Telugu is part of the Dravidian language family (belonging to Central Dravidian branch), spoken primarily in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. It is the second largest Indian language after Hindi with over 75 million native speakers, including those in areas of the neighboring states of Orissa, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. It is also widely spoken in countries of the Indian diaspora including Bahrain, Fiji, Malaysia, Singapore, UAE and the United States. It is considered a very expressive and evocative language, but with a simple grammar. Telugu was used for the composition of lyrics of Tyagaraja in Carnatic music (one of the two major schools of traditional music of India), because of its musical vowel sounds at the ends of words. For this reason, Telugu was known as “Italian of the East” to 19th century Europeans. Beyond their music, Telugu-speaking peoples have a rich cultural heritage of dance, literature, folk arts, cuisine, handicrafts and handlooms. There are different local and regional spoken dialect variations within Andhra Pradesh itself, as well as a distinct high-literary style of Telugu language, which has been used for a vast corpus of poetry, secular and religious epics, novels, and literature in all genres for nearly a thousand years.

The first Telugu language class was held in UC Berkeley in Fall 2007. Since then, Telugu is taught at UC Berkeley every year at both the Elementary and Intermediate Levels.

Our Telugu Language Instructor is Dr. Hepzibah Sunkari

It is the mission of the Telugu Studies Initiative to create an endowment that will support instruction in Telugu language and literature at Berkeley on a permanent basis. With nearly 73 million Telugu speakers in Andhra Pradesh, India, Telugu is the most widely spoken Dravidian language and the second most spoken language in India. Its rich literary heritage includes famous writers such as Kandukuri Viresalingam Pantulu and Guarajada Apparao.

Establishing a Telugu language program at Berkeley will:
• Enable young Indian Americans to appreciate and participate in Telugu culture
• Ensure that the Telugu language and its rich heritage are studied by future generations of scholars from all backgrounds
• Create new and innovative materials to enhance the study of Telugu
• Increase Berkeley’s library holdings in Telugu literature
• Raise funds to bring Telugu scholars, artists and performers to the Bay Area

The Center for South Asia Studies (CSAS) at the University of California, Berkeley is one of the world’s foremost centers for research and programs on South Asia. CSAS works with faculty members, graduate students, community members, private institutions, and non-profit organizations to deepen understanding of the region and to create new generations of scholars of South Asia. One key area of focus at CSAS is South Asian language study designed to equip scholars and practitioners with the tools they need to engage most effectively with the communities in which they work. Whether it involves studying classical texts, conducting archival research, working with villagers, or interviewing government officials, knowledge of the local language is imperative to advancing research and engaging effectively with the local population. To this end, CSAS has launched the Telugu Studies Initiative, which focuses on the study of Telugu language, culture, and history.
Experience to date

Telugu has been taught at UC Berkeley since June 2007 when we, with the tremendous support of the Telugu community of SF Bay Area spearheaded by Dr Rao Vemuri of UC Davis, had raised $200,000, enabling us to hire Dr. Hephzibah Sunkari as a temporary lecturer to offer Telugu language courses to the UC Berkeley campus community. Dr Vemuri and community members rallied to raise over $200,000, which was the threshold amount required to initiate the Telugu language program at the university. Since then, Telugu has been taught every year at UC Berkeley.

Dr Sunkari has taught Telugu to graduate students in the University of Madras, India and translated books and articles from English to Telugu. She did her Ph.D from the University of Madras in Telugu language (1995) following an M.Phil (1991) and M.A (1990). Besides English, Dr Sunkari is proficient in Hindi, Sanskrit, Hebrew and Greek.

Future Goals

By June 2015, we would like to create a $1.5 million endowment to recruit a full-time lecturer to offer beginning, intermediate, and advanced Telugu courses on a permanent basis; support an annual public lecture on Telugu language, literature, or society; and hire an advanced graduate student part-time to catalogue the growing number of Telugu manuscripts coming to the library from India.

Ways to Give

The University of California at Berkeley invites alumni, parents and friends active in the Bangladeshi and Bangla-speaking community to join in supporting the Berkeley Bangla Studies' Initiative. Gifts from families, businesses, and other organizations are also encouraged. Gifts may be given in the following forms:

- Outright cash contributions, tax-deductible within certain limits of law
- A pledge to be paid over several years
- Gifts of securities
- Matching gifts by employers. Many companies match gifts from retirees and board members as well as employees.
- Bequests
- All donations are tax deductible.

Levels of Support

The University of California at Berkeley invites alumni, parents and friends active in the Telugu community to join in supporting the campaign for an endowment in Telugu studies at Berkeley. Gifts from families, businesses, and other organizations are also encouraged.

- $2 Million (to endow): Permanent Telugu Studies Program at CAL
- $300k (to endow): Permanent Lecturer in Telugu
- $7k (per year) or $140k (to endow): Named Graduate Fellowship
- $5k (per year) or $100k (to endow): Distinguished Lecture Series
- $2k (per year) or $40k (to endow): Named Under-Graduate Fellowship

Donors will be acknowledged on the Center's website and publicity materials. All donors who make donations above $10,000 will also be honored with a plaque from the Center. All donations are tax deductible.

For more information on giving opportunities, please contact:

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