



Center for South Asia Studies NEWSLETTER

Interview: Professor Sudipto Chatterjee

Sudipto Chatterjee, Assistant Professor of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies, is a new Berkeley faculty member.

CSAS: We'd like to open this interview by asking you to speak about the classes you are teaching this semester.

SC: I'm teaching three classes and running the gamut really. I'm teaching one freshman seminar on acting, a course on Asian American performance, and a graduate seminar on post-colonial performance. So that's my Spring platter.

CSAS: How much do they overlap?



CSAS: What sort of Asian acting techniques are you referring to?

SC: When I say Asian techniques, I don't mean a particular technique that is specific to a particular form of performance, but rather the performance philosophies, the representational styles. In particular, I'm referring to the inherent

difference that most Asian performance traditions make between "daily life behavior" and "performance life behavior," whereas in the normative Western style of performance, the aspiration is to "be real." In Western performance, "getting real" drives the efficacy of a performance. In Asian performance, and I'm generalizing here, the rule is that the effect is not intended to be real. Asian performers and audiences start with the acceptance that performative behavior is a unique behavioral plane. It's an analogy to reality, not a correspondence thereof. The actor is not trying to hide behind the character, or become the character, but in performance is commenting on the character. It's an open secret that the audience is going to see a performance, so they know it's not real, and yet the Western performer's aspiration is to get as real as possible. Asian performance accepts this basic contract between audience and performer, that they are indeed watching a performance. Therefore, what's the point in getting real?

SC: Well, there are overlaps. For example, in the acting class, we're working from the outside in. So it's not really about method, emotion recall, or things like that. It is more about trying to apply what I have picked up through my exposure to Asian performance techniques to texts that were not necessarily written for this kind of technique. Then when I'm teaching Asian American performance, there is a lot of Asian in the American. And when you're talking about the postcolonial, it's the same thing - inter-culturality connects the three dots.

CSAS: Did your dissertation address this issue?

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SC: My dissertation was historical, analytical, and political and did not address this observation very directly. It was mainly on 19th century Bengali theater and its interface with colonialism, where I talk about a certain performance quality to colonialism itself and the way in which the Western-educated intelligentsia is produced by the colonial machinery. When you situate Bengali theater in the larger theater of the colony it becomes a kind of a play-within-a-play. In other words, the performance history within this larger performance of coloniality is always talking to colonial functions, and produces a

(cont'd p.3)

A View From the Chair

By Raka Ray

This year has been remarkably full, and has generated new friends and visitors for the Center for South Asia Studies. In addition to our exciting slate of speakers on Sanskrit, Bengali poetry and Human Rights, we strengthened our ties with South Asian artistic communities. One hundred and fifty people attended an evening of Kabir in Song, a traveling performance organized by Linda Hess of Stanford University, on the terrace of the Center, and were entranced by folk singer Prahlad Tipanya and his troupe, and classical singer Krishna Kant Shukla (p. 6). In addition, we inaugurated a documentary film series (p. 9), as well as a series of talks on Indian theater, under the leadership of our new colleague in the Department of Theater and Performance Studies, Professor Sudipto Chatterjee.

This spring saw the first four talks of our City lecture series, in which eminent scholars think through issues of the cities from the South in the context of globalization and liberalization. The City is our major theme of the year and the series has been beautifully conceptualized and planned by Professor Ananya Roy of the Department of City and Regional Planning. At the same time, the Center hosted a lecture series on security issues in South Asia, organized by Adjunct Professor of Political Science Neil Joeck, in which Stephen Cohen, George Perkovich, Peter Lavoy and Feroz Hassan Khan spoke about "India and Pakistan: Prospects for peace in the 21st Century." Continuing our attention to the arts, we also inaugurated an exhibition of contemporary paintings from Mithila in April. This group of magnificent works by women from the Mithila region can be seen at the Center up to the 7th of June of this year. Other major talks included Sudipto Kaviraj on Tagore, Gyanendra Pandey on community, and Flavia Agnes on the women's movement in India. Our annual conference in February was attended by over 150 people and continued to showcase the best new work in South Asian Studies.

I am also very pleased to announce that the Qaid-I-Azam Chair is soon to be filled by distinguished scholar of linguistics and politics, Dr. Tariq Rahman of Qaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad. Dr. Rahman will take up residence at Berkeley this fall and will teach and lecture on a range of issues.

Our fundraising drive for the Berkeley Bengali Initiative has attracted worldwide attention, including an editorial in the Bangla newspaper, *Anandabazar Patrika*, by reknowned author Sunil Gangopadhyay. We are pleased to announce that even as we continue our fundraising

efforts, we will have Introductory Bengali at Berkeley this fall thanks to the Bengali community in the Bay Area and around the country (p. 8).

Unfortunately, not all the news is good. All Title VI centers face a grave threat to academic freedom, as the bill which renews Title VI funding, HR 3077, now contains a number of provisions which are of concern to many scholars, especially those affiliated with area studies programs. Some of these provisions include "the establishment of an 'International Higher Education Advisory Board,' directing the Secretary of Education to study 'foreign language heritage communities' within the U.S. for national security purposes, and requiring Title VI institutions to provide federal recruiter access to students." The bill is clearly politically motivated and filled with factual errors. Under the guidance of Dean David Leonard of International and Area Studies, we have encouraged our faculty to contact relevant Congresspersons and Senators to urge them not to support this bill. For more information, please go to: <http://ga.berkeley.edu/academics/hr3077.html> ❖

Bengali 1A

Introductory Bengali classes will start at UC Berkeley in Fall 2004. For class times please check the following website beginning June 15:

www.ias.berkeley.edu/southasia/courses.html



(from p. 1)

socio-cultural political discourse.

CSAS: *Before your graduate work in Theater at NYU, you were a literature student. Can you tell us about this transition?*

SC: I studied at St. Xavier's College in Kolkata, where I did my honors in English Literature, and my pass subjects were Bengali and Political Science. It was never a transition for me, because I was a split personality. During the day I was this English Lit student, going to college, writing, and teaching in the school as well. During the evenings I was in the rehearsal room working hands-on. So it was a split life. When I came to the United States they came together. I was not willing to give up on either one of them, and performance studies seemed to be the perfect ground to make that combination happen.

CSAS: *The rehearsal room? What is that exactly?*

SC: Well, it was a group of people from various walks of life who were united in their common goal of doing theater. Not for making money necessarily, most people had other professional obligations. But in the evenings they would devote what time they had beyond their professional lives towards theater.

CSAS: *How did you meet these people?*

SC: Random. When I was an early teen, I met this incredible director in Bengali theater, Ajitesh Banerjee, who became my guru. I had lost my father very early, so he sort of became the father figure in my life. He died when I was just entering college but that whole period from eleven to eighteen was a very

formative period for me. I learnt that theater was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, but also the kind of dedication you need to pursue it. And I realized there was nothing else that I could do with any kind of satisfaction.

CSAS: *When you came to New York did you only work in theater, or were you in academia as well?*

SC: I was in the performance studies program at NYU right away. Well, actually, for a semester I was at the Eugene O'Neill theater center, this is in '88, in Connecticut, which was hands-on theater all day from 6 AM through 9 PM every day. It was like a boot camp, total immersion. I had come for a playwright's conference to the same place in the summer of '88 and they asked me to come back in the Fall for this boot camp. While I was there, I met this teacher from NYU who was teaching us theater criticism and he directed me towards the program at NYU. So it was here in the US that theater became directly related to my academic pursuits.

CSAS: *How has your acting career informed your academic work and how has your academic work informed your approach to acting and performance?*

SC: They are inseparable in a sense. I'm not an actor in the traditional sense, though I did enough professional work in New York to come up for Actor's Equity union membership, but I never took it because I'm not prepared to make a whole time commitment to acting in the way that I have made a commitment to academic life. I'm more of an academic in that regard. However, I do enough performance - more directo-

rial, rather than acting - to balance my academic pursuit of performance. I don't think you can really be a theater academic without having something to do with theater itself, hands-on. At least, that's how I function. One of the problems with Performance Studies is that it can very easily become a view from the outside, and what is elided over is the insider's view. When you are doing intercultural work, there are choices you make at every step, and the eclecticism that goes into it is always informed by a certain kind of thinking. You have to be in a position, when you are writing in the academic mode, to be able to second guess what went into these aesthetic decisions. And unless you are a practitioner as well, you'll never be able to second guess. That for me is an absolute necessity.

CSAS: *So being a practitioner gives you more freedom in your academic work to question the way that performances are structured?*

SC: It's not always that specific, it surprises me at times. Today in class I was talking about Peter Brook's *The Mahabharata*. There is a whole body of literature that bashes and trashes and thrashes Brook's project as Orientalist, as appropriative, as culturally imperialist and what not. All kinds of pejoratives have been thrown at Brook. While I agree with a lot of that, I also see the stupendous amount of work that Brook did for a nine hour play.

CSAS: *So it makes you a better critic.*

SC: It makes me a better critic, it gives me a more wholistic view of things. It's fine and dandy to stand out-

side and bash up something that has been produced after twelve or thirteen years of hard work, but if you are someone who has gone through that process, you are more empathic with it. And staying on the Peter Brook topic for a bit longer, what Brook did was fraught with many controversies and he knew it, but at the same time it was controversy that needed to be generated, because through the controversy a lot of issues surrounding intercultural performance practice came to the forefront. Issues that would not have arisen had Peter Brook not risked it. These are necessary evils.

CSAS: *Are you working on any productions in the theater department here or elsewhere?*

SC: There are a couple of things in the pipeline. I have proposed a production of *Othello*, but I don't know if the production committee will approve it. It will be a cross-gendered *Othello*, which I think has not been done before. If it happens it will be very different, and again I hope that my exposure to Asian performance would feed my directorial philosophy in realizing the play, whenever I get a chance to do it.

The second potential project, which might be a collaboration with CSAS, would be a West Coast reprise of a production I did in 1999 in New York City. It is a Bangladeshi play called *Nuraldeen's Lifetime*, written by Syed Shamsul Huq, which I did bilingually in New York. It's set in the British Period against the backdrop of a peasant uprising, so there are British characters and Bengali-speaking characters in the play. The British characters in the

original play speak a stylized Bengali, standing in for the English that they are supposed to be speaking. For my production, I translated them (or, in a manner of speaking, “retranslated” them back into English!). Then I did some research in the British Library and retrieved letters written by these very same characters and combined them with the scenes that were already present in the play. As a result, at the end of the dramaturgical process, I had a play that was kind of half Bengali and half English, and I used super-titles, flip-flopping between both languages. The play had a very successful run in New York: we sold out and the Village Voice gave us a decent rap. Then we took it to the Nandikar National Theater Festival in Kolkata, so it’s appropriate that we now have a West Coast version of it.

CSAS: At the prodding of one of our graduate students, we’d like to ask you to share your opinion of Satyajit Ray.

SC: My generation of people raised in West Bengal looks on Ray in a unique way, because Ray was not only a filmmaker, he was also a writer who wrote mainly for children, and I was a child when he was writing for children. He edited a children’s magazine, and was a prolific short story writer with characters like the detective Feluda and an eccentric genius, a scientist called Prof. Shanku. There are at least twenty books of Feluda and ten of Shanku, along with hundreds of short stories. Ray would write articles for children in his children’s magazine, on “How to write a screenplay.” And he was a role model for me: I would write mock screenplays as a

child, based on Ray’s articles on movie-making! So, I have an emotional connection to Ray that will always be there, but at the same time I am re-negotiating my adult relationship with him. I’m trying to gain some objectivity on the emotional response that I have from having been a ‘child’ of Ray in many ways, to become an objective critic of his films. I’m beginning to realize that despite the delectable filmmaking and the incredibly subtle details, and the way he would pack every shot, every frame of his movies with as many signifiers of meaning as possible, Ray was a hugely moralistic person, very conservative actually. He was not at all willing to subscribe to new ways of doing things. Which is why as a filmmaker he works always within this very realist frame, and he never really steps out of it, except in his children’s films. These children’s films are seldom watched by the adult Western critic. There is no market for them outside Bengal. So, as an adult, when I look at Ray’s work, he’s too much of a conservative moralist. He was making films in India during the very tumultuous period of the 1960s-70s, but that is barely reflected or dealt with in his films. He kind of refers to it, and there are moments in many films when the tumult of the times looms very large in the background, but he is not one to make this the most important thing in the film, whereas Mrinal Sen and Ritwik Ghatak do so without qualms.

CSAS: You are a musician as well as an actor. Would you tell us about your disc featuring Baul songs?

SC: Well, Bauls have been an interest of mine since I was a child. There used to be this Baul in the neighborhood where I lived in Calcutta, and he took a liking to me and I did to him, and he would sing songs to me. Then there were available recordings of Bauls, and my mother really gave me a lot of allowances to buy books and music. She would give me whatever she could spare, and that allowed me to buy my own cassette and record collection. My mother was a fantastic singer and I could sing a little bit, and in fact my very first performance on stage was as a singer at the age of three. My mother used to do children’s plays, so I was in one of them singing a song that my mom had taught me. My sisters learned music but I was never taught music, though I would listen when they received their lessons. When I went into theater, the vocal training helped, and my interest in Bauls became more focused. I got interested in Lalon Fakir, one of the most celebrated Bauls in the Bengali tradition. And now, having mustered up the courage, I have recorded an album of his songs. It should be coming out of Kolkata this year.

CSAS: What’s your take on the Baul faith?

Well, I look at it essentially as a syncretic, a unifying faith that takes in all the religious and philosophical influences that the region of Bengal has experienced. It encompasses everything from Vedantic Hinduism to its Vaishnav reinterpretation, to a radical reading of Islam through Sufism, and vestiges of Hevajra Buddhism, Tantra, and Christianity, because

Catholicism reached Bengal very early through the Portuguese. And the Baul philosophy negotiates between all of these various influences that turn into a confluence, because they don’t want to negate anything. It’s all about absorption and coming up with a combination theory that accommodates everything and goes beyond the differences in many ways. This always fascinated me. Music is one of the paths through which a Baul practitioner is trying to live the life of a Baul. There’s a ritual aspect to it, it’s an enactment, an encapsulation of the *sadhana*. Because of their unifying efforts, Bauls have been ostracized for a long time and they have lived on the margins of mainstream society. Plus there has been the rural/urban divide, the rich/poor class walls, and what have you. It’s only recently that they started being turned into folk icons mainly by the urban middle class, as representations of the nation and the national, but mostly without the voice to speak their own words. This too is very problematic because most people from urban cultures are fascinated by the Bauls’ “otherness.” It’s kind of an internal Orientalism, folded into itself. I am thinking of doing a play on Lalon Fakir as well, where all of these things – sociology, politics, music, and acting – will intersect.

CSAS: Would you like to tell us anything about being here at Berkeley?

SC: Well, I had completed my fourth year of the tenure-track at Tufts, and you’ll seldom find people leaving from that position, when

you're that close to tenure. But when I got this offer, I wanted to be here so badly that I took the risk. I had been here a few times and I just loved the Bay Area. I'm not regretting the decision at all. I've completed my first semester and it's been fantastic. The students are supremely intelligent, much more than any students I have encountered in eight years of teaching. They don't always show up to class and are often late, but I suppose it's California Time! But it's been fantastic – the collegial support I have been getting from my own department, from the Center, and the other faculty. It makes me feel at home. I'm glad I made the move. It's an honor to be here. ❖

New Urdu Lecturer M.J. Warsi Arrives at UC Berkeley

CSAS would like to officially welcome Dr. M.J. Warsi, our new Lecturer in Urdu. Dr. Warsi teaches beginning, intermediate, and advanced Urdu classes through the South and Southeast Asian Studies Department.

Originally from Patna, Dr. Warsi received his BA, MA, MPhil, and PhD in Linguistics from



Dr. M.J. Warsi (left) and Indian President Abdul Kalam

Aligarh Muslim University, where he also taught Linguistics for two years. His dissertation research focused on the psycholinguistics of Urdu electronic and print media. After completing his degree, Dr. Warsi spent a few months at the Center for the Development of Advanced Computing, in Pune, working on a machine translation project. He subsequently wrote a computer textbook with software developers in Urdu, which won the West Bengal Urdu Academy Award for the year 2002, and enabled Urdu speakers to obtain a diploma in computer education. Dr. Warsi has published numerous scholarly books and articles as well. His recent book, *Language and*

Communication (2003), was released by the President of India. Dr. Warsi is currently editing a book entitled *Essays in South Asian Linguistics*.

In August 2003, Dr. Warsi arrived at Berkeley from the University of Michigan, where he taught for two years. His classes included an online course on Film and Cultures of South Asia. Dr. Warsi also has worked as a Subject Matter Expert with the National Foreign Language Center, Washington, D.C., developing web-based materials for Urdu instruction. He looks forward to helping strengthen Berkeley's Urdu program. He also hopes to teach a course on South Asian Linguistics. ❖

Sanskrit Knowledge Systems on the Eve of Colonialism

By Vasudha Paramasivan and Samir Shah

In the first major CSAS lecture of the 2003-04 academic year, Professor Sheldon Pollock of the University of Chicago delivered a lecture on "Sanskrit Knowledge Systems on the Eve of Colonialism," outlining the aims of an on-going international project of the same title based in Chicago. This project seeks to investigate the structure and social context of Sanskrit science and knowledge in the two centuries prior to the consolidation of European power (1550-1750). Pollock and his colleagues are attempting to historicize and theorize the end of the Sanskrit cultural order in South Asia.

The motivating question of the knowledge-systems project is: When and why did Sanskrit culture cease to make history? The project focuses on the knowledge practices related to science and scholarship such

as *ayurveda* (life-science), *nyaya* (logic and epistemology), *mimamsa* (hermeneutics), *vyakarana* (language analysis), *alankara/sahitya* (poetics), and *dharma* (moral and legal discourse). It aims to develop a comparative methodology for diagnosing historical change by examining the production and consumption of Sanskrit texts.

To explain how the project unfolded, Professor Pollock discussed his provocatively titled article "The Death of Sanskrit," which locates four major sites of discontinuity: Kashmir in the 12th century, the Vijayanagara kingdom in the 16th century, the Mughal court in Delhi in the mid-17th century, and Bengal on the eve of colonialism. Focusing on the scholars and scholarship produced in and around these four sites, he illustrated some of the complex and diverse conditions that might have led

to the end of Sanskrit culture, such as the deterioration of the courtly "civic ethos" in Kashmir, the subversion of Sanskrit literary culture to the imperial aims of the Vijayanagara kings, the "localization" or "vernacularization" of knowledge, and the inability of the "new intellectuals" to create new literature.

Professor Pollock then spoke about four active areas of Sanskrit knowledge practices in the period 1550-1750: Delhi/Varanasi, Navadvip/Mithila, Madurai/Thanjavur, and Maharashtra. He described a few specific systems such as the *mimamsa*, *alankara*, and *dharma shastras*, and some multi-talented scholars such as Appaya Dikshita and Kamalakara Bhatta, to exhibit how transformations were taking place in and among these knowledge-systems. These transformations included

the increased production of certain texts, a return to primary sources, new interdisciplinary studies, new discursive idioms, and a new historicist framework for the analysis of knowledge. However, after 1750, this kind of activity ceases. Finally, Pollock expressed the merits of comparative analysis between Europe and South Asia to understand the different processes of vernacularization and cosmopolitanism. The talk closed with a question and answer session that turned into a debate about how to understand contemporary Sanskrit knowledge practices in the framework of this project.

Considering the breadth of this ambitious and complex enterprise and its team of international scholars, we look forward to its conclusions on the historical process of change and decline in Sanskrit knowledge-systems. ❖



Kabir in Song:

Musical Traditions of a Great Religious Poet of India Photos by Bob Sikora



Linda Hess, Stanford Professor and event coordinator



Accompanists



Krishna Kant Shukla

On October 8, 2003, CSAS hosted a performance by folk singer Prahlad Singh Tipanya of Malwa, Madhya Pradesh and classical singer Krishna Kant Shukla of Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. They performed with accompanists on Stephens Hall terrace to a packed crowd of over 150, singing the poetry of Kabir.



The musicians as night falls

FACULTY, VISITING SCHOLAR, & GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

Lawrence Cohen (Anthropology) is on leave at the School of American Research in Santa Fe, working on two book manuscripts, both based on research in India. His 1998 book, *No Aging in India: Alzheimer's, The Bad Family, and Other Modern Things*, recently received the 2003 Staley Prize in Anthropology.

Jay M. Enoch (School of Optometry) recently presented a series of papers at the Optical Society of America in Tucson, at the 40th Anniversary Celebration of the Center for Vision Research at the University of Rochester, and in the Fechner Lecture at University of Missouri, St. Louis. All of these lectures dealt with recent research on mid-to-high myopia. This condition has increased rapidly in prevalence in recent years, particularly in East and South Asia. Enoch, along with his former post-doc Stacey Choi, Dong-Anh Le, Allen Chang, Daphne Ling, Jeannie Seu, and others, has described in detail a meaningful complication of myopia resulting in the retina and choroid displacing from the nasal side of the optic nerve and over-riding the optic nerve (usually described as the "blind spot"). This is a destructive complication occurring in about one-third of myopic individuals with -5.00 D. or more myopia, and can occur in those with lower myopia and long eyes. Amazingly, vision is present in this displaced tissue on top of the "blind spot." This disorder is known in modern literature as nasal super-traction of the optic nerve. Oddly, this anomaly has been described since 1874 in the eye pathology literature, but until recently the visual and certain clinical implications have not been considered or appreciated. Further results will be presented at Spring meetings and in two honors theses in MCB (Chang, Seu) this winter. Enoch is also donating the bulk of his library to the Sankara Nethralaya, Medical and Vision Research Center and the Elite School of Optometry in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. He helped found the latter unit. He has also received a Gaspar de Portola Award to lecture in Spain in 2004 at Catalonian Universities.

Carlos Mena (Graduate Student, South and Southeast Asian Studies) is working on his dissertation research in India. He is looking at the role a particular text plays in the social fabric of Tamil Nadu. *The Tirumantiram* is a 9th-12th century text that contains many strands of philosophical, religious, and yogic discourses which were prevalent at the time and which contain pan-Indian elements. He is looking at the way traditions cope with the many ideologies present at a particular time and how they are incorporated and re-made in order to present them as part of a continuing tradition. Presently he is in Pondicherry, India, working in conjunction with Tamil scholars and pandits at the Institute Francais de Pondicherry.

Thomas Metcalf (History) has been awarded a Mellon Emeritus Fellowship for 2004. This recently instituted fellowship program is designed to encourage retirees to continue active careers in scholarship and writing. The fellowship will support all of Metcalf's research, including travel to England and India, and the writing of his proposed book, *Recentering Empire: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920*. Metcalf is one of only twenty awardees nationwide to win this fellowship.

Daisy Rockwell (Vice Chair, CSAS) served as chair and discussant for a panel at the Association of Asian Studies annual conference in San Diego titled "Global Literature, Local Critique: Exploring the Foundation of Modern Critical Vocabularies in Hindi, Urdu and Bangla." In the fall, she published an article, "Visionary Choreographies: Guru Dutt's Experiments in Film Song Picturisation," in the *Journal of South Asian Popular Culture*. This winter, she was invited to give a lecture at Katha Utsav's annual literary conference in New Delhi, in conjunction with the release of her book, *Upendranath Ashk: A Critical Biography* (published by Katha). She also gave a lecture in Jalandhar at Khalsa College on Upendranath Ashk.

Smitha Radhakrishnan (Graduate Student, Sociology) is examining the emergence of the IT working woman as an icon for India's development success in recent years. Her study contextualizes this icon within the increasing circulation of discourses surrounding the "new" Indian middle class and a shifting political economy in a moment of Hindu nationalism. Her dissertation will integrate discourse analysis, interviews, and participant observation to investigate the intersection of gender and nationalism in the contemporary political moment. Her past research examines related issues of gender and nationalism among South African Indians in the post-apartheid era.

Nitasha Sharma (Fellow, Institute for the Study of Social Change) is finishing her dissertation, *Claiming Space, Making Race: Second Generation South Asian American Hip Hop Artists*. Her project, based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork based in the Bay Area, analyzes how some second generation South Asians use hip hop to voice their affiliations with Blacks as "people of color." By detailing the political potential of popular culture, she argues that South Asian American hip hop artists cultivate a critical race consciousness that allows them to cross boundaries while acknowledging difference. This summer she is teaching Women's Studies 50, "Gender in American Popular Culture: Racial and Gender Politics in Hip Hop," at UC Berkeley. She will be an Assistant Professor in American Studies at Amherst College in the Fall. ❖

GIVING

to the Center for South Asia Studies

The Bengali Studies Initiative

The mission of the UC Berkeley Bengali Studies Initiative is to create an endowment that will support the cultivation and development of Bengali literature, humanities, performance arts and social science.

Objectives:

• **Short term:** As of this writing, we have raised \$102,000 in donations and pledges of the \$150,000 that we need to reach our short-term goal. Because of the funds raised so far, we are pleased to announce that beginning in the fall of 2004, we will be offering an introductory course in Bengali language through the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies. Once we have raised the full amount of our short-term goal, we will be able to offer the class at the intermediate and advanced levels as well during the following two years.

• **Long term:** Raise an endowment to ensure full-time Bengali language instruction on a permanent basis at UC Berkeley. The endowment will also support the study of Bengali society and culture at Berkeley.

The Center invites tax-deductible gifts at the following levels to establish and sustain Bengali studies:

- \$100,000: The Rabindra Circle
- \$50,000-\$99,999: Benefactors
- \$10,000-49,999: Patrons
- \$5,000-\$9,999: Sponsors
- \$1,000-\$4,999: Partners
- Up to \$999: Supporters

To show our sincere thanks for your generous support, all donors will receive personalized handmade cards from Kolkata especially crafted for the Bengali Studies Initiative. Hand-crafted tiles listing the names of donors at the levels of \$10,000 and above will be displayed at the Center. All donors will be recognized in the newsletter and on our website.

We are very thankful to the following donors who have generously contributed to our fundraising efforts:

Sponsors (\$5,000-\$9,999):

Pranab & Kalpana Bardhan
Shankar & Kimi Bhattacharya
Sanjay & Anuradha Ray
Subhas & Ratna Sarkar
Sengupta Family of Walnut Creek, CA

Partners (\$1,000- \$4,999):

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Rana Bose & Nandini Pal
Arnab Kumar Chanda
Debashish & Aparna Chatterjee
Angira Dey
Som N. Konar
Jitendra Malik & Isha Ray
Pasupati & Maya Sadhukhan

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Ahsan Habib
Abu Hassan
Mohammed Mehedi Masud
Debasish & Aditi Mukhopadhyay
Dipankar & Sharmila Pramanik
Ehsan & Wahida I. Rashid
Gargi Sengupta

Friends of CSAS

The Friends of CSAS Fund has the potential to dramatically strengthen CSAS by supporting events and research not covered by our federal National Resource Center grant, such as student summer research grants and graduate fellowships. We also welcome major gifts that permanently endow student summer research grants or annual lectures. Donations can be made at the following levels:

- \$100,000: The CSAS Circle
- \$50,000-\$99,999: Benefactors
- \$10,000-49,999: Patrons
- \$5,000-\$9,999: Sponsors
- \$1,000-\$4,999: Partners
- Up to \$999: Supporters

By making a gift to the Center for South Asia Studies (CSAS), you are helping to preserve and extend the excellence of South Asia studies at UC Berkeley. We are currently embarking on two principal development efforts: the Bengali Studies Initiative and the Friends of CSAS Fund.

All donors to the Friends of CSAS Fund will receive greeting cards especially designed for CSAS donors in India and receive recognition in our newsletter and on our website. Major donors at the Patron level and up will also be recognized on hand-crafted tiles in the Center.

Additional Information

For more information on these fundraising initiatives, please visit the Giving page of our website:

<http://www.ias.berkeley.edu/southasia/giving.html>, or contact Dr. Daisy Rockwell, Vice Chair of CSAS.

Making a Donation

Donations to either the Bengali Studies Initiative or the Friends of CSAS Fund can be sent as a check payable to UC Berkeley Foundation directly to our address. You can also make a secure credit card gift to the Bengali Studies Initiative at this webpage:

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Center for South Asia Studies

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Fall film festival

During the Fall 2003 semester, CSAS organized a series of documentary film screenings. The films were *Amader Kotha* (Our Stories): Shorts from Bangladesh, *Words on Water*, *Pather Chujari* (The Play is On...), *Mat* (The Vote), and *Unlimited Girls*. As you can see from the listing of events on page ??, the film directors were present for most of these screenings and participated in energetic discussions with the audience. Following are reviews of several of the films.

Through Human Interest: *Amader Kotha* (Our Stories) – Shorts from Bangladesh By Caroline Arnold

Women and War: Trauma and Triumph in 1971 explores the neglected subject of Bangladeshi women's participation, as both victims and fighters, in the 1971 conflict. From the recollections of a woman who left as a refugee to India at the age of twelve, to the accounts of survivors of a village slaughter, the directors Catherine and Tareque Masud flesh out the multiplicity of experiences and roles of women during the conflict. Perhaps the most poignant moments come in the continuing effects of attacks on women who, over three decades later, find neither an escape from the questions about their experiences nor a secure place in the contemporary social order. In the words of one woman: "If I speak it will only bring shame and dishonor to me, so I don't speak." *Women and War* thus provides insight into more than the events of 1971, illustrating the enduring legacies of violence.

My Migant Soul, a short film by Yasmine Kabir, investigates the plight of migrant workers through chronicling the experience of one of the 250,000 migrants who left Bangladesh in

1993 to search for work abroad. While many films effectively illustrate the human side of events or social issues through personal and individualized accounts, *My Migrant Soul* conveys an even deeper sense of the experience of migrant laborers by interweaving the audio tapes and letters of one migrant, Shahjahan Babu, with his family's recollections of him. Shahjahan's initial optimism about working abroad to earn money is revealed both through his family's accounts of his leaving and in his initial letters home, as he tries to hide from his family the terrible experiences and labor conditions to which he is subject. Shahjahan's horror and helplessness is mirrored in his mother's and sister's tales of their struggles with the agent who sent Shahjahan abroad, as they attempt to learn where he is and try to have him returned home. The parallel accounts, from the shift in Shahjahan's letters home as he increasingly despairs, to the smallest of details remembered about Shahjahan by his family, makes the film all the more vivid; as much is revealed in what is not said as is by that which is shown.

Within these personal commentaries on social issues in contemporary South Asia, one of the most compelling films came in the five-minute short, *The Conversation*, directed by Catherine & Tareque Masud. While the above films shed light on how "social issues" are lived through personal narratives, *The Conversation* demonstrates the complications inherent in

personal relationships in the stunted and taut conversation between a man and a woman who knew each other long ago. Each line of dialogue suggests more than it confirms, bringing home the intensity and fragility of ties that one expects to bind. The focus on the two individuals brings out a sense of universalism amidst the everyday.

Grassroots Protest "More or Less" at Work: Sanjay Kak's *Words on Water* By Anshu N. Chatterjee

Sanjay Kak's *Words on Water* goes to the very heart of India's development politics. This film was made in the two years following the Supreme Court's decision to continue the construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam, which will displace over 300,000 people in the Narmada Valley. The Mumbai International Film Festival's (MIFF) recent decision not to include the film in the festival highlights the invisibility of the people in the Narmada Valley who, as Kak points out, are being drowned by the state's need to satiate the cities and the industrialists. Who do the water resources of the nation's largest democracy serve? Big dams promise great benefits in the form of more electricity, employment, improved agriculture, and other greater goods. *Words on Water* illustrates that the development rhetoric of increased public goods mainly serves the liberalized consumer urban classes and large businesses in the dry zones of the nation. The losers of this planned zero-sum equation are the inhabitants of

the valley that the redirected waters drown or leave dry. Thousands are being persuaded to give up their livelihoods and ancestral homes in order to relocate to places that have yet to be identified, or are arid and uninhabitable.

The focus of this film is the continued resistance by displaced communities to the state's ongoing efforts to build dams on the Narmada. Kak gives a face to neglected and displaced Adivasi families, fisherman and farmers from the Nimad region who form the backbone of the grassroots protest. Amazingly, the protests remain non-violent despite the despair of displacement. The people's lack of control over their future seems to provide them with the strength and the will to continue confronting the state, taking joy in small victories that delay the building process. The film is a must see and is available at the Center. ❖

Caroline Arnold is a PhD Candidate in Political Science and Anshu N. Chatterjee is a recent PhD in Asian Studies.



EVENTS

Fall 2003 - Spring 2004

September 4
Annual Reception

September 16
Doing Linguistics Through
Philology: Reconstructing the
Gandhari (Northwest Prakrit)
Language
Richard Salomon, University of
Washington

September 24
Sanskrit Knowledge Systems
on the Eve of Colonialism
Sheldon Pollock, University of
Chicago

September 29
Documentary Film Screening I
"Amader Kotha" (Our Stories):
Shorts From Bangladesh

October 6
Documentary Film Screening II
"Words on Water" with
Director Sanjay Kak

October 8
Kabir in Song: Musical
Traditions of a Great Religious
Poet of India
Featuring folk singer Prahlad
Singh Tipanya and classical
singer Krishna Kant Shukla

October 9
Talks on Bengali Theater Part
I: The Contemporary Stage
The Predicament of Emerging
Voices in Indian Bengali
Theater
Suman Mukherjee, a leading
Kolkata theater director

October 16
Documentary Film Screening
III
"Pather Chujari" (The Play
Is On...) and "Mat" (The Vote)
with Director Pankaj Kumar

October 21
Human Rights, Insurgency,
and Legal Accountability for
'The Disappeared' in Punjab
(India): A Presentation and
Discussion of "Reduced to

Ashes," The Final Report of the
Committee for Coordination
on Disappearances in Punjab
(CCDP)

October 29
Talks on Bengali Theater Part
II: The 19th Century
Mothers of Invention:
Prostitute Actresses in 19th
Century Bengali Theater
Sudipto Chatterjee, UC Berkeley

November 1 - 2
San Francisco International
South Asian Film Festival
Co-sponsored by CSAS

November 4
Documentary Film Screening IV
"Unlimited Girls"
with Director Paromita Vohra

November 12
Comings and Goings: From
Michael Madhusudan Datta to
the Diaspora of Today
Clinton Seely, University of
Chicago

December 4
Back to the Future: Appayya
Dīksita's Kuvalayānanda and
the Rewriting of Sanskrit
Poetics
Yigal Bronner, Tel-Aviv
University

February 9
City Lecture I
Spectres of Superurbanization:
Marx and the Holy Ghost
Mike Davis, UC Irvine

February 12
SALRC South Asian Language
Pedagogy Workshop

February 13 -14
19th Annual South Asia
Conference at UC Berkeley

February 18
India and Pakistan: Prospects
for Peace in the 21st Century,
Lecture I
India, Pakistan, and Kashmir in
the 21st Century

Stephen P. Cohen, Brookings
Institution

March 1
City Lecture II
The Gentrified Future: New
Globalism, New Urbanism
Neil Smith, The City University
of New York

March 8
India and Pakistan: Prospects
for Peace in the 21st Century,
Lecture II
Nuclear Dangers in South Asia
George Perkovich, Carnegie
Endowment for International
Peace

March 10
Under the Sign of Asia: The
Cultural Affinities and Political
Differences of Rabindranath
Tagore and Okakura Tenshin
Rustom Bharucha, an
independent writer, cultural
critic, and director

March 12 - 21, 26 - 28
EKTA South Asia Film Festival
Co-Sponsored by CSAS

March 27
Nuclear Proliferation and the
State of Affairs in Pakistan
Today
Ambassador of Pakistan Ashraf
Jehangir Qazi

March 31
India and Pakistan: Prospects
for Peace in the 21st Century,
Lecture III
Was the Kargil War India
and Pakistan's Cuban Missile
Crisis?
Peter Lavoy, Center for
Contemporary Conflict, Naval
Postgraduate School

April 5
City Lecture III
On Chinese Cities
Ackbar Abbas, University of
Hong Kong

April 7
Refiguring the Folk:
Contemporary Mithila Painting
from India
Art Exhibit Opening at CSAS

April 15
Indian Narrative Strategies:
Past and Present
Sonjoy Dutta-Roy, UC Berkeley
and University of Allahabad

April 19
Tagore and the Ideals of Love
Sudipta Kaviraj, SOAS,
University of London

April 21
India and Pakistan: Prospects
for Peace in the 21st Century,
Lecture IV
Nuclear Stability in South Asia
Feroz Hassan Khan, Department
of National Security Affairs,
Naval Postgraduate School

April 26
The Politics of Community:
Some Notes from India
Gyan Pandey, Johns Hopkins
University

April 27
Rethinking Subaltern Studies
Gyan Pandey, Johns Hopkins
University.

April 29
Poetry Reading
Sonjoy Dutta-Roy, UC Berkeley
and University of Allahabad

May 3
City Lecture IV
Urban Conversions:
Reworlding African Cities
AbdouMaliq Simone, New
School University

May 4
Secularism, Gender Identity
and Politics: the Indian
Women's Movement Revisited
Flavia Agnes, noted Mumbai-
based feminist legal scholar and
activist ❖

Student Profile: Gita Pai

Gita Pai is a PhD Candidate in the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies (SSEAS) who works closely with the Department of Art History. Pai graduated from Hunter College in New York, where she studied Education and English. She subsequently received her MA in Reading Disorders from Cal State Hayward before joining SSEAS and getting another M.A. under the guidance of Professor George Hart, Professor Joanna Williams, Professor Gene Irschick and Professor Lawrence Cohen. Her circuitous route to the South and Southeast Asian Studies department does not reflect her longstanding

desire to study art. "I knew I wanted to study Indian art, but I could not find a place to do it within traditional art history departments."

Pai examines South Indian painted textiles in her research, and links them to the literary genres and texts of the region. One of the most interesting texts Pai has considered with the help of Mrs. Kausalya Hart is the Vikrama Chola Ulla ("procession"). This text describes a king on a procession as he is leered at by women of different age groups, ranging from five to forty years old. When asked why women of such a range of ages would be mesmerized

by the king and stare at him with such delight, she responded: "Well, I'm not sure... But the first Ulla was seen as Shiva, so one could interpret it as the king assuming the role of a God." The women's gaze might have a devotional sense, reflecting the king being elevated to divine status. "It legitimizes the king."

Currently, Pai is looking at other visual and material artifacts from South Indian dynasties such as the Nayakas of the 16-18th century. She hopes to travel to India and Europe soon to locate and examine texts and artifacts central to her research, such as painted textiles, an unspecified

temple near Tanjore, and ivory panels in museums in Paris and London. She is particularly eager to analyze ivory panels that show the king intimately involved with women. Through her observations and analyses, Pai is attempting to dispute the model of the sybaritic king, one who is devoted to pleasure and licentious women. She suggests that the women in these representations are not merely hapless victims of the king's whims and fancies, but are empowered individuals embracing their sexuality.

We wish Gita Pai luck in her compelling research endeavors and would like to congratulate her on recently passing her oral examinations. ❖

The second semester of the City Lecture Series continues in Fall 2004:

August 30. Monday, 5 pm/112 Wurster
GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK

Why Are We Thinking About Cities Now?
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities and Director of the Center for Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia University, New York.

September 27. Monday, 5 pm/112 Wurster
PARTHA CHATTERJEE
Is There a New Indian City?
Partha Chatterjee is Director of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, and Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University, New York.

THE CITY

An interdisciplinary lecture series

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This lecture series promotes conversations across urban studies and international & area studies. On the one hand, it seeks to unsettle the EuroAmerican locus of urban theory by locating the production of critical concepts and frameworks in "other" cities. On the other hand, it highlights how contemporary theories and philosophies are engaged with the material geographies of the city.

Lecture Series Organizer:

Professor Ananya Roy, Department of City and Regional Planning

October 28. Thursday, 5 pm/112 Wurster
MANUEL CASTELLS
Cities in the Information Age

Manuel Castells is Professor Emeritus of City Planning and Sociology, University of California, Berkeley, and Research Professor of Information Society at the Open University of Catalonia, Barcelona.

November 8. Monday, 5 pm/112 Wurster
TERESA CALDEIRA
Democratizing the Neoliberal City

Teresa Caldeira is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Irvine.

December 6. Monday, 5 pm/112 Wurster
AMITAVA KUMAR
Lights, Karma, Action: Report from Bombay
Amitava Kumar is Professor of English at Penn State University.

For more information and the list of co-sponsors, please see the lecture series poster online at <http://www.ias.berkeley.edu/southasia/city.pdf>

Refiguring the Folk: *Contemporary Mithila Painting from India*

On April 7, CSAS held an opening reception for this exhibit of colorful paintings by women from the Mithila region of Bihar. Malini Bakshi, a Mithila expert, described the featured artists' different styles, from the intricate *kachni* "line" drawing to the bold *bharni* style. We would like to thank David Szanton and the Ethnic Arts Foundation for their help in making these paintings available. Please visit our office during regular business hours through June 7 to view the exhibit. Many of the paintings are available for purchase.



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