Letter from the Director
Dr. Monisha Das Gupta

The fall semester of AY 2015-2016 opened with several university-community collaborations that presented us with the rare opportunity to expose Honolulu to a range of contemporary and traditional South Asian visual and other creative arts. The occasion was the year-long celebration, Arts of Mughal India, planned by the Doris Duke Foundation to celebrate the opening of the restored Mughal Room at the Shangri La, the 5-acre Honolulu home of Doris Duke, who wanted it to become a premier center for students and scholars to cultivate their interest in Islamic art and architecture. The Center for South Asian Studies and several of its affiliated faculty have been involved in a range of events and in hosting some of the artists-in-residence at the university for talks and workshops. Prof. Kazi Ashraf (see faculty spotlight on p. 14) from the School of Architecture and Prof. Cheri Vasek from the Department of Theatre and Dance delivered lectures as part of the events in the community. An additional treat for the community (outside of the Arts of Mughal India events) came in the form of the 8th Bollywood film festival. The selection of this year’s films, including the Marathi language Fandry, benefited from the advisory role of Prof. Sai Bhatawadekar.

At the university, the CSAS and the Department of Art and Art History hosted interdisciplinary artist Hasan Elahi (Art, University of Maryland), who works across media to play with space and movement. The audience found his digital project, “Tracking Transience,” fascinating. After being profiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation post-9/11, he uses the project to turn back on the agency its surveillance mechanisms by flooding it with photographic documentation of his mundane, daily activities.

(Continued on page 2)
In partnership with the Department of Theatre and Dance, the CSAS supported a wonderful masterclass and workshop taught by Dipankar Mukherjee (Creative Director, Pangea World Theatre, Minneapolis) and Krithika Rajagopalan (Associate Director of Chicago’s Natya Dance Theatre). Mukherjee introduced dance students to basic movement structures of the southern Indian martial art, kalari, in a vigorous session. Rajagopalan invited them to experiment with a verse about Radha’s unrequited love for Krishna asking them to represent through gestures a range of expressions from longing, to disappointment, to sarcasm, to anger. All three artists were in residence at the Shangri La. The Hamilton Library South Asia Librarian, Dr. Monica Ghosh, who is currently serving as the interim Associate University Librarian, coordinated a beautiful exhibition in the Asia Collection entitled, “Indian Arts and Architecture at Doris Duke’s Shangri La.”

Along with our usual programming, which includes the Rama Watumull Lectureship Series (see list of invited speakers on p. 3) and the annual symposium, our focus as a Center this year has been to reach out to graduate and undergraduate students. We organized gatherings, informational sessions and class visits so that the students become conversant with the Center’s work and see it as a resource for their academic interests and as a space to build community. Such efforts are also part of publicizing our Study Abroad in Delhi program. We are very fortunate to have a very talented group of graduate students (see p. 8-9 & 13), who have helped with various aspects of the Center’s work. Their initiatives have included nominating speakers they would like to invite to our campus, presenting their research and creative writing projects, and making their presence felt as students who engage with South Asia in other interdisciplinary spaces across the university. We invite ideas from our students and faculty members about how we can continue to involve students in our programming.

I welcome our new coordinator Akta Kaushal, a PhD student in Political Science, who has brought her dynamism, digital media savvy and intellectual-political passions to the position. Her weekly news bulletins have attracted new subscribers. She has increased our social media visibility to over five times of what it was in the past year.

We are also delighted to welcome Prof. Victoria Fan, Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Health, as part of our CSAS ‘ohana. Her doctoral dissertation examined the effectiveness of health insurance and conditional cash transfers on maternal and child health in India. She has worked with NGOs such as BRAC and SEWA.

I take this opportunity to thank the members of the CSAS executive committee for their labor and valuable input, the Dean of the School of Pacific and Asian Studies, R. Anderson Sutton, whose enthusiasm for the Center’s work is critical, and the Watumull family for its generous support for our programs and scholarships.

Rama Watumull Lecture Series 2014-2015

The Center for South Asian Studies runs the Rama Watumull Collaborative Lecture Series (RWCLS), which invites scholar of South Asia from the U.S. continent, and other parts of the world. The award is aimed at supporting the interest in departments across the UHM campus in South Asia-related topics and perspectives. Departments at UHM compete for the RWCLS funds.

This year’s awardees were:

**Nilan Chaudhuri (Tabla Player) and Joshua Feinberg (Sitarist)**
- Lecture and Concert (October 9, 2014). Hosted by the Asian Studies Program.

**Krithika Rajagopalan (Natya Dance Theatre) and Dipankar Mukherjee (Pangea World Theatre)**
- Dance and Martial Arts Workshop (March 9, 2015), Hosted by the Department of Theatre and Dance.

**Dr. Gayatri Gopinath (NYU, Assoc. Professor, Director of Asian/Pacific/American Studies)**
- “Diaspora, Indigeneity, Queer Critique: The Intimate Geographies of Dwelling & Displacement” (April 8, 2015), Hosted by the Department of Sociology and the International Cultural Studies Program.
So often when we think of Indian classical music, the first artists who come to mind are the great masters of old. After that, perhaps, come the musicians who brought their art from India to the world on the global concert stage. As the first generation of these internationally known artists passes on, the legacy of their music and teaching can be found in a new generation of Hindustani classical performers, many now trained in the United States at schools like the Ali Akbar College of Music in California.

The Center for South Asian Studies was pleased to host two of these up-and-coming musicians this year through the Rama Watumull Collaborative Lecture Series. Sitarist Joshua Feinberg and tabla player Nilan Chaudhuri students of Ustad Ali Akbar Khan and Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri joined us to share their music as well as their experiences of learning Indian music in the United States. On October 9, 2014, they gave a pre-concert lecture and performed to a packed hall in the music department at UH. In the audience were introductory music classes, high school classes, and members of the public and UH community. In their pre-concert talk, Joshua and Nilan explained the detailed raga and tala systems of melody and rhythm, and answered questions about their instruments, their musical lineage, the development of Indian music in the United States, and the finer points of their training. Playing to illustrate their points in their lecture was a warm-up for the next hour of raga performance, in which each demonstrated his virtuosic skills in a rendition of Rag Bhairav in teental.

We are grateful to Joshua and Nilan for their enthusiasm in teaching and performing for us, to the Asian Studies Program for their collaborative contributions to making the artists' visit possible, and to the band Doolin Rakes for the use of their sound system.

On Monday March 9, 2015 visiting artists Krithika Rajagopalan, Associate Artistic Director of Chicago's Natya Dance Theatre, and Dipankar Mukerjee, Creative Director of Pangea World Theater, presented a public lecture and dance master class to over 40 UHM dance students in the discipline, department, and larger community. The public event was co-sponsored by the Department of Theatre and Dance, the Center for South Asian Studies, and the Shangri La Center for Islamic Arts and Cultures, and was part of the Rama Watumull Collaborative Lecture Series.

The workshop focused on developing movement vocabulary while exploring dance and gestural language from the Indian classical dance Bharata Natyam and a martial art of Southern India called Kalari. Krithika and Dipankar gave a brief introduction to their body of artistic work, research in South Asian studies, and a presentation of the developing ideas around finding new ways to theorize embodiment, performance, and experience in relation to culture through the arts.

The workshop was concurrent with a residency Krithika and Dipankar had at Shangri La. While here the artists were working on a new production combining elements of dance, spoken word, music, and poetry which was premiered at Shangri La and at the Doris Duke Theatre at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. The dance program was fortunate and grateful to have their presence on island and to be exposed to new innovations in their wonderful dance and theater collaboration. Since 2011, the Department of Theatre and Dance has been in collaboration with CSAS to encourage choreographic and teaching opportunities in Bharata Natyam and other South Asian dance styles.
Report from the Field: Study Abroad in Delhi
“Monsoon Session” 2014

By Dr. Mimi Sharma, Asian Studies Program

I spent the fall 2014 “Monsoon Session” as the Resident Faculty Director for our fairly new Study Abroad Program at Ambedkar University in Delhi. As someone long married to India (my late husband, Jagdish P. Sharma—UH History Emeritus—was from a village near Delhi) and who has been visiting and doing research in rural areas since 1965, this presented a memorable and challenging experience—one that I would highly recommend to faculty and students alike.

I experienced living in a huge and often rambunctious city of over 17 millions (figures vary, but it is the second largest city in the world, after Tokyo) that is the capital of a diverse nation of over 1.25 billion people. As the nation’s center, Delhi presents a window on a rich cultural and vibrant political scene. I used the extremely efficient if very overcrowded metro to get from my lodgings to the university but must admit this is the only place where women rule. The separate and short security lines and separate car reserved for females (who could also go in any other car) was a real blessing. The metro is also clean, efficient, and spreads all over the capital and so this was my main mode of transportation, day and night. I was also fortunate to locate an extremely comfortable flat near the city center.

The University campus is located just one metro stop from the famed Chandani Chowk—the gateway to “Old Delhi”—and is a relatively young (founded in 2007) and innovative institution. Founded on the principles of famed freedom fighter and Dalit leader, Babu Rao Ambedkar who fought for social justice and equality, it offers an interdisciplinary undergraduate degree in the social sciences and humanities along with a number of specialized graduate centers. The faculty are young (at least from where I stand!) bright, and progressive and make the campus an intellectually vibrant place. I was affiliated with the Sociology Department and taught two classes that were open to second and third year Indian students who took these as electives: “Civilizations and Societies of Asia” (Asian Studies 312) and “Globalization and the ‘New’ Indian Middle Class “(Asian Studies 493). The course on the “new” middle class was focused on youth.

Teaching was the highlight of my resident directorship. Most of my interaction was with the students, those in my classes as well as those I met. They were, for the most part, extremely bright and fluent in English, if—like students at UH—not always that motivated. Some of the students were quite vocal in the class. Heated and stimulating debates between them were not unusual. Those who were really brilliant were an absolute real pleasure to teach. Challenges did present themselves, basically in terms of adapting to a different university and teaching structure as well as to teaching amenities that we take for granted (i.e., IT, library, duplicating services). However, the IT Director and his staff, as well as the “Aunty and Uncle” who ran the Duplicating “closet” with two ever-whirring machines, were unbelievably kind and always helped with the numerous requests.

A main achievement for me personally was the vast improvement in speaking Hindi—thanks to becoming addicted to watching Hindi films on the TV (soap operas are something else!), being able to visit my sasural (husband’s village) and other relatives on several occasions, as well as travel to Jaipur, Varanasi, Mussoorie, and Kolkata to see dear old friends and visit the universities with which they were affiliated. I also had a wonderful stay at the Manorama School of Communication at Kottayam in the south Indian state of Kerala, founded in 2002 and recognized as one of the premier journalism training centers in the country.

I was able to meet and talk with budding journalism students and its extraordinary Director, K. Thomas Oommen. Truth-be-told, my real highlight was two visits to a “traditional” Ayurvedic clinic for an absolutely miraculous, oil-sla\hthing massage on a hard wood plank table.

As a new study abroad venture for UH, we hope to attract a significant number of our students to go to Delhi for the Study Abroad program. For them, the program represents a unique total immersion in an Indian university and society—both academically and socially. It represents the same for faculty. It provides the opportunity to teach in a very different environment, engage with other scholars, and explore research opportunities. Delhi and India are changing unbelievably rapidly. But, while certainly different from Hawai‘i and presenting multiple challenges to one’s proverbial “comfort zone,” the experience is definitely unforgettable and transformative.

Spring 2015
Now in its fourth year, the Jagdish P. Sharma Memorial Scholarship supports graduate students pursuing South Asian studies. The scholarship will continue to be awarded annually, with students receiving up to $5000 credit toward educational expenses. A maximum of $10,000 is available for academic year 2015-16. Students must be enrolled in the next year to be eligible for an award. The prospective recipient should be a graduate student in the College of Arts & Sciences at UH and pursuing studies of or about the South Asia region and its people.

This year’s awardees are:

**Kevin Maroufkhani**

Kevin P. Maroufkhani is a part-time lecturer and Ph.D. candidate in the Philosophy department. His dissertation research examines key metaphysical debates in both contemporary and classical South Asian thought relevant to contemporary theories of moral motivation and self. He argues in his dissertation that theories that promote self-privileging and self-assertion fail as viable models in a pluralistic and globally interdependent world. He will be employing Sanskrit texts that require fresh or first-time translations. As part of his research, he will be traveling to India to attend intensive Sanskrit courses at the University of Pune. As a lecturer, he teaches courses in introductory philosophy and ethics that include large sections of Brahmanical and Buddhist thought. He plans to develop courses that focus on Indian theories of self, and the role of empathy, altruism, and compassion in moral motivation. His dissertation adviser is Professor Arindam Chakrabarti.

**Rajiv Mohabir**

Rajiv Mohabir is currently pursuing his PhD in English with a concentration in creative writing. His award-winning poetry attempts to merge three areas into one poetic: the eco-critical, the post-colonial, and the queer by examining the natural history of the humpback whale and queer trans-Atlantic migrations of Indians in indenture under the British East India Company. Rajiv has received the Kundiman, VONA, and American Institute for Indian Studies language fellowships. He writes in Guyanese Bhojpuri, Creole and English and currently teaches undergraduate courses at the University of Hawai‘i in creative writing and composition. Rajiv’s most recent chapbook *Acoustic Trauma* has been released, and his other writing and work is on his website: [www.rajivmohabir.com](http://www.rajivmohabir.com).
I am working on a story about my family. This chapter has to do with my father’s emigration, at the age of 8, to the U.S. in 1950 to the segregated South. My father’s father, a well-known statistician who helped establish the field of multivariate analysis, a man whom I never met, had been given a job teaching mathematics at the University of North Carolina. That is the story of how our family ended up in the United States. But what was our family’s story before then?

When I was 18 and told my dad I wanted to be a writer, he told me I was descended from a great journalist. That was all I knew of my great grandfather at the time. I wanted to know, what would it mean to uncover my family’s stories, to connect with family members, to sew us back together again across the land and water and decades that separate us from our histories? I started thinking about backstitches: how there are those who live and drive the story forward, and those of us who loop back, to preserve and recover to make sure the story stays strong, stays alive. I traveled to India with the J. Watumull Scholarship for the Study of India to conduct a two-month research project on my family in the summer 2014. The generous award allowed me to visit India after a 20-year gap. All those years ago, when I was 11 years old, I had traveled to India for a two-week trip.

I wanted to visit places that my father hadn’t returned to since he was a boy, despite the dozens of trips he has made back to India since he left: the childhood home where he lived in Kolkata; the boarding school he was sent to from 4-8 years old in the Himalayas; the Indian Statistical Institute, where his father had worked. I wanted to chart our families, to know our histories.

In preparation for my trip, I started to collect what information I could find online about my thakurda, my father’s father. When I found a short biography of him that stated that he was the son of an English-language journalist and freedom fighter Kalinath Ray, I was completely taken aback. This was the “great journalist” my father had told me about. But, a freedom fighter? I learned from my online research that Kalinath Ray had been imprisoned by the British for what was deemed “seditious writings” in 1919 on the eve of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. I learned that Gandhi supported the movement for Kalinath Ray’s release. During this time, the tide in India turned from striving to achieve equality within the British Empire to the call for civil disobedience on the road to independence. I learned that, in the process, Kalinath Ray became a symbol of the free press.

With this information in hand, I sought to recover the stories of the legacy of my great-grandfather. None of my family members had copies of the original articles that Kalinath Ray wrote that the British considered seditious. Recovering these documents was very important to me. I wanted to get to the bottom of what might have motivated his son—my thakurda—to leave the newly independent India just a few years after his father had passed away, and never look back. What motivates the son of a freedom fighter to leave the newly independent nation? I kept asking myself. I also wanted to reconnect with family I hadn’t seen in nearly twenty years.

After working in archives in Delhi and Chandigarh and spending rainy hours with elders whom I had never met before in my family in Kolkata, I returned to Hawai‘i with some answers about Kalinath Ray and about my thakurda, and with stories about so many of my other family members whom I never knew.
I am left with many more questions that push me to consider how to take care of these stories, the forms to which they belong, and how I, as no scholar of South Asian history, can continue to buoy them for and with my family in India and the United States.

I am incredibly grateful to the Watumull family and the selection committee for the scholarship that supported this research project. I am also so thankful that my father, Subir Roy, and my partner, Donovan Kūhiō Colleps, were able to travel with me, holding this story in their gentle hands as our whole family began feeling for leads back into the past that might help us better understand who we are, in this present.

J. Watumull Report by Benjamin Zenk (Department of Philosophy)

The J. Watumull Scholarship has supported my attending, over the course of the 2014-2015 academic year, an intensive Sanskrit language program with the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS). I have attended the program to facilitate my working with primary philosophical sources written in Sanskrit. I am using these sources for my dissertation project Indian philosophy.

Pune is a wonderful city full of educational institutions, cafes, parks, museums, and archaeological sites. The Sanskrit program itself is held at the historic Deccan College campus, a beautiful, old institution with an excellent library and a renowned Sanskrit program. The instructors at the institute are world-class educators, attentive to the interests and aspirations of AIIS students and researchers. In addition to their regular classes, they have offered me a philosophical Sanskrit tutorial with a researcher from the Deccan College Sanskrit Lexicography Department. In this tutorial, I have been able to work through a large portion of the Anekāntajayapatākā, one of the primary texts I will be examining in my dissertation, in Sanskrit.

The text is an initially puzzling one, but one which is well-known in the Jain philosophical tradition and with contemporary relevance for philosophical studies of disagreement. The author, Haribhadra Yakinī-putra, has a reputation for being philosophically non-partisan, and in this Anekāntajayapatākā (Victory Banner of Non-Absolutism), he attempts to make peace between logical opposites. In a presentation of my work at the Australasian Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy meeting in Melbourne this July, I will examine the first section of this monograph,
where Haribhadra responds to the objection that no object having both an existent and non-existent form can be established except by a form of absolutism. In doing so, my paper will also work through his defense of the Jaina doctrine of non-absolutism (ānekānta-vāda), attempting to draw connections between the text’s intricate conceptual arguments and the thinker’s more general claims about tolerance of and deference to disagreeing views elsewhere.

In my personal tutorial, I have been working on and polishing a translation of the first chapter of this text along with notes from its auto-commentary to accompany my work. To this end, I have also been able to procure a copy of the manuscript of another commentary on this text from the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, a long-established institution in Pune. This institute has an excellent research library and collection of Sanskrit manuscripts, and happens to be just short walk from my apartment.

Since arriving here at the AIIS in Pune, my Sanskrit language skills have improved tremendously. The program offers a range of course contents and styles, from drama to philosophy, from speaking to grammar. In my time here, I have expanded and reaffirmed my familiarity with paradigms and complex grammatical forms, especially through the additional emphasis that the program places on speaking and writing. Attentiveness to the Sanskrit philosophical tradition, too, has further convinced me of the contemporary relevance of Sanskrit debate culture. Most importantly, I have continued to develop a facility with the language – in particular with the philosophical language of the texts I am working with – and this has enhanced the quality of my dissertation research.

Graduate Student Spotlight:
Activism and Community Building in Hawai‘i

The coordinator of the Center for South Asian Studies, a second-year PhD student in Political Science, Akta Kaushal, interviewed her fellow students about the various ways in which they are involved at the university and in the community in Honolulu.

A mission of the Center for South Asian Studies is to increase the visibility of South Asia and its diaspora at the University of Hawai‘i. As a graduate student, what have been the challenges and rewards of doing South Asia related research, writing and creative projects here?

Rajiv Mohabir: Most recently coming from New York City—having lived in Jackson Heights and worked in Ozone Park, both very South Asian places — Hawai‘i has offered me a way of understanding my own plantation history. The local contexts of migration and indenture feel familiar and resonate with what it means to be Indo-Guyanese in that I can see elements of my home culture here. People speak Pidgin and have hybrid cultural practices; these are analogous to Creole spaces in the Caribbean.

Riddhi Shah: My two semesters as a graduate student in the Political Science Department have been truly transformative for me because of a strong critical approach here that departs from traditional political science departments. While my research orientation has remained more or less focused on what I originally proposed when I came to Hawai‘i, it most certainly has grown in wonderful and unexpected ways. In part, this growth in my research has been fostered not only because of my exposure to issues and subjects at UH as a student but also the very experience of living in a politically charged environment like Hawai‘i. Sure the US bureaucratic system can at times be a challenge for an international student but the support and willingness of people around me to provide a helping hand more than makes up for it.

We do not have a large heritage community here in Hawai‘i. Has living here been a very different experience for you when you compare it to other places where you have lived? How have you constructed and transformed your sense of community in Hawai‘i?
Rajiv Mohabir: One difficulty is that I have not met very many Indo-Caribbean people here but I have met Indo-Fijians with a similar history of what Khal Torabully calls “Coolitude,” or a shared history of indenture. I have also been able to meet the Indo-Fijian poet Sudesh Mishra—something that would not have been possible if I lived elsewhere. The same boats that took indentured laborers to Trinidad went to Fiji. If my ancestors boarded a boat just down the dock, we would have ended up in the South Pacific. In this way, I realize that Pacific struggles are close, parallel, or analogous to mine in that I have a responsibility while I am here to forge alliances and resist a settler mentality.

Riddhi Shah: As a South Asian graduate student new to the University of Hawai‘i, I think I found it relatively easy to adjust to my work life at UH and to my personal life in Hawai‘i than I have during my previous study trips. I think a part of this has been the small but extremely supportive community present here. Interacting with my fellow South Asian students and now friends has been doubly rewarding. While I got to know them and their research orientation, they also introduced me to several outstanding and truly committed people from Hawai‘i and elsewhere - people who were working to make political change in Hawai‘i. Some of them are striving for these changes through their work at the university. Getting to know people, who were not only politically conscious but also politically active, makes a huge difference.

All of you are engaged in various social justice projects and conversations. We see you at events that engage with Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiians issues as well as events that highlight critical political and social transformations in East and Southeast Asia. Can you talk about how these issues mesh (or not) with those that inform your South Asia and diaspora-related academic, creative and community work?

Rajiv Mohabir: I am currently involved with a project that examines the occupation of West Papua by Indonesia and how its settler-colonial logic mirrors the conditions of oppression that Hawaiians face. While these issues are not the same, they are related. Being in a space illegally occupied by the United States has forced me to recognize my own complicity with Empire, even being from—or especially from—a formerly colonized community. This moment will help shed light on the genocide, and American complicity in the extraction of West Papua’s rare minerals to feed the electronics industry. We must build alliances as activists, as artists with those fighting oppressions we encounter around us. If we fail to do so, we become the face of the occupier that seeks to erase and to dispossess indigenous people of their land. From this recognition, and reckoning with my own state of postcoloniality, cultural amnesia and cultural shift for modernity’s sake, I have been working on a project that conjures anti-colonial magic spells. In this project, I use the momentum inherent in my fragmentation to critique Empire. Hopefully these “magic spells” will smash its face in.

Riddhi Shah: I originally came to UH with the intention of focusing on security studies. I have now become more critical not only of the issue that I am interested in understanding but also of the larger framework. I have had to question the framework within which I understood “security”; I had to question what I had been taught. The presentations, colloquiums and events I have been attending for the past months have been largely responsible for this shift in understanding in my own work. While not all presentations have been related to my work directly, they demonstrate how new frameworks and ways of thinking can be mobilized in one’s research. As a PhD student at the start of my career, I cannot stress the significance of this enough. It opens up doors in one’s mind in how to frame and organize one’s own research. The events demonstrate how to publicize one’s views and research; and how to craft counter-arguments in often charged environments. Just as importantly, these events are ideal for getting to know other researchers who might have similar research interests.
Faculty Updates

Ned Bertz, Department of History
Since returning from teaching in Delhi last academic year, Prof. Ned Bertz has been continuing to finalize his book manuscript, *Diaspora and Nation in the Indian Ocean: Transnational Histories of Race and Urban Space in Tanzania*, which is due out this fall from the University of Hawai‘i Press. He was an invited speaker in March at New York University Abu Dhabi’s conference entitled “Cosmopolitan Currents in the Indian Ocean: New Conceptual Models for Studying Cultural Integration and Change.” This summer he will begin preliminary research on his next project, a history of Partition from various locations around the western Indian Ocean, an attempt to reframe this critical event within longer-term processes in which new ideas about territoriality, mobility, and belonging reshaped people’s lives all around the Indian Ocean region.

Sankaran Krishna, Department of Political Science

Priyam Das, Department of Urban and Regional Planning
Priyam Das is an Assistant Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at UHM. Her primary research area is water governance in the Global South. Her current research focuses on community-managed water supply and sanitation for the urban poor in Madhya Pradesh, India. Her recent publication include: “Women’s participation in community-level water governance in urban India: The gap between motivation and ability,” *World Development* 64: 206-218 (2014) and “The urban sanitation conundrum: What can community-managed sanitation programs in India unravel?” *Environment and Urbanization* (forthcoming). She also presented the paper "The urban sanitation conundrum" at the Urbanization and Urban Planning in Asia Joint Symposium, UH Mānoa and Tongji University, Beijing on February 6, 2015. Students in Priyam’s class – PLAN 678 (Site Planning) – recently proposed site design alternatives for the Daniel K Inouye Center at UHM. Two of the student teams were awarded the DKI Center Student Project Award last week.
Subramaniam Shankar, Department of English

S. Shankar published the essay "Spitting at Power: The Boom in Dalit Literature and Questions of Agency" in *Journal of Contemporary Thought* 39 (Summer 2014). He was interviewed on literature and caste for the online show *Asia in Review* and for the journal *Writing Today*, and wrote a short note on "The Vernacular" for the State of the Discipline Report of the American Comparative Literature Association. He has short journalistic pieces appearing in *Tin House* and *Summit* (Honolulu) on American writer Agnes Smedley and the public spectacle of Indian elections respectively. Shankar spent the Spring 2015 semester on a sabbatical in India and London working on future projects. During this time he gave invited talks at the English and Foreign Languages University (Hyderabad) and delivered the Balvant Parekh Distinguished Lecture at the Balvant Parekh Centre for General Semantics and Other Human Sciences in Baroda. Earlier, in 2014, he gave invited talks at Rutgers University (New Jersey) and University of Goa (India). He also organized two panels on "Translation and the Global South" and "Comparatism and the Global South" for the 2015 Modern Language Association Annual Convention.

Sai Bhatawadekar, Department of Indo-Pacific Languages and Literatures

Sai Bhatawadekar had an eventful year. She was invited to work with four other Religious Studies and Philosophy scholars to write the Templeton Foundation Grant on Cross-Cultural Inquiry into Religious Understanding. Together they received a significant grant to explore the Kataphatic (affirmative) and Apophatic (negative) approaches to God in five major world religions. (See [https://religiousunderstanding.wordpress.com/](https://religiousunderstanding.wordpress.com/)). So far, they have organized very successful workshops, town-hall discussions, and research with scholars and students, which will yield two books, one on the project itself and another an edited volume on related concerns.

Sai was also invited by the National Foreign Language Resource Center to work on their four-year Department of Education grant on Project Based Language Learning, which is currently the budding and leading theory and practice in language pedagogy. Sai facilitated a nationwide session on “Creative Project, Process, and Performance Based Language Learning.” As part of that approach, which she regularly applies in her classes, Sai made two Hindi short films with her students - parodies of blockbuster Bollywood movies of last year - *RamLeela* (Romeo and Juliet) and *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*. She is currently editing another film – a Hindi video news report on East West Center's exhibition on Indian Narrative Folk Art. She has branched out into Peace Studies. She was invited to give a keynote address "From Pedagogy to Positive Peace" at the Southeastern World History Association's conference on Peace and Human Rights. She also gave the talk at the workshops at Dr. Maya Soetoro Ng and Kerrie Urosevich's organization, Ceeds of Peace, a peace-building initiative for Hawai‘i.

At East West Center's art exhibition, Sai gave a talk, "The Family Portrait: Four Generations of Ketkar Artists." Additionally, she worked on the Honolulu Theater for Youth’s production of Bollywood Robin Hood as a cultural consultant, music consultant, and background singer. Sai continues to be on the board of the Honolulu Museum of Art's Bollywood Film Festival to expand the variety and spectrum of the films offered every year. Her Bollywood dance group - Aaja Nachle - is flourishing beautifully in the community; they did many events this year, but most prominently a dance workshop at the Museum with nearly a 100 participants, and an ArtAfterDark event, which drew 2161 guests!

L. Ayu Saraswati, Department of Women's Studies

Dr. Saraswati is currently co-organizing the workshop, “Creative Connections Writing Retreat” in Kailua, with Dr. Tanya Golash-Boza (University of California, Merced). This workshop teaches writers to be productive in their writing and to lead a creative, mindful, and content life at the same time. You can learn more about her work on her website: [http://drsarawati.com/](http://drsarawati.com/).

(Continued on page 12)
Monisha Das Gupta, Departments of Ethnic Studies and Women’s Studies

Monisha started her work as the associate editor of the *American Quarterly* in the summer of 2014 and finds it a rewarding and instructive process, which helps her with her own writing. A book chapter entitled, “Shadowed Lives: Invisibility and Visibility of Mexican in Hawai’i” is forthcoming from Routledge later this year in *Transpacific Americas: Encounters and Engagement with the Americas and South Pacific* edited by Eveline Dürr and Philipp Schorch. Her invited entry on “Resistance” in *Keywords in Asian American Studies* (New York University Press) co-edited by Cathy Schlund-Vials, Linda Trinh Vo, and K. Scott Wong will be released in May this year. She has been invited to speak on the Association of Asian American Studies President Sponsored Panel on “The State of Immigration Fifty Years after 1965” at the association’s annual meeting at Evanston later in April. In between her various commitments at the university, she continues to support the empowerment of hotel workers and migrant youth in Honolulu. In August 2014, she organized a Hawaii People’s Fund-hosted Kipuka For Change conversation on the incarceration at the U.S. Southwest border of children and women fleeing violence in Central America.

Jan Brunson, Department of Anthropology

Jan Brunson’s new book, *Planning Families in Nepal: Global and Local Projects of Reproduction*, will soon be in the final stages of production at Rutgers University Press. The book is based on over a decade of ethnographic research with Hindu women and their families in a community on the rim of the Kathmandu Valley. The ethnography examines the differential effects of globalization on a critical site of social and biological life – reproduction. Prof. Brunson describes the ways global projects of family planning articulate with local projects of making families and conceptions of the self. In the process, she raises important questions regarding the notion of “planning” when applied to conception and family making, as well as the structural limitations that systems such as patrilocality and economies impose on gender norms.

In February, Prof. Brunson was invited by Oxfam India to participate in the “South Asia Consultation on Maternal Health: Regional Dialogue and Way Forward.” The conference included delegates from all countries of South Asia and was held in Kathmandu. She also recently published an article on maternal health in Nepal titled, “A Review of Women’s Health: The Hegemony of Caste, Development, & Biomedicine,” in the journal, *Studies in Nepali History and Society*.

Chennat Gopalakrishnan, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Management

In 2014, Chennat Gopalakrishnan was awarded the Western Agricultural Economics Association Distinguished Scholar Award. The Distinguished Scholar Award is the highest recognition granted to members making an enduring contribution over their career to agricultural or other type of applied, resource, and/or environmental economics. According to the award citation, “Gopal is best known for his research on water economics and policy, particularly for advancing our understanding of water management institutions. He is one of the leading figures in the institutional analysis of the water sector.” As a scholar, he remains just as active after retirement. He edited the January 2015 issue of the *Journal of Natural Resources Policy Research*, on the topic, “Designing Water Disaster Management Policies: Theory and Empirics.” The special issue helps to identify, examine, analyze and assess the complex world of disaster management and to design robust, effective, implementation-friendly, widely accessible and affordable policies. The issue will be published as a book by Routledge and will be available in July 2015. For book description see: [http://www.tandf.net/books/details/9781138930797/](http://www.tandf.net/books/details/9781138930797/).
Graduate Student Updates

Akta Kaushal, Department of Political Science
Akta Kaushal is the new coordinator for the UH Center for South Asian Studies. Her year has been packed with CSAS-related activities, course work and conference presentations. She presented at the International Studies Association conference in February. She also has two new publications: “Brown Magic Woman,” *Journal of Narrative Politics*, 1:2 (March 2015) and “Confronting Farmer Suicides in India,” *Alternatives*, (forthcoming). She has also performed and presented her research at UHM. In her second year in the PhD program, Akta’s interest and inquiry into the political has been through postcolonial theory and feminism, and she has been more specifically pursuing migration/diaspora studies and creative writing this year.

Anjoli Roy, Department of English
Anjoli Roy is a creative writer and PhD student in the English Department, where she is grateful to be part of a dynamic literary community. Her recent work has appeared in *Fiction365*, *Frontier Psychiatrist*, and *Kweli*. She is currently working on a series of creative nonfiction pieces about the research she conducted on her family in India last summer, with a special focus on her great-grandfather, freedomfighter, and English-language journalist, Kalinath Ray.

Riddhi Shah, Department of Political Science
Riddhi Shah is a new PhD student in the Political Science department. She is focusing on security issues in the maritime domain. Prior to coming to the university for her doctoral work, she worked at the National Maritime Foundation (NMF) and the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi, India.

Sadie R. Green, Asian Studies Program
Sadie R. Green is a second-year MA student in the Asian Studies Program. After completing her ethnographic fieldwork and intermediate Nepali language program in Kathmandu during the summer of 2014, she returned to the UHM to complete her coursework and thesis as an East-West Center and Starr Foundation scholar. This May, she will defend her thesis, “Publics of Dress: Rethinking Representations and Expressions of Women through Fashion in an Urbanizing Neighborhood in Nepal.” During her MA program, she presented her work at academic conferences, including one at the London University of the Arts, and performed with local Nepali and Indian dance troupes as well as with the University of Hawai’i’s Department of Theatre and Dance. Upon graduation, she plans to pursue her PhD and to continue to work with women’s organizations and progressive initiatives in Nepal and across Asia and the Pacific.
The CSAS Coordinator, Akta Kaushal, interviewed CSAS faculty member, Dr. Kazi Ashraf, Professor, School of Architecture, to learn more about the multiple dimensions of his recent work and his plans to set up a transdisciplinary institute in Dhaka, Bangladesh, to train a new generation of architects.

**Akta:** You have recently published *The Hermit’s Hut: Architecture and Asceticism In India* (UH Press, 2013) and *Designing Dhaka: A Manifesto for a Better City* (LOKA, 2012), and more recently *An Architect in Bangladesh: Conversations with Mazharul Islam* (LOKA, 2015). Do you identify yourself as an architect who specializes in South Asia?

**Kazi:** I do and I don’t. I basically work with ideas and wherever I can find the ideas manifested or embodied, I look at it and thematize. But, yes, looking back I can say that most of it seems to be located in South Asia, but does that make me a South Asianist? I don’t really define myself as one.

**Akta:** How do Buddhist philosophy, concepts and history inform *The Hermit’s Hut*?

**Kazi:** I am glad you bring that up because if you look at it immediately, the site is India (ancient India). Yes. But, I didn’t get there because I had to pursue an Indian or an ancient Indian topic. I was interested in the whole business of dwelling, the fabrication of dwelling, the rejection of dwelling, the paradox of home. Since I had more immediate and ready access to Buddhist materials, I entered the topic through Buddhism. At the end, I looked it at in a much more thematic way, rather than through a denominational window.

**Akta:** Can you talk about your conception of “home” space as you explore it in *The Hermit’s Hut*?

**Kazi:** I have been broadly interested in the theme of “home”; what is “home”? The book, which was actually part of my dissertation, evolved into something new. In some ways, it is incredibly difficult to work with the theme of “home” because it is both immediate and endless, both accessible and indeterminate. But many new projects have sprung out of that exploration, most particularly the modernist project of the house. How is the modernist project analogous to original asceticism? That brings me to the whole business of reduction and minimalism. I mention this in the book [*The Hermit’s Hut*] a little bit, but that is my next project. One undercurrent is a transaction between Asia and Europe through the concept of minimalism. I want to explore how modernist minimalism and traditional asceticism, which could be Buddhist, Jain, or even early Christian, are parallel projects. I want to encounter this dichotomy, this contradiction and paradox between giving up and gaining that such home thoughts entail. I am in the process of framing new ways of interpretation in the practices of “home.”

**Akta:** You are also very involved with projects outside of the university. You have served on the advisory committee of Shangri La, the Doris Duke House and you recently did a public lecture, “Learning from Mughal Architecture,” as part of the year-long celebration of the opening of the Mughal Room at Shangri La. Can you talk about the Shangri La?

**Kazi:** I spoke about something related to a parallel research project, specifically the modernity of the Mughals. The genesis of the Doris Duke House is Mughal architecture. I recognize two critical aspects of the Doris Duke House, one is about its origin and the other is about its evolution. One is the Mughal suite with its lustrous white marble, the rich inlays, the diaphanous screen… the original scheme of the House! It is this quality that has primarily defined Mughal architecture, such as the Taj Mahal, etc. Or it seems. The other aspect of the House is the ensembling of architectures, making a hybrid assembly though the art of drafting and crafting, of creating a juxtaposition of diversities, of a kind of fabricated unity – a contrived unity as in Fatehpur Sikri – that does not exist anywhere in Muslim regions.
Doris Duke may have started with the particularity of Mughal architecture but she increasingly became enamored with the second [the hybrid assembly]. So that makes it, interestingly, both singular and an assemblage of many, at the same time. 

*Pluribus* and *unum.*

*(The video to Dr. Ashraf’s lecture at Shangri-La can be found here: https://vimeo.com/114930922)*

**Akta:** Tell us about the institute you are setting up in Dhaka.

**Kazi:** Well, the institute is not affiliated with any university. It’s a private initiative to be called the Bengal Institute for Architecture, Landscapes and Settlements. This offer came up to take on the task of creating an institute that will be transdisciplinary in nature in its very formation, which doesn’t have to abide by university restrictions or professional guidelines. Since I believe ideas do not have ‘homes,’ I have worked around disciplinary boundaries that create compartments. Even from the time I was in grad school, I have always gone outside my own discipline turning to philosophy, Sanskrit, art history etc. Even within architecture there are many sub-groups, and people often don’t talk to each other. The institute is an effort to transcend that. It will be located in Bangladesh, but we are getting people from all over. We are supported by a major cultural organization called the Bengal Foundation. They invited me to conceive and organize this. Yes, I am thrilled and excited. We are interested in larger issues of environmental design, you know, settlements, landscapes, and so on.

**Akta:** Is the purpose then to train individuals to practice architecture in certain ways or are there other kinds of pedagogical emphases?

**Kazi:** The main activity will be to train advance-level students or young architects or faculty. It would be incorrect to say there is a deficit of teaching in that regard, but people are hungry to understand and know more. So the academic part is formatted as a semester system. It’s divided into four months and each month will have a series of workshops or seminary/design studios along a dedicated theme, and eventually participants will get a sprinkling of all disciplines and be exposed to a wide range of topics. It’s a brand new operation, and involves innovations in looking at the broader aspect of environmental design. It’s not architectural design in terms of buildings as much, but more focused on landscapes, settlements, or the broadscape, which tends to be lacking in some architectural training.

**Akta:** So, is this regionally specific? Will you be observing and learning from the surroundings and the context of Bangladesh?

**Kazi:** That’s a good question. We would like to do that. We would like to start off with the local (Bengal or Bangladesh) in the workshops, classes, and discussions. We want to foreground the geography, or what I call the ‘hypergeography’ of Bangladesh. How do you deal with the delta, the floods, and the river and then think of the arrangement of settlements? By settlements, I mean habitats, from village to country to town. In some ways, Bangladesh will be a kind of laboratory for engaging with this broader approach and new conceptualization of our habitats.

**Akta:** So, there is a kind of political ethos here, where you are interested in environmental sustainability.

**Kazi:** That’s exactly right. But sustainability with new arrangements or rearrangements. This issue is parallel in many ways to other places in South Asia and South East Asia. And, for that purpose, we will have people coming in from all these regions to present, teach and discuss.
The material and existential conditions in contemporary South Asia and its diasporas necessitate a reckoning with forms of power which suppress or marginalize different manifestations of knowledge, subjectivity and social relations. What sorts of political struggles, epistemological shifts and aesthetic sensibilities could help envision and realize decolonial futures in South Asia and its diasporas? A new generation of scholars has begun to engage with political projects and intellectual traditions that have been subjugated or silenced within dominant national narratives. We invite papers which engage with the challenges decoloniality poses for postcolonial studies, research on South Asian migration, and/or scholarship on imperial formations, old or new. We welcome new forms of writing and storytelling that excavate silenced histories, lived experiences, and resistance politics and practices. Given our location in Hawai‘i and the Pacific, topics of particular interest include oceanic connections, decolonial politics, environmental struggles and rights, and transnational networks.

**APRIL 16, THURSDAY**

8:45-9:00am: Welcome remarks by R. Anderson Sutton (Dean of the School of Pacific and Asian Studies), and Monisha Das Gupta (Director of the UH Center for South Asian Studies)

9:00-10:15am: Keynote Address by Himadeep Muppidi, Vassar College
Title: “Anticolonial Intimacies”

10:30am-12:15pm: PANEL: Circuits: Suppressed Histories, Insurgent Dreams

12:15pm-2:15pm: Keynote Address by Ned Bertz, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
Title: “Ground Between Two Millstones”: Interrogating Decolonial Past in Indian Ocean History

3:00-4:30pm: PANEL: Frictions: Indigenous and Migrant Dispossession and Dislocation

5:30-7:00pm: RECEPTION

**APRIL 17, FRIDAY**

9:00-10:15am: Keynote Address by Vivek Bald, MIT
Title: “Silences, Exclusions, and Everyday Lives: Documenting the Histories of South Asians in the U.S.”

10:30am-12:15pm: PANEL: Excavations: Telling Stories as Writers and Activists in the South Asian Diaspora

5:00pm-7:00pm: Open Mic Night: “Decolonial Solidarities” at The Manifest (Chinatown, 32 N Hotel St)
DECOLONIAL SOLIDARITIES
an OPEN MIC

COME SHARE YOUR ART AND STORIES OR OF THOSE WHO INSPIRE YOU

featuring

JAMAICA OSORIO
AIKO YAMASHIRO
RAJIV MOHABIR
AKTA KAUSHAL
NO’U REVILLA
ANJOLI ROY

FRIDAY april 17th
5-7 pm

MANIFEST
32 N HOTEL ST

PART OF THE 32ND ANNUAL UN MANGA CSAS SYMPOSIUM;
DECOLONIAL FUTURES IN SOUTH ASIA AND BEYOND
APRIL 15-17 2015
The Center’s activities enrich the university’s unique focus on Asia and the Pacific. The objective of the Center, since its creation in 1985, has been to bridge disciplinary approaches to the study of South Asia in the humanities, social sciences, and applied sciences. The Center draws on the expertise and interest of approximately forty distinguished UH system faculty whose research interests spread over India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal to foster awareness within the university and the community of South Asia’s rich cultural heritage, its history, its languages, and its contemporary economic and political landscape.

The Center’s main goal is to promote interdisciplinary research on South Asia and the diaspora, and assist undergraduates as well as graduate students to develop a focus on past and present societies and cultures of South Asia. South Asia has been an academic focus at the University of Hawai‘i for over fifty years, beginning with the establishment of the Oriental Institute in 1935 and a still ongoing series of East-West Philosophers’ Conferences in 1939. This emphasis continued with the establishment of the journal, Philosophy East and West, in 1951, and the Asian Studies Program. The Center for South Asian Studies was created in 1985.

Visit our website: [www.hawaii.edu/csas](http://www.hawaii.edu/csas)

Newsletter Editor: Akta Kaushal

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