South Asia: Challenges and Transformations

15th Annual Conference of the
South Asian Studies Association

Hosted by Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles, California
Friday, March 11th to Sunday, March 13th 2022

Join in person at LMU or virtually via Zoom.

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Brought to you by the SASA Board of Directors 2020–2024

Christopher Key Chapple, Loyola Marymount University, USA
Deepak Shimkhada, Chaffey College, USA
Vandana Asthana, Eastern Washington University, USA
Purnima Bhatt, Hood College, USA
David Blundell, University of California, Los Angeles, USA
Parkes Riley, University of California, Riverside, USA
Rafiq Dossani, RAND Corporation & Pardee RAND Graduate School, USA
Chandrika Kaul, University of St. Andrews, UK
Anupama Prabhala, Loyola Marymount University, USA
Asma Faiz, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan
Debashish Banerji, California Institute for Integral Studies, USA

Special Thanks to:

Amy Osborne, Program Administrator for Graduate Yoga Studies, LMU
David Rogoff, Sr. Administrative Coordinator, LMU
Katie Davidson, Heather Romanowski, Gayatri Sehgal,
Shuo Wang, Laine Wherritt, Graduate Student Coordinators, LMU

Cover Art Courtesy of:
Binod Pradhan
"Fading Heritage Urban"
Acrylic on Canvas
2018

Program Schedule at a Glance

Friday, March 11th
5:00–7:15pm PST:
Awards and Musical Performance

Saturday, March 12th
8:00–9:25am PST: Panel 1
(four concurrent sessions)
9:35–11:00am PST: Panel 2
(four concurrent sessions)
5:00–7:00pm PST: Plenary Session

Sunday, March 13th
(*note PDT change*)

8:00–9:25am PDT: Panel 3
(four concurrent sessions)
9:35–11:00am PDT: Panel 4
(three concurrent sessions)
11:00am–12:15pm PDT:
Closing Ceremony & Musical Performance
Lunch

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Awards for the Exemplar Honorees

UHALL 1000
Zoom Link:

Romila Thapar

Deepa Mehta

Historian Romila Thapar, author of more than 20 books, is Professor Emerita at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her work insightfully elucidates the complex interface of cultures and communities throughout India history, highlighting change and continuity. Her study of Emperor Ashoka examines the role of Buddhist Dharma in establishing a harmonious social order. She received her doctorate from the School for Oriental and African Studies at the University of London.

Filmmaker Deepa Mehta directed several award–winning and Oscar nominated films, including Fire, Earth, and Water, dramatic reflections on sexuality, politics, women's rights, and human dignity. Her recent Apple TV film for the Little America series, The Manager, chronicles the life of a brilliant youngster who, despite the deportation of his parents, competes in the finals of the National Spelling Bee. A native of Amritsar, she studied philosophy at Delhi University.

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Musical Performance

The Los Angeles–based world fusion trio Keenar bridges their vast influences from around world to form a unique sound at the edge of various styles. The group consists of sitarist Rajib Karmakar, multi–instrumentalist James Waterman, and percussionist Neel Agrawal.

Rajib Karmakar is a Los Angeles–based performance artist, composer, and educator. Rajib has performed in many countries including India, USA, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, and Switzerland. He has played and has been featured in various movies and T.V. shows for Disney, Warner Bros., Sony, Universal, A&E Network, and has been an artist–in–residence for various colleges and universities all over the world. Rajib's versatility and ability has allowed him to adapt his skills and knowledge to various world music projects by utilizing his own creation, "Mayur Tantri" – the world's first double–neck sitar. Rajib received his MFA in Music from California Institute of the Arts and is the Artistic director of Los Angeles International Music and Arts Academy (LAIMA).

James Waterman is a multifaceted percussionist, composer, and teaching artist based in Los Angeles. James has extensively studied West African drumming, Western Classical percussion, Middle Eastern drumming, Trinidadian Steel Drums, jazz vibraphone, Latin percussion, and Indian Classical music. As a composer, James's works span from the stage to the screen, and include the original score for Sharine Atif's award–winning film Jebel Banat (Festival de Cannes and Tribeca Film Festival). James has performed at such venues and events as SFJAZZ, The Getty Villa, Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, NBC's Today Show, and Boston Court Pasadena.

Neel Agrawal is a world percussionist performing with leading musicians across a wide range of genres. Neel received the 2021 COLA Individual Artist Fellowship and was recognized as an inaugural 2018 "Cultural Trailblazer" by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. He also participated in "Celebrate the Connections", an urban arts and education tour of India sponsored by the U.S. State Department, and completed a fellowship at the Harvard Library Innovation Lab for his groundbreaking research on African Drumming Laws. Additionally, Neel was the section leader of the Michigan State University Drumline, where he received two national tenor drumming awards from Percussive Arts Society. He currently teaches at the Los Angeles International Music and Arts Academy (LAIMA).

UHALL 1000
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: One

1a. Sacred Goddess Traditions of Nepal: Many Faces of the Goddess

In this panel, the speakers will speak about the three goddesses from the Hindu and Buddhist traditions of Nepal. However, in each case, the tradition is rooted in Tantra. It is because Nepal was and still is the home to Tantra. When Tantra left India due to various reasons—cultural or political—Nepal became the haven for Tantra. As a result, many of the Tantric texts, art and ritual practices have been preserved in Nepal. Three presenters will examine some of those traditions from various sources in this panel.

Deepak Shimkhada, Moderator, Chaffey College

Sthaneshwar Timilsina, San Diego State University,
Sarvamanaya Goddess Tradition in Nepal

Jeffrey Lidke, Barry College,
The Goddess of the Upper Revelation: The Centrality of Tripurasundari and the Sri Vidya within the Sarvamnaya Tantric System of Nepal

Miroj Shakya, University of the West,
The Cult of Vasudhārā in Nepal

University Hall 1775
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: One

1b. Literature:

Maryam Khan, Lahore University of Management Sciences,
Exploring Horney's 'womb envy' in Saddat Hassan Manto's "Mummy" and Ismat Chughtai's "Jungli Kabootar"

The dissection of post-colonial fictional narratives using the lens of a psychoanalytic framework has not been a commonly explored literary attempt. Just like many other spheres of knowledge, the world of western psychoanalysis was driven by men and this intellectual bias is what many academics and feminists, including Karen Horney, disapproved of and subsequently questioned in their work. While on the Western front, Karen Horney was questioning the sexist Freudian analysis on female development and sexuality, particular literary intellectuals in the subcontinent were also challenging the orthodox views on similar topics; these included figures such as Saddat Hassan Manto and Ismat Chughtai whose names flourished during the first half of the 19th century in the subcontinent, both as modernist and post-colonial writers. These two wrote unapologetically and audaciously about topics which were otherwise met with daunting disapproval when displayed in sub-continental literature; their concentrated focus being on topics of social, sexual and psychological oppression faced by women such as rape, abuse and exploitation on various fronts. Just like Manto and Chughtai were forming unheard discourses on female sexuality in the sub-continent, Horney formulated the concept of 'womb envy' in reaction to Freud's 'penis envy' in which she argues that stemming from men's envy at their incapability of mothering, arises their need to dominate women by exercising masculine power to overcompensate for their inabilities. Freud, in her opinion was using psycho-analysis to further the masculine domination of the field which she decided to counter with such contributions. Tying her theoretical framework to selected South Asian literature, I will be localizing this paper by using some literary works of Saddat Hassan Manto and Ismat Chughtai, 'Mummy' and 'Jungli Kabootar' respectively, to explore their narratives through the concept of 'womb envy' as propagated by Horney.

Neeti Shetty, Nitte University,
"Pound her well, turn by turn": Examining Female Agency in Select Tulu Kabitas

When Moonlight is Very Hot (2018) is a collection of English translations of Tulu works songs or Kabitas and dance songs, translated and compiled by B. Surendra Rao and K. Chinnappa Gowda. Tulu is a Dravidian language spoken in South-Western India. This paper will look at select work and dance songs from this collection and examine the agency of the female voices within them. In particular, the gender roles that the working women fulfill will be critiqued. The collection offers a diversity of voices, many enmeshed in the patriarchal norms, while several also appear to question that dominance. There is a recurrent trend of metaphors being utilized as a means of apparent catharsis in the face of abuse. The imagery of vegetable, fish, cattle and the agrarian setup is the backdrop for the performance of these songs. The women singing them only do so in the presence of other women, championing a certain "freedom of expression." The sexual undertones in the work songs also function as a tool for release, although their implied agency will be examined further. The caste-forced poverty is also apparent in the uttered and clear desire for jewels and upward class mobility. Thus, a double oppression is at play. The women in these songs are equated along with cattle, subjected to male ownership which leads to them internalizing the prevalent patriarchy. Lastly, how these women may have internalized the entire narrative is also central. In order to do so, critical tools advocated by Adrienne Rich, Simone de Beauvoir, and Helen Cixous would be applied.

University Hall 1226
Zoom Link:

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: One

1b. Literature:

Komal Phuyal, Tribhuvan University,
Rebel as the Creative Anarchist: Modes of Resistance in Nazrul Islam and Bairagi Kainla

Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976) and Bairagi Kainla (1939-) invent their unique position to envision the contour of rebel in "The Rebel" (1922) and "Drunk Man's Speech to the Street after Midnight" (1960) respectively. The rebellious self recognizes the space akin to the primordial universe from which to begin the world anew. As nonconformist poets of Bengal and Nepal, Islam and Kainla delve into the structure until they uncover the last remnant of the oppressive order to expose the inequalities such structures promote in each society. The mode of resistance that the poetic persona adopts to view the existing social order presents a novel way of responding to the tyranny. Islam's rebel takes the form of anarchist, debunking the firm structure of the British Raj. In the similar ways, Kainla's persona poetically gets intoxicated to order the intellectuals to walk out on the street seeking for change. In both cases, the revolting self emerges larger than the political order. Using Marxist dialectics as implied in later Foucault and David Jeffer's concept of resistance, this study examines the mode of resistance that enables creative writers to uphold the contour of the rebellious self seeking of the space of creative anarchy.

Abhishek Jain, Independent scholar,
Emplotment and Historicity in the Prabandha of Haribhadra Sūri

This essay attempts to see anomaly of Jain Prabandha texts that proposes a methodology in which a discourse of past events from the 13th to 16th century can be called historical, but scholars sitting in the department of history are hesitant to establish them or categorize them as being a form of historical discourse. Even if they do, South Asian historians rely on source criticism which is a method that have been employed by Eurocentric historians. When applying European way of history in South Asian literature, cultural-literary tradition is neglected. Since the entire corpus cannot be read at once, the Prabandha of Haribhadra Sūri from the Prabandhakośa written in 1348 CE by Rājaśekhara Suri will be discussed to demonstrate the feasibility of regime of historicity. To read Jain Prabandha corpus from a local conceptual perspective or local proofs of concepts, a methodology can be proposed that may open up a new discussion on theory of narrative and theory of history within the study of South Asia with particular reference to medieval Sanskrit literature through which historicity, which makes a discourse historical, may be understood.

University Hall 1226
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: One

1c. Politics in South Asia: Kashmir and Human Rights

Bhavna Misri, University of Johannesburg,
The Loss of Home and Habitation for the Displaced Kashmiri Pandits

The late 1980s saw the beginning of political turmoil in Kashmir valley including a cross-border proxy war sponsored by Pakistan and a separatist movement led by insurgent sections of the Kashmiri Muslim population. Kashmiri Pandits were a micro-minority in their natural habitat, numbered at approximately 400,000 and less than 2% of the total Kashmiri population in 1990. While the pot has been boiling in Kashmir since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, and India has fought two wars with that country, matters came to a head in the early nineties. With the rise of religious zealotry, the minority community, that identified as Indian, faced a genocide which led to their en masse exodus from Kashmir in 1990. While there has been a lot of brouhaha regarding the political standoff between India, Pakistan, and the majority religious populace of Kashmir, the losses suffered by the minority Kashmiri Pandit community, as a result of this conflict, have not been addressed in tangible and measurable terms. In the last three decades, the community has spread all over the world and has lost not only a homeland but the complete concept of home (abode, neighbourhood, family bonds et al.). Using a mixed research methodology, the research shall investigate the transition in the habitation status of the Kashmiri Pandit community, from their original abode to their current status as diaspora, drawing a trajectory between three data points, 1980s (pre-insurgency), 1990 (the year of exodus) and present day to illustrate the loss of home and identity.

Kanika Bhalla, Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, UNC Chapel Hill,
Evolution of the Kashmiri Arms Movement: Jihad in Vikram Chandra's The Srinagar Conspiracy

The division of the Islamic community into different nations in the world is one of the justifications offered by the Islamists in defense of their call for jihad. In response to this, the meaning of the concept of martyrdom also undergoes a subtle but substantial shift. The status of a martyr, instead of being exclusively conferred upon those who die spreading the message of Islam, is now given to those who die defending their states as well. One can presume that even though the Islamic civilization has achieved the 'stability' once so strongly desired by them, jihad continues in the form of anti-colonial movements and national liberation struggles. In my paper, I will try to debate whether Vikram A. Chandra has been able to realistically represent India, Pakistan, and Kashmir in The Srinagar Conspiracy, his journalistic narrative of the Kashmir conflict recounting the pre-partition era of India and Pakistan to the beginning of the 21st century. The article also focuses upon the representation of Pakistan's role in aggravating insurgency in Kashmir, while looking into the manipulation and misappropriation of the Islamic concepts of 'jihad' and 'martyrdom' by the foreign mercenaries from Afghanistan and Pakistan, which imposes a terrorist label on the Kashmiri struggle for independence.

University Hall 1401
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: One

1c. Politics in South Asia: Kashmir and Human Rights

Suparna Soni, SUNY Buffalo State,
Gender Representation in Bureaucracy and Human Rights in India

The relationship between democracy and human rights has widely been studied, and there is a consensus that democratic authority will be less likely to violate the human rights of its citizens. Nevertheless, democracy is necessary but often not sufficient to uphold human rights, especially in private affairs. So, when is democracy adequate for the full realization of human rights? The representativeness of its bureaucracy plays a vital role in the effective translation of this relationship of democracy and human rights. According to the 2021 report of the United Nations Development Program," gender equality is at the core of an inclusive and accountable public administration." Accordingly, the diversification of public service recruitment is crucial for government institutions to improve the government's functioning and make it more responsive and accountable to vulnerable social groups' needs. This research seeks to provide a gendered perspective on representative bureaucracy and explores the role of women's representation in protecting liberal democratic principles and promoting human rights. While utilizing the theoretical lens of representative bureaucracy, this study advances our understanding of DHR and public administration relationships in recognizing and realizing women's human rights.

University Hall 1401
Zoom Link:

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: One

1d. Educational Innovation and Embodied Philosophy:

Marcy Braverman Goldstein, Founder, Sanskrit Revolution
Stephanie Corigliano, Humboldt State University
Kiesha Battles, Bennett College
Raj Balkaran, Founder, School of Indian Wisdom

Educational Innovation at Embodied Philosophy, an Online Certificate Program for Yoga Studies

Shifts occurring within academia such as the feasibility of tenure, job insecurity for adjunct instructors, the decline of literature, and soaring tuition costs, etc. are interwoven with the rise of educational innovations offered by faculty who are founding and teaching in programs online and at yoga studios internationally.. Adult education is changing and expanding. What are these new learning opportunities? How are they similar to and different from traditional university education? Who is teaching and who is enrolling? How is administration handled? What is going smoothly, and what challenges are arising?

Online education offers a 21st century path to knowledge and wisdom that many people are seeking and which more people will find as these paths expand and deepen. Participants at this roundtable discussion will answer a range of questions that fall into the two categories below. We represent a variety of perspectives as academics who teach at both universities and Embodied Philosophy. Additionally, we are founders and instructors at yoga schools and programs, and also represent the online student perspective. Embodied Philosophy offers a high quality education, and we are always looking at ways to improve the program as it moves into its fourth year and beyond. This roundtable discussion will provide a forum for people to engage, envision, and plan for the future of online education, both within and outside of traditional modalities for learning.

University Hall 1402
Zoom Link:

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Two

2a. Jain Goddess Padmavati: Literature and Practices

Venu Mehta, Claremont School of Theology,
Constructing Jain Goddess Padmāvatī in Gujarati Literature

The importance of Padmāvatī, the Jain goddess, and the yakṣī, the female attendant deity of the twenty-third Jina Pārśvanātha can be seen in the several references made to her in Jain history, iconography, and Sanskrit literature. However, this paper argues that the vast literature in the Gujarati language dedicated to Padmāvatī is particularly constructing her unique regional identity. Drawing mainly upon understudied, published, and unpublished textual evidence in the Gujarati language from the late eighteenth century to the contemporary time, I demonstrate ways in which various forms of literature are creating Padmāvatī's identity that, while maintaining her Jain affiliation, highlights her as a Mother Goddess with a regional version of female divinity.

Christopher Key Chapple, Loyola Marymount University,
Worship of Padmavati at Vallabh Smarak Jain Mandir, Alipur, Delhi

Honoring of Padmavati takes place daily at Vallabh Smarak Jain Mandir in Alipur, Delhi. This presentation will point out family resemblances between the Padmavati Puja in Alipur and Hindu forms of goddess worship. An explication and portions of a 108 verse Sanskrit text will be provided.

Caleb Simmons, University of Arizona,
The Goddess's Domain: Kingship and the Authority of the Jain Goddess Padmavati

In this paper, I will examine the role of the Jain Goddess Padmavati in her role as the source of sovereign power in premodern India. I will argue that Padmavati, as the ruler over her physico-spiritual domain (kṣetra), transferred her divine sovereignty and authority to local rulers in southern India. To make my case, I will examine a 12-century genealogy from the Western Ganga dynasty that tells of the kingdom's foundations at the choice of the goddess. This process is replicated in the region up to the colonial period. Through a closer examination of the origin narratives and the process of authorization, we can see the vital role that Padmavati played in the establishment of earthly sovereignty.

University Hall 1775
Zoom Link:

Simultaneous Sessions: Two

2a. Jain Goddess Padmavati: Literature and Practices

Choodamani Nandagopal, Jain University,
PADMAVATHI The Jaina Goddess – Significance of Imagery and Rituals

The art of image making is a glorious and living testimony to the uniqueness of Indian art and culture. Indeed the icons stand as the epitomized symbols of Indian cultural heritage. The sacred duty of a jaina is to worship images, dedicate sacred images and sacred books, and build temples and libraries. A historical instance of Attimabbe, wife of a chieftain under Kalyana Chalukyas in early 11th century distributed one thousand and five hundred images of Jina Parshvanatha made of gold and studded with precious stones, to the devotees. She ordered the scribes to write one thousand copies of poet Ponna's 'Shanthipurana' on palm leaves and they too were distributed among scholars. So, image worship has a great importance and strongly rooted tradition in Jainism. The images are to be created to the specific iconographic features according to the Jaina sacred texts. There is not much of difference in image worship between Shvetambara and Digambara sects of Jainism.

Apart from the images of 24 tirthankaras, there were plenty of images known as Yakshas and Yakshis in Jaina order. In Vallabhi Council in the 6th century CE, a pantheon of divinities were formed and introduced. These divinities were the guardian spirits, known as shasanadevata, who fulfill the wishes of ordinary devotees. Every tirthankara has a dedicated pair of yaksha and yakshi. On the right of the tirthankara are the yaksha and on the left are the images of the yakshis. They are known to serve the tirthankara, protect him while he is in penance. Along with the Tirthankaras the yaksha and yakshi are also worshipped. In Karnataka, according to Jaina scholar, Nagarajiah, by the 1st and 2nd century CE the worship of yaksha and yakshi as shasanadevatas was popular. Though each of the twenty four tirthankaras have separate yaksha and yakshi the most popular are the five yakshis, namely, Pamdavathi, Chakreshvari, Jvalamalini, Kushmandini and Siddhayini known as 'Pancha Kuladevi'. However the tradition of worship of these goddesses became more prevalent after the 9th Century CE.

In course of development Goddess Padmavathi attained highest socio-cultural acceptance. Songs and special chants were composed, elaborate rituals were observed, especially Fridays were chosen for customary rituals, offerings to Padmavathi similar to that of Hindu Goddess were introduced, independent shrines were built, even tantric practices and texts were associated with the Yakshi Padmavathi. This paper explores the special iconography, modes of worship, ritual significance, myths and legends associated with Padmavathi, the Jaina Goddess.

University Hall 1775
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Two

2a. Jain Goddess Padmavati: Literature and Practices

Robert Zydenbos, Ludwig-Maximilians-Univeristät München (LMU Munich, Germany),
The Jaina Goddess Padmavati in Karnataka: Literature and Practice

The number of yakṣi-s or 'goddesses' in Jainism is large, but in the current religious practice of the Jainas in Karnataka only three of them play a significant role; among these three, Padmāvati is clearly the most prominent. Her main kṣētra is in the small village of Hombuja in central Karnataka and attracts devotees not only from the whole of India but also from overseas. Apart from a medieval sthalapurāṇa which tells the history of the kṣētra, there also exists a wealth of folk literature about the goddess, which illustrates the kind of personality she is believed to have and which also sheds light on the shamanistic rituals that are a part of her worship. This presentation will mainly deal with Hombuja, but it will also touch upon the cult of Padmāvati in other localities in Karnataka.

University Hall 1775
Zoom Link:

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Two

2b. Politics: Belt Road, Pakistan, Security:

Murad Ali, University of Malakand, Pakistan,
China's Belt and Road Initiative and US policy options: is the US doing too little, too late?

Since its formal launching by President Xi Jinping in 2015, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has remained the focus of significant discussion and research in media, think tanks, and academia across the globe. Aimed to cover about 65 countries comprising 60 per cent of the global population, the BRI is Beijing's most ambitious foreign policy venture to finance infrastructure projects including power plants, trade and economic corridors, and telecommunication and transport infrastructure. The main question this research explores is what specific initiatives and measures the US has taken or may take to contain a rising China. To this end, this paper critically examines how the US has responded to China's BRI and what policy options it has taken vis-à-vis growing role of Beijing under the BRI. It reviews several US-led initiatives, both economic and geopolitical/security to counter the expanding role of China. In the economic sphere, there are two key US-led initiatives. First, the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor (IPEC), a policy rooted in Obama's `US rebalancing' and `pivot to Asia' strategy. Second, the Build Back Better World (B3W) plan. This was proposed by President Biden during the G7 Summit held in the UK in 2021, wherein he stated that China has BRI, the US and its allies have a new vision for funding infrastructure projects in developing countries which he claimed will be 'greener and more inclusive'. On defense and security fronts, the US has come up with initiatives including AUKUS (comprising Australia, the UK and the US) and the rejuvenation of the Quad comprising the US, Australia, India and Japan to counter Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. This research examines whether these and other US measures will be sufficient to counter the rising influence and expanding role of Beijing or is the US doing too little and too late.

University Hall 1226
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Two

2b. Politics: Belt Road, Pakistan, Security:

Mohammed Athar, Syracuse University,
Third World Solidarities: Pakistan's Relationship with Iran and Saudi Arabia during the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Period

In the aftermath of the 1971 Indo-Pak War, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was left to pick up the pieces after a bitter defeat that separated Pakistan from its eastern wing, establishing the state of Bangladesh. Pakistan's conduct during the war, especially its brutal suppression of Bengalis, sullied its international reputation. Historically, Pakistan relied on the West, particularly the United States, to sustain its economy and other needs. Yet, in Bhutto's view, the U.S. did little to support Pakistan during the war, and now Washington was reluctant to continue economic and military support.

Bhutto understood that he could no longer primarily rely on Western support. Thus, under the guise of Third World and Islamic solidarity, Bhutto sought out support from Africa and the Middle East. In his first few months in office, Bhutto embarked on a tour of the region, with notable stops in Iran and Saudi Arabia, which I argue became Pakistan's primary benefactors in the 1970s. A student of international relations, Bhutto framed the relationship as an emergence of a new block in Third World and global politics and envisioned Pakistan as its head. In hosting the Second Islamic Summit Conference of 1974, coordinating with Iran to establish the Regional Cooperation for Development, and establishing cultural and religious links to Saudi Arabia, I argue that Bhutto constructed a Third World and Islamic solidarity discourse not only to rectify the myriad of issues facing Pakistan in the aftermath of 1971, but also to establish an alternative to the U.S.-Soviet dynamic of the Cold War.

Iram Naseer, Forman Christian University,
South Asia in pursuit of human security; Challenges and Concerns in 21st Century

Security debates have changed over the years, since the post-Cold War era. Now security focuses more on people-centric rather than state-centric security. In this backdrop, the research points out that despite attaining steady economic growth, South Asia faced heavy starvation and individual suffering. So, this study examines that the problem of social well-being is a core dilemma of humans and governments of the region. The states of this side required to emphasis on mushrooming non-traditional security intimidations to encourage the insurance of the communities and increase the excellence of their survives by devoting capitals in human improvement and realizing the legitimate necessities indispensable to defend essential human privileges and self-esteem. Besides, for theoretical understating the thoughts of human development by Mahboob-ul-Haq has applied to further build a sound argument. Whereas, the primary source material has been accumulated from official files, annual reports, and policy statements of policymakers in this region. As a whole, the subject argues that in order to discourse politico-socio-fiscal and ethnic differences and get wealth; the responsibility is far more about the nations themselves to arrange the human safekeeping program through shared partnership rather than to blame the outside forces.

University Hall 1226
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

Saturday, March 12th, 9:35–11:00am PST: Panel 2

Simultaneous Sessions: Two

2c. Teaching in Times of Covid:

Mayuri Deka, The University of the Bahamas,
The virtual classroom of the pandemic: Effective online learning and South Asian Literature

The pandemic forced a sudden shift to e-learning, whereby teaching is being remotely undertaken through digital platforms. There are questions now on whether virtual classrooms are here to stay and if this shift reflects a radical change in the way education occurs across the world. While there was already an upward trend in the adoption of education technology with global edtech investments reaching US$18.66 billion in 2019 and the overall market for online education projected to reach $350 Billion by 2025, the pandemic has contributed to a significant surge in e-learning growth. While virtual classrooms are only one part of online learning, for most instructors the shift from the physical space has had the most considerable impact on their teaching strategies. Within the South Asian Literature classroom, instructors have had to come to terms with not only engaging students within a remote space but also to address content that to many students appears distant and alien. The challenge is not only to create teaching strategies more effective for online learning but also to promote understanding of material that is sometimes outside of their proto-typical socio-cultural scape.

The classroom could be an opportunity where instructors provide students with alternative frameworks of perceiving the racial Other to lead to more pro-social thinking. The literary texts, written and visual, included in the curricula can present a world separate from the usual scape and allow students to engage with the Other from an empathy-based perspective. Pedagogical strategies focused on expanding the students' awareness of sameness along with shrinking their sense of distinction from the Other would widen their core identity components. This would allow the students to incorporate more varied information in their perception and judgement of the racial Other. Thus, content and strategies that focus on empathy within the South Asian Literature classroom can reduce biases and result in pro-social thinking and action.

University Hall 1401
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Two

2c. Teaching in Times of Covid:

Gunindu Abeysekara, University of California, Irvine,
Translating and Transforming Our Diaspora: A Sri Lankan American's Experiences Curating the Language-Learning Blog @SpeakInSinhala

At the onset of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, our cultural realities transformed in unprecedented ways. Such is the case of "YALU," the Sri Lankan American youth organization I co-founded in 2018. We created YALU: Youth Advancement, Leadership, and Unification, also the word for "friend" in the Sinhalese language, to foster transnational relationships between Sri Lankan Americans and Sri Lankans living on the island through various programs. One such way was through a physical pen pal letter-exchange program that we had to halt, along with our in-person language instruction, because of the pandemic. Consequently, I decided to create the Instagram-based blog @SpeakInSinhala1 on April 14, 2020, Sinhala and Tamil new year.

@SpeakInSinhala began as a personal attempt to curate daily words and phrases in Sinhala which I pair with Sri Lankan art and history. As my following grew, I decided to use the blog to create vocabulary on current events and social justice issues to encourage conversation on such topics in the Sinhalese-speaking community. Some topics include, environmental sustainability, LGBTQIA+ rights, feminism, Black Lives Matter, disablity justice, Palestininan liberation, equity for Tamil civilians, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this endeavor, I not only became fluent in my native language, but also stimulated an interest in the intersections of Sri Lankan culture and activism in others. Through this process, and now with a following of over 1,100 people from across the world, I have experienced a unique criticism of being called a "traitor to Sri Lanka" by Sinhalese supremacists for attempting to present constructive criticisms of the Sri Lankan state. With my background in media studies and a master's in Asian American studies, I am compelled to analyze these experiences as valuable insight into the role of social media, arts, and national belonging in the Sri Lankan diaspora. Furthermore, this paper examines my perspectives on intergenerational cultural transmission, navigating Sri Lankan ethnic and religious tension, media curation, and youth activism while creating and curating this blog.

University Hall 1401
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Two

2c. Teaching in Times of Covid:

V.P. Sagimaynonathan, The American College, Madurai, India,
Educational injustices in South Asian classes: Mute cry of Indian internal migrant children

The unprecedented global spread of Covid-19 which resulted in the outbreak of mass human exodus due to uncertainty with the scale of never-before-in the known human history had raised an alarm on the humanitarian migrant crisis. In India, "the largest movement of migrants since the partition" (Ellis-Petersen & Chaurasia, 2020) due to the 'Janta curfew' on 22nd March 2020 (lockdown) has attracted the world-wide attention to the untold miseries and the plight of incalculable internal migrants across India. The internal labor migration in India is record-setting at around 117.9 million inter-district and 54.4 million interstate, as per 2011 Indian Census (Rajan & Bhagat, 2022). Indian internal migrant issue entails under researched problems of migrant children. Therefore, this study sets out to analyze the socio-educational vulnerabilities of migrant school children and the nonchalant educational policies which neglect the cultural and linguistic resources of migrant children's 'mother tongue(s)' at the school setting. The study is restricted to an educational district (Hosur) in Tamilnadu – one of the 28 states in India. A questionnaire about the nature and conditions of migrant school children in the destination-district will be administered. Data will be analyzed with view of understanding the migrant children's educational marginalization and the state's exclusive policy. The study argues that MTBMLE which is in place in all most all the states in India, does not cater to the needs of the migrant stakeholders, because the programs do (can) not accommodate migrants' resourceful mother tongues in the pedagogic instructions due to the practicality of non-availability of human/teacher resources. Rather, it proposes that the linguistic and educational rights of the labor migrants' children under the Right to Education Act 2000 are to be addressed for ensuring access to schooling with an inclusive-exclusionary policy such as 'Education through English' in order to be able to help them socially and economically move upward. Hence, the study, in short, would argue that an exclusionary language policy is also a mandate alongside the non-materialisable inclusive rhetoric of 'education for all.'

University Hall 1401
Zoom Link:

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Two

2d. Material Culture: Painting Durga, Embroidery, Circus:

Deepak Shimkhada, Chaffey College,
Born from a Ball of Fire

"That peerless splendor—born from the bodies of all the gods, unified and pervading the Triple World with its luster—became a woman."
—Devi Mahatmya 2:12

The birth of Durga, a beautiful painting depicted on the walls of a room in the Hanuman Dhoka Palace of Kathmandu, Nepal, will be the subject of my presentation. The wall painting—derived from the story of Devi Mahatmya, a Hindu text—is of great importance for the Hindus of the Shakta order. I see uncanny parallels between this painting and the Big Bang, theorized by scientists as an event that took place some 14 billion years ago.

Using the passages from the Devi Mahatmya as a basis, I propose to compare this painting of the birth of the Goddess Durga with the Big Bang against the backdrop of the rare images painted in the Hanuman Dhoka Palace. With this, I wish to build a bridge between religion and science through the medium of art.

Natasha Narain, Queensland University of Technology, Australia,
ReKalibrating Kantha: historical and contemporary perspectives of a creative practitioner

Kantha is a Bengali women's hand embroidery tradition that references *Kaan* or ear and *Katha* or story, suggesting the power of visual language to create places for digressive conversations. Placing the practioner at the centre, I reinvigorate select historical Kantha from feminist and decolonial perspectives by relocating them from silenced Museum exhibits to pre-modern Bengal. I demonstrate how the unknown maker personally reflects and narrates with agency and humour, the complexities of her lived experiences negotiating between private and public spaces, multiple mythologies, social history, and ecology. Finally, I demonstrate how my interdisciplinary works recreate similar relationships between form and content, upcycling, and sustainable practice, to offer transnational placemaking and sites for layered conversations.

University Hall 1402
Zoom Link:

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Two

2d. Material Culture: Painting Durga, Embroidery, Circus:

Nisha Poyyaprath Rayaroth, Yale University,
Caste and Resistance: A Social History of Indian Circus

Circus in the Indian subcontinent is deeply embedded with the arrival of the modern, the remaking of caste and gender hierarchies, the transformation of physical cultures, bodies, and performances, the expansion of itinerant entertainment, the emergence of new transregional and transnational spaces, the interventions of the colonial and the postcolonial states on nature, humans, and animals, and the development of various technologies. In my recently published book, Jumbos and Jumping Devils: A Social History of Indian Circus (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2020), I discuss how caste reformed the space of the traditional martial art, Kalaripayatt (marked with Hindu caste purity notions) into a 'modern' circus kalari opening an egalitarian world of all castes and genders. Women, men and children who got trained in these circus kalaris went on to perform not only in the circuses across India but also in the performance arenas in Europe, America and Australia in the early decades of 20th century. But this does not figure in any colonial, nationalist, or subaltern historical narratives of 'resistance' or 'reform' in Malabar, South India. This is not at all surprising since the history of circus and acrobatics in South Asia itself remains a hardly explored realm.

Chandrika Sunkad, Deccan College,
Engineering and Scientific technology in Indus Valley Civilization

There have been innumerable writings about the Indus Valley Civilization being a Dravidian culture; that there was an Aryan Invasion, or a migration theory. My paper explores into archaeological artifacts and structures that have been bought to light in the numerous excavations. It focuses on engineering techniques such as hydraulics, town-planning, architecture and standardization of weights and measures. These recall a functional and modern ways of living and intellectual advancement that existed and can be compared to other ancient civilizations. I contend that archaeological data and its objective interpretation are crucial for understanding past history.

University Hall 1402
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola
Marymount
University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

William H. Hannon Library, Third Floor

Special Collections at LMU's Hannon Library and LMU's Archaeology Museum have created a display of many treasures from South Asia. A special SASA exhibit will be open for viewing for one hour that will include Indus Valley clay lamps, seals, and votive images from the Indus Valley Civilation (ca. 3000 B.C.E.) South Asia; early European lithographs of Hindu Temples from the colonial era; household shrines from the Pieper Collection; and bronze images of gods and goddesses.

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Plenary Session
Von der Ahe Family Suite
Zoom Link:

Launch of Monsoon: Journal of the South Asian Studies Association

Monsoon Journal, Volume One, Issue One

Igor Sitnikov, Ryasan College of Fine Arts, Russia and
David Blundell, University of California, Los Angeles,
Digital and Spatial Humanities Mapping: Eurasia-Pacific Early Trade and Belief Linkages

Nalini Rao, Soka University,
Ganges in Indian Sculpture and Literature: Mythology and Personification

Christopher Key Chapple, Loyola Marymount University,
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Perspectives from Contemporary India and 6th Century Jain Yoga

Debashish Banerji, California Institute of Integral Studies,
Vedantic Basis and Praxis of the Integral Advaita of Sri Aurobindo

Deepak Shimkhada, Chaffey College,
Tushā Hiti: A Stepwell in Nepal

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

Saturday, March 12th, 5:00–7:00pm PST: Plenary Session

Plenary Session
Von der Ahe Family Suite
Zoom Link:

Auroville: The City the Earth Needs, Cult or Utopia?

Discussion with author of the book *Better to Have Gone: Love, Death and the Quest for Utopia in Auroville*
Akash Kapur in conversation with:

Debashish Banerji, California Institute for Integral Studies
Eliza Kent, Skidmore College
Robert McDermott, California Institute for Integral Studies
Christopher Key Chapple, Loyola Marymount University

Auroville, in Tamil Nadu, South India, was founded at the height of the Western counterculture, in 1968, by Mirra Alfassa, also known as The Mother, the spiritual partner and collaborator of Indian yogi and philosopher, Sri Aurobindo. It was meant to be an international community of about 50,000 spiritual aspirants attempting to realize a creative utopia of human unity built around lives of cultural diversity dedicated to the growth and expression of consciousness. The Mother saw Auroville as a model for collective life in the future and designated it as "the city the earth needs." A little over 50 years old at present, Auroville houses about 3000 residents from around the world, occupied variously in a growing mini-cosmopolis. In many respects a success story, particularly with environmental rehabilitation, child education and creative expression, Auroville is not without its shadows, and has been featured occasionally as one among the many fanatical and/or eccentric cults of our times. In recent years a number of books have been written by early inhabitants of Auroville, reflecting on the history of the community in its difficult birth-throes to emerge into the fullness of its ideal. This history reveals several common and ongoing patterns related to the life of intentional communities, including periods of extreme crisis, but also an extraordinary resilience that has allowed it to continue to survive and develop. The most recent book of this kind is Akash Kapur's *Better to Have Gone: Love, Death and the Quest for Utopia in Auroville* published by Scribner in July 2021. It has been very positively reviewed in the American press, including selection as a New York Times Notable Book and Editor's Choice. Kapur has also edited an anthology *Auroville: Dream and Reality*, published in 2018. Two other recent books that traverse an overlapping terrain of Auroville memory are Jocelyn Janaka's *The Antithesis of Yoga* and Amrit's *Children of Change: A Spiritual Pilgrimage*. The proposed round-table will discuss the history represented in these books in terms of aspirational communities, cults, utopias and the future of human habitat.

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Three

3a. Comparative Religion:

Edward Ulrich, University Of St. Thomas,
Aurobindo Ghose's Early Approaches to Hindu-Muslim Relations (1906–1909)

In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth centuries a militant nationalism was developing that had British rule as its target. Today there is a militant nationalism that has Islam as its target. Some of today's Hindu nationalists look to Aurobindo Ghose as a progenitor and some scholars have looked for roots of today's nationalism in Aurobindo's life and writings. However, today's era is a different era with different issues. This paper looks at a narrow slice of Aurobindo's life, his politically active period of 1906-1909, examining at his stance towards the Muslims. On the one hand, he had ideals of inclusion, but on the other hand, he fell short of those ideals in carrying out his political agenda. This presentation focuses, in particular, on the 1907 Hindu-Muslim riots in East Bengal and on Aurobindo's reaction to the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909.
(This presentation is based on an article of mine, by the same title, in the 2022 issue of the Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies.)

Adam Pave, San Bernardino Valley College,
Jesus in Hinduism

Jesus is a religious figure who can be polarizing and divisive or unifying and edifying. Perhaps many believe that Jesus is only studied within the Christian (or perhaps "Western") world. This is most certainly not the case, and the figure of Jesus is studied from many perspectives. Some of those important and interesting perspectives are from India and the Hindu world.
The impetus for this presentation is that I teach a course at a community college called "Jesus and His Interpreters." Within, I offer my experiences – some more successful than others – in teaching this course with a pluralistic approach.

Many students come to the course on "Jesus and His Interpreters" and do not expect to study Jesus from outside the Christian world. However, I include thinkers from Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and, of course, Hinduism. Ram Roy, Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Gandhi, and others have something valuable to say about how we might better understand Jesus. These thinkers also approach why this particular religious founder matters to the world – and particularly to the Hindu world. Through the lens of a religiously pluralistic approach, students come to understand the value of studying about this one particularly important religious figure. Additionally, they might also come to appreciate the idea of syncretism as this seemingly non-Hindu religious figure might be incorporated within an Indian or otherwise Hindu context.

University Hall 1775
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Three

3a. Comparative Religion:

Rohini Pragya Samani, Jain Vishva Bharti Institute, Ladnun, India,
"Merit" (Puṇya) Revisiting: Offerings to Śvetāmbara Terapanthi Jain Ascetics in Pandemic Covid-19

The seven or nine reals of Jainism which were the principles of metaphysics eventually were associated with epistemology, ethics, and soteriology. From the late canonical period onwards "reals" became the content of three jewels (ratna-traya): right world view (samyag-darśana), right knowledge (samyag-jñāna), and right conduct (samyag-cāritra) that constitutes the path of liberation. Of the nine realities I would like to discuss the notion of "merit" (puṇya) in terms of offerings made to ascetics that can be revisited by the Śvetāmbara Terāpantha lay community in the present scenario of Covid-19 pandemic as aspect of their right conduct.

University Hall 1775
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Three

3b. Kashmir Shaivism:

Vikram Zutshi, Independent Researcher,
Shonaleeka Kaul, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University,
Subhash Kak, Oklamaha State University,
Sunil Raina, Himalayan Heritage Foundation,

1000 Years of Kashmir Shaivism: A Historical Survey

Trika Shaivism, also known as Kashmir Shaivism, is a non-dual tradition of Shaiva-Shakta Tantra, which originated sometime after 850 CE in Kashmir. Defining features of the Trika tradition are its monistic 'doctrine of recognition' (Pratyabhijna), propounded by Utpaladeva (c. 925–975 CE) and Abhinavagupta (c. 975–1025 CE), and the centrality of the three goddesses Parā, Parāparā, and Aparā.

The main exegetical works of Trika Shaivism are those of Abhinavagupta, such as the Tantraloka, Mālinīślokavārttika, and Tantrasāra, which are formally an exegesis of the Mālinīvijayottara Tantra, although they also drew heavily on the Kali-based Krama subcategory of the Kulamārga.

20th century revival:

After the 14th century, there were no major published works on Trika Shaivism in Kashmir or the rest of the subcontinent. In the 20th century, Swami Lakshman Joo, a Kashmiri Hindu, helped revive both the academic and yogic streams of Kashmir Shaivism with his enormous contribution to the field. He inspired a generation of scholars such as Alexis Sanderson, Jaideva Singh and Mark Dyzcowski, who made Kashmir Shaivism a legitimate field of inquiry within the academy.

Swami Muktananda, although not belonging to the direct lineage of Kashmir Shaivism, was strongly drawn to the teachings, validated by his own direct experience. He also introduced Kashmir Shaivism to a wide audience of western meditators through his writings and teachings on the subject.

This round table proposes to discuss the evolution of Kashmir Shaivism from its early origins to present day and seeks to understand the place of this venerable tradition in contemporary academy settings as well as in traditional Sampradayas.

University Hall 1226
Zoom Link:

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Three

3c. Temple and Monumental Art:

Punam Madhok, East Carolina University,
The Multifarious Temple Art of Jayavarman VII and the French Orientalist Interest in Cambodia

Built between ninth and thirteenth centuries CE, the temples of Angkor are remains of the acclaimed Khmer Empire. Some of the most impressive among them were built during the reign of Jayavarman VII (reigned c. 1181-1218 CE), a devout Buddhist. He was emulating Ashoka (reigned 272-231 BCE), who had mounds called 'stupas' erected all over India. Jayavarman's Bayon is the magnum opus of Khmer sacred architecture. Carved into its towers are large faces, that have been interpreted as Shiva, Brahma, Lokeshvara, Vajrasattva or Hevajra. Jayavarman also dedicated temples to deified family-members -- Preah Khan to his father, Ta Prohm to his mother, and Banteay Chhmar to his chosen protégé. The mythical eagle, Garuda, and multi-headed serpent, naga, feature prominently on these temples. A project with remedial power that has survived is Neak Pean, built in reverence of Buddha Bhaisajyaguru. Dancing maidens -- Apsaras or Yoginis -- are carved on many temple walls. Jayavarman had halls attached to temples where living damsels would perform ritual dances. They have inspired the creation of classical Cambodian ballet of today. After Cambodia became a French protectorate in 1863, Louis Delaporte (1842-1925), a young French naval officer, made fanciful watercolors of Angkor temples and usurped statues that are now housed in Paris' Guimet museum. Drawing upon my field trip of December 2019, I wish to explore further the amalgamation of Buddhist and Hindu imagery on these temples as well as the French orientalist interest in this region.

Choodamani Nandagopal, Former DEAN School of Humanities & Social Sciences Art Historian UNESCO Fellow,
Rudreshvara (Ramappa) Glorious Kakatiya Living Temple

Rudreshvara (Ramappa) Temple – The Crest Jewel of Kakatiya Art and Architecture, with the foundation inscription dated 1213 CE is unique as it is the lone testimony of the technological excellence and the fine technique of exquisite craftsmanship with the use of different and diverse materials. The entire temple has been conceived with an aesthetically designed form: the Lotus, the Padma. The Chitraputrikas (salabhanjikas) in the form of bracket figures adorning the exterior of the sabhamandapa and the dancing figures adorning the pillars in the interiors are visually arresting and they adhere to the cannons of ancient texts. The temple heralds spiritual merit and glory of the patron Recharla Rudra.
Socio-religious and cultural notions of the times are well captured and presented by the Kakatiya architects in this illuminative space 8 centuries ago, earning a proud place in the art history and culture of India.

Ramappa Temple inscribed as 39th UNESCO World Heritage Site in India on 25th July 2021.

University Hall 1401
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Three

3c. Temple and Monumental Art:

Michael Calabria, St. Bonaventure University,
The Language of the Taj Mahal: Islam, Prayer and the Religion of Shah Jahan

The Taj Mahal, built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (1592-1666 CE) as a mausoleum for his wife Mumtaz Mahal (1593-1631 CE), is considered exceptional in the history of world architecture for its extraordinary beauty and artistry. Within the context of Mughal funerary architecture, the Taj Mahal is also significant for its extensive and unprecedented inscriptional program of Arabic calligraphy.

Although there is much scholarship on the architecture of the Taj Mahal, there has been very little work done on the Qur'anic inscriptions. This paper will address this lacuna. Referring to findings from my recently published book by the same title (published by I.B. Tauris/Bloomsbury, Nov. 2021), I will provide a deeper understanding of the Taj Mahal and its builder by examining the Qur'anic inscriptions within their architectural, scriptural, historical and biographical contexts. I will address such questions as: who chose these particular suras, and why? What meaning and significance did they have for Shah Jahan and his subjects in the seventh-century? By using selected texts, I will also demonstrate that the Taj Mahal is not merely an historic Islamic funerary monument, but by means of Qur'anic texts, it was intended to address issues of morality, social justice, charity, righteousness, interfaith relations, theology and eschatology for all peoples of the Mughal Empire.

University Hall 1401
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Three

3d. Buddhism:

Sirnanda Unaleeye, University of the West,
Bodhi Pūjā, The practice of worshipping the Bodhi tree in Sri Lanka

My paper is based on the practice of worshipping the Bodhi tree by Sri Lankan Buddhist practitioners. Worshipping a tree could be considered the most ancient form of religion that ancient ancestors practiced before the concept of theism emerged in society. The Bodhi tree is sacred in Buddhism since the Buddha enlightened under a Bodhi tree. Even though all Buddhists worldwide respect and revere the Bodhi tree, Sri Lankan Buddhists engage more in that practice even in the United States. In my paper, I try to discover and present why Sri Lankan Buddhists engage in that practice. Compared to the Theravāda religious practices of other Theravāda countries and communities, I found that Sri Lankan Theravāda practitioners are more interested in Bodhi tree worship. According to the practitioners, the meaning of worshipping the Bodhi tree and performing pūjā-s have advanced benefits. They include assurance, blessings, making aspirations, awakening the wisdom, concentrating the mind and meditation, venerating the great wisdom of the Buddha, etc.

Jamie Mills, University of the West,
Śūnyatā and Quantum Physics: Voidness and Dark Matter in the Cosmic Womb of Creation

With dimensional realities invisibly emerging and vanishing into illusory fields of perceptions and realms of obscurity, the Buddhist concept of Śūnyatā is perfectly illustrated by the scientific theories of Quantum Physics. The Voidness of Śūnyatā and the Dark Matter of Quantum Physics, while seemingly empty, are in actuality the fertile Cosmic Womb where Creation exists in potentiality and reality. Being invisible and unlocatable, the existence of Dark Matter is inferred from gravitational effects, radiation, and the mass of orbital velocities calculated between related luminous bodies (gas, dust, stars). Mathematically speaking, Dark Matter is considered the missing mass in orbital velocities of galaxies which exemplifies how mass is more than can be seen, and empty space is not nothing. Similarly, as the Ontological Voidness that constitutes Ultimate Reality, Śūnyāta exceeds the limitations of measurement, form, time, space, and dimension, wondrously bringing into existence the transformation of emptiness into energic and infinite fields of realities and possibilities through the propagation of self-projecting forms, non-forms, beings, and non-beings. Hidden within potential, Śūnyatā is Consciousness without Content. In the same way observation of phenomenon in Quantum Physics affects reality, the awareness of Śūnyatā breathes Consciousness with Content into Creation. When Anutpāda transforms from the passive and undifferentiated into the active and differentiatedUtpāda, the genesis of perceivable universes sets into motion the materialization and Creation of the realities of time, space, multiple dimensions, planes of consciousness, worlds of perpetual motion, and illusory realities of truth. Creation in pre-existence, existence, and non-existence in observable and imperceivable realities is a form of pulsating energy which exists as electromagnetic vibrations and fields of sound. All that exists perpetually generates sound and emits unique shape-generated frequency and energy patterns as visualized by Cymatics. As vibrational or resonant frequencies change, forms simultaneously morph from conglomerates of subatomic particles into tiny vibrating loops that split, combine, and absorb back into the curled up multidimensional Spacetime universes of Śūnyatā and Dark Matter. Quantum Physics has predicted there are 10500 versions of Spacetime – each with their own novel laws of physics. The multifaceted dimensional universes of Quantum Physics and the mysterious philosophies of Śūnyatā reflect creative materialization from the Cosmic Womb, as further explored in this paper.

University Hall 1402
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Three

3d. Buddhism:

Nalini Rao, Soka University,
Role of Trade, Royalty, and Ideology in the Spread of Buddhism in Deccan India

The aim of this paper is to investigate the role of on the functioning of three inter-related forces of patronage, trade and ideology that sustained the religious environment revealed by the recent archaeological excavations in Kanaganahalli, Karnataka. An art-historical analysis of the numerous royal portraits reveals the unique role of the Mauryan king, Asoka and the Satavahana kings in relation to the trading operations along trans-regional and arterial trade routes, and the relationship between the monastery, merchants and kings. The practice of religious ideology substantiated in archaeological remains of symbolic motifs and its anomalies, enables the reconstruction of the dynamism between Buddhism and local traditions and adaptation of new cults. The paper is an analysis of three interrelated phenomena of political patronage, economic power and symbolism, using architectural, sculptural and epigraphic sources. The seminal role of the Buddhist Sangha at Kanaganahalli as an intermediary between emperors and local population can throw a new light on the unanswered questions about role of Buddhist monastery as part of networks of religious, economic and political power.

Vaishali Gaidhani, University of the West,
Understanding the concept of 'khanti' = 'patience' in the path towards liberation with reference to some of the Buddha's foremost disciples as seen in the Theravāda Pāli texts

"We could never learn to be brave and patient, if there were only joy in the world." - Helen Keller.

The Pāli word, 'k*hanti'* is translated in English language as 'patience', 'forbearance' and 'calm acceptance', and sometimes also as 'forgiveness' and 'endurance'. Yet, this does not provide a comprehensive meaning. For easy communication and convenience, we use the English word 'patience' to represent 'khanti' in this paper. This paper attempts to study the concept of 'k*hanti'*, through the biographies of the Buddha's foremost disciples with references from the T*heravāda Pāli can*onical texts. Although, 'kha*nti' i*s one of the ten perfections that are the noble deeds or wholesome qualities to be perfected by a bod*hisatta. A*nd although the quality of patience is appreciated by the Buddha as the foremost austerity, we cannot find many Sut*tas (di*scourses) in the Pāl*i text*s, that teach the specific practice of 'khan*ti'. T*his paper attempts to explore the subtle concept of 'khanti' and its significance as a liberating path with reference to some of the Buddha's foremost disciples as seen in the The*ravāda Pāli texts.*

University Hall 1402
Zoom Link:

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Four

4a. Digital Archives / Caste Confusion / Radio and the Raj:

Neel Agrawal, Loyola Marymount University,
Leveraging Digital Archives for South Asian Studies

This presentation provides the audience with a greater understanding of how to leverage the vast array of digital archives and online resources to support research on South Asian studies. In this complex and interdisciplinary research environment, digital archives furnish scholars, students, and researchers with access to historical and contemporary sources to advance a variety of South Asian-related projects. The presentation highlights both open access and fee-based content, with a particular focus on subject-specific and geographic centric collections. The audience will come away from the presentation equipped with effective research strategies to search for material within individual and aggregated collections, browse through thematic content, and utilize tools such as research guides, online databases, and library catalogs. The presentation concludes with a brief discussion on preserving South Asia's cultural heritage.

Stephen Christopher, Marie Curie Postdoc, University of Copenhagen,
Priestly Purity: Tribal Claims Near the Touchability Line

This presentation analyzes the caste heterogeneity of the Gaddi tribal community in Himachal Pradesh and Jammu. Through ethnographic data, I show how the partial integration of five Dalit castes into the Gaddi community has instigated a range of tribalizing ethnopolitical practices. Specifically, I consider the Sippis, traditionally a wool-shearing caste most closely associated with Gaddi ritual and pastoralism. Sippis are a Scheduled Caste in Kangra, a Scheduled Tribe in Chamba because they live in reserved Gaddilands, and an independent tribe in J&K, juridically separate but culturally aligned with Gaddis. Sippis generally reject their subordination as landless peasants and unfree clients under patronage exploitation (pāūcārī), and in doing so separate their appeal for Scheduled Tribe inclusion as Gaddis from other Gaddi-aspiring Dalits. Sippis strategically deemphasize tribal casteism and emphasize status equivalence with Gaddi Rajputs. I analyze the spiritual and mythic roots of Sippi exceptionalism, their priestly role during the Manimahesh pilgrimage, and their 'tribal mobility' as an integral part of Gaddi transhumant pastoralism. Among the five Scheduled Caste Gaddi groups, Sippis are the highest status caste group, both in terms of self-stylization and social inclusion by Gaddis. Stepping back from the particulars of this case study, I show how the politics of reservation—and especially perceived state misrecognition— informs spirituality and subjectivity.

University Hall 1775
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Four

4a. Digital Archives / Caste Confusion / Radio and the Raj:

Chandrika Kaul, University of St. Andrews,
All India Radio and the British Raj, 1927-47

The paper will chart the fortunes of broadcasting in British India from its hesitant beginnings in the 1920s, to its reluctant take-over by the Government of India during the 1930s, the impact of the Second World War, and its role at Indian Independence in 1947. How did the Raj approach and organise the medium of radio, and with what impact? What role did Indians play in this process? Were Indian politicians permitted to engage with broadcasting? Overall, what conclusions can we draw from this study about the nature and significance of broadcasting in India under the Raj, 1927-47? This paper is based on published research (my monograph, Communications, Media and the Imperial Experience (2014), as well as ongoing new research for a forthcoming book.

University Hall 1775
Zoom Link:

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Four

4b. New Trends in Yoga Therapy Research:

Christine Gabaly, Loyola Marymount University,
The Senses: Cease & Desist or a Doorway to the Soul through the Heart? Sensing your way to Spirituality

This paper will argue that yoga is not just a mind-body practice, but a spiritual practice that is experienced through the body and the senses, including sight, sound and physical sensation. This is of importance because most of the emphasis within yoga scholarship is on the mind as the doorway to spiritual practice and not the sensory experience as the key to opening the door. We will look at two important passages within The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali and The Bhagavad Gita, and compare how they differ. We will also take a look at spiritual doorways, mind vs. heart. Feelings and emotions often seem to be absent from yogic practices, or there seems to be a misconception that we need to rid the self of feelings and emotions within our practice. Meditation is a common practice found within world religions. One sits quietly contemplating an aspect of the divine. But then what happens next in reality? The mind likes being given things to do, and points of focus help draw our awareness and attention to where we would like to direct it. A variety of practices can help us in our efforts to concentrate, many of which involve our senses, such as mantra. In addition to the sense of sound, our sense of sight and touch is also often used within meditative practices, such as yantra, mudrā and mandala. So in our meditative practices, are we really telling our minds to cease and desist? Stop thinking. Stop feeling. Stop sensing. Is that what we are really saying? What would a world without senses look, sound, smell, taste and feel like? Yoga is a sensory spiritual practice that is experienced by the heart- mind through all of the senses, a completely immersive experience. Yoga is a spiritual practice that is experienced by the whole person, heart and mind, through the body and senses. It is is felt.

Heather Romanowski, Loyola Marymount University,
Yoga and Disability: Redefining yoga for every body and mind

This paper explores how the messages found in the Bhagavad Gītā offer an opportunity to pair ancient wisdom with modern applications through yoga therapy, specifically in working with persons with developmental disabilities. I argue that the practices and benefits of this wisdom needs to be shared, not just with those for whom it comes easiest, but those that could find the greatest successes through its challenges.

University Hall 1226
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

Simultaneous Sessions: Four

4b. New Trends in Yoga Therapy Research:

Francesca Gold, Loyola Marymount University,
The Pañcamayakośa Model: From Upaniṣhadic Philosophy to Modern Yoga Therapy Assessment
followed by an update of *Breathe Ojai: a newly founded Accessible, Trauma Informed, Yoga Therapy Studio in Ojai, CA*

Francesca Gold's research examines the historical origins of the pañcamayakośa model, which is widely used within the yoga therapy sphere, and asks: Who developed the pañcamayakośa model as a yoga therapy tool and how did it become a touchstone assessment for modern day yoga therapy? As a practicing Yoga Therapist with a clinical private practice, Francesca was taught to use this model; but where did this model come from and why are we using it? What is the clinical reasoning behind using this model? Are we meant to use it in this modern Yoga Therapy arena? What began as a final paper in her History of Modern Yoga class has developed into a thesis for her Masters Degree in Yoga Studies. Francesca received IRB approval from Loyola Marymount University to conduct research and has interviewed over 12 C-IAYTs, all of which use this model as part of their intake process. The paper offers an overview of Yoga Therapy history, asks questions regarding standardization, and explores the use of this model within modern Yoga Therapy intake, assessment, and treatment process.

Breathe Ojai, founded in 2022, was formed after eight patient years of dreaming, gestating, and studying. It serves as a place to study the eight limbs of Yoga as well as that of a traditional Community Hall. Presently, there are 13+ accessible yoga classes a week, a book club, support groups for mental wellness, recovery, codependency, and chronic illness/pain, and community yoga therapy clinics. Almost all of the offerings are conducted on a sliding scale basis (with many free and comped opportunities) making services accessible to all.

University Hall 1226
Zoom Link:

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Simultaneous Sessions: Four

4c. Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative (ECAI) and South Asian Studies:

David Blundell, Moderator, ECAI and South Asian Studies,
Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative (ECAI) and its Contributions to South Asian Studies

The Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative (ECAI), based at the University of California, Berkeley, since 1997 was founded and currently directed by Lewis Lancaster and co-directed by Michael Buckland, has supported mapping historical sites with methods to integrate spatiotemporal data into interactive dynamic map interfaces designed by Jeanette Zerneke. Utilizing methods developed by ECAI and its collaborators, we explore complex technical issues in terms of spatiotemporal representation that often make use of historical maps in layers over Google Earth.

A key project is the ECAI Atlas of Maritime Buddhism in conjunction with the Austronesia Team chart South Asian cultural linkages based on the invention of sailing and navigation across oceans. Research includes maritime connections of ancient Indic religious networks, especially Buddhism. In our research for example, we have found that sea ports are orientated with mountain peaks serving as navigational points of reference. Advanced mapping techniques have provided new guidance for developing the best practice standards applied to our databases giving interactive multimedia aspects for making enhanced possibilities in spatial humanities for scholarly exchange.

Alex Amies, ECAI Maritime Buddhism and South Asia,
Sources of South Asian Esoteric Texts in the Chinese Buddhist Canon

Inspired by ECAI, this paper describes the historic background and sources of South Asian esoteric texts included in the Chinese Buddhist canon. The majority of esoteric texts of South Asian origin in the Taishō version of the Chinese Buddhist canon are in Volumes 18-21. These four volumes form the Esoteric Section of the Taishō and include 573 works. This very large list is substantially different from the list of esoteric texts included in the Korean (Goryeo) canon that the Taishō canon is understood to be based on. This paper examines the sources of the texts and reasons for differences between the two canons. The major sources other than the Korean canon are: 1. multiple versions from Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra, and well known Chinese translators; 2. new texts translated in the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties; 3. texts with Siddham characters transcribed by historic Japanese figures, such as Kūkai, and; 4. important texts by unknown translators.

University Hall 1401
Zoom Link:

Simultaneous Sessions: Four

4c. Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative (ECAI) and South Asian Studies:

Miroj Shakya, University of the West,
The Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon Project: Recent Developments and Future Plans

Among the vast corpus of Buddhist literature, Sanskrit Buddhist works are of paramount importance in the textual history of Buddhist literature. Unlike Pali, Tibetan, and Chinese texts, there is no unified body of collection or catalogs in Sanskrit. It is believed that there existed a separate Sanskrit Tripiṭaka or canon in the Sarvāstivāda or Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition in its initial phases of development and that there was even a Dhāranī Piṭaka. But later these canonical texts disappeared and were lost in history. Fortunately, a substantial number of Buddhist texts in Sanskrit are extant, and we cannot underestimate their importance. In this paper, I will report on the ongoing digitization projects of Sanskrit Buddhist texts initiated by the Nagarjuna Institute of Buddhist Studies of Nepal and the University of the West, California which seeks to save the disappearing books and Manuscripts containing great ideas of Buddhist philosophical principles and then make these resources and ideas accessible to the world at large. More significantly, the Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon website (www.dsbcproject.org) represents an ambitious, though rudimentary, attempt to devise a modern Buddhist 'canon' in Sanskrit. The creation of such a canon is not merely a textualist's or antiquarian's conceit: Sanskrit is still the primary canonical language of Newar Buddhism of Nepal. Thus this Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon aims to fill a living need for online access to, and propagation of, the basic texts — in lieu of any alternative.

Gauthama Prabhu, Foundation for His Sacred Majesty, Chennai,
Eco-Temple and Buddhist Development in Tamil Nadu, India

This panel is based on the contributions of ECAI and its initiator Prof Lewis Lancaster. It explores historical GIS in terms of South Asian research for mapping trade and religious networks. Its outcome is a time map showing Indian Ocean navigation, trade ports, and related religious data in history and why it's relevant today. As Buddhism is an important component to the research, each panelist will present on an aspect of its canon, historical networks, and contemporary development.
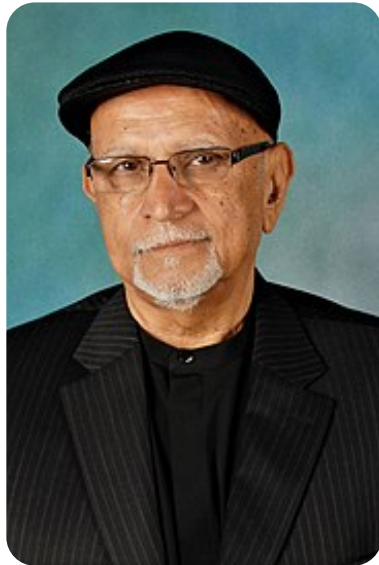
University Hall 1401
Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University

15th Annual Conference of the South Asian Studies Association

Closing Session

Appreciations from Members of the South Asian Studies Association Board of Directors

Closing Address: Navin Doshi

"The South Asian Experience in the United States: A 50 Year Retrospective"

Navin and Pratima Doshi endowed the Doshi Chair of Indian History at UCLA and founded the Sardar Patel Award. In 2006, Doshi endowed a professorship for Indic traditions at LMU which also gives a Bridgebuilder Award annually, jointly with Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts and the Department of Theological Studies. In 2012, Doshi established the Haridas Chaudhuri Chair in Indian Philosophies and Cultures and a Doshi professorship in Asian Art at California Institute for Integral Studies in San Francisco. In 2019, he established a chair on water and sanitation research at the Indian Institute of Technology in Gandhinagar and received the Doctorate of Peace from Maharishi International University in Iowa. In 2020, Doshi created an endowment to support academic works of SASA.

Musical Performance

Since its establishment in 2015, Los Angeles International Music and Arts Academy has been providing music education, and instruction through various workshops, seminars and performances about the traditional heritage of Indian classical art forms and other forms of Global Music. Our mission statement is that of inclusion and exploration of rich cultures from across the globe. It is our hope to increase awareness and appreciation of our roots.

laimacademy

Rajib Karmakar

@sitarrajib

www.facebook.com/sitarrajib/

http://sitarrajib.com

James Waterman

@jameswatermanmusic

www.facebook.com/JamesWatermanMusic/

http://www.jameswatermanmusic.com

Neel Agrawal

@neel.k.agrawal

www.facebook.com/people/Neel-Agrawal/100008633885814/

http://www.neelagrawal.com

University Hall 1857

Zoom Link:

SASA | SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
Understanding South Asia's Cultures, Histories, Issues, and Opportunities

Loyola Marymount University