New York’s taxicabs are driven by a workforce that is 60% South Asian and 90% immigrant. The terrorist attacks of September 11 and the aftermath of hate crimes against Arabs and Sikhs rendered even more risky the job of NYC taxi driving that the US Dept. of Labor generally recognizes as the most dangerous in the US. But contrary to media portrayal of these immigrant drivers as peripheral bystanders and passive victims, South Asian taxi workers offered rides free of charge to pedestrians on the day of the disaster, and in the weeks to come to rescue workers and Red Cross volunteers. They moved to provide relief for survivors ineligible for workers’ compensation death benefits, and those who no longer had jobs. In light of the backlash that followed against Asian peoples, they came together to develop legislative guidelines to ensure that taxi drivers could perform their jobs in securer conditions. Also, disturbed by the impact of September 11 on their fellow workers’ livelihood, they expressed the need to document the effects on the taxi industry in the same way that related industries such as hotels, entertainment and airlines have publicized their plight.

South Asia Center scholars, led by Principal Investigator Professor Monisha Das Gupta, Research Assistants Ms. Payal Banerjee & Ms. Mohua Das, are researching a project examining how these workers in high-risk, low-paying occupations managed to display remarkable civic participation and mobilization. They propose to reveal the motivations that led to super-exploited taxi drivers acting as “agents in transforming citizenship” who are developing methods of engagement and claims to membership in a society which often considers them outsiders even when they are formally American citizens. The twin points of research enquiry are the impact of 9/11 on, first, the workforce and the industry, i.e. economic effects: the changes in earnings, work conditions, laborforce participation, and the industry as a whole. It aims at investigating the drivers’ sense of increased economic insecurity in an industry which already does not provide adequate earnings, health insurance, or other basic benefits. The second focus is civic and democratic participation, i.e. evaluating the willingness of a predominantly immigrant laborforce that was very active in changing the conditions of low-wage work to continue to actively engage in civil society through institution-building, campaigns for justice, and rights claims. The role of grass roots organizations like the NYTWA (New York Taxi Workers Alliance) as bridge-builders in the emerging discourse on globalization will also be taken up.

The research team plans to first conduct a survey (January 2002), analyze the data (February 2002), and then prepare a detailed report with statistical and qualitative observations and policy recommendations (March-May 2002) that should interest New York municipal and traffic authorities, NYC chroniclers and students and scholars of immigration and diaspora, not to mention South Asia observers.

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The South Asia Consortium of Syracuse and Cornell Universities is co-sponsoring a workshop on Public Goods and Public Bads in Nature: From Landscapes to Genomes in South Asia on February 22 and 23. The workshop, which is being hosted by Cornell University, will investigate continuities between current debates over genetic engineering and ongoing conflicts over public goods in nature. At stake are convergent views of the natural and the unnatural, as well as of the role of science, the meaning of development, and representations of "the people" or "the poor" by elite protagonists in bio-prospecting. The symposium seeks to address issues where cultural logics intersect with the logics of political economy—in a range of grounded South Asian settings. Speakers and respondents come from a variety of disciplines and several universities, and will elaborate cases from diverse viewpoints. Following is the schedule of events:

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22**
GO8, Uris Hall, Cornell University

4:30 P.M. - 6:30 P.M. Introductory remarks and welcome by Ron Herring, Ann Grodzins Gold, followed by a showing of the film: Turf Wars: Conservation Claims in the Great Himalayan National Park, and a discussion with the filmmaker, Vasant Saberwal and a panel of respondents.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23**
GO8, Uris Hall, Cornell University

9:00 A.M. - 10:30 A.M. State Projects in Nature
10:45 A.M. - 12:15 P.M. Communities—Natural and Unnatural
LUNCH
1:30 P.M. - 3:00 P.M. The GMO Controversy: Property from Nature
3:30 P.M. - 5:00 P.M. Science, Politics, Risk: The Nature of the Good

Participants include:

- William R. Bentley, Forest and Natural Resources Management, Syracuse University
- Peter Castro, Anthropology, Syracuse University
- Mark Chong, Communication, Cornell University
- Ann Grodzins Gold, Religion and Anthropology, Syracuse University
- Sumit Guha, History, Brown University
- Shubhra Gururani, Anthropology, York University
- Ronald J. Herring, Government and Einaudi Center for International Studies, Cornell University
- Michael Lewis, History, Salisbury University
- Ravi Rajan, Anthropology, University of California at Santa Cruz
- Mahesh Rangarajan, Environmental History, South Asia Program, Cornell University
- Devparna Roy, Development Sociology, Cornell University
- Vasant Saberwal, Free Lance Environmental Researcher and Film-maker
- Pradeep J. Tharakan, Forest Ecosystem Science, Willow Biomass Energy Program, SUNY ESF College
- Norman Uphoff, Government and CIIFAD, Cornell University
- Tomiko Yamaguchi, Sociology, Michigan State University

Background papers by a number of participants are posted at:
http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/SouthAsia/workshop/land_genome.asp

ALL SESSIONS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!
While the status of Afghan women under Islamic fundamentalism has been a concern of human rights groups and gender study forums, their plight has come into the public realm after September 11 like never before. In light of intense popular and scholarly interest on human rights denial in the Islamic world and numerous demand for presentations on the topic, South Asia Center organized on November 13, 2001, a public screening in the Maxwell School of an undercover documentary film made by the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA). Entitled Behind the Veil: Afghan Women Under Fundamentalism, the 26-minute presentation visibly moved the viewers as if vindicating the adage that one picture is worth a thousand words. The eclectic audience, ranging from students and faculty to rights activists, understandably came up with different reactions ranging from the pedantic to the purely human. The lowest common denominator was deep disgust with the travails heaped upon one half of Afghanistan in the name of ‘true’ religion.

Review: The RAWA narrative clearly sets the tenor by beginning with a general overview of “our” suppression and subjugation, which have driven “us” to the conclusion, “suicide is much better than this life.” Juxtaposed to breathtaking photography of the Khyber Pass is the dreary and pulverized existence of women who were “forced to become faceless” through the mandatory burqa. Once the Taliban took over in 1996, that freedoms of women were steadily worsening even before Taliban seizure of power is demonstrated by a brief tour d’horizon of Afghan history, wherein “everyone who got power violated women’s rights.” As one hapless victim of fundamentalist abuse puts it, “Gulbuddin (Hekmatyar), Masud (Ahmad Shah), Dostum (Abdul Rashid) and Taliban...all are cruel dogs.” Warlordism and war itself are presented as an infliction especially on women and the girl-child, whose rights to existence and nourishment are severely infringed during conflict.

The focus then shifts to four women witnesses who had the courage to speak up and break the silence. One woman was abducted in 1997 by the Taliban religious police, raped and then sold to a commander. Barely suppressing her emotions and tears, she relates the horrors perpetrated upon her, “especially because she was a woman who was educated.” Prohibition of female education was the biggest blow to women’s rights in Taliban times and the major mark of distinction between pre-1996 and post-1996 Afghanistan. RAWA fought back silently, setting up secret schools for girls in hidden inner quarters of secluded buildings. A RAWA activist explained that nearly 2000 girls from downtown Kabul, under supreme risk of detection by the authorities, went to these schools so that “the right to understand is not denied to us.”

Witness 2, a middle aged woman, raises the problem of conscription into the armed forces. Her son was summarily drafted into the army, beaten repeatedly for opposition and finally ‘disappeared’ when he resisted being sent to the north for fighting the Northern Alliance. Not only was the mother threatened to keep her mouth shut, the government also secluded her from public appearance by imposing curtains and blinds to her home as a special punishment for begetting a ‘renegade’.

Witness 3’s husband was killed in a nightly raid by Taliban secret service for belonging to a minority tribe, but her misery worsened when she was disallowed to work for wages even though her children were going hungry. When she defied the diktats, they lashed and crippled her, leaving no option but to beg for a living. Denial of the right to work to thousands of widows has left them with three unenviable options—begging, prostitution or suicide.

Witness 4 is an adolescent girl, abandoned to a listless and uncaring life in refugee camps of Pakistan. The UNHCR runs a ramshackle school for thousands like her, but being orphaned and exposed to exploitative practices like sexual slavery, she doesn’t even know whether returning to Afghanistan will make things any better.

Public executions for alleged adultery, ‘Islamic justice’ for perceived ‘religious crimes’ and complete obfuscation of women from the outer world are other obnoxious practices documented in the film. The leitmotif is the burqa, a symbolic tyranny on the face which then extends into darker and more sinister and degrading treatment of women. When the tyranny of the veil ends, Afghan women will have real freedom. Signs that major changes in sexual division of labor may not be brought about by mere overthrow of the Taliban are reminders to the feminist movement that fundamental transformation cannot be brought about overnight. The wait for true women’s rehabilitation will be a long and agonizing one.
Spring 2002 Speaker Schedule

January 23, Wednesday, 4:00 P.M., 341 Eggers Hall
Fouzia Saeed, "Traditional Prostitution and Gender Roles in Pakistani Society."

February 6, Wednesday, 4:00 P.M., 341 Eggers Hall
Anita Weiss, "Interpreting Women's Rights: The Dilemma Over Eliminating Discrimination Against Women in Pakistan, Tunisia and Malaysia."

February 22, Friday, 4:30 PM, Einaudi Center, Cornell University
Environment Workshop "Public Goods and Public Bads: From Landscapes to Genomes in South Asia."

February 23, Saturday, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM, Einaudi Center, Cornell University
Environment Workshop Continued

February 27, Wednesday, 4:00 PM, 314 Eggers Hall
Farina Mir, "Syncretism Reconsidered: Popular Devotion in Punjabi Oral Tales"

March 7, Thursday, 3:00 PM, 220 Eggers Hall
Akhil Gupta, "State and Civil Society in Latin America"

March 8, Friday, 12:00 Noon, 341 Eggers Hall
Akhil Gupta, "Reincarnation and Childhood"

March 18, Monday, 7:30 PM, Goldstein Auditorium
***Salman Rushdie, "A Conversation"

March 20, Wednesday, 4:00 PM, 341 Eggers Hall
Ajantha Subramanian, "Indians in North Carolina: Race, Dress and Culture in the Making of Immigrant Identity"

April 1, Monday, 7:30 PM, Shaffer Art Building, Shemin Auditorium
Vidy Dehejia, "Women, Beauty and Power."

April 2, Tuesday, 10 AM, 105 Hall of Languages
Vidy Dehejia, "On Goddesses"

April 11, Thursday, 4:00 PM, 341 Eggers Hall
Carla Sinopoli, "Crafting Empire: Craft Production and Political Economy in the Vijayanagara Empire"

April 24, Wednesday, 4:00 PM, 341 Eggers Hall
Sarah Lamb "Gendering Across Worlds: Visions from South Asian American Transnational Families"

Dissertations Defended 2001-2002

"Dissonant Subjects: Women in the Hindu Nationalist Movement in India" by Kalyani Menon for PhD. in History.

"Sri Lanka. Barriers to Conflict Resolution" by Anna Phrikian for M.A. in International Relations.

Martha Nussbaum, noted feminist, philosopher, legal and development expert, will deliver a series of lectures at SU, including "Feminist Internationalism" at the Maxwell Auditorium, April 9, Friday 4:00 PM.
Faculty Updates


Professor Babiracki also acted as facilitator, interpreter and narrator for stage performances of the Indian folk music and dance troupes Kunjoan and Shiv Shakti, in their spring 2001 residencies: Duluth Children's Museum and Lake Superior College, Duluth, MN, May 6-12 (ten performances); Seattle International Children's Festival, Seattle, WA, May 13-19 (fourteen performances); Interview on radio station KUOW, Seattle, with members of the troupes; Performance at the North Pointe Cultural Center, Kinderhook, NY, June 10; Performance at Harvard University, June 29 She also just completed a term as First Vice President (publications) of the Society for Ethnomusicology.

Ishita Banerjee, Department of History, joined us in Spring 2002 from El Colegio de México. She has been a doctoral fellow at the Center for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, a postdoctoral fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, and a visiting scholar at the Center of South Asian Studies, Cambridge University, South-Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg, International Programs, University of Iowa, and South Asia Program, Cornell University. In 2001, she published Divine Affairs: Religion, Pilgrimage, and the State in Colonial and Postcolonial India, a book on the Jagannath Puri temple in Orissa. She is currently completing a book manuscript entitled Emergent Histories: Religion, Law, and Power in Eastern India 1860-1995, about a heterodox and subaltern religious formation in Orissa.


Professor Bhatia also taught two one-week courses on English and cross-cultural communication in Tokyo, Japan. Aug. 2001; a one-week course and three lectures on topics ranging from Indian scripts to 'How language really works?', attended by high school students from all over Japan. As part of the Distance learning Partnership Waseda University, he also participated in a series of videoconferencing lectures on topics ranging from “The Bilingual Brain” to “Global Advertising.”

Richard L. Breyer, TRF Department, Newhouse School of Public Communications, is currently on his way to India pursuing a media project on Sikh communities. The inspiration for this project were incidents in Syracuse area in the aftermath of September 11, where a group of young Americans set fire to a Sikh temple, mistaking it to be an Islamic establishment. Prof. Breyer hopes to educate the younger generation of Americans about the differences in Sikh temples and Mosques through this media project of his.


Tula Goenka, S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, produced and edited a one-hour documentary on Native American musician, Joanne Shenandoah, called "Dancing On Mother Earth." The film chronicles a year (2000-2001) in the life of Ms. Shenandoah who is a member of the Oneida Nation, Iroquois Confederacy.

Professor Gold presented the following papers in 2001: "Village love: Nostalgia for Community in Rural North India," at a conference on "Love in South Asian Traditions: Words, Meanings and Contexts," Centre for South Asian Studies and Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Cambridge, Cambridge UK; "Seeds," at the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies Humanities Symposium, "Fleeting Objects: Assessing the Allure of Material Culture," University of Iowa, Iowa City; "Beautiful Queen (Sundar Rani) and other Devis: Questions of Name and Form," at the symposium, "Experiencing Devi: Hindu Goddesses in Indian Popular Art," University of Iowa, Iowa City. She also delivered invited lectures- "Landscapes of the Heart: Ecology and Community in Rural North India", Goodspeed Lecture, Denison University, Granville, Ohio; "Memory work in North India", a discussion of her co-authored manuscript, In The Time of Trees and Sorrows, Anthropology Colloquium, co-sponsored by the Institute for Global Studies, University of Minnesota; 'Beauty, Goddesses and Women in Rural Rajasthan,' at The Nehru Centre, High Commission of India, London.

In 2001, Professor Gold was also the organizer and discussant for the panel on "Grounding Renunciation: Asetic Women's Everyday Lives." presented at the one hundredth Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C. She was the speaker on panel session "Defamation / Anti-Defamation: Hindus in Dialogue with the Western Academy", Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Denver. She also spoke on 'Seed Talk: Cyclicality and its Opposites.' at the 30th Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, Wisconsin.

Priyadarshini Jaikumar, Department of English, published three book reviews in film journals, presented and led two workshops at the Society for Cinema Studies Conference. She has been invited to lead discussions at the "Feminist Across Borders: Visualizing the Nation" panel with Chandra Mohanty, Zillah Eisenstein, and Deepa Mehta at the Women Direct 2001 Film Festival, Ithaca College, April 2001 and the "Race and Representation" conference, Ithaca College, December 2001. Her article "An Act of Transition: Empire and the Making of a National British Film Industry, 1927," will be in the forthcoming issue of Screen, 43.2 (Summer 2002).


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South Asia Center at International Conference on Rajasthan

Two faculty members and one graduate student represented SU at the Fourth International Conference on Rajasthan, Dec 28-30, 2001, sponsored by the Institute of Rajasthan Studies in Jaipur, India. South Asia Center Director and Professor of Anthropology Susan S. Wadley presented a paper, "Raja Nal and the Rajputs: Seeking status in the oral Epic Dhola." Ann Gold, Professor of Religion, presented a paper co-authored by Bhoju Ram Gujjar, titled "Of Gods, Kings and Government servants: three modes of Tree Protection in Rajasthan." Alicia De Nicola, doctoral candidate in Anthropology, presented the paper titled, "Printing in Bagru: Innovations in Rajasthani Traditional Industry."

Puppet Arts of India
An exhibition at Open Hand International Mask and Puppet Museum, March 2- April 15
Curated by Center Director Susan S. Wadley, Rajasthani string puppets known as kathputli and south Indian shadow puppets used in telling the Ramayana epic are featured in an exhibition that focuses on the making Indian puppets and their performance traditions. On her recent trip to India, Professor Wadley visited Kathputli Nagar, the village in Jaipur where puppeteers have migrated from their rural communities. There she

met with puppeteers and documented the making of Rajasthani string puppets. These form the basis of the Kathputli exhibition at Syracuse’s puppet museum.

String puppets of Rajasthan, known locally as kathputli, are said to be most ancient form of marionettes in the world. The figures of these puppets are often inspired by those depicted in Rajput paintings complete with swords, turbans, crowns, beards and moustaches in accordance with their station in life. The heroism of historical figures is the recurring theme of puppet shows, and kings like Prithviraj Chauhan of Ajmer, Amar Singh Rathor (of Rathor), and Vikramaditya of Ujjain are favorites.

Tolubommalata is a puppet tradition found in the Telugu speaking areas of South India: Andhra Pradesh and portions of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. It has a long history, dating back at least seven hundred years. Made of leather and then dyed, these often life-sized puppets are used in telling Indian epics such as the Ramayana. Some fifteen shadow puppets used in the telling the Ramayana form the second focus of this exhibition. Open Hand International Mask and Puppet Museum is located at 518 Prospect Ave, on Syracuse’s north side (Phone 315-476-0466). Museum hours are Friday 2PM-5PM, Sat. 10AM-3PM You can take your class to the museum!! South Asia Center is currently sponsoring guided tours for classes. For details call 315-443-2553

National Resource Fellows 2001-2002

The South Asia Center is a National Resource Center (one of seven in the country) funded by the Department of Education. The Center is part of a consortium with Cornell University. The South Asia Center receives a grant from the Department of Education under Title VI to fund Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) graduate fellowships. This year’s recipients were:

Gretchen King—Anthropology
Ian Wilson—Anthropology
Jennifer Smith—Engineering
Lisa Knight—Anthropology
Pritham Khalsa—International Relations
Keri Olsen—Anthropology
Susan Parulekar—International Relations

Applications for next year’s fellowships are now available on the web. Just go to the South Asia Center web page at

http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/southasiacenter/application.html

and make the appropriate selection. Applicants must be permanent residents and enrolled as full time graduate students at Syracuse University.

Global Terrorism Gateway
Developed by South Asia Center

With the focus of world attention on Afghanistan and Pakistan after September 11, South Asia Center began compiling one of the most comprehensive internet gateways for global terrorism. A weekly updated site, it contains news, views, opinions, commentaries and information on a range of topics, including Islamic Terrorism and the West. A ‘Clash of Civilizations’; The Afghan War Front; Global Terrorism. International Perspectives; Fourth Estate and Media on Terrorism and Means of Confronting It; Human Rights and Tolerance in a World of Deadly Conflict.

This inter-disciplinary and non-partisan collection can be accessed at the following URL:

http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/southasiacenter/Terrorism/TerrorismResponseLinks.htm

Similar gateways with emphases on Anthropology and NGOs respectively can be accessed at:

http://web.archive.org/collections/sep11.html

http://www.geocities.com/dmvairisco/wte.htm

Education About Asia Available on Worldwide Web

Education About Asia, edited by Lucien Ellington, is a journal published by the Association for Asian Studies in conjunction with the Freeman Foundation, and goes to nearly 10,000 subscribers throughout the United States and twenty-two other countries. The exclusive focus of Education About Asia is improving classroom teaching at all levels. Now in its sixth year, Education About Asia is designed to be a tool for teachers who wish to bring information on Asia to their classrooms. Its articles are for teachers and professors from elementary school through university. This useful resource is now available on the internet at the following URL:

http://www.aasianst.org/eaatoc.htm