In the zero degree chill of Upstate New York in January, it is hard to think about South Asia, heat, dust, drought and monsoons. But 2008 and 2009 have brought many challenges to the region and those of us who care enormously about its people and their welfare, whether from years of study, family connections, close friendships and more. Our Afghani students worry incessantly about their families’ welfares in Kabul. Colleagues and students from Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh share similar worries. I shall never forget walking into my daughter’s house at Thanksgiving and having my son-in-law say, “So what do you think about Mumbai?” to which I replied, “What do you mean?” Even NPR, whose news we had heard on our drive to Boston, hadn’t kept up—I was glued to BBC for the next 24 hours—after immediately reaching out to our undergraduate students in Mysore to be assured of their safety.

Just today, more suicide bombers hit Kabul. Thousands of civilians are threatened in the Jaffna region of Sri Lanka. Pakistan faces constant threats, internal and external. On a more positive note, Bangladesh had a postponed election that was largely peaceful, with a turnout of more than 80 percent, resulting in an overwhelming mandate for Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League. Nepal’s civil war has ended. India has survived terrorists, the economic downturn, and thus far global warming. But enormous challenges continue to face the region.

All of these suggest why the South Asia Center exists, to allow us to begin to understand the complex events-human, religious, artistic, economic, cultural, geographic, environmental- that are occurring and have occurred there. We as faculty face the challenge of bringing our insights to our students and our communities. To this end, we welcome new faculty—Farhana Sultana and her focus on the environment; Robert Doyle, not new to Syracuse but to South Asia and his work on vaccines for children; and Tim Dye, one-time SU FLAS student now returned to Public Administration and Upstate Medical University, and his focus on health care throughout the region. Moreover, Jennifer Smith has transitioned from being a grad student (and FLAS recipient) in Civil Engineering and Public Administration to teaching in our partner school, SUNY-ESF, with a particular interest in sustainability.

All of this energy means that the study of South Asia thrives at SU. Innovative programs by Tula Goenka and John Thompson take students to India for short trips—Tula for four weeks in the summer to Bollywood and John for two weeks between semesters for art in Rajasthan and Delhi. This past fall, four students studied in Mysore—two Honors Capstone projects will come out of that cadre. This winter, a group of management and iSchool students leave for India to work as graduate interns for JP MorganCase.

In a different vein, Tazim Kassam led a program on Muslim Cultures in London this past summer—as a returned student noted just this week, it was the ideal locale for understanding Islam in its various cultural manifestations—and its varied foods! As seen later in this newsletter, our faculty are fully engaged in scholarship, teaching and communicating the knowledge they have gained. Working with the Mellon Humanities Corridor (linking Rochester, Syracuse and Cornell), we have participated in workshops exploring the history, religion and music of the Indian Ocean region.

Next year we’ll examine urban religious spaces. Through our Outreach Program, we connect with local schools and teachers in the K-12 range, while our seminars and workshops reach out to our colleagues in the area’s colleges. We are in fact doing our job—studying, learning and communicating what we learn.

So I return to the South Asia Center as Director for another 18 months. With our wonderful students and faculty, we have the opportunity to expand our work, to engage in new issues, to learn and communicate yet
Robert Doyle

“Our research will have an enormously positive impact on people well beyond Syracuse University: This is truly scholarship in action” — Prof. Robert Doyle, Ph. D.

Prof. Robert Doyle has currently created a link between Syracuse University and the global South in a mission to save the lives of children of third world countries.

Dr. Doyle received his undergraduate degree in Natural Science and Graduate diploma in Statistics, both at University of Dublin, Ireland. He then pursued three post doctorate degrees, on synthetic chemistry at University of Dublin, on bioconjugate chemistry at Australian National University, and molecular biology at Yale University.

 Prof. Robert Doyle joined the Chemistry faculty in 2005. After establishing his own laboratory, his dedicated research team and hard work soon attracted the attention of top researchers. Prof. Doyle’s revolutionary research in developing the oral form of insulin intrigued several companies and manufacturers worldwide, including the Serum Institute of India. The Serum Institute of India is the world’s largest producer of measles and diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DPT) vaccines, employing more than 6000 workers. The Serum Institute has recently partnered with Dr. Doyle’s team and awarded a $250,000 grant for creating affordable, easily accessible vaccinations against tetanus and rotavirus for the children of developing nations.

During my interview with Dr. Doyle, I truly admired his enthusiasm for his new project and his appreciation of his team. Doyle states the current project with the Serum Institute is extremely rewarding as it not only a breakthrough in science, but the project can “really make a difference in saving lives.” In short, by reducing the cost of vaccinations, Doyle’s research team can increase the distribution in developing countries, and saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of children.

Dr. Doyle admits that as he has traveled several countries, but has not yet visited India and certainly hopes to do so in the near future. At times of declining economy and human spirits, we are proud to have Dr. Doyle in our faculty, one who can truly make a difference. More information on Dr. Doyle’s research work and achievements: http://chemistry.syr.edu/faculty/doyle.html

Farhana Sultana

“Water is the Theoretical Lens, through which I look at the Social Implications of Environmental Change” – Prof. Farhana Sultana, Ph.D.

Dr. Farhana Sultana joined the Maxwell School in Fall 2008 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography. Dr. Sultana’s educational background includes B.A in Geology and Environmental Studies from Princeton University and Masters and PhD degrees in Geography from University of Minnesota. Before coming to Syracuse, she was a faculty member in the Department of Geography at King’s College London. As an academic who would liked to be identified as an “interdisciplinary scholar,” Prof. Sultana brings unique interests and interdisciplinary projects, combining earth sciences and social sciences.

Prof. Sultana’s work focuses on the intertwined relationship between nature and society, and its implications for development. She also has a special passion on water politics including water governance and water rights. Dr. Sultana states, “Water is the theoretical lens through which I look at the social implications of environmental change.”

She has done extensive work on the management and mismanagement of water and its impacts on gender and class relations. Although much of her field work has been primarily in her home country of Bangladesh, her conceptualizations can be projected to address global issues as well. For three years, she served as a Program Officer at the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Bangladesh, bringing policy experience to her academic work.

Dr. Sultana’s current and future plans include more in-depth work on social implications of climate change, particularly in South Asia. Although her previous work has included focusing on rural water governance, her new project will be urban water governance in Dhaka, Bangladesh. More information on Dr. Sultana’s work and achievements can be found at http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/geo/faculty/sultana.htm

Timothy D Dye

“I am a Medical Anthropologist” — Prof. Tim Dye, Ph.D.

“When I was 8 years old, I became interested on stories about explorers in
Tibet. I started making trips to Syracuse University library to take out books about Dalai Lama and Tibet. The more I read, the more I became interested in their culture - music, food, and their literature. I still have the book called “Out of Tibet” sitting in my bookshelf” - And so began Dr. Dye’s unique interest in Tibet and the people of the Himalayas.

Dr. Tim Dye, now Professor of Public Health and Preventive Medicine at Upstate Medical School and an Adjunct Professor in Public Administration, the Maxwell School, began his affiliation with the South Asian region in 1984 when he was an undergraduate student in anthropology at Syracuse University. Prof. Dye notes that his initial background at Syracuse University solidified his career. He further praised two of his professors in helping him develop his passion towards South Asia— Susan Wadley, the current director of the South Asia Center, and the late Agehananda Bharati whose courses in anthropology and on the Himalayas fed his passion. Prof. Dye has remained connected to South Asia ever since. After completing his BA in Anthropology, he studied Hindi through a FLAS fellowship while completing his Masters degrees in International Relations and Public Administration.

Shifting to SUNY Buffalo for his doctoral work in medical anthropology, Professor Dye focused on a project in maternal and child health in Kashmir for his dissertation. More recently, Prof. Dye has worked in India, interviewing doctors and workers in Rajasthan, Delhi and Mumbai, with a focus on cancer diagnosis and treatment. From 2000 to 2003, he also worked with Media Lab Asia, an initiative from the Government of India and Massachusetts Institute of Technology to analyze how the public would benefit from technology in improving health care, focusing on Haryana and the environs of Delhi. In 2003, Prof. Dye finally made it to Tibet with a project on maternal and child health. Critical here is that he was fortunate to get permission from all the major government agencies to work in Tibet, Professor Dye’s work combines anthropology with epidemiology, public health and technology. “We use anthropology in ways that people don’t usually think about... In Tibet, we used anthropology to study food procurement- growing and preparing food. In India, we used integrated anthropology with medical oncology. We work with biologists, physicians, scientists, geographers. This is a multidisciplinary project.”

Prof. Dye has returned to Syracuse to aid in the new Masters in Public Health being jointly offered by Syracuse University and Upstate Medical University. He looks forward to reconnecting with our South Asia Center and possibly reviving the course on the Himalayas that he took long ago with Professor Bharati. He also seeks to do more research on chronic diseases in India. He is a valuable addition to our South Asia faculty.

Mohammad M. Haque

Mohammad Mahmudul Haque is currently teaching Bengali at Syracuse University as a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant. On leave from his position as a lecturer in English from BRAC Uni-
more. We all thank Ann Gold for four years of wonderful leadership.

We on the South Asia Center staff wish health, food, shelter—for human security—for all South Asians. Most of us, we wish for peace in the region and between its many varied peoples.

Susan Snow Wadley
January 17, 2009

Preliminary Research Towards Mapping Calcutta’s Queer Movement

This past December I conducted preliminary research on queer collective action for social change in Calcutta. The oral history of queer activism in this city can be traced back to 1989 when a small group of gay men got together to form a club. In 1999, Calcutta was host to the first queer pride parade in India. Today, the city and its surrounding districts are home to a network of approximately twenty-five different organizations that work on issues of same-sex sexuality.

A couple of stressful days after my arrival in Calcutta, I was finally ready to go out into the city all by myself. By this time I had found an expensive paying guest accommodation in the Salt Lake neighborhood that was willing to host a non-Indian Muslim. Understandably, most landlords were tense in the aftermath of the Mumbai terrorist attacks. After two noisy rickshaw rides, thirty minutes of standing in a crowded bus, and fifteen minutes of walking along dust-laden streets, I finally reached my destination. Taking this route to the SAATHII (Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India) office became a part of my daily routine for the remainder of my month-long stay in Calcutta.

The primary goal of SAATHII, a non-government organization (NGO) where I volunteered, is to create an awareness of HIV/AIDS and to strengthen efforts towards the prevention and treatment of the infection. I spend my time at SAATHII working on several ongoing projects, such as analyzing surveys from media advocacy training workshops, and editing interview questionnaires for a baseline project on coalition building amongst community based organizations. I spent every opportunity I had speaking to the organization’s employees about their work, life experiences, and views on social change. I also made good use of the SAATHII reference library by watching short independent films made by local activists on issues of same-sex sexuality.

SAATHII employees, most of whom are queer activists, welcomed me wholeheartedly, and I was immediately comfortable in their company. One member of the staff, Subadeep, a transgendered activist and musician, decided to adopt me as her son and insisted that that I call her “mummy.” Sonali, the documentation officer, encouraged me to speak in Bengali, and Santosh, the SAATHII outreach coordinator, treated me as a friend and confidant. I was also invited to office parties and other social gatherings where I met with activists, scholars, and supporters from various queer networks.

My friends at SAATHII introduced me to representatives of other key organizations like Manas Bangla, a grant funded coalition of thirteen community based organizations (CBO) located in different parts of West Bengal. I learned that each CBO has its own Drop-In Center (DIC) that functions not only as a clinic but also a safe space where local queer support groups can host their monthly meetings and social events.

I visited two of the four DICs based in Calcutta. The Kadapara DIC was a small apartment with two rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. One of the rooms was set up as a clinic, complete with a bed and medical supplies, from where a doctor administered treatment to patients. The other room was used as a common area. Here, I observed a meeting in which peer educators narrated their experiences from the field. The role of peer educators is to go to cruising areas, such as parks and public toilets, to advise men on safe-sex practices and on the risks of sexually transmitted diseases. I discovered that fieldwork is fraught with dangers for peer educators; many of them are effeminate men who are routinely harassed during interventions with target populations.

Contd on pg 14
Syracuse University Students in Rajasthan

Syracuse University students on a semester program in Mysore, India also participated in a two week seminar in North India examining “the selling of Rajasthan,” looking at the ways in which the landscape, peoples and crafts are constructed on a global marketplace.

Emera Bridger, Doctoral student in Anthropology, Syracuse University is directing the program in Rajasthan.
Faculty Updates


Shobha Bhatia, Professor, Civil Engineering, published jointly with Jennifer Smith, Assistant Professor, ESF, a book titled "Bridging the Gap Between Engineering and the Global World—A Case Study of the Coconut (Coir) Fiber Industry in Kerala, India, Morgan & Claypool Publishers and also submitted an article on “The Bioimprovement (Vegetation) of Soils for Highway Applications Using RECPs,” at the 88th Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) session on Bioimprovement of Soils for Transportation Applications.

Tej Bhatia, Professor, Languages, Literature and Linguistics, spend the last academic year in Japan. While there, he delivered a series of lectures—“The Hindi Grammatical Tradition” at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies; “Global Warming: World Englishes in Global Advertising” at Waseda University, Tokyo; “WE and Global Advertising” at Doshisha University Kyoto; and “Reaching the Unreachable: NGOs and Communication Challenges in Rural India” at Chukyo University, Nagoya. He also presented “Early Hindi Grammars: Context and Contributions to Language Study” at the International Conference on the History of the Language Sciences, in Potsdam, Germany in Sept. His publications include “Regional Languages of South Asia” in Languages in South Asia, Cambridge University Press, and is editing a special issue of the Journal of Creative Communication on global advertising.

Tula Goenka, Associate Professor, Newhouse School of Communication has been selected for the Syracuse University Chancellor’s Citation for Excellence Award for Engaging the World, recognizing her work on the Syracuse Human Rights Film Festival. She led a very successful study abroad program, “A Bollywood Experience: Internship in Mumbai,” and she will lead this program again in the coming summer.

Ann Grodzins Gold, Professor, Religion and Anthropology, is back from her leave in Spring 2008. She also completed her very successful term as a Director of the South Asia Center. She wrote a book chapter, “Blindness and sight: Moral vision in Rajasthani narratives” in 'Speaking Truth to Power': Religion, Caste, and the Subaltern Question in India, edited by Manu Bhagavan and Anne Feldhaus, Oxford University Press.

Prema Kurien, Associate Professor of Sociology, is the Interim Director of a new initiative in Transnational Asian Studies. She is also serving as Graduate Director in the Department of Sociology.

Ishwari Pandey, Assistant Professor, Writing Program, received a Ford Foundation Award with African American Department in 2008. He published several articles including “Researching (with) the Postnational Other: Ethics, Methodologies, and Qualitative Studies of Digital Literacies” in Digital Writing Research: Technologies, Methodologies, and Ethical Issues, edited by Dânielle DeVoss and Heidi McKee, Hampton Press and “Transcultural Literacies of Gaming?” in Gaming Lives in the 21st Century: Literate Connections, edited by Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe, McMillan Palgrave.

Jeremy Shiffman, Associate Professor of Public Administration, has received a grant from Save the Children USA to conduct research on the political priority for newborn survival in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Malawi, Nepal and globally.

Cecilia Van Hollen, Associate Professor, Anthropology, received a American Institute for Indian Studies (AIIS) Senior Short Term Fellowship in the summer of 2008 for research project on “HIV/AIDS, Women, and Childbearing in Tamilnadu, India.” In Spring 2008, she developed new course, “Culture and Reproductive Health and Medicine,” taught through the Consortium for Culture and Medicine which brought together students from Syracuse University, SUNY Upstate Medical College, and LeMoyne College.
Indian Civil Servants in Maxwell

The Maxwell School again hosted a group of senior Indian civil servants who are currently enrolled in the Post-Graduate Program in Public Policy and Management at the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore. This continues an activity that began in 2002 and has been continued annually since then.

The 2008 batch of 34 participants included men and women from a variety of services including the revenue service, telecom service, police service, Indian railways, and the Reserve Bank of India, among others. The group arrived on campus in early October and remained here until late November (in time to experience some Syracuse snow). They also spent a week in Washington D.C. In fact, that visit coincided with the general elections in the U.S. and included a visit to a local polling station in a Virginia suburb.

While on campus, the participants attended lectures given by Maxwell School faculty on a variety of public policy and management topics. Each participant also completed several writing assignments including a major public policy analysis paper and made public presentations of their results during the final days of their stay. Professor Larry Schroeder coordinated the lectures and supervised the writing efforts. Dan Nelson, Ronda Garlow and Susan Condron in the Executive Education Program of the Maxwell School coordinated their stay in the U.S. Jessica Ernst, a student in the MPA program also assisted in the coordination efforts.

The training is sponsored by the Government of India. For more information on the various ties between the Executive Education Program and India, see http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/exed/international/india/

By Larry Schroeder, Professor of Public Administration, Maxwell School, Syracuse University

THANK YOU NOTE

South Asia Center extends its sincere gratitude to Mr. Ved Prakash Kayastha, an SU alumuni, for the donation of two Indian fabric motif paintings to the center. These beautiful motifs depict a marriage procession and Shiva, a popular Hindu deity.
What began as an instructional supplement—The Picturebook Ramayana: An Illustrated Version of Valmiki’s Story, a 1981 booklet printed in English and Sanskrit on standard 8½x11 inch duplicating paper, spiral-bound with a simple colored paper cover, and locally distributed—has recently been transformed into something quite different both in appearance and intent. It was originally a collaboration between me and Dr. M. Narasimhachary, the Sanskrit scholar then at The University of Madras, and the artists M.S. Kumaraswami (d.1983) and A. Manivelu, both also of Chennai. Long out of print, that publication a year or so ago came to the attention of a Rama-devotee, Mr. V.S. Krishnaswamy, now living in retirement downstate in Westchester County. The two of us had engaged in an extended correspondence about maps we had independently produced, each purporting to show the possible route followed by Rama during his earthly career. There were slight differences between the two supposed itineraries, but both were based on locations of temples, shrines and other pilgrimage sites associated with Rama scattered across north, central, west and south India that we had respectively visited during the course of our own travels throughout the subcontinent. We had found much to talk about, many memories to share.

At some point, the 1981 Picturebook came into his hands. The nature and direction of our conversation irreversibly shifted. As he later wrote to me, he immediately envisioned the re-publication of that discontinued Picturebook as an opportunity to perform an “act of devotion.” Now in his late eighties and in frail health, he viewed in that pictorial rendering of the beloved story a powerful means by which he might bring to a new generation of Indians (and others) a freshly-minted version of the beloved tale. As owner of the copyright of the 1981 collaboration, I found myself intrigued by his enthusiasm, his motives. I urged him to move forward with his project.

In due time, I was to learn that this elderly man, now a resident of White Plains, NY, had served during a distinguished career in India as Director General of the Geological Survey of India. That is why, in part, he was able to draw upon a wide network of associates, former colleagues and friends to join him in his proposed project “as an act of faith.” Many of them, as was he, were well into their retirement years and several, as had he, likewise left India late in life to take up residence in North America. Within a matter of a few short weeks he managed to pull together a team of experienced and like-minded individuals from widely separated places in North America and India (New York, New Jersey, Texas, California, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Pune, Trivandrum). Despite that wide geographic distribution, members managed to keep in touch through the Internet. Indeed, most procedural decisions and textual contributions were made via e-mail exchanges. Many team members have yet to meet face-to-face.

As the team got down to work the first, and most fundamental, element of their joint effort was to expand the textual matter that appeared in the original publication. To the Sanskrit and English of the original 1981 version they added six vernaculars: Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil and Telugu. Those are the languages spoken today in regions of the subcontinent where faith asserts Rama passed through during his wanderings in exile.

As for the 78 original line drawings I put at the team’s disposal, they chose not to use all of them. Like many ardent devotees of Rama, they share a sensibility that deems the concluding section of Valmiki’s great epic suspect. It was, in any case, their decision to “colorize” the original black-on-white line drawings that most impacted the “look” of their re-issue. That move was prompted mainly by the availability of a computer program not available when the 1981 Picturebook was in production.

The actual work by the six teams of two contributors each, was completed within a remarkably stringent time frame. In fact, the vernacular versions of the Valmiki quotes that accompany every illustration came in ahead of schedule! And the layout, overall design and printing all seem to have been driven by an engine of extraordinary en-
On 3-5 October 2008, the culminating event in the Religions and Cultures Initiative of the Mellon Central New York Humanities Project convened at Cornell University. This was a workshop on *Religion and Culture in the Indian Ocean Region, 18th Century to the Present*. It followed several previous public events on different campuses sponsored by the initiative, including last April’s three-day workshop on *Music Moves Religions: Performance Networks in Indian Ocean Cultures*, held at Syracuse.

*Religion and Culture in the Indian Ocean Region* involved several innovative features. Following the model of the previous conference on Indian Ocean music at Syracuse, which included several musical performances, the workshop at Cornell began on Friday evening with a performance of Indian classical dance in the Odissi style by Pratibha Jena Singh. It served as a particularly auspicious inspiration for the conference because of the close aesthetic relationship between this dance form and traditional Hindu temple sculpture.

Saturday was organized around three panels each of which consisted of four papers that had been circulated in advance. Each panel was chaired by a fifth scholar who did not submit a paper but introduced and moderated the discussion. While five of the twelve papers were based primarily on the study of Islam, four on Hinduism and three on Buddhism, the panels were deliberately organized to foster discussions that cut across these religious traditions, across disciplinary boundaries, and across traditional geographic areas. Panel I was chaired by a historian and included papers by a historian, an anthropologist and two art historians discussing trade, politics, architecture and textiles in East Africa, western India and Southeast Asia. Panel II was chaired by a historian and included papers by two anthropologists, a historian and a scholar of religious studies discussing Muslim, Buddhist and European intellectual responses to the colonialism in East Africa, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. Panel III was chaired by an anthropologist and included papers by two anthropologists, a historian and a scholar of religious studies on new Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist movements in East Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Sunday three graduate students—in Religion (SU), Anthropology (CU) and Asian Studies (CU)—offered comments on the previous day’s presentations. Their responses touched on very different aspects of the conference and stimulated much further discussion. By the end of the day there was a consensus that the careful blending of regions, religions and academic disciplines had been a great success and that it could lead to a cohesive and innovative publication.

*By Ann Gold, Professor of Religion, Syracuse University.*
While sitting in the plane on my way to Trinidad, I thought of what Indian culture I might find when I reach there. I knew they ate food such as *dhalpuri*, fried dough stuffed with lentils and spices, and that the Indian population was descended from indentured laborers and that many of the Indians speak the Bhojpuri language having been brought over from Bihar. Before starting my journey, I had done little previous research regarding the cultures of Trinidad and Tobago. I was there to explore the status of Hindi language speaking and learning and to find out what is happening as far as Hindi is concerned. It was both very exciting and familiar to find that as soon as I got into the taxi at the airport, the cabbie was listening to an all time favorite song from Bollywood. The driver could not speak Hindi but he was enthusiastic enough to reveal his ancestral connection to India and we chatted all the way into Port of Spain about things “Indian.”

The next morning we visited a temple named ‘Sri Ram Dham’ run by a nonprofit religious and cultural organization ‘Swaha.’ I was surprised to meet Pt. Maniedeo Prasad, the spiritual leader and the priest of the temple who was also the Trinidad’s High Commissioner in India. I would never have thought of a high profile Indian Foreign Service personnel being a priest and performing temple rituals in the traditional attire of *dhoti* and *kurta*. I attended an elaborate puja ceremony and made some contacts, which were very fruitful in my exploration of Hindi and Hindu culture in this Caribbean island. One of the attendees I met at this temple was the cultural secretary from Indian High Commission. It was he who informed me of the Hindi classes run by the Indian Embassy in Trinidad.

The construction of the temple was still underway and a couple of artisans from west Bengal were engaged in making the sculptures of many Hindu deities and other religious artifacts. This four story temple is modeled after Bharat Mata temple of Haridwar. The idol of Ganesha sitting atop of a globe-shaped *aasana* (seat), with the wall in the background painted with elements of solar system was quite unusual.

During my short stay, I was elated to find out about the Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha, an educational and cultural center located in St. Augustine, very close to the main campus of University of the West Indies. Established in 1952, this institute is very well known in Trinidad and it runs about forty-three Hindu primary schools, five secondary schools and twelve early childhood care and education centers. They also run an exclusive FM radio station, Radio Jaagrity, which broadcast *bhajans* and massages related to Hindu culture around the clock. I was able to get an appointment with the secretary general of the Sabha, Mr. Samarayan Maharaj, at the St. Augustine campus. When I greeted him with “namaste” he returned the greeting with “*seetaa raam*” and reminded me that “this is the way we greet here as namaste is too neutral a term for us sanatanis.” He was very prompt to correct me when I used the term Hindu in place of Sanatan and made it clear that they are sanatanis and do not like to be called Hindu. He proudly mentioned that the objective of teaching Hindi language in his schools is for the preservation and continuation of the Indian culture. For better appreciation and comprehension of scriptures, prayers, *bhajans* Hindi songs and Hindi movies is also important. He invited me to observe and listen to a piece of Vedic chanting by a group pundit who received training in the programs of the institution. At the time of my departure, he graciously handed me a fabric bag with a painting of goddess Durga, which included a copy of a Hindu calendar, a copy of a Hindi book used in their primary schools and a box of flash cards containing the Devanagari alphabet.

In my stay in Port of Spain, I could not find any Bhojpuri speakers. However, I was satisfied with all of the Chutney Soca songs that I heard on various radio stations. The lyrics of all the Chutney songs are the folk songs of Bhojpuri mixed with the typical Trinidadian calypso beat. I was thrilled when I was asked to authenticate the Bhojpuri of one of the audio CDs produced by a shopkeeper in one of the many Indian stores.

*By Anand Dwivedi, Associate Director of the South Asia Center, Syracuse University.*
US film school syllabus gets a Bollywood chapter

Anna Biernat
Mumbai, June 13

THE ARCHETYPICAL Bollywood masala film, with its melodrama, action, song and dance sequence, has lessons to offer to some budding US filmmakers. Students of Syracuse University’s film school will now have a chapter on Bollywood as part of their training, which is a first.

On Friday, 11 students of Syracuse University in upstate New York had a first-hand experience of Hindi movies on the set of *Mein Prema*, which left many indebted.

The visit was facilitated by Mumbai-based film institute, Whistling Woods International. Interacting with major Bollywood production companies and media channels, the students have been learning about direction, choreography, cinematography, editing and screenwriting for the past four weeks.

Before coming to India, 36-year-old Yuan Le had seen only one Bollywood film, *Dream Girl*. But after a month in Mumbai, he is ready to come back to work here. “An insight to Bollywood cinema was very inspiring. This experience has confirmed my belief about working as a cinematographer in the future,” said Yuan. “And I would like to do it in India because every day is a new adventure here,” he added.

The filmmakers treated the foreign interns professionally. “In Hollywood, where everything is planned, we would never have been able to be so close to the action. Here everyone was very helpful and willing to answer our questions,” says Vikas Shashikar (21).

Anna Biernat
Mumbai, June 13

The colour in Bollywood overwhelmed them all. “Indian films are fantastically colourful,” they said in unison. “My plan is to come back to Bollywood and work here,” says Yuan.

As for the difference between Hollywood, their familiar ground, and the Mumbai film industry, the answer was unanimous — chaos. “In Hollywood every single detail is planned. Here, it’s an impression of a total chaos. There are five people doing one job, but still it seems like nobody is doing anything,” said Monic Schumacher (22).

“I often wonder how it is possible that Bollywood produces more films than Hollywood? Maybe it’s because Hollywood is really picky about scripts,” mused Jawahar Kasar (20), an NRI student.

According to ace director Subhash Ghai, it was a beginning of a new trend. “It is the first time in India that film students from the US have come to study Bollywood cinema. With the world cinema coming closer every year, I am glad to see that western film makers’ interest is increasing in our cinema and people,” he said.

SU in Bollywood

Milind Menon

Tinsel-town tips

Shilpi Singh

The Chaos of India never changes. It just keeps going... and that never ceases to amaze me!” says 46-year-old Yale-Google, associate professor of film and television at Syracuse University, US. Goenka is in Mumbai with 11 of her students for a “Bollywood internship”, which she has tailored for them and claims to be the first of its kind. One of the students started working on director Aditya Chopra’s new film on her first day itself, while another is with PVR Cinemas for its new venture.

For someone who left India almost 50 years ago, the long gap has given Goenka new perspectives on an industry she has always loved. “Bollywood always intrigued me.”

With hands-on experience in filmmaking — she has assisted Krishna Lee in Akashvani, James Ivory in *Sariyana*, and Mira Nair in *Monsoon* and *Mississippi Mosquito* — Goenka came up with the idea of a month-long summer programme because she wanted her students to learn more about the Indian film industry.

After a week of orientation, the students attended lectures on Indian cinema’s history at Subhash Ghai’s Whistling Woods, with which “we have tied up”. They also visited the Film and Television Institute of India and the National Film Archive of India. “Anything from India in Bollywood in the US,” she says. “I want them to know that Bollywood is just a part of the Indian film industry. It’s the Indian film industry, which is the biggest in the world. Not Bollywood alone.”

A five-month visit in 2002 culminated in a book — *Bollywood and Beyond* — which is due out soon. “It’s mostly about conversations with directors like Yash Chopra, Mrinal Sen and Prakash Jha, etc. I have tried to place them in a historical perspective.”

Goenka sees herself as a bridge between Hollywood and Bollywood. Bollywood is no more than just tinsel town. It is, as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh pointed out recently, an industry whose growing importance as a “soft power” India can leverage.

Goenka, who battled cancer two years ago, says her experiences were deeply transforming. “I don’t sit back and complain. I told my doctor this is yet another battle I have to fight.”

A mother of two, Goenka may have left India for greater pastures, but she acknowledges that the future lies back home. “I tell all my Indian students to move back eventually because the impact they can have in India, they can’t have elsewhere.”


Susan Dewey’s *Making Miss India Miss World* is an engaging ethnography of the Miss India pageant in the context of a changing, globalizing India. The book follows the 2003 pageant from beginning to end. It also considers the larger history of pageants and the effects of India’s 1991 implementation of structural adjustment policies on the Miss India pageant and on surrounding issues of gender and national image. Dewey conducted four months of participant-observation in the pageant process, mostly in Mumbai, but also at the day-long auditions in Delhi and Bangalore. She interviewed pageant organizers, judges, and participants in the 2003 pageant and examined all submission materials. She also interviewed former participants and winners of Miss India, Miss Universe, and Miss World. The book is a unique contribution to the study of gender and globalization, examining both the “exploitative, classist, and sexist nature of pageants” (222) and the agency and social mobility possible for women involved in them.

The book consists of seven chapters, including an introduction and three sections, on “The Power of the Gaze,” “Gender” and “Globalization,” each considering different aspects of the making of Miss India and the larger goal of making this Miss India into a viable Miss Universe. This thematic rather than chronological organization makes for some repetition of material. The forty-eight page introductory chapter, in particular, introduces themes in great detail that are repeated in the later chapters. Nevertheless, an ethnographically rich description of the entire process of the 2003 pageant -- from initial submissions to the day-long final selection of three separate Miss Indias bound for Miss Universe, Miss World, and Miss Earth pageants – emerges in this highly readable book.

In the chapters on “gaze,” Dewey draws on Foucault’s theory of the panopticon to discuss how pageant participants as well as the larger middle class society “are so closely monitored that they begin to monitor themselves” (99). Here, she introduces the twenty-six women out of 332 valid applicants who qualify for an intensive month-long training and preparation for the final pageant. Dewey is careful to note the narrow reaches of the Miss India contest’s definition of “international standards” (99) of beauty that limit opportunities to participate to a small, privileged minority, who must alter their bodies and self-presentation to be competitive. Dewey argues successfully that the image of India presented to the larger world is stereotypically North Indian, even as the pageant organizers make efforts to remove names and other identifying features from applications during early selection. Yet in some places – most strikingly when she refers to the large metropolis of Chennai (formerly Madras) as a “small town” (80) – Dewey herself seems to have fallen sway to the pageant’s misapprehension of South India.

The sections on gender and globalization devote considerable critical attention to the complex processes that produce feelings of inadequacy among women who cannot fit the mold or the proportions of an idealized Miss India. This despite rigorous counseling, dieting, fitness programs, skin bleaching and vitamins designed to lighten skin and shape women into ideal internationally competitive proportions. Yet, in a sensitive ethnographic style, Dewey puts forward a nuanced reading of the pageant centered on the words and experiences of the individual participants, arguing that femininity is always a “cultural performance” (135). She watches as each woman manipulates her performance of by-design vacuous answers to questions in front of a variety of judges, “altering key elements of her personality … to suit each judge’s view of gender-appropriate behavior” (178). Here, she demonstrates a central argument of the book: despite the structural oppression of pageant ideology, women of a particular, privileged location in the English-speaking middle-class are able to negotiate this world to achieve success and gain access to the otherwise elusive film and entertainment industry.

Dewey is mindful of the extreme disparity between the concerns and stakes of the pageant population and that of the majority of Indian citizens living with poverty and illiteracy. Dewey also points to the way that class impacts notions of the ideal body-type, observing that women and men who labor outside the five-star hotel in Mumbai where the pageant takes place are considered unhealthily thin, even as women inside nearly starve to meet the rigorous standards of the pageant. One of the sharpest examples of the contrast of worlds appears in an excerpt of an interview with an Editor at *Femina*, the Times of India magazine that sponsors Miss India. Sathya Saran comments that India as a
country, is “in desperate need of… fashion consciousness,” a point which Dewey calls “almost offensive in the context of real social problems,” but which she says also demonstrates “the cultural framework in which Miss India operates” (209-210).

Light on theory, this book is accessible for non-specialist audiences, including undergraduates. It would fit nicely into a syllabus on gender and globalization or contemporary India. Given Dewey’s extensive discussion of the impact of ethnicity and class on constructions of beauty, it would also make a great addition to courses on race and ethnicity, and particularly the gendered aspects of these. The subject matter and accessible writing style would likely appeal to a variety of readers.

By Laurah-Klepinger Mathew, PhD student in Anthropology, Syracuse University.

**Desert Sounds in Syracuse**

On a usual fall evening in the temperate climes of upstate New York, you would not expect to hear the music from the Indian desert. But October 7, 2008 was quite exceptional. For on that day, a little after sundown, eight musicians of the Langa and Manganiyar communities from northwestern India stroked and tapped their instruments and raised their voices – sometimes alone, often in unison – to paint the autumnal air of Syracuse with their deep musical tones. The Langas and the Manganiyars are folk musicians from Rajasthan, in northwestern India. Though they are Muslim musicians, many of their songs are in praise of Hindu deities and celebrate Hindu festivals such as Diwali and Holi. Besides praising god and the spirit of man in their music, these musicians also sing of nature and love; of the love of nature, and the nature of love. Their music captures the vibrancy of the Rajasthani landscape and attests to the syncretic culture of the Indian sub-continent.

The evening began with an instrumental piece as Habib Khan Langa played the Algoza, a double flute. The vocalists were the next to perform. And virtuoso performances from Gazi Khan Manganiar, Bundu Khan Langa and Kachra Khan held the audience at the Hendricks Chapel auditorium in thrall. The vocalists were supported by a variety of percussion and string instruments, such as the dholak, sarangi and morchang played by Manjoor Khan and Umer Farukh.

Particularly impressive was the performance of Khete Khan with his kartal, a pair or stone clappers that are not unlike the Spanish castanets. His work supported the vocalists’ while also helping them maintain their beat and rhythm through the evening. The audience was also treated to the sounds of the kamayacha by Chanan Khan Manganiyar. It is rare to hear the kamayacha, not least because of the very few people who play it, even in its native Rajasthan. A remarkable bowed instrument, the Manganiyars’ kamayacha has a big, circular resonator that gives the instrument its deep and distinctive timbre.

The songs of the Langa and Manganiyar musicians touched upon traditional themes that inform much of the music, classical and folk, of the Indian sub-continent. They sang of the joy of the monsoons arriving in the deserts of Rajasthan; of the daughter’s sorrow for leaving her parents’ house for her in-laws. And the musicians also sang some songs, like nimbooda nimbooda and damadam mast qalandar, that have become household tunes across the Indian sub-continent owing to Bollywood adapting and transforming these folk numbers. Hearing the Rajasthani musicians sing those songs – in their earthy avatars, and scorn of the musical excess that often marks Bollywood music – was a uniquely enriching and uplifting experience. For those in the audience from the Indian sub-continent it was like being presented with a welcome slice of home. For the others it was a special flavor of India.

The Langa and Manganiyar musicians performed for almost two hours. By the end much of the audience must have been convinced that music was indeed the food of life (if not of love). I surely was. It was a pity, then, that Langas and the Manganiars could not play on.

By Sandeep Banerjee, PhD student in English, Syracuse University.
Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, is one of the largest mega-cities in the world. It is still growing, or rather bursting at the seams. Having lived two years teaching English in a sea-town in southern Bangladesh, I thought I was ready to live in Dhaka to conduct my dissertation research. However, the challenges of moving around the city are more difficult than I had imagined. On Fridays, the Muslim holy day and weekly holiday, there is little traffic and I can travel across town in about 30 minutes. Most other days, it takes at least one to two hours depending on the time of day and the bus route. In the hot summer heat the old non-A/C buses turn into hot public vessels of moving heat. As we bake in the tin-can buses, it becomes a game to duck the sweat dripping off the latticework of arms above. Many car-owners blame the traffic on the cycle rickshaws, even though rickshaws are usually carrying more people than private A/C cars, emit no pollution, and take up less space. There is a dire need for a public mass transit system. The government recently announced a plan, to be completed in 20 years hopefully.

Most old buildings and houses continue to be demolished all over the city in order to build multi-storied apartment buildings. My favorite apartment complex is Japan Gardens, a conglomerate of about 15 skyscrapers built almost back to back, without a tree in sight, or breeze or light for people living in the middle buildings. In spite of the jams and struggle for space and time in Dhaka, most people are open, friendly, and curious. Before, when I lived in a small town, people eventually came to know me and know that I was a teaching at a local school. The challenge of living in a huge city is that, despite the pockets of people that I know, live, and work with, I am usually anonymous. However, this anonymity does not bring the same advantages as it would in a city in the West since I still stand out as a foreigner clad in shalwar kameez, and am asked every day on buses, the street, and shops, where I am from and what I am doing here in Bangladesh.

Despite the challenges, I do manage to get around: visiting schools, herbal pharmaceutical companies, NGOs, and attending meetings and conferences. The people I talk and meet with are happy that I am interested in their work and practice, although I have been asked too many times if I can help people to start an NGO. I see this as a sign of the power and prevalence of foreigners and their relationships to NGOs in Bangladesh.

This year is significant for Bangladesh because it marks the end of a 2-year caretaker government, which has also been described as a military-backed interim government. The elections were finally held in December 2008 and Sheik Hasina, the daughter of the assassinated father of the nation, won in a landslide election. The media portrays Hasina as bringing about change and even glossed the cover of a magazine with the faces of both Obama and Hasina. Hasina was in power the last time I was living in Bangladesh in 2000. However, many people on the streets are both skeptical and hopeful about change, especially change that will curb the rising inflation and decrease the cost of food.

By Karen McNamara, Doctoral student in Anthropology, Syracuse University.

Contd from pg 4

At the Dumdum DIC, I attended the monthly meeting of a queer support group called Swikriti. This group aims to empower sexual minorities, sponsors community building initiatives, and organizes programs to create an awareness of alternative sexualities. I sat cross-legged on a large thatched floor mat with fifteen other people consisting of gay men, kothis (an indigenous queer identity), and male-to-female transgendered individuals. Amongst those assembled were a university professor, a law student, two social workers, and a male-sex worker. On the agenda was a discussion of the progress towards the group’s annual publication, Swikriti Patrika, a compilation of essays and poems on queer sexuality and activism. Each year Swikriti sells these anthologies at a local book fair.

My time in India was well spent. I met a large number of people, made new friends, learned fascinating details about their lives, and gained valuable knowledge about the queer activism in Calcutta.

By Faris Khan, Ph D student in Anthropology, Syracuse University.
Graduate Student Updates and Spring Events

**FLAS FELLOWS**
The South Asia Center has named seven Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellows for this academic year, whose studies will reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the Fellowship and its focus on language. We are proud to welcome to the Center’s family the following individuals. For the 2008-2009 academic year, Foreign Language Area Studies fellowships were awarded to:

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Daniel Cheifer</td>
<td>Religion</td>
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<td>Soumitra Chatterjee</td>
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<td>Faris Khan</td>
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<td>Laurah Klepinger-Mathew</td>
<td>Anthropology (Spring)</td>
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<td>Jocelyn Killmer</td>
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<td>Nicole Wilson</td>
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**Recent Graduates**

Payal Banerjee, PhD, Sociology, "Indian Information Technology Workers in the U.S.: Integrated Circuits of Race, Gender, and State in the Making of Immigrant Labor.” She will join as Assistant Professor at Smith College, MA in Fall 2009.

Sanjukta Mukherjee, PhD, Geography, “Producing the IT Miracle: The Neoliberalizing State and Changing Gender and Class Regimes in India.” She is currently a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Asian Institute, University of Toronto.

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

- Sandeep Banerjee and Tanushree Ghosh (English)
- Laurah Klepinger-Mathew (Anthropology)
- Deepa Prakash (Political Science)
- Kasturi Gupta (Sociology)

**Spring Events 2009**

Faris Khan, Syracuse University  
**Powerful Cultural Productions: Identity Politics in Diasporic Same-Sex South Asian Weddings**  
February 10, 2:00 — 3:30pm, 341 Eggers

Tej Bhatia, Syracuse University  
**The Oldest Grammar of Hindustani: Contact, Communication and Colonial Legacy**  
February 24, 12:30 — 1:50pm, 341 Eggers

Madhura Lohokare, Syracuse University  
**Articulate Spaces: An Analysis of Urban Landscape in an Indian City**  
March 17, 12:30 — 1:50pm, 341 Eggers

March 24th — Performance  
Kabir Singers  
7pm, Stolkin Auditorium Physics Building

Tim Dye, SUNY Upstate Medical University  
**Beer, Bartering and Babies: Food systems, Communities and Pregnancy in rural Tibet**  
April 7, 12:30 — 1:50pm, 341 Eggers

Craig Jeffery, University of Washington  
**Male Youth and the Politics of an Indian Middle Class**  
April 14, 12:00 — 1:30pm, 341 Eggers

**Alumni Updates**

Vikas Choudhary have joined UPenn's Center for High Impact Philanthropy as Director of International Economic Development. The Center for High Impact Philanthropy at the University of Pennsylvania is an innovative new resource center established by Wharton alumni and housed at the School of Social Policy and Practice. Its goal is to provide information and tools to help philanthropists determine where their gifts would have the greatest potential to improve the lives of others. Vikas will spearhead center's initiatives in international economic development.  
[www.impact.upenn.edu](http://www.impact.upenn.edu)

**Publications**

Sandeep Banerjee  

Payal Banerjee  
"Indian IT Workers and Black TANF Clients in the New Economy: A Comparative Analysis of the Racialization of Immigration and Welfare Policies in the U.S." Race, Gender, and Class 15(1-2). (with Frank Ridzi).
SOUTH ASIA CENTER: OUTREACH SERVICES

Funded as a National Resource Center by the Department of Education, the South Asia Center at Syracuse University serves as a liaison between Syracuse University faculty with research interests in South Asia, educators, and the wider public in the Central New York area. Our resources and faculty interests cover the South Asia region, broadly defined as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Our audience includes educators in area schools and colleges, the general community, individuals interested in the region, and the Syracuse University community. South Asia Outreach presents workshops, seminars, lectures, film and video screenings, school and college lecture and discussion programs, cultural programs, and other public events. In addition, Outreach loans a wide variety of educational materials to educators at no cost. These resources include books, maps, videotapes, slide sets, comic books, and "hands-on" kits. We also have curriculum units and our staff is available to offer teachers advice on curriculum development. A list of our comic books and videotapes may be obtained by sending us a request with a self-addressed stamped envelope to South Asia Center, 346F Eggers Hall, Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244 or on our web page at http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/moynihan/programs/sac/. Our phone number is (315) 443-2553, email: southasia@maxwell.syr.edu.

The South Asia Center News is the official outreach bulletin of the South Asia Center, Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs, Maxwell School of Citizenship, and Public Affairs, Syracuse University.

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