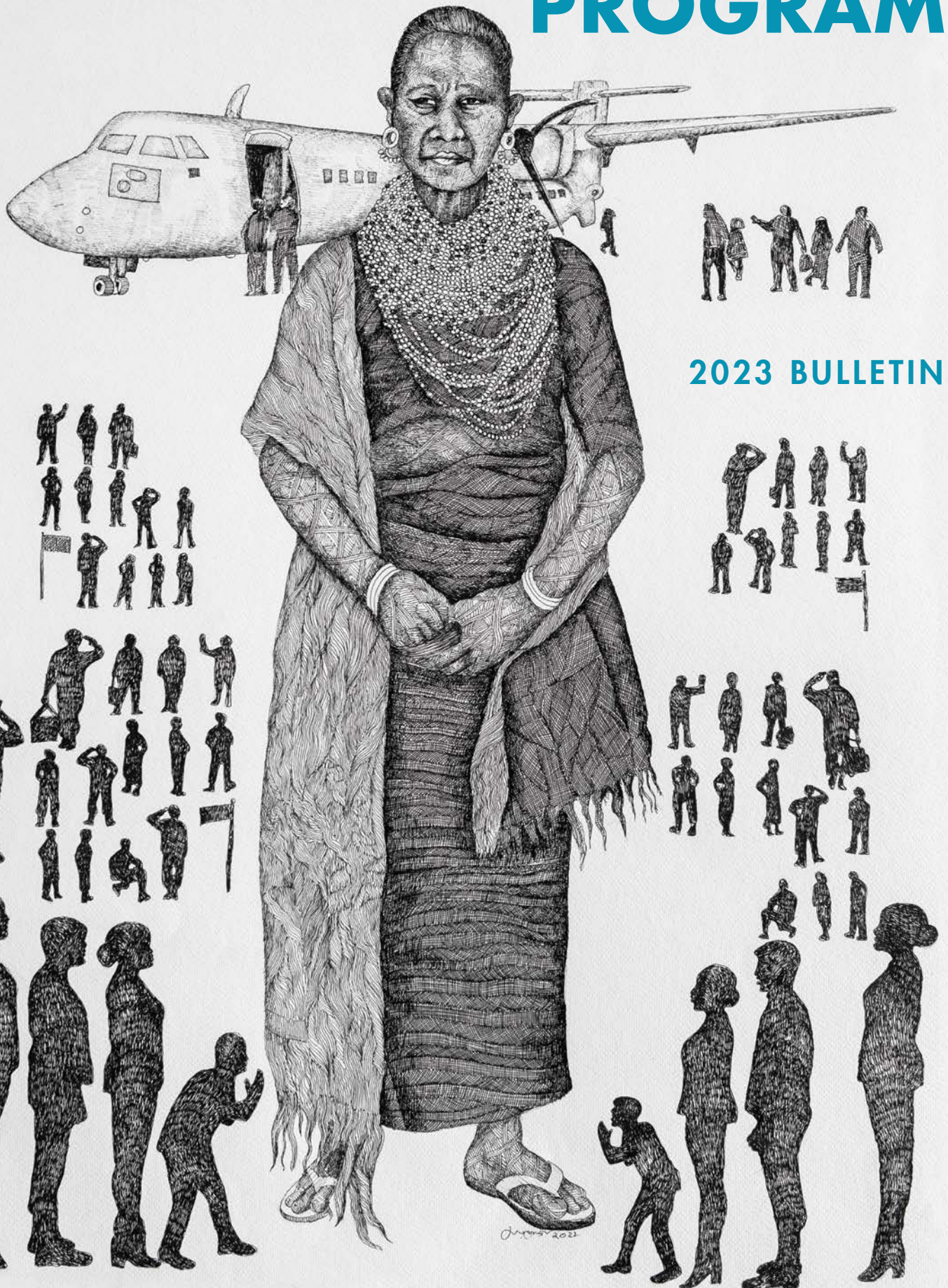


Cornell University

# SOUTH ASIA PROGRAM



2023 BULLETIN





Muvindu Binoy  
 Avilenasului, 2022  
 Giclée print on archival photo paper  
 33 x 48 cm  
 Courtesy of the artist and Saskia  
 Fernando Gallery, Colombo  
 Exhibited at Pop South Asia, Sharjah Art  
 Foundation, 2022 (p. 15)

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Mario Einaudi  
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# Directors' Letters

By Iftikhar Dadi, John H. Burris  
Professor of History of Art &  
former Binenkorb Director,  
South Asia Program

The 2022-23 academic year at the South Asia Program (SAP) has been one full of programs and activities, as campus life returned to regular, in-person interactions after the COVID interruptions. It has been wonderful to see Afghan students and scholars assume an active presence on campus (p. 3-5). We are grateful for alumni support in bringing them to campus, and sustaining their work (p. 6). In collaboration with other programs on campus, SAP supported bringing many distinguished visitors to Cornell. These include Anupama Rao, historian at Columbia University specializing on caste (p. 23), Brinda Somaya, leading architect based in Mumbai (p. 23), and Navina Najat Haider, curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (p. 21).

The Annual Tagore Lecture (supported by Professor Prabhu and family, p. 31) was delivered by the renowned author Kamila Shamsie, whose talk underscored how personal memories and political history are seamlessly interwoven in her recent writing (p. 17). We also welcomed and supported several exhibitions on campus. These included one on the Joseph Allen Stein archives that are now housed at Cornell (p. 13), and three art exhibitions at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art (p. 20). And an innovative conference on Kashmir organized by Asian Studies visiting scholar Asiya Zahoor focused on the role of fiction and poetry in understanding the conflicted region (p. 21).

Our consortium partner for the National Resource Center grant from the US Department of Education is Syracuse University's South Asia Center. We are delighted to be working with their new director Prema Kurien and manager Matthew Baxter (p. 33). For the first time, the Cornell and Syracuse centers organized a Consortium Symposium, bringing together graduate students and faculty to share their work (p. 19). We plan to continue this as a regular program.

It has been deeply rewarding and fulfilling for me to have completed five years as director of SAP. The program's success is largely due to unwavering commitment of its staff, Gloria Lemus-Chavez and Daniel Bass, who have been a pleasure to work with. I am delighted that Sarah Besky is the incoming director, who will undoubtedly bring fresh perspectives and initiatives to further enrich the Program in the coming years.

Sarah Besky, Associate Professor  
of Global Labor and Work &  
Director, South Asia Program

It is a real honor to begin my term as the new Director of the South Asia Program, and I am deeply indebted to Iftikhar Dadi for his steady leadership over the course of some of the most challenging years any of us can remember.

In July 2023, just as my term began, I had the pleasure of meeting more than 40 students, parents, alumni, and friends at a new student send-off event in Delhi (p. 12). I was able to share news about the current goings on at SAP and Einaudi, and the energy in the room and the excitement about building stronger connections between Cornell and South Asia were palpable.

One of the things that attracted me about the prospect of teaching at Cornell was the university's laudable tradition of wide geographical, topical, and disciplinary engagement with South Asia. As a student, I was initiated into the study of the area via study abroad experiences in Nepal, and later in the Indian Himalaya, and at SAP, we continue to be proud that our academic reach spans far and wide. This year's SAP speaker series reflects that commitment to breadth. Speakers will cover topics from climate change in Pakistan to tobacco economies in South India to the everyday politics of the India-Bangladesh borderlands. Our series remains a key gathering place for faculty and students from across campus, and I look forward to seeing you in G08 Uris Hall most Mondays at 12:15 p.m.

One of my main initiatives this year will be to continue fostering student engagement with the center. To that end, I am offering a new course, "Issues in South Asian Studies" (ILRIC 4377/6377), which will allow students to receive credit for attending and responding to our speaker series. We know from the experiences of other area studies programs at Einaudi that these formalized courses do much to build a sense of interdisciplinary intellectual community, particularly for graduate students.

In addition, SAP will be exploring new opportunities for summer student internships, beginning with our partners at Indian academic institutions. As we work to further internationalize the undergraduate experience, we want to showcase the richness and vitality of intellectual and public life in South Asia, while also providing students with a chance to enhance lessons learned in language training and other coursework.

This is an exciting time to build on Cornell's historic strengths in South Asian studies. As Director, I look forward to thinking together with all of you about how SAP might play a role in preparing students and reaching out to the public about issues for which South Asia will be a center of knowledge production, from climate crisis to political division to food security. Of course, the great pleasure of this job is sure to be the many opportunities to share the accomplishments of our distinguished students and faculty with Cornell alumni and friends of SAP. As a new academic year begins, I welcome your input on how we can continue to thrive.







# MY FULBRIGHT EXPERIENCE

by Supriya Pandit

When I landed in Delhi in September, 2022, I had no idea what the next eight months as a Fulbright-Nehru Student Researcher would hold for me. I had seemingly lost all sense of what my project was going to look like due to bureaucratic stipulations implemented after I applied almost a year before. After deciding to make a home in South Delhi and registering at my affiliate institution, Jawaharlal Nehru University, I met Rajib Dasgupta, my academic advisor, who helped me reconnect with MAMTA-Institute for Mother and Child, where I had initially hoped to work.

Instead of working in Uttar Pradesh alongside a study about contraception, though, I would work in rural Rajasthan alongside an infertility awareness program (pictured above right). It was not what I had pictured, but it actually clicked in a way I had not anticipated for my own project investigating the philosophical and anthropological underpinnings of people's reproductive intentions and behaviors, especially during the pandemic.

With the assistance of Leena Uppal and Neha Bhardwaj, I conducted field visits to the MAMTA field office in Kotkasim, Rajasthan. After learning about MAMTA's work and attending sex education classes and community meetings for women, I conducted my own interviews, at first with an assistant for interpretation, and then solo as my Hindi improved. I was accompanied by various field workers who helped me find ideal participants who were of reproductive age, some of whom had children already.

My project goals and questions changed as each conversation unfolded. I learned how women changed their behaviors to accommodate pregnancy, how deeply infertility is affected their mental health, and how a new generation are changing their views. These young women want fewer children and prefer daughters, deviating from the traditional aspiration. Living in Delhi also served as a blessing. I gained a valuable dual perspective in many casual conversations in the city with young people about their changing ideas about having children, overpopulation, and overconsumption.

I am so grateful for the many people I worked with and interviewed who welcomed me into their offices and homes. Because of them, I have a much clearer, nuanced understanding of what this research area looks like, but also how someone like me, with my social identity as an Indian-American woman, ought to act and reflect on my experiences in rural India. I truly hope that once I have more clinical training, I will be able to return to a similar site to fill unmet needs. Each woman I spoke with left an impression on me, and I wish to dedicate my career to serving people like them.

My grant was undeniably the most challenging yet rewarding period of my life. I connected with many incredible people (including other amazing Fulbrighters!), but I learned a great deal about myself. I feel more motivated and purposeful about life ahead of me; I sincerely believe that living in India and continuing to ask questions like these are in my future.

# Afghan students – now Cornellians – **LOOK TO FUTURE**

by Jonathan Miller

**A**s a midwife in her native Afghanistan, Khadija Monis (pictured below) dreamed of one day opening a hospital for maternal and child health. Her experiences this last year at Cornell have made that dream more achievable, she said. “I’m now living in a bigger world, with a different view than the world I was in,” said Monis, who is majoring in interdisciplinary studies in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. “I feel stronger, more passionate about life.”

Monis is one of nine Afghan undergraduates from Bangladesh-based Asian University for Women (AUW) who fled their country after the Taliban took control in August 2021, arriving in Ithaca four months later. In July, all nine were admitted as Cornell students with full financial aid. “We couldn’t be more proud of these women,” said Nishi Dhupa, Executive Director of the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies. “I’m so impressed by their tenacity and courage. I’m sure there will be hurdles ahead, but these are women who will change the world.”

In 2021, Diana Ayubi (pictured above) was studying public health at AUW, mainly because the school had no psychology department. Now she is a psychology major at Cornell. She hopes to become a therapist and help people deal with trauma, a condition she knows firsthand. “I’m very lucky if I compare myself with others,” she said, citing members of her family in Afghanistan whose mental health is “not good,” and others who are “dying emotionally” in prison. “Many people do not have the opportunities that I have had.”

Shegofa Ibrahimimi was studying finance at AUW, and was admitted to Cornell’s hospitality management program. She knows exactly what she hopes to do with her degree. “If I have the chance to go back to Afghanistan,” she said, “I will



Photos by Jonathan Miller

establish a big hotel in central Kabul, and all the personnel will be women. And the men will see that the women can do this.”

Monis, Ayubi, Ibrahimimi and the other AUW students were not officially enrolled until the Fall 2022 semester, but they have lived like Cornell students, staying in dorms, taking English language lessons, sitting in on college classes, and working in university labs and libraries. It has been like an eight-month orientation, giving them time to adjust not only to Cornell but also to life in the United States. Monis learned to drive, swim and ride a bicycle. She also joined a Dragon Boat team and won two medals. “I can’t really say that I feel stable,” she said. “That takes a long time. But I feel better than I did. I feel more grown up, more experienced, with more skills.”



In the summer of 2022, the students had the opportunity to use their growing skills and learn more about the community beyond Cornell in six-week summer internships with local nonprofits arranged by Global

Cornell and the Ithaca-based Park Foundation. Monis and Tamana Ghaznawi worked with the Ithaca Doula Access Initiative, which provides free support to women before, during and after childbirth. They visited birthing centers, met with

midwives and learned about the disparities in maternal mortality rates in the United States. They also shared their knowledge of practices in Afghanistan and Pakistan with their hosts, even preparing foods typically served to new and expecting mothers.

Ibrahimimi worked at Alternatives Federal Credit Union, helping update client databases and contributing to other projects. Khurshid Hussainy interned with the Downtown Ithaca Children’s Center, and Sepehira Azami worked with the Ithaca City School District’s Farm-to-Table and Literacy Intervention programs. Four students (Ayubi, Shukria Mirzaie, Simah Gul Sahnosh and Tamana Ahmadi) worked directly with the Park Foundation on a study of local mental health resources. They interviewed providers, updated resource lists and identified service gaps and obstacles.

Ayubi said the internship taught her about the US mental health care system, which will be useful as she pursues her studies. But it also gave her a chance to learn about her adopted hometown. “I love the way people in Ithaca are,” she said. “They are so friendly, so kind. That is a completely new experience for me, and I love it.”

Another thing Ayubi has learned over the last year is that life can be unpredictable. “It’s been very long journey,” she mused. “I had Plan A and Plan Z came true.”

Original version appeared in *Cornell Chronicle* (September 6, 2022)



# AN AFGHAN SCHOLAR'S SEARCH FOR STABILITY

by Jonathan Miller

*"There were hundreds of incidents, with Hazara being kidnapped on the highway, being beheaded and killed," Hozoori remembered. "They were disappearing and no one knew where they were." Along with millions of other Afghans, Hozoori's family fled to Iran, where they lived as refugees.*

Kabul-Kandahar Highway. Photo by Jason P. Howe

Two years ago, Sharif Hozoori was living in Kabul, working as a university professor and administrator and raising an infant son with his wife. He was glad to be back in his native country after many years away, first as a refugee, then as a student. Hozoori was part of a wave of educated Afghans who had returned from abroad to help rebuild the country. His job as vice chancellor for academic affairs at the University of Afghanistan offered stability and prestige. Kabul was not exactly safe (he checked the chassis of his car for bombs every time he drove to or from work), but it felt like a good place to build a future.

"I was so optimistic, I didn't even apply for a passport," he recalled. He finally got one to travel to Turkey for a conference and research in July 2021. He was still there when Kabul fell to the Taliban in August. Suddenly, his prospects changed completely.

Today, Hozoori is an Institute of International Education Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF) fellow and a visiting scholar at the South Asia Program. He has contributed to several events, including a panel discussion reflecting on the Taliban's first year in power, as well as talks organized by SAP at regional community colleges. In September 2022, the newly formed Afghan Students Organization invited him to serve as the group's faculty adviser. Yet while he says he is relieved and grateful to be at Cornell, he knows his journey is far from over.

The Einaudi Center has increased its support for scholars under threat, including three Afghan scholars (p. 4-5), providing an intellectual community, connections with university departments, social and career support and links to faculty mentors. "These people's lives were in danger,"

said SAP Director Iftikhar Dadi. "It's not just that they were professionally thwarted. Their lives were threatened."

The challenge for all of them, as for thousands of others who have fled perilous situations and found temporary shelter, is to figure out what to do next. Fellowships tend to be short. Hozoori's was originally one year and was extended for a second, but reconstructing a shattered life takes time, if it happens at all.

As a Hazara, Hozoori is no stranger to displacement. The predominantly Shi'a Hazara community were frequent targets of the Sunni guerrilla groups that were vying for power during the 1990s. When the Taliban took control in 1995, life became even more difficult. "There were hundreds of incidents, with Hazara being kidnapped on the highway, being beheaded and killed," Hozoori remembered. "They were disappearing and no one knew where they were." Along with millions of other Afghans, Hozoori's family fled to Iran as refugees.

By the time Hozoori finished high school in Iran, the Taliban had been chased from power and a pro-Western government was in charge. He returned to Afghanistan with an Iranian accent. He left again to attend university in India, where he eventually earned a PhD in international relations at Jawaharlal Nehru University. When he came home this time, his accent was Indian.

He wrote his dissertation on the role of political elites in Afghanistan's politics and foreign policy. He was critical of both traditional political players and insurgents like the Taliban. When the group seized power again in 2021, he knew he would be jailed or killed if he returned to Kabul. From Turkey, Hozoori

applied for an IIE-SRF fellowship and waited for a new path to open.

SAP staff worked to arrange a US visa for him, a complicated process that took several months (2022 Bulletin). After many false starts and missed connections, Hozoori finally made it to Ithaca in January 2022. His wife and son followed in late February.

Now Hozoori walks from Hasbrouck Apartments each day to his shared office in the Einaudi Center and tries to map out his future. But finding a path is not easy. The academic job market is fiercely competitive. Hozoori's expertise in Afghan politics and culture puts him in a narrow niche.

Peter Katzenstein (Government), one of Hozoori's faculty mentors, advised him to be as active as possible writing papers, giving talks, sitting on panels and producing a blog. He has done all those things, including traveling to Denver and Los Angeles to present at conferences. Katzenstein said Hozoori is "tough and resilient," but acknowledged that finding an academic post will be difficult. He thinks his best prospects are as a researcher or analyst at a think tank. "He's basically a contemporary historian, with a very deep, immersive knowledge," Katzenstein said. "That's his comparative advantage."

Hozoori says his first choice is still a university research or teaching job. Second is something in educational administration. But the clock is ticking, and he has begun to look farther afield. He has a family to support, so long-term stability is paramount. For him, as for so many displaced scholars, stability may be the most ambitious goal of all.

Original version appeared in *Cornell Chronicle* (February 15, 2023)

# Noor Ahmad Akhundzadah's LONG JOURNEY TO ITHACA

In her August 30, 2021 article in *The New York Times*, “A New Breed of Crisis: War and Warming Collide in Afghanistan” reporter Somini Sengupta quoted Noor Ahmad Akhundzadah, then a professor at Kabul University, stating “The war has exacerbated climate change impacts. For 10 years, over 50 percent of the national budget goes to the war.” He added, “Now there is no government, and the future is unclear. Our current situation today is completely hopeless.”

Sengupta ended her article, just over two weeks after the Taliban's takeover of the Afghan government, writing that “Dr. Akhundzadah, a father of four, is hoping to emigrate, too. But like his fellow academics, he said he has not worked for foreign governments and has no way to be evacuated from the country. The university is closed. Banks are closed. He is looking for research jobs abroad. For now, there are no commercial flights out of the country. ‘Till now I'm OK,’ he said on the phone. ‘The future is unclear. It will be difficult to live here.’”

Thankfully, Akhundzadah soon contacted his colleague, Karim-Aly Kassam, International Professor of Environmental and Indigenous Studies in the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment at Cornell, with whom he had worked on research in Afghanistan for many years. After consulting with SAP and the Einaudi Center, Kassam had Akhundzadah connect with the IIE-Scholar Rescue Fund, who awarded him a fellowship as a Scholar Under Threat.

After earning his PhD in Hydrogeology from Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology in 2009, Noor Ahmad Akhundzadah was Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Environment at Kabul University, having previously served for eight years as Dean of the Faculty. In addition, in May 2021, he was assigned as Director of Foreign Relation and Scholarships Affairs in the Ministry of Higher Education, connecting Afghan and foreign universities. Because of this work, as well as with the UN and other international agencies, he felt under threat. In fact, his driver was injured

in a terrorist attack in June 2021, after dropping Akhundzadah off at his house.

Once his fellowship was awarded in October 2021, Cornell was able to sponsor visas for Akhundzadah, his wife and their four children, but first they had to travel to a country with a functioning US embassy. After many delays, all members of his family received their Pakistan visas in February 2022, and they left Afghanistan within days.

Thanks to the work of SAP Director Iftikhar Dadi, Akhundzadah and his family were able to stay at the American Institute of Pakistan Studies guest house in Islamabad. While he had an appointment at the US embassy in late February, his application soon entered the nether world of “administrative processing.” His family was thankfully safe in Islamabad, but they were in limbo for many months.

In December 2022, with the imminent possibility of their Pakistani visas expiring at the end of the year, their US visas were finally approved. However, they were slated to arrive in Ithaca in the evening of December 22, when Cornell was about to close for the winter break. SAP arranged a brief hotel stay for them, during which time Dadi and fellow IIE-SRF fellow Sharif Hozoori welcomed them to Ithaca.

On December 26, they were able to move into a spring semester sublet in downtown

Ithaca which SAP had arranged, assisted by the generous staff and volunteers at Ithaca Welcomes Refugees (IWR). While SAP helped Akhundzadah get settled in at Cornell, IWR helped his family get settled in Ithaca, arranging for school registration, doctor's appointments, and English classes.

In February 2023, Akhundzadah presented his research at a SAP seminar, “Climate Change, Water Resources, and Renewable Energy in Afghanistan.” In May, he spoke at Tompkins Cortland Community College, on “Global Water Conflict in Global Water Sustainability” for a Global Seminar class (p. 25). He even

presented “Earthquake Disaster in Afghanistan” at the annual Japan Geosciences Union Meeting in May. Karim-Aly Kassam added, “Since being at Cornell, he has tirelessly

been giving seminars, undertaking original applied research, presenting papers, and lecturing and engaging undergraduate students. He has earned my respect and admiration. As a result of this fellowship at Cornell, Akhundzadah will contribute to future environmental policy in Afghanistan.”





# GIVING WITH IMPACT:

## How One Alumna is Assisting Many Afghans

by Linda Copman

In August 2021, Sharifa Sharifi (pictured above right) was working as general manager of the Afghan National Gallery in Herat, Afghanistan's third largest city, when the government collapsed and the Taliban took control. As a government employee, a professional woman, an outspoken advocate for women's rights, and an artist whose paintings celebrated the female body, (pictured above left), Sharifa, who goes by the name Elja, knew her life was in grave danger.

"I didn't feel safe," Elja says. "I couldn't believe that night when, among the noise of bombs, shootings, and rockets, our beautiful Herat fell. Although I was still alive, I had become like the walking dead. I decided that I had to get out of the country. It wasn't an easy decision, but I had to."

After a harrowing month of hiding out in the homes of family members and stashing dozens of her paintings in attics, Elja was able to leave the country by pretending to be part of a friend's family who had visas to travel to Iran. "My friend has a husband and some children. Like a family, we covered our faces. Fortunately, the Taliban didn't look inside the car. They only asked my friend's husband for our passports, stamped them, and we were able to cross the border," she explains.

Once in Iran, her friend introduced her to an American colleague who helped Elja submit her documents to the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, which offered her a Visiting Scholar position. But because Afghan banks had been closed, Elja had no way to pay for her travel.

"It's money that I enjoy giving," Cady-Krus says.

"A great outcome of my story would be to inspire others to help, too, and see that a small investment in the right place can make a big difference."

With the promise of matching funds from Cornell, she spent the next several months working to secure a fellowship from the Institute of International Education's (IIE) Artist's Protection Fund.

In August 2022, one year after the Taliban takeover sent her fleeing for her life, Elja arrived in Ithaca and was welcomed into the home of a Cornell faculty member and to her new role at the Johnson Museum. Jessica Martinez, director of the Johnson Museum, helped Elja to secure another one-year fellowship through the Open Society University Network, which will allow Elja to remain at Cornell. Here, she's free to pursue her work as an artist and advocate for the rights of women, especially for those left behind in Afghanistan, like her 15-year-old sister.

Since the fall of 2021, Cornell has welcomed five Afghan scholars (see p. 4-5), including Elja, and more than 20 Afghan

students (p. 3). The South Asia Program has played a key role in coordinating support for these Afghans, as part of Global Cornell's Scholars Under Threat initiative.

Since fall 2021, Cornell alumna Nell Cady-Kruse has been one of several donors who have supported Global Cornell's Scholars Under Threat program, donating funds to cover the cost of laptops, medical care, winter clothing, English language support, and more for Cornell's Afghan students and scholars.

Cady-Krus, who spent her formative years in Ithaca, says that having a global perspective was part of her upbringing. She was a "townie," whose father taught nuclear engineering at Cornell. After earning Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Cornell, she spent over three decades working in global financial services, banking, and risk management in the US, Europe, Africa, and Asia, with a focus on emerging markets. Soon after the Taliban takeover, Cady-Krus became a strong supporter of Cornell's efforts to support Afghan students and scholars at risk.

When Elja learned about Cady-Krus, whose behind-the-scenes philanthropy has directly helped her start a new life in Ithaca, she said: "I hope I can meet her in person and thank her. She saved our lives. We—I and the other Afghans at Cornell—are also supporting our families now. When she helps us, she helps all of us, too."

Original version appeared on Alumni Affairs and Development website (May 23, 2023)



# CREATING A 'POLITICAL ECONOMY OF HOPE' at the Pakistan-India border

by Kate Blackwood

Lately, Indian government officials all the way up to the prime minister have been encouraging Hindu Pakistani nationals to “return,” according to Natasha Raheja, Assistant Professor of Anthropology. But at the border, many hopeful migrants find that Indian citizenship is not assured. “Pakistani Hindus may imagine their migration as an enactment of their ‘right of return,’ but they in fact experience an ambivalent welcome on arrival,” Raheja wrote in an article in *Cultural Anthropology*.

While embedded among migrants in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, Raheja found that Indian officials use physical closeness and digital connection to entice would-be citizens while keeping them waiting for recognition and basic welfare. For the past eight years, Raheja has worked with migrants from Pakistan waiting for Indian citizenship, as part of her broader inquiry on how border crossings demand new ways of imagining our geopolitical order.

“I wanted to understand how migrants continue to pursue recognition in the face of repeated deferral,” Raheja said. “During fieldwork, I noticed the enchantment and cynicism associated with the visits of national politicians to borderland regions. In this article, I make sense of these mixed affects of state performances through the concept of governing by proximity.”

Proximity is a modality of governance that yields mixed results, Raheja said. When politicians get close to constituents, either physically or digitally, they manage expectations and offer assurances to constituents. But they also expose themselves to scrutiny, giving people the chance to see beyond the performance into imperfect government workings. “Proximity is like a magnifying glass that amplifies both stature and shortcomings,” Raheja said. “On one hand, when people in powerful positions are close to us, we can feel



A Pakistani migrant woman, at right, meets with Indian Ministry of Home Affairs officials in Jodhpur. Photo by Natasha Raheja.

special and as if we personally belong. On the other hand, we can observe their shortcomings and inconsistencies.”

In Jodhpur, a city with a high concentration of Pakistani migrants, Raheja met Meera, an indigenous farmworker hoping to get Indian citizenship for herself and her husband, parents and ten children at a two-day citizenship camp. “For Meera, meeting with high-ranking officers and seeing digital clips of welcoming political speeches in the palm of her hand made Indian citizenship feel like a close possibility,” Raheja wrote. “At the same time, she had relatives and acquaintances whose visa and citizenship applications had been delayed or rejected.”

Elsewhere in the citizenship camp, a man named Pankajlal waited for an hour to apply based on the fact that his mother, with him in the line, had been born in pre-Partition India. When they finally reached the desk, they were refused because the affidavit Pankajlal had acquired was not sufficient; instead, they needed a birth certificate. “The burden always falls on the common people, the way weight always falls on the wheel of a cycle,” Pankajlal said. “There

[in Pakistan], they call us infidel Hindus; here [in India], bloody Pakistanis.”

But a fellow applicant encouraged Pankajlal to speak up, and together they complained to government representatives. “Their exchange conveys how this site, centered on a performative avowal of their special status as desirable Indian citizens, also generated refugee-migrants’ critiques of the Indian government,” Raheja wrote. A few hours later, a Ministry of Home Affairs official came on the loudspeaker to announce that, in lieu of birth certificates, the camp would accept applications with affidavits attesting to a parent’s birth in undivided India.

Raheja’s wider research looks to migration to understand how majority-minority politics exceeds national frames. “Across borders, manufactured national belongings and state legitimacies require maintenance,” Raheja said. “As the article carefully details, governing by proximity enchants but also generates fatigue and doubt. It is in this gap that there is potential for migrants to refuse and imagine alternatives.”

Original version appeared in *Cornell Chronicle* (October 6, 2022)



# FINDING COMMUNITY at Cornell

by Syed Jaleel Hussain

In the midst of COVID restrictions, I left New Delhi, where I teach at Jamia Millia Islamia, to arrive at Cornell as a Fulbright-Nehru Postdoctoral Fellow in April 2022. Left alone to explore the picturesque Cornell campus and the Ithaca town, I spent my first few weeks strolling in the serene gorges, walking on the beautiful trails and in the lush green parks while feasting my eyes on the breathtaking hills and lakes. Cornell is dynamic, creative and full of exquisite autumn colours and long snowy days. It is the most beautiful university campus I have ever seen.

As a visiting fellow, crucial support came from the South Asia Program. On my maiden visit to the US, I was initially reluctant and reserved. Daniel Bass and Gloria Lemus-Chavez at SAP made it extremely smooth and easy for me from the very beginning. My very first interaction with SAP Manager Daniel Bass was the right kind of attitude and energy you need for a perfect year. With his amazing support, I was able to quickly connect with the faculty and vital resources on the campus. On my day of joining, SAP had, to my surprise, provided me with a short-term bus pass to ease my travel before I got my personal university ID card. It is difficult to find such an amazing feeling of community in an academic institution.

Many faculty members allowed me to participate in their graduate and undergraduate classes and lent me books and materials from their personal libraries. My hosts at SAP prioritized my requests and helped me understand and navigate Cornell's academic culture. In spite of his extremely busy schedule, SAP Director Iftikhar Dadi was constantly supportive of my project.

The Einaudi Center director, Rachel Riedl, was extremely generous with her time and ideas. She helped me think in directions that I was reluctant to explore. The productive and pleasant discussions with Durba Ghosh, Robert Travers, Natasha Raheja and Mustafa Minawi were immensely helpful.

Apart from a world class infrastructure and research rigour, the university campus, the faculty and the students exude a feeling of a tight-knit community.

I was generously allowed to join classes and discussion groups by Sarah Besky and Seema Golestaneh. I especially cherished reading and discussing in-progress works by Sarah's graduate students. Her infectious energy and mindboggling commitment to rigour helped steer my own research. My independent study with Seema Golestaneh was extremely fruitful, as was her fascinating graduate course on Textual Ethnography. She was generous with her time and ideas and her comments and suggestions were critical in finalizing my research project. One of my most pleasant and rewarding experiences was my participation in Farsi classes taught by Iago Gocheleishvili. With his gifted language skills and remarkable teaching methods, I became comfortable with the language in a matter of months.

Unsurprisingly, the fellowship year proved to be very productive. I presented papers in various conferences and seminars, submitted three papers for publication, while also starting work on my book project, *Ambivalent Allegiances: Shiism and Everyday Politics in Kashmir*.

Cornell helped me build friendships that are going to stay with me forever. The fascinating discussions with the highly diverse community of scholars from different countries at the Einaudi Center helped me personally and professionally. I look forward to revisiting Cornell in the future.





# VISITING SCHOLARS' COMRADERY

by Jomy Abraham

The idyllic location of Cornell University, comfortably nestled on a hilltop, sprawling acres of land with a unique blend of historic and modern architecture, gorge trails and Beebe Lake, was a pleasant surprise for me. Not only did the beauty of the campus captivate me but also the seamless integration of nature into its design. The thoughtful landscaping, which weaves serene nature with stone works and facades of historic buildings of Gothic design, alongside large glass windows and iron frames of modern structures, inspires academic creativity as well as profound appreciation for nature in anybody who visits the campus. Witnessing nature's splendid ballet as seasons pirouetted on Cornell's campus was a breathtaking experience, something I had never experienced in India.

Joining Cornell, soon after finishing a PhD amidst the uncertainties sown by the pandemic, was a fresh breath of air. Like any other early-career researcher, at Cornell I tried reworking my thesis to publish a journal article and develop a book proposal. My PhD research was an interdisciplinary attempt to understand the suicide notes of farmers from India as texts emerging from the contemporary death worlds. Drawing from Literary Theory, Environmental Humanities, and Critical Suicidology Studies, I also tried to theorise this new author who writes while on the cusp of life and death. Extending my PhD work further, at Cornell, I tried understanding the 'publicness' of the suicide notes at hand, which was presented at the SAP Weekly Seminar Series as *Dying to be Read: Suicide Notes of Indian Farmers as Public Texts*. Furthermore, I also developed a book proposal and look forward to getting it published soon. Meanwhile, my fascination with not for Law and Literature, and the dense syllabus of the combined graduate course offered by the Department of Literatures in English and School of Law, lured me into auditing it. The joy of reading, attending the classes, and discussions led by Prof. Elizabeth Ankar will remain etched in my memory.

As a South Asian with no exposure to the US academia, the academic excellence and professionalism of Cornell University and the vibrant Cornell community provided me with a transformative experience. What surprised me the most was not were the hassle-free

As a South Asian with no exposure to the US academia, the academic excellence and professionalism of Cornell University and the vibrant Cornell community provided me with a transformative experience.

library facilities; a borrowed book could be returned by just dropping it in any of the boxes kept at different points on campus! The comradery among the Visiting Scholars, faculty, and students at the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, especially the South Asia Program, nurtured me academically and personally. The First Friday Breakfast meetings for not of the Visiting Scholars along with Einaudi managers provided a space for fun and frolic, while also giving us opportunities to directly raise our concerns to the management team. Easy access to seminars and lectures in different departments encouraged intellectual curiosity which helped me in envisioning new projects. The informal writing group which met every Tuesday turned into a gathering where new friendships bloomed while engaging in writing our respective academic papers.

The symphonies and concerts conducted by artists from different parts of the world and cultural activities organized by student groups in Cornell gave me a cross-cultural experience. While writing this, I remember how I stood gaping at the Chime Masters playing the Cornell bells. Time spent on Cornell campus was indeed a rewarding experience as it opened a door to international networks and collaborations which helped me in developing a transnational perspective of the projects I am working on. Although I have returned to India, where I started a new position as an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, GITAM University, Hyderabad, I left Cornell with lifelong friendships, networks, better academic practices and professionalism, and beautiful memories.





# BANGLADESH'S WATER CRISIS

## and the Problem of a "Green" Solution

by Sonia Ahmad & Neema Kudva (City and Regional Planning, Cornell University)

Kushiara River along  
Bangladesh-India border.  
Photo by Abu Siddique/Mongabay.

As the world scrambles to address climate change and build resilience to prepare communities for its destructive impacts, nature-based solutions are being presented as a panacea. These projects, which leverage nature and natural processes to help alleviate the effects of climate change and harmful human activity, are increasing in number and scale. Governments around the world are investing in research and development of nature-based solutions, while global financial institutions such as the World Bank are actively involved in funding projects utilizing such approaches.

As urban planning scholars studying water, urbanization, and climate justice in small and medium-sized South Asian cities, we agree that nature-based solutions hold promise. But we also suggest caution. Our work in Khulna, a region in southern Bangladesh facing multiple ecological crises, provides one example of how integrating nature-based solutions can lead to complicated outcomes that help some communities while harming others.

In 2011, Khulna, Bangladesh's third-largest city, was facing severe water scarcity. Along with declining groundwater and pollution, there was rising saltwater intrusion into its freshwater sources. The local government had several options to address the crisis. It could build a desalination plant to treat water from nearby rivers, but such installations can be ecologically harmful. Another option was implementing tougher water controls on residents and businesses.

This would mean asking residents to conserve water and industries to drop water-intensive practices and invest in rainwater harvesting systems. Such policies can be hard to implement and politically unpopular.

To avoid the negative effects of either of these options, the local government opted to construct a "climate-proof" water supply system for which it obtained foreign funding from the Asian Development Bank and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency. This water supply system was planned to extract water from the Madhumati River in the village of Mollahat, 40 kilometers northeast of Khulna, and bring it to the city. During the rainy season, water would be processed directly by a water treatment plant and then provided to consumers. During the dry season, when the salinity of the Madhumati is high, the water would be mixed with low-salt water collected in a reservoir during the rainy season to decrease its salt concentration before being sent to the plant.

The framing of the new water infrastructure as climate- and nature-friendly enabled the local government to justify the construction of the expensive project. The new water infrastructure, which was finished in 2019, indeed benefitted Khulna residents. It increased access to piped water from 23% of households to 65% and provided water access to some informal settlements that did not have any previously.

The popularity of the new water system in Khulna was apparent in the interviews

Policymakers hoped this  
"nature-based solution"  
of mixing water would  
address future problems  
as rising seas will continue  
to increase salinity levels  
in Khulna's water.

we conducted with the city's residents. They reported that women could now get water from taps at assigned times instead of queueing up for hours to collect water from tube wells.

However, the reports from Mollahat were completely different. During our fieldwork in 2018, one of us spoke to a local resident, Mohammad Liton, who said he barely slept through that year. Liton was overcome by worry about the rising salinity and low water levels in the Madhumati River, which had begun to impact his livelihood. Liton argued that the Khulna water project had reduced the availability of water for fishing and rice cultivation in the Mollahat area. In January 2017, Liton and other residents of Mollahat staged a protest against the project, which was impacting the lives of thousands of farmers and fisherfolk living in the village, but the authorities did not address their concerns.



The project's environmental impacts statement, which was required by the government of Bangladesh and the foreign donors and was completed in 2011, focused narrowly on the water site and accounted for construction as the only impact on Mollahat. According to representatives of the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, we interviewed, the scale of the assessment inaccurately accounted for the Madhumati River watershed as existing only in Bangladesh. The river is a tributary in the complex Ganges River system, with flows coming from neighboring India.

The Madhumati River has been heavily affected by the upstream construction of the controversial Farakka Dam in India's state of West Bengal, which diverts its waters. The dam has made the river watershed much more sensitive temporally and ecologically. Thus, the additional

burden of drawing water for the Khulna project has significantly strained the river resources and affected Mollahat and other communities along its basin.

In this case, while industries and households of Khulna reaped the benefits of the projects, residents of Mollahat bore the costs. This could have been avoided if the local authorities had consulted with village dwellers at the construction site and downstream while evaluating the impact of the project. Their feedback could have been used to adjust implementation. The local authorities should have also aimed to distribute benefits equally among the population of the city and the nearby rural communities. For example, they could have asked industries to conserve water, which would have decreased the strain on the Madhumati River and significantly lessened the impact on the Mollahat community.

Khulna's water project should be a cautionary tale – one that can teach policymakers lessons about what they should and should not do when implementing nature-based solutions.

When green approaches are combined with infrastructure, local authorities must ensure that no harm is done to adjacent communities. Fixing the water problem of a city should not come at the cost of the devastation of rural communities. As nature-based solutions are scaled up, we urge policymakers, donors, and communities to be more cautious. Infrastructure projects, like the one in Khulna, must minimize harmful impacts and help tackle inequalities at the local level and across regions.

Original version appeared on Al Jazeera (May 7, 2023)

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## Summer Internship in **KOLKATA ARCHIVES**

by Mohona Ganguly

**T**his internship has been a truly wonderful experience! Having been raised in a Bengali-speaking household, many of whose members are originally from Kolkata, I am very familiar with the culture, customs, and language of Bengal. However, being able to truly immerse myself in the city and explore it as a resident would, rather than only as a tourist has been such a unique privilege.

I greatly enjoyed working in the West Bengal State Archives, under the guidance of SAP Director Sarah Besky. It was truly fascinating to examine and work with documents preserved from the 19th and early 20th centuries, which I had not been exposed to before. My main duties involved requesting files, marking the necessary documents, and either transcribing or photographing them.

Throughout this whole experience, Dr. Besky has been a very patient mentor. She is always very clear about what is expected, and is always open to and willing to answer questions. However, I do feel that there are a few aspects of

the work that I would like to specifically address for anyone who may embark on this wonderful experience in the future.

Firstly, knowing Bengali was a huge help. Although I could absolutely communicate with the archives staff completely in English, I felt that it was easier to not only ask for help, but to try to fully connect with the workers through Bengali, and I feel as though they appreciated my attempts to do so.

Secondly, it really helps to be as patient and flexible as you can be. Although the archive workers were extremely efficient, it may take a while for your files to be found, or for your photo request form to be processed. Therefore, you may be waiting for long periods of time, and that can, of course, potentially become tedious. However, I do feel as though going through these waiting periods, and even the whole work period in general, allowed me to understand fully how and what speed at which I work, and how to attempt to plan my work wisely.



Mohona Ganguly at Indian Museum, Kolkata



# India Trip

CONNECTS CORNELL WITH  
ALUMNI AND PARTNERS

**A** Global Cornell delegation, led by Vice Provost for International Affairs Wendy Wolford, visiting India, including Mumbai, New Delhi, Chandigarh, Kolkata, and Chennai, in April 2023. The Global Cornell team met with alumni and institutional partners to strengthen Cornell's connections in India, which already include an alumni network of over 1,600 and two Global Hubs partner universities.

The trip began in Bengaluru, where Wolford, Director of Development Christian Shaffmaster, and Associate Vice Provost and Executive Director of Global Operations and Strategy Christine Potter (pictured above left to right), met with local alumni and visited Infosys, an Indian multinational technology company whose CEO, Salil Parekh, is a Cornell alum. While visiting institutions and universities around India, the delegation was pleased to be greeted by Cornell alumni who now sit on faculty and in leadership roles throughout the country.

The team connected with alumni in Mumbai over dinner and in New Delhi over brunch. They shared news of the new Cornell Global Hubs, including Ashoka University and O.P. Jindal University, and Cornell's international work, along with updates on the university. Meeting with officials at these two universities outside of New Delhi sparked conversations about student and faculty exchange opportunities between Cornell and partners in India and prospects for the local alumni to support Cornell's work locally.

# SAP Director IN NEW DELHI



On July 22, 2023 SAP Director Sarah Besky met with Cornell parents, students and alumni at the 2023 New Student Send-off organized by the Cornellians in Delhi chapter, at the India International Center (Annexe). Besky discussed SAP, the Einaudi Center, Global Hubs, and more, also helping answer a variety of questions from incoming students and their parents. This was an auspicious start to Besky's Directorship, as well as these students' Cornell careers.

Besky is pictured, above, speaking to alum Ujjwal Pradhan (Global Development PhD '90). Photo courtesy Cornellians in Delhi chapter.





Stein exhibition in Bibliowicz Family Gallery, Milstein Hall. Photo by Melanie Chu

# Joseph Allen Stein Exhibition & Archives

by Matthew Nakamoto

In October 2022, Jeffrey Chusid, Associate Professor of City and Regional Planning, led a colloquium lecture, exhibition, and reception on renowned architect Joseph Allen Stein. The exhibition presented some 100 items from the more than 5,000 drawings and other materials from Stein's personal archives that were given to the Cornell University Library. The gift is an important addition to the library's collections on modernist architecture and planning on South Asia. The documents will provide rich fodder for scholars of "the architecture of independence" period, from which the physical infrastructure for the modern Indian state was built.

"Creating the exhibition has not only allowed me to immerse myself in the wonderful materials being given to Cornell, but it also impelled me to explore important themes in Stein's life and work," said Chusid. These themes include Stein's work in affordable housing and lightweight long-span structures, his role as an expatriate in a post-colonial state, and the relationship between architecture, institution building, and the politics of the Cold War.

Joseph Allen Stein (1912–2001) was a rising young architect in the San Francisco Bay Area when the political storms of the time drove him and his family to India. Arriving to head the new architecture program at the Bengal Engineering College in Calcutta in 1952, he soon began working on an increasingly important series of projects, on his own and with various partners, and his

firm would become the largest in India. Clients included the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, various non-profit organizations, governmental entities, and private businesses and individuals.

Chusid, who is working on a book on the architect, feels inspired by Stein's life story. In Stein's 40+ years in India, he managed to convert from an outsider into something more respected and central to the conversation about architecture and planning. Several of his works, including the India International and India Habitat Centres, have become monuments in New Delhi.

The exhibition captured different aspects of Stein's life and work, including Chusid's three favorite pieces: an architecture student journal from his time at the Bengal Engineering College in 1952 in which Stein introduces himself to his future homeland, a freehand perspective sketch of the India International Centre, c.1959, on which Stein wrote a brief essay about the meaning of architecture, and a series of beautiful and rigorous hand-drawn light studies for the façade of the India Habitat Centre from 1988.

"He was a deeply ethical individual—passionate about architecture and its ability to improve lives, while eschewing formalism or high style—who aspired to be good and modest as a person, and as an architect."

Original article appeared in *City and Regional Planning Blog* (November 11, 2022)

# Cornell Students, Faculty ORGANIZE FOR FLOOD RELIEF IN PAKISTAN

by Pareesay Afzal

Humanitarian aid is  
deployed to survivors  
of the devastating 2022  
Pakistan floods. Photo by  
Abdul Majeed

In September 2022, Rabei Javaid Bhatti discovered that Pakistan, her home country, was facing one of the worst climate disasters of the century, leaving thousands dead and upwards of 33 million displaced, through Instagram. “We’re so far away from home that it’s hard to find information about things affecting your family,” Bhatti said. “I was very sad at first because so many people are getting displaced, which is terrifying, and then I got angry about the way it’s not being addressed at Cornell necessarily.” Khadija Rashid also received videos taken by friends and family members in the afflicted areas. “My friends and family are being affected by it,” Rashid said. “I’m so far away from home, but I had to do something here.” Rashid, who is the head event coordinator for the Pakistani Students Association (PSA) and social chair at South Asian Council, collaborated with Rabail Makhdoom, president of PSA, in the organization’s first effort towards flood relief during the first week of September. They circulated a bingo board for donations through Instagram stories, and it has amassed more than \$3,100. “It was the first

week of classes. We had to get together whatever we possibly could,” Makhdoom said. Subsequently, PSA organized several other fundraisers throughout the fall semester. SAP Director Iftikhar Dadi emphasized the importance of international assistance, stating that the massive need for relief and reconstruction is far beyond the infrastructural capacities of the Pakistani state and organizations. “A lot of people don’t generally know about Pakistan — there is a biased outlook in viewing a third world country. They still don’t know that one-third of the country is underwater,” Makhdoom said. Bhatti, who also organized an October open mic benefit at the Green Dragon café, added that despite the limited official reaction from Cornell, she will not stop creating awareness regarding the floods and the relief efforts. “More people need to know that things are happening,” Bhatti said. “It’s important to me because it’s my home — I don’t want people at my home to not feel like they have a home.”

Original version appeared in *The Cornell Daily Sun* (September 27, 2022)



## Cornell Law Clinic Wins Dismissal of Libel Suit Against Rutgers University Professor by Christina Neitzey

In December 2022, a federal judge dismissed in full a defamation and conspiracy lawsuit the Hindu American Foundation (HAF) brought in 2021 against Audrey Truschke, Associate Professor of South Asian History at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey (pictured above), and four other activists. The Cornell Law School First Amendment Clinic and co-counsel Davis Wright Tremaine LLP represented Truschke in this matter.

HAF’s claims against Truschke centered around several April 2021 Twitter posts in which she criticized HAF and Hindu nationalist ideology. Among these tweets, Truschke reposted two articles from AlJazeera.com concerning the awarding of federal COVID relief funds to organizations including HAF, which the articles characterized as “Hindu right-wing groups.” HAF subsequently brought claims for defamation and civil conspiracy against Truschke and four other individuals quoted in the Al Jazeera articles.

In late 2021, Truschke filed a motion to dismiss HAF’s suit, arguing that HAF fails to state a claim against her, and that she is not subject to personal jurisdiction in the District of Columbia. The other defendants also filed motions to dismiss.

In a 28-page opinion, Judge Amit Mehta agreed, granting all of the defendants’ motions and dismissing the case.

“At its core, fighting this lawsuit was about protecting academic freedom, political debate, and critical inquiry,” said Christina Neitzey, Stanton Fellow in the Cornell First Amendment Clinic. “We are thrilled with this victory and hopeful that it dissuades HAF and others from seeking to use the courts to silence scholars and activists with whom they disagree in the future.”

“While this process was inevitably stressful, a silver lining has been working with some rather promising law students at Cornell,” stated Truschke. “I’m grateful that I was able to secure pro bono counsel in this litigation as well as continue my research and publishing agendas throughout. But I worry about others in my situation who could spend their life savings defending against similar meritless lawsuits and would be compelled to bow to anti-intellectual pressure to halt their research. I hope that one outcome of this dismissal is dissuading further bad-faith litigation that seeks to infringe on academic freedom and civil society.”

Original version appeared on *The Cornell Law School First Amendment Clinic Blog* (December 21, 2022)



# NEH-funded Conference & Podcast

Activities related to SAP's grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for our project, "The Next Monsoon: Climate Change and Contemporary Cultural Production in South Asia" heated up in 2022-2023, with regular meetings of reading groups, the first season of SAP's first podcast, and planning for the international conference. Former SAP Director Iftikhar Dadi (History of Art) is the Principal Investigator of this grant, with current SAP Director Sarah Besky (ILR) one of three faculty collaborators, along with Sonal Khullar (Art History, University of Pennsylvania) and Rupali Gupte (School of Environment and Architecture, Mumbai). The focus of this project is not the science of climate change, but how individuals and communities are responding to a changing climate through visual arts, cinema, literature, architecture and other cultural expressions in South Asia.

During the 2022-2023 academic year, the four faculty leads convened four virtual reading group meetings, bringing together the 20 international faculty who will be coming to Cornell for the Next Monsoon conference in October 2023, as well as other interested faculty and graduate students. These discussions provided a common language and frame of reference for the participants' individual presentations at the conference, and the resulting publication.



In April 2023, the six-episode podcast, "The Next Monsoon" debuted. Hosted by SAP Manager Daniel Bass, and Shavin Seneviratne, graduate student in architecture and SAP student worker, the podcast examines how art and culture can help us

navigate the uncertain future. Each episode features an interview with an artist or scholar, including Dadi, Besky, Khallur and Gupte, to examine the ever-changing relationship with climate in South Asia.

Seneviratne edited each episode, with production supervision from SAP Administrator Gloria Lemus-Chavez, who also provided the theme music, composed with her partner Bandon Kane.

The podcast is available on all major platforms, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or Google Play.

The second season will be released in Spring 2024, incorporating presentations made at the conference, as well as interviews with participants on the sidelines.

Over twenty faculty from around the world are invited to the Cornell campus for the Next Monsoon conference, taking place October 27-29, 2023.

The conference is open to the public, and will feature seven panels examining climate change in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka through literature, film, politics, rhetoric, rituals, architecture, design, and more.

## POP SOUTH ASIA EXHIBITION

During Fall 2022, then SAP Director Iftikhar Dadi co-curated *Pop South Asia: Artistic Explorations in the Popular*, one of the first major exhibitions to provide a substantial survey of modern and contemporary art from South Asia engaging with popular culture. The exhibition opened at the Sharjah Art Foundation in Sharjah, UAE, and was recognized as among the top ten shows from across the world in 2022 by *Frieze*, a leading contemporary art publication.

Spanning works from the mid-twentieth century to the present, the exhibition showcased artists addressing complex issues facing the self and society through irony, play and humor. Weaving an intergenerational dialogue through more than 100 artworks by artists from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the diaspora, *Pop South Asia* navigated multiple themes. The exhibition spotlighted artists who intervene in the aesthetics of print, cinematic and digital media, alongside those engaging with devotional practices, crafts and folk culture. It presented artists addressing modes of local capitalism, from large-scale industries to vernacular "bazaars," in company with those commenting on identity, politics and borders.

Organized by Sharjah Art Foundation and Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA), New Delhi, *Pop South Asia* was curated by Iftikhar Dadi, and Roobina Karode, Director and Chief Curator of KNMA, where the exhibition traveled to in Spring 2023.



Shishir Bhattacharjee, *The Story of a Hero*- No.2, (1987)  
Acrylic on canvas, 122 x 152.2 cm  
Collection of Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation



Photos courtesy of Noor Jehan Ahmad

# A Taste of Home: Pakistani Night at Cornell Dining

by Allyson Katz

**O**n April 18, 2023, Noor Jehan Ahmad, an undergraduate student from Pakistan, worked alongside Cornell chefs to amend family recipes and feed over 2,200 students for Morrison Dining's Pakistani Night. Head Chef Josh Holden, Ahmad and the dining staff spent hours preparing a menu of 11 Pakistani dishes, including dal, chicken korma, and *firni*. According to Holden, 500 pounds of chicken, 250 pounds of beef and 800 pounds of vegetables were ordered to prepare the meal. The celebration also featured live music from the Cornell chapter of the Society 'SPICMACAY,' for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music And Culture Amongst Youth (pictured above). "Food is a foundational thing that brings people together," Ahmad said.

Ahmad began working at Toni Morrison Hall in Fall 2022 and eventually Morrison management allowed her into the kitchen to act as an unofficial culinary assistant.

In the kitchen, she began to notice that the way in which South Asian food was cooked did not match what she had been taught. Her solution was to bring her own recipes to the chefs in an attempt to convince them to let her cook. Through this endeavor, she met Holden and persuaded him to try some of her food. Holden, who has worked with Cornell Dining for almost 19 years, noted that he was excited to have student involvement and oversight to recreate Pakistani recipes. He asked Ahmad, "What do you like to cook? Can we represent your culture here? Can we bring a piece of you into this space, and then celebrate that?"

Over winter break, Ahmad traveled home to Pakistan and collected recipes from family, local chefs and restaurants. Ahmad had to ensure the recipes she brought back could feasibly be made for thousands, with available ingredients. Cornell Dining's Culinary Wellness and Innovation team vetted the recipes for allergens and helped source specialty items.

Ahmad hopes her experience can inspire other Cornellians to run similar events. "Because [Cornell] is a primarily white institution, there are very myopic views of what each region of the world is like," Ahmad said. "The white, appropriated versions of different cultures [that] we see is all we see." Despite this, she felt supported by the dining staff. When testing her recipes, Ahmad said that Holden ensured spices were not toned down to appease the general student body.

Holden said he hopes to expand collaborations with students in the future to capture new recipes and cultivate connections among members of the Cornell community. "I don't think that you could ask for something that is more Cornell than creating community within community," he added. Collaboration with students creates "this continued learning environment, [and] that ability to learn something new and bwe exposed to other things — it's just really beautiful."

Original article appeared in the *Cornell Daily Sun* (May 5, 2023)



# KAMILA SHAMSIE

## Delivers Tagore Lecture

Novelist Kamila Shamsie delivered the 13th Annual Tagore Lecture, History, Memory and the *Fictions of 1988*, which included a reading from her latest novel, *Best of Friends*, on April 14, 2023. The novel required Shamsie (pictured below) to return in her imagination to her 15-year-old self who lived through a pivotal moment in Pakistan's history (the death of the dictator, Zia-ul-Haq, followed by the election of a 35-year-old woman, Benazir Bhutto, as Prime Minister). She discussed how writing fiction about history can lay bare some of the fictions built around history, while also casting surprising shadows on the present.

"Kamila Shamsie is a leading writer of our time, who has brought her South Asian background to bear upon the most significant and existential issues that many of us face, whether living in South Asia or abroad. We are delighted that Shamsie visited Cornell during a semester when a graduate student book group has also been closely reading her novels" says SAP Director Iftikhar Dadi.

Kamila Shamsie is the author of eight novels, which have been translated into over 30 languages. Her 2017 novel, *Home Fire* won the Women's Prize for Fiction and the Hellenic Prize, was long listed for the Man Booker Prize, and shortlisted for eight other prizes around the world. *A God in Every Stone*, published in 2014, won the Anisfield-Wolf Award and was shortlisted for the Bailey's Women's Prize for Fiction and the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature.



Her 2009 novel, *Burnt Shadows*, won the Premio Boccaccio (Italy) and was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction.

For years Shamsie spent equal amounts of time in London and Karachi, while also occasionally teaching creative writing at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. She now lives primarily in London. A Vice-President of the Royal Society of Literature and Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Manchester, she was one of *Granta's* 'Best of Young

British Novelists' in 2013. In Spring 2023, she was Belknap Visiting Fellow in the Humanities Council and Department of English at Princeton University. Shamsie is the daughter of literary critic and writer Muneeza Shamsie, the niece of celebrated Indian novelist Attia Hosain, and the granddaughter of the memoirist Begum Jahanara Habibullah.

The Rabindranath Tagore Lecture Series in Modern Indian Literature is made possible by a gift from the late Cornell Professor Emeritus Narahari Umanath Prabhu and his wife, Sumi Prabhu (p. 31). With their endowment, the Prabhus sought to "project a strongly positive image of South Asian literature" – including non-fiction prose, poetry, and fiction – from India and other locations, in both "national" and English languages. Inspired by Rabindranath Tagore's expansive imagination, unbounded by geopolitical boundaries, the series has regularly featured prominent writers from across South Asia and its diasporas.

# Three Thrilling Concerts

During the 2022-2023 school year, SAP was excited to co-sponsor three thrilling concerts, featuring sibling harmonies and Grammy-nominated ensembles, on campus, put on by student groups.

On September 23, 2022, the Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music And Culture Among Youth (SPICMACAY) Cornell chapter hosted a Carnatic vocal concert at Barnes Hall from the renowned sister duo Ranjani and Gayatri, accompanied by Manoj Siva on the mridangam and L. Ramakrishnan on the violin. Ranjani and Gayatri (above right) started their musical journey as violinists before they reached their teens, though they switched to vocals in the late 1990s, performing songs in Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati. The sisters have won numerous awards and played in a wide range of prestigious venues/festivals including the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, Bengal Music Festival in Dhaka, Southbank Centre in London, and the Esplanade Theatre in Singapore.

On April 28, 2023, SPICMACAY brought the brotherly duo Ganesh Kumaresh on violin, accompanied by Kulur Jayachandra Rao on the mridangam and Trichy Krishnaswamy on the ghatam, for a concert at Klarman Hall Auditorium. The brothers gave their first public performance in the year 1972, when Ganesh was just seven years old and Kumaresh was five. Since then, they have teamed up with a range of musical luminaries, including Balamurali Krishna, Zakir Hussain, Vikku Vinayakaram, John McLaughlin, Illayaraja, Palghat Raghu, Louis Banks, and Trilok Gurtu.

The musical highlight of the year occurred on March 11, 2023, when the Grammy-nominated Berklee Indian Ensemble took the stage at a packed Alice Statler Auditorium in a benefit concert for ASHA Cornell (pictured right). Returning to Cornell for the first time since October 2018, this group, founded in 2011 by Annette Philip, the first Indian musician appointed as a faculty member at Berklee College of Music, transitioned into a professional band in 2021. In 2023, their debut album *Shuraat* (Hindi for “beginning”), featuring collaborations with Indian music royalty such as tabla maestro Zakir Hussain, Bollywood superstar Shreya Ghoshal, and virtuosic singers Shankar Mahadevan and Vijay Prakash, was nominated for a Grammy for Best Global Music Album. ASHA Cornell donated all proceeds from the concert to their partner schools in India, to fund the education of children from underprivileged communities.





# SOUTH ASIA CONSORTIUM SYMPOSIUM

**A**s part of our National Resource Center grant from the US Department of Education, we planned a series of symposia, once per semester, to bring students and faculty affiliated with Cornell's South Asia Program and Syracuse's South Asia Center together for discussion, dinner, and more. The first symposium, held Tuesday March 21 at Syracuse, featured a research roundtable discussion about the challenges facing scholars in the current political climate in South Asia, dinner, and a guided tour of an exhibit by Rina Banerjee at the Syracuse Art Museum. SAP staff drove two vans of graduate students, faculty, and Visiting Scholars from Ithaca for this auspicious event, overseen by new SAC Manager Matthew Baxter (p. 33).

The *Research Ethics in Contemporary South Asia* roundtable (pictured above), featured alumni and graduate students from Cornell and Syracuse and was chaired by South Asia Center Director Prema Kurien (Professor, Sociology, Syracuse University). Participants discussed the logistics of researching and writing on vulnerable populations, especially in the context of increasingly authoritarian political regimes in South Asia.

Poonam Argade (Social Sciences, Syracuse University) began with her reflections on ethical and methodological concerns while doing qualitative research with Dalit and Muslim female community organizers in informal settlements near Mumbai in a post-COVID context. Next, Karlie Fox-Knudtsen (Anthropology, Cornell University) discussed her experience working with adivasis and scheduled tribes



in Odisha, which has become increasingly difficult amidst increasing domestic resource extraction and Naxalite tensions.

Geethika Dharmasinghe (Visiting Assistant Professor in Religion, Colgate University), who completed her PhD in Asian Literature, Religion, and Culture at Cornell, discussed her research on militant Buddhist movements and their Muslim neighbors who are increasingly a target of these Buddhist monks. Lastly, Taveeshi Singh (Social Sciences, Syracuse University) examined the 70,000 soldier-servants currently employed in Indian Army officers' homes as *sahayaks* (Hindi for "assistants/helpers") wherein soldiers perform domestic and care work in the homes of the army's administrative officer class.

A robust conversation followed the roundtable, which continued over a delicious dinner. Once minds and stomachs were satiated, everyone proceeded to the Syracuse Art Museum for a feast for the eyes. *Take Me to the Palace of Love*, an exhibition of critical artworks by Rina Banerjee, supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, explored the meaning of home in diasporic communities (pictured below). Romita Ray (Art and Music Histories, Syracuse University) and Melissa A. Yuen (Interim Chief Curator, Syracuse Art Museum) led tours of the exhibit, as well as selections of the museum's permanent collection of South Asian artwork.

This initial event successfully brought people from both campuses together, making our consortium a more meaningful entity. SAP will be hosting the Fall 2023 consortium symposium, and our SAC colleagues have set a high standard for future events.



*Take Me to the Palace of Love*, an exhibition of critical artworks by Rina Banerjee





## THREE EXHIBITS at Johnson Museum

During the Fall 2022 semester, the Johnson Museum of Art hosted three South Asia-related exhibits: *Line of Ascent*, *Al-An deSouza: Elegies of Futures Past*, and *75 Years of Consequence: The Partition of India*.

In 2011, Studio Shunno in Dhaka invited twenty Bangladeshi artists to create etchings for a portfolio entitled *Line of Ascent*, which reflects and expands the contours of the spirit and culture of Bangladesh (pictured above). The featured artists represent two generations, all born between the early 1930s and '60s, who witnessed and

participated in significant moments in the region's tumultuous history. Senior Lecturer of Bengali Razima Chowdhury lent this portfolio to the museum for this exhibit.

*Elegies of Futures Past* combined several recent photographic series from Al-An deSouza (pictured right) in ways that question everyday notions of the photograph as recording a fixed moment in time in relation to family memory, diasporic identity, and colonialism. DeSouza's complicated familial history, which saw their family traverse three former colonies (India, Goa, and Kenya) and two former colonial powers (Britain and Portugal), provides fertile soil for these explorations.

*75 Years of Consequence: The Partition of India* explored the legacy and tragedy of Partition, which created the independent states of India and Pakistan, and later Bangladesh. Photographs by the American photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White, Cornell Class of 1927, and contemporary works by South Asian artists underscore the shared history and connection between different religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups and highlight the



arbitrary nature of borders in the Indian subcontinent. The exhibit was curated by Cornell undergraduate Zain Abid, the advocacy chair of Cornell's South Asian Council (SAC), with assistance from SAC members Neha Malepati and Alyssa Kamath, as well as Johnson Museum staff.





## Stoikov Lecture on Asian Art

On September 29, 2022, Navina Najat Haidar (pictured above) delivered the annual Stoikov Lecture on Asian Art at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art. Haidar is the Nasser Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah Curator in Charge of the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is currently marking ten years of its permanent galleries. This talk provided a visual introduction to the spaces, objects, and ideas that constitute the galleries, as well as new directions ahead.

Haidar organized the exhibitions *Workshop and Legacy: Stanley William Hayter, Krishna Reddy, Zarina Hashmi* (2016); *Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy* (2015); and *Treasures from India: Gems and Jewels in the Al-Thani Collection* (2014) at The Met. She was involved in the planning of their permanent galleries for Islamic art, which opened in 2011, and is currently working on a series of new installations to mark their anniversary. Her future projects include an exhibition on the age of the Mughal emperor Jahangir, and a forthcoming book on the pierced window screen (*jali*) in Islamic architecture.

The annual Stoikov Lecture on Asian Art is funded by a generous gift from Judith Stoikov, Class of 1963, and was co-sponsored this year by the Department of the History of Art and the South Asia Program.



Painting by Masood Hussain

## Kashmir in the Global Humanities: Genres, Poetics, Ecologies

On September 10, 2022, SAP co-sponsored a conference hosted by Cornell's Asian Studies Department, organized by Visiting Scholar Asiya Zahoor. The conference focused on Kashmiri literature through extensive discussions of forms, genres, ecologies, and poetics that inhabit literary landscapes in Kashmir. By exploring multiple forms, genres, and languages of literary expression across disparate temporalities and historical contexts, the conference aimed to address what we can learn about the morphing formations of power in Kashmir and how to understand the subsequent modalities and idioms of subversion in and across Kashmiri literature. By bringing together scholars, critics, poets, and writers, this conference both furthered a nuanced understanding of Kashmiri literary culture in historical and contemporary contexts and highlighted its significance for theorizing the broader relationship between literary expressions and modern forms of power in South Asia,

The conference brought together thirteen scholars to think collectively about the intersections of literature, identity, and citizenship, and to re-envision questions of collective belonging, political imagination, and literary expression. The conference endeavored to enhance intellectual exchange on Kashmir, emphasizing the production of knowledge, focusing attention on recent key concepts, building a new cohort of researchers across disciplines and institutions, and strengthening relationships between American academia and intellectual circles in Kashmir.



# COMMUNITY, CONTEXT, CRITIQUE

On April 21-22, 2023, SAP hosted “Community, Context, Critique,” this year’s Sri Lanka Graduate Conference, co-sponsored by the American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies.

This hybrid event brought together students from the US, Canada, UK, and Sri Lanka for two days of scholarly engagement, providing opportunities for cohort building across disciplines and offering an academically rigorous atmosphere for students to present work and receive feedback. A Cornell graduate student committee, consisting of Kaitlin Emmanuel (History of Art), Praveen Tilakaratne (Comparative Literature), Vishal Nyayapathi (Science & Technology Studies), and Bruno Shirley (Asian Studies) developed the conference title, Call for Papers and schedule.

A Pre-Dissertation Proposal Workshop started the conference with five students: P. Krishanthan (Geography, University of Colombo), Vishal Nyayapathi (Science & Technology Studies, Cornell University), Gunindu Abeysekera (Culture & Performance, University

of California-Los Angeles), Josie Portz (Rhetoric, Composition and the Teaching of English, University of Arizona), and Bhadragee Hewage (History, University of Oxford). The faculty for the workshop were Arjun Guneratne (Anthropology, Macalester College), Elizabeth Bittel (Sociology, SUNY-Cortland), Anne Blackburn (Asian Studies), and Daniel Bass (South Asia Program). The students were all appreciative of the discussion and were excited to receive positive comments and suggestions, especially since several were planning to conduct research in Sri Lanka this summer.

That afternoon, V. V. Ganeshanathan (English, University of Minnesota) provided the keynote lecture with a reading from her new novel, *Brotherless Night*, set in Jaffna in the 1980s, followed by a vibrant Q&A with students. After discussing the novel’s development, Ganeshanathan read a passage from the book, about a rather awkward meeting of a feminist reading group, which resonated among the audience. Ganeshanathan is also the author of *Love Marriage*, which was longlisted for the Women’s Prize and named one of the best books of the year by the *Washington Post*.

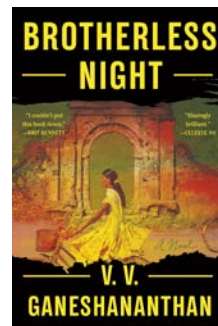
The next day’s public conference presentations had ample time for discussion among panelists and the audience. In the first panel, “Community and Context of

the Nation,” Pasan Jayasinghe (Political Science, University College London) and Chamila Somirathna (Sinhala, University of Kelaniya) presented their research on nationalism, literature, land, and identity in Sri Lanka. The second panel, “Digital Archives of Sri Lanka,” featured Crystal Baines (Program Consultant, American Institute of Sri Lankan Studies), Thamilini Jothilingam (Digital Asset Archivist, University of the Fraser Valley), and Kartik Amarnath (Archival Creators Fellow, South Asian American Digital Archive)

discussing numerous digital resources for Sri Lankan Studies, especially how archives are developed and what is excluded from such archives. The third panel, “Eastern Communities and Contexts” included Shalini Mariyathas (Geography and Planning, University of Toronto) and Senthujan Senkaiahliyan (Health Sciences, University of Toronto), focused on identity,

migration, and religion on the east coast.

Several Cornell students then took visiting students on a tour of the campus, and all returned for a final conference dinner and further discussion. Throughout the whole conference, we allowed ample time for socialization and networking which is very important for cohort building and mutual support.





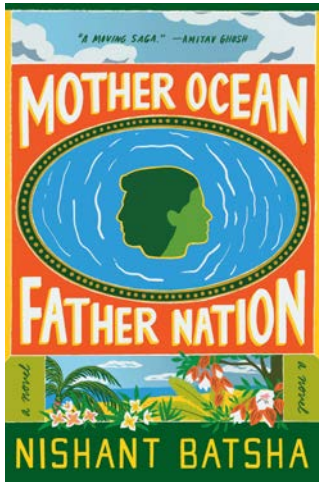


## Anupama Rao University Lecture

In February 2023, Anupama Rao delivered a University Lecture, “Caste, Outcaste, Anticaste: Reflections on Worldmaking.” In this presentation she addressed the forms of refusal and practices of insurgence that define and distinguish Dalit thought as a genre of political thought bound together by a set of thematic preoccupations including: the historicity of caste, the operation of Brahminism, caste poverty, and the itineraries of Dalit emancipation.

Anupama Rao is Professor of History at Barnard College, and Director of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society, and the convener of the Ambedkar Initiative at Columbia University. While at Cornell, Rao also led a workshop for graduate students, “Archival Activism: Reclaiming Histories of Radicalism,” drawing from her experience as a historian of anti-caste radicalism and in curating a finding aid for the archive of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar at Columbia University.

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## Nishant Batsha Reading

On October 12, 2022, Nishant Batsha read from his debut novel, *Mother Ocean Father Nation*, and discussed the processes behind writing a historical novel with Durba Ghosh (History). Batsha holds a PhD in history from Columbia University, as well as a master's from the University of Oxford (on a Doctorow Fellowship and ESU-SF Scholarship) with research focused on Indian indentured labor in Trinidad and Fiji. This deep historical knowledge provided the background for the novel, centered on a brother and sister, part of an Indian diaspora on an unnamed Pacific Island, who face an uncertain future after a nativist military coup. In March 2023, Batsha virtually visited a class at Corning Community College which had read part of his novel (p. 25). He is currently at work on *A Bomb Placed Close to the Heart*, a novel set between California and New York at the dawn of World War I, to be published in 2025.

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## Brinda Somaya A.D. White Professor-at-Large

Renowned Indian architect and urban conservationist Brinda Somaya was on the Cornell campus October 24-28, 2022 for a series of events as an A. D. White Professor-At-Large. As was the case when she came to Cornell in October 2018, Somaya gave a public lecture, met with students, participated in panels, and held an exhibition of her works. SAP Faculty Mary Norman Woods (Architecture) hosted Somaya, her longtime colleague and collaborator.

Over four decades, Somaya has merged architecture, conservation, and social equity in projects ranging from institutional campuses to the rehabilitation of an earthquake-torn village and the restoration of an 18th-century cathedral. Her belief that “the Architect’s role is that of guardian – hers is the conscience of the built and un-built environment,” underlines her work that encompasses large corporate and industrial campuses and extends to public spaces, some of which she has rebuilt and others reinvented as pavements, parks, and plazas.

She is the Founder Trustee of the HECAR Foundation, which has brought out several publications on heritage and architecture, and has curated several conferences and exhibitions showcasing women in architecture and design, both in South Asia and across the globe.

## SAP SEMINARS & EVENTS 2022-2023

**August 25:** "Afghanistan One Year Later: Reflections on Life Under the Taliban" Sharif Hozoori, (South Asia Program, Cornell University) & Zinab Attai (Government, Cornell University)

**September 8:** "Built to Fail: How Bureaucratic & Institutional Origins Undermined State Building in Afghanistan" Jennifer Brick Murtazashvili (Public & International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh)

**September 10:** "Kashmir in the Global Humanities: Genres, Poetics, Ecologies" conference

**September 12:** "Cinemas Dark and Slow in Digital India" Lalitha Gopalan (Radio-Television-Film, University of Texas at Austin)

**September 19:** "Locating the Affluent Middle Class in Dhaka, Bangladesh" Seuty Sabur (Anthropology, BRAC University, Bangladesh)

**September 23:** *Carnatic Vocal Concert*, Ranjani Gayatri

**September 29:** *Stoikov Lecture on Asian Art* Navina Haidar (Nasser Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah Curator in Charge, Metropolitan Museum of Art)

**October 3:** "The (Un)Livable City: Food and Embodied Ambivalence in India's IT Capital" Camille Frazier (Anthropology, Clarkson University)

**October 12:** "Mother Ocean, Father Nation" Nishant Batsha (Novelist) & Durba Ghosh (History, Cornell University)

**October 17:** "Apparel Innovations, Sustainable Interventions & Ethical Aspirations: Garment Manufacturing in Sri Lanka" Denise Green (Fiber Science & Apparel Design, Cornell University)

**October 20:** "Why and How Gandhi Civilized Disobedience" Karuna Mantena (Political Science, Columbia University)

**October 21:** "Aunty Aesthetics, or More Ways to be an Aunty" Kareem Khubchandani (Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies, Tufts University)

**October 24:** "Life After Death: Ritual and Placemaking in Old Delhi" Kalyani Devaki Menon (Religious Studies, DePaul University)

**October 31:** "Deep Solidarity? Reflections on Post-colonial Solidarities in a Moment of National and Global Crisis" Harshana Rambukwella (English, Open University of Sri Lanka)

**November 1:** "Colonial State-Building in a Persianate World: Mughal Law and the Making of British India" Robert Travers (History, Cornell University)

**November 7:** "Radio for the Millions: Hindi-Urdu Broadcasting Across Borders" Isabel Huacuja Alonso (Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies, Columbia University)

**November 14:** "Rabindranath Tagore's Pirate Surrealism and the 1930 Paris Exhibition Rakhee Balaram" (Global Art & Art History, University of Albany)

**November 15:** "The Context and Legacy of the Partition of India through Works of Art" roundtable

**November 21:** "Refugee Cities: How Afghans Transformed Pakistan" Sanaa Alimia (Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations, Aga Khan University, UK) & Aziz Hakimi (Sociology, Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), Norway)

**November 28:** "The Closed and the Open Prison: Contested Imaginaries & the Limits of Openness" Trishna Senapaty (Anthropology, Cornell University)

**November 29:** "Laboring for the Nation: Transnational Capital and 'Muslim' Women's Work in Bangladesh" Dina Siddiqi (Liberal Studies, New York University)

**January 30:** "Cakravartin Kingship: Between Theory and Practice in Medieval Sri Lanka" Bruno Shirley (Asian Studies, Cornell University)

**February 3:** "Buddhist-inflected Sovereignties Across the Indian Ocean: A Pali Arena, 1200–1550" Anne Blackburn (Asian Studies, Cornell University)

**February 6:** "Everyone Speaks Pali if Left Alone: The Buddhist Language Ideology in the Pali Commentaries, 500 CE" Liyu Hua (Asian Studies, Cornell University)

**February 10:** "Archival Activism: Reclaiming Histories of Radicalism" Anupama Rao (History, Barnard College, Columbia University)

**February 10:** "Caste, Outcaste, Anticaste: Reflections on Worldmaking" Anupama Rao (History, Barnard College, Columbia University)

**February 13:** "An Urban Experiment: Moving the Urban Poor to Formal Water Supply in Khulna, Bangladesh" Sonia Ahmad (City and Regional Planning, Cornell University)

**February 16:** "A City of Men? Masculinities and Everyday Gendered Violences in Urban India" Shannon Philip (Sociology, University of East Anglia)

**February 20:** "Climate Change, Water Resources, and Renewable Energy in Afghanistan" Noor Ahmad Akhundzadah (Natural Resources and the Environment, Cornell University)

**March 1:** "Lahore Cinema: Between Realism and Fable" Iftikhar Dadi (History of Art, Cornell University)

**March 6:** "A Gujarati in Mecca: Negotiating Piety, Politics, and Belonging in Ottoman Hejaz" Jyoti Balachandran (History, Pennsylvania State University)

**March 11:** "The Shuruat Tour" Berkle Indian Music Ensemble

**March 21:** *First Annual Cornell-Syracuse Consortium Symposium*

**March 23:** "Waiting for the People: The Idea of Democracy in Indian Anticolonial Thought" Nazmul Sultan (Political Science, University of British Columbia, Canada)

**March 27:** "Dying to be Read: Suicide Notes of Indian Farmers as Public Texts" Jomy Abraham (South Asia Program, Cornell University)

**April 10:** "Mobs and Megaprojects: Infrastructural Populism in Bangladesh" Nusrat S. Chowdhury (Anthropology, Amherst College)

**April 13:** "Border Fortification and Legibility: Evidence from Afghanistan" Christopher Blair (Politics, Princeton University)

**April 14:** "History, Memory and the Fictions of 1988" *13th Annual Tagore Lecture* Kamila Shamsie (Novelist)

**April 17:** "Feminist Urdu Poetry: Protest, Activism, and Radical Writing" Amina Yaqin (World Literatures and Publishing, University of Exeter)

**April 17:** "The South Asian Imaginary: Exploring the Region through Image-making Practices" Rahaab Allana (Alkazi Foundation for the Arts, India)

**April 21:** "Brotherless Night" V. V. Ganeshanathan (English, University of Minnesota)

**April 22:** "Community, Context, Critique" Sri Lanka Graduate Student Conference

**April 24:** "South Asia's Partitions and the Changing Aspirations of its Working Classes" Anushay Malik (History, Simon Fraser University, Canada)

**April 25:** "Priming the Canon: Ananda Coomaraswamy and Sri Lankan Art" Janice Leoshko (Art and Art History, University of Texas at Austin)

**April 27:** "Perilous Homelands: The Rohingya Crisis and The Violence of National Territory" David Ludden (History, New York University)

**April 28:** *Violin concert*, Ganesh Kumares

**May 1:** "The Choice of Building Techniques: Stabilized Mud and the Politics of Self-Reliance" Curt Anderson Gambetta (Architecture, Cornell University)



# An intersection of community college curricular development on South Asia

by Kathi Colen Peck  
(Outreach Manager, Einaudi Center)



Each June, we have the pleasure of welcoming a new cohort of Community College Internationalization Faculty Fellows (CCIF) at nearly the same time as the outgoing cohort is wrapping up their projects. This spring was no different with one delightful exception: we graduated our first three fellows from Corning Community College, a new collaborator.

Corning Community College joined Monroe Community College, Onondaga Community College, Tompkins Cortland Community College, and Cayuga Community College as a collaborating institution with whom the South Asia Program engages to leverage its scholarly and culturally rich resources, along with the South Asia Center at Syracuse University and other programs at the Einaudi Center. The fellowship program matches dedicated community college educators in their fields with Cornell area studies researchers, librarians, artists, and visiting scholars with expertise in international scope.

Narasimhan developed two new labs for Organic Chemistry, one on the isolation of the natural product curcumin, a compound found in the rhizomes of turmeric, and the second on its chemical characterization, which has its origins in traditional Ayurveda medicine.

Two CCIF fellows in the 2022-23 academic year put their full attention to projects nested in South Asia. Corning faculty members Sri Kamesh Narasimhan (Chemistry) and Emma Draper-Reich (English) each developed remarkably creative curricular projects that they wove into their courses. Narasimhan developed two new labs for Organic Chemistry, one on the isolation of the natural product curcumin, a compound found in the rhizomes of turmeric, and the second on its chemical characterization, which have origins in traditional Ayurveda medicine. Draper-Reich, who after reading many novels, short fiction, poetry, and children's literature by South Asia authors, was inspired to fold several into three of her courses: Composition & Writing II, The Modern

Novel & a special topics course: Children's Literature. Novelist Nishant Batsha, who visited Cornell in the Fall (p. 23), made a deeply appreciated virtual visit to Draper-Reich's classroom to read from his debut novel *Mother Ocean, Father Nation* and to give her students an intimate opportunity to ask questions about the author's writing process, inspiration, and his post-publication activities.

For this upcoming academic year, Catherine DuBreck, who specializes in Geospatial technology at MCC, won a coveted two-week seminar spot in the CAORC-AIIS faculty development program in India in January 2023. She was so inspired by that trip that she pitched an idea for a CCIF project just days after returning. DuBreck earned her CCIF fellowship award and will begin exploring the nuances and sensitivities involved in mapping informal settlements in various locations in India. Past fellow & MCC faculty colleague Laura Penman (2021) also traveled to India on the 2023 CAORC-AIIS program (p. 26-27).

In response to SUNY's new upcoming Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice (DEISJ) Gen Ed requirement, the Einaudi Center hosted a virtual workshop in February 2023 for community college and other SUNY faculty on *Borderlands, Migration, Movement: Teaching DEISJ Effectively*. This well-received 90-minute workshop combined the expertise of faculty across disciplines and regions to share ideas and resources with one another. SAP faculty Natasha Raheja (Anthropology) led an inspiring session on how borderlands, migrations, and movement can connect students to seemingly disparate experiences. She stressed the importance and value of oral histories in capturing the lived experience of immense migration events such as Partition, and pointed to research that illustrates the parallels and alliances from the 1960s civil rights movement and that of the Nationality Act of 1965.

Last, in May 2023, SAP Visiting Scholar Noor Ahmad Akhundzadah (p. 5), visited TC3's Anthropology/Environmental Science Honors course, Global Seminar, to share his research on Global Water Conflict. Akhundzadah highlighted the difficulties experienced in managing Afghanistan's water resources and the challenges that arise when natural resources do not adhere to state borders, an enlightening presentation for students studying current issues related to environmental sustainability.

# INDIA'S URBAN RIVERS

## as a tenuous niche for climate migrants

by Laura Penman, Professor of Biology, Monroe Community College, and 2022 CCIF Fellow  
(Biology, Monroe Community College)

**E**xtrême weather events have widespread impacts that disproportionately impact poor and vulnerable populations on a regular basis. Through the 2021-2022 Community College Internationalization Fellows Program (p. 25), I researched agricultural techniques that farmers in Bangladesh and South India use to adapt to unpredictable rainfall patterns. While visiting Delhi, Lucknow, and Jaipur through a Council of American Overseas Research Centers faculty development seminar in January 2023, I was particularly mindful of how climate refugees contribute to population growth in these large cities.

One chilly winter morning, our group walked along a raised dirt path on the northern side of Delhi that led to the bank of the Yamuna River. I observed small, family-sized plots of wheat and vegetables on either side of the path which were planted during this temporary respite from the monsoonal floodwaters. The land was claimed (but not owned) by individuals in the nearby neighborhood who had sufficient funds to afford tractors or cattle-driven carts and who used this raised path to access the fields.

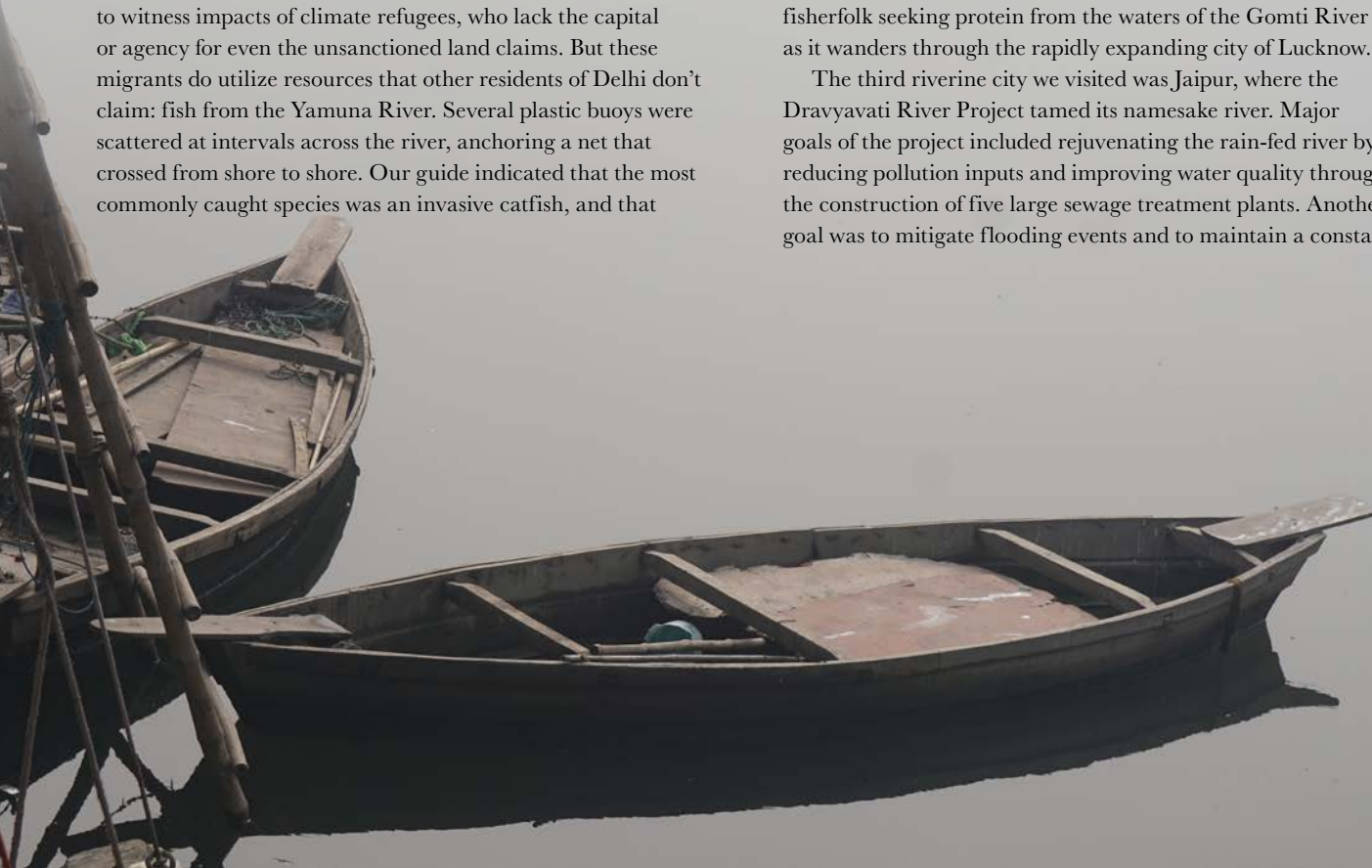
When we reached the shore of the Yamuna, the fog enveloping the river revealed patches of hay growing along sandbars and row boats tucked along the shoreline. This is where I was able to witness impacts of climate refugees, who lack the capital or agency for even the unsanctioned land claims. But these migrants do utilize resources that other residents of Delhi don't claim: fish from the Yamuna River. Several plastic buoys were scattered at intervals across the river, anchoring a net that crossed from shore to shore. Our guide indicated that the most commonly caught species was an invasive catfish, and that

the migrants valued the fish both for their own consumption and as a commodity sold in the informal economy.

In Lucknow, we visited the Gomti Riverfront Park, established in 2016 as a 15-kilometer-long development project. This park had concrete and stone pathways with railings, and numerous pavilions were scattered along the elevated embankments. The smog was fairly heavy in the morning, but we could see the Gomti Barrage that helps maintain the water level for municipal use. As we continued our walk along the riverside, I noted visible nets anchored to bridge pylons, presumably to catch fish from this river. Compared to natural shorelines, the developed park seems less accessible to the activities associated with fishing. Even so, several boats were perched below the berm, accessible by a bamboo ladder.

When the mist cleared, we saw what appeared to be a small waterfall on the opposite shore, which actually contained untreated water from many household drains. The contamination of the Gomti River deters many people from consuming fish obtained from these waters. Yet, the fishing nets and boats suggest that the protein from these fish is a valuable resource for some marginalized groups in Lucknow. I suspect that less-developed shoreline zones would reveal more evidence of fisherfolk seeking protein from the waters of the Gomti River as it wanders through the rapidly expanding city of Lucknow.

The third riverine city we visited was Jaipur, where the Dravyavati River Project tamed its namesake river. Major goals of the project included rejuvenating the rain-fed river by reducing pollution inputs and improving water quality through the construction of five large sewage treatment plants. Another goal was to mitigate flooding events and to maintain a constant







water level for the river, even during the dry season. For a distance of 30 kilometers, the riverbed was cleared and lined with concrete, and regularly-spaced check dams maintained minimum water levels. To create attractive recreation areas, the project also added three landscaped parks and 82 km of trails flanking the waterway. Additionally, authorities cleared all of the informal settlements along the river, and the families that resided there were relocated through the Jaipur Development Authority.

Walking along the landscaped paths of the Dravyavati River Project Park, the space was clean and well-maintained. But whenever I looked out at the concrete-lined basin of water, my brain kept registering it as an aqueduct rather than a river. The elevated walking and biking paths created both physical and philosophical separation between people and the water. It quickly became apparent that I would not find evidence of fishing or other riverside enterprises on the Dravyavati River.

In conclusion, booming urban populations are taking a toll on the ecology of the very waterways that attracted commerce to riverine cities like Delhi, Lucknow, and Jaipur. Climate change will likely increase the severity and frequency of floods and droughts across India, accelerating rural to urban migration patterns and further challenging water sanitation efforts. Many informal settlements are located near the water's edge, as monsoon season makes this location undesirable for more permanent development. These riverside settlements offer access to water and to fish for climate migrants and other marginalized groups, but they are also particularly vulnerable to temperature and precipitation extremes. Unfortunately, the interplay between climate change and urban poverty in India is likely to intensify due to increasingly severe climate change anomalies that are predicted for the coming decades.







# Sustainability through Saris and Scarves in Northern India

by Catherine DuBreck (GIS, Monroe Community College)

**A**fter receiving word that I was selected to participate in CAORC's 2023 faculty development seminar on urban sustainability in India, I was excited to see my fields of study (geography, urban planning, and geospatial technology) in action in South Asia. As I packed and repacked my bags before departure, I wondered how Indian city planning departments are working to set their communities up with sustainable practices and development for the future. I looked forward to seeing in what ways geospatial technology is being used or could be used to make urban India more sustainable. While I gained a wealth of knowledge and perspective on those topics over those two weeks, I also got to experience another side of India's urban sustainability efforts through textiles, crafts, and clothing. While I am certainly not the trendiest person, I am all too familiar with our collective "fast fashion" obsession. Rather than seasonal clothing resets in stores, cheap styles made from low-quality synthetic materials from last week are

replaced with cheap styles from this week, causing both producer and consumer to ditch old for new at a high rate. At Sanatkada Weaves and Crafts Store in Lucknow, I was thoroughly impressed by the company's founder and mission to empower women from marginalized communities and provide them an outlet to express their creativity and share their art, whether it is film, sewing, or beyond, with the world. Here were beautiful clothing items for sale, with seamstresses in the back working on new designs. The store was small, and there were not multiple sizes of the same item like one would find in a fast fashion outlet. Each piece (scarf, dress, shirt, bag, stole, etc.) was unique and hand sewn. In Jaipur, known as the "Craft City," we toured Anokhi Farm, actually an open, communal, crafting center, and saw local craftspeople block printing, sewing, and creating, all by hand. Using natural dyes and fabrics, it was clear the sustainable textile practice was there, but I also observed sustainable employment as well, as the facility has a childcare center for working parents.

Many of the fabric scraps that are a by-product of the clothing creation at Anokhi Farm are given to Salim Paper, also in Jaipur. Salim Paper employees take these fabric scraps and turn them into a pulp which is turned into handmade paper and shipped all across the globe. This recycling of fabric scraps shows that we do not have to just throw old clothing out or burn it; we can sustainably reuse it! The most fascinating sustainable clothing learning experience was with indigo dye workers. In India, indigo grows naturally. During British rule, Indian farmers were forced to grow indigo instead of food crops and they received only a fraction of the profits from the sale of the indigo-dyed clothing. Today, this "blue gold" has been taken back by the farmers. On site in Jaipur, we saw fields of indigo in its green plant form, and deep in-ground cement tanks full of blue water. We learned how patterns are made on the fabric with the indigo dye and got to see a short demonstration as well. In a world where fast fashion rules, the sustainable textile and clothing I saw in India was a breath of fresh air.



# Testimonies of Migration

by Sarah Plotkin (Student Engagement & Community Outreach Coordinator, Einaudi Center)



**O**n June 27, 2023, 40 educators from across Central New York came to the Cornell campus for the annual International Studies Summer Institute (ISSI). This year's focus was "Testimonies of Migration," which explored migrants' personal narratives, and how to engage with migrant stories and students in a culturally responsive way. Throughout the day, educators explored stories of migration from around the world and within our communities in New York. One teacher shared, "I personally felt this was the best workshop I have attended... the material was so tangible and relatable regardless of population taught."

The event began with a panel discussion on "Ethical and Culturally Responsive Engagement with Migrant Narratives." Shannon Gleeson (ILR School) moderated the panel, featuring Rose Anderson (Director for Protection Services, Scholars at Risk), Farah Bakaari (Literatures in English), and Juhwan Seo (Sociology). Each panelist shared their experiences working with migrants, as well as resources for engaging with migrant stories in a respectful, ethical way. They also shared suggestions for how to interact with migrant students in classrooms, with Bakaari and Seo speaking from their own experiences growing up as immigrants in the United States.

Mary Jo Dudley (Cornell Farmworker Program) next led a workshop on "Supporting Immigrant Families in Schools." She shared factors that influence migration to our area and innovative approaches for parent-teacher communication. After the workshop, one teacher noted how vital it is "to be aware of the needs of the families that don't have as many resources or the freedom to ask for help."

After a creative networking activity and a delicious lunch, educators reconvened for a series of breakout sessions exploring migrant narratives from the perspective of hands-on learning. Maria Claudia Gimma (Spanish, Seven Valleys New Tech Academy) shared a project-based curriculum for high school students that explores the challenges and responsibilities surrounding asylum seekers and refugees. Nausheen Husain (Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University) offered tools for exploring data sets with students to better understand people's experience of migration. Lastly, Nicole T. Venker (Natural Resources and the Environment), led a session on an innovative technique for helping people tell their own migration stories called Photovoice Methodology.

The last session of the day took place at the Johnson Museum of Art where Carol Hockett, Hintsa Family Manager of School and Family Programs, and Maryterese Pasquale-Bowen, Assistant for School Programs, led an engaging session on art and migration inspired by the museum's past show, "how the light gets in." Among artworks from Ai Weiwei, Mohamad Hafez and Meschac Gaba, participants were

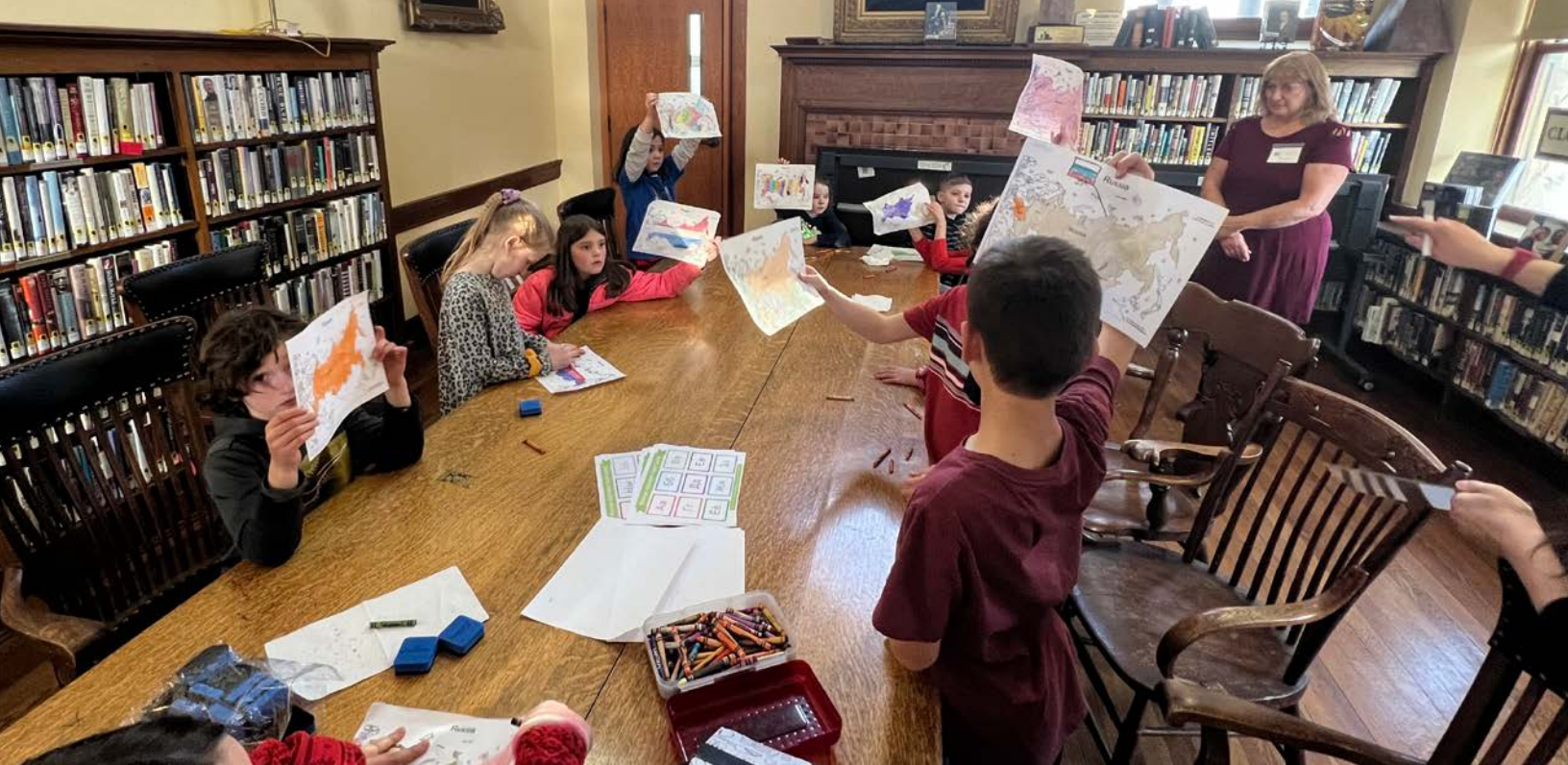
especially struck by the collaborative fabric piece "DAS KLEID/THE DRESS" by Elisabeth Masé. A diverse group of women created this artwork, embroidering their hopes for the future with red thread on tan cloth, which was then sewn into a dress.

Afterwards, many teachers said that they were excited to bring aspects of what they had learned into their classrooms. One teacher wrote, "I am always energized by this experience." Another mentioned how meaningful this year's topic was for them: "I am excited to incorporate what I have learned into my lessons. I also feel more at ease teaching about other cultures. I realize I don't have to know everything and can learn with my students about new cultures."

The 2023 ISSI was sponsored by South Asia Program, Southeast Asia Program, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Institute for African Development, East Asia Program, Institute for European Studies, Migrations Initiative, and Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies at Cornell; South Asia Center at Syracuse University; TST-BOCES; and the US Department of Education Title VI Program.







# FLIP: NURTURING LANGUAGE LEARNING AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN CENTRAL NEW YORK

by Maksym Tkachuk (FLIP student coordinator)

The Einaudi Center's Foreign Language Introduction Program (FLIP), a volunteer-based program, recruits Cornell community members to teach a bit of their own languages and cultures to central New York K-12 students in fun and engaging ways, with the support of the Center's area studies programs. FLIP began in the early 2000s as the Afterschool Language Program (becoming the Afterschool Language and Culture Program in 2018), with the goal of sparking international interest and intercultural learning among local students. In 2022, the program became a student-led initiative run by volunteers who are fluent in the languages they teach, and overseen by Sarah Plotkin, the Einaudi Center's Student Engagement and Community Outreach Coordinator.

Diane Pamel, the Director of the Southworth Library in Dryden, "a predominately white, rural village in Upstate New York" observed that "the FLIP program has provided cultural and language introductions to Mandarin, Russian and French for our students. Over 30 children and some parents have been

introduced to cultures and languages from around the world. One mother reported that her child now has a keen interest in languages and is learning Spanish on her own and Russian with a tutor. This child is only seven years old! Several others have reported a new awareness of world cultures and languages with an awakened interest to learn more. It has been a wonderful experience for our library and community to participate in this program."

FLIP volunteer teachers, including many international students and scholars at Cornell, develop as global citizens through their work with youth in the surrounding communities. Jean Marie Nizigiyimana, a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow at Cornell, taught French in Dryden as a FLIP volunteer in spring 2023. Within his French lessons, he incorporated lessons about the geography and culture of his home country, Burundi, and even taught some of the drumming techniques that were an important part of his childhood. Jean Marie shared, "FLIP opened a door for me to have an opportunity to impact the lives of kids through teaching. It was

my first time teaching kids speaking a different language than mine, and I really learned that a teacher is always the same regardless the audience he is given, he can still draw the attention of the students."

The current staff and volunteers of FLIP hope to create a vibrant community of language lovers who encourage and inspire each other in their linguistic adventures. Next year we plan to organize workshops on language learning strategies and cultural awareness, as well as social events that celebrate the diversity of languages and cultures. FLIP shows how language learning can be fun, accessible, and meaningful for everyone involved. If you would like to join FLIP as an instructor or a participant, or if you want to learn more about FLIP, visit our website, or contact us at [outreach@einaudi.cornell.edu](mailto:outreach@einaudi.cornell.edu).



# Narahari Umanath Prabhu

(1924-2022)



Narahari Umanath Prabhu, a professor emeritus who helped make Cornell's School of Operations Research and Information Engineering truly international, died at his home in Ithaca on October 14, 2022.

Prabhu and his wife Sumi generously endowed the South Asia Program to create the Rabindranath Tagore Lecture in South Asian Literature. Starting in 2009, this annual lecture series brings international authors to Ithaca for readings and discussions which are free and open to the public, the most recent being Kamila Shamsie (p. 17). Asked why the Prabhus chose Tagore to honor, he said "Tagore brought East to West and West to East." Prabhu added, "When people ask why I gave this gift, I tell them it is to show my gratitude to Cornell, where I have spent the major part of my life."

Known to most as Uma, Prabhu was born in Kozhikode, Kerala, in 1924, the ninth of eleven children in a poor family. As a child, he met Mahatma Gandhi which influenced him deeply. He earned his BA in mathematics at Loyola College in Madras, India, an MA in statistics from the University of Bombay, and an MS in mathematics from the University of Manchester in England – all at the top of his class.

Prabhu joined the Cornell faculty in 1965, and was the first person of color in his department. Before coming to Ithaca, he held positions at various universities in India, where in 1951 he founded the statistics department at Karnatak University, Dharwad, and also taught at the University of Western Australia and Michigan State University.

Prabhu was the author of five books and dozens of papers on queuing theory and stochastic processes, a research area that deals with the evolution of random processes over time and is applicable to the analysis of storage systems (including water storage systems), manufacturing, vehicular and communications traffic, and financial engineering. He was the founding editor of the journal *Queuing Systems: Theory and Application* and co-founding editor of the journal *Stochastic Processes and their Applications*, and was President of the International Indian Statistical Association from 1999 to 2001.

*His family members  
said that he considered  
his students his  
"spiritual children."*

In addition to his research, Prabhu was well-known for his love of and dedication to teaching. Student evaluations from his days in the classroom attest to his rigorous but supportive teaching style. His family members said that he considered his students his "spiritual children." Prabhu retired from teaching in 1994 but remained committed to the Cornell and Ithaca communities.

Prabhu was preceded in death in 2017 by Sumi, his wife of 66 years. He is survived by his daughter Vasundhara Prabhu ("Vas") and her husband Bob; his daughter Purnima Prabhu; and his granddaughters Basyah and Aliyah Prabhu.

# TWO SAP STUDENTS

## Receive Fulbright Awards

*Of the 13 Cornell graduate and undergraduate students who received Fulbright awards in 2023, two have connections to the South Asia Program*



SASHA PREVOST, a PhD student in Near Eastern Studies, had previously received SAP FLAS fellowships to study Persian. Her research project, “On the Path of Two Abrahams: Contemporary Jewish Sufism in Israel,” maps the genealogies and contemporary iterations of Jewish Sufism, originally a medieval intellectual movement, fusing elements of Islamic and Jewish mysticism and praxis. She examines the intersection of Jewish Sufi histories with global Sufism, highlighting the presence of South Asian Sufism in Israel, including members of the Chishti Order and “Israeli Sufi” qawwali performers like Shye Ben Tzur. Prevost investigates how Israelis look to Indian Sufism, as well as Urdu and Persian poetry and music, as a safe, culturally appealing contrast to Arab Islam.



FARZANA HOSSAIN, who graduated in 2023 with a Bachelor’s in Architecture is headed to India for a project, “The Sundarbans’ Heroines: Gender and Climate Change in Action.” She will research erosion processes occurring from mountain ranges into river beds, leading to the formation of new land. Building on her undergraduate thesis on the emergence of new land through the natural deposition of silt in the Sundarbans, she will investigate the accelerated erosion of sediments from the Himalayan mountains. Commencing in Sikkim, India, her research will trace the Rani Khola watershed, mapping and documenting sediment deposition along its course as it flows into the Ganges River, ultimately reaching Calcutta and eventually the Bay of Bengal. Hossain intends to document and record both the physical landscapes and the lived experiences of individuals residing in contested areas.

## Introducing SARAH PLOTKIN



In November 2022, Sarah Plotkin started at the Einaudi Center as Student Engagement and Community Outreach Coordinator. She works with students, staff, and faculty to create meaningful

programming that engages K-12 students and teachers. Plotkin advises and supports the Cornell students who run the Foreign Language Introduction Program (FLIP), which brings world language and cultural education to K-12 classrooms and community programs. She also organizes the International Studies Summer Institute (ISSI), the Einaudi Center’s annual K-12 teacher professional development workshop (p. 29). Additionally, she is managing and re-organizing our Culture Kits and Lending Library, resources for teachers to access artifacts, books, and music curated from around the world.

Before coming to Cornell, Plotkin worked for ten years as an educator and community-engaged theater artist in New York City and Boston. She was the Founding Artistic Director of Electric Eye Ensemble, a collaborative theater company exploring American myths through a revisionist, feminist lens. Plotkin is excited to have returned to her hometown of Ithaca, and continue her work of community engagement, sharing all the resources that the Einaudi Center and the larger Cornell community has to offer with central New York’s K-12 students and teachers.



# BRONWEN BLEDSOE RETIRES



In September 2022, Bronwen Bledsoe, Curator of the South Asia Collection at the Cornell University Library, retired after sixteen years at Cornell, where she was also Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Asian Studies. Bledsoe received her BA in Anthropology and South Asian Studies at the University of

Washington, and earned her PhD in South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, with her dissertation, *Written in Stone: Inscriptions of the Kathmandu Valley's Three Kingdoms*. At the University of Chicago, she worked for ten years as the Assistant to the Bibliographer for Southern Asia, before she came to Ithaca.

At Cornell, Bledsoe was responsible for Cornell's South Asian Collection in all its dimensions and aspects: collection development; cataloging and access; outreach and liaison, reference and teaching; participation in national and regional associations. She negotiated the gift of the Bombay Poets archive, and was dedicated to the diversification of Cornell's collection on South Asia through cooperative collection development. She made yearly acquisitions trips to South Asia to collect non-mainstream materials and to liaise with Indian, Nepali, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan literati.

Bledsoe has knowledge of a wide range and number of South Asian languages, including Nepali, Sanskrit, Newari, Hindi, Sinhala, Bengali, Urdu, Rajasthani, Marathi, Gujarati, Oriya, and Tibetan, as well as Latin, French, and Spanish.

She also organized numerous exhibits at the Cornell University Library, including *Bridging Worlds: Buddhist Words and Works*; *Films, Mills, and Poets: Mid-century Bombay*, and *High Hopes and Deep Collections: Nepal and Himalayan Studies at Cornell*, sharing materials in the university's collections with the community. As Durba Ghosh, Professor of History, said, "Bronwen did more than her job description: she was creative and generous, enlarging the South Asia collection's resources in responsible ways and ensuring access for those who needed to see special materials, particularly graduate students."

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## NEW DIRECTOR & MANAGER at Syracuse South Asia Center

The Syracuse University South Asia Center (SAC), our consortium partner in SAP's National Resource Center (NRC) and Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) grants, acquired a new director and a new manager in Fall 2022.

In October 2022, Prema Kurien, Professor of Sociology, became the Director of SAC, in the Daniel Patrick Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs (pictured above left). For over three decades, Kurien has explored the relationship between international migration, race, ethnicity and religion with a focus on migrants from India and other South Asian countries. Kurien joined Syracuse in 2003. She is

the founding director of the Asian/Asian American Studies program, former chair of the Sociology Department and has long served as a senior research associate with SAC. "I look forward to making the South Asia Center an inclusive, welcoming space for students and faculty at Syracuse University and the wider community and to supporting research as well as intellectual and social exchanges," she said.

In December 2022, Matthew Baxter started as Regional Programs Manager, Asia, at the Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs, overseeing the South Asia Center, as well as their East Asia Program and the Central Asia & the Caucasus Initiative (pictured above right). He is also Assistant



Prema Kurien & Matthew Baxter

Professor by Courtesy Appointment in the Political Science department. Baxter earned his PhD in political science from the University of California, Berkeley and was a postdoctoral fellow at Rutgers and Harvard Universities. He is no stranger to the South Asia Program, having been a Visiting Scholar with SAP from 2016 to 2018. He then moved to New Delhi, working as Assistant Professor of Political Science at Ashoka University for four years. A Syracuse native, Baxter is excited to return to his native land and continue SAC's longstanding collaboration with Cornell.

# Selected SAP Faculty Publications 2022-2023

**Anindita Banerjee** & Gabriella Safran, eds. "Socialist Anti-Racisms: Connected Histories and Contradictory Legacies." *Comparative Literature* 75: 2, 2023.

**Kaushik Basu.** "Hume and Hobbes with a Dash of Nash: Why Have Leaders at All?" *Homo Oeconomicus: Journal of Behavioral and Institutional Economics* 2022.

**Kaushik Basu.** "Digital Technology and Globalization: The Promise and the Pitfall," in *An Inclusive Future? Technology, New Dynamics and Policy Challenges*, Zia Qureshi, ed. Washington: Brookings Institution, 48-64, 2022.

**Kaushik Basu.** "The Morphing of Dictators: Why Dictators Get Worse Over Time." *Oxford Open Economics* 2: odad002, 2023.

**Kaushik Basu** & Ajit Mishra, eds. *Law and Economic Development: Behavioral and Moral Foundations of a Changing World*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.

**Sarah Besky.** "Reproducing the Plantation." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Plantationocene Forum, 2022.

**Sarah Besky.** "Commentary on Special Issue: Stories of Everyday Life in the Darjeeling Hills." *Himalaya* 41 (1): 8-11, 2022.

**Sarah Besky.** "Plantation Nation." *Theorizing the Contemporary, Fieldights*, January 24, 2023.

**Anne M. Blackburn.** "Local Projects and Trans-regional Modalities in the Pali Arena." in *Monsoon Asia: A Reader on South and Southeast Asia*, Nira Wickremasinghe and D. E. F. Henley, eds. Leiden: Leiden University Press, 183-196, 2023.

**Daniel Boucher.** "Straddling the Himalayas: Translating Buddhism into Chinese." *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Religion*, Hephzibah Israel, ed. New York: Routledge, 367-281, 2022.

**Iftikhar Dadi.** *Lahore Cinema: Between Realism and Fable*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2022.

**Iftikhar Dadi**, ed. *The Lahore Biennale Reader 01*. Milan: Skira, 2022.

**Iftikhar Dadi** & Roobina Karode, eds. *Pop South Asia: Artistic Explorations in the Popular*. Sharjah: Sharjah Art Foundation, 2022.

**Iftikhar Dadi.** "Lithographic Assemblages: The Urdu Art Book in the Age of Print." in *Old Stacks, New Leaves: The Arts of the Book in South Asia*, ed. Sonal Khullar, ed. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2023.

Ellen Caniglia, Rebecca Zash, Sonja Swanson, Emily Smith, Christopher Sudfeld, **Julia L Finkelstein**, Modiegi Diseko, et. al. "Iron, folic acid, and multiple micronutrient supplementation strategies during pregnancy and adverse birth outcomes in Botswana." *The Lancet Global Health* 10 (6): e850-e861, 2022.

**Julia L. Finkelstein**, Heather Guetterman, Amy Fothergill, Christina Johnson, Yan Ping Qi, Shameem Jabbar, Mindy Zhang, Christine Pfeiffer, Charles Rose, Lorraine Yeung, Jennifer Williams, Jesse Krisher, Caleb Ruth, Dripta Roy Choudhury, Sudha Venkatramanan, Jere Haas, Rebecca Kuriyan, **Saurabh Mehta**, Wesley Bonam & Krista S. Crider. "A Randomized Trial of Quadruple-Fortified Salt for Anemia and Birth Defects Prevention in Southern India: Protocol Design and Methods." *Current Developments in Nutrition* 7 (3): 100052, 2023.

**Durba Ghosh.** "Touch and the Figure of the Woman Revolutionary." Symposium on Poulomi Saha's *An Empire of Touch: Women's Political Labor and the Fabrication of East Bengal*. *Syndicate*, 2023.

Nancy H. Chau, **Ravi Kanbur** & Vidhya Soundararajan. *Employer Power and Employment in Developing Countries*. United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research. Working Paper 100, 2022.

**Karim-Aly Kassam** & Joseph Bernardo. "Role of biodiversity in ecological calendars and its implications for food sovereignty: Empirical assessment of the resilience of indicator species to anthropogenic climate change." *GeoHealth*, 6, e2022GH000614, 2022.

**Karim-Aly Kassam**, Daler Kaziev, Leo Louis, Morgan Ruelle & Anna Ullmann. *Rhythms of the Land: Indigenous Knowledge, Science, and Thriving Together in a Changing Climate*. Ithaca: ECCAP Project, 2022.

**Karim-Aly Kassam**, Morgan Ruelle, Christopher P. Dunn, Raj Pandey & Felice Wyndham. "Rhythms of the Earth—Editorial Introduction." *GeoHealth* 7 (4): e2023GH000815, 2023.

**Andrew J. McDonald**, Alwin Keil, Amit Srivastava, Peter Craufurd, Avinash Kishore, Virender Kumar, Gokul Paudel, Sudhanshu Singh, A. K. Singh, R. K. Sohane & R. K. Malik. "Time Management Governs Climate Resilience and Productivity in the Coupled Rice–wheat Cropping Systems of eastern India." *Nature Food* 3 (7): 542-551, 2022.

Gokul Paudel, Vijesh Krishna, Dil Bahadur Rahut & **Andrew J. McDonald.** "Sustainable Intensification under Resource Constraints: Estimating the Heterogeneous effects of Hybrid Maize Adoption in Nepal." *Journal of Crop Improvement* 37 (2): 157-182, 2022.

Gokul Paudel, Aditya Raj Khanal, Timothy Krupnik & **Andrew J McDonald.** "Smart Precision Agriculture but Resource Constrained Farmers: Is Service Provision a Potential Solution? Farmer's Willingness to Pay for Laser-land Leveling Services in Nepal." *Smart Agricultural Technology* 3: 100084, 2023.

Heather Guetterman, Samantha Huey, Rob Knight, Allison Fox, **Saurabh Mehta** & **Julia L. Finkelstein.** "Vitamin B-12 and the Gastrointestinal Microbiome: A Systematic Review." *Advances in Nutrition* 13 (2): 530-558, 2022.

Melisa Medina-Rivera, Washington Cárdenas, David Erickson & **Saurabh Mehta.** "Gold Nanoshells-Based Lateral Flow Assay for the Detection of Chagas Disease at the Point-of-Care." *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 107 (2): 323-327, 2022.

**Prabhu Pingali** & Matthew Abraham. "Food Systems Transformation in Asia – A Brief Economic History." *Agricultural Economics* 53 (6): 1–16. 2022.

**Prabhu Pingali** & Milorad Playšić. "Hunger and Environmental Goals for Asia: Synergies and Trade-offs among the SDGs." *Environmental Challenges* 7: 100491, 2022.

**Prabhu Pingali**, Jocelyn Boiteau, Abhinav Choudhry & Aaron Hall. "Making Meat and Milk from Plants: A Review of Plant-based Food for Human and Planetary Health" *World Development* 170: 106316, 2023.

**Prabhu Pingali** & Jocelyn Boiteau. "Can we Agree on a Food loss and Waste Definition? An Assessment of Definitional Elements for a Globally Applicable Framework" *Global Food Security* 37: 100677, 2023.

**Eswar S. Prasad.** *Has China's Growth Gone From Miracle to Malady?* NBER Working Paper W31151. Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2023.

**Natasha Raheja.** Governing by Proximity: State Performance and Migrant Citizenship on the India-Pakistan Border. *Cultural Anthropology* 37 (3): 513-548, 2022

**Natasha Raheja.** Our Sisters and Daughters: Pakistani Hindu Migrant Masculinities and Digital Claims to Indian Citizenship. *Journal of Immigration and Refugee Studies* 20 (2): 190-205, 2022

**Natasha Raheja.** Visualizing Citizenship in a Bureaucratic Frame. *Visual Anthropology Review* 39 (1): 268-287, 2023

**Natasha Raheja.** Invasive Media: The Making of A Gregarious Species. *Journal of Media Art Study and Theory* 4 (1): 159-168, 2023

**Robert Travers.** *Empire of Complaints: Mughal Law and the Making of British India, 1765-1793*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.



# Tata-Cornell Institute for Agriculture and Nutrition Scholars

*Tata-Cornell Scholars include a multidisciplinary group of Cornell graduate students who are actively engaged in applied and field-based research aligning with TCI's key research priorities. Research topics relate to food and nutrition security, agriculture development and food system transformation in India. Learn more at: [tci.cornell.edu](http://tci.cornell.edu).*

## **Whitman Barrett**

*PhD, Soil and Crop Sciences*

Whitman Barrett focuses on the reuse of human excreta in agriculture, with the goal of improving smallholder farmers' productivity and resilience to climate change.

## **Shivranjani Baruah**

*PhD, Plant Pathology and Plant-Microbe Biology*

Shivranjani Baruah has research interests in exploring the intricacies of plant-pathogen interactions at the molecular level in order to inform decision making related to crop protection.

## **Apurva Borar**

*PhD, Applied Economics and Management*

Apurva Borar conducts research at the intersection of development economics and gender studies, and is also interested in politics, governance, culture, and identity studies.

## **Kiera Crowley**

*PhD, Soil and Crop Sciences*

Kiera Crowley is interested in innovation diffusion and the adoption of conservation agriculture technologies among farmers in India's Indo-Gangetic Plain.

## **Natasha Jha**

*PhD, Applied Economics and Management*

Natasha Jha studies the linkages between agriculture and nutrition and how these are likely to be impacted by climate shocks.

## **Ekta Joshi**

*PhD, Applied Economics and Management*

Ekta Joshi examines how agriculture can be an effective instrument for economic development in developing countries.

## **Kavya Krishnan**

*PhD, Soil and Crop Sciences*

Kavya Krishnan studies soil health, particularly its effects on food security.

## **Sumedha Minocha**

*PhD, Applied Economics and Management*

Sumedha Minocha studies the complex ways in which food systems work in developing countries, particularly their impact on nutrition and health-related outcomes and the role of public policies in shaping these outcomes.

## **Amrutha Jose Pampackal**

*PhD, Global Development*

Amrutha Jose Pampackal is interested in studying the sociology of access to food, particularly among marginalized communities in India.

## **Chanchal Pramanik**

*PhD, City and Regional Planning*

Chanchal Pramanik has primary research interest in rural-urban dynamics and how they can benefit rural economies, with a focus on digital technologies.

## **Shree Saha**

*PhD, Applied Economics and Management*

Shree Saha researches women's empowerment, maternal and child nutrition, financial inclusion, and development.

## **Kasim Saiyyad**

*PhD, Applied Economics and Management*

Kasim Saiyyad is interested in agriculture and nutrition economics, with a special focus on public welfare programs in low- and middle-income countries.

## **Vanisha Sharma**

*PhD, Applied Economics and Management*

Vanisha Sharma has research interest in analyzing the effects of the internet and digitization in rural economies. Her field-based research involves exploiting increasing internet access in rural communities to analyze its effects on agriculture technology adoption, as well as maternal health and nutrition.

## **Anna David Thottappilly**

*PhD, Applied Economics and Management*

Anna David Thottappilly looks into issues related to development and social mobility. She is interested in policy-oriented research that could aid in bridging the inequality gap.

## **Sonali Uppal**

*MPA, Public Administration*

Sonali Uppal is interested in the intersection of development economics and agricultural livelihood, as well as the mechanisms for improving agricultural returns and generating secure and sustainable livelihood opportunities for the existing workforce and potential entrants.



## Recently Graduated Students 2022-2023

### **Farhana Ahmad**

PhD, City and Regional Planning  
*State-Society Relations in the Creation of Multiple Hydro-Social Territories: The Case of Climate Proofed Water in Khulna, Bangladesh*

### **Geethika Dharmasinghe**

PhD, Asian Literature, Religion and Culture  
*Third Wave Politics: Violence and Buddhists in Sri Lanka*

### **Natasha Jha**

PhD, Applied Economics and Management  
*Unintended Consequences of Public Policy: Essays in Development Economics*

### **Austin Lord**

PhD, Anthropology  
*Vital Uncertainties: Disaster, Afterlives, and Change in the Langtang Valley*

### **Seema Singh**

PhD, City and Regional Planning  
*Rethinking Urban Transportation from a Gendered Perspective: The Case of Panchkula, India*

### **Anna David Thottappilly**

PhD, Applied Economics and Management  
*Essays In Agriculture Economics, Climate Change, And Nutrition*

### **Tanuj Chawla**

MPS, Information Science  
*User-Centered Design and Product Management in the Agritech Sector: A Practical Application in Improving the FPO Platform for India*

### **Shhrruti Jain**

MS, Architecture  
*Architecture and Urbanism*

### **Iman Khan**

MRP, City and Regional Planning  
*“Hundred Percent Legal, Hundred Percent Illegal”: Building a Modern City for a Dying River, Ravi Riverfront Urban Development Project*

### **Jialu Li**

MPA, Public Administration  
*Agricultural Mechanization and Gender Influence: A Case Study on the Adoption of Machine Harvestable Chickpeas in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, India*

### **Sumedha Minocha**

MS, Applied Economics and Management  
*Do Maternal Spot Feeding Programs Effect Birth Weight? Evidence from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in India*

### **Ravin Nanda**

BA, Economics

### **Karina Ohri**

BS, Biological Sciences

### **Sojeet Sharma**

BS, Biological Sciences & Classics

## Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellows 2023–2024

### **Shivani Aysola**

Degree: MRP, City & Regional Planning  
Language: Hindi

### **Nishal Basnet**

Degree: MPP, Public Policy  
Language: Bengali

### **Kaitlin Emmanuel**

Degree: PhD, History of Art & Visual Studies  
Language: Tamil

### **Aura Gonzalez**

Degree: PhD, Government  
Language: Hindi

### **Jessie Hughes**

Degree: PhD, Natural Resources  
Language: Nepali

### **Parijat Jha**

Degree: PhD, Anthropology  
Language: Hindi

### **Vishal Nyayapathi**

Degree: PhD, Science & Technology Studies  
Language: Sinhala

### **Sasha Prevost**

Degree: PhD, Near Eastern Studies  
Language: Persian

### **Priyanka Sen**

Degree: PhD, Architecture  
Language: Bengali

### **Phoebe Wagner**

Degree: MPS, Global Development  
Language: Hindi

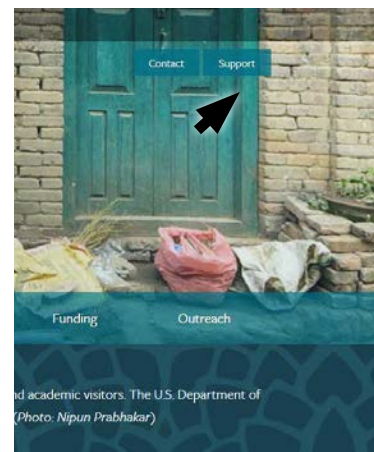


## THE SOUTH ASIA PROGRAM

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## About Us

The South Asia Program (SAP) is an interdisciplinary hub for Cornell students, faculty, staff, community members, and academic visitors, located in the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies. SAP coordinates teaching, research, and campus activities concerning the area comprising the nations of the Indian subcontinent: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The South Asia Program maintains distinctive strengths and dedicated expertise in several key areas, especially South Asian humanities; social, scientific, and applied research on South Asia; and the languages and cultures of Nepal and Sri Lanka.

With the Department of Asian Studies, SAP is committed to teaching a number of modern and classical South Asian languages, including Bengali, Hindi, Nepali, Pali, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sinhala,

Tamil, Tibetan and Urdu. Additionally, Persian is taught in the Department of Near Eastern Studies.

Our special resources include a library collection of over 500,000 printed monographs and nearly 10,000 serial titles in hard copy; 48 core faculty and 16 associate faculty in 28 departments, annually teaching over 100 Area Studies courses and 60 language courses at levels from beginning to advanced.

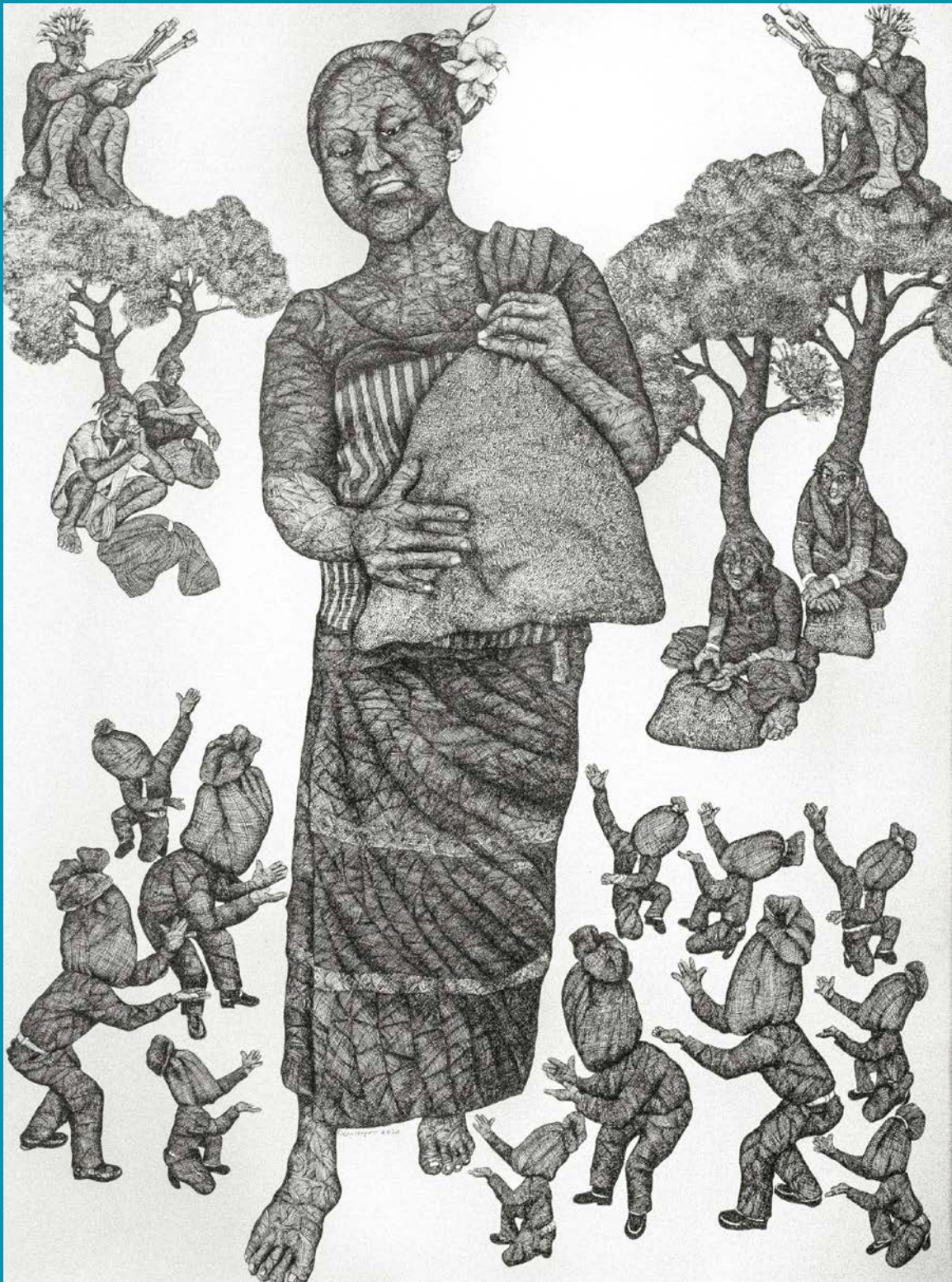
SAP sponsors a weekly seminar series with presentations by local, national, and international scholars, and organizes or co-sponsors numerous conferences and workshops every year. SAP collaborates with student organizations to bring South Asian cultural and performance events to campus on a regular basis, enriching Cornell and the surrounding communities. SAP also has a significant outreach program which makes training

on South Asia available to educators from K-12 schools and community colleges.

Since 1983, Cornell has collaborated with Syracuse University as a National Resource Center for South Asia, one of only eight nationally, sponsored by the US Department of Education. SAP facilitates summer intensive language opportunities for students from Cornell and other universities on the Cornell campus, at the South Asia Summer Language Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and at the American Association for Indian Studies language programs in India. The South Asia Program also nurtures the Office of Global Learning's study abroad opportunities in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. SAP plays a key role in Global Cornell's Global Hubs initiative, coordinating with Hub partners in India.



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[einaudi.cornell.edu/programs/south-asia-program](http://einaudi.cornell.edu/programs/south-asia-program)

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