Cal & the South Asian Community:
A Desi Reporter’s Perspective

by Ashfaque Suapan

During my two decades from a privileged perch as a reporter for an Indian American weekly, it has been fascinating to watch the times between a world-class university and a flourishing U.S. minority community evolve into a deepening, mutually rewarding relationship.

Today, Indian Americans are an admired community in the U.S.; Berkeley has a reputation as one of the finest universities in the country. In the past two decades, especially with the founding of an India studies chair and a variety of other activities, the community and the university have considerably grown closer to each other.

The first wave of Indian Americans came to the West Coast — this was over a century ago — at the turn of the 20th century.

Today India is a major global player, its IT prowess is formidable, and many Indians coming to the U.S. bask in that glory.

India’s first immigrants faced a very different scenario. They were farmers from Punjab, and the California they came to was an awakening giant, large swaths of it still a sleepy agricultural backwater, with a population not quite ready to embrace a multicultural ethos.

Cal had a desi connection even then. Rabindranath Tagore, Asia’s first Nobel laureate and a poet-philosopher lionized in South Asia (both India and Bangladesh’s national anthems are written by him) visited Berkeley in 1929. Kartar Singh Sarabha, a hero of the Gadar movement, a remarkably egalitarian group of Indian freedom fighters based in California, was a Berkeley student. He later went back to India to fight colonialism, and was hanged by the British.

The second wave of Indian immigration in the mid 1960s brought in its wake a rush of graduate students, many of whom subsequently made an eventual successful transition to leafy middle class suburbia.

I remember the time over two decades ago when I first arrived as a graduate student in Berkeley. Indian students were divided into two groups — as I suppose they still are. Fresh arrivals from the old country predominated among the graduate students, while undergraduates had a substantial number of Indian descent raised in the U.S..

Berkeley faculty had distinguished Indian scholars even then — off the top of my head I remember economist Pranab Bardhan, Buddhist scholar Padmanabh Jaini, political scientist Jyoti Dasgupta, earthquake structural engineer whiz Anil Chopra.

From a desi viewpoint, one person who played a profoundly significant role in building a sense of community for desi students was the redoubtable Hindi instructor Usha Jain, who put generations of Berkeley students through the wringer in her demanding Hindi classes.

Jain was the quintessential desi mom — feminine, graceful and affectionate to a fault, but an absolute drill sergeant when it came to Hindi instruction.

Her classes were far more than Hindi instruction, though. It was a marvelous window into the Indian world, its culture, society and heritage, and for desi and mainstream students, a wonderful cultural meeting place, thanks to Jain’s extraordinary efforts. (Full disclosure: I took Jain’s classes, and benefited enormously.)

Kausalya Hart did the same for Tamil students.

Some faculty members inspired students and the community into developing a substantive involvement in development issues in the old country — engineering Prof. PK. Mehta helped found Indians for Collective Action. In addition to the excellent work it did, it had one significant consequence. Sandeep Pandey, then a PhD student of mechanical engineering, founded Asha for Education, which grew into a huge group of U.S. students supporting basic education projects in India.

Pandey went back to India after getting his PhD and went on to win a Mag-saysay award. He is a full-time activist today.

The Berkeley graduate engineering departments had a substantial share of Indian students by the time I came here in the 1990s. Alongside their engineering degrees, one piquant development was the emergence of Naatak, a theater group. It was founded by Berkeley and Stanford Indian engineering students — it continues to be that rare desi cultural phenomenon — possibly the only U.S. South Asian theater group that regularly performs plays in Hindi.

Over the past two decades, the Indian community around the university has grown prodigiously — in size as well as visibility and self confidence. In Silicon Valley next door, Indian Americans have joined the movers and shakers of the information technology world.

It was at this time that the community, to both insure the future of South Asian studies as well as to enhance the participation of South Asian academics in the UCB faculty, came up with the idea of establishing a chair focusing on Indo-American Community Chair in South Asia studies as well as to enhance the participation of South Asian academics in the UCB faculty, came up with the idea of establishing a chair focusing on the study of contemporary India at Berkeley. Recognizing this need, Silicon Valley Indian Americans began an effort to raise endowment funds and the South Asians for Collective Action (SACA), a new defunct Bay area group of desi lefties in the classic Berkeley mold, began a push for Berkeley to hire Indian academics.

The success of their efforts can be seen in three new endowed chairs — the Indo-American Community Chair in India Studies, the Chair in Tamil Studies, and the Sarah Kailath Chair in India Studies — all established... (cont’d p 3)
Dear friends,

Khabar comes to you after a gap of one year because of the budget cuts that have affected UC Berkeley (and much of the rest of California)!. Despite the fact that we had to tighten our belts considerably, we continued to support South Asia Studies at Berkeley and fund our students to the best of our ability.

The good news is that the Center for South Asia Studies did receive a Title VI award to the tune of $2.4 million over four years. This is the largest amount received by any Title VI center at UCB and I am so grateful to the center staff, led by Sanchita Saxena, for putting us in this position. Continuing with good funding news, CSAS is the proud recipient of a major grant from Kanwal Rekhi which will support a conference on urbanization in India. The conference, called “The 21st Century Indian City: Setting the Agenda for Urbanization in India,” will be held on March 23-25, 2011 in New Delhi, India.

Finally, in terms of funding for our students, our academic program affiliated with TATA has expanded: In addition to TISES, we now have Tata Study Grants (5k each for three grads and 2.5k each for 3 undergrads) for research on Contemporary India.

Against the backdrop of relentless negative media attention on Muslims and Islam, three centers at UC Berkeley (CSAS and the Centers for Middle East Studies and Southeast Asian Studies) obtained a grant from the SSRC to produce a wonderfully innovative, year-long program on “Islam, Youth and Media” which explored how Muslim youth around the world work with new media, politics and popular culture to find “virtual” communities, promote new agendas and confront stereotypes in the post 9/11 era. We look forward to such fruitful collaborations in the future.

We had the second of our Democracy conferences on India last year as well. In true Berkeley style, this conference on Justice and the Law courted attention and controversy since it highlighted the tension between Marxists and the state in Chhattisgarh (see pp. xx). We also had a conference on development issues in Bangladesh, and launched a new Lecture Series in memory of Sarah Kallath with San Francisco’s District Attorney, Kamala Harris as the inaugural speaker. Also in 2009 we were fortunate to have the brilliant and gentle iconoclastic scholar Ashis Nandy as our scholar in residence.

Thanks to the efforts of our former staff member Sudev Sheth and program director Puneeta Kala, we have dramatically expanded our programming in the performing arts, with Nautanki performances as well as the Manganiar musicians of Rajasthan two years in a row, and a Kabir Festival capped off with a performance by the 2008 Sangeet Natak Akademi award winner Prahlad Singh Tipanya. In October this year, we are delighted to host the marvelous singer, Shubha Mudgal.

I’m also pleased to announce that we have expanded our repertoire of published materials such that we now publish the proceedings of our major conferences as well as a new series called South Asia Research Notes which highlights the work of our faculty. Please let us know if you would like to receive this material.

Finally – some welcomes and farewells. We are delighted to welcome Tapan Parekh (School of Information) and Saira Mohamed (Law School) onto our faculty, even as we regretfully announce the retirement after 40 years of teaching, of Professor Joanna Williams (please see special section). In addition to her scholarship on the art of South Asia, Professor Williams produced several of the best scholars of South Asian art history in the US today, and has been an ever reliable and generous colleague. We will miss her.

This year we said goodbye to staff members Nadia Hussain, Shweta Doshi and Shaleen Shanbag. We wish them well in their travels and graduate school careers. We welcome Behnaz Raufi as our new Publications and Program Assistant and Cristin McKnight Shanbag. We are delighted to have both of them at the Center.

As always we hope to see many of you at our events or at the center offices in 10 Stephens Hall. Please check our website: southasia.berkeley.edu for lists of upcoming events, conferences and other South Asia related activities.

We are so pleased to have been awarded the Title VI grant. The Title VI award is peer-reviewed by faculty from other universities and we are so delighted that our colleagues across the country have recognized our work in promoting South Asia related research and enhancing awareness about South Asia in the community. These grants are very competitive and our success in this round is a tribute to the strength of our faculty and students engaged in South Asia related studies. We are delighted to be able to continue all the exciting programming that we have planned for the upcoming years as well as start new initiatives.

Sanchita Saxena, Associate Director
We are proud to report that CSAS has been awarded a $2.4 million Title VI grant by the U.S. Dept. of Education. This award will not only allow us to continue with our dynamic range of South Asia related research and language programming, but will also, over the next four years, help us launch exciting new initiatives and programs around the following three study areas that we have identified for special focus:

- **Pakistan**: Using a variety of fora—including workshops, a large-scale conference, public lectures and film screenings—our spotlight on Pakistan aims to deepen our understanding of the nation and focus on critical, yet understudied developments in Pakistani society, including: the emergence of a pugnacious media, a vibrant Lawyers Movement, and crucial non-governmental work aimed at improving public health and women’s rights.

- **Water & Sanitation**: The lack of access to safe water and sanitation in large parts of South Asia undermines human health, human dignity, economic development, and gender equity. Yet many efforts are under way to provide affordable water and sanitation, some with great promise, across India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. CSAS will organize a series of workshops and lectures to highlight both the causes and consequences of inadequate access, but also some of the ways forward.

- **The South Asian Novel**: Though there have been a number of studies of the beginning of novel writing—and thus of the process of modernization—in late 19th and early 20th century India, there has been practically no work on the 1910 to 1930s, once novel writing really came into own. If this was the age of Gandhi, fervent nationalism, and non-violence, it was also the age of violence on several other fronts—peasant unrest, communal strife, armed and underground resistance to British rule. Dalit agitations, and the new role that women were beginning to play in the public sphere. We plan to organize a conference that will bring together people working on the novel in Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Malayalam, Tamil, Urdu and others, amongst them also the first Anglophone novels from the subcontinent.

UC Berkeley has participated in Title VI since its inception in 1959. Funding from Title VI supports core activities across the Berkeley campus, including the operation of regional institutes and centers, language instruction, support for graduate students in a variety of disciplines, public outreach, and library acquisitions in targeted foreign languages. The grant also provides funding for the Foreign Language and Area Studies Program, which supports foreign language acquisition.

The other seven UC Berkeley centers to receive this grant are:

- Center for Southeast Asia Studies (consortium with UCLA)
- Center for African Studies
- Institute of Slavic, East European, & Eurasian Studies
- Center for Middle Eastern Studies
- Center for Latin American Studies
- Institute of East Asian Studies
- Institute of European Studies

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A Desi Reporters Perspective, cont’d (from p. 1)

through the tremendous outpouring of support from the South Asian-American community, as well as in the considerably more diverse South Asian studies faculty at UC Berkeley.

Silicon Valley Indian Americans may be physically and temperamentally more close to Stanford, but it is to Berkeley’s enormous credit that a group of Silicon Valley community leaders got together with Cal to organize two extraordinary events. At the risk of nuzzling some feathers, I would say that even more than the India Studies chair, these events represent the finest example of how a community and a liberal arts university can come together.

I am referring here to the two conferences hosted in Berkeley by a group of civic minded Silicon Valley professionals called the Foundation for Democratic Reforms in India. It brought together formidable intellectual resources of a world-class university.

It is my sense that community involvement with the university will continue to be influenced by the resin that binds Cal and all communities — its students. Berkeley now has a vibrant, substantial Indian student contingent — the undergrad (mostly U.S.-raised) Indian students manage to sell out the cavernous Zellerbach auditorium every year with their annual Indus shows where they re-gale the audience with bhangra and raas garba. And yes, most of them still want to be engineers, doctors and lawyers.

But deep down there is still a craving to find out more about their roots, to create a connection with the old country through developmental activities. Hindi classes are invariably oversubscribed. This will continue to bring the community and Cal closer.

How will these ties between the campus and Indian community play out in the future? That’s a difficult question to answer, given the protean nature of both the community as well as the campus. Suffice it to say that there is enormous potential for both the community and the campus to benefit. All it takes is a bit of commitment and initiative. Carpe diem.

Aghafoque Suapan has been writing for India-West newspaper, the preeminent weekly newspaper for the Indian American community in the U.S. West Coast, for nearly 20 years. His articles have appeared in The Times of India, Pioneer, The Week, Anandalok in India as well as the Daily Star and Prothom Alo in Bangladesh. The views are the author’s own.

Generous Gift by Kanwal Rekhi to Fund Conference on Urbanization in India

T echnology pioneer and philanthropist, Kanwal Rekhi has pledged $100K towards a CSAS conference on the 21st Century Indian City to be held in New Delhi, India in March 2011.

The 21st century will be an urban century. But it will also be an Asian century with much of this urbanization taking place in Asian cities, especially in India and China. This conference will examine how such urbanization carries with it tremendous potential for economic prosperity, the consolidation of middle-class aspirational lifestyles, growth of civil society and experiments with local democracy. But, such urbanization also presents significant challenges including the degradation of urban poverty and inequality, the inadequacy of infrastructure, and the ecological impact of stifling pollution and increasing carbon footprints. India’s rapid urban growth thus presents a call to scholars, policy-makers, planners, and civil society activists to engage with these various potentialities and challenges. The aim of this conference will be to try and set an agenda for research and policy such that the Indian city and its transformations can be better understood and better managed.
THE ANNUAL SARAH KAILATH MEMORIAL LECTURE

WOMEN & LEADERSHIP

CSAS is proud to announce the launch of the “Sarah Kailath Memorial Lecture,” an annual lecture series on the theme of Women and Leadership, in which distinguished scholars and activists from all over the world will address critical social issues. This lecture series has been established in memory of Sarah Kailath (February 5, 1941 - October 15, 2008), a long-time supporter of CSAS’s mission and activities and in whose name the center holds an endowed chair in India studies called the “Sarah Kailath Chair in India Studies.”

Our first Sarah Kailath Memorial lecture was delivered on February 21, 2010 by Kamala D. Harris, the first woman District Attorney in San Francisco’s history, as well as the first African American and South Asian American woman in California to hold the office.

Harris, who served as California Co-Chair of Barack Obama’s presidential campaign, was born in Oakland, California and attended the historically African American college, Howard University in Washington, D.C. She received a Juris Doctor (J.D.) from University of California, Hastings College of the Law in 1989. She is the daughter of a Tamil Indian mother, Dr. Shyamala Gopalan, a breast cancer specialist, who immigrated to the United States from Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India in 1960, and a Jamaican American father, Donald Harris, Professor of Economics, Emeritus at Stanford University.

to the education and uplift of women and children in India.

Sarah passed away on October 15, 2008, very peacefully and surrounded by her family. A few days earlier, she had marked this passage from Ecclesiastes in her prayer book: “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.”

Though we deeply miss her, her beauty, her smiles, her empathy and generosity, her warmth and good humor, her wisdom and her love, we rejoice in the example and in the wonderful memories and legacies that she has left us.
In the last months the Center offered, once again, a wide range of performances to viewers on campus and the wider community in the Bay Area. In the breadth of their offerings—plays, concerts, readings, films, and the variety of modes, ‘traditional’, musical, spiritual, modern—these presentations reflected in some measure the wealth of forms and practices current in the subcontinent. To speak of just two items from opposite ends of the spectrum: if one the one hand we had Nautanki, a North Indian folk theater form performed by Bay Area artists, on the other, we were presented with excerpts from plays in English by a well known (South) Indian playwright and theater personality.

To begin with nautanki. Try and imagine the theatre and performance landscape before film and cable TV. An endless spectrum of forms, and I speak only of the North Indian plays, Kaslila, and Ramila, around Krishna and Rama, performed on religious occasions, dance and song sequences (which we know today primarily from the Bombay film), performed in the homes of the wealthy and in temples, story telling in village squares, with and without scrolls, and musical theatre dramatizing well known tales, known variously as Svang, Sangit, Khayal or Nautanki, which kept audiences enthralled through whole nights. These were the forms, from which the urban Parsi or Company theatre borrowed profusely to create its own distinct idiom in English by a well known (South) Indian- these presentations reflected in some measure the wealth of forms and practices current in the subcontinent. To speak of just two items from opposite ends of the spectrum:

However in India today, faced with waning patronage and dwindling state support, as well as the popularity of Indian cinema and cable television, this traditional theatre form is nearing oblivion and is struggling to survive. But all over the world, as traditional and indigenous art forms fade in one place, say, Northern India, they show up in surprisingly far away places, like this one has in Fresno, California. Devendra Sharma, Professor of Communication at California State Fresno, is trying his best to keep this tradition alive. Professor Sharma comes from an illustrious line of Nautanki exponents (his father, the great Pandit Ram Dayal Sharma, is one of the last remaining living masters of this art form) and he himself is a writer, performer and director of Nautanki. In Spring 2009, Professor Sharma staged, for the first time ever on US soil, a classic of this genre, a nautanki titled “Sultana Daku” which the CSAS, with the co-sponsorship of the Department of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies, and Music, brought to campus. Though the version presented was abridged, it was a huge success and the campus community responded with great enthusiasm to it. So much so, that this year Professor Sharma and his troupe were invited back with a new nautanki titled “Mission Suhani”.

So, if on the one hand we have the phenomenon of a largely English speaking Diaspora reliving a traditional Hindi/Hindustani form but also ready to experiment with it to come to grips with its present reality, on the other we have the reality of a subcontinent whose middle classes struggle with similar exploitations, tragedies, comedies, not only in the many

South Asian Performing Arts In CAL - a commentary by Professor of South & Southeast Asian Studies, Vasudha Dalmia

CSAS was proud to organize a series of events celebrating the poetry and legacy of the 15th century mystic weaver-poet Kabir, between February 5 and May 1, 2009. A provocative and challenging figure who can’t be pinned down by any religious label, Kabir is admired by Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, secularists, and atheists, as well as by followers of the Kabir sect who claim him as a God. A profound mystic to some, a biting social critic to others, a Dalit hero to others, Kabir is all of these things and much more.

The festival consisted of the screenings of four documentary films on Kabir made by Shabnam Virmani, who has dedicated considerable time in journeying to archive the legacy of Kabir. The result, a series of four documentaries: Had-Anhad (Bounded-Boundless), Chalo Hamara Des (Come to My Country), Kabira Khada Bazaar Mein (In the Market Stands Kabir), Koi Sunta Hai (Someone is Listening) compiles some very visible oral repositories of the cultural and political legacy of Kabir in the subcontinent

The festival culminated in a performance by renowned Kabir folk singer, Prahlad Singh Tipanya, who is increasingly recognized as a remarkable exponent of Kabir’s music and meanings. He lives in Lunyakhedi village in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. A rural schoolteacher, he began singing in the late 1970s after being attracted by the sound of the folk tambura. His rare talent, passion, and insight have caused him to be increasingly recognized as a remarkable exponent of Kabir’s music and meanings. Among many other honors, he received the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi award in 2008. Tipanya is one of the main artists featured in Shabnam Virmani’s films. Playing the tambura (a five-stringed plucked and strummed instrument originally from Rajasthan), and kartal (a percussion instrument played with the fingers of the left hand), he took to the stage and provoked the campus community to respond with a new nautanki titled “Mission Suhani”.

The festival proved to be an opportunity for audiences to experience the joy of Kabir in song, while engaging with the radically transformative power of his poetry. It offered a powerful encounter with the philosophy of Kabir, generating moments of critical self-awareness and reflection on ideas of cultural identity and social divisions, death and impermanence, oral traditions and the nature of knowledge.

A Festival of Kabir

Spring 2009

Prahlad Singh Tipanya (2nd from R) and his musical group

Vasudha Dalmia, Magister-tretti Distinguished Professor in South & Southeast Asian Studies
Arts, cont’d (from p. 5)

regional languages but also in English. Poile Sengupta writes plays in English and they revolve around women. As she says in the introduction to Women's Centre Stage, her recently published collection of plays: “The six plays in this volume are distinct from each other in structure, theme and style. What is common though is that they all place women centre stage.”

Poile Sengupta is a writer of children’s literature in English; she started writing columns for children in India’s best-known newspapers from 1968 on. She is equally well known as a writer of plays in English. She has her own theatre group, Theatre Club, in Bangalore, has acted in several plays and in the award winning film The Outhouse.

English theatre in India is a relatively young phenomenon. It is related to the ‘serious’ modern urban theatre in the great colonial cities of Bombay and Calcutta that evolved from at the mid-nineteenth century on and was much influenced by models from England. But the plays written and performed there were all in the languages of the region- Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati.

Indian writing in English, and it began happening early, was primarily in the many prose forms that we have become so familiar with today- the short story, the novel. However, particularly after independence, as the Indian middle classes turned increasingly to English, in education and in public and professional lives, the drama of their own lives also began to be played out in English. Not surprisingly then, it is from 1947 that we begin to find plays being written in English. It was no longer the language of imperial power alone; it had become officially Indian. By the late 1960s there was a sizeable corpus of plays in English, particularly from Bombay and then later also from Bangalore. And they began to be staged, sporadically, it is true, but ever more on the urban stage. It would take another couple of decades for such plays to situate themselves yet more squarely in their given cultural contexts- no longer apologetic about writing in an idiom regarded as elite and at least partly alien, but part and parcel of a shared dialogue, of shared concerns and of a shared past.

Poile, her daughter Anasuya, and her husband Abhijit read out from her very reading of some of her plays.

Nautanki
Bringing Back India’s Lost Opera

Nautanki is a folk performance tradition of northern India with vibrates with lively dancing, pulsating drumbeats, and full-throated singing. Thanks to the efforts of Devendra Sharma, Professor of Communication at California State Fresno, the CAL community had the unique and rare pleasure of witnessing not one but two nautankis: “Sultana Daku” in Spring ’09 and “Mission Suhani” in Spring ’10.

“Mission Suhani,” a recent creation of Devendra Sharma’s, follows a confident young Indian bride called Suhani, whose new husband has taken her dowry and left her in India. Nautanki can and does draw attention to serious social issues through music and humor and this particular one raises a very contemporary social issue relating to immigration, dowry, and domestic violence. It critically examines the phenomenon of bride abandonment by US-based Indian grooms. Such cases have become so common that in India the Indian government has now formally established a special cell functioning under the National Commission for Women (NCW) to deal with the issues of women married to non resident Indians (NRI) and published a guidebook for families planning to marry their daughters abroad. Within the US there are no less than 22 organizations working within the South Asian community to address these issues.

Cast of “Sultana Daku” with Prof. Vasudha Dalmia & Usha Jain

The musical, based on vignettes from Bangla literature by the greats such as Manik Bandopadhyay, Ritwik Ghatak, Sukumar Ray, Shakti Chattopadhyay, Jibanananda Das, Shamsur Rahman, to name a few, tells the story of an asvattha (banyan) tree in a small village in East Bengal, that was about to be cut down, but was saved at the last minute from the ax after the village folk successfully battled against the evil forces that wanted to chop it down.

The musical, directed by Chintapukur (Think tank). The musical was produced by Chintapukur (Think tank).

Abhijeet Paul (extreme right), lecturer of Bangla at UCB with the cast

Galcher Panchali
A Natok by Cal’s Intermediate Bangla Class of 2009

Cal’s Intermediate Bangla class of 2009 recently staged an excellent performance of a play titled, Galcher Panchali (Song of the Tree: An Arboreal Tale). The play, a musical, was mostly written and directed by Rebecca Whittington, who also wrote its lyrics and music. Sumita Mitra, Farzana Abed, Julie Booth, Anika Tuba, Rita Ganguly, Sumana Moitra and Ballari Mukherjee comprised the rest of the cast and crew. The musical was produced by Chintapukur (Think tank).

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The students, though they received support from their instructor, Abhijeet Paul, managed the production almost entirely independently. Rebecca’s incredible talent, which shone through in the original music, score and lyrics, combined with the remarkable vocals and performance by the students created a moving and wistful production that was truly an incredible experience as well as a testament to the quality and level of Cal’s Bangla instruction.
The campus was getting its spring makeover and while everything looked picture-perfect, something was simmering below the surface. I had arrived in the university town, famed for its counter-culture and Vietnam protests of the 60s. Only, I had done so fifty years later, in a globalised 21st century world, facing one of the worst economic recessions in history.

It was a crucial time to be in Berkeley. The severe budget cuts for the UC system had brought the students and faculty on the same page of protests, strikes and mobilisation. Funding cuts of up to 36 per cent for a public university like Berkeley had angered everyone. The more militant ones were indulging in dramatic protests like hostage-taking. Would I get a taste of the old Berkeley of the sixties?

The month of February and March saw innumerable protests culminating in a major strike with hundreds marching to Sacramento shouting: “No Cuts: No Fees: Education Should be Free”. It was important to understand what the publicly funded universities like Berkeley in the UC system had meant to America and the world. I learnt to my amazement that 40 per cent of students admitted to UC Berkeley were first generation college-goers. By imposing such massive funds cuts, the government was ensuring that the national treasures that the country had built from its public education system, would be badly dented from now on. The cuts would mean that the first generation college goer, usually from a disadvantaged background, would be hit hardest. So would international students.

But though the protests were building up, one could sense that the mobilisation was not as massive as in the past. Something in this old university’s character had changed. The February-March strikes at Berkeley, old timers said, were not a patch on the agitation of the past. Was the Berkeley counter-culture under threat?

I was told that there was a perceptible demographic change in this university town with the influx of the more conservative Chinese and Asian students. It was even suggested that since these ethnic groups were more career-oriented, they did not want to take ideological positions on public funding and welfare issues. While in the early days the radical students would mount their protests on Sproul Plaza, the place was now taken up by Chinese drummers belting out martial sounds.

The university town had its share of disturbing images - from mentally ill people camping out in the open in the People’s Park (a remnant of the Reagan era when as Governor of California he had ordered that mental hospitals be shut down) and the homeless women and men who lived on the side-walks on Telegraph Avenue with their dogs to keep them warm. Berkeley, I thought, was a strange melting pot of Nobel Laureates (with their special NL designated parking lots) and the innumerable others living on the edge.

Yet there were priceless stories of social mobility that I shall always treasure from Berkeley. One afternoon as I walked down from Euclid and Hearst just outside the North Gate with the Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism, Neil Henry, he waved to one of the passing bus drivers. Most of them were African-Americans and Neil knew them all on first-name terms and had individual stories to tell about them. On this occasion he told me that the driver he had just waved to, had two sons. One of them was studying in Harvard, and the other, in Princeton!

The intellectual delights of a university town are always many and Berkeley provided its share of cerebral activity. Besides listening to some invigorating discussions at the J-School on Africa, Mexico, Cuba and attending some intense soul-searching sessions on the challenges before the media in the West, the other place I was drawn to was the Centre for South Asian Studies, a centre of learning.

Besides the world of words, the world of music in Berkeley held many attractions too. The Noon Concerts at the Hertz Concert Hall on Wednesdays and Fridays were a perfect example of Berkeley’s rich musical tradition. The auditorium would fill up by noon, and then, in true Berkeley tradition, at 12.30, the musicians would take their positions on stage and the music would begin.

The concerts were usually a great way to showcase the talent of the Berkeley Music School. If you were lucky, as I was, you could listen to a piece played on a 17th century violin which had just been restored lovingly by experts. The concerts were short and intense lasting just an hour. Everyone emerged energised after the lunch-hour musical treat.

Then there were the Zellerbach Hall concerts where one watched the legendary Senegalese singer Baaba Maal and Arlo Guthrie of Woodstock fame perform, the latter with three generations of his family on stage, the youngest being his three-year-old grand-daughter.

Taking in the view of the Bay along with the skyline of San Francisco and the Golden Gate from Tilden Park, sitting in the Rose Garden and admiring the famous pink Berkeley Rose, walking in the Marina and watching migratory birds, savaging Berkeley’s different cuisines and ice creams, going organic at Berkeley Bowl were some of the pleasures of campus life.

All of this, done in the company of friends drawn from Japan, Norway, Africa, Germany, New Zealand, Korea, Iraq, USA, Britain, Sweden, India, Nepal and Pakistan, made it even more special.

In the impeccably kept Bancroft archive, there was also the excitement of discovering with my psychiatrist husband that between the entire stretch of San Francisco in California and Tezpur in Assam, India, there were no other mental hospitals in the year 1868 in the world. There was also the sheer joy of handling a rare map of Bangalore, my home city, in the same archive. It showed the assault on the city in 1793 by the East India Company Army led by Lord Cornwallis, who partly redeemed his failure to prevent the American Independence by conquering Mysore! Berkeley and Bangalore were not far apart even 250 years ago, it seems...

Connections between Berkeley and India were everywhere: whether it was to do with Bharatnatyam or street signages. We found metal flaps on the university streets with signage stamped ‘India’ and marvelled at Indian engineering of the old days. We met and spent some great moments with the famous Kathakali dancer from Kerala, K P Kunhiraman, now a sprightly 80 years of age, and his American wife, Katherine, a Bharatnatyam dancer, both of whom have been teaching Berkeley students the joys of Indian dance for the last three decades in their school, Kalanjali.

In an influence is incomplete without talking about food: the biriyani, mutton kathi rolls and saag paneer from Cafe Raj got the stamp of approval of my students and colleagues. There were also some amazing ambassadors from India I encountered- Harminder Singh, a Sikh cab driver who had the old-world charm of a Jullundurite and a Tibetan waiter working in one of Berkeley’s popular Italian restaurants on College Avenue. To my utter surprise, he told me he came from Bylakuppe, a Tibetan refugee camp, 80 miles from Bangalore.

The world is flat, I thought, at such moments. And Berkeley, a true melting pot.
CS IN THE CITY
Essay written by 2010 Tata ISES intern, Kate Lyons, on her internship experience.

In the United States, distrust of big business is as American as apple pie. At University of California, Berkeley, a farleft college both geographically and politically (A.K.A. Socialist HQ), we are trained to be suspicious of large, multi-national conglomerates such as Tata. Described by America’s right-wing as “commie-liberal-pinko-socialist-treehugger-populist-peaceniks”, Berkeley students are known to nurture a deep mistrust of white collar corporate thugs; the corporate “man”, homo corporatus, is to be disdained for his conspiracy against economic and social equality. In reality, these stereotypes are distortions of a complex truth. Students are taught to be critical, but it is incorrect to describe all Berkeley students as liberal fanatics, precisely as unfair as characterizing all corporations as menaces to society. Although I was aware of this before I left the US for India to work with Tata on some Corporate Sustainability (CS) initiatives, I still maintained some bias against big business: including considering CS as a publicity stunt to boost a corporation’s image, rather than a genuine effort for significant change. In all honestly, my inner pinko was ready to meticulously dissect Tata, (particularly Tata Teleservices Limited, TTEL) and its “sustainable initiatives” with scathing principled discernment. I was in for a surprise.

Over the past three weeks, I have encountered exceptionally dedicated individuals—people so committed to improving the world they are an inspiration. Every single TTEL CS initiative that I have observed is genuine and effective, all contributing to economic empowerment and sustainable change, rather than the assumed corporate lip-serviced, blunt charity. Added to this discovery was another realisation. When traveling to India, an expectation exists for students to undergo a dramatic philosophical revelation upon arrival, something I failed to encounter. Stepping on the hot, humid, Mumbai tarmac, one is expecting to be swept away by the requisite “Eat, Pray, Love / Shantaram” romanticism of the Third World that has so recently given the chick lit genre and tourism industry such a boost. My own lack of sudden emotional breakthrough, (or breakdown, for that matter) first made me feel that I would have to add “incorrigible-self-centered-shallow-20-something-materialist” to my previous appellation, but then I had a REAL revelation. This romantic “India experience” is in itself packaged and forced, commodified and objectified: a sort of nouveau Orientalism that encourages self-righteous self-discovery instead of pompous Western-superiority. Thinking this way misses the larger point, which in itself is more fantastic: India is ordinary. My experience here has shown me how refreshingly approachable India is, and seeing through the cloud of contrived exoticism has revealed a straightforward reality. The same concerns exist here: anxiety for the impoverished, crusade for public awareness, struggle between empathy and apathy. It is counterproductive to concentrate on perceived differences—it is better to celebrate our striking similarities, generating esteem for each other (and all that the other has to offer). This perspective has enabled me to learn a lot from the CS work TTSL is engaged in, and shown me how I can apply the same strategy to programs back home, in making American Corporate Sustainability as real as I have seen it to be in India.

UC Berkeley/Tata Academic Programs

C Tases is proud to announce that the UC Berkeley - Tata academic programs on campus have grown. In 2008, UC Berkeley and The Tata Group, one of India’s largest private sector conglomerates initiated launched the Tata International Social Entrepreneurship Scheme (TISES). TISES provides students (primarily undergraduates) with opportunities to contribute to community initiatives projects of Tata Group companies in India. This year we have secured funding from Tata to also establish the Tata Fellows program for students not necessarily familiar with India. Three awards of $3,000 each will be given to student graduates and three awards of $2,500 will be given to advanced undergraduate students to study topics relevant to contemporary India for up to three months.

The Tata Study Grants program was established in 2009 by the Tata Sons office in Washington DC at the Center for South Asia Studies, UC Berkeley as well as at two other prominent US universities. The six grants – three senior research grants of $5000 and three junior research grants of $2500 – are designed to facilitate scholarly excellence among undergraduate and graduate students interested in pursuing research on contemporary Indian issues. Grant recipients, known as Tata fellows, are selected by committees formed within each university, and have the opportunity to travel to India to carry out their research.

Kate Lyons with her Tata Teleservices Team in Delhi. (L-R) Jitendra Routray, Sidharth Gaur, Rajiv Narayan (project reviewer), Sangeeta Robinson (project guide), Kate Lyons, Sharmavaz Cohal (TISES coordinator, Tata Services Ltd.) and Nidhi Kapoor

2010 Tata ISES Interns

Ryan Ballard (Major: Anthropology. Minor: Global Poverty & Practice) Project: Reach of Health Services of CSS Division of Tata Steel, Jamshedpur.

Robin Marie Collins (Major: Political Economy. Minor: Global Poverty & Practice) Project: Diagnostic study of livelihood programmes. Project will lead to creation of strategic, operational and financial plans for livelihood initiatives of Tata Chemicals, Mithapur

Kate Lyons (Major: Linguistics. Minor: Global Poverty & Practice) Project: Carbon footprint reduction programs at Tata Teleservices, Delhi.

Neda Saghafi (Major: Business & Psychology) Project: To make a road map for growth of tomorrow’s agriculture for Okhandamal keeping in mind economic impacts at Tata Chemicals, Mithapur.

2010–2011 Tata Fellows

Awarded $2500 each

Malia Lee Hunt (Major: Gender & Women’s Studies, Minor: Global Poverty & Practice) for her work in aiding in women’s poverty reversal, and women’s empowerment efforts in Rajasthan.

Reya Sehgal (Major: Theatre, Minor: Global Poverty & Practice) for her project, “Postcolonial Delhi: The Commonwealth Games and the Transformation of Urban Design and Identity.”

Jacqueline C. Barin (Major: Public Health, Minor: Global Poverty & Practice) for studying the prevalence of viral hepatitis among pregnant women in Mysore, India.

Awarded $5000 each

Zachary Burt (Ph.D Candidate, Energy and Resources Group) for researching the politics and economics of urban water distribution systems in India.

Neha Kumar (Ph.D Candidate, School of Information) to study the adoption of new media for the production and dissemination of folk music in rural India.

Andrew Hao (Ph.D Candidate, Cultural Anthropology) for investigating the flows of transnational corporate social responsibility initiatives between contemporary India and China.

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Bangladesh Hopes & Challenges: A Berkeley Conference

In a symposium headlined by a stirring speech by Bangladesh’s U.N. envoy, Berkeley academics highlighted challenges and achievements of contemporary Bangladesh. Reprinted with permission from the November 12, 2009 issue of The Silicon Review.

To the chagrin of many a Bangladeshi, and not a few sympathizers of that densely populated nation all over the world—the nation has become a byword for poverty, backwardness and misery—in any discussion of international policymaking. To be sure, Bangladesh faces daunting problems, not the least of which is a huge population squeezed in a small landmass that faces a dire threat of global warming which could put even a lot of that precious space underwater. Corruption and political unrest are also facts of life. However, that’s not the whole story—far from it. This cash-strapped nation has made considerable strides in female literacy, infant mortality and population control, and is ahead of India in many of these indicators despite a much lower per capita income.

Led by a Bangladesh diplomat, four experts from the University of California at Berkeley talked about policy areas critical to Bangladesh’s growth and development. The keynote address by delivered by Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, Bangladesh Permanent Representative, United Nations. Momen is refreshingly different from a conventional diplomat, and for good reason. A professional diplomat he is not. He is a college professor with a long-standing record of human rights activism and community engagement which has got him in trouble with intolerant Bangladeshi governments before. He made a compelling case—complete with data and statistics (he is, after all, a college professor by profession)—that democracies invariably perform better than autocratic states in improving economic growth and promoting social progress.

Ahmed Badruzzaman, a scientist with Chevron who also teaches at Berkeley, spoke about the twin challenges that Bangladesh faces in terms of its growing energy needs and climate change. Rising CO2 emissions pose a present threat for countries like Bangladesh. Increased floods, melting of glaciers and the polar ice cap will lead to a horrendous global scenario of submergence of the Ganges-Brahmaputra, Nile, Mekong and Mississippi basins. The only way to deal with the challenge is mitigation and adaptation, and he suggested the use of alternative energy and transfer of technology from developed countries, which have the wherewithal and skills to cope better. Bangladesh will need to plan for adaptation. Issues that deserve close consideration include introduction of flood resistant rice, building infrastructure to deal with climate refugees due to the rise of sea level. Bangladesh also needs to think regionally; he said, because “climate doesn’t know any regional boundaries.”

Ananya Roy, a professor of city & regional planning, talked about the remarkable role of non-governmental institutions in presenting a “possibility of an alternative model of development.” Roy is an author of a book on which studies those who manage poverty and sheds light on how powerful institutions control “capital,” or circuits of profit and investment, as well as “truth,” or authoritative knowledge about poverty. Such dominant practices are challenged by alternative paradigms of development, and the book details these as well. Using the case of microfinance, the book participates in a set of fierce debates about development—from the role of markets to the secrets of successful pro-poor institutions. While the work of Grameen Bank founder Mohammed Yunus is more widely known, Roy also talked about the substantial efforts of Bangladesh Rural Advance Management Committee or BRAC, founded during Bangladesh’s independence movement in 1971 by a visionary development thinker, Fazle Hasan Abed. BRAC and Grameen do a lot more than microfinance, she said. In particular, BRAC’s work is deeply informed by the experience of the independence movement, when Abed gave up a corporate career to work in relief work. After independence, that transmuted into development work, and today the two are coupled.

Allan Smith, professor of epidemiology in the School of Public Health, spoke about the continuing crisis of arsenic poisoning in Bangladesh. He called the arsenic crisis the “largest poisoning of a population in a generation.” From December 1996 to January 1997, a three-week survey was conducted by the Dhaka Community Hospital and the School of Environmental Studies. The survey team visited 18 affected districts. Of the 1,650 adults and children examined, 57.5 percent of them had skin lesions due to arsenic poisoning. In another study, approximately one-third of the 7,764 patients examined had skin lesions due to arsenic. The population of the 42 affected districts was 76.9 million. These studies do not imply that the entire population is drinking contaminated water. A recent report from the World Bank has estimated that 20 million inhabitants of Bangladesh may be drinking arsenic-contaminated water. The health effects of ingesting arsenic-contaminated drinking-water appear slowly. For this reason, a more important issue than the number of patients who currently have arsenic-caused diseases in the number who will develop these diseases in the future as a result of past and continuing exposure to arsenic. Large numbers of tubewells were installed in Bangladesh approximately 5 to 20 years ago. If the population continues to drink arsenic-contaminated water, then a major increase in the number of cases of diseases caused by arsenic may be predicted.

Sanchita Saxena, associate director of Berkeley’s Center for South Asia Studies, talked about the remarkable success of Bangladesh’s garment industry. The last several decades have seen Bangladesh’s dependence on the garment sector grow significantly. In 1983, there were only 55,000 garment factories in the country. By 2004, this number had jumped to 4,000. Exports have increased from a meager $68 thousand in 1968 to $5.7 billion in 2004. Currently, this sector employs approximately 2.2 million workers, of whom almost 80 percent are women. This sector has created enormous economic opportunities for the country’s women, who until the late 1970s were almost non-existent in the labor force. Bangladesh owes much of its success in the global garments and textiles market to the system of quotas that were in place for several decades under the Multi-Fiber Arrangement. After guaranteeing market share to countries for more than thirty years, the MFA was phased out in 2005. All the pundits predicted that once the quotas were lifted and all WTO members would have greater access to the developed countries’ markets, many of the “smaller” and less competitive Asian countries, like Bangladesh, would drastically lose market share especially to China. To the contrary, however, the data over the last three years shows that many of these “smaller” countries including Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Pakistan have in fact increased their garments exports to the U.S. and E.U. Bangladesh owes much of its success to the system of quotas that were in place for several decades under the Multi-Fiber Arrangement. After guaranteeing market share to countries for more than thirty years, the MFA was phased out in 2005. All the pundits predicted that once the quotas were lifted and all WTO members would have greater access to the developed countries’ markets, many of the “smaller” and less competitive Asian countries, like Bangladesh, would drastically lose market share especially to China. To the contrary, however, the data over the last three years shows that many of these “smaller” countries including Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Pakistan have in fact increased their garments exports to the U.S. and E.U. This growing convergence among groups like factory workers, owners and the government in terms of what needs to be done, Saxena said. The raise in minimum wage law enacted in 2006 has been implemented in 2008. Benefits to workers in terms of wages, health care and child care are improving, and most importantly, workers say everybody is paying more attention to their needs.

A lyrical dance-drama on Bangladesh performed by the Bangladesh Academy of Performing Arts.

(cont’d from previous page)

TTF has hatched amazing projects in a community that is comparable to our own; proving that effective and sustainable change is possible. So, I’m proud of my involvement in this large, multinational conglomerate. It’s shown me that the inner commie-liberal-pinko-socialist-treehugger-populist-peacean can fight towards social innovation with the help of the corporate elite, in the urban comfort of the city. Now, THAT is a revolution.
The University of California at Berkeley is a globally-leading site for the study of South Asia, and one of very few institutions in the United States to offer both undergraduate and graduate degree programs focusing on numerous aspects of this vital region. Pakistan studies is a critical element of South Asia studies and CSAS is strongly committed to strengthening our engagement with Pakistan-related subjects in the years ahead. Pakistan Studies at Berkeley is a growing field. UC Berkeley has a special interest in the region are Munis Faruqui, an expert in South Asian law; Nazish Kazmi, an expert in Pakistan funded Quaid-i-Azam Chair in South Asia Studies. Berkeley. Other faculty members with strong interest in Pakistan include Saba Mahmood (Anthropology), Kiren Chaudhry (Political Science), and Atif Mian (Haas Business School). Additionally, UC Berkeley is also home to one of the two institutions in the country that houses the Government of Pakistan funded Quaid-i-Azam Chair in Pakistan Studies.

Quaid-i-Azam Chair of Pakistan Studies at UC Berkeley
The CSAS in collaboration with the Government of Pakistan established the Quaid-i-Azam Chair of Pakistan Studies at UC Berkeley in 1999. Named after Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the leader who founded Pakistan and who is known by the title, “Father of the Nation,” or “Quaid-i-Azam,” the goal of this chair is to encourage increased knowledge of Pakistan in the United States and to help forge better ties between American academics and their counterparts in Pakistan. According to the terms of the chair, the chairholder, chosen from colleges and universities in Pakistan, will have a full-time teaching and research position at UC Berkeley for two years. The funds for the scholar’s salary and travel expenses are provided by the Pakistan government’s Ministry of Education. The first Chair-holder, Professor Tariq Rahman, arrived in the summer of 2004. He taught a course titled “Language and Politics in Pakistan” and was a very welcome addition to our faculty. Unfortunately, he had to return to Pakistan for personal reasons after one year at Berkeley. In 2009, the chair was filled again. Professor Ihsiqua Ahmad Chaudhry, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sargodha in Pakistan, became our Quaid-i-Azam Chair for the academic year 2009-10. He taught a course titled “Current Political Trends in Pakistan.”

Our collections of publications in Pakistani languages is one of the largest in the world.

Pakistan related Library Holdings
The UC Berkeley library contains one of the largest collections of publications in Pakistani languages in the world, with over 22,000 books in Urdu, 7,500 in Punjabi, 950 in Sindhi, 700 in Pushto, and 600 in Kashmiri. We are also working towards building our holdings of Persian language materials produced in the pre- and post-1947 period in what is now Pakistan. We anticipate our acquisition efforts to rapidly increase in the coming years thanks to the recent hiring of Adnan Malik—as the head librarian for the entire South Asia collection—as well as a series of faculty-library initiatives to build upon on our already strong Pakistan-specific holdings.

Over the years, the Center has continued to strive to create a diverse offering with respect to Pakistan-related programming: Pakistani Journalist and official biographer of Osama bin Laden, Hamid Mir discussed the war against the Taliban; Abid Hassan Minto, the famous constitutional expert and senior lawyer of the Supreme Court of Pakistan spoke on the Pakistan Crisis and on the current situation in the sub-continent and India-Pakista Relations; poet, scholar, and archivist, Ahmed Salim who visited the Center under the AIPS program, spoke about the Preservation and Promotion of Archives in Pakistan; and Huma Yusuf, the online Feature’s editor of Dawn.com, Pakistan’s largest English daily, spoke about rising anti-Islamism in Pakistan. Of particular note in our Pakistan related programing, was our year-long focus on “Islam, Youth and New Media.” [See article on next page for event details]
CALS also has a vibrant Pakistani Student’s Association (PSA).

The Pakistani Student Association (PSA)
Founded and organized by CAL’s Pakistan-American students, the PSA provides the Berkeley community a glimpse into Pakistani culture through their Annual Urdu Culture show, a celebration of the Urdu language in the form of traditional dances, folk music, skits, poetic recitations, delicious ethnic cuisine, and lively speeches by various literary figures. This year the PSA is adding another dimension to their work, fundraising for the victims of the recent Pakistani floods. Recent flooding has left over a third of Pakistan underwater, and the economic and social damage caused by this disaster has been monumental. Through cultural events that will raise both cultural and disaster awareness, the PSA hopes to do as much as it can to alleviate the tragedy inflicting the people of Pakistan.

Looking ahead, CSAS will initiate a campaign to broaden and deepen Pakistan Studies at Berkeley. Our first priorities will be to financially strengthen the Urdu program, raise funds for graduate fellowships (and thereby training the next generation of scholars of Pakistan), and initiate an annual lecture series by prominent scholars working on Pakistan. We also wish to extend our Pakistan-specific programming to engage growing academic and community-based interest in the study of culture, religion, and politics. We look forward to working with supportive individuals and organizations to accomplish these goals.

Support the CSAS
The Friends of CSAS Fund strengthens CSAS by supporting events and research not covered by our Title VI Award. The Fund provides the faculty director with resources to support various Center priorities, such as:

• Fund student summer research projects in South Asia
• Provide scholarships to students from South Asia to attend graduate programs at UC Berkeley
• Support visiting scholars from South Asia to give talks at UC Berkeley and interact with faculty and students
• Host performances and speakers of interest to the wider Bay Area community
• Develop web based South Asian language materials for instruction.

For more information please contact CSAS Associate Director, Sanchita Saxena at sanchitas@berkeley.edu
ISLAM TODAY:
A year long collaborative program on how Muslim youth around the world are using new media, politics and popular culture to explore their identities, find “virtual” communities, promote new agendas and confront stereotypes in the post 9/11 era.

For many young people, the post-9/11 world has sparked a new, if not confusing, relationship with their own identities as Muslims. Difficult times have led young Muslims all over the world to try and find answers, connect with other individuals in similar situations, debate issues, and re-work commonly held notions of Islam. To increase public understanding of Islam, CSAS and UC Berkeley centers for Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian studies organized a series of programs, all supported by the Social Sciences Research Council (SSRC), during the 2009-10 academic year.

The first event, a forum on New Media & Politics in the Muslim World, took place on October 15, 2009 at the newly opened David Brower Center, in Berkeley. It brought together five young practitioners, researchers and scholars to discuss the transformations that have occurred following the rapid expansion in the use of technology and new media to talk about political issues and political change in the Muslim world. The speakers included Mohamed Abdel Dayem from the Committee to Protect Journalists; Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, a member of Malaysia’s opposition party Keadilan Rakyat; and a recently elected member of Selangor’s State Assembly; Muhamad Ali, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at UC Riverside whose research looks at contemporary Islam in Southeast Asian studies organized a series of programs, all supported by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), during the 2009-10 academic year.

The third forum consisted of an arts festival that took place throughout Berkeley in April 2010 and consisted of three parts:


2. Two staged readings of The Domestic Crusaders were presented at the Durham Studio Theatre on the UC Berkeley campus. The play follows the members of a modern Muslim Pakistani-American family as they convene to celebrate the twenty-first birthday of the youngest son. Set against debates and issues concerning Muslim Americans, sparks fly among the three generations, culminating in an intense family battle, as each “crusader” struggles to assert his or her respective voice and opinions.

3. A film festival titled Stories from the Muslim World. The film festival, which took place between April 12-22 at different venues throughout Berkeley, emphasized newer films focused on young people living in Muslim-majority countries and/or films made by up-and-coming Muslim directors. The festival included question-and-answer sessions at relevant screenings with visiting Muslim filmmaker Zain Ashraf, Malaysian film producer Elyna Shahri, Indonesian actress Jajang C. Noer, and Afghan-American director Wazhmah Osman.

To learn more about the “Islam Today” program, please visit http://islamtoday.berkeley.edu.

Written by Meigian Massoumi, Program Coordinator & Center Manager, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, UC Berkeley.

Left to Right Standing Row: Mohamed Abdul Dayem, Haroon Mughal, Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, Huma Yusuf, Muhammad Ali, Wajahat Ali. Left to Right Sitting Row: Puneeta Kala, Sarah Maxim, Sanchita Saxena, Meigian Massoumi

Left to Right: Wajahat Ali, Monis Rahman, Imam Suhail Webb

Left to Right: Wajahat Ali, Monis Rahman, Imam Suhail Webb

Leading English-language daily newspaper Dawn; and Haroon Mughal, a popular U.S.-based blogger about issues concerning South Asia and Muslim Americans (www.typepad.com). The forum was moderated by Wajahat Ali, Associate Editor of altmuslim.com.

The second forum, a two-day event held in early March, addressed ways in which Muslim youth are using new media to network and discuss commonly held attitudes and stereotypes about Islam. Imam Suhail Webb, an American Muslim activist and scholar who maintains a website on Islamic theological issues (www.subahwebb.com), kicked off the forum with a public lecture titled, Virtual Pulpit: Net Mosques, Congregations and Imams. The talk was held at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley and Prof. Munir Jiwa, director of the GTU’s new Center for Islamic Studies, moderated the discussion. The latter half of the forum, titled Islam, Social Lives, and Online Networking, was held the following day in San Francisco at the California Historical Society. It brought together young Muslim activists and bloggers to talk informally with audience members in a meet-and-greet social hour before discussing their work more formally. The speakers included Fatemeh Fakhraie, an associate editor for Altmuslim.com, and founder of Altmuslim Media Watch (http://muslimahmediawatch.org); Zeba Iqbal, the executive director of the Council for the Advancement of Muslim Professionals and a regular contributor to blogs focused on Muslims in America; Zeina Kuhin, a social media consultant, writer, and founder of Muslim-Americans for Obama in 2008; and Wajahat Ali, an associate editor for Altmuslim.com, playwright, and founder of Goatmilkblog.com. The program concluded with a panel discussion, moderated by Zeina Kuhin, featuring two path-breaking Muslim web entrepreneurs: Shajeed Amanullah, the founder of Altmuslim.com and Altmultimedia LLC, a network of Islamic-themed websites boasting more than seven million visitors annually; and Monis Rahman, the founder of the matching website Naseeb.com, who now also runs Rozee.pk, a Pakistan-based online jobs site.

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Written by Meigian Massoumi, Program Coordinator & Center Manager, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, UC Berkeley.

ARE YOU READY FOR A CHALLENGE

Teach For India

What is the best way to approach a nation’s education crisis that involves understaffed schools, an alarmingly high student dropout rate and pitiable spending in the education sector? There may be many different solutions. Shabeen Mistri, founder of the Akanksha foundation, decided that India needed a rigorous movement led by the youth, to tackle this problem of educational inequity.

Modeled on the Teach for America program, Teach for India was started in 2007 with the goal of providing equal educational opportunities for all. Teach for India strives to achieve this educational reform by recruiting outstanding college graduates and professionals to serve as teachers in low income schools as part of a two-year, fully paid teaching fellowship program. In addition to being a valuable teaching experience, the program is designed to hone the leadership skills of the fellows as well as create a group of young, dynamic leaders who will champion long term reform in the Indian educational system, irrespective of the career path they choose.

So join the movement and let us help empower children in India through education.

To learn more please contact UCB Teach for India Campus Ambassadors Yasaswini Sampathkumar at yasaswini@berkeley.edu or Shanmuga Prasad at shanmuga@berkeley.edu or visit www.teachforindia.org/index.php
Ashis Nandy with Raka Ray

Dr. Nandy is a political psychologist and social theorist whose path-breaking work has revitalized scholarship on political psychology, the Indian encounter with colonialism, mass violence, nationalism and culture. In 2008, he was listed as one of the top 100 public intellectuals of the world by the magazine, Foreign Policy. While at the Center, Dr. Nandy, in addition to participating in several campus and community events including giving an interview on KPFA Radio on the attacks on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Pakistan, gave two very well received public lectures.

Dr. Nandy’s first lecture, Coming Home: Religion, Mass Violence and Exiled and Secret Selves, given on campus on March 3, 2009, focused on India’s Partition and the traumatic bloodbath of violence that followed in its wake. As a part of his ongoing interest in genocides in South Asia, Dr. Nandy, for the last 10 years, has led an ambitious project to document the experiences of partition survivors across India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. He and his associates have interviewed more than 1,300 survivors and have conducted about 100 in-depth interviews. The study led to some very surprising findings, the most unexpected being that more than one-fourth of all survivors said that they owed their survival to somebody from the opposition and that the worst bitterness and rancor about the experience was felt not by the generation that actually experienced the violence by the children and grandchildren of those people.

His second lecture, States of Mind: India, Pakistan and other States without Nations in South Asia, delivered at the World Affairs Council in San Francisco on March 9, 2009, discussed the political psychology of nations in South Asia and the challenges of maintaining a nation-state in the region.

Dr. Nandy also led a day-long workshop around the theme of “Violence & Social Creativity.” Students who mostly from Cal and UCLA presented papers as diverse as “Spatiality of Loss, Violence, and Memory in District Six,” “Japanese Mobilization in Taiwan” and the “French Banlieue Riots” to “Violent Self-making in Mehoobo’s Aurat” and “Aesthetics of Violence in the Venisamhara of Bhatta Narayana.”

Mike Levin, a doctoral candidate in Sociology, interviewed the great scholar. Below is an excerpt from his interview, “A Conversation with Ashis Nandy.”

MI: In your quite controversial article the “Oribrary of Culture,” you say that after Modi and the Quitarian violence, “I’m afraid I cannot look at the future of the country with anything but great foreboding.” Is there anywhere in India that you see promising agents of social change challenging the rise of Hindu nationalism and fascist violence?

AN: Yes. I do see lot of young people who are very active and very committed to the idea of communal peace and coexistence. But even more than that, I have tremendous faith in ordinary Indians and their stand in this matter. I think they have repeatedly shown that communal forces can be resisted at the village level, and that they can often even risk their lives to protect their neighbors without the benefit of ornate theories and ideological positions which are palpable to the urban middle class and the academicians.

ML: That brings me to my next question. You’ve been an outspoken critic of the secularism of urban, middle class intellectuals in India. If not in secularism, where do you find the discursive basis, if you will, for resisting the rise of Hindu nationalism?

AN: It is not my job or responsibility to find discursive places for the Indian middle-class and intellectuals like us. Secularism is probably a reasonable discursive place for us. It is just that it either doesn’t reach the Indian population or they cannot make heads or tails out of it. It is not one of their categories, and never will be if we have to judge by India’s record in the last 60 years. And that is quite understandable…. Secularism is bound to the idea of Western history and the battle between the church and the state carried out over centuries. It is based on Western experience of communal violence and religious wars, which has nothing to do with India. India doesn’t have that kind of structure in its religions. Religion and state are intertwined as well as separate, but by criteria that are part of the cultures of 1 billion Indians, or at least a huge majority of them. And I would suspect that we will gain much more if we use the categories that make sense to people and which have prompted them to risk their lives resisting such violence at the grass roots level, even at times of violent pogroms.

ML: So it is your position that there is already bases in “traditional” Indian culture to resist phenomenon like Hindu fundamentalism?

AN: Communal violence is still predominately an urban phenomenon. Almost all the riots either begin from cities or are consigned to cities. Only three and a half percent of casualties in riots, just like earlier pogroms against the Sikhs were one of the main contributing factors to the militancy in Punjab which lasted more than a decade. And I have a suspicion that the effects of these kind of pogroms do not go away quickly, and widen the catchment area for recruitment of terrorists and collaborators.

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The World in 15 Lines
A Love Poem from Akananuru—a 2000-year-old Tamil Anthology
Translated by UC Berkeley Tamil Chair, George Hart

The Akananuru is one of the Tamil Sangam anthologies, composed almost 2000 years ago. It contains 400 elaborate longer poems on love themes and is quite unlike anything in Sanskrit or any other language. The poems are highly conventional — each belongs to one of five categories that determine the landscape, flowers, animals, and situations of each poem. What makes them especially interesting is the skill with which the poets manage to incorporate suggestion and striking imagery into these highly conventional works. Translated below is a mulai poem, named for the jasmine that blooms on forest meadows during the rains. As in other Indian traditions, the monsoon season is when lovers should be together; their being apart is a source of suffering for both. Here, the hero has gone off to fight for a king and make money and cannot return to his wife even though the monsoon has started. He is distressed not only because he must be away from her during the monsoon, but that he must spend the night without her. This is an extraordinary poem in Tamil. One may find many resonances in the image of the buds compared to the useless ends of the conches. Certainly, the simile would seem to contrast the many days the heroine spent waiting in anxious anticipation (the bangles of the conch which will be worn) with the present, where she feels despair as the rainy season when her lover promised to return is coming to an end (the useless ends of the conch that cannot be worn). It is notable that the poet contrasts objects that the heroine sees (buds, flowers, clouds) or feels (cold, north wind) with the elements of conflict that the hero can only hear at night. There seems to be a contrast between the order (painful because the hero is away) of the heroine’s world with the confusion and disorder of the camp where the hero is spending the night. It is also notable that the elements afflicting the heroine are natural, while those tormenting the hero are manmade. The poem given below, Mullai is what the hero says upon seeing the season, or what the hero says to his heart when he has finished his work (away from the heroine).

Looking like the ends of conches left over by a Brahmin who has given up his sacrificing and makes bangles instead,
the buds of palashati closed tight with curling tips suddenly open
and bloom in the beautiful drops scattering in the wind.

In these last days of Tai, when the cool rains come to an end
and the north wind hides the light of the rising sun,
a huge black cloud seems to have stripped the skin from the sky
as it moves along the emptiness and goes to the south.

There, in her town, my woman with a bright forehead
has somehow, alone, crossed through the black, cold night.

But I must be here in this night where the bright hells
ring with their long tongues on the small-eyed elephants
with white, thurited tusks whose ornamental rings are broken
from hitting the gates in guarded walls and arrows sharp as they rain down

... 

— Avin Mullais

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Art has recently returned to Berkeley Economy and Society in 2010. He is the author of the forthcoming paper on the politics of development in South Asia. He has a teaching focus on urbanization and development in South Asia. His teaching will focus on urbanization and development in South Asia. He has a forthcoming paper on the politics of enumeration and legibility in Delhi’s informal settlements that will appear in Economy and Society in 2010.

Alka Hingorani (Lecturer, History of Art) has recently returned to Berkeley after several months away, to teach two courses on South Asian art – “The Art of Medieval India in Perspective – 800 to 1500 C.E.” and “The Art Object in India: Aesthetic Urge or Religious Impulse.” She is also working on a book called “Making Faces: Gods and God-makers in the Kullu Valley,” to be published by the University of Hawai‘i Press next year.

Francesca Jensenius (Ph.D Candidate, Political Science) was awarded the American Institute of Indian Studies junior fellowship to carry out her project, “Designing Political Representation: A Study of the Variation in Context and Consequences of Political Quotas in India.”

Neil H. Joek (Adjunct Professor, Political Science) recently moved to Washington DC as the National Intelligence Officer for South Asia. His responsibilities cover Afghanistan to Bangladesh and all points in between.

He previously served in the US Government at the National Security Council in the Office of Proliferation Strategy (2004-2005) and at the Department of State as a member of the Policy Planning Staff (2001 - 2003). Prior to joining the NIC, he was a Senior Fellow at the Center for Global Security Research at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) and an Adjunct Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley (2005-2009).


Adnan Naseemullah (Ph.D Candidate, Political Science) will be leaving Berkeley for a two-year postdoctoral fellowship in Comparative Politics at the London School of Economics.

Gita V. Pai (Ph.D, South & Southeast Asian Studies) finished her dissertation, “Kingship, Images, and Rituals: A Nayaka Monument in South India. 1635-2009” in May. This fall, she joins the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse as an Assistant Professor of South Asian history.

Malini Ranganathan (PhD Candidate, Energy & Resources Group) presented part of her doctoral work titled “The Right to Water as the Right to the City: Spatial Politics and Citizenship Struggles at Bangalore’s Urban Periphery” at the “Right to Water” conference at Syracuse University on March 30-31. She also presented her work at a session on water resources technologies, power, and politics at the Association of American Geographers in DC in April. After finishing her dissertation, Malini will start a post-doctoral fellowship in the Geography department at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign later this year.

Michael Slouber (Ph.D Candidate, South & Southeast Asian Studies) was awarded a DAAD fellowship to study in Hamburg, Germany for the academic year 09/10. He also presented his research under the title “Garuda Medicine: An attempt to bridge the study of ancient Sanskrit texts and modern ethnography” for a colloquium in Hamburg on December 9, 2009.
Awakening Giants, Feet of Clay: Assessing the Economic Rise of China and India

Pranab Bardhan

Awakening Giants, Feet of Clay scrutinizes the phenomenal rise of China and India, and demolishes the myths that have accumulated around the economic achievements of these two giants in the last quarter century. Pranab Bardhan investigates the two countries’ economic reforms, each nation’s pattern and composition of growth, and the problems affecting their agricultural, industrial, infrastructural, and financial sectors. He considers how these factors affect China and India’s poverty, inequality, and environment, how political factors shape each country’s pattern of burgeoning capitalism, and how significant poverty reduction in both countries is mainly due to domestic factors—not global integration, as most would believe.

About the Author:
Pranab Bardhan is Professor of Economics at the University of California at Berkeley. His books include the widely used “Tamil for Beginners.”

Cultures of Servitude: Modernity, Domesticity, and Class in India

Raka Ray & Seemin Qayum

Cultures of Servitude offers an ethnographic account of domestic life and servitude in contemporary Kolkata, India, with a concluding comparison with New York City. Focused on employers as well as servants, men as well as women, across multiple generations, this book examines the practices and meaning of servitude around the home and in the public sphere, and shifts the conversations surrounding domestic service away from an emphasis on the crisis of transnational care work to one about the constitution of class.

About the Authors:
Raka Ray is Sarah Kailath Chair in India Studies, Chair of the Center for South Asia Studies, and Professor of Sociology and South & Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

Seemin Qayum is a historical anthropologist and the author and editor of works on nationalism, elites, and gender in modern Bolivia.

The Ramayana of Valmiki: An Epic of Ancient India Vol VI – Yuddhakanda

Translated & annotated by: Robert P. Goldman, Sally J. Sutherland Goldman & Barend A. van Nooten

Introduction by: Robert P. Goldman & Sally J. Sutherland Goldman

The sixth book of the Ramayana of Valmiki, the Yuddhakanda, recounts the final dramatic war between the exiled prince Rama, manded by the arch de-Rama’s primary purpose abducted princess Sita. However, the confront-point for the divine mis-incarnation of Lord Visnu restore righteousness to a The book ends with the The Ramayana of Valmiki contains some of the and larger-than-life characters of the world literature. This sixth and translation of the Valmiki Ramayana includes an extensive introduction, exhaustive notes, and a comprehensive bibliography.

About the Author:
Robert P. Goldman is professor of Sanskrit and Indian studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and general editor of the Ramayana Translation Project.

Sally J. Sutherland Goldman is lecturer in Sanskrit at the University of California, Berkeley, and associate editor of the Ramayana Translation Project.

Barend A. van Nooten is professor emeritus of Sanskrit at the University of California, Berkeley.

Poverty Capital: Microfinance and the Making of Development

Ananya Roy

This is a book about poverty but it does not study the poor and the powerless. Instead it studies those who manage poverty. It sheds light on how powerful institutions control “capital,” or circuits of profit and investment, as well as “truth,” or authoritative knowledge about poverty. Using the case of microfinance, the book participates in a set of fierce debates about development—from the role of markets to the secrets of successful pro-poor institutions. Based on many years of research in Washington D.C., Bangladesh, and the Middle East, Poverty Capital also grows out of the author’s undergraduate teaching to thousands of students on the subject of global poverty and inequality.

About the Author:
Ananya Roy is Professor of City & Regional Planning and the founding chair of the undergraduate curriculum in Global Poverty & Practice at the University of California, Berkeley.

New Publications by UCB Faculty
What was your experience of learning in the field?
I have spent the last several years studying languages in Berkeley, and I can vouch for the fact that learning in the field is a much superior, though difficult experience. I lived in the capital city of Kathmandu and studied under a former head of the Ministry of Education, Mr. Laxminath Shrestha. His instruction style was strict yet encouraging, and involved many guided activities like trips to the market and traveling near Kathmandu.

What was it like to live in Nepal?
Normally Mr. Shrestha’s students are placed either in his own home or in that of one of his relatives (for cultural immersion), however since I was in Nepal with my family we lived in a separate apartment. My two year old daughter gradually picked up an impressive amount of Nepali, aided by her bilingual preschool and the neighborhood children. By the time we left, my daughter was able to sing about a dozen Nepali songs and loved listening to me read Nepali children’s books to her.

Being there as a family forced us to integrate with the local culture and was a good icebreaker to boot. While walking down the street with my daughter one day, I met Mr. Lila Vishwakarma (pictured) who was also carrying his son. We became friends and I traveled to his village to make inquiries about local snakebite remedies. I learned much from him and he will be an invaluable contact once I return for the actual fieldwork.

In contrast to my experience, I met several Fulbright fellows during my stay who rarely traveled near Kathmandu. One major system uses a five syllable mantra of Garuda, the divine eagle and archenemy of snakes, to effect possession mantras are employed, with an emphasis on the latter. One major system uses a five syllable mantra of Garuda, the divine eagle and archenemy of snakes, to effect possession. Mantras are employed, with an emphasis on the latter. One major system uses a five syllable mantra of Garuda, the divine eagle and archenemy of snakes, to effect possession.

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Can you tell us something interesting about snakebite remedies?
The traditional systems treat by two methods: with herbal preparations and ritually with mantras. In Ayurveda mantras are rarely used, while on the Tantric side both herbs and mantras are employed, with an emphasis on the latter. One major system uses a five syllable mantra of Garuda, the divine eagle and archenemy of snakes, to effect possession.

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How did you get interested in the Newars of Kathmandu?
The Kathmandu valley of Nepal has in the past been shielded from the influences of Islam and British colonialism, and as a consequence harbors Indic religious traditions that have long vanished elsewhere on the subcontinent. Among these is a tantric form of Mahayana Buddhism that reflects the final stages in the development of Buddhism before its gradual disappearance from the Indian mainland in the 13th century. The Kathmandu valley thus affords the possibility to study how this form of Buddhism survives on the ground, how it has become part of the fabric of society, and how it has come to be shaped by the Hindu religious traditions with which it coexists and which it has shaped in turn.

What aspect of this tradition do you focus on?
My studies focus on rituals. A particular interest has been the caitya of Swayambhu at the outskirts of Kathmandu. Using Newar and Tibetan historical records and inscriptions, I have studied study how this most important monument of the Newar tradition has been repeatedly renovated over the last 700 years. I had the good fortune to extend this study into the present when a new renovation of the caitya, the first in nearly a hundred years, commenced on the very day that I arrived in the summer of 2008 for a sabbatical research stay. As has often been the case in the past, the principal patron is Tibetan, but this time it is a Tibetan master, Tarthang Tulku, who for the last several decades has been based right here in Berkeley. Even so, as in the past the rituals have been performed by Newar Buddhist priests, and the current renovation has afforded me the possibility to observe many of the rites that I had previously studied only in historical records. This connects with my interest to combine the textual study of ritual manuals with the documentation of actual performances. I have done this during my most recent stay in Nepal for the consecration ceremonies, recording the startling variation in contemporary practice, and tracing these rites back in time to their roots in tantric texts of the 11th and 12th century.

Are there any other forms of ritual practice that you study?
Yes, I have worked extensively on life-cycle rituals and continue to do so. My research in this area centers on a series of very colorful old age rituals that are unique to the Newars.

The first such rite is performed when the celebrant has lived 77 years, 7 months and 7 days. On this occasion, he and his wife are deified and conveyed around their home locality in a colorful chariot procession. Basically the same sequence of rites is performed when one has seen a thousand full months (with roughly 84 years), when turning 88 years and 8 months and 8 days, and finally when turning one hundred. On the latter occasion the elder is seated in a huge earthenware pot made for the occasion. It serves as uterus and after the ritual performance the elder is seated in a huge earthenware pot made for the occasion. It serves as uterus and after the ritual simulation of the 9 months period of gestation, a hole is broken into the pot and the elder is thus reborn. I have been working on these fascinating old age rites for many years, documenting contemporary practice and studying both modern and historical ritual handbooks. Of particular interest for me is how these rites, which are in origin not specifically Buddhist, have been reworked in a Buddhist idiom and adapted to a Buddhist framework. This feeds into my more general interest in the dynamics of these rituals, of how they are transmitted over hundreds of years and in the process modified and adapted to changing circumstances.

Which other features of Newar Buddhism interest you?
I am also interested in the narrative literature of Newar Buddhism, its depiction in painting and its link to ritual practice. These texts are composed in Sanskrit and as such form the last layer of Buddhists Sanskrit literature. I have worked mainly on the so-called Swayambu Purana, a text that locates the origins of Buddhism in mythical terms in the Kathmandu Valley. It took shape not long after the disappearance of Buddhism from the Gangetic plane and served to compensate for that loss. I used my most recent stay to study the Purana’s depiction in the murals adorning the vestibule of a tantric shrine at Swayambhu.
JOANNA WILLIAMS
A BELOVED PROFESSOR RETIRES

In celebration of Williams’ retirement, a festschrift, To My Mind: Essays for Joanna Gottfried Williams, edited by one of her former students, Padma Kaimal (Ph.D. 1988), will be published as a special Artibus Asiae volume.

Williams’ interest in the “elite” versus the “folk” was continued in a recent exhibition at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, Palace, Palaces, and Passion. In the accompanying catalog—Kingdom of the Sun Indian Court and Village Art from the Princely State of Mewar—edited by Williams, she brings together seventy-five pieces from public and private collections highlighting the importance of seeing and studying both royal and popular art. In her own essay on the “Artists of Mewar,” she challenges the assumption that much Indian art is unsigned and hence anonymous, directing attention to artists who have been overlooked in scholarship on the Mewar artistic tradition.

Williams’ questioning of such dichotomies was most recently celebrated by her youngest crop of Ph.D. students in the form of the dual panels, “The Marga and Desi in the Art of South Asia: In Honor of Professor Joanna G. Williams” at the 38th Annual Conference on South Asia at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which brought together such diverse topics as depictions of jataka stories at Amaravati in South India to the Mohras, or masks of gods, from the Kulu Valley in the lower Himalayas, and to the popular outdoor commercial site of Dilli Haat in Delhi.

Not only is Williams conversant with the visual cultures of North and of South India (and even Sri Lanka), but she is one of the few Asian art historians who is comfortable discussing the two vast regions of South and Southeast Asia. The dissertations she has supervised range from Khmer temples to modernism in

Sujatha Meegama: What have you most loved about teaching at UC Berkeley?
Joanna Williams: Well, I’ve had as interesting students here as anyone could ever ask for, students with interesting backgrounds, both American and foreign. And, I feel privileged to have added to the pool of Ph.D.s out there in various ways with very smart people. I love having the odd geology major and the anthropologist, who end up in my classes just because they want to know something about these parts of the world. Eventually they travel there later on and send me a postcard! I remember vividly around 1990 getting a postcard from a former student, who had been specializing in Chinese painting, but took a course in Southeast Asian art with me. He sent me a postcard from Borobudur! It was right after there had been a small explosion on the top of the monument and she wrote “don’t worry, it’s all right!”

SM: What have you most loved about teaching at UC Berkeley?
JW: I’ve had just one day and filed my M.A. and I was encouraged to write on a Central Asian topic—on the Buddhist interpretation of some of the Central Asian paintings located in what was “Communist China.” In my year in Delhi, I got to see Central Asian paintings that are still preserved in the National Museum, which has a large part of Sir Aurel Stein’s collection, as well as next door, in what’s now the Archaeological Survey’s main office, which has a display of larger pieces. I photographed all the fragments of the Aurel Stein collection, in black and white mostly, and they were part of my Ph.D. dissertation. That was 1965-66.

JW: I don’t think it was somewhat limited. I couldn’t go to China and hence to Central Asia because of politics. Americans were not able to
Indian art, and stone portrait sculpture of the Pallavas and the Colas to Buddhist palm leaf manuscripts. Perhaps, the best example of a project that brings together Williams’ love of South and Southeast Asian art is one written by one of her undergraduate advisees, My Ket Chau, for her senior thesis—‘The Power of Patterns: Double Khat for Textile Exchange in India and Indonesia’—which won the 2008 Library Prize for Undergraduate Research sponsored by the University. My Ket, who is presently the Lifchez/Stronach Curatorial Intern at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, reminisces on how she was inspired by Professor Williams’ commitment to seeing the actual object and the process of production. In her course on Southeast Asian art, Williams invited a Laotian weaver (along with her gigantic loom) to demonstrate to her students the intricate process of weaving textiles!

Even though she freely admits to an old-fashioned preference for slides over digital technology, Williams is fearless in throwing herself into exploring new topics—her recent seminars have ranged from 19th century photography in South Asia (requiring a field trip to the Getty Collection in Malibu, CA) to Sri Lankan painting, for which she nearly traveled the length and breadth of Sri Lanka, and most recently the problems of archaeological conservation in South and Southeast Asia. Her newest Ph.D. student, Sandra Sardjono, in speaking about this last seminar, says that Williams brought much awareness on the issue of “who owns antiquity.” For the seminar Williams had invited an archaeologist from Sri Lanka and two lawyers who specialize on legal ownership of objects. “Bringing real life experience is what makes her and her classes very interesting,” says Sardjono.

My days in Orissa were rather wonderful because I spoke the local language. I had made an effort to learn it from a local tutor and had to be able to read it for my own work. I could communicate with the villagers, which made it much easier for me to study the Ramila performances in rural Orissa taking place in villages in which all the villagers take the parts and do magnificent productions of this powerful dramatic story. My Ket, who is presently the Lifchez/Stronach Curatorial Intern at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, reminiscences on how she was inspired by Professor Wil- liams’ talk to local people about what it meant. Then, two years later when I was again in Chennai, I redid the whole trip: hired a car, walked over rice paddy fields to get to the little temple. And, this time I had a permit from the Archaeological Survey of India attendant there to make sure I did not photograph it because it was not permitted. That time I failed. But, I did get to look at and talk to local people about it which was different. Then, two years later when I was again in Chennai, I redid the whole trip: hired a car, walked over rice paddy fields to get to the little temple. And, this time I had a permit from the Archaeological Survey of India attendant there to make sure I did not photograph it because it was not permitted. That time I failed. But, I did get to look at and talk to local people about it which was different.

SM: What are some other memorable moments from your fieldtrips?
JW: After I finished working on Gupta art, I thought to myself, “Do I want to be known as the ‘Gupta Girl from California’? No, I should work on something different.” One of the problems that bothered me about Gupta art was how hypothetical our knowledge of texts and versions of the story that was used was. Shouldn’t I work on something still living where I could actually talk to people and observe them, enacting later versions of the material and see how those related to the art of the late eighteenth through early twentieth century. That’s how the turn to Orissa happened.

SM: What is your advice for future scholars?
JW: Go see it! Visit it! And, questions will come to you that way. There’s no harm in reading theory from other fields and expanding your own mind in terms of what’s possible. But, before you map someone else’s theory onto your material, think about what the material itself presents as a problem worth addressing.

SM: What are you hoping to research or write during your retirement?
JW: There is one project that has been on the backburner for a long time: there is a need for a textbook for Southeast Asian art history. South Asian art has various books that serve this purpose, but Southeast Asian art is difficult to teach because no book does it all—holds together everything from Burma, to Vietnam, to Indonesia. And, does it well and respectfully rather than treating it as Greater India. Since I do have my own slides and negatives of most of the places involved, even though I am not a Southeast Asian specialist, I might be the person to do such a general book. I’ll think about it.

SM: What do you most look forward to in your retirement?
JW: No more committees!
New CSAS Publication

**South Asia Research Notes**

We are proud to announce the launch of a new CSAS publication series, South Asia Research Notes. The overall goal of this series is to promote dialogue and exchange between scholars who work in interdisciplinary fields related to South Asia, as well as to convey to the wider public the variety of exciting projects going on at Berkeley.

South Asia Research Notes is published annually every Spring and is available in pdf format at southasia.berkeley.edu/publications or by mailing us at the address given below.

The first two issues are currently available online.

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**South Asia Research Notes Spring 09**

*Cultures of Servitude: Modernity, Domesticity, and Class in India*

Raka Ray and Seemin Qayum

**South Asia Research Notes Spring 10**

*Awakening Giants, Feet of Clay: Assessing the Economic Rise of China and India*

Pranab Bardhan

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