



South Asia Center, Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs

Syracuse University

SOUTH ASIA CENTER

OUTREACH BULLETIN

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From the Director's Desk

The South Asia Center has had an unprecedented year of activity—the lecture by Nobel Laureate Mohammad Yunus in February, one by Khaled Hosseini in September, a week long visit and mandala-making by Tibetan monks, and a Shen Wei Dance Arts performance focusing on Tibet, also in September. And of course there is the Elephant Extravaganza at the zoo last August that brought us into contact with thousands of zoo-goers, young and old. These major events, in addition to the seminars, films, and other on-going teaching

and research have kept us all busy. Yet to come is a music performance by Ganga in April, and an active March and April series of lectures and three major outreach events involving schools from East Syracuse, Oneida and Chittenango.

As we think about next year, our focus is turning to Afghanistan and Pakistan, with new courses planned, the addition of Pashto language training, and major outreach efforts directed towards the Fort Drum region where the schools are filled with children who have parents in

Afghanistan. I will be leading these efforts, supported by our graduate assistant, Akbar Quaraishi. We are also working on fall lectures, including one by Philip Oldenburg of Columbia University on the divergent political paths of India and Pakistan and one by sociologist Anita Weiss on modern Pakistan. I also want to welcome my replacement, Cecilia Van Hollen of Anthropology, who will take over as Director in August. She and I welcome your input and ideas for events and speakers.

Susan S Wadley

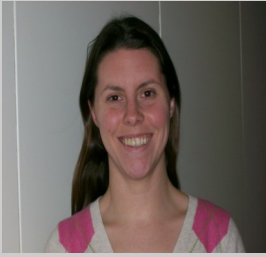
Chenrezig mandala by Venerables from the Namgyal Monastery, Ithaca



The South Asia Center hosted two Venerables from the Namgyal Monastery in Ithaca from September 21-25, 2009, who made a *Chenrezig mandala* in Strasser Commons, Eggers Hall. This mandala, which represents the abode of the Chenrezig Buddha, encourages compassion for all beings and hopes to overcome anger and hatred.

Continued on page 3

New Faces at Syracuse University



"My job is really varied, I get to do something different almost every day."

Emera Bridger Wilson Please welcome Emera Bridger Wilson, the newest staff member at the South Asia Center. Emera joined the South Asia Center as the Outreach Coordinator in the summer of 2009. But she is not a stranger, either to the South Asia Center or Syracuse University. Emera is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology and she has been affiliated with the South Asia Center even before she was matriculated into the program in 2005. She returned to Syracuse in May after 18 months in India, where she was conducting her dissertation fieldwork.

Her dissertation, tentatively titled "Livelihoods in Motion: The Rickshaw Drivers of Keoladeo National Park," will examine the ways in which tourism impacts the lives of rickshaw drivers—low caste, impoverished men who have been trained to lead tours of Keoladeo National Park, a World Heritage Site in Bharatpur, Rajasthan. Emera and her husband, Ian Wilson, also a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology, lived in Bharatpur, Rajasthan for about a year. When asked what she enjoyed most about her fieldwork, Emera laughed. "I enjoyed all of it, but I guess the most special part of it

was getting to know these extraordinary men and their families." She also says she misses drinking *chai* and chatting with the rickshaw drivers about their work. Emera says that she now has a deeper understanding of the ways in which class, caste, and place of residence articulate to produce different types of livelihood strategies in rural and peri-urban Rajasthan.

In the summer of 2009, Emera returned to Syracuse and started working at the South Asia Center as the Outreach Coordinator. She is a jack-of-all trades and she helps the Director and Associate Director to plan and execute events as well as planning programs at local schools for K-12 teachers and students. "My job is really varied, I get to do something different almost every day," she says. One of the best parts of the position is to meet faculty from different universities and to hear about their work. She also enjoys working with the wider Syracuse community.

Emera Bridger Wilson is always there to help if you have any questions about the time or logistics of the events organized by the South Asia Center, and she welcomes your feedback on future events.



Himika Bhattacharya Starting this past fall, there was a new face among the Women and Gender Studies—Himika Bhattacharya. Himika finished her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2008 and taught at SUNY Stony Brook before coming to Syracuse. Her broad research interests include meanings of violence and the ways in which different forms of violence against women get defined in transnational contexts. The four courses she is offering this year are WGS 400 & 600 Women, Gender and Violence in a Transitional Context WST 310 Feminist Inquiries and WGS 201 Transnational Feminist Studies. These courses offer insights drawn from Himika's research experiences in India and the U.S.

Himika's research is based in India. In 1999, after completing her Masters of Social Work (MSW) from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, she traveled to the Lahaul Valley for the first time for a weeklong fair organized by the Government of India. This trip to the Lahaul Valley familiarized Himika with some of the local women's issues and she decided to return to the region as a Fellow with support from Action Aid India to conduct a yearlong livelihoods research project there.

With support from local women in Lahaul and funding from CAPART she first began organizing women's groups in the area, which eventually led to a 15-day trip for 15 women from across the valley to meet and interact with women's organizations in other parts of North India, including other mountain districts such as

Tehri Garhwal. The friendships and connections established during this period led Himika to her doctoral project where she documented women's narratives of marriage, violence and medical practice.

She eventually enrolled in at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and returned to the Lahaul valley for a year of fieldwork. During her graduate program in Illinois, she also had the opportunity to work with immigrant populations—conducting research on domestic violence issues in Illinois and New York City.

Himika was attracted to Syracuse University because of its strong Women and Gender Studies program and the South Asia Center. She is inspired by the faculty at Syracuse and is looking forward to contributing to the community here.

Please, welcome Dr. Himika Bhattacharya the new Assistant Professor of Women and Gender Studies at Syracuse University

Mehedi Pabitra hails from Dhaka, Bangladesh and he has come to Syracuse as part of the Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant Program. After obtaining his M.A. in Linguistics from University of Dhaka, he taught English at Southeast University and IUB's Summer Institute in Bangladesh before applying to the Fulbright program. It takes only a few minutes in Mehedi's company to realize his love of languages and of learning. Our conversation opened with a discussion of American idioms. "I write them all down in a notebook...they are great!" When



Chenrezig mandala , Continued from page 1st

People from all across campus, and all across the country thanks to a live webcast, watched on as the Venerables created the intricate designs from colored sand as well as when they ritually deconstructed the mandala on Friday, September 25. The mandala was created in association with this year's College of Arts and Sciences Milton Lecture presentation by Shen Wei Dance Arts, of which Tibet played a key part.



Venerable Lobsang Tashi



Venerable Dhondup Gyaltzen

asked what the biggest differences he sees between Bangladesh and the U.S., he remarked that besides the quicker pace of life in the U.S., the ways in which professors and students interact as well as the integration of technology into learning are the two things which he has found most different. He hopes to take these experiences back with him to the classroom so that he can integrate American styles of teaching into his repertoire.

Besides teaching, Mehedi has taken the opportunity to pursue his love of radio and film. He is currently DJing for WERW, where he hosts a weekly show called "Fried Friday" which is World Music pro-

gram, playing a mix of Hindi and Bengali tunes. He is also interested in making a film about his experiences in Syracuse which will trace the educational landscape and youth culture of the U.S.



Shakti Revisited: A Panel in Honor of Sue Wadley

Our South Asia Center Director earned a new title last October at the 38th Annual Conference on South Asia: Susan S. Wadley, Superhuman.

Sue was honored in a series of panels that revisited her seminal work on shakti, including her monograph *Shakti: Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion* (1975) and edited volume *The Powers of Tamil Women* (1980). Nine participants delivered papers about *shakti* in a wide range of regional and religious contexts throughout India, attesting to the significance and reach of Sue's intellectual work. Indeed, the two panels were merely a tiny sample of Sue's influence as a scholar and mentor. Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger organized Friday's panels and dinner. She remarked, "We could have filled a whole day with the scholars/friends whom [Sue has] mentored and whose work [Sue's] work helped to shape."

Over the course of Friday afternoon, images, stories and analyses of women's power in goddess traditions, agricultural labor, songs, burqa, Christian social service, and nationalist rhetoric slowly permeated the full conference room. With each paper, the panel developed into a more complex and rich conversation about the nature of mortal and divine female power in India.

It also became evident that the papers were not simply indebted to the intellectual work of a researcher, but also to the guidance and support of a remarkable mentor. As discussant for the panels, Ann Grodzins Gold highlighted Sue's commitment to fostering "a life of the mind that does not neglect its embodiment." Some of these stories of personal support, hospitality, and friendship emerged during the panels. More were shared over a lively Nepali dinner on State Street, where Sue's colleagues, friends, and students gathered to continue the celebration. From personal anecdotes to analyses of power, Sue had inspired an atmosphere of intellectual curiosity and rigor combined with laughter and friendship. As Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger said, "Aren't we fortunate to be in Sue's circle of mentees and friends!" Several of our faculty, alumni, and current students participated in the panels *Shakti Revisited: In Honor of Susan S. Wadley*, 38th Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 23, 2009:

Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger (Emory University), Geraldine Forbes (State University of New York, Oswego), Ann Grodzins Gold (Syracuse University), Lindsey Harlan (Connecticut College), Connie Etter (Syracuse University), Lisa Knight (Furman University), Kalyani Devaki Menon (DePaul University), Keri Olsen (Syracuse University), and Priti Ramamurthy (University of Washington-Seattle).

Contributed by Connie Etter



Mohammad Yunus with South Asia Center's Community at Syracuse University



Language and Presence: Finding My Legs in Malayalam

Around the middle of month nine, in a ten-month Malayalam language program, a friend approached me at the Yoga center where I attend daily class in Trivandrum. I was lying on my mat, relaxing, and she tapped me on the leg, greeting me with a big smile as I sat up. "I didn't see you yesterday," she said. "I wanted to ask if Biju met the doctor." We proceeded to have a small conversation about my husband's visit to the orthodontist.

As I lay back on my mat, I felt myself beaming. This kind of simple conversation was now easy to carry out in Malayalam. But more than that, having the words brought me a new sense of confidence in our friendship. Lying there, feeling my breath move up and down through my body, I felt a new level of "being here" in my new community and life. Later that night when I returned home to my apartment, my satisfaction turned to giddiness as I stood outside listening to my elderly landlady complain in her endearing way about her son. As she griped about his discriminating palate – he's good at advising, but certainly not willing to lift a finger in the kitchen – my heart glowed with recognition. I was a woman, an ear, and she was sharing with me in confidence that I would understand and support her.

Being a woman. Being here. These sensations contrast with my intense feelings just after we arrived in Kerala in May. As we visited my husband's family during our first week in Idukki, my strongest and most lasting impression was one of displacement – not only in terms of time and climate, but at a deeper level. I wrote in my journal that I was neither man, woman, nor child. I

was recovering from the time change, but feeling stripped of my sense of self. Unable to help in the kitchen as I would at home, certainly no participant in any adult conversations, and too shy even to change a diaper since I didn't know where the cloths were kept – I handed off my smallest nephew to a niece or neighbor more than once!

All because of a lack of language and despite great mutual affection. Similar feelings continued as we first got acquainted with students and staff at the Yoga center where my dissertation research is based. I found myself at the edge of

Christmas with the in-laws was punctuated by many moments of presence and understanding – each burst of recognition a heart-warming experience of being more accepted, more able to listen and to be... a friend, a sister, a daughter.

Though I had previously spent a similar year in Madurai learning Tamil, I am struck

Here, I am both: wife and researcher, student and teacher. I have been affiliated with this international Yoga organization for twelve years. Yet without language, I felt primarily a "foreigner."



different groups of people – not able to stand on my own among women who were strangers, and uncomfortable tacking onto my husband at the edges of groups of men who congregated after class. Here, I am both: wife and researcher, student and teacher. I have been affiliated with this international Yoga organization for twelve years. Yet without language, I felt primarily a "foreigner."

Certainly, as my language skills have developed, I have continued to be a foreigner living in India, but I notice that people have begun to tell me I'm becoming a "Kerala lady." Affirmations like this are half-truths, but they reveal a process that I also feel happening. As I have developed the tools of communication, the language has made me not more a Malayalee, but more, in fact, a person: a woman, and legible as such. For me, this legibility has come in a sudden recognition, as I have recently made leaps and bounds forward with my language acquisition.

again by what an intimate, affecting experience a language immersion program can be, and by how deeply grateful I feel to my teachers for giving me the tools to more fully arrive here. Language and the fuller presence it enables will be fertile ground to begin my research on labor and relations in globalized Yoga. But more amazingly, through language, I feel I have been given a new extension of my life as a person in this world and a greater place in both my extended family and the family-like community of my research site.

Contributed by Laurah Klepinger-Mathew

Outreach: Annual Asian Elephant Extravaganza at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo

Despite the threat of rain early in the day, the South Asia Center had another successful Elephant Extravaganza. This year's activities integrated some popular activities from past years such as the henna tattoos, skillfully applied by

senior history major Kelsey Kobik, Tamil instructor Sheela Chavan, and Charulata Chawan with new activities like children's dress up. We met a lot of great people who visited our table and enjoyed working with the Zoo volunteers and vol-

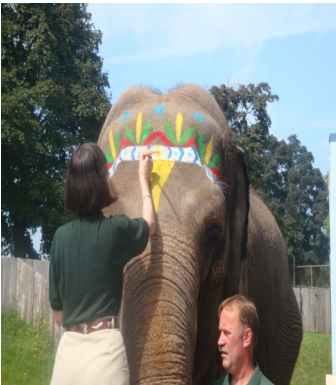
unteers from the South East Asia Center at Cornell University. We look forward to doing it all again next year; the Elephant Extravaganza is scheduled for **August 21, 2010.**



A young visitor in Traditional Rajasthani Turban



A Henna Session



This lovely young girl is in a beautiful banarasi saree



SU study abroad: Mysore Program

I had moments while abroad in India and Nepal that I could not believe. These would come while driving the wrong way in a rickshaw, climbing a trail in the Himalayas, in everyday life in Mysore – times when I would stop, speechless at the complex beauty that is South Asia.

By far, the greatest of these moments measured an entire month as I lived and worked with an organization of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees. The task and opportunity were fairly straightforward: research the end of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and assess the opinions of the refugees about the potential of returning to the island nation. I completed some thirty interviews, jumping from offices of the Organization for Eelam Refugee Rehabilitation in Chennai, Trichy, Erode, and Nellai. The organization itself was inspiring – a group of five hundred volunteers throughout the over 125 camps scattered throughout Tamilnadu.

What I did not expect, however, was how I would be welcomed into that community. To save money, many of the guys who worked for the or-



ganization or were sponsored for IT training stayed right in their offices. I joined them – spending nights on a bamboo mat and playing carrom board, watching Tamil movies, and joking in the often few words of common language we shared. By the time I headed back to Mysore, and then the States, we were closer to brothers than friends.

As I was planning to study in India, many of my family and friends would ask, “why

would you want to go to there.” My answer was always “why not,” without thinking much of the question. But in those moments throughout the semester, wherever I was or whatever I was doing, I learned this was certainly the right thing to ask. I cannot wait to return.

*Contributed by
John Giammatteo*

*Spending nights
on a bamboo mat
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Kabir Singers

Renowned folksinger, Prahlad Singh Tipanya, along with his group of musicians known as Kabir Singers were on the campus on the 24th of March, 2009 with their unparalleled music and song of Kabir. In March 2008, Tipanya was honored with the illustrious Sangeet Natak Akademi award.

Kabir was a great mystical poet of fifteenth-century North India. Difficult to categorize by any one religious label, Kabir has been revered by Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, secularists, atheists, and sectarian worshippers alike. Still a popular figure in contemporary times, his poetry and influence appear in various social, religious, and political locations, as well as through vibrantly diverse musical genres.



Faculty Update

Ann G Gold, Professor, Religion and Anthropology published a paper "Tasteless Profits and Vexed Moralities: Assessments of the Present in Rural Rajasthan," in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2009. She has another article in the *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, titled Deep Beauty: Rajasthan Goddesses above and below the Surface."

Devashish Mitra, Professor and Chair of department of Economics was recently quoted in "Apocalypse Then" in *Slate*. His forthcoming book chapter is "Globalization, Institutions and Economic Development: The Case of India," in *Globalization and the Rural-Urban Divide*, M. Gopinath and H. Kim, eds., Seoul National University Press, Seoul, Korea.

Farhana Sultana, Assistant Professor, Geography is chairing a conference titled "The Right to Water" on March 29-30. Her recent publications include "Political Ecologies of Water and Development," in

Special Issue of *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 2010. and "Dying for Water, Dying from Water: Gendered Geographies of the Drinking Water Crisis in Bangladesh," in *Gendered Geographies: Interrogating Space and Place in South Asia*, S. Raju, ed., Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2010.

Iswari Pandey, Assistant Professor, Writing and Rhetoric received a senior research fellowship from AIIS. His project "Ways of Writing: Composing (in) Global English, Globalizing Composition," expands on his ongoing research into the practices of teaching and learning English composition in South Asia in the context of globalization. As part of Iswari's fellowship, he spent the summer and fall of 2009 doing research in India and Nepal.

Joanne Waghorne, Professor, Religion, has a forthcoming book chapter "Global Gurus and the Third Stream of American Religiosity" in *"Public Hinduism"*, edited by Vinal Lal and published by OUP Delhi.

Prema Kurien, Associate Professor, Sociology, published a paper in *Race and American Culture*, 2009 titled "White Protestant Normativity and Asian American Religions," Starting January 2010 she will be serving a three year term on editorial board of American Sociological Review.

Shobha Bhatia, Professor of Civil Engineering department received the SU Chancellor's citation for 2009 for faculty excellence and scholarly distinction.

Susan S Wadley, Professor, Anthropology published an article "Exploring the Meaning of Genre in two Indian Performance Traditions" in the *Journal of the Institute of Ethnology*, Taipei, Taiwan. Her forthcoming book *Damayanti and Nala: The Many Lives of a Story* is in press.



Conference on 'The Right to Water'

Dates: March 29-30, 2010

Locations:

Monday March 29 – Maxwell Auditorium (4:00pm – 7:00pm)

Tuesday March 30 – Maxwell Public Events Room (8:30am-6:00pm)

For details visit: <http://www1.maxwell.syr.edu/waterconference.aspx>

***Transforming Faith: The Story of Al-Huda and Islamic Revivalism among Urban Pakistani Women.* By Sadaf Ahmad. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009**

This book is a detailed and sensitive ethnographic study of the Al-Huda movement in Pakistan – an Islamic “school turned social movement”(p. 1) that is drawing urban women to its classrooms and lectures. Ahmad's motivation for doing this research is to understand why women, especially from the middle and upper-middle classes, are recently flocking to Al-Huda schools and centers. She was both curious and troubled by the expansion and the influence of Al-Huda's religious teachings since the late 1990s. In order to understand why these women are engaging with Islam via Al-Huda and their journey into “piety,” Ahmad spent almost a year interviewing and spending time with women who attended classes at the main Al-Huda school in Islamabad. She also visited different *dars* (regular gatherings to discuss and read the Qur'an) held by various women.

Ahmad discusses her position as a Pakistani woman studying other Pakistani women in her home-city of Islamabad. She is very upfront about the ethical and practical questions that she asked herself while carrying out this research. She illuminates the personal challenges that ethnographic research in general entails and the particular challenges that a “native anthropologist” encounters. Most women were generous and willing to work with Ahmad, although a few women were hostile, even questioning the basis of her research as a fellow Muslim Pakistani.

Ahmad presents the larger context of Islam in Pakistan by describing the diverse indigenous practices of Islam. She discusses the historical influence of Deobandi Islam in Pakistan, the increasing Islamization of the state and culture, and how Al Huda fits into this recent religious trajectory. She describes the “technologies of expansion”(p. 40) used by Al-Huda to spread their teachings on “the one 'true' Islam”(p. 40) and to reach a larger audience in Pakistan, beyond the realm of the urban upper classes. Ahmad's main argument is that the less diversity there is in a society, the easier it is for an organization like Al Huda to create a unitary subject with a belief in their ideology of a unitary religious consciousness.

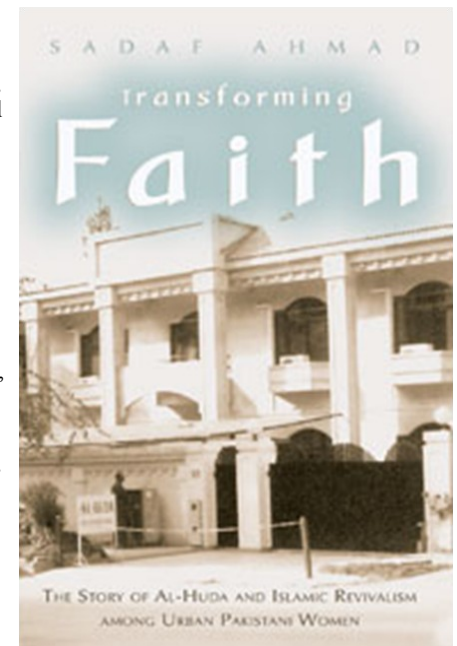
Al-Huda creates pious subjects by using techniques of discipline and “pedagogies of persuasion”(p. 77) through which women internalize the ideologies, values and beliefs of the school. Ahmad draws on Foucault's work on the “technologies of the self”(p. 67) to explain how women use techniques of self-discipline and self-reflection in their transformation into pious subjects. Part of this transformation includes an institutionalization of veiling. Ahmad reveals the tension between patriarchal structure, agency, and resistance in her nuanced explanations of how “the adoption of veiling is the rule rather than the exception. The variation lies in what veiling means to women”(p. 170).

Ahmad argues that this school is a social movement because its ideology has spread beyond the urban upper classes in Pakistan to rural areas and other countries. Although the majority of students in the one-year course do transform, she cautions that not all women internalize Al-Huda's message completely. A woman's faith and previous exposure to other Islamic discourses play an important role in the degree of their transformation. There are detailed descriptions of the transformative process from various women's points of views, however, I was left wondering if women involved in Al-Huda also saw themselves as a part of a social movement and how they envisioned the future of Pakistan.

In the chapter on *dars*, Ahmad articulately examines the heterogeneity of various *dars* in Islamabad. She uses a comparative approach to shed light on why women choose to attend Al-Huda *dars* as compared to other *dars* in the city. The teaching in the *dars* is not always as strict as in the Al-Huda classrooms and women attend them for a variety of reasons including; for some time for themselves, for social networking with other women, and for the *du'as* (supplicatory prayers) offered by the *dars* teachers. Students of Al-Huda also play into a religio-nationalistic discourse in which the West is held as responsible for the negative and unIslamic behavior in Pakistan. Ahmad successfully shows how in a society which is in flux, the teachings of Al-Huda provide women with a clear and moral framework for how to live as pious Muslims.

In the concluding chapter Ahmad leaves us with some very broad and important questions to consider concerning the future of Pakistan, the role of an anthropologist to take a stand on an issue, and the possible personal repercussions for taking such a stand. In the first chapter Ahmad disclosed a personal story about how she grew apart from a close childhood friend who was attending Al-Huda classes at the same time that Ahmad was conducting her research. However, in the last chapter Ahmad reveals that she reconciled with her childhood friend, despite their differences. We are left to ponder her message that even though it is necessary to take political stances on larger institutional structures and processes, at the same time, in our personal interactions it is still important to be human and tolerant of people with views different from our own. This book is well-written and organized and would be an engaging read for students and scholars interested in social movements, Islamic revivalism, women's studies, or Pakistani and South Asian politics.

Contributed by Karen McNamara



Release and Relaxation: The Sri Mangala Vinayagar Satsang Group of Madurai, Tamilnadu

By Nicole A. Wilson

It was early in the morning, the fifth of December, when we arrived at the Chennai Egmore train station. Myself and nine other members of the Sri Mangala Vinayagar Temple Satsang Group had traveled overnight in order to attend the wedding of our female guru's granddaughter, Ramya. Because a bus had been sent to the train station to collect us, we arrived at the marriage hall (*Tam. kalyana mandapam*) much earlier than many of the other guests. We stopped to have a coffee on the bottom floor of the wedding hall and then went up to our assigned rooms to freshen up for the festivities.

One of the celebratory occasions was a birthday party for the bridegroom's nephew, which was being held in between the formal prescribed Hindu wedding rituals of the afternoon. The celebration of this birthday party in conjunction with the wedding was itself a rarity, but it was even more unusual that the birthday party was partly celebrated through choreographed song and dance performances presented by the bridegroom's family members. After we had thoroughly enjoyed the performances and our egg-less Brahmin birthday cake, the women and I went back upstairs to our respective rooms.

Now, around this time in the afternoon, it is customary to rest before the wedding rituals begin again in the evening (many Tamil Brahmin wedding rituals/events require changing into a different saree, which can become rather exhausting!). But on this day, the rest period did not happen in our room. In fact, the women were so impressed by the dancing and singing at the birthday party that they boisterously joked for two hours about how they were all going to put on jeans and sing and dance at my future Indian wedding reception. Mala, a woman one might describe as the "class clown" of the Satsang Group, even got up from her miniscule amount of space on the floor (even though we had been allotted two rooms, all nine members of the group plus myself ended up talking and joking within the walls of one room) and began to jump around and dance saying to the other women, "Remember when we used to do this dance in school?" The women laughed at this and another group member, Giri, then got up, put on the highest high-heel sandals she could find in the room, and began strutting around causing the other members of the group to giggle uncontrollably.



This scene was a marked difference from what occurred in our room earlier that morning. For about an hour, a group member named Tilakam lamented about how her son had been mistreating her. During this time other group members consoled her by saying that everyone has at least one son "like this." This occurrence was hardly a jolly affair, and yet, as I reflect on these experiences now, I realize that they share something very important in common – they are incidents that exemplify the meaning of the Satsang group within the wider scope of the women's lives.

Since August 2009, I have been living with and experiencing the daily lives of the Sri Mangala Vinayagar Satsang Group women. In contrast to their daily routines at home, Satsang group events (like the abovementioned wedding) allow for a space in which women can relieve themselves of household responsibilities and release their emotions, whether happy or sad, among friends and within a supportive framework¹. Mala's nostalgia for dances done in her schooldays and Tilakam's outpouring of frustration over her son's actions are examples of how this group-facilitated emotional outlet functions. During a casual conversation, the group's guru later emphasized the importance of the group in the lives of its members saying that the spiritual nature and group's weekly meetings "let the women get away from troubles at home so that they can relax." Another member of the group, Latha, described the impact of the group's weekly meetings on the members' lives in this way, "from eleven o'clock to one o'clock we learn *slogams* (Sanskrit recitations) and then from one o'clock to two o'clock we talk, trade recipes, and talk about our 'tours'...we will be very jolly...since class started in 2000, many people are 'friends'...and we are all happy...and we can get *punniyam* (religious merit) and meet people, 'friends'...so ever since I started going to class I have been very happy. 'Suppose' if one person (a group member) is sick, then we will all take care of each other."

My anthropological training has taught me that conceptions of happiness (as well as other emotions) are often culturally specific, and yet when I am with the Sri Mangala Vinayagar Satsang Group members, my feelings mirror those of Latha. I consider myself fortunate that my dissertation research environment is so welcoming and supportive, and I know that the relationships I make during my stay in Madurai, Tamilnadu will shape the rest of my life.

My anthropological training has taught me that conceptions of happiness (as well as other emotions) are often culturally specific, and yet when I am with the Sri Mangala Vinayagar Satsang Group members, my feelings mirror those of Latha. I consider myself fortunate that my dissertation research environment is so welcoming and supportive, and I know that the relationships I make during my stay in Madurai, Tamilnadu will shape the rest of my life.

¹ I do not wish to imply that outside of Satsang group events, its members lead unhappy lives without familial support networks. I interpret the group as offering a separate space for them to shed the pressures of family responsibility and obtain advice and support from friends.

FLAS FELLOWS

The South Asia Center has named eight Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellows for this academic year, whose studies will reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the fellowship and its focus on language. We are proud to welcome to the Center's family the following individuals. For the 2009-2010 academic year, Foreign Language Area Studies fellowships were awarded to:

Christopher Giamo	Anthropology
Soumitra Chatterjee	Public Diplomacy & IR (Fall)
Faris Khan	Anthropology
Holly Trace	International Relations
Jocelyn Killmer	Anthropology
Mathew Dippold	International Relations
Mathew Regan	Library Science
Ian Wilson	Anthropology (Fall)

BHARATI SUMMER RESEARCH GRANT 2009

The friends and family of Agehananda Bharati established a memorial grant in his honor in the early 1990s. Each year, awards are made to doctoral students in the Maxwell School for research leading to their dissertation research on South Asia. This year's recipients were:

Faris Khan (Anthropology)
Nicole Wilson (Anthropology)
Anirban Acharya (Political science)
Shrimoy Chaudhary (Political Science)

GOEKJIAN SUMMER RESEARCH GRANT 2009

This award provides summer research support and mentoring to doctoral students in the Maxwell School interested in contemporary and historical international and global issues.

Madhura Lokhare (Anthropology)
Deepa Prakash (Economics)

SPRING EVENTS 2010

Approaching Local History through Performance: Recasting the Tradition of Jikadi-Bhajanto the Recent History of Bharatpur

Ian Wilson
 Syracuse University

Tuesday, March 2nd, 12:30 pm
 341 Eggers Hall

Secularizing the Sacred and Exorcizing the Profane: Himalayas in the imagination of Bengali literati (1857-1902)

Subho Basu and Sandeep Banerjee
 Syracuse University

Tuesday, March 9th, 12:30 pm
 205 Maxwell Hall

When There Are No Tourists: The Reaction of Sightseeing Rickshaw Drivers to Uncertainty in Tourism Work

Emera Bridger Wilson
 Syracuse University

Tuesday, March 23rd, 12:30 pm
 341 Eggers Hall

Sri Lankan Muslims: Between Ethno-nationalism and the Global Ummah

Dennis McGlivery
 Colorado University

Tuesday, April 6th, 12:30 pm
 341 Eggers Hall

Hindu Gurus in an American Context

Lola Williamson
 Millsaps College

Tuesday, April 13th, 12:30 pm
 341 Eggers Hall

Postcolonial Theory and the Shadow of Capitalism

Vivek Chibber
 New York University

Tuesday, April 20th, 12:30 pm
 341 Eggers Hall

Changing Terrains and New Directions in the History of Medieval India

Daud Ali
 University of Pennsylvania

Tuesday, April 20th, 7:30 pm
 Hendricks Chapel

Ganga
 A singing group from Bengal



The south Asia newsletter is official outreach bulletin for south Asia Center at Moynihan Institution of Global affair, Maxwell school of citizenship and public affair, Syracuse University.

Director
Susan Wadley

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SOUTH ASIA CENTER: OUTREACH SERVICES

Funded as a National Resource Center by the Department of Education, the South Asia Center at Syracuse University serves as a liaison between Syracuse University faculty with research interests in South Asia, educators, and the wider public in the Central New York area. Our resources and faculty interests cover the South Asia region, broadly defined as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Our audience includes educators in area schools and colleges, the general community, individuals interested in the region, and the Syracuse University community. South Asia Outreach presents workshops, seminars, lectures, film and video screenings, school and college lecture and discussion programs, cultural programs, and other public events. In addition, Outreach loans a wide variety of educational materials to educators at no cost. These resources include books, maps, videotapes, slide sets, comic books, and "hands-on" kits. We also have curriculum units and our staff is available to offer teachers advice on curriculum development. A list of our comic books and videotapes may be obtained by sending us a request with a self-addressed stamped envelope to South Asia Center, 346F Eggers Hall, Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244 or on our web page at <http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/moynihan/programs/sac/>. **Our email: southasia@maxwell.syr.edu.**

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