

# The South Asia Newsletter

A Publication of Cornell's South Asia Program

Spring, 2000

## Linguist, Professor James Gair, Retires after 39 Years of Dedicated Teaching/Research

On December 8, 1999, loyal friends and colleagues of Professor James W. Gair met at the A.D. White House to celebrate his retirement and transition to Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at Cornell University after thirty-nine years of dedicated teaching and research of Sinhala, the language of Sri Lanka.

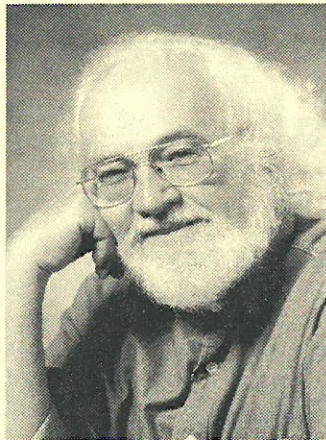
Gair received his B.A. (*Magna cum Laude*) and M.A. in English from the University of Buffalo. He then came to Cornell, as both a Ph.D. candidate and Assistant Professor of Linguistics. He received his Ph.D. in 1963, with a dissertation titled *Clause Structures in Spoken Colloquial Sinhalese*. Although he had originally begun his Ph.D. studies in Old English, his interests shifted when he decided to work with a language "that involved real people." He attributes his inspiration and interest in Sinhala and South Asia to his advisor, the late Professor Gordon Fairbanks. In 1974 he became a full Professor of Linguistics at Cornell, and has been both Associate Chair and Acting Chair of the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics.

Over the years, Professor Gair has had Visiting Lectureships at the Universities of Alberta and Pennsylvania as well as being a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University. He has had numerous honors, fellowships and grants and is a member of the Linguistics Societies of

America, Great Britain and India, as well as the Linguistic Association of Great Britain, Royal Asiatic Society (Sri Lanka Branch), Dravidian Linguistics Association, Association for Asian Studies and he is a founding member of the Sri Lanka Studies Committee, AAS.

In 1994 Gair received a Doctor of Literature (*honoris causa*)

from the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Sinhala linguistics and Sri Lankan culture. Although Sinhala has been his major focus, he has also made contributions to the study of Pali, Tamil, Hindi, Marathi, Malayalam and Dhivehi. His most recent addition to the South Asia Program's book distribution list has been *A New Course in Reading Pali: Entering the Word of the Buddha* (Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1998). His language texts (with Fairbanks and De Silva), *Colloquial Sinhala, Parts I and II*, continue to be the SAP's bestselling publication. Professor Gair has numerous other books and articles to his credit on the learning of Sinhala and related linguistics. He is currently writing a grammar of Dhivehi for publication



with his former graduate advisee, Bruce Cain, based on Cain's dissertation. He has directed Cornell's semiannual Summer Language Program in Sinhala since it began in the 1980's.

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## Cartographies of the Vernacular: Directions in Contemporary South Asian Literature

by Sheetal Majithia

On February 19th the South Asia Program sponsored "Cartographies of the Vernacular: Directions in Contemporary South Asian Literature." The conference was the culmination of a series of discussions held by students and faculty members around debates sparked by Salman Rushdie's controversial 1997 *New Yorker* article in which he claimed that only contemporary Indian writing in English is vibrant and vocal today. The conference sought to address issues such as the politics of language and translation as well as the growth of postcolonial studies as a context for the new interest in South Asian writing. In an effort to address these diverse questions, the event was organized so that writers and scholars based in the United States and in South Asia could take up these issues from their various geographic, academic, and artistic locations. Students and faculty met periodi-

cally to generate readings and questions that were then passed on to the eight speakers attending the conference.

The conference was inaugurated by a series of readings held on February 18th during which acclaimed author U. R. Anantha Murthy read in Kannada from his award-winning *Samskara*. He was joined by Meena Alexander, Distinguished Professor of English at the Graduate Center and Hunter College, City University of New York, and also the author of *The Shock of Arrival: Reflections of Postcolonial Experience* and *Manhattan Music*, who read new and unpublished poetry. Cornell professor of Hindi, Susham Bedi, who is the author of *Havan* and *Gatha Amarabela Ki* also read new fiction. Finally, Pakistani poet and feminist activist, Fahmida Riaz, read new and unpublished fiction and recited Urdu ghazals from *We Sinful Women*, an

*Continued on page 2*



## Notes from the Director

Dear Colleagues and Friends of the South Asia Program:

I am on leave this semester, and though I suppose I should be writing these notes on a postcard from some sunny beach, instead I have been on campus every day this winter. How could I keep away from the SAP when so many interesting things are going on?

In addition to the visitors here for the entire year, we are very pleased to welcome Prof. Saurabh Dube back from El Colegio de Mexico for the semester to teach two courses in the History Department and to participate in the other activities of the Program. We are glad to have Prof. Ganesh Gurung of Tribhuvan University here on a Fulbright to do research for the semester. As I write this we are looking forward to the visits of two A. D. White Professors at Large, David Pingree here from Brown on his final visit as an ADW-PAL, and Richard Schechner here from New York University, on his first (see pg. 3).

In February the SAP put on a workshop on "Directions in South Asian Literature" in conjunction with the Society for the Humanities, the University Lectures Committee, the English Department, and the Einaudi Center for International Studies. The workshop was a great success, in spite of an especially messy snowstorm that weekend (see pg. 1).

*"Workshop," continued from front page*

anthology of Urdu feminist poetry.

Speaking to a crowd of students and faculty from various departments, Susham Bedi, along with Narayana Rao, professor of Indian literature from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, joined Fahmida Riaz in taking up the question of translation in "The Task of the Translator," a panel moderated by Cornell's own David Lelyveld, Executive Director of the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies. "The Politics of the 'Postcolonial,'" a panel moderated by Sudipto Sen from the History

Two of our esteemed senior colleagues have retired this year, Jim Gair, retiring from the Department of Linguistics, and Roy Colle, retiring from the Department of Communication, after many years of dedicated service to the University. A twenty-one gun salute to both of them as they make the transition to emeritus status. And kudos all around to our graduating work-study students, Sasha, Mythily, and Matt, who have given us so much help here in the offices over the past year.

Spring is coming, even to Ithaca, and will turn quickly to summer. We will be offering both our summer Nepali and Sinhala courses, and I hope you will pass along the word to any interested students.

Yours,

Christopher Minkowski  
Associate Professor, and  
Director, South Asia Program

department at Syracuse University, allowed Meena Alexander, Hunter College, and Vasudha Dalmia, professor of Hindi from University of California, Berkeley, to discuss the contested nature of all that is signified by the term "postcolonial." Finally in "Towards a Category of the 'Modern,'" a panel moderated by Saurabh Dube, Visiting Professor of History at Cornell, U.R. Anantha Murthy, Milind Wakankar, from Columbia University and Cornell's Satya Mohanty from the Department of English, discussed the various aesthetic and political sites in which modernity manifests itself the South Asian context.



*Members of the Writers Workshop panel.*

### Visit the South Asia Program Website

To learn about the South Asia Program's faculty, course offerings, publications, outreach materials, events calendar, summer language programs and more, visit <http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/southasia/>. You can download application forms for both Summer Sinhala and Nepali Language Intensives with just a click!





## Visitors

### A.D. White Professors at Large to Participate in SAP's Seminar Series

David Pingree will be visiting Cornell on his last visit as an A. D. White Professor at Large during the week of April 17. Prof. Pingree is the world's foremost expert on the history of the "Exact Sciences in Sanskrit": Astronomy, Astrology, and Mathematics. He has been a pioneer in the study of the transmission of scientific models and parameters between the Babylonian, Hellenistic, Sanskrit, Arabic, and medieval European scientific communities. He is the author of more than 30 books and monographs, including groundbreaking editions of works in Greek, Sanskrit, Arabic, and Latin, and more than a hundred scholarly articles. Among his countless honors, he was given the title of "Abhinavavarāhamihira" by the Governor of Uttar Pradesh.

Prof. Pingree will give a talk at the South Asia Program on April 17, at 12:15 p.m. in G08 Uris Hall, on *The Earliest Version of Jagannātha's Siddhāntakaustubha*. This talk will feature a discussion of the scientific activity at the court of the noted astronomer-king, Sawai Jaisingh of Jaipur. Jaisingh was

particularly interested in attempting to blend the scientific models available to him in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Latin. Jagannātha's text was one of the early results of Jaisingh's scientific project.

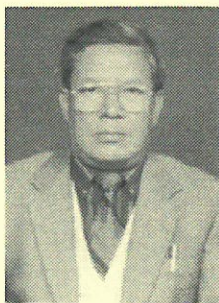


On Wednesday, March 29, at 12:15 p.m. in 153 Uris Hall, Richard Schechner, a newly appointed A.D. White Professor at Large, will give a lecture, *East is East/West is West: What Happens When the Twain Meet*, explaining the impact of Indian performing arts on Western artists and vice versa and the "colonial" issues regarding Peter Brook's "Mahabharata".

Schechner founded New York University's Department of Performance Studies in the early 1980's, and reshaped a graduate theater department into an interdisciplinary field of inquiry, which explores performance in the broad spectrum.

His in-depth work on the Ramlila of Ramnagar in *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (U. Of Chicago Press, 1985), covers the Ramlila historically, socially, geographically, geometrically, economically, philosophically, literarily and theatrically. No stranger to India, Schechner has taken theory and concepts from Bharata's *Natya Sastra*, and applied them to Western teaching techniques. On March 3 and 4, students and faculty participated in Schechner's "Rasa Box Workshop", which is a device designed to explore the eight *rasa*(s), or emotional states as documented in the *Natya Sastra* in order to develop emotional, vocal and physical expressiveness and agility. These exercises are not only being used as a teaching technique for actors and dancers, but, in some cases, have become a tool for therapists in helping their patients deal with emotions. The workshop was a precursor to Schechner's visit and was lead by two of his students, Michele Minnick, Producing Artistic Director of East Coast Artists, and Paula Murray Cole, Acting Instructor at Ithaca College.

### Visiting Scholar Dr. Ganesh Man Gurung



The SAP welcomes Dr. Ganesh Man Gurung, from the Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Tribhuvan University, Nepal, to the Cornell Campus. Prof. Gurung is here for five months as a Fulbright Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Anthropology. His current research centers around the ethnic movement in Nepal and the democratization process, searching within a theoretical framework. On February 21, Dr. Gurung participated in the SAP Seminar Series with a lecture entitled, "Ethnic Voice: In the Context of Democratization Process in Nepal".

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## Faculty

*Continued from front page*

### Dr. Royal D. Colle Remains Active on Campus in the Wake of Retirement



The fact that Professor Royal D. Colle, of the Department of Communications (see "Faculty in Focus: An Interview with R.D. Colle," *SAP Newsletter*, Spring 99), has officially retired as of December, 1999, is misleading. Dr. Colle remains active on campus and off. In Fall 2000, he will be offering two separate courses entitled "Communication in the Developing Nations," for graduates (COMM 624) and undergraduates (COMM 424). He continues to Chair graduate-student committees and is working on projects to develop telecenters in China and materials for training telecenter personnel. He will present four professional papers over four months and has several international trips planned. He has agreed to coordinate a globalization initiative for the College of Agriculture, focusing on providing international experiences for undergraduate students. So how does retirement figure into his life? He says he's playing a little more tennis than before! SAP wishes him luck in his retirement and all future projects.

### Faculty Briefs

**Susham Bedi** (Department of Asian Studies) released her book *Navabhum Ki Raskatha (Love Story of the New Land)*, at an event organized by "A Gathering of the Tribes," on January 9 in Manhattan.

**Shelley Feldman** (Department of Rural Sociology), will be Associate Dean of the Graduate School for the calendar year 2000. She presented a paper, "Constructing States and Citizens: Partition as a Social Product," November 5 at University of Pennsylvania as part of the South-Asia Forum.

**Ronald Herring** (Department of Government and Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies) presented a paper, "Political Conditions for Poverty Reduction via Agrarian Reform," at the conference, *Responsiveness of Political Systems to Poverty Reduction*, Castle Donnington, UK, August, 1999 (a revised version of a paper on the same topic presented at Oxford, January, 1999). The long version is coming out as a discussion paper published by the Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex; the short version is becoming a chapter of a book edited by James Putzel of the London School of Economics and Mick Moore of IDS, Sussex, this year. In December, 1999, he presented a paper entitled "Reconceptualizing Political Coalitions for the Poor: Beyond the Impossibility Theorem," for the faculty of the Postgraduate Program in Political and Social Sciences at the National University of Mexico in Mexico City. He also gave a presentation on "Comparative Agrarian Reforms," focused on India, to the conference *Agrarian Reform and Development in the Twenty-First Century*, Puebla, Mexico, December 6-8. On another front, the project began at the Einaudi Center on *International Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict*, funded by Carnegie and the United States Institute of Peace, has concluded with the third volume in a series, entitled: *Carrots, Sticks and Ethnic Conflict: Rethinking Development Assistance*, edited by Milton Esman and Ronald Herring, forthcoming from the University of Michigan Press 2000. He wrote the introductory chapter with Milt ("Projects, Policies, Politics and Ethnicities") and the chapter "Making Ethnic Conflict: Explaining Civil War in Sri Lanka." The Sri Lanka chapter was presented at Harvard University in October, 1999.

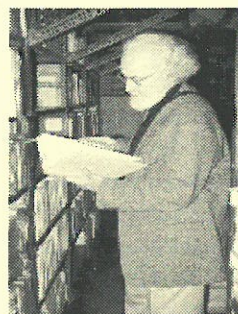
**Kenneth A. R. Kennedy** (Departments of Ecology, Anthropology, Asian Studies/Section of Ecology and Systematics of the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology) is completing a new book, *God-Apes and Fossil Men: Palaeoanthropology of South Asia*, which he plans to use as one of the texts for his new course to be taught next fall at the 600 level known as "Palaeoanthropology of South Asia", which will be cross listed with Asian Studies, Anthropology and Biological Sciences. He will also teach a new course at the 200 level, "Human Biology and Evolution".

**D. Fairchild Ruggles** (Department of Near Eastern Studies) presented a paper to the Historians of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York on February 25. On March 3 she gave a lecture at the *Hagop Kervorkian Lectures Symposium* at New York University on "Aesthetics in Islamic Spain." In August, 2000, she will chair and present a paper in the session "Modern Islamic Art and Architecture" at the XXXVI *International Congress of Asian and North African Studies* in Montreal.

We hope that, in the wake of his retirement, Jim will continue to stay involved in the SAP's activities, as his periodic visits to the Program were always welcome. His keen wit and sense of humor make him outstanding among faculty and his friendliness and generosity extend beyond the workplace. He and Professor Barbara Lust (Departments of

Human Development, Linguistics, Cognitive Studies and Psychology, Cornell University) often open their home, and especially their kitchen, to friends, colleagues and students. His gourmet marvels include, but are not

limited to, South Asian cuisine and his kitchen is an inspiration to any professional chef. His forthcoming cookbook, *The Feast of Serendib:*



*A Book of Sri Lankan Cuisine*, is a far cry from his most recent publication, *Lexical Anaphors and Pronouns in Selected South Asian Languages: A Principal Typology* (with Lust, Subbaro and Wali), which is 976 pages of detailed descriptions

of the anaphoric system of fourteen languages of South Asia, representing four linguistic families: Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman and Austro-Asiatic.

The SAP wishes Professor Gair a long and happy retirement!



## Students

### Crop and Soil Science Student Shares Valuable Knowledge with Sri Lankans

Joeli Barison, a Master's student in Crop and Soil Science, was sent to Sri Lanka for two weeks by the Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture and Development (CIIFAD) to share with farmers and researchers there the knowledge he has gained from working with a new "system of rice intensification" (SRI) developed in Madagascar. This system relies on better soil, water, plant and nutrient management practices to increase yields of rice by 100% or more, without requiring new varieties, chemical fertilizer or other purchased inputs.

Barison was hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture and worked with farmers and field staff in Kurunegala and Ampare districts, as well as talking with researchers at Batalagoda station. At the end of the visit, he appeared on national television with the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, who expressed interest in this rice-growing method.

Farmers were quite intrigued by the techniques involved, Barison reports, and had already some experience with growing rice more successfully in fields that are kept mostly drained rather than flooded. Before coming to Cornell, he was working on SRI in Madagascar with Norman Uphoff, former director of the South Asia Program, and now director of CIIFAD, who has provided information on SRI also to colleagues in India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

### Notes from the Field

*Cynthia Caron, Ph.D. candidate (Development Sociology), is in the field for fourteen months in Sri Lanka. She has been awarded a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Fellowship along with a grant from Cornell's South Asia Program. The following are Cynthia's "Notes from the Field":*

Just as I think, "Well, one can never say that fieldwork isn't always an adventure," my colleague, Chaminda said, "Without problems like these, the trip is not interesting." Perhaps this is the second or third time the three-wheeler (i.e., auto rickshaw) we are traveling in has gotten stuck in a narrow, secondary road of heavy, wet sand. Once again it's time to push our way out. The driver slowly reverses. As he starts to rev the engine, Chaminda and I push from behind on either side. So far we are lucky. We manage to free ourselves easily every time. Whether or not he is trying to reassure us- I am not certain; the driver says, "If it had rained, we wouldn't be able to go at all."

My research examines how Sri Lankan citizens, businesses, and the government are raising capital, crafting policies, and implementing programs to increase the country's electricity generation capacity. In 1996, electricity users suffered through rotating power cuts that often lasted for as long as eight hours at a time. Under the current process of expansion, I wonder if the residents of approximately 48% of the island's households without electricity will realize any benefits and if so how they will manage to do that. For the past few months I have been focusing my attention on private-sector approaches to renewable energy. Today we find ourselves negotiating a rural road dug up by tractors and bullock carts on the way to interview a family who recently purchased a solar-home system. If the main electricity grid were out this far into the jungle, we'd find ourselves on at least a partially-paved road. If the main electricity grid were here, however, I probably would not be.

Chaminda and I are in Monaragala, a district of southeastern Sri Lanka  
*continued on page 7*

### Bhakti: Society for Hindu Cultural Awareness

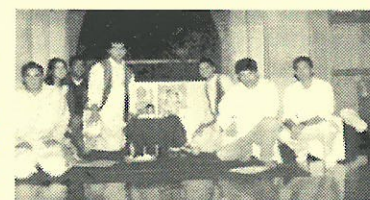
*by Nishant Shukla*

Bhakti is an organization that meets biweekly on Fridays at 5 p.m. As the name of the organization suggests, we seek to gain a greater understanding of Hindu thought and culture by means of discussion. We are by no means a religious organization and welcome members from all faiths and races. We often discuss issues that concern Hindus in America today. Some of the titles of our discussions this year were, "The Vegetarian Way - The Hindu Way?", "Hinduism in our Daily Lives: Do Our Beliefs Affect our Actions?", "U.S. Baptists Target World's Hindus for Prayer", "Kabir - A Poet-Saint", "The Caste System", and "Gurus - Necessary or Extraneous?".

Along with biweekly discussions, Bhakti usually performs a skit in Society for India's Diwali Show and we also sponsor speakers to come and lecture. In last semester's skit, we acted out a classic scene from the ancient epic Ramayana with a contemporary and comic twist. Also last semester, Swami Tadatmananda came from the Arshavidya Gurukulam in Pennsylvania and discussed, "Spiritual Enlightenment: Fact vs. Fiction". He also came the semester before and we would like to have him come again in the future. He has an eloquent and methodical manner of explaining difficult Hindu concepts.

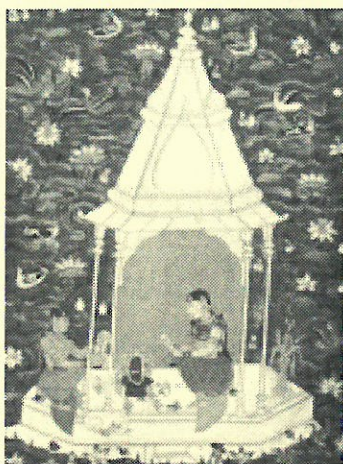
On April 14, 2000, a person who goes by the name of Raphael will come from Italy to give a talk for Bhakti entitled, "Making Vedanta A Lived Experience: An Experiential Approach To Vedanta". Wisdom's Goldenrod, a nonsectarian organization based near Ithaca, is sponsoring Raphael and will hold various talks by Raphael that weekend.

More information about Bhakti can be found at the web site: <http://www.saiusa.com/bhakti>.



*last year's Diwali pooja*





This illustration is taken from a ragamala album painted in the Provincial Mughal style c. 1610. It represents the Bhairavi ragini, and has the following inscription:

"Out of the lake, in a shrine of crystal, she worships Shiva with songs punctuated by the beat. This fair one, this bright one is Narada bhairavi."

*Guide* makes mention of the fact that contemporary musicians no longer place as much emphasis on the relationship between a raga's rasa and the ragamala image which traditionally represents it, the images in the *Guide* do give the listener/reader a window on this lesser known aspect of the ragas' historic significance.

The discussions of the individual ragas are preceded by a seven-part introduction to various aspects of Hindustani musical theory and practice. Condensing even an overview of such an intricate musical system into a handful of pages is a mighty task indeed, and the result here is at times dizzyingly complex – in places becoming a barrage of terminology that might fluster all but the more experienced or meticulous readers. Even so, or perhaps as a result, the information in the introductory section nicely illuminates features of the ragas as heard on the recordings. Bor's understanding of the music is clearly masterful, and though it might require careful reading, the discussion here is a very good outline of many of the central aspects of Hindustani performance.

In sum, the *Guide* is as musically and artistically beautiful – an aesthetic joy along several lines – as it is important for the tremendous gaps that it fills in both historical/musicological and performative study of Hindustani music. It is a fitting testament to the richness of a musical tradition in which study and pleasure are inseparably and wonderfully entwined with one another. *Steven Curtis is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Music, and was SAP's FLAS recipient in 1998-99. He specializes in the music of Nepal and plays tabla.*

## The Raga Guide by Steven Curtis

It is always refreshing to come across a scholarly work that is aesthetically engaging as well – an artistic work that holds academic significance – a work for which the distinctions "academic" and "artistic" are not terribly useful in the first place. *The Raga Guide: A Survey of 74 Hindustani Ragas* (Joep Bor, ed., Nimbus Records, 1999) is such a work. A text accompanied by four CDs of musical performance, the *Guide* catalogs seventy-four of the ragas that are most common in Hindustani performance today, with color plates of ragamala paintings and extensive historical and musical annotation throughout.

The ragas themselves, performed on flute by Hariprasad Chaurasia, on sarod by Buddhadev DasGupta, and by vocalists Shruti Sadolikar-Katkar and Vidyadhar Vyas, have been distilled to miniatures – three to six minutes in length – yet retain their essence and form quite well (and who would have ever dreamt of being able to put ragas on a mix tape?). Each performance is accompanied in the text with discussions of the raga's historical development, the emotive sentiment (*rasa*) associated with the raga, the times of day and year at which the raga is intended to be performed, and the musical elements central to the raga's character. The descriptions of each raga are then followed by three sets of musical notation: the ascending and descending pitch sets for each raga; the raga's "melodic outline" – the melodic motives (*chalan*) that are most essential to the performance of the raga; and a meticulous transcription of the raga's improvised introductory section (*alap*) as realized in performance on the accompanying recording. These transcriptions, offered in both Western staff notation and Indian syllabic *sargam* notation, comprise a resource of terrific importance; nothing of this magnitude has been published since Vishnu Narayan Bhatkande's *Sangit Sastra* of the 1930s, and, as much as Hindustani music *walas* the world around enjoy pretending it's not so, a great deal has changed since that time.

The ragas are accompanied by annotated prints of 17<sup>th</sup> century Mughal and Mewar ragamala paintings, initially created to embody the raga's *rasa* in visual form and further enhance a raga's affect. While the

## Ustad Allah Rakha Passes Away



Tabla wizard Ustad Allah Rakha Khan, who won the hearts of millions with his magic fingers over the past seven decades, died at his Shimla House residence in Mumbai on February 3. He was 81.

Disciple of Ustad Kader Bux and Ustad Ashiq Ali Khan, Ustad Allah Rakha was one of the finest accompanist and soloist of the past century. Any-one remotely familiar with Indian music knew his name, as his tone production, technique and *layakari* were truly amazing. He was longtime accompanist for Pandit Ravi Shankar and accompanied many other major artists.

## Hindustani Vocal Concert, April 24, 2000

SPICMACAY, together with the South Asia Program, is sponsoring a North Indian Vocal concert, Monday, April 24, at 8 p.m. in Barnes Hall Auditorium following a lecture demonstration at 7:30 p.m. The featured artists are Rajan and Sajan Mishra with tabla accompaniment. Born in the famous Banaras *gharana*, Rajan and Sajan belong to the family of great

maestros. Both brothers have been trained in vocal music under the able guidance of their father, Pandit Hanuman Mishra. In 1979 they received the coveted Sanskrit Award for musical excellence from the Prime Minister of India. The concert is free and open to all.

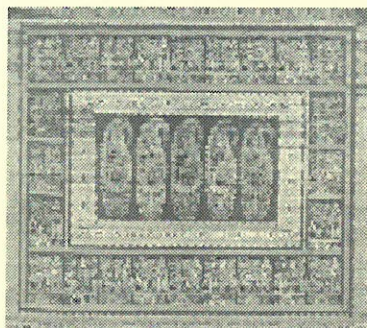




## Outreach

### Petals and Plumage: A Collection of Indian Textiles on the Cornell Campus

by Ellen Avril



*Baluchar sari with pallav designs of foreigners in ships, Indian, Bengal, Murshidabad, 19th century, brocaded, dyed silk (plain weave) with silk extra warp and weft yarns, private collection*

Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art

April 1 – June 18, 2000

Spanning 600 years of the history, graphic beauty and technical precision of Indian textiles, this exhibition, organized by the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art and drawn from a private collection, presents a broad range of production techniques—printing, ikat, tie-dye, brocade, tapestry and embroidery. Early painted and printed cottons along with silk ikat patola represent prestige textiles exported to Southeast Asia. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Golconda chintzes and Kashmiri shawls exemplify the fine garments and furnishing fabrics associated with Mughal patronage. Also included are textiles made for use within Hindu religious contexts, such as painted cotton *pichwai* and cloth for dressing sacred

*Continued on back page*

*“Notes,” Continued from page 5*

Lanka. I have chosen to spend some time in Monaragala as it is the most under-electrified district on the island (12% of the households are electrified). Chaminda works for Sarvodaya, one of Sri Lanka's largest national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and has a free day to help me conduct an interview. One of Sarvodaya's newest programs is a credit scheme in conjunction with the World Bank to purchase solar-powered electricity generation systems. I have a list of family and village names of several new owners. Finding them hidden in the jungle, nestled among banana trees, or perched on the edge of a steep cliff is an adventure indeed, especially upon reaching a fork in the road and not having any indication in which direction we should go.

After climbing out of the three-wheeler, we walk a footpath for two hours traversing rice paddy fields, wading knee-deep through streams, and trudging through forests dotted with teak trees before we make it even to the outer edge of the village we have been trying to find. The sun is high in the sky as it is already one o'clock. I was not well prepared for a location as remote as this. We have no food, only water. And I wish that I had worn a hat.

What to do if the family on our list is not a home? Interview the next family that we meet. If they have not purchased a solar-home system, find out why. The reasons why people are not adopting this technology are just as important as the reason for why they are. While we take care not to bias our sample, Chaminda also very rationally points out, “After coming all this way somehow or other we must talk to somebody.”

The woman we do meet today purchased a top-of-the-line system in November, 1999. Her family operates the maximum number of appliances possible with the system: 8 light bulbs, a cassette recorder, and a black and white television set. In the corner of the front room, where we each sit on plastic chairs, she has a

stockpile of tinned fish, powdered milk, and laundry soap. The walls are nearly completely papered with calendars and posters of Sri Lankan cricketers. She speaks excitedly and animatedly as she praises the system. There's no smoke in the house as with kerosene lamps. She doesn't have to walk four miles to buy kerosene or recharge the car battery that the family previously used to power the television. Much to my surprise she

would not prefer electricity from the Ceylon Electricity Board that would enable her to use a clothes iron and other high voltage appliances.

“If the grid is extended here, they will have to cut trees,” she said.

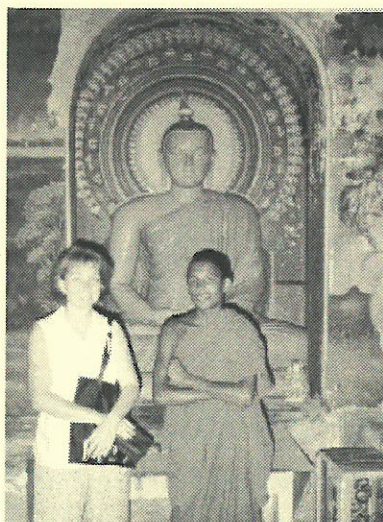
“Yes,” I replied, “but earlier you said you wanted a road. If they build a road, they will have to cut trees.”

“Ah, but a road is different. I would even give land for a road. We have too much land for ourselves anyway,” she explained.

In addition to the adventures associated with just ‘getting there’, I love how fieldwork allows me to learn about local politics and possible directions of the country's development as people describe themselves, ask me questions, or reveal their fears. [“I hear,” she says, “that they might cut Samurdhi (i.e., welfare) benefits if you take electricity with these solar systems.”] I enjoy being able to share my experiences from visits to other Sri Lankan communities or explain that even

in America there are communities with unstable power supplies or without electricity all together.

I am trying my best to understand how electricity-generation capacity is going to proceed in Sri Lanka and what that implies for the island's development. Government, private corporations, environmentalists, and religious groups all claim to have the ‘national interest’ at the very core of their very different programs. The solar-home system owner and the farmer protesting the construction of a coal power plant are active participants in designing the future. And even though the inconsistencies and contradictions as illustrated above, twist my brain, I still want all the stories. For hidden in all these stories are meanings. I have yet to figure out the plot.



*Cindy with a young monk at a temple in Unawantuna*



## Work-Study Staff to Graduate

Congratulations to Sasha, Matt and Mythily, our work-study administrative staff, who will all be graduating this May. It is the first time we've lost an entire support staff to graduation in the same year. The Program relies on the student staff for a variety of responsibilities, particularly maintaining the database, by collecting data for the annual National Resource Center report and the tri-annual grant proposal. Their contribution to the proposal and subsequent reports, adds to its success.

City, to pursue her new found passion, sculpture. After two years of career exploration, she hopes to attend law school. Mythily Sivarajah (ILR School) will return to her home in San Diego before beginning a yearlong position for a start-up internet company in Silicon Valley, after which she will attend law school in either the Bay Area or Washington, D.C. Matthew Niva (ILR School) is planning to spend one year in Denmark, where he spent his Junior year abroad, doing an academic internship and improving his Danish, before attending graduate school there. The SAP wishes them success!

After graduation, Sasha Pinaro (Department of Human Development) plans to return home to New York



*Mythily, Sasha and Matt*



*Students from Shambu Oja's Nepali 101 class performed a traditional Nepali folk dance last week at Tribhuvan University in Nepal. They are currently studying in the Cornell-Nepal Study Program in Kirtipur, not far from the capital city of Kathmandu. Their dance was well received by an enthusiastic audience of Nepali students.*

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images. Brocade *saris* and *dupattas* from Murshidabad, Dacca, Paithan, and Chanderi celebrate distinctive regional styles. Embroideries and tie-dyed fabrics from Gujarat, Bengal, and Kutch display colorful and varied folk traditions. Uniting these diverse textile types is the ubiquity of flora and fauna that defines the vernacular of adornment in Indian aesthetic tradition, revealed in the vivacious petals and fanciful plumage that embellish and enliven the overall visual effect.

Public programs in conjunction with the exhibition (at the Museum unless otherwise noted):

April 1, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. Spring Arts Fest. Featuring activities and performances related to Indian arts.

April 2, 2:00- 3:30 p.m. Arts Sampler Lecture Series: The Art of India, Ellen Avril, Curator of Asian Art

April 15, 4:00 p.m. Gallery Talk: Cynthia Cort, guest curator for the exhibition

April 15, 5:00 – 7:00 Opening Reception

April 27, 12:00 noon, Art for Lunch: Tour the exhibition with Ellen Avril, Curator of Asian Art



### ***South Asia Program***

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