



South Asia

Newsletter

A publication of the South Asia Program, Cornell University

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The SAP Welcomes New Director, Anne Blackburn



Anne M. Blackburn is Professor of South Asia Studies and Buddhist Studies in the Department of Asian Studies at Cornell. She is an historian of Buddhism, with a B.A. from Swarthmore College, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Chicago. She taught at the University of South Carolina before joining Cornell's faculty. Blackburn studies Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia, with a special interest in Buddhist monastic culture and Buddhist participation in networks linking Sri Lanka and mainland Southeast Asia before and during colonial presence in the region. Her publications include *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice in Eighteenth-Century Lankan Monastic Culture* (Princeton, 2001), *Approaching the Dhamma: Buddhist Texts and Practices in South and Southeast Asia*, co-edited with Jeffrey Samuels (BPS Pariyatti Editions, 2003), and *Locations of Buddhism: Colonialism and Modernity in Sri Lanka* (Chicago, 2010). She is working on a new project, *Monks, Texts, and Relics: Towards a Connected History*

of 2nd-Millennium Buddhisms in Southern Asia. Blackburn served as Acting Director of the Cornell South Asia Program during Spring Semester 2011. For further information, see <http://lrc.cornell.edu/asian/faculty/bios/blackburn>.

Welcome, Anne!

Agrarian Crisis in India

Annual Conference of the Cornell-Syracuse Consortium by Triveni Gandhi

On April 5th and 6th the Cornell-Syracuse Consortium, in conjunction with the South Asia Program presented "Agrarian Crisis in India?" This two-day conference brought together scholars, scientists and journalists from top U.S. and Indian institutions to discuss the ongoing challenges farmers in India face. Major topics focused on biotechnology, water rights, agrarian violence and representation of crisis in popular media and discourse.

The conference started with a screening of Michael Pela's "Bitter Seeds", which focuses on the role of biotech (BT) cotton for Maharashtran farmers. Panelists and participants debated whether the film accurately portrays the link between BT cotton and the crisis of output farmers face today. Some argued that the spread of biotech seed among farmers has increased the overall yield and export of Indian cotton since 2004. Deepthi Kolady (Cornell University) presented evidence to the fact of growing

yields and overall positive impacts of new seed technology. However, BT cotton fails to produce yield when planted in unfavorable soil and weather conditions. The resulting loss incurred by farmers leads to an overall negative stigma about the use of seed technology, perpetuated through vitriolic debate by scientists and ecologists alike.



Professor Ronald Herring (Cornell, Department of Government) welcomes participants.

The discourse surrounding seed technology is also linked to the crisis of farmer suicides. In a unique session on this phenomenon, Anoop Sandanandan (Syracuse University) presented evidence that surge in farmer deaths is related less to the use of seed technology than previously thought. He finds that the changes

in banking policy during India's liberalization period has forced farmers to incur greater debt from loan sharks. The reliance on predator lenders forces farmers into cycles of

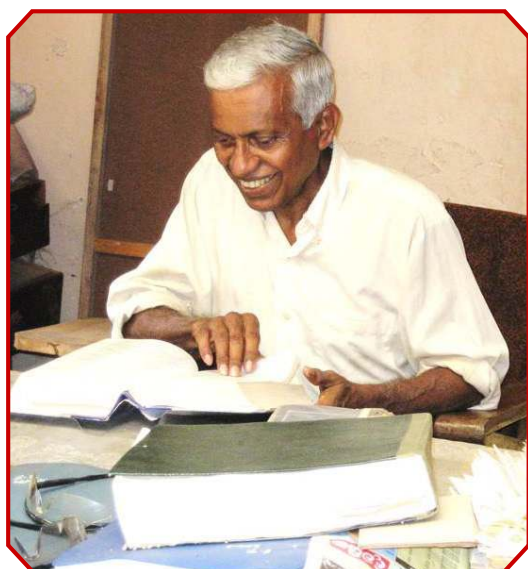
Professor Daniel Gold Reaches the end of His Tenure as SAP Director

The South Asia Program would like to thank Professor Daniel Gold for his directorship at the South Asia Program during the past three years. The time flew by, but under Dan's leadership, the South Asia Program presented many prominent speakers as well as films and filmmakers.

Dan's on his way to Poland this June to attend a workshop on Old Hindi text at the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Warsaw, where a small group of scholars will read texts in pre-modern Hindi literature languages, with special attention to Braj Bhasha. Several scholars with expertise in particular textual fields (the majority old-school European philologists) will take turns leading the group. As Old Hindi was an early interest of his, this workshop will provide Professor Gold with a good way to get back to working with old languages. The first of such workshops was held in Romania two years ago, and a number of the same people are expected to return to this one. We wish Professor Gold a successful journey, and hope to see him often as an active faculty member of the South Asia Program.



The South Asia Program Mourns the Loss of Long-Time Colleague and Friend, Professor Emeritus, W. S. Karunatilake



On September 5, 2012, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at the University of Kelaniya, W. S. Karunatilake sadly passed away after a long illness at the Peg Mill Retreat, in Groton, NY. Professor Karunatilake (affectionately known as Karu) was considered one of Sri Lanka's foremost linguists. He trained generations of scholars worldwide in linguistics, history, and religious studies. Of his work, Wisdom Publications posted on their Facebook page: "He was a public intellectual in Sri Lanka and a supporter of the Sangha, and in addition to his many works on the Pali, Sinhala, and Tamil languages, he also published on the topic of Buddhism. Professor Karunatilake insisted that research on Buddhism take into account the lived experiences of Buddhists, and he and his students have contributed greatly to our understanding of Buddhism as it is lived today in South and Southeast Asia."

Charles Hallisey, President of the American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies, in a memorial tribute noted: "He was part of the legendary 1967 summer program on Sinhala at Cornell University, that James Brow, James Gair, John Ross Carter, Donald Smith and others were also part of, but that was only the beginning. An important acknowledgement of Professor Karunatilake's contribution to American scholarship on Sri Lanka, a celebration of how he facilitated American scholarship on Sri Lanka, can be seen in the Felicitation Volume that was published in honor of him this past year: *Embedded Languages: Studies of Sri Lankan and Buddhist Cultures*, edited by Carol S. Anderson (Kalamazoo College, USA), Susanne Mrozik (Mount Holyoke College, USA), R.M.W. Rajapakse (Univ. of Kelaniya) and W.M. Wijeratne (Univ. of Kelaniya)."

Karu had a long history at Cornell, where he received his Ph.D. in Linguistics in 1969 under the advisorship of Professor Emeritus James Gair, who became his life-long friend and colleague. He coauthored five Sinhala texts published by the South Asia Program, including the ever-popular *Colloquial Sinhala, Volumes I & II* (South Asia Program, Cornell University, 1968, Fairbanks, Gair, Sugathapala and DeSilva), which is still widely distributed to this day. He also published *A New Course in Reading Pali: Entering the Word of the Buddha* (Motilal Banarsidass, India, 2001, with James Gair), which is intended as an introduction to the reading of Pali texts. A complete bibliography of all his books, let alone articles, would be too long to list, but Professor Karunatilake stayed active as a writer and scholar right up until his untimely death. *The Sidat Sangara: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (see page 9) was published posthumously. The staff at the South Asia Program offer our sincere condolences to his wife, Kalyani Ranamuka, son Dr. Suniti K. K. Walimunidevage, and daughter-in-law, Dr. Maheshi Dassanayake.

OUTREACH

The South Asia Program's Outreach activities, often in conjunction with CERIS (Cornell Educational Resource for International Studies), which includes four other international programs under the umbrella of the Einaudi Center for International Studies, has had a very busy year.



Making Rakhi bracelets at the New York State Fair

The academic year began with the South Asia Program being represented at the New York State Fair in Syracuse, NY. Outreach Educator, Durga Bor, had a display on *Rakhi*, or *Raksha Bandhan*,

an Indian festival with Hindu roots, which has become secular throughout South Asia. She instructed children on how to make traditional *Rakhi* bracelets, which resulted in the making of approximately 100 bracelets that day.

The Ithaca City Schools' Resource Fair has become an annual event for the South Asia Program. This is an excellent opportunity to reach out to the entire K-12 faculty of the Ithaca City School District. Approximately 300 teachers passed by our display, some speaking with SAP's Outreach Educator about materials and presenters available to their classes in aiding them to teach about the many aspects of South Asia.



SAP's display table for Ithaca City Schools' Resource Fair

On Saturday, October 20, 2012, the South Asia Program, in conjunction with CERIS, hosted a professional development workshop for community college faculty and several high school teachers, which included representation from community colleges spanning more than a hundred mile radius of Ithaca. This one-day workshop, "Global Islam", featured mainly Cornell and Ithaca College scholars presenting topics on a range of disciplines and world areas. It was an opportunity for educators to expand their knowledge on Islamic societies around the world. Representing South Asia, Dr. Jason Freitag of Ithaca College spoke on "Islam in South Asia: Culture and Cooperation" and Pakistani novelist Sorraya Khan read from her book *Five Queens Road*, emphasizing how teachers can use novels as a tool for teaching about different cultures.



Jason Freitag speaks on "Islam in South Asia", while an American sign interpreter translates for the hearing impaired.

Sorraya's novel was focused on an Islamic family in Pakistan during and after partition.

Sorraya also gave an additional outreach presentation for Ithaca City School District teachers with the day's theme being "Cultural Sensitivity" on January 28, 2013. Once again she explained how literature in the classroom can educate both teachers and students as to the different social norms and mores of a particular culture.



Sorraya Khan reads from her novel, Five Queens Road.

For our rural school initiative, Durga Bor visited two rural schools, Sept. 27 at Spencer-Van Etten Elementary she spoke on "Hinduism, Caste and Culture" and on February 6 she visited the International Culture Club at Dryden High School, whose monthly topic was "Dance around the World". Durga gave a slide presentation entitled "The Role of Dance in Indian Culture", and gave an Odissi dance workshop and performance in this afternoon presentation.

In keeping with both our rural and community college outreach initiatives, Anthropology Professor Kathryn March visited Corning Community College March 18, where she inaugurated their library's newly-acquired "Shelf on Islamic Literature", with a talk on "Veils across the Globe". Professor March spoke about the issues surrounding women under the veil in South Asia and elsewhere.

On April 4 the SAP sponsored a classical Hindustani/crossover music presentation at Tompkins-Cortland Community College, with George Brooks on sax, Alam Khan on sarod, and Salar Nader on tabla. The trio also performed an evening concert on the Cornell campus the day before as well as leading a workshop on improvisation for the Department of Music in an open forum (see page 10).

Taking advantage of our Visiting Fulbright Scholar from India, documentary filmmaker Vani Subramanian, who is appointed in the Department of Performing and Media Arts, the SAP organized a classroom visit to Ithaca High School on Oct. 11, where she addressed students in a film class on the use of film as a media to educate the public about social injustices.



Fulbright Scholar Vani Subramanian visited an Ithaca High School film class.

Altogether there were 14 off-campus outreach activities during this academic year, and many more on campus addressing a broad range of topics.

STUDENTS

SAP Congratulates Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship Recipients for 2012-2013 Academic Year



Jonathan Abraham is a second year M.P.A student studying Hindi as a FLAS fellowship recipient. His research interest is the political economy of liberalization, focusing on the effect of remittance payments from the Indian diaspora on the balance of payments. He is a Presidential Management Fellowship Finalist through the U.S. Department of State.

Vincent Burgess is a second-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Asian Studies, where he studies the religious and cultural history of India. With the support a FLAS fellowship he is studying Hindi in order to further his research pursuits regarding the social and political aspects of renunciant traditions in colonial and postcolonial North India.



Aimée Douglas is a third-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Anthropology. Her dissertation research is focused on the production of decorative handloom textiles in Sri Lanka. As a FLAS Fellowship recipient, she has been studying Sinhala.

Faraz Haqqi is a first-year student at the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs, where he is pursuing a master's degree in Public Administration with a concentration in International Development Studies. The FLAS fellowship supports his study of the Persian language and of strategies for improved governance and poverty reduction in South Asia.



Andrea Nicoletta Haynes is currently working towards her Master's of Landscape Architecture. She is interested in the effects of climate change on ecosystems and how landscape architectural practices can be applied at the community and regional scale in mitigation and adaption. She is a practicing Buddhist and is interested in the Nepali culture and geography for it's historical and modern connection to Buddhism and for it's biodiversity/resilience and vulnerability to a shifting climate. She is honored to have been awarded a FLAS fellowship in order to study Nepali.

Karlie Fox-Knudtsen is a first year Ph.D. student in Socio-cultural Anthropology. Her research is primarily in Orissa and West Bengal, India, at the intersections of local goddess traditions, 'indigenaity', religious performance, and environmental development. Most recently she looked at issues of mining development, tribal displacement and ritual transformation, and slumification in northwestern Orissa State. Currently she is looking at how certain social and political interests operationalize indigenous goddess traditions to frame environmental development and conservation issues in Orissa state. Her first FLAS at Cornell is for the study of Bengali language, her third Indian language along with Sanskrit and Oriya. Together, these three languages enable her to read relevant texts and conduct field research. throughout East India. She is grateful for this opportunity.



Rumela Sen is a Ph.D. student studying comparative politics in the Department of Government and is working on the Maoist movement in India and Nepal. More specifically, she is interested in where and how these violent movements are more likely to transition into electoral democracy. Title of Dissertation is *From Bullets to Ballots: The Maoists and the Lure of Democracy*. She has been awarded an American Institute for Indian Studies Fellowship to do pre-dissertation research in India starting this summer.

Luke Wagner is an Exchange Scholar from Yale University, where he is pursuing a Ph.D. in Sociology. His research is about how the relationships between religion and politics affect democratic culture and norms, and he is focusing in particular on the role of secularism in Nepal's political transition. With the support of a FLAS Fellowship, he is studying Nepali.



FINE ARTS

Alam Khan, George Brooks and Salar Nader Dazzle Audience



On April 3, 2013 the South Asia Program, together with the Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture amongst Youths (SPICMACAY), presented three unique musicians: Sarodist, Alam Khan; saxophonist, George Brooks; and tablaist, Salar Nader.

The evening began with raga Puriya Dhanashree. It is hard to classify the emotional character of this raga as it varies from the transition of one note to another. The temperance of its scale makes it very emotional in character. It is elaborated with the

raudra and *bhayanaka* or the wrathful and the fearsome, but it also contains the *karunakara* or compassionate characteristic. Every transition in this raga captures a different *rasa* or sentiment, and it is an example of how classical Indian music is highly dependent upon emotions. This was followed by Kirwani Raga, believed to be taken from the South Indian Carnatic classical tradition, its minor key renders it sentimental, with moods of love, devotion and sadness (*sringara*, *bhakti* and *karuna rasa*).

Son and grandson of the legendary sarod masters, Ustads Ali Akbar Khan and Allauddin Khan, respectively, Alam Khan is carrying on the family tradition of the Maihar Seni Gharana. His command of his instrument was truly amazing, as he glided through the notes in a liquid-like way, adhering to the raga in the strictest classical sense. Alam is well on his way to following in his father's and grandfather's footsteps.

George Brooks stunned the audience with his sensitivity and execution of a very non-traditional instrument in the Hindustani genre of music, the saxophone. A uniquely loud and driving sound, the saxophone is a favorite in jazz, funk, blues, and soul music. Who would have thought this instrument could be tamed to match the sensitive sounds of a classical music performance, blending perfectly with the sounds of the sarod, and having it all make sense? Hailed as the "leading American voice in Indian jazz fusion", saxophonist and composer, George Brooks has performed with such notable musicians as Hariprasad Chaurasia, Terry Riley, John McLaughlin, Zakir Hussain, Larry Coryell, Etta James, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the Kronos Quartet, and Anthony Braxton.

Salar Nader is one of the most sought-after young tabla players today, and protégé of the famed Ustad Zakir Hussain. Born in Germany in 1981 to Afghan parents forced to flee their home during the Russian-Afghan war, Salar relocated to the San Francisco Bay area when he was five years old, and began studying tabla at the age of seven. He composed the music for the stage version of Khaled Hosseini's *Kite Runner*, and toured with the production throughout North America.

All in all, it was a perfect evening of music by three fine and talented musicians. This was their debut performance as a trio. This concert was sponsored in part by Cornell Concert for the Arts, the Martin Hatch Fund, ISPB, GPSAFC, Rose Goldson Fund and the Cornell Concert Commission.

Chitravina N. Ravikiran to Perform September 29, 2013

Once again the South Asia Program will collaborate with SPICMACAY to bring Chitravina N. Ravikiran, who performs in the South Indian, or Carnatic genre of classical music. Ravikiran trained extensively under his father, Chitravina Narasimhan. He debuted as a vocalist in 1972, at Coimbatore at the age of five. At the age of ten, he switched over to the 21-stringed chitravina and gave his maiden chitravina concert at age eleven. He established himself as an Indian string instrumentalist within the next three years with recitals in prestigious venues and festivals. The chitravina is one of the most exquisite of Indian musical instruments. Also referred to as the gotuvadyam, it is a 21-stringed, fretless lute. Noted instrumentalist and vocalist, Ravikiran will give a chitravina concert at 8 p.m. in Barnes Hall Auditorium on September 29, 2013. He will be accompanied on mrdangam, a cylindrical drum, by noted percussionist, Vinod Seetharaman, and on violin by Ranjani Ramakrishnan.



Emme Edmunds Receives Boren Fellowship Award

Emme Edmunds has been awarded a Boren Fellowship to study in Delhi, India during the 2013-14 academic year. Ms. Edmunds is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Development Sociology at Cornell University. Her research focuses on sexual and reproductive rights and health in India and the United States and women's experiences with formal and informal information and education. As part of her research, she will continue her study of the Hindi language.

David L. Boren Fellowships are sponsored by the National Security Education Program (NSEP), a major federal initiative designed to build a broader and more qualified pool of U.S. citizens with foreign language and international skills. In exchange for funding, Boren award recipients agree to work in the federal government for a period of at least one year.

Midwives Emme Edmunds, Sonia Singh and Linda Schutt in New Delhi

An independent not-for-profit founded in 1919, Institute of International Education is among the world's largest and most experienced international education and exchange organizations. Undergraduate and graduate students interested in applying for the Boren Awards should visit www.borenawards.org.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD



Hayden Kantor, a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at Cornell University, was awarded an American Institute for Indian Studies Junior Fellowship for his project, “*The Struggle to Have Enough*.” These are his “Notes from the Field”:

I was walking through the sleepy village of Amalpur one afternoon with Mohan, a strapping 22-year-old. Like many young men from rural Bihar, Mohan has sought his future beyond the confines of his village. Currently, he works as a bus conductor on a long distance sleeper route that runs nightly between Patna, the capital of Bihar, and Siliguri, a city in West Bengal. Yet on this day Mohan had returned to his home in Amalpur on a break from his job, having become exhausted by the rigors of the work.

Bus conductor is a typical job for village boys who come from poor families. As an eldest son, Mohan feels both the burden and pride of earning money to contribute to his family. At the same time, he detailed the various pressures of the job: grueling schedules, hauling luggage, fixing flat tires, and dealing with demanding bosses and passengers. Indeed several former conductors from the village have suffered serious

injuries due to falls from moving buses or crashes caused by poorly maintained vehicles and treacherous road conditions. Mohan works all night, and sleeps in the bus in the daytime. When we first met, he took my hand in his and marveled, “Your hands are so soft. You use your brain in your work. My hands are rough, from all the hard work I have to do.” But he also relished showing off his muscles and boasting how much weight he could lift.

I have come to Amalpur to conduct my dissertation fieldwork on changing farming and eating practices in rural Bihar in light of the recent capitalization of agriculture. Crop yields in this area have risen with the introduction of Green Revolution technologies such as hybrid seeds, fertilizers, and mechanized irrigation and tractors. Yet while small-scale farmers are able to grow enough food to feed their families, they also struggle to earn the money they need to survive. The commodification of farming inputs and many other aspects of rural life have prompted many young men to leave agriculture in search of wage labor, often handing off the farming of their land to sharecroppers. Yet leaving the village also means giving up access to the nourishing foods produced there. My research focuses on how rural Biharis negotiate these shifts with respect to the economics, pleasures, and ethics of growing, preparing, and eating food.

A few days before he took his break, Mohan was working one night when he accidentally drank what turned out to be distilled water meant to refill batteries. The water is sold in clear, unmarked plastic containers and looks just like mineral water. He drank two liters and ended up in the hospital with intense internal pain. The fact that he made such a mistake underscores the stressful conditions under which he works. In the aftermath of that incident, he was disconcerted to find that his prized vigor had diminished. So he returned home and undertook intensive dietary regime of milk, fruits (taken in milk), yogurt, *rotis* loaded with *ghee*, green vegetables, and wholesome grains in an attempt to regain his strength. For this task, it was best to be in the village, eating the vegetables and drinking the milk available here.

As he was telling me about his situation, we came to a shady grove in which many of the village teenage boys like to gather to play cricket. We watched them from a distance for a bit. Most of the players were his cousins, just a few years younger than he, yet Mohan was dismissive of them: “These kids are rich. Their fathers just give them money so they don't have to work. They can play cricket all day long. But I don't have a father to give me money. They don't have any worries like I do.”





As we left, I asked him how he was feeling physically. “I’m not ready,” he said. “I’m not ready yet. But I have to go back now.”

* * *

Not long after my walk with Mohan, I went to the fields where some farm workers were finishing up the rice harvest. As men increasingly migrate out of the area to find work in factories, women must increasingly help in the field while also taking care of housework. Once the paddy has been cut and laid out in the sun to dry, workers pack up small bundles of it into massive bales, each 30-50 kg in weight. They then carry these bundles on their heads a significant distance, along the narrow bunds that transect the fields, to the area on the outskirts of the village where the crops will be stacked and stored.

Upon arriving that day, I was surprised to find Kamla Devi, limping badly. I had seen her a few days earlier, and she seemed fine then. When I asked her what happened, her normally sunny voice was filled with anguish, “Oh, *bhai*, I fell!”

A few days earlier, while carrying a load of paddy she slipped on one of the raised, uneven bund that separates plots. (I had tripped once myself, on the slick morning dew, and though the ground appeared soft, it felt like landing on concrete.) Yet here she still was, hobbling in evident pain, having walked more than two kilometers from her village, putting in a full day's work. While her husband, their fifteen-year-old daughter, and their twelve-year-old son carried the last of the bales, she hobbled around the plot, gleaning stray grains to take home. Her family will receive a half share of the crop from their employer when the work is complete at the end of the season. Until then, she carefully added fallen strands of rice to her bundle to take home.

Participant-observation is a foundational methodological approach for anthropologists, and while I have been able to participate in many different farming activities during my time in Amalpur, I have also encountered the hazards involved in it. In participating in their field work, I have had to re-articulate ideas of my own. Yet rather than romanticizing agricultural labor as a type of communion that links the farmer and his land, it's clear that many of my informants consider their work repetitive, exhausting, and occasionally dangerous. No one would spend their day carrying 50 kg loads on their heads for ten minutes at a time unless he or she absolutely had to. Moreover, there are others perilous activities from which I've had to abstain: When plowing, two men ride tottering atop a heavy wooden plank hitched to the back of the tractor, used to level the land. Likewise, when using the threshing machine, one must take care to ensure that one's fingers do not get caught in the fast spinning metal hooks that strip the rice grain from the rest of the fiber. For each of these tasks, tales of accidents and mangled limbs abound.

As such, Mohan and Kamla Devi's predicaments each point to the complex relationship between economic security and bodily security. Going out to work is the only way to ensure the body—to make sure family has good food to eat and a comfortable house to sleep in. The paradox is that in doing so, they must put their own bodies at risk. Given the prevalence of multiple threats—operating dangerous farm equipment, consuming contaminated food in locales far from home, traveling while hanging off the roof of an overcrowded bus—it's not surprising that concerns work and bodily violation are so common in contemporary Bihar. Yet with stomachs to fill and money to earn, resting up to what they considered to be full health was a luxury neither Mohan nor Kamla Devi could afford.

Note: I have changed the names of the people and village discussed.

RABINDRANTH TAGORE MODERN LITERATURE LECTURE SERIES

Rajasthani Tales in English: Lessons Learned Translating the Work of Vijaydan

Our September, 2012, Rabindranath Tagore Modern Lecture Series speaker was Christi Merrill, Associate Professor of South Asian Literature and Postcolonial Theory, Asian Languages and Cultures and Comparative Literature at the University of Michigan. Christi spoke on Rajasthani author Vijaydan Detha's exuberant oral-based tales which have been winning awards for decades but are famously difficult to translate into English. Christi Merrill offered glimpses into the process of collaborating with the author and his Hindi translator to reflect on the larger challenges of recreating Indian literature for the English-language reader.



Amit Chaudhuri to Speak for Upcoming Rabindranath Tagore Modern Literature Lecture Series



The South Asia Program is pleased to announce that this year's Rabindranath Tagore Modern Literature Lecture Series speaker will be author and musician Amit Chaudhuri. Born in Mumbai in 1962, Amit grew up in Bombay. He has written numerous novels, short stories, poems and critical essays in English. He is currently Professor of Contemporary Literature at the University of East Anglia, United Kingdom. Chaudhuri is the author of five novels, the latest of which is *The Immortals*, a novel about music in the modern world. *The Immortals* was a New Yorker and San Francisco Chronicle Book of the Year and Critics' Choice Best Books of 2009 in the Boston Globe and the Irish

Times. His study of D.H. Lawrence's poetry, *D.H. Lawrence and 'Difference': Postcoloniality and the Poetry of the Present*, was called 'truly ground-breaking' by Terry Eagleton in the *London Review of Books*. [contemporarywriters.com]. On March 18, 2008, he was included in the panel for the Man Booker International Prize, 2008, and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

Amit is also an acclaimed Indian classical musician, and an internationally recognised singer and composer of Indo-Western experimental music, with an album from each of these genres. His project in experimental music, bringing together the raga, jazz, the blues, rock, techno, disco, and the Indian popular song, is called "This is not Fusion", and has been performed worldwide.

Amit attended University College London, Balliol College, Oxford and has also been Creative Arts Fellow at Wolfson College. He was Leverhulme Fellow at Cambridge University, a Visiting Professor at Columbia University, and Samuel Fischer Guest Professor of Literature at Freie Universität Berlin. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amit_Chaudhuri].

This year's lecture will take place at 4:30 pm, Friday, September 27, at the Kahin Center on 640 Stewart Ave., Ithaca, NY 14850. A reception will follow. This event is free and open to all.

The Rabindranath Tagore Endowment in Modern Indian Literature, is made possible through a generous gift by Professor Emeritus Narahari Umanath Prabhu and his wife, Mrs. Suman Prabhu. The Lectures are designed to bring a distinguished writer from India or elsewhere to present a series of seminars on aspects of modern Indian literature (prose, poetry and fiction), that is, literature in the Indian regional languages plus English. An accomplished writer, artist, and composer, as well as social critic and educator, Rabindranath Tagore, 1861-1941, was the 1913 recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature. Now, nearly 60 years after his death, a new generation of Indian writers writing in English and India's regional languages have attracted global attention to the continuing vitality of Indian literatures. The series got underway in the fall of 2009, when Bengali writer, Sunil Gangopadhyay spoke on *Poet Rabindranath Tagore's Involvement in the National Movement against the British Rule in India*.

Chaudhuri's image from: <http://www.uea.ac.uk/mac/comm/media/press/2012/October/creative-writing-india-amit-chaudhuri>

PUBLICATIONS

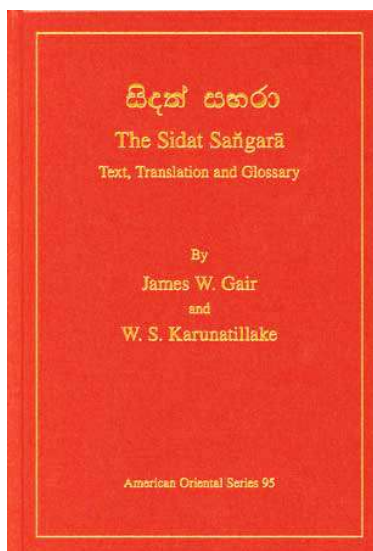
The Sidat Sangara: Text, Translation, and Commentary

by James W. Gair and W. S. Karunatillake

American Oriental Series - AOS 95

American Oriental Society, April 15, 2013

Price: \$45.00



The *Sidat Sangara*, (also *Sidat Sangarava* or *Sidat Sangarawa*) “Compilation of Principles,” is a medieval Sinhala (Sinhalese) grammar composed in the thirteenth century on the Sinhala poetic language of that period. It can rightly claim to be the earliest indigenous grammar of any current Indo-Aryan language, and it has been widely considered in Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) to be the repository of the “true” language. Part of a rich Sinhala literary tradition, it also includes chapters on poetics, with examples drawn from earlier works, some lost. The influence of the work still lives, despite the arising of new genres. It is thus a cultural landmark in the history of Sri Lanka while linking with the rich literary and grammatical tradition of India and South Asia. There have been, as far as we know, only two translations in western languages: in English by James de Alwis in 1852 and in German by Herbert Guenther in Vienna in 1943. The present collaborative volume is a completely new translation of the work along with a general introduction, the full text of the sutras in both Sinhala script and Roman transliteration, a glossary for each sutra, and notes on a number of problematic points. The edition includes a complete glossary, with

Sanskrit and Pali etymologies for the Sinhala technical terms and many other forms.

This work and its publication are the result of a close collaboration over many decades between Emeritus Professor of Linguistics James W. Gair of Cornell University USA and Professor of Linguistics W.S. Karunatillake of Kelaniya University Sri Lanka (sadly recently deceased), dating from the latter’s doctoral studies at Cornell. Both scholars hold Cornell Ph.D. degrees, and Professor Gair has a D.Litt. from Kelaniya.

Absolute Constructions in Early Indo-European by **Antonia Ruppel**, Classics Department, Cornell University

In the past, discussions of absolute constructions (ACs) have been limited by an imprecise understanding of what ACs are. By examining the nature and function of ACs and related constructions in Greek, Latin and Sanskrit, this new study arrives at a clear and simple definition of ACs. Focussing on the earliest attested material in each language, it highlights how AC usage differs between languages and offers explanations for these differences. Identifying the common core shared by all ACs, it suggests a starting-point and way by which they developed into Greek, Latin and Sanskrit. Further historical study reveals how ACs have been conceived of by grammarians, philologists and even Christian missionaries over the



last two thousand years and how enduring misconceptions still affect our discussion of them today. All Sanskrit material is annotated in detail, making it accessible for classicists in particular and allowing a better understanding of ACs in Greek and Latin.*

A linguist, Antonia Ruppel teaches in Cornell’s Classics Department, and is a teacher of Sanskrit, Latin and Ancient Greek languages and literature. She received her undergraduate and graduate degrees in Classics from the University of Cambridge, receiving her Ph.D. in 2007.

*Taken from: http://www.cambridge.org/gb/knowledge/isbn/item6883632/?site_



Panel discussion of film, l to r, Tula Goenka, Anindita Banerjee, Lucinda Ramberg, Vani Subramanian, KV Raman

debt that, when coupled with the pressures of modernization, leads them to take their lives in an attempt to escape difficult situations. Additionally, the framing of farmer suicides by activist groups and the media may have exaggerated the nature of this crisis, which detracts from the seriousness of suicides among Indian youth (especially females).

The role of activist groups and social movements in framing the discourse on agrarian crisis is evident in new forms of violence and protest. Rumela Sen (Cornell) discussed the Maoist framing of land relations that shifts farmer violence from suicide to rebellion. For Maoists, issues of crisis related to money lending, seed technology and land allocation are protracted by the ‘semi-feudal, semi-

colonial society’ of India. In this framework, the only solution to crisis is a complete revolution of the current system in order to rebuild a truly democratic state. Capitalizing on this ideology, Maoists are able to co-opt farmers into the broader social movement. Farmers learn to redirect their anger outward against the state, as the Maoist movement perpetuates its understanding among farmers and activists across India.

A paper by Vikramaditya Thakur (Yale University) further highlighted the issues of framing in public culture and media in agrarian crisis and land distribution. His ethnographic study of local social movements in western India emphasized the various paths to dissent that leaders take when engaging in protest against the state. Individual social and educational differences shape actors preferences and knowledge related to the agrarian crisis, which in turn shapes the perceptions of movement leaders, NGO groups and state actors. The paper’s focus on protests against the Sardar Sarovar dam and relocation program tied nicely to another element of agrarian crisis- namely water.

As presentations by Ann Gold (Syracuse), Nagesh Gavirneni (Cornell) and Sri Vedachalam (Cornell) demonstrated, the crisis of water is a growing problem in Indian agriculture. With an increase in demand, as well as the need for sanitary drinking and irrigation water, the state is faced with a serious public goods dilemma. While governing the commons is never an easy task, the panelists were able to offer some solutions based around new technology and cooperation that may help mitigate the current and future crisis of water.

Finally, a panel entitled “The Way Forward” summarized some of the main themes of the conference and offered some possible solutions for the future. M.H. Metha (Science Ashram) discussed the introduction of organic farming and bio-pesticide use in Indian farming practices. Other scholars argued for increased state capacity, especially in the regulation and promotion of seed technology, farming practices and support for struggling farmers. Additionally, participants debated whether the evidence presented at the conference suggests agrarian crisis is occurring in India, or if it is an artifact of construction that seeks to demonize global markets and modernization. While the question of framing is not easily resolved, those present agreed that changes in the nature of political participation and state-wide reforms are necessary to combat the most evident challenges in agrarian India. From the two-day discussion it becomes clear that fair access to resources, public goods and best practices are necessary to help farmers stay profitable in the changing economy.



Sri Vedachalam, Srinagesh Gavirneni, & Ann Gold

Triveni Gandhi is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Government.

VISITORS

The South Asia Program Welcomes this Year's Visiting Scholars to Cornell



Maina Dhital, Nepal
Humphrey Fellow

Journalist, Kantipur Daily

Maina's interests span agriculture and development policy, food security, poverty reduction, climate change mitigation, and agricultural economics. Maina Dhital is the senior sub-editor and deputy chief of the Business and Economic Bureau for the Kantipur Daily. Working in Nepal's male-dominated media for the last twelve years, Dhital challenged her colleagues to stop neglecting women leaders. Dhital specializes in stories about agriculture, development and the economy; she has also frequently written about human rights. Dhital is an advisor and the founding general secretary of Working Women Journalists (WWJ). She is also general secretary of the Nepal chapter of South Asian Women in Media (SAWM).



Bishnupriya Ghosh
Society for the Humanities Fellow

Department of English, University of California, Santa Barbara

"Speculating Life: Theorizing HIV/AIDS Pandemic Media" Much of her scholarly work has been on the cultures of globalization (literature, visual culture, and cinema), the two published (*When Borne Across* and *Global Icons*) and one monograph in progress (*The Unhomely Sense*) variously investigating the relations between the global and the postcolonial; area studies and transnational cultural studies; popular, mass, and elite cultures.



Ajay Raghava, India
Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow

Deputy Director, Ministry of Environment & Forests, National Ganga River Basin Authority, Government of India

Ajay's directorate is responsible for conservation of rivers and lakes in the country. He has experience in policy formulation and implementation of river conservation program in India and is involved in implementation of the National Ganga River Basin Authority's program, which focuses on pollution abatement measures for improving water quality of one of the most important Indian rivers. Previously he served at Central Pollution Control Board and worked in the area of environmental planning, industrial pollution control and environment management. He has been involved in development of planning tools for ecologically based land use for urban areas, and developed approaches for siting of industries. Ajay has degrees in Civil Engineering, Environmental Planning and Energy & Environment Management. He was a British Chevening Scholar for Environment Management in 1999 at the University of Bradford, UK and a Fulbright Fellow for Environmental Policy and Law in 2003 at the US Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, DC.



Bhaskar Sarkar
Society for the Humanities Fellow

Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies at UC Santa Barbara, CA

Works in four broad fields: 1) Postcolonial Media Theory, 2) Globalization and Media, 3) Asian Film and Video Cultures, and 4) Risk, Uncertainty and Speculation. He is currently associated with two long-term collaborative research projects, with multiple volumes in the works: "The Subaltern and the Popular," and "Speculative Globalities." The author of *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition* (Duke University Press, 2009), he has also coedited a volume of essays, *Documentary Testimonies: Global Archives of Suffering* (Routledge, 2009), and special issues of *The Journal of Postcolonial Studies* ("The Subaltern and the Popular," 2005) and *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* ("Indian Documentary Studies," 2012). He has also published widely in journals such as *Cultural Dynamics*, *Rethinking History*, and *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*.



Vani Subramanian, India
Visiting Fulbright Fellow, Department of Performing and Media Arts

Vani Subramanian is a documentary filmmaker and feminist activist from Delhi. Her films span a range of concerns from socially embedded realities of the free market and primary school education to urban development and safety, communalism, the politics of sex selective abortions, and personal and political dimensions of our food practices. Her films have been screened at a range of forums and festivals, and received national and international awards. As a Fulbright Fellow, currently at Cornell's Department of Performing and Media Arts, she is looking at the gendered nature of cinematic spaces in popular Hindi films.



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Professor Emeritus Kenneth A.R. Kennedy Celebrates 50 years as SAP Faculty



Dr. Kenneth A.R. Kennedy of the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Cornell University, came to the Department of Anthropology in 1964 to establish a program in biological anthropology and build a laboratory in McGraw Hall. This was done and up to his retirement from his present department in 2005 (followed by three more years of teaching) Kennedy's field research has been conducted in Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka with the support of NSF, the

Smithsonian Institution, the Howard Foundation, the American Institute of Pakistan Studies, The American Institute of Indian Studies and the South Asia Program of Cornell University.

He served two years as the Director of the Program. Among his awards was the T.D. Dale Stewart Award for Forensic Anthropology by the American Board of Forensic Anthropologist,

elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Vice-President of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists. He has been listed in Who's in the World since 1989. For his book *God-Apes and Fossil Men: Palaeoanthropology of South Asia* he received the William W. Howell's Book award from the American Anthropological Association in 2002. Since that date he has undertaken eight research programs in South Asia. Now retired, he is active professionally with four articles in press. According to Ken, "The great thing about retirement is that you can get some work done!"



Kennedy's former students, Drs. Nancy C. Lovell and John R. Lukacs unearth a fossil man with Kenneth from a Bronze Age Site (2500-1700 B.C.) at an urban center of Harappa in the Punjab region of Pakistan, also referred to as part of the Indus Civilization

Congratulations Cornell's 2013-2014 Fulbright Student Scholarship Recipients for Study in South Asia



Andrew Amstutz, India
 Department of History
 "Vernacular Histories and Science in twentieth-century India: The *Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu*"



Jeffrey Valla, India
 Department of Psychology
 "Hindustani Music as Non-Invasive Perceptual Therapy for Children with Autism in Dehli"



Aimee Douglas, Sri Lanka
 Department of Anthropology
 "Artisanal Nation: Heritage Production and the 'Crafting' of Identification in Sri Lanka"



Kasia Paprocki, Bangladesh
 Department of Development Sociology
 "Politics of the Landless: Development and Resistance in Rural Bangladesh"

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