the Center for Advanced Studies, Palo Alto, where she is writing a book on incarceration and citizenship. Her term as treasurer of the American Institute of Indian Studies ended July 1, 2004 and she has been succeeded by another upstate New Yorker, Geraldine Forbes (SUNY, Oswego).

Kenneth A. R. Kennedy, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, was the host for the 20th annual meeting of the North-East Forensic Anthropology Association at Cornell University during the period of November 5-7, 2004. Professional anthropologists and their students from the East Coast and Canada presented papers and case studies in the Human Biology Laboratory, Stimson Hall, on November 6. Kennedy's paper is entitled "Who Was the Lady from Chanhu-Daro?" Chanhu-Daro is an Indus Civilization site on the Indus River and dated to circa 2500 B.C. In addition to this, Kennedy recently published the following: Kennedy, K.A.R. 2004. "Slings and arrows of predacious fortune: Asian evidence of spear use". *Evolutionary Anthropology* 13 (4): 127-131. Published. Kennedy, K.A.R. 2004. "The Monstrous Races of India and the Americas". In: *Issues and Themes in Anthropology: A Festschrift in Honour of Professor D.K. Bhattachbarya.* N.K. Srivawstava and M.K. Singh, eds. Pp. 361-382. Delhi: Palaka Prakashan Press; and reviewed Clive Finlayson's book, *Neanderthals and Modern Humans: An Ecological and Evolutionary Perspective*, 2004, Cambridge University Press. *American Paleontologist* Fall 2004:26-27. He was also a Guest Lecturer for the Department of Geology, Syracuse University, October 19, 2004 where he spoke on "God-Apes and Fossil Men: Palaeoanthropology of South Asia"

Neema Kudva, Department of City and Regional Planning, organized an international conference, *Second Cities in a Global World*, at Cornell in May 2004, with support from the Poverty, Inequality and Development Program. Four of the 18 papers presented were focused on India. She is currently editing the conference papers for a book. She will be in India from November through January 2005, gathering data for her project on secondary urbanism in southern Karnataka. She was awarded the President's Council for Cornell Women 2004-2005 Affinito Stewart Grant to support this project. She is publishing a chapter, "Uneasy Partnerships: NGO-State Relations in India" in Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Raka Ray's edited book, *Social Movements in India: Poverty, Power and Politics,* to be published by Rowman and Littlefield in 2005. While in India, she has been invited to present her work at a seminar on "Governance of NGOs" organized to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the Indian Institute for Rural Management in Anand, Gujarat; at the Center for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT) in Ahmedabad, and at the Kamala Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute for Architecture & Environmental Studies (KRVIA) in Mumbai.

Debali Mookerjea-Leonard, Department of Asian Studies, presented a paper at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London in June. She has an article to be published in the *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* in February 2005, and a review of "Organizing Empire" in the *Journal of Asian Studies.*

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Rice and Rain in Nepal

Steve harvesting rice in Rampur

Steven Culman, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Crop and Soil Science and former FLAS recipient, through the South Asia Progrm at Cornell, spent most of 2003 and half of 2004, in Nepal on a Fulbright Fellowship. Here are his Notes from the Field:

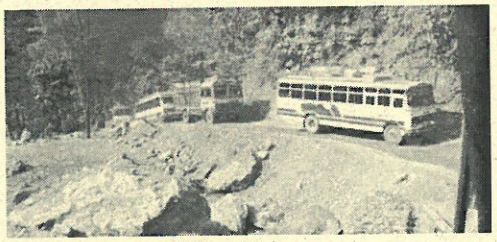
I am spending my Fulbright year in Nepal studying the effects of a management practice, soil solarization, on the soil microbiology of rice and wheat. But let's face it, no one (aside from my advisors) wants to read about that right now. So I digress, to talk about things hopefully a little more stimulating to the reader... Having one field site in Kathmandu and one in Rampur, Chitwan has afforded me the opportunity to travel here on a regular basis. This has been both a blessing and a curse. Traveling back and forth on local buses, watching the landscape change over the course of a year has been truly remarkable. My wife, Nicole, and I have made the trip roughly every other week over the past year. And true to form, there has never been a dull moment.

Soon after we arrived, the rains came. At first they were beautiful. They washed out the muted shades of brown and red, and replaced them with lush greens. Rice came to dominate the landscape. Almost overnight it seemed, that rice had been transplanted into every nook and cranny of every terraced hillside, often on precariously steep slopes. It was growing and thriving and uniformly bringing order to the rugged landscape in a way that was never tiring to look at.

Then suddenly the soil and plants had their fill of rain and rejected this once valued resource. And after three days of continuous rain, huge masses of earth and rock came crashing down, demonstrating the great geologic forces still at work here—the Himalayas are still growing. Landslides washed over and took out the Prithvi Highway, the main economic artery of Nepal—for 10 straight days it was not passable. More rains followed to close it periodically for days at a time, and made choosing your travel date a gamble with the weather. Large sections of road, heeding the call of gravity, literally cracked in half and fell into the raging river below. Stretches of the road became barely passable for vehicles one-way. Consequently, huge queues formed on a daily basis, and with increased security checkpoints, our 150 km trip was transformed into a 10-13 hour endeavor, instead of the 4.5-5 hours that we were initially privileged with. Even after the rains died down, for many months, running water was still everywhere. Gravity was having its way, pulling water ever so slowly from the soil, collectively turning it into streams to fall from the jagged hillsides, run over the road and down to the river where it would continue its journey. Armed with shovels, pickaxes and wheelbarrows, road crews are still fighting the relentless forces of nature and consequences of deforestation.

Time has passed. The Trisuli has shrunk to a tame meander. Wheat has since replaced the rice and is presently trying to squeeze out the last drops of moisture from the soil, in a race with time to mature before the soaring temperatures come. Traveling on the beaten, dirt road from Mugling to Narayangadh has become a way of life for the Nepalis that journey from Kathmandu to the Terai. It seems easier now—mostly because of loosened security, and longer expectations of travel time—not because the road is in much better shape.

When I make the journey, I don't do much but think. First and foremost, I think about not getting thrown out of my seat or smacking my knees on the seat in front of me as the bus rumbles down the broken road. As this adventurous task slips into the subconscious realm, I begin to think about other things, hopefully of more significance. It's hard to escape the glaring metaphor of how this country, like the highway, is desperately holding on, resisting the forces of nature and the collective adversity they face in these times. Traveling on the road these days, I can't help but think that we're coming to a breaking point. Little effort has been made to repair the highway. Presumably the funds have been diverted to arm Nepalis to kill other Nepalis. With several bridges on the verge of collapse, 20 km or so of unsealed road and the monsoon rains only a few months away, extended road closings are one of the only certainties in this country's future. Yet, at the same time, you get the feeling that this country will endure these unstable times, will endure with or without a road.



Prithvi Highway

Life here is often difficult, but always tangible. You can see it in the weathered faces of the elders, you can taste it in the ritual-like consistency of *dal-bhat*, you can hear it in the ringing bells of morning *puja*. Life in Nepal leaves out the middleman, and passes its juiciest intensity onto you. I believe this is what keeps bringing Westerners back time and time again. The Himals possess beauty that defies description, but it's her people that make it magical. I've been told that Nepal is a country of people who are accustomed to surviving in harsh times and in harsh landscapes. My heart is comforted by this thought as I think of the farmers (and everyone else remaining) who still have to walk the long road ahead.

Sitara Performs at Harvard

Sitara, Cornell's premier South Asian Dance Troupe, performed at Harvard University's Intercollegiate Fusion Dance Show, *Raunak,* on Friday, October 8, and Saturday, October 9, at Lowell Lecture Hall in Cambridge, MA. The show featured schools from across the Northeast, with performances by South Asian dance groups from Dartmouth, U. Penn, and MIT, among others. The piece Sitara performed, entitled "The Art of Fusion," incorporated a wide variety of dance styles that reflect the diverse training of the troupe's members. With music from Rishi Rich, Janet Jackson, and the hit Hindi movies Taal and Devdas, this dance included classical Indian dance styles of Kuchipudi, Kathak, and Bharatanatyam, as well more Western hip hop and modern dance moves. This unique blend of Western and Eastern styles is reflected in the fusion of styles visible in their costumes. Look for upcoming performances by Sitara at The Pink Ice Ball on Friday, October 22nd, and Society for India's Diwali Show, on Saturday November 14th.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends,

It seems the Fall semester has flown by, and is nearing an end. I am both excited and overwhelmed as I prepare to take next semester off to go to India. Having spent six years of my adult life in India, it's almost unbelievable to me that my last trip to that vast and interesting land was ten years ago. Being in constant contact with Westerners traveling to India, and both expatriate and resident Indians, I know I will find many changes from my last visit. I start my travels in New Delhi. If I ate at all the new restaurants in Delhi which come highly recommended, I would be eating my way through the Spring semester, something I'm probably capable of! This, no doubt, would be frowned upon by my sponsors, AIIS. I look forward to meeting old friends and teachers in Delhi, and hope to find Acharya Keshev Dev, master of the art of healing *mudras,* my latest side interest.

After Delhi, I'll have a brief stint at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Mumbai, and a five day retreat to Goa. I will then proceed to my base, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, where I will resume study at the Orissa Dance Academy with Guru Gangadhar Pradhan. I'll, hopefully, be expanding my repertoire, with a particular interest in learning dances that will be more suitable to perform in primary and secondary schools when I return to Ithaca, which is part of my job as an outreach educator. Let's face it, the *Gita Govinda*, which is the core of Odissi *abhinaya* would be rated "R" in an American classroom, and *Das Avatara,* my most animated piece, with the beheading, killings, and ripping out of internal organs just isn't politically correct for school children on this side of the globe (remembering the horrified face of a teacher, when I explained the actions of Narasinha ripping out demonic king Hiranyakasipu entrails). I am, therefore, hoping to create gentler and less sensuous pieces with the guidance of my Guru, perhaps choreographing a story or two from the *Panchatantra.* New pieces always involve the composing and recording of music, which will be done by one of the very talented Oriya musicians. In addition to this, I hope to enhance my PowerPoint slide show, which I call "A Walk Through India", where I introduce the streets, temples, sculptures, and finally, performing artists to the children of local and regional schools in the Ithaca area. I would like to add to this show slides of Indian primary and secondary schools of all economic ranges, drawing awareness to the fact that there are still children sitting under trees, having only slates to write on as well as high tech schools for the more privileged.

I'm warned of the changes taken place in Bhubaneswar, particularly the volume of traffic and urban sprawl. When I left it in 1994, it was a relatively quiet town, especially for a state capital, and I buzzed around on my Luna moped without a problem. My Luna has since been crashed by its subsequent owner (my Guru), and I'm warned that it wouldn't be safe to get around on either moped or bicycle anymore. The good news is that there are more forms of public transport than before, the only choices in the past being cycle rickshaw, which took forever in a town so spread out and somewhat hilly, or public buses, which were way too crowded and ran irregularly and not off the beaten path, where I prefer to live. Now, I'm told, there are motor rickshaws. I, no doubt, will take regular pilgrimages to the home of Lord Jagannath Puri, and to the village of Konark, home of the "Black Pagoda", and my teacher's other school, Konark Natya Mandap, where he holds a three day festival of music and dance in February. All this to look forward to, and the added bonus of not spending the coldest months in Ithaca, and returning to Spring. It doesn't get much better than this!

Minda Ware will take over in my absence, and will edit the Spring, 2005, SAP Newsletter. See you in May!

Sincerely,

Durga Bor

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