

Washington South Asia Report

Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies

Volume XXI, Number 1, Winter, 2006

Message from the Director

K. Sivaramakrishnan

Let me begin by wishing all of you a very happy and prosperous new year! I hope you enjoyed the new look for the newsletter and the many new features. We will continue to expand coverage of issues and present more stories and perspectives in each new issue, and suggestions for other improvements are always welcome. A rainy and cold winter is upon us, but the affairs of the South Asia Program and Center are off to a busy start this calendar year. In this winter quarter we are organizing a series of lectures on south Asian poetic tradition. The first of these events was graced by CM Naim of the University of Chicago. His wonderful lecture on the Urdu Ghazal held a large audience spell bound and generated a spirited discussion later.

On the second day of his visit Prof. Naim joined many of us in a more informal setting, the South Asia Chai. This fortnightly Friday afternoon event, started last term, is proving to be a popular occasion for students and faculty to assemble for a hot cup of tea, some *samosas* or *pakorras*, and discussions, led by faculty, visitors, or graduate students. On this particular occasion Prof. Naim shared his experience with writing about contemporary Islamic youth and related issues in Indian newspapers. As part of the poetic traditions series we will host Prof. Indira Peterson, of Mount Holyoke College. She will be in Seattle in a few weeks to talk about classical Tamil poetry.

We resume our popular Indian film series this quarter with the help of Visiting Professor S. Charusheela from University of Hawaii. Every film screening will be briefly introduced by a member of the faculty. Another colleague, Prof. Zahid Chaudhary of the Department of English, has organized a graduate seminar and speaker series on the topic of 'Postcolonial Visuality' that is jointly sponsored by South Asian Studies and the Simpson Center for the Humanities. South Asian film maker Iftikhar Dadi and renowned film scholar Ravi Vasudevan will visit us to lecture and meet students in February and March 2006 as part of this series.

A measure of the growing interest of the University of Washington administration in the promotion of South Asian Studies may be found in the visit made by Prof. Susan Jeffords, Vice Provost for Global Affairs, to India in December 2005. She had a successful trip covering both north and south India during which, in addition to signing some Memoranda of Understanding with Indian universities, she also had occasion to meet with academic policy makers and university leaders in New Delhi and see a few unforgettable sights on her first trip there. A series of follow up measures resulting from this trip are in the planning stages. We are also working actively with the Trade Development Alliance to support their Washington Trade Mission to India later in 2006. Some collaborative events in this connection are being planned and will occur over the next few months.

Our graduate students and new faculty are doing us proud with their research and their active participation in academic conferences. We carry in this issue a field report from one student, Leah Koskimaki, currently in the western Himalaya doing dissertation research, as well as profiles of, and reports from, other students and faculty. Among our visiting faculty and scholars Dr. Jane Dyson will be teaching a course on Youth Cultures in South Asia, and Prof. S. Charusheela will be teaching a course

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“ Poverty is the most important issue for women in India” Tanika Sarkar Interviewed by Amy Bhatt

Noted historian **Tanika Sarkar** was the Rockefeller Resident Fellow at the Simpson Center for Humanities in Fall 2005. She is the author of *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation* and *Bengal, 1928-1934: The Politics of Protest*. Her recent research focuses on the rise of the Hindu right and its impact on women. At UW, she delivered public lectures and took part in many round table discussions on Indian history, gender, social movements, and the rise of Hindu fundamentalism. She spoke to **Amy Bhatt**, a second year Ph.D. students in the Women’s Studies department, a few days before she left for India.

First, I want to say thank you for taking the time to talk with me. It’s been wonderful to have you here at UW. I was wondering if you could tell me a bit about your own history, where you were born, what did your parents do, how did you take your education?

Well, thank you for talking to me and it was wonderful to be here. My own history’s pretty boring. I was born into an academic family. My mother’s a Sanskritist and my father was a teacher of English literature. Both in Calcutta, in Presidency College and in Jadavpur University. So I more or less grew up in a family dealing with liberal arts, but I chose to do History.

So what made you get interested in history?

That’s difficult to say. Probably, you know, I had only a choice between history and literature. Those two were the subjects that interested me and since my parents were both doing literature, I chose history! But I suppose, since I was an only child and a lonely child, I was interested in people. And, the lives of people, what’s ticking inside them. So I used to think a lot about people and this was one way of looking at them collectively and individually. I mean, if I think back, I thought, if

I’m not going to do novels and literature then its history.

So who were some of the people who sparked your intellectual interest in History as you moved from your undergraduate and onto graduate work? Were there any particular figures or moments that really sparked your interest in history also?

When I was growing up, the Naxalbari Movement and the Vietnam War were happening. I would say it was really the Vietnam War because it sort of went on and on throughout my childhood, my youth, and continued for so long. So I just began to read up the subject thoroughly and I got interested in histories of communism

and socialism, and the international movements, so on and so forth. So that kind of got me used to taking up the subject and reading around it. I remember at that time, I also started reading Chomsky and others. So I would say I was sort of interested more in contemporary history, but it was not something that I knew I was going to do for myself when I would come to do research. When I came to research, it was Bengal because I knew knowing a language was important and Bengali is my real language.



Prof. Tanika Sarkar (left) and Prof. Priti Ramamurthy.

While I was growing up in college Ashin Das Gupta, whose work on trade in Malabar in the 18th century and trade in Surat was very famous, was also a very influential teacher. He exposed us to history, important history writings of the day quite diligently and always pushed us to think for ourselves. So, it was a whole lot of things- political movements around, at home and internationally, wanting to know what makes them tick, what’s really happening, and trying to figure out what is actually going on which is not visible.

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Tanika Sarkar Interview (continued)

So, you mentioned an intellectual interest in some of the movements that were happening, were you personally involved in any of these?

Not really. No, I was in England for a year with my parents just after school. And I did my A-levels there. And the Naxalbari Movement was in its height around that time. So when I came back, it was already a movement where you might get yourself very badly burned. And I wasn't sure that I would want to be a part of a violent movement. It was more of a political sympathy, a kind of agonized sympathy, but not direct involvement. So the choice was really to keep out of it, which was probably a compound of cowardice and belief in non-violence.

Thinking of movements, your work has been deeply influential on the question of gender and nationalism. And how would you describe your own interest in questions of gender and history?

That's interesting because before I came to Delhi to do my Ph.D., feminism was not in the air for me. Women's history was pretty unthinkable at that stage. And I wanted to do the hard archival history, a proper training in history and historical methods. My first book is actually on popular movements of nationalism in Bengal. I don't know why, but from the very beginning, I knew that women had to be as much a part of it. They were a part of the movement, it's not that I was looking particularly hard for them. But it was not very conventional at the point where I was researching and writing, to automatically bring in women and questions of gender. And I suppose my own gender had something to do with that, I was by then a married woman. I had been exposed to family politics, gender politics, and the women's movement was growing in Delhi. I was involved in some of the issues and agitations, so I suppose that was the first work that was gendered history, not just on gender, but really gendered history.

Your work has also highlighted the complex ways in which women are not only survivors of communal violence, but also in some cases, perpetrators of it. And thinking also about gendered history, what have been some of the responses you have received to centering gender in examinations of communal violence, or violence in general? Especially with regard to the contradictory role that women often play in acts of violence?

I have worked on other dimensions of Hindu communal-

ism, not just gender. But because we started working in a group of five, and I was the only woman in the group, I went on to pursue that part of it. My understanding of the movement was that it was deeply inclined towards violence. It was hateful, but it was not necessarily fundamentalist in its gender ideology. It was very orthodox and conservative, but not fundamentalist. Now this was an issue, a contentious issue. I think a lot of secular feminist colleagues did not like this and I have had this problem that whenever I try to talk of these women's complicity with the politics of violence, they would always want me to talk about their fundamentalism. And looking there, I would not see anything very much beyond mainstream, upper-caste, orthodox Hindu values. So that was one problem. Secondly, this was a point when already a lot of very good and mature feminist work on "women as victims" had come to a crescendo. So at this point, to talk about violent women and a very contradictory sort, well not contradictory but a grim sort of women's politics, was not taken very well. And that also caused some problems. But we know they are some bad women, but we don't need to talk about them.

And if you talk about them, then talk about them as patriarchally managed women, but I did not see them in that way. And then when Gujarat happened, some of us who were trying to document the exact forms of violence done to Muslim women faced this problem, that you know, if you talk of this kind of torture and torment, then you are actually replicating a male gaze, a voyeuristic gaze. You're repeating the rape verbally, which was a difficult issue. I mean, I just had a conversation with Kamala Visweswaran about it, and I still hold on because I suppose my training is as a historian. Whatever "facts" are there on the ground, I can't ignore them. I know that they need to enter into the documents.

So that there's still value in the documentation.
Exactly.

Moving forward a little bit, your work concerns issues that are very pertinent to Indian politics and social movements today. What do you see as the role of history to inform current phenomenon, current movements?

You know, that's a very troubling question. Because on the one hand, as you know, the horizon is filled with debates on history. And if any subject gets caught in the

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Tanika Sarkar Interview (continued)

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cross fires between right and left, or right and secular, it is history. For some reason, it has been the ground on which both right-wing and secular politics must take their stand. I won't go into the details of that, but we often pushed to provide secular histories. Now, I'll talk about the problem of that. I fully believe in secular history, but history is something bigger than secular histories. History is ultimately unmanipulatable, it will always have an excess beyond what you want it do. If you are being honest with your own craft, your own sources and records and so on, so what if it does not lend itself to secular conclusions?

There is the problem of over-sanitized histories; we cannot talk of conflict, cannot talk of violence in the past, in the pre-colonial past for instance. That we cannot talk of where there have been minorities, or rather, you cannot talk of Muslims and Hindus in general. You should always specify which group of Hindus and which group of Muslims. And I never see why we should "cover" up for Muslim emperors' wrongs, because emperors or kings always are tyrannical. And they certainly don't represent the entirety of Indian Muslims. So there is a tendency to talk about Akbar and Aurangzeb or to talk in pretty terms about people who are being victimized in the present. But it bothers me that you can talk of this and not talk of that-self-repression. So I think, we have to write the kinds of histories that are available to us, through our researches and in no way should secular histories lend themselves to any right-wing agenda. But, at the same time, to write just for secularism may not make for interesting histories or honest histories.

So, considering the question of secularism, secular histories and also thinking about the politics behind the work you do as well, would you consider your work to be feminist? Would it fall into that category?
Sure. Sure.

And who do you see yourself in dialogue with as a feminist within India?

I think feminists who deal with problems of secularism, problems of communalism but also feminists who work on religion, because I'm interested in that. Also, feminists who look at social norms and laws. Laws and rights is another area I'm keenly interested in and there are debates among feminists in India about whether citizenship rights are of any value or are they counter-productive. Is the public sphere as the realm of politics hospitable to

women or, should women really cultivate an inner domain, because the public sphere is something that is just inhospitable? The political is always employed to domesticate and tame women, or to give them false rights and silence them. So, these are important debates that I'm engaged in my work.

What do you see as the most important issues that face women today in India?

Poverty. Because that's something that's been brushed under the carpet throughout India. I think that's the ground for women really, because questions of sexuality, questions of tortures, questions of violence are always most acute for poor women. If you think of rape, if you think of even domestic violence, it is particularly acute for poor women because on the one hand, they have to be within the family. They do not have anything outside that to sustain them, except in those small spaces where there's a supportive women's movement. But the state does not provide for them, private organizations do not provide. So the only shelter is the family. And when the family begins to torture them, they are even more helpless. There are questions of sexuality; rape is such a blatant form of caste and class struggle in our country.

But I always find it interesting when I'm talking about it in this country, because here feminists are always talking about race. And that is, up to now, not an issue in India. So, sometimes we are talking at cross-purposes. Certainly women of South Asian origins have also put race clearly into the feminist horizon, Chandra Mohanty and so on. And I admire their work, I see the politics, the importance of that politics. But for Indian women, that's one issue which is not of any relevance whatsoever.

So would you say that you see yourself falling more in line with Third World Feminisms?

Again, that is a question which I suppose feminists here would find more relevant, you know? India is such a big country that I do not really understand (what) does it mean to be a Third World feminist. I mean, there are networks going on, but we tend to network more with First World feminists, isn't that so? Because other Third World countries do not have the resources for sustained dialogues, although we may have a lot more in common with them. I would see the Third World as an entity centered on imperialism, not race as such. Although the two are, of course, interrelated, but my Third Worldism is far more centered on imperialism.

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Tanika Sarkar Interview (continued)

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What would you recommend to those people from the United States or abroad who are interested in getting involved in activism in India? Or, how might we build stronger alliances between Indians outside of India or others interested in India with movements for social change within India?

One thing I would warn against is, sometimes very well-meaning and politically very good people, rush into alliances with groups that they haven't sufficiently checked out. There's a group in England called *Awaz* and others groups which are checking out on every Indian organization they give funds to, even if it is for very innocuous things. Because the Indian right-wing operates under multiple names and you can't pin them down. So for instance, in Gujarat, with the earthquake, a lot of money was raised by the BJP under a different name. A lot of them [right-wing groups] function under social welfare, charity, etc, names like that. Secondly, NGOs with which people here bond. Sometimes they face a lot of ambivalences and active obstruction in India. There are some very interesting movements going on in rural education and in education of slum children, even street children, which are good. Environmental movements are very important and they are just dying for want of cooperation. At least even spreading some of their voices here, sort of taking them back here. And they function, even the Narmada Bachao Andolan, which is the best known of them all, functions under conditions of absolute nothing. People have to trudge for miles to get to a phone booth. So that's one environmental movement and wherever possible, if there are trade union movements. But here, among the diaspora, I think it's going to be very interesting because I think right now, the Indian right-wing is going to work more with the diaspora than in India.

So what do you see happening there? Could you say a little bit more?

That the Indian communities here, South Asian communities here, they are going to be the major target areas for the right-wing. And because they are not adequately known here, and because perhaps they supply something that other groups do not supply, which is religion and culture. So at least I think that is an area which needs major intervention. They are going to draw a lot of sustenance from the groups here.

So what projects await you back in Delhi?

I just started reading the secondary literature for my next project, for which the trip has really been useful because we don't get much that work which is on criminal lunacy, jail labor, and vagrancy in 19th century Bengal.

I want to end now by asking the most important question: how have you enjoyed your time in Seattle and the University of Washington overall?

Oh, it has been absolutely marvelous. You people must be getting tired of hearing such rhapsodies, but it's a beautiful city, warm and friendly people. Extremely positive in its approaches to people from outside and the University had been wonderful. I have never seen an American university which takes so much care with people who come from outside, their guests. And the library is superb.

Well I am glad to hear that! Thank you so much, it was great to talk with you.

Thank you as well!

Director's Message (contd.)

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on Women and the New Economy in India. To learn about all these activities and more visit our new-look web pages and do get in touch as we look forward to working with, and for, all of you.

-K. Sivaramakrishnan, Director

The Washington South Asia Report is published three times a year from Seattle, Washington. The South Asia Center is a U.S. Department of Education Title VI Funded National Resource Center.

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Notes From the Field:
Youth Politics and the Public Sphere in India's Uttarakhand
By Leah M. Koskimaki

Uttarakhand, India

Perhaps it is because I am researching youth participation in the public sphere in the mountains here, that I think that youth, or *yuva* in Hindi, has become such a commonplace word and a much discussed topic of local concern and interest. But I do believe it is more than that: the new generation is always a subject that provokes a response in people, for the reason that it is a marker of changing ideas. "Youth" (approximately aged 20-30) are seen as a source of new energy or purpose, or of disillusionment and frustration, or as a gauge to perceive the future of an idea or an ideology. Even more, youth politics, forms of youth activism, and student mobilization as I have observed it in the foothills of the western Indian Himalaya have a unique history and influence which has shaped the intellectual element and voice in this region. The various periods of youth movements here are linked to expressions of regionalism, nationalism, and social change, whose mobilization campaigns expand out from the intellectual circles in hill towns to villages throughout the foothills. The movements are based on such various themes as environmentalist campaigns, anti alcoholism, education and reservations policies, and the lack of employment opportunities for a youth forced to migrate outward to the "combative" plains for work. Some also contain various forms of personal agendas, layers of power and competition, and as a means of entry into politics and status. I believe that attention to this age group is important because it is a way to theoretically analyze how youth emerges in the public sphere as a category that has been constructed, guided or represented. I am working to trace the relationship between youth and the state here over time, as well as provide a window through which to witness the various changes taking place during the construction of Uttarakhand (the popular locally used referential term for Uttarakhand).

How can we situate the study of youth and the public sphere in Uttarakhand? In particular scholars

have highlighted the region's history of long serving colonial administrators whose patronage shaped its contemporary power and class structure, the region's comparatively high caste composition, local reliance on natural resources such as forests and rivers, its largely non-urbanized spaces, and the reliance on government jobs. Significantly, the region asserts a popular identification with its mountain topography, natural beauty, pilgrimage sites and temples. Its vast natural resource base has spawned both environmental movements such as the famed Chipko movement against deforestation as well



Leah Koskimaki in Uttarakhand

as a massive influx of Himalayan development NGOs. Media production has also increased, which reflects the region's growing literacy and educated population. In addition, the movement for a new state (granted on November 9, 2000) gained momentum largely due to two main issues: the politics of caste and reservations policies and access to development of infrastructure. This context differs greatly than other state demarcation undertakings in India, which involved tribal struggles or linguistic boundaries. The various projects and popular struggles of the region have taken a large amount of inspiration and impetus from various student movements and youth groups whose work towards new creative regional representation has created and defined these changes. These different generations of youth assemblies have mobilized, envisioned, and shaped an Uttarakhandi identity.

However, in the opinion of an older activist and editor of a local Hindi newspaper, activism in youth today has been dulled by an incessant and

Notes from the field (*continued*)

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trivial 24-hour media. The youth activists of fifty years ago perhaps treasured more the circulation of information in the public sphere here. The nostalgia that comes with media in the way it functioned in the earlier stages of state building for Uttarakhand is quite justified. Information had a different value and the determination to spread it took different means and forms. Youth in the early seventies put out pamphlets and in the eighties produced street theaters to promote social awareness. In the nineties they traveled through villages to spread the word of a unified Uttarakhand, a unified mountain state with a right to its forests and access to local education and government jobs for the hill people. So there is a historical dimension to my project that examines youth in the public sphere of the western Himalaya throughout the twentieth century, but in identified key historical moments.

I am also conducting an ethnographic study of those who presently participate in or lead student and youth groups intensely involved in contemporary struggles and aspirations. This is the group shaping the future for Uttaranchal post statehood and in the era of economic liberalization. It is a group with access to new communication technologies and who draw from the various effects of a heightened globalization. Again, I am focusing on those youth who are active in popular politics and public culture, including those working in NGOs and local media. In this way I am examining the shaping of local elites, particularly tracing the manner in which the younger generations have been influencing these turns in social change over time.

A detailed study of regional print culture and media has provided many insights into literary influences and the production of ideas here in the mountains. In these materials, I am holding in my hands colorful and poignant images and words that reflect the way youth are represented and represent themselves, and through them I am able to begin to trace the forms of young regional intellectualism and regionalist assertions. Newspapers publish articles almost daily on student strikes and activities. The walls of streets are covered with posters for

student and youth associations with slogans for various local causes: one has an image of a group, fists in the air, holding a red flag with a picture of a pen on it, demanding education. Others have photos of young men running for student elections. Others are ads for participation in youth unemployment demonstrations. Youth use mobiles to send SMS (text messages) with statements like “the real struggle is ... in between education and propaganda.” I have been collecting journals, letters, photos, pamphlets, propaganda, poster art, handwritten radio bulletins during the movement for statehood, and local magazines aligned with various political parties. I have been visiting colorful local fairs in small hill towns, most recently the Uttarayani Mela at Bageshwar, observing rallies by political parties and other forms of cultural production of the political sphere in public speeches and rallies. There young NGO workers sat in booths beside black magic stalls and manpowered ferris wheels, next to people taking holy baths in the river along whose banks intense political speeches by Congress, BJP and UKD (Uttarakhand Kranti Dal) parties blared on competing loud speakers, all promising local development and jobs for youth. I have met members of Uttaranchal Youth websites, youth active in social awareness theatre, and met with young poets who write and publish their poems in local journals in Hindi and the Pahari “dialect” of Kumaoni, which address social themes and Uttaranchal’s identity. Through all these materials as well as through older documents for each historical period I hope to reveal a youth public intellectualism and its concerns in the present.

Traveling through the hill towns here, observing student demonstrations outside colleges in Srinagar or Nainital, drinking three rupee *Pahari chaha* in dhabas next to green terraced fields with a view of the snowy peaks of Trishul, I feel amazed at the opportunity to be able to be a temporary resident here. I would like to express my gratitude to the South Asia Center and Department of Anthropology, and to the UW for their support, as well as to the Fulbright-Hays DDRA grant whose funding

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Faculty Profile: Craig Jeffrey

By Matthew Bunt

Craig Jeffrey is an Assistant Professor at the Jackson School of International Studies and the Geography Department. He started at the UW this fall after earning his doctorate from the University of Cambridge in 1999 and working as an Assistant Professor for six years at the University of Edinburgh. His courses engage subjects such as geographies of international development and agrarian change in South Asia. Jane Dyson, his wife, is also working in the Jackson School this year as a visiting scholar. **Matthew Bunt**, graduate student in the Jackson School of International Studies, spoke with him.

How did you come to the University of Washington?

I was very attracted to this job because it is based jointly between Geography and the Jackson School. Both departments have excellent reputations so I



Dr Craig Jeffrey

was keen on the idea of working here. When I came and saw the UW and met possible future colleagues I could sense a real buzz. I enjoyed working at the University of Edinburgh as well but I fancied a change and the University of Washington seemed like a pretty exciting place to be based as a South Asia

Notes from the Field (continued)

and support network in India has been making this experience and research possible for me. I look forward to seeing you all next year and sharing my findings with you.

Leah M. Koskimaki is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociocultural Anthropology

geographer.

What was the focus of your doctoral dissertation?

I went to India in 1996 to study the social impacts of the Green Revolution. I particularly was interested in the emergence of a class of rich farmers as a result of technological changes in agriculture between the mid-1960s and mid-1990s. One thing that happened in the area where I worked in western Uttar Pradesh was that a new rural elite had emerged in the countryside who were very important economically, politically, and socially. My project started as an effort to look at their economic strategies but in the course of conducting Ph.D. field work I became much more interested in their social strategies. I was particularly fascinated by the way in which they were investing in their children through education and through dowries. I also became interested in the involvement of rich farmers in creating and sustaining political networks which linked them to the local government. So a lot of that doctoral work has spoken to debates in anthropology and geography on the ethnography of the state in South Asia and cultural politics of agrarian change.

How have your academic interests evolved since then and what are you currently studying?

During my research, I perceived a profound transformation occurring in that part of North India. People were moving from a system where they reproduced power within families through the transfer of land at inheritance to a system where access to social networking resources and education was becoming increasingly important. So a lot of my more recent research has focused on the cultural politics of education in North India. I've also been interested in the importance of student politics in South Asia. I've always been surprised there hasn't been more research on student politics which has been very important in terms of the emergence of the democratization of Indian politics since independence in 1947. Students have often played very active political roles not just in terms of particular events but in a more day to day level in terms of shaping political discourse and in the emergence of low caste political formation and movements.

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Faculty Profile: Craig Jeffrey (continued)

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Most of your field work has been in western Uttar Pradesh. What is it like working in that region?

It's a place where I've encountered an enormous amount of kindness and generosity. People's willingness to engage in research, to welcome you and make you feel at home is really an abiding memory of working in that part of South Asia. It's also a challenging environment to work in for various reasons. The electricity supply is not particularly good and the sanitary conditions are quite poor. It's an environment in which politics intervenes in your daily life in a direct way. A lot of my research in western Uttar Pradesh has occurred in times of political violence. For example I was conducting research in Bijnor District just after the attacks on America in September 2001 and there was palpable tension. So those are some of the challenges of working there. It's also an enormously rewarding place to work. It's a place with extraordinary diversity where one encounters people from diverse social and economic backgrounds. That makes it an exciting place to work intellectually and socially.

Can you share an interesting experience from your time in the field?

One incident immediately springs to mind. A lot of my research is interview based. I had wanted for quite a long time to meet a man called Afzal in one of the villages we were working called Qaziwala. Afzal was a man who was quite involved in local politics. I was interested in talking to people who were educated and unemployed and he had spent quite a bit of time in school but hadn't been able to get a government job. Eventually I was able to meet with Afzal and we had what I thought was an excellent conversation. About a week later I was back in Qaziwala and I was passing a shop where I knew Afzal worked. I saw a young man who I hadn't seen before and he introduced himself as Afzal. I said, "You can't be Afzal. I talked to him a week ago." And he said, "No, no. That wasn't Afzal, that was Tausif, my cousin. He was just pretending to be Afzal." That experience, apart from making me wonder what I would do with

the interview, brought home to me in quite a direct way the performative nature of field work. I had been preoccupied in the way I was presenting myself in my research but I started thinking of the way the people were presenting themselves to me. This really reminded me of the roles people can take that inform us as researchers. The idea that someone had just pretended to be one of their relatives during an hour and a half conversation kind of surprised me.

How did you become interested in South Asia?

My grandfather was a surgeon in South India in the 1950s and my father grew up in India so since my childhood I've heard a lot of stories about India. As a result it's always been somewhere I've wanted to go. When I was an undergraduate at the University of Cambridge I did an excellent course on South Asia which really sparked my interest in the region. Actually, towards the end of my period as an undergrad I was particularly interested in historical geography and I was thinking of doing research in the history of social organizations in Manchester in the UK. But I didn't really want to spend four years sitting in a library looking at sources. I thought it would be more challenging and exciting to go and do research in India and that's really how I ended up working there.

Before starting graduate school I didn't have a clear understanding of geography as a discipline. How would you explain social geography and how does geography as a discipline help you in your intellectual pursuits?

I remember at the University of Cambridge I was the only geographer in my college. Before my final examinations a friend gave me a set of coloring pencils and said I'd be needing them for the exams. I do think that the public perception of geography is way behind what geographers are doing and that's kind of sad and a cause for concern. I do think that people are increasingly realizing that things like political and social change don't happen on the head of a pin, that space, place, and the environment matter.

Do you have ideas of new courses you would like

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Craig Jeffrey Profile (continued)

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to offer in the future?

I'm currently trying to develop a course on global youth which would explore how young people in three different parts of the world, the US, South Africa and Asia, are responding to three key challenges related to their growing involvement in formal education, new health insecurities, and processes of economic restructuring. A key aim of the course is to encourage students to reflect on the active and creative way in which young people engage with these structures. They are not simply just victims of broader structural change

but they're engaged in trying to counter, shape and work within the structural circumstances they find themselves. I'm keen to try and involve students in the UW in visiting local high schools, particularly high schools with large proportions of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. I also want to try to get UW students involved in creating a web site and discussion board where they can hopefully talk to young people in other parts of the world about these key issues of education, health, and the economy. It's ambitious but I hope it will work.

Student Profile: Phelps Feeley

Phelps Feeley is a 2nd year student, pursuing concurrent Master's degrees in South Asian Studies (Jackson School) and the Evans School of Public Affairs.



What drew you to South Asian Studies?

In the mid-90's I went on the Antioch Buddhist Studies program in India. I know this is a cliché, but it was a life-changing experience. The program was very well run, and

I knew I wanted to go back, so I did. First as a backpacking traveler and volunteer, mainly in North India, and then later as a TA on the Antioch Program. As a volunteer, I taught English and basic computer skills at a Buddhist nunnery outside of Dharamsala. When I returned as a TA, I was able to teach from my own experiences as a student on the program, as a backpacker, and from living with Buddhist communities in both India and the US.

So what made you decide to come to the University of Washington?

I wanted to professionalize my experiences. I want to develop and direct study abroad programs, and the interdisciplinary programs here, as well as the language instruction, were very attractive to me. My background consists of undergraduate work in Anthropology and my work experience with nonprofits and Antioch. Before I came to UW, I was working in an NGO in Thailand. I

(Continued on page 15)

Student Profile: Amy Bhatt

Amy Bhatt is a 2nd year PhD student in Women Studies.

What drew you to South Asian studies?

As an undergrad at Emory University, I majored in Women's Studies and Political Science with an international relations concentration. I had also worked during the 2000 election with advocacy groups focused on reproductive health issues. Through both of those experiences, I became interested in questions about reproduction and gender in India, bringing my academic and activist interests together. And perhaps more materially, I have a family connection to South Asia as my parents emigrated to the U.S. from India.



Why did you decide to come to Washington for graduate school?

When I applied to graduate school, I was looking at programs in Women Studies and Sociology across the country. There are only 10 Women Studies programs offering PhD's in the U.S., and Washington is one of them. I had actually decided to enter a different graduate program, but at the last moment, accepted the offer to visit Washington since I had never seen Seattle before. When I came to visit, I had great meetings with faculty and students and decided this was a better academic and personal fit for me. There are some exciting and strong international feminist

(Continued on page 15)



THE JACKSON SCHOOL OUTREACH CENTERS
PRESENT

**K-8 Arts Mosaic:
Storytelling, Puppetry, and Masks from around the World**

For more information contact
Phone: 206-543-9606
E-mail: tikka@u.washington.edu

SATURDAY, FEB 25TH, 2006, 8:30AM-3:30PM
THOMSON HALL, UW SEATTLE CAMPUS THOMSON HALL

Registration form on the back**

Keynote Presenter:

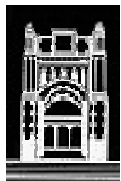
Kathy Foley is a Professor of Theatre at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She trained in mask and puppetry in the Sundanese region of Indonesia and was the first non-Indonesian invited to perform in the prestigious all Indonesia National Wayang Festival. She is author of the Southeast Asia section of *Cambridge Guide to World Theatre* and editor of *Asian Theatre Journal* and her articles have appeared in *TDR*, *Modern Drama*, *Asian Theatre Journal*, *Puppetry International* and other publications.

The Henry M. Jackson School of
International Studies
Box 353650
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195-3650

K-8 teachers who love storytelling and art in their classrooms will want to put this date on their calendars right away! The Jackson School Outreach Centers have teamed up once again to offer an action-packed day of storytelling and puppetry presentations as well as fun, hands-on sessions that will leave teachers brimming with ideas to take back to the classroom. Professor and Puppeteer Kathy Foley, will kick off the program with a lecture workshop on Indonesian Puppet theater. Following the keynote, participants will select from a series of break-out sessions that explore storytelling traditions, puppetry and puppet-making crafts from various world regions.

Break-out Sessions Include:

Do-it-yourself Turkish Shadow Puppetry
The Northwest Puppet Center
The Manas –Central Asia’s Tale of Epic Proportions
The Ramayana Epic
Chinese Shadow Puppets, Stories and Characters
Music, Dance and Storytelling of Ghana
Wayang Kanchil: Indonesian Trickster Tales



THE JACKSON SCHOOL OUTREACH CENTERS PRESENT
K-8 Arts Mosaic:

Storytelling, Puppetry, and Masks from around the World from around the world

Registration required by Feb 23rd: \$45 which includes 7 clock hours, an ethnic buffet lunch and all materials. Print this form out, fill in the details, and mail it with a check or P.O. payable to "University of Washington" to:

Southeast Asia Center,
Attention: K-8 Mosaic
Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies
Box 353650, University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195-3650

For further information, contact:
(206)543-9606, email: tikka@u.washington.edu



K-8 Mosaic Registration Form

Saturday, February 25, 2006, 8:30AM-3:30PM Thomson Hall, UW Campus

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home phone: _____ School phone: _____

Email: _____

School and District: _____

Grades / subjects taught: _____

7 Clock Hours Vegetarian Meal SAC

****Please note registration fees are non-refundable & we can not except payment by credit card. Saturday UW Parking costs \$4.00 payable by cash or check at the gatehouse.****

BOOK REVIEW of Tomoko Masuzawa: *The Invention of World Religions, or How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*

University of Chicago Press. 384 pp., 2005. \$47.50 (cloth); \$19.00 (paper). By Prem Pahlajrai

It is typically accepted that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the European categorization of peoples of the world evolved through improved knowledge and understanding. The older four-part system comprising of Christians, Jews, Mohammedans and “the rest” evolved to a more egalitarian, inclusive list of ten to twelve “world religions.” This list typically comprises of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Confucianism, Taoism and Shinto, and occasionally, also Sikhism and Baha’ism. This classification of religions is a triumph of the scientific method to the study of religion, moving away from the archaic Eurocentric conception of the world that prevailed prior to the mid-nineteenth century. Or is it? In her present book, Tomoko Masuzawa asks: “What is the logic of ‘world religions’ that has become so prevalent, so naturalized in our discourse that it seems as though it were no logic, no ideology at all, but a mere reflection of the way things are?” (6). She answers this question by critically analyzing the origins of the “world religions” discourse, showing that “the new discourse of pluralism and diversity of religions ... neither displaced nor disabled the logic of European hegemony—formerly couched in the language of the universality of Christianity—but, in a way, gave it a new lease” (xiv).

The discourse on religions in the modern era has been both a discourse of secularization as well as a discourse of othering. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europeans, through exploring the similarities and differences between Christianity and non-European religions, were “work[ing] out their own identity and [developing] various conceptions of the relation between the legacy of Christianity on the one hand and modernity and rationality on the other” (18). Chapter 1 explores the four-part taxonomy of religions in effect until the early nineteenth century, with the Abrahamic religions—Christianity, Judaism and Islam—contrasted with that of the heathens or pagans, who did not worship the one supreme deity. Jews and Muslims were deemed lesser people, since they either chose to follow a false prophet (Mohammed) and/or didn’t recognize Jesus as their savior. Christianity is the only true faith in these classifications. Though today it may seem that theology has no place in the comparative study of religion, in Chapter 2, Masuzawa argues that there is an “atavistic continuity” between the unabashed view of Christian supremacy of the nineteenth century and the contempo-

rary world religion enterprise. In the mid-nineteenth century, a transitional trend towards classification and comparison of religions starts to surface, foreshadowing the scientific classification schemes seen today.

In Chapter 3, Masuzawa investigates how the equivalence of “world religion” with the idea of “(all the) religions of the world” comes to be established around the 1880s. “World religions” were considered “universal religions”. But what makes a religion universal? Is it possible to have more than one universal religion? Chapters 4 through 6 explore the construction of Buddhism as a world religion by the European academy, in contrast to Islam as a national religion, on the basis of a misguided extension of language-family characteristics to race and ethnicity by comparative grammarians such as Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) and Friedrich Schlegel. In Chapter 7, Masuzawa considers the rôle played by F. Max Müller (1823-1900), both as a comparative philologist and one of the founders of the science of religion, *Religionswissenschaft*. Masuzawa suggests that Müller has been largely misunderstood and unfairly marginalized, both in his day and today, and is incorrectly associated with “valoriz[ing] things Aryan, whether language, religion, culture, or ‘race’” (208). Chapter 8 is “a series of tentative forays” into some of the factors which contributed to finally install the prevalent scheme of world religions in the early twentieth century: (1) the influence of *The Sacred Books of The East* series, covering seven Eastern religions, including Islam; (2) the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, with invitees from ten world religions; (3) the influence of private donors and foundations in the formation of the discourse on world religions; (4) the self-articulation of the “non-West” in the production of the world religions classification; (5) a sampling of a few post-nineteenth century transitional systems of classification of religions; and lastly (6) Max Weber’s undermining of the distinction between national and world religions, “seemingly by default.” In the final chapter, Masuzawa presents a case study of the theologian Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) to demonstrate how the emergent world religions discourse was effectively the transfer of Euro-Christian hegemony couched in the language of religious pluralism. Finally, in her “Unconcluding Scientific Postscript” she raises some key questions: “[How] can we ensure that the science of religion henceforth will not [be] in collusion with such malign forces

(Continued on page 16)

BOOK REVIEW of Roy, Arundhati: *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*, South End Press, 142 pp., 2004 By Shiwani Srivastava

There is the old truism about judging a book by its cover – but what are readers to do when it seems they are the ones being critiqued? The back cover of Arundhati Roy's *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* features a provocative quote from the author that isn't so much an invitation for American readers to pick up the book as it is a challenge: "I hate to disagree with your president: yours is by no means a great nation. But you could be a great people."

This challenge is representative of the irreverent tone that characterizes much of Roy's book, her most recent collection featuring speeches and essays. Non-fiction, particularly political essays, has become her preferred genre since the success of her 1997 Booker Prize-winning novel, *The God of Small Things*. Roy attributes this shift to the sadness she experienced during and after writing the novel: "It's a very sad book and somehow the sadness of the book is what stays with me. It took five years to write and I keep finding myself making an effort to be happy." But it seems from *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*, Roy has managed to channel her sadness into activism, as she confronts her readers with staggering statistics and tragic stories. However, this is not a sad book. Readers who take up the challenge presented on the back cover and decide to peruse the table of contents find that Roy, most likely, took great pleasure in coming up with essay titles such as "Instant-Mix Imperial Democracy" and "Do Turkeys Enjoy Thanksgiving?"

That being said, this is a book that is better judged by its back cover than its title or table of contents. Indeed, the title *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* suggests that it might be a number of things, including a "for dummies" guide to imperialism. But this book is certainly no "Intro to Empire" and Roy is writing for a shrewd audience, although it is difficult to tell who her invectives are directed against – Americans, South Asians, or anyone who is willing to listen? The back cover very much suggests that her target audience is American, and that her hope mired in frustration with the US is the focal point of the book. In certain essays, that is very much the case, as she urges Americans to put an end to what she sees as their government's "democratic imperialism" from spreading rampantly throughout the world. However, Roy also appeals to Indians and citizens of any burgeoning democracy to stop the spread of current-day imperialism. For her, the "Empire" includes the Bush administration, the Indian

government (depending on who's in power), the corporate media, and neo-liberal capitalism at large.

The pieces in this book are primarily speeches delivered at forums and award ceremonies, articles written for various newspapers and magazines, and essays broadcast on the radio. Because they were written for specific occasions, and not particularly for this collection itself, there are a number of facts and key points Roy uses that start to become repetitive (as an example, she frequently cites a survey illustrating the percentage of Americans who relate the war in Iraq to September 11). Also, it becomes a bit difficult to pinpoint why Roy put these particular essays and speeches together in a volume or what she wants her readers to do. Ultimately, it seems as though Roy is trying to combat apathy – that is, apathy for starvation, public health atrocities, racial and ethnic violence, etc. Certainly, she is being an activist on behalf of human rights – but in the case of this book, her good intentions (and impassioned, witty writing) may get lost for some readers in her partisan jabs.

And so, it seems as though Roy is not really writing for the "ordinary" citizen – at times she comes across as preaching to the choir, writing with a no-holding-back style that is likely to attract readers who already agree with Roy and perhaps drive away those who do not (for instance, she has single paragraphs devoted to lines like, "Barf bag?" and "Excuse me while I laugh..." to express her general disgust on various issues). Still, there is a certain vitality to her writing, perhaps from her background in fiction, that makes this a quick read that is sure to invoke a strong response. For those interested in South Asia, development studies, and the international media, it is worthwhile picking up Roy's book to glance through her extensive endnotes – she provides an unusual yet illuminating reading list that seems worth investigating. Finally, even though a great deal of Roy's book deals with the Iraq war before it had officially begun, it is far from outdated. If anything, with the luxury of hindsight, it is likely to provoke thought and discussion, regardless of where one stands on Roy's political leanings.

Shiwani Srivastava is pursuing a Master's degree in South Asian Studies at the Jackson School

Student Profile: Phelps Feeley

Interview by Keith Snodgrass

(Continued from page 10)

felt like all of these experiences could be built upon with the combination of South Asian Studies and Public Affairs. My academic interests have shifted from my undergrad work on women and social movements to agrarian movements and land issues.

What are your immediate plans?

I am applying to study on the AIIS Jaipur Hindi program this summer, for the equivalent of 3rd year Hindi. This will be the first time I've been in India with Hindi language abilities, so I look forward to that.

What are your plans after completion of your degrees?

I have a couple of major interests. I'd like to start a study abroad program focused on experiential learning of development studies in North India. Alternatively, or complementary to that, I'm also interested in working in an NGO either in India or in the US. I'd most like to work on issues of agrarian rights, the distribution of excess land holdings, use of public lands, redistribution by state agents, etc. My MPA and JSIS work provides knowledge and skills for either of these endeavors.

Thank you.

No no, thank YOU!

Student Profile: Amy Bhatt

Interview by Keith Snodgrass

(Continued from page 10)

scholars working across the university here. Also, Washington's institutional commitment to South Asia Studies was very important in my decision, since I knew I wanted to use those resources for my own dissertation work.

What are you working on now?

When I entered graduate school, I had worked a lot with family planning and reproductive health policy in India. More recently, I have become interested in looking at South Asian populations in the U.S. and how reproduction fits into their lives. The Indian diaspora in the U.S. specifically has grown tremendously over the past ten years and continues to become more diverse as different groups from India are coming over for work, education, or to reunite with family. I am curious to see how reproduction and gender are being formulated within these new communities. I've also been working with the women's health committee of Chaya (a social service organization working with South Asian victims of domestic violence) and have been thinking about how reproductive health issues affect younger women of the diaspora. As for more practical work, I hope to take my general qualifying exams next year and start my research soon after.

You also worked on the South Asia Oral History Project with the UW Libraries. Can you tell me a little about that experience?

Yes, I transcribed the interviews which were done last year. That project also sparked my interest in diaspora on both methodological and theoretical levels. It was my first experience with life histories as a method that takes a holistic view of an individual's life. It was particularly interesting to see how race, diaspora, gender, and nationality played a role in these people's lives in 1950's and 1960's Seattle. They each had led very interesting lives here. It was also great to go to the reception and connect faces to the voices I had been listening to for so long! I found that there were also echoes of many themes I have experienced through my own family's history, such as leaving behind family and social networks in India and having to construct new ones in the US. These networks included people, including other Indians, with whom they most likely never would have connected had they stayed in India. The Oral History Project was also a glimpse into how South Asians have been seen in American race relationships, and in what ways they were and were not discriminated against. Maintaining an identity which is both local and transnational definitely remains an important issue for 2nd generation people like myself.

What are your plans after you graduate?

Well, I'd like to pursue a university teaching career, although I am sure I will stay committed in areas in which I previously worked, policy and non-profits.

Review: Pahlajrai on Masuzwa (continued)

(Continued from page 13)

of absolutism in the name of pluralism, with its hidden supremacist pretensions and exclusivism” (325)? “What alternative method ... should be adopted [instead of the world religions discourse] in order to conduct basic research, or to teach an introductory course on various religions” (327)? According to Masuzawa, the beginnings of answers to these questions may be through a “the historical analysis of our discourse itself” (328).

This present book is a tour de force in post-modern, post-structuralist discourse analysis based on texts, and also paying attention to the “negative revelation of language” (31). Well aware of the criticisms leveled at rhetorical analysis, Masuzawa avoids the pitfalls of being “suspiciously obscure” or “improbably clever”. Typical of post-modern endeavors, however, the sophisticated and thorough deconstruction of the world relig-

ions enterprise leaves us with the unanswered question: “Where do we go from here?” Masuzawa’s treatment is well-structured, provocative and eminently readable. The issues of implicit imperialist/colonial/Christian hegemony in the world religion discourse unearthed from their subterranean “rhizomic” resting places are important to be aware of. Perhaps owing to the depth to which they have been buried for over a hundred years, and the degree to which they have been unquestioningly accepted as fact, the consequences of, and answers to the questions she raises in her “unconclusion” will not be immediately forthcoming. My only quibble with this book is the incomplete index.

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