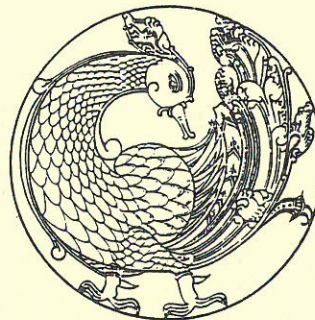


Cornell University South Asia Program Newsletter

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South Asia Program Faculty and Staff, 1989-90

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Faculty News:

Chris Minkowski is New South Asia Faculty

Cornell added a full-time Sanskritist, Christopher Minkowski, to its faculty in the fall semester 1989. Until this past fall, Sanskrit was taught by faculty members in Cornell's Classics and Linguistics Departments who had specialties in other language areas.

A member of both the Asian Studies and Classics Departments, Minkowski offers courses in Sanskrit language and literature, both in Sanskrit and in translation. Currently he is teaching level one Sanskrit and a course on Sanskrit mythological and epic literature in translation. Next year, he will offer an intermediate language course and a course on Indian story literature. In the future he plans to offer more advanced courses and courses in translation on ancient Indian philosophy, Buddhism in India, ancient Indian science, and the Vedas.

The presence of a Sanskritist at a university is useful for a wide variety of fields. At Cornell, Minkowski is able to complement some already established strengths; on one side, comparative historical linguistics, and on the other, East and South Asian studies. In addition, he will make a significant contribution to the community of humanists at Cornell studying South Asia.

Minkowski was previously a Junior Research Fellow in Indology at Wolfson College in Oxford. He has had both Junior and Senior AIIS Fellowships to carry out research in Poona, Varanasi, Madras, and elsewhere in India on his specialty - Vedic language, literature and ritual. He received his PhD from Harvard and taught at the University of Iowa and at Brown before he came to Cornell last fall.

Christopher Minkowski invites anyone interested in any aspect of Sanskrit language and literature to see him. He is particularly fond of questions about tricky, difficult, or smudged passages of Sanskrit that might turn up in another scholars' work.

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Student Life:

Preparing for More Work on Nepal Rural Electrification

Dale Nafziger, a graduate student presently working on his PhD in Agricultural and Biological Engineering, hopes to return to Nepal when he is finished with his studies so that he can continue his work on rural electrification.

Nafziger graduated in 1979 from Pennsylvania State University with a Master's Degree in electrical engineering. From there he went to spend three years in Nepal, where he worked on a United Mission to Nepal rural electrification project using water turbines.

He found work in Nepal a challenge and sometimes an overwhelming task. However, there was enough sense of achievement from this activity to make him decide that he wanted to make a long-term commitment to working in Nepal. Realizing that to accomplish his goal required further education, he came to Cornell in 1982 to do a Master's degree in Agricultural and Biological Engineering.

Nafziger completed this in 1985 and returned to Nepal to do fieldwork on the impact that electricity had on rural Nepali households. He spent three years there before returning to Cornell.

Supported by a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship, Nafziger hopes to complete his PhD work by August of this year, so that he may go back to Nepal. While he spends most of his time preoccupied with data analysis for his thesis, he also enjoys his Nepali classes under the instruction of Shambu Oja, spending time with friends, and eating *daal bhat*.

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	Jyotsna Kapur
	Rafiuddiin Ahmed
	Wendy Werblin

On Islamic "Fundamentalism"

by Rafiuddin Ahmed

What is fundamentalism and who is a fundamentalist? Is he a religious fanatic, a terrorist, a muhajid (holy warrior), or a subversive bent on destroying the social and political status quo and bring about chaos? The inconsistencies with which scholars and the Western media use these terms have made it difficult, if not impossible, for the ordinary inquirer to understand both the significance and deeper meanings of the developments in Muslim countries in recent years. This misunderstanding has also led to a void in communication between Islamists and the secular and Western cultures.

Equally problematic is the tendency to overemphasize developments in Middle Eastern, especially Egyptian, and Iranian Islam. Try asking anyone to free associate the word "Islam" and see the confusion it creates! Islam has become almost synonymous with the Middle East and Iran in popular mind. The often superficial reports of the Western press tend to focus exclusively on the developments in those countries. There is a whole mini-industry of conferences, papers, and seminars dominated by Egyptian and Iranian examples; to a lesser extent by the Pakistani example, due in part to its involvement in the Afghan Civil War.

Four out of every five of the 900 million Muslims in the world live outside of these "heartlands" of Islam and have developed their own culture, traditions, and ways of life which may or may not be compatible with life and society in the Middle East. So why should one associate Islamic culture with Arabian culture? Islam in the Middle East has inherited values and traditions — still intact today — from its pre-Islamic past which are as "un-Islamic" as similar inheritances in the non-Arab world. It is wrong to argue that Arabian culture is purely Islamic culture. While it may have been a slogan, it is historically unacceptable and illogical.

This is where the question of South Asian and Southeast Asian Islam comes in. These regions, especially Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan are home to over 500 million Muslims, and they have been generating many movements that have spread elsewhere and that have sometimes preceded

developments in other areas. South and Southeast Asia also give key examples of where Islam is placed in a larger non-Islamic environment.

A real challenge in my view is to find fresh approaches to the question of Islamic fundamentalism in different regional and cultural contexts. One great advantage of working on the subject with a focus on South Asia as a rubric is that there are three countries with significant similarities and shared historical experiences that simultaneously offer profound differences. One can look at their developments in a historical perspective. Too much emphasis on specific events, like the Arab-Israeli war and the Iranian revolution, will come under closer scrutiny. Questions must also be raised about the roles of the despotic ruler of the Middle East, their new found oil-wealth, and their efforts to keep the Iranian Revolution from spreading.

Although they aim literally at the restoration or establishment of Islamic *shari'a* in the Muslim countries by excluding all institutions and values derived from the Imperial West, the fundamentalist movements have a much more realistic goal. They are not led by emotions and cheap slogans, as one might imagine.

Fundamentalism should not be viewed as necessarily regressive or backward-moving. Adherents do not reject modernism or modernization; they oppose wholesale Westernization of institutions in the Muslim countries. They argue that both Western and socialist ideologies have failed to resolve the pressing social, economic, and political problems in these countries. The only alternative left to them is to go back to the rule of the *shari'a*.

There are both radicals and moderates among the fundamentalists. The more radical of them, for example the Brotherhood of Egypt and the *Jamat-i-Islami* in South Asia, do not hesitate to resort to violence in order to realize their political objectives and silence their opponents. On the other hand, moderates like the Tabligh and the Daw'a movements concentrate more on peaceful programs whose aim is on revitalizing the spirit of Islam. However, it is the political tensions created by the activities of the radical movements which have received much attention from scholars and the media. Peaceful

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programs have gone unnoticed although I would argue, the peaceful programs have been more effective in creating a sense of new awareness among Muslims about their "Islamicness" than the political activities of the radical movements.

There is no reason to suppose that Islamic fundamentalism is a passing phenomenon. Its impact on the domestic fabric of the Muslim states, and on the social and political life of ordinary Muslims, will have far-reaching effects on the peace and security in different regions. The passing away of Ayatollah Khomeini has done little to change the strategies and programs of these movements, although this has slowed down the momentum considerably.

It is necessary to explore the issues and questions raised above objectively in the context of different geographical regions and within a historical framework. This makes it imperative to find new approaches to the study of the subject. With this end in view, a seminar is planned, at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC, for April 26. Its primary focus will be on the countries of South Asia, including Afghanistan. It will make a significant shift in emphasis from the Arab to the non-Arab world where the force of Islam as a political symbol is stronger now than ever before. The reaction to the Salman Rushdie affair unmistakably demonstrated this. Islam thus poses a real challenge to the existing systems in Egypt, Indonesia, South Asia, and most other Muslim countries.

Rafiuddin Ahmed is a Visiting Professor in the Department of History.

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Student Life from page 2

Pakistani Student Association Grows at Cornell

The relatively new Pakistani Association is trying to make an impression at Cornell, according to Johanzeb Khan, the group's treasurer. Currently, the group has over sixty members from in and around Cornell, and is growing.

This semester, the PSA has already held a dinner-lecture for its members on the Dynamics of Islam and worked with the Cornell Indian Association during International Week on a dinner, song and dance for the festival of Holi. The group is working on putting together a seminar on the Kashmir issue and on coordinating more activities for its members.

Although the PSA has grown significantly this year, Khan says the group would like to see even more involvement in the future. An objective of the PSA is to increase the community's awareness of the organization and its culture, and to work with the community to expand on the theme of cultural awareness. Last semester's dinner-lecture, which drew much participation from both the group and the community, successfully got many people involved.

Cornell India Association Sponsors Foster Children in India

by Wendy Werblin

This year, the Cornell India Association (CIA) is undertaking a new project. CIA members are taking part in a "Foster Parents" plan for four underprivileged children in India. The CIA's sponsorship of these children helps to pay for their education, clothing, and food. Some money goes toward aiding the child's family and community projects.

The CIA got the Foster Parent project started last year, when its members established a bank account from donations. This pool serves as a backup account so that foster children can be maintained over the summer, or when donors graduate. Individual members give five dollars per week to sponsor a child, according to Ajay Singh, the CIA's president. It takes a team of four people to sponsor one child, totalling eighty dollars per month for each child.

This will be a long-term commitment for the CIA. While students spend time in America, the Foster Parent program allows them to do something for people in India; "to give money back home." Currently, the CIA is sponsoring four children and hopes to increase that number to ten.

There are many child and family international help organizations in the United States. The CIA chose the Foster Parents Plan, based in Rhode Island, because of its unique "helping those who help themselves" policy, which not only gives money to the poor, but trains them for self-advancement.

Over seventy per cent of the funds donated to the Foster Parents Plan goes directly to the children and their families, unlike many other programs which get a lower percentage to the children. The Foster Parents Plan itself is a non-profit service agency.

While the Foster Parents Plan works mainly to help impoverished children, it also aims to help families and communities via self-help programs. Children are clothed and put through school. Their parents are taught better farming and building techniques, nutrition, and child care. Community projects, for example, building a new well, are undertaken by the community with the help of the Foster Parents Plan's workers.

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Symposium on Chandigarh

From April 14 - 16, graduate students of Architecture and History at Cornell had a symposium on Chandigarh, the Indian capitol city designed by the French architect Le Corbusier in the 1950's. With two participants from India involved, A. Prakash and C. Correa, the symposium also provided a forum for discussions on East-West exchange.

The lecture presentation and panel discussion was complimented by three exhibitions featuring original drawings and models of Chandigarh, photographic studies on the iconography of the Hindu temple, and images of India's architecture. A main objective is examination of cross-cultural implications of architecture.

This symposium is a follow-up of a similar program which took place during the fall of 1988 which suggested a need for a more extensive discussion of Le Corbusier's work. The participants of this symposium have been invited on the basis of their direct involvement with Le Corbusier or Chandigarh. Papers presented at the symposium are planned to be eventually published.

South Asian Art at the Johnson Museum

by Jyotsna Kapur

On the fifth floor of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art are the George and Mary Rockwell Galleries of Asian Art. If you can pull yourself away from the breathtaking view of Ithaca the galleries give on a clear day, you can be transported to another world - a world of stone and bronze sculpture, miniature paintings, and wood carvings that give a glimpse into other cultures and ways of life. Mike Bosler, a graduate student who works at the Museum, took me around and helped me to see the links between the different works on display.

The George and Mary Rockwell galleries contain many of Cornell's South Asian art holdings. The most extensive collections are from India, ranging from the 7th to the 18th century and representing many different styles. There are sculptures in molded clay and red sandstone, bronze, copper, and wood.

There is also a good collection of painted miniatures dating from the mid-eighth century to the 18th century, from the Mewar, Bundi, Kangra, and Mughal schools. The first three schools depict religious themes; the Mughal pieces are more secular.

There are bronze sculptures from Tibet. There are also a few works from Sri Lanka. The galleries have several Nepalese Tankhas which will be on display later this year. Only part of the South Asian holdings are on display at any one time as exhibits are changed periodically to reflect different themes.

The current display is organized to illustrate the centrality of religion in South Asian Art. There are representations of different icons from the Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions. There are also a few friezes from temple architecture on display, for example, a wooden frieze from South India depicting Shiva and his two sons.

The religious element in South Asian art is also represented through works on religious myth. The sculpture, "Vishnu Giving Birth to Brahma," shows a well-known Hindu creation myth, usually referred to as Anantashayi, or Vishnu lying on a serpent. The panel is dated to the ninth

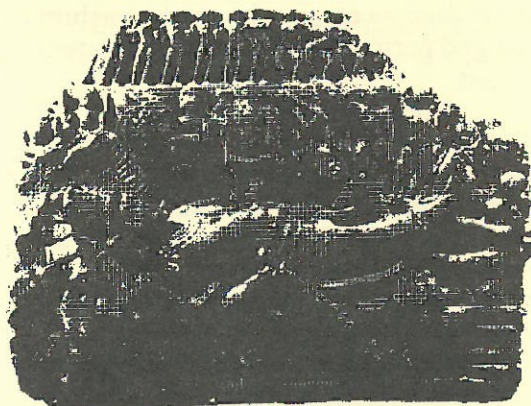
century and is attributed to a northern tradition clustered near Kotah in the state of Rajasthan.

However, it is mostly the "high" or elite traditions of art that are represented at the museum, marked out primarily by the materials used. Most of the works are in stone or metal; few are in wood, clay, or cloth, which were the common folk elements. In the styles of art also it is mostly high art that is seen, with little representation of folk styles.

This summer, the George and Mary Rockwell Galleries of Asian Art will have a comparative theme on display: the influence of Indian art on Southeast Asian art and the unique way Southeast Asian art has adopted and transformed it according to its own cultural standards.

The Asian Galleries already have some works on display which reflect this. There are striking sculptures of Vishnu carved in wood with gilding from early 20th century Cambodia, and Shiva carved and painted in wood from Bali. The display will be of much interest to students of Asian art and culture.

Jyotsna Kapur is a graduate student in the Department of Communication. Before coming to Ithaca, she worked in Bombay with Astha, a voluntary organization that produces communication material related to development and women. At Cornell she is working on the CWAS - Committee on Women in Asian Studies - newsletter.



*Vishnu Giving Birth to Brahma,
11-12th century Rajasthan.
Courtesy Johnson Museum of Art*

Faculty News from page 2

W. S. Karunatillake, Fulbright Scholar, at Cornell

Professor W.S. Karunatillake is at Cornell this year as a Fulbright Scholar, on leave from the University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka. As a language specialist, Karunatillake is teaching Sinhala 101-102 and Pali and is also supervising Tamil while Professor James Gair is on sabbatical leave.

Gair and Karunatillake, who have collaborated previously on Sinhala texts, are doing further work on an introductory Pali text and an advanced Pali reader. They are also working on Sinhala texts that focus on the different formal (literary) and colloquial forms of the language. The Sinhala Newspaper Reader they are preparing will give students a sense of "real-life" written Sinhala, and an advanced text on formal spoken Sinhala is being done because, says Karunatillake, "students often don't know how to decode a speech or introduce someone formally." They are also working on a contemporary translation of a 13th century Sinhala text which contains some of the oldest written Indo-Aryan grammatical expositions.

Also in the works is a text on spoken and literary Sri Lankan Tamil, which will contain various readings and discussions when completed. In addition to Karunatillake and Gair, one of the professors at Karunatillake's home university is working on this project also.

The next big project for Karunatillake will be teaching this Summer Session's Intensive Colloquial Sinhala program. The program, modelled after one he taught at the University of Pennsylvania, will cater to American students and will focus on the functional language rather than on formal versions. Students will use the Introductory Colloquial text and new Newspaper Reader and will concentrate on learning the language through conversation and as much "cultural immersion" as Ithaca will allow.

more Faculty News on next page

PIDW Has New Director

Shelley Feldman, Assistant Professor in the Department of Rural Sociology and member of the South Asia Program, has been named as acting director of the Program on International Development and Women.

Affiliated with the Center for International Studies, the PIDW seeks to consolidate and systemize the study on the effects of international development on women, and of women as agents of social change. The emphasis is on embedding analyses of gender within a global framework.

In addition to its emphasis on research and teaching, the program is also facilitates an international exchange among students, educators, policy makers, political activists, and others who share a common interest in understanding gender dimensions in international development. Unlike most women-in-development programs, PIDW considers women cross-nationally and thus includes in its analyses the role of women in industrialized countries such as the United States and nations of Europe.

Other Members of the South Asia Program who are involved with the PIDW are: Mary Katzenstein, Government; Kathy March, Anthropology; Kiki McCarthy, Human Ecology; and Barbara Miller, Rural Sociology.

The Cornell India Association - South Asia Program Film Series

April 21 Aadharshila, starring Naseeruddin Shah, Neena Gupta. Directed by A. Ahuja.

April 28 Amar Akbar Anthony, starring Amitabh Bachchan, Vinod Khanna, Parveen Babi. Directed by Manmohan Desai.

May 5 Guddi, starring Jaya Bhaduri, Ashok Kumar. Directed by Hrishikesh Mukherjee.

All showings are at 3:15 p.m. in Room 302 Uris Library.

Humphrey Fellow at Cornell

Bina Pradhan, Executive Director of the Centre for Women and Development in Nepal, is at Cornell this academic year as a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow. Under sponsorship of the U.S. Information Agency, Humphrey Fellows are mid-career professionals selected from developing countries to further their professional development. Cornell is one of a small number of American universities chosen to host Humphrey Fellows in non-degree graduate programs that are tailored to the Fellows' respective career needs and interests.

Pradhan, who has an M.A. in Economics from Tribhuvan University in Nepal and some post-graduate training in the U.K., is concentrating on women's studies, international development, and research methodology. In Nepal, the non-governmental organization she heads is involved in field studies, evaluations, project designs, and training that can promote an expanded and more beneficial role for women in that country's development.

During her stay in the U.S., she is making contacts with other organizations to form links for the exchange of ideas, collaboration, and support. She has visited the International Development Research Centre in Canada; and in Washington, D.C. the International Center for Research on Women, the Women in Development Office in USAID, the Population and Human Resource Development Branch of the World Bank, and the World Bank's Volunteer Service.

Among other activities while at Cornell, Pradhan is collaborating in the planning of a Nutrition Surveillance Study in Nepal to be conducted in conjunction with the Nutrition Division of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Pradhan is one of ten Humphrey Fellows at Cornell this year and one of 125 nationally. Humphrey Fellows take courses and make presentations according to their interests, both gaining and sharing knowledge as part of a very flexible cultural exchange program.

News From the ISA

This year, the Indian Students Association tried to go beyond their usual cultural and social activities and sponsor some events dealing with issues confronting South Asians growing up in the U. S., following up last year's sponsorship of the South Asian Students of the East Coast Conference. In addition to our annual concert, Divali Dinner (cosponsored with CIA this year), and Spring semi-formal, ISA organized two events to educate its members as well as others.

In the Fall, there was a video showing followed by a discussion of My Beautiful Laundrette, which deals with issues of race, class, and sexuality as it affects a South Asian family in London. The video was shown to challenge our own preconceptions and stereotypes of South Asians.

In March, ISA sponsored a full-day workshop on domestic violence in South Asian families, facilitated by Grace Poore, an Indian woman working with the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence in Washington, D.C. Poore said that both South Asian and American societies send cultural messages to men and women, such as the idea that men have the right to dominate and control their

families, thereby allowing domestic violence to happen. This shatters two myths; one that there is no domestic violence in South Asian families, which are seen to be fairly successful in this country.

Another myth, perhaps more prevalent outside the South Asian community, is that South Asian men are somehow more oppressive than other men, and that South Asian women are necessarily subordinated and victimized by South Asian cultures. These myths often work together to keep a South Asian woman in an abusive relationship. If a woman leaves, she often either has little support from her community, which wants to deny the problem, or she is put in a position of having to defend her culture in discussions with domestic violence workers, who use her situation to make unfair generalizations about South Asian cultures. The workshop included some role play activities to advise participants on how to deal with domestic violence. She will be sending a resource list of groups that do domestic violence work, both specifically for South Asians and for the general population.

ISA hopes to do more of this type of programming in the future and focus more on South Asian American themes.



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