



South Asia News

Center for South Asian Studies
University of Hawai'i

Fall 2002

Buddhadeb Dasgupta's *The Wrestlers*

Interview by **Monica Ghosh**

This interview is based on the screening of Buddhadeb Dasgupta's film *The Wrestlers* at the 2002 Hawai'i International Film Festival (HIFF) and the Conference on Social Justice at the Honolulu Academy of Arts on November 5, 2002. The screening was preceded by an introduction from the director and followed by a discussion of the film with the audience. In the process many interesting aspects about the director and the contents of the film were revealed and the following interview continues the conversation.

MG: In the introduction to the film *The Wrestlers* you said that the film was about your "dreams" and your "nightmares" about India. Can you elaborate your ideas first about your "dreams" and your "nightmares" and how these ideas influence and are represented in your filmic works?

BD: In the reality around us there are many things that happen without the approval of anyone. Moreover, reality is predictable, repetitive and at times repulsive. It can be extended with magic and dreams. Perhaps somewhere distortion of REALITY is the resultant output but I prefer this other world of mine. I choose to link my images as well as my poems with that world. Apparently they look alike as I never manipulate my images with the overdose of technology like slow motion or superimposing images with one another.

MG: Your comments about the various types of fundamentalisms were most interesting. If I recall correctly, you mentioned religious funda-



mentalism, which is not surprising in the context of India, but also in the U.S.A. where certain religious fundamentalisms are denigrated while others are ignored—for example between Islamic and Christian fundamentalisms. However, what was most interesting to me, is your reference to political fundamentalism. Please tell us what issues and problems you associate with political fundamentalism and feel free to give specific examples from international or national events and/or incidents.

BD: Religion practiced mostly by our 'civilized' society always attempts to remain close to the ruling political party. This happened with Christianity, with Islam and with Hindu and other mass practiced religion. Religion and ruling party compliment each other and hide their fundamental nature. But there are still communities all over the world where religion is practiced as a living style. The vast tribal population in India have different gods: some worship tigers, some trees. However, religion of whatever kind is never practiced to create terror. I think the religion in association with ruling powers have failed to become a philosophy or lifestyle. Political fun-

See Dasgupta page 7

Director's Note

What's Going On

by **Monica Ghosh**

Aloha! Since I took over as Director of the Center for South Asian Studies in September, 2002, the activities and events sponsored by the Center have focused mainly around the Colloquium Series. Many of the Colloquium Series talks were co-sponsored by other departments, such as English, Philosophy, Women's Studies, and Ethnic Studies. Next semester (Spring 2003), we will continue the Colloquium Series; organize the Spring Symposium around the issues of "Film and Social Justice," which is scheduled for April 16-17, 2003; and welcome Prof. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who will be the Citizen's Chair in the English Department for a semester.

The interest and visibility of South Asia over the last year has been extraordinarily high. However, I am concerned about how this interest combined with a conservative swing in the mainstream politics of the U.S.A. could influence and affect programs and the study of South Asia here at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and elsewhere. Since the attacks on Afghanistan, I have been involved in an anti-war group on campus called the University Peace Initiative. Now, more than ever, as the Republican administration whips up support

for an attack on Iraq, it is imperative that voices opposed to war speak out against such actions.

An important strategy to oppose acts of violence requires that each individual take personal actions to resist the violence, by participating in protest marches, writing to elected officials, signing petitions, organizing on campus, and promoting open discussions in the classroom. Together these personal actions become part of a collective response, and the collective response works to create change. Because, in the words of the immortal Marvin Gaye:

...war is not the answer
for only love can conquer hate
you know we've got to find a

way
to bring some loving here
today...
picket lines and picket signs
don't punish me with brutality
talk to me
so you can see
what's going on....

I hope these words will inspire all of you who are active in South Asian Studies to seek peaceful alternatives to war and violence in South Asia and other parts of the world over the holidays and in the New Year.

(This "note" is inspired by two people; one is Marvin Gaye, who is not South Asian; and the other will remain unnamed.)

List of South Asia Websites that Promote Peace and Anti-War Movements:

<http://www.mnet.fr/aiindex/Kargil/Kargilindex.html>

(Kashmir and Indo-Pak relations)

http://southasia.net/Activism_Public/

(South Asia activism)

<http://www.mnet.fr/aiindex/index.html>

(The South Asia Citizen's Web)

<http://www.angelfire.com/sd/urduimedia/peace.html>

(Peace activism)

<http://www.mnet.fr/aiindex/NoNukes.html>

(Peace and anti-nuclear activism in South Asia)

<http://brain.brain.net.pk/~pakindo/>

(Indo-Pak dialogue on peace and democracy)

<http://www.samarmagazine.org/>

New Faculty Profile

Introducing S. Shankar

by Monica Ghosh



S. Shankar is an Associate Professor in the English Department at University of Hawaii at Manoa. He was born in India, and has lived in Europe, Africa, and North America. Living in Nigeria during his early teens has most influenced the way he sees himself in the world,

especially the importance of learning about, understanding, and relating to other people of color. This consciousness continued to develop when he returned to India to go to college in Chennai (Madras) where he got a B.A. and M.A. Being in Madras was important — it is the “place” of his home and family — sort of a central place in his thinking even though he is often physically located elsewhere. During this time (1981-1986), he became immersed in reading and writing about the socialist tradition in India — a period that reflected upon the huge political movements and events of India in the 1970s, such as the Naxalite Movement

(a radical, revolutionary Marxist-Leninist movement) and Indira Gandhi’s emergency (repressive policies that inhumanely targeted the poor and disenfranchised).

Shankar is a novelist, critic, and poet. *Water!*, is his most recent published work — a translation of the Tamil play *Thanneer*

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Thanneer, which was produced in 1980 and published in 1981. The play was very successful and was made into a movie. It reflects leftist socialist ideology of the 1970’s and takes up an environmental issue of a drought in a village. It focuses on how the village community rallies to get the government bureaucracy to respond with a plan or program to deal with the lack of rain in the village. The play shows how things change over time and all the various ways in which the community responds to the lack of water. The community’s efforts fail with the bureaucracy and they take matters into their own hands and decide to cut a canal to

bring water into the village. The previously ineffective bureaucracy is galvanized to prevent the cutting of the canal because the community action is in violation of what is supposed to be a bureaucratic responsibility. Ultimately the project is abandoned, and the final words in the play are from an urban journalist who is drawn to the community’s struggle for water. The play closes with the suggestion that without a revolution there would be no change.

A Map of Where I Live is Shankar’s first novel that runs two parallel stories that intersect at various points. One story is that of a historian who has “located” Lilliput and then decides to visit. What progresses is a post-colonial political allegory, which is written upon his return from Lilliput and documents his observations of various countries and the political struggles and events he encounters in this journey. Here Lilliput takes on a mythic quality that is not Indic but postcolonial in much the same way that Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, written in Ireland, critiqued the rising middle classes. Thus, even though the critique comes from a conservative bourgeois perspective, it nevertheless serves to disrupt and disturb assump-

AIIS BOOK PRIZE

In order to promote scholarship in South Asian Studies, the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) announces the award of two prizes each year for the best unpublished book manuscript on an Indian subject, one in the humanities, **The Edward Cameron Dimock, Jr. Prize in the Indian Humanities** and one in the social sciences, **The Joseph W. Elder Prize in the Indian Social Sciences**. Indiana University Press has the right of first refusal for any prize winner, with manuscripts being published in the Indiana University Press/AIIS series *Indian Culture and Society* (after revision and editing). Only junior scholars who have received their PhD within the last five years (after 1997) and/or been awarded an AIIS Fellowship or participated in an AIIS program (fellowship or language) are eligible. A prize committee will determine the yearly winners and can choose to designate no winner in any given year if worthy submissions are lacking. When submitting manuscripts to the prize committee, applicants are committed to publication in the AIIS series with Indiana University Press if chosen as a winner. AIIS will provide a subvention to Indiana University Press for all prize manuscripts.

Unrevised dissertations are not accepted. We expect that the applicants will have revised dissertations prior to submission.

Manuscripts are due May first, with an announcement of the awardees at the Madison South Asia Conference in October. **Send manuscripts, postmarked no later than May 1, 2003**, to the Publications Committee Chair, Susan S. Wadley, Anthropology, 209 Maxwell, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244. Queries can be addressed to sswadley@maxwell.syr.edu

Publications committee:

Akhil Gupta, Stanford University

Martha Selby, U. of Texas-Austin

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David Lelyveld, William Patterson U.

John Echeverri-Gent, U. of Virginia

Shankar con't

tions and directions of society, politics, and history. The second strand in the novel engages with the fictionalization of a domestic workers movement that has become very significant in an election year. It is a story that involves intrigue and suspense when the leader of the domestic workers union, a woman, is murdered. This novel, which has been widely and favorably reviewed, has been called a "minor masterpiece" in *World Literature Today*.

Textual Traffic: Colonialism, Modernity, and the Economy of the Text, is a critical work that

followed *A Map of Where I Live*. It analyzes a series of travel narratives. The study considers *Gulliver's Travels* as a master travel narrative, and does readings as well of Richard Wright's *Black Power*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men*, and V. S. Naipaul's India trilogy, as well as the filmic representations of travel in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. This work combines Shankar's interests in Africa and India. However, Shankar is quick to point out that his experiences in India and Africa do not rely only on some colonial connections between these locations, but

rather a serious and committed interest to understand his affiliations to both places which have been earned and cannot easily be translated from one to the other — one has to understand the similarities and the often huge differences and put them in perspective. Here, Shankar finds that post-colonial work lends itself to useful and coherent applications.

Shankar's poetry was selected for the anthology *Con-tours of the Heart: Passage to North America*, that most directly deals with the immigrant experience of South Asians. Devel-

Book Review

Bharti Kirchner's *Darjeeling*

St. Martin's Press, 2002

Reviewed by **Monica Ghosh**

Darjeeling is a hill station in the north of West Bengal. It is a place name that has become synonymous with tea and is also the title of Bharti Kirchner's recent novel — a story of two sisters, Aloka and Sujata, which begins in New York in 2000 when Aloka receives an invitation from her grandmother to return to Darjeeling for a birthday celebration. As Aloka decides whether or not to attend the party, the reader is introduced to her younger sister, Sujata. ensuing chapters flash back to 1990 detailing their privileged lives in Darjeeling in the home of their father, the owner of a tea estate/garden.

Aloka is "perfect"; she likes classical Indian music, and reading and discussing Bengali literature with her father. Sujata, on the other hand, prefers magazines, has a real sense for tea, is knowledgeable about agricultural trends and issues related to tea growing, and is not interested in makeup or classical music or the culinary arts. The representations of the sisters in obvious binary opposition to each other is a plot device that is supposed to provide an explanation for the events that occur in the first

third of the novel. However, I found the author's reliance on outdated and baseless stereotypes disturbing, such as describing Aloka, the woman with "refined" tastes in literature and music, as beautiful because she has an "ivory" and "almond" complexion; whereas Sujata,

Setting the novel in a non-urban location, *Darjeeling*, in a Bengali family that also has ties to Bangladesh, and engaging with their occupations as owners and producers in the ever-changing industry of tea, as well as their personal lives, results in a story that is mostly well-told and interesting to read.

whose interests lie in the natural world and who is equally intelligent, is described as "dark" and "homely." Despite their differences, they seem to understand each other whenever they are together until Aloka falls in love with Pranab.

Pranab is the activist manager of their father's tea estate. He organizes the workers to rally for better working conditions. He, like Sujata, is knowledgeable about tea; he is "a born tea taster" (24). Pranab's actions create havoc in the Gupta family, causing Bir and Nina (the father and grandmother of the sisters) to become involved in engineering

and executing an incredible and implausible plan to restore the "harmony" of their family. Unfortunately, these machinations have the opposite affect. As a result, Sujata is packed off to relatives in Victoria, British Columbia and is followed by Aloka's and Pranab's arrival in New York City in 1993.

In the remaining two-thirds of this novel, I believe the author does try to disrupt the absurd conditions that were laid out initially. Aloka and Sujata's lives in the U.S.A. and Canada take on nuances and color that are more credible and interesting.

Their relationship with each other remains strained, but they grow and develop as individuals through relationships with others. Sujata becomes a successful, independent, business woman and develops the confidence to be the person that she wants to be, and enabled in part through her friendship with Eva Pavlova. Meanwhile, Aloka takes on a career that appeals to her caregiving character. She assumes another personality as Parveen, thus freeing herself to challenge her traditional upbringing in remarkable ways.

In the latter half of the

see *Darjeeling* page 14

Watumull Awardee Report

Rewards and Obstacles: Historical Research in India

By John Pincince

I conducted India research from late October 2001 through the beginning of February 2002. I intend to return to India in January 2003 to follow up on research gaps financed by student loans.

I have decided to narrow the breadth of my dissertation project to an examination of the first-half of V.D. Savarkar's life. This period then extends from his birth in 1887 to the late 1930s, around the time in 1937 when Savarkar was completely released from the conditions of his political exile in Ratnagiri (1924-1937).¹

Considerable attention will be given to an historical examination of expatriate Indian nationalists who operated in Europe from the early 1900s through the 1910s. The most important locales include England, France, and Germany.² Paris and London acted as the metropolitan centres for Indian nationalists during the first decade of the twentieth century. In Europe from 1906-1910, Savarkar spent the majority of his time in London, and nearly nine months in Paris.

Other parts of the dissertation will focus on Savarkar's political trials in London and Bombay (1910-1911), his imprisonment in Cellular Jail on the Andaman Islands (1911-1924), and his activities during his conditional release in western

India (1924-1937).³

During the period October 2001-February 2002 detailed research has been conducted at the locations that follow:

- * National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi, India: examined records on Indian nationalists and Savarkar.
- * Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), New Delhi: Mostly relied on published books by and about Savarkar.⁴ Consulted two of the six reels of the Savarkar files that were confiscated by the Government of India during the Gandhi Assassination trial.⁵ Of little importance for this current project as the files cover the period after 1937.
- * Maharashtra State Archives

J. Watumull Scholarship for the Study of India

The Watumull Scholarship for the Study of India will provide support for three University of Hawai'i students who want to study in India. Scholarships of up to \$5,000 each will be awarded to students who wish to learn about the culture and history of India and its people. Minimum length of study in India is for two months. UH students from across the system, at both the graduate and undergraduate level, are eligible to apply for support.

Application Deadline: March 1, 2003

For more information contact:
The Center for South Asian Studies
Moore Hall 219
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(MSA), Mumbai, India: examined records on Savarkar and other related Indian nationalists.

* Swatantryaveer Savarkar Rashtriya Smarak, Mumbai, India: examined books, documents, and photos of Savarkar.

* Pune, India: visited sites of importance while Savarkar was a student at Ferguson College;
* Nasik, India: visited sites of importance during Savarkar's childhood.

* Bhagar, India: visited Savarkar's birthplace, and took personal tour with the museum's (memorial home) director

Obstacles experienced: At
see Watumull page 11

South Asian Films at the Hawai'i International Film Festival 2002

Bhor - The Dawn (India) - An animated music video in the "style of traditional Rajasthani miniature paintings."

Birju (India) - A film that follows the wanderings of a boy through the streets of Pushkar.

Devdas (India) - A re-make based on the Sarat Chandra Chatterjee novel, with actors Aishwarya Rai, Madhuri Dixit, and Shahrukh Khan.

Mr. and Mrs. Iyer (India) — A film by veteran actress and film-maker Aparna Sen. Winner of the Golden Maile Feature Film Award. The story of a personal response to religious violence.

Octave (India) - A film by Shaji N. Karun, where a "war between India and Pakistan" influences the past, present, and future of a particular family.

Pickpocket (Sri Lanka) - A tragic story of Kamal, a pickpocket, who finds his wife's photograph in a stolen wallet and his search for the owner of the wallet.

Pilgrimage (India) - Based on a novelette by M.T. Vasudevan Nair is a "story of love kept immaculate ... by a couple destined to stay apart."

The Island (India) - A film that deals with how government decisions to change the environment affect the people on the land.

The Legend of Bhagat Singh (India) - The story of a Sikh activist who fought against British colonial occupation of India. A film that is melodramatic and a musical but retains the political integrity of the hero - Bhagat Singh.

The Wrestlers (India) - A film that mixes the real with the surreal to raise issues of communal violence that erupt in a remote village community in Bengal. A poetic and thought-provoking film. (See feature article — interview with the director).

Dasgupta con't

damentalism practiced by Hitler, Mussolini or Franco always had the direct or indirect support of the Churches. Twentieth century has also seen a new kind of violence practiced by intellectual fundamentalism. Sometimes violence is executed in a covert manner, it is too subtle for the naked eye. The tyranny of intellect in the modern era perhaps was quite unthinkable to the Elitist's two or three decades ago.

MG: As a published poet*, you bring a poetic sensibility to your films. Can you speak about the importance of poetry and literature on your art as a film-maker?

voyage through these images initially and only then begins the process of the creative conception of the story. But I don't follow a story to the extent of getting trapped by it. In the course of chasing a story one may unknowingly leave those images aside. My poems and films both owe their magical touch to them.

MG: In the film *The Wrestlers*, you weave the real with the surreal. One of the recurring surreal images in this film is that of the masked and cross-dressed Baul singers and dancers, who interrupt the narrative at various points in the film always to disturb the story and introduce other possibilities than the often violent and ugly reality, that eventually overcomes a character.

BD: Poetry is altogether different a form. When I am on a poem, I am not using the camera, but the pen. But the same thought process creates a set of images coming out of these poems. I value these images most in making my films. These images evolve from my past; my childhood memories, my interactions with situations and people at different times, sometimes from my solitude and finally from music and painting. A static image of a painting sometimes offers multiple images in my mind and I use them all in my own way in celluloid. I

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Fall 2002 Events

Reading Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Panel & Discussion with
S. Shankar, S. Charusheela, Laura Lyons, and John Zuern

Co-sponsored with the Department of English

Knowing Goddesses, Mothering Nature

Vrinda Dalmiya
Philosophy

Co-sponsored with Cultural Studies and Women's Studies

Goddess iconography has often been interpreted as symbolic appropriations of birth which are then mobilized to solidify both patriarchal gender roles and communal identities. This presentation explored how spiritual narratives associated with a goddess, even though never innocent of all other structures of social power, can suggest interesting possibilities for a deployment that might be more positive for ordinary women and men. By analyzing a particular goddess (Kali) as the intentional object of worship for a particular devotee (Ramprasad Sen, 18th century Bengali poet), Prof. Dalmiya argued that a female divinity need not always herald an essentialised, biological

mother-power nor gesture towards a romanticized oneness with nature. Rather, the devotional nexus can be (re)read as indicating an engaged self-in-relation as well as a localised and embedded epistemic subject. The 'play' of this goddess and her devotee could well be a rethinking of cognition along the lines suggested by some contemporary feminist epistemologists. Prof. Dalmiya attempted to open up possibilities for a politics of spirituality which positions the latter as disrupting both spirit/matter and spirituality/rationality dualisms. Framed in that way, a goddess could come to signify a fracturing of frozen identities by gesturing towards a more mobile notion of a knower.

What you hear... What you see... That's not all you get (Filmic Representations of the South Asian Diaspora)

Monica Ghosh
CSAS Director, South Asia Librarian

Co-sponsored with the Department of English

Monica Ghosh's paper engaged with linguistic and cultural criticism to discuss issues related to the ways South Asians speak English. "Indian accents" served as a springboard for further analysis of how the South Asian diaspora is represented in independent and big budget

films using films made in the U.K. and the U.S.A. by South Asian and non-South Asian film makers. The paper examined representations of South Asians in the following films: *My Son The Fanatic*, *Bhaji on the Beach*, *East is East*, and *Chutney Popcorn*, juxtaposed with short clips from the Hollywood blockbusters *Sixth Sense* and *Keeping the Faith* — as examples to explore and articulate the complex hierarchical relationships and issues of class, gender, and sexual preference among South Asians in the diaspora because simple binary explanations are not enough. What kinds of alternative explanations suggest themselves? And can these explanations have relevance for a greater discourse on diaspora? The research and analysis presented in the paper placed an emphasis on understanding the numerous issues and concerns of straddling two or more cultures and how they are represented in film through the spoken word.

Of Hostility and Hardship: Impact of 9/11 on Taxi Drivers in New York City

Monisha Das Gupta
Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies

Co-sponsored with Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies

Yellow cab drivers in New York City form one of the largest and

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most visible Muslim immigrant workforce. Sixty percent of drivers in the industry are South Asian, many of them Sikhs, and Bangladeshi and Pakistani Muslims. The attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11 made these drivers easy targets of the backlash that followed. South Asian drivers faced anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim violence from passengers and passers-by who regarded Muslims, immigrants, and terrorists as one and the same. Soon after 9/11, the New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA), which organizes workers in the industry, raised concerns about the grave economic impact on drivers and the violence they faced. Indeed, drivers have suffered a severe (38 percent) drop in their already meager earnings as a result of the downturn in business. Their inability to recover from their losses has led to indebtedness, and in some cases evictions. Yet, yellow cab drivers, like other low-income service workers in the city, have had difficulty accessing relief. The plight of yellow cab drivers in New York City is a window to understanding how working class South Asian immigrants have suffered in the wake of 9/11, and how their suffering is embedded in pre-existing policies implemented in the city to regulate a workforce that has become increasingly immigrant as condi-

tions in the industry have deteriorated.

Representations of the Poor in Contemporary Literature and Film in India

S. Shankar
English

Co-Sponsored with Cultural Studies and English

In *Deewar*, the 1975 Bollywood Hindi film, Amitabh Bachchan plays the eldest son of an impoverished single mother who is driven to become an underworld don. In Komal Swaminathan's 1980 Tamil play *Thaneer, Thaneer (Water!)*, the peasants of the drought stricken village of Athipatti take matters into their own hands as the postcolonial bureaucracy begins to fail them. The presentation focused on the representation of the poor and poverty in these works from the Seventies, a key decade in India when arguably a postcolonial political and social dispensation was coming to crisis. The crisis of the Seventies had many facets but one was within a postcolonial developmentalist discourse of poverty alleviation. Pointing out the variety in the representations of the poor in these two works, the presentation focused on the question of agency in this context—how does each work evaluate the poor as agents? The question was posed out of the conviction that rep-

resentations of the poor are crucially invested in the exploration of their agency. It is through this exploration, S. Shankar argued, that such representations articulate the place of the poor within the social imaginary.



Brawn and Beauty: Women Laborers in Mughal Art

Vivian Price

Rockefeller Fellow, OWR, UHM
(Research Scholar, UCLA Center for the Study of Women)

Women in present day India are conveyors of mortar and bricks in building projects, and comprise about 30% of the manual labor on the country's construction sites. As construction technology changes due to international pressures, women's place in the industry is being questioned. Using paintings from the Akbarnama, Prof. Price raised questions about the gendering of work, and the longevity of women's contribution to the construction industry.

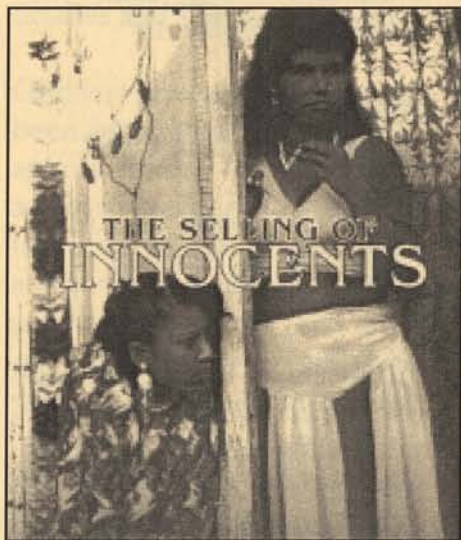
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Aestheticism: Some Perspectives from the Indian Tradition

Rosa Fernandez Gomez

Fulbright Visiting Scholar,
Philosophy

Western aestheticism creates a radical separation between art and life. Rosa Fernandez Gomez interrogated the roots of this rupture in Western philosophy and aesthetics. In addition, her paper explored the dynamic of detachment and playful engagement in the Indian aesthetic tradition, especially the Kashmir Shaivite tradition.



The Selling of Innocents
by William Cobban

This film, shown as part of the Cinema Paradise Film Festival, documents the trafficking of women and children for the Bombay sex trade. The film was followed by a panel presented by Kelly Hill, founder

and special advisor to *Sisters Offering Support*. Co-sponsored with Zang Pictures, Women's Studies, and Aquaria.

Faculty Notes

Cristina Bacchilega (English)

"Genre and Gender in the Cultural Reproduction of India as 'Wonder' Tale." *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches*. Ed. Donald Haase. Wayne State UP, 2002.

Arindam Chakrabarti (Philosophy) delivered the inaugural address "Logic, Morality and Meditation" at the 13th International Vedanta Congress in Miami University Oxford Ohio, in September. In early November he presented a paper on "I SEE WHAT?: Perception and the Myth of Non-Conceptual Content" at the Moral Sciences Club, St. Johns College, Cambridge. This trip was made possible by a special invitation from King's College London to deliver a lecture and conduct a workshop on "Self, Self-knowledge and the Inner Sense in Classical Indian and Modern Western Thought. Prof Chakrabarti is also delivering a focal theme lecture on "Is This a Dream? Analytical Reflections on Objecthood and Externality" at the International T.R.V. Murty Centenary conference in Varanasi on 18—21 Decmeber.

S. Charusheela (Women's Studies)

"Women's Choices and the Ethnocentrism/Relativism Dilemma." In S. Cullenberg, J. Amariglio, and D. Ruccio (eds.) *Postmodernism, Economics and Knowledge*. Routledge: Forthcoming.

"Introduction to the Issues: Libertarian/Postmodern vs. Marxist/Post-Colonial Approaches to Gender and Economy," Introduction to "Postmodernism and Postcolonialism: Divergent Perspectives presented by Deirdre McCloskey and Gayatri Spivak." (Forthcoming).

"Macroeconomic Theory for a Gendered and Changing Economy: Class, Patriarchy, Financial Intermediation, and the Structure of Aggregate Consumption." (Forthcoming).

"Postmodern Marxism as Postcolonial Economic Theory: An Accounting Framework for Historically Situated, Contextually Appropriate Marxian Analyses," with Stephen Cullenberg. (Forthcoming).

"Do Microcredit Programs Help Poor Women?" with Colin Danby. (Forthcoming).

Monica Ghosh (CSAS Director and South Asia Librarian) published "Filmed Representations of the South Asian

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Diaspora" in the IAS (International Institute for Asian Studies) Newsletter, August 2002, 36; "What you hear... What you see... That's not all you get" in *Asian Cinema*, Fall/Winter 2002, 24-38; and a review of *Darjeeling* in South Asia Women's Network (SAWNET), SAWNET Book Reviews, September 2002. (Online at: <http://www.umiacs.umd.edu/users/sawweb/sawnet/books/darjeeling.html>.) She organized a panel titled, "Artists, 'Maneaters', and Aesthetics: Clashing Images of Colonial Encounters on the Subcontinent," with Professors Elizabeth Fowkes Tobin (Arizona State University) and Arindam Chakrabarti. She also presented a paper titled, "'Maneating' Tigers: Transposing Anxieties to Establish Colonial Control," at the 31st Annual Conference on South Asia in Madison, Wisconsin scheduled October 10-13, 2002.

Peter Hoffenberg (History) *An Empire on Display: English, Indian and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War*, Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming.

"Equipose and its Discontents: Voices of Dissent during the International Exhibitions," Martin Hewitt, ed. *An Age of Equipose? Reassessing Mid-Victorian Britain*, Aldershot: Gower Press, forthcoming.

Kirstin Pauka (Theatre and Dance) *Folk Theatre, Dance, and Martial Arts of the Minangkabau in West Sumatra*, CD-ROM, University of Michigan Press (Spring 2002)

Mimi Sharma

Racing through the Diaspora: being Asian, Black, and British. Duke University Press; in press. "Anand Patwardhan: Social Activist and Dedicated Filmmaker, with an introduction by Arvind Rajagopal." *Critical Asian Studies* 34:2 (2002), 279-294.

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present there exist several research lacunae, some a result of insufficient archival and research data, and others because of bureaucratic problems. In relation to the former, it was nearly impossible to find detailed intelligence reports on the activities of Savarkar and others at India House in London at any of the above research sites. A constant problem experienced was the failure to locate documents listed in records indexes—numerous requests placed at NAI and MSA were returned "No such records", or "NT" (Not transferred to NAI). "NT" is used by the NAI staff as an indication that they could not locate the document—it could be missing, stolen, misplaced, non-existent, or not transferred. At the MSA, many of the materi-

Lee Siegel (Religion)

Love and Other Games of Chance: a Novelty will be published by Viking Penguin in February.

Majid Tehranian's (International Communications and director of the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research) latest edited volumes are *Dialogue of Civilizations: A New Peace Agenda for a New Millennium* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), and *Bridging a Gulf: Peacebuilding in West Asia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003). ▽

als are in very poor condition owing to insufficient archival preservation. ▽

In regard to bureaucratic obstacles, the Bombay High Court is the overwhelming winner of the "obstacles to research award." Here I was unable to access records of Savarkar's two trials (1910 & 1911)—the short story: the man with the key to the records cabinet was on (permanent?) vacation. The long story: too long to tell here. ▽

The effect on the dissertation project: difficult to discern, although obtaining these records (if they even exist) remain a nagging pre-occupation as I would like to locate testimonial records of intelligence officers and approvers (defendants who have agreed to assist the prosecution). ▽

Dasgupta con't

You mentioned that as a child you were very influenced by the songs of the Baul, which is a folk tradition that is very syncretic and borrows from both Hindu and Muslim teachings in a unique and popular way. Will you address the importance of this tradition and why you relied on it to disrupt the narrative in the film in such a positive way?

BD: The word 'surreal' has become quite a cliché. The surreal undoubtedly has a distinct characteristic and tends to detach itself from the realms of reality. But one can still extend the zones of reality by introducing real-like images in it. The dwarfs, the masked dancers, the rolling down of the rock and so on are part of those real-like images. Sometimes I seek the association from the folk and when the blend becomes easy, they gradually form a part of that extended reality. The audience doesn't question their existence any longer. They come and go in the film thereby securing a perfect concoction of the real and the unreal.

MG: There's a community of dwarfs who also function to disrupt the narrative as do the Baul singers and dancers. It appears in the film that the dwarfs live in a segregated society "across the river" where they live in a contented peaceful society. Was your description of this community influenced by any particular political perspective? What I am wondering is whether you are influenced by the leftist, communist politics in West Bengal? Would you be willing to discuss your political perspectives?

BD: Plato conceived of a different world - Utopia, which was supposed to be the better world. Everything in that world was incorporated as the 'perfect form' of their counterparts in this world. The Communists also talked of another world - a world better than this capitalist form of society. However, that has hardly happened and the myth around communism has become a fiasco. But I am not referring to these 'other worlds.' Rather, I always try to extend reality and in that

way I talk of other ways of living which are of course conceived as better in comparison to the present way of living. In Uttara the dwarfs come from a village where everybody dreams of a better future. You can explain it in your own way, in fact everybody is free to do that. But I cannot resist the temptation of stepping forward to another world where you can walk along with your dreams. And regarding political perspectives: I have opened up in my films and writings.

MG: In the discussion that followed the showing, someone in the audience asked about the homo-erotic relationship between the wrestlers in the film. It seemed to me and some others in the audience, that you complicated the relationship of the wrestlers by introducing the homo-erotic possibilities, but even that possibility had its limitations because ultimately the wrestlers are only obsessed with each others body, but that obsession does not transcend into anything greater.

BD: I don't think that I have 'complicated' the relationship. I think I have depicted a possibility and again it has been placed very subtly. The relationship between the wrestlers has been developed because of their sole passion for wrestling which is of course something physical. And it follows very logically that their relationship will be centered around physical attraction. Again, it is very human for them to be enticed by a woman-body. Sometimes I think that had there not been Uttara in their lives they would have decided to lead a homosexual life.

MG: Do you see connections between masculinity as expressed by the wrestlers obsession with this activity and aggressive nationalism(s) and fundamentalism(s)?

BD: To some extent, yes. The predominance of physical strength does exude an aura of aggression. Today political fundamentalism is essentially nothing more than a mere obsession.

MG: The portrayal of Uttara, the woman who marries one of the wrestlers, someone in the audience described as a feminist. She is an extremely intelligent and sensitive woman, who understands every situation and encounter completely. She is not satisfied with her husband who remarks after their lovemaking that he "felt as if he were flying" to which Uttara responds that he cannot fly as he has only one wing (implying his body) and then suggests that to fly one needs two wings — the body and the mind. Uttara is disappointed in the inability of the villagers to act against violence and eventually is a victim of violence. After the showing you said that in the fight against violence, there will be losses and I suppose Uttara is that loss in this story. However, what are you suggesting as the future for the struggle against violence — should one continue to struggle to effect change in the world and what forms should that struggle take?

BD: I am not suggesting anything. In fact it is not my way to preach. If someone is motivated after viewing my film, and takes any course of action, that is different. I believe it is not the task of a filmmaker to throw directives to the activists. He should let the idea float as I have done it with my film. But now it is the task of those who are keen, to delve deep and find out what has been said. Even Uttara's death should not be explained in such a simplistic manner. I never ever think of her death as a 'loss' or a 'sacrifice' for the 'war against violence.'

MG: You mentioned that the film is based on an actual incident, I believe you were referring to the assassination/murder of a Christian priest from Australia who was living in Assam. However, in the film the priest is a Christian but he is not a foreigner, he is Indian. Would you be willing to share your impressions when you learned about the actual incident and how it inspired you to make this film?

BD: When the innermost chord of a creator is strummed by the stroke of any moving incident,

he is so deeply touched that within him stirs up the power to recreate something out of that particular event. Personally I could not give an exact impression of the event but chose a similar line of thought. And regarding your other question: I can not tolerate violence of any sort. The political and religious violence that have crossed the boundaries of human perception should be opposed by any sensitive person. I have tried to do so in my own way.

MG: You have another film that is to be released shortly, what is the title of the film and what is the film about?

BD: *Mondo meyer upakhyan* — The tale of a naughty girl. We all dream of making journeys to different destinations. Sometimes they are real, sometimes they are magical. In this film a few people and a cat make a similar journey. The sparse Bengal countryside adds to the definitive character of their voyage and it coincides with man's first landing on the Moon. The film weaves a patchwork of narrative style and eroticism, told with poems, monologues, ballads and conversations.

MG: What trends among films, directors, and actors out of India inspires you and what would you like to see change?

BD: The world cinema today is either too real with unwanted detail or too much of consumerism in the assembled images which have been mutilated again and again. There are exceptions, but they are few. However, there is this thirst of continuous creation of better and meaningful films that always inspires me to go on and on.

Dasgupta has made several visits to Honolulu as part of the Hawai'i International Film Festival and he speaks fondly of his connection to Honolulu and HIFF through which he has many friends and admirers.

It was a pleasure to meet the director

Darjeeling con't

novel, Nina's relationship to her granddaughters is emphasized more. While she remains sometimes conniving, she also grows to be more accommodating, understanding, and evidences a will that shines through the ups and downs of her life. She provides a credible connection between the sisters over time and place and is also associated with their "home" in India — Darjeeling.

I would recommend this book with some reservations. This is a novel that celebrates bourgeois middle-class values through the lives of the characters both in India as well as in the U.S.A. and Canada. It does not break or disrupt the current publishing trend to promote South Asian writers with this middle-class appeal. There is no deep examination of any particular issue—neither that of single South Asian women living overseas who belong to certain age groups—nor does the author explore characters' lack of any political convictions or motivations. The only character who shows any political potential ultimately becomes "[A] fallen leader" with "no place in the territory...lost" (94).

Events unfold either unbelievably or too smoothly. As alluded to earlier, the first-third of the novel requires a certain suspension of belief. Characters act in ways that make no sense — a genteel person with literary leanings takes out what amounts to a death contract on

another. A tea picker is described as an "intrepid soul" whose labor conditions are summarily glossed as battling "rain, chilly weather, and precarious terrain to bring in the crop" (17). There are constant references to food and again the labor is erased, except at the end during the preparation of *channer payesh*. The success of the sisters in the U.S.A. and Canada alludes to but never seriously questions the paths open to certain women with particular advantages, such as fluency in English and an openness to "Westernization", that appear less threatening to existing hierarchies. Along with her characters, the author therefore ultimately becomes complicit in these hierarchies, rather than subverting them. Thus, in this novel the issues of race, politics, and economics simply reflect the status quo because ultimately one could "...own the most organic tea garden in Darjeeling and be able to distribute the finest product to the North American market" (298), thereby supporting global capitalism rather than disengaging or suggesting alternatives to that model.

Kirchner's earlier work on South Asian cuisine is evident in this novel. I found the references to food familiar and interesting, such as this description of a guava as "a jade-green fruit ... about the size of an apple...the flesh soft as room-temperature butter, ex-

cept for the tiny, chewy seeds that occasionally got in the way" (42). However, I was somewhat put off by the repeated glossing of terminology for every Indic word and phrase, such as the unnecessary explanation when Aloka greets Sujata as *bontee* that it is the "diminutive for a little sister" (21). If the context is self-explanatory, glossing is unnecessary and should be used carefully rather than liberally.

With regards to the tea industry, one that I support and contribute to with enthusiasm, I was disappointed that there was not a greater discussion both on the aesthetics as well as the complicated and interesting history of tea and tea growing in Darjeeling. I consider myself somewhat knowledgeable about tea and Darjeeling, having been to school in Kurseong (a hill station close to Darjeeling), which is mentioned once in the book, but did not learn anything that I did not already know. My memory of planters is not of Hindu (Sanskrit) and Bengali literature experts living genteel lives on the foothills of the Himalayas managing their tea gardens without serious concerns over labor and economic issues, but rather hedonistic and even disturbed people, some of whom have no other choice than to be planters and find escape in alcoholism. There is no reference to all the mixed-race children of planters

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Darjeeling con't

and their employees from the colonial and even post-independence periods who operated the Glenary Bakery, which is mentioned often by the author. These inclusions would have made the novel much more complicated and thought-provoking.

Notwithstanding all the limitations I have expressed in this review, I want to reiterate my initial recommendation, which is based primarily on the particular way in which the author works through the events in the lives of three women and

the unique and remarkable ways by which their lives become resolved in the end. Setting the novel in a non-urban location, Darjeeling, in a Bengali family that also has ties to Bangladesh, and engaging with their occupations as owners and producers in the ever-changing industry of tea, as well as their personal lives, results in a story that is mostly well-told and interesting to read.

Dasgupta con't

while he was in Honolulu. I commend him for making a film that challenges the audience to think outside their experiences and engage with ideas and content that are disturbing, profound, brilliant as seen in the film *The Wrestlers*.

*For a list of his published works see: Hood, John W. *Time and dreams: the films of Buddhadeb Dasgupta*. Call Number PN1998.3 D36.H66 (Location: Asia Collection)

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Shankar con't

oping his knowledge of the immigrant experience led to a co-edited anthology, which is a forthcoming publication titled *Crossing Into America: The New Literature of Immigration*. Currently, he is working on a novel that is set in a village in India that is based on his mother's ancestral home. The story is very localized and explores an inter-generational relationship between a father and son. Shankar's other literary and

critical contributions include short fiction, encyclopedic entries, scholarly articles, book reviews, interviews, and journalistic articles.

Since his appointment at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Shankar has taught courses in World Literature since 1600, Literature in English after 1900, and Twentieth Century Novel in English. In the Spring, he will be teaching a graduate course on Cultural Studies in Asia and the Pacific, and Composition 100.

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