Order and Disorder in South Asia

South Asia Studies Association Annual Conference

March 1st–3rd, 2024

A Hybrid In-Person/Online Event

California Institute *of* Integral Studies

Namaste Hall, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco

**Asian Contemplative
and Transcultural Studies**
California Institute of Integral Studies

SASA

Order and Disorder in South Asia

South Asia Studies Association Annual Conference 2024

OVERVIEW OF CONFERENCE

Join us for the *Order and Disorder in South Asia* conference, where leading experts and scholars will explore the delicate balance between stability and chaos in one of the world's most diverse and dynamic regions. Delve into the historical, political, and socio-cultural complexities that have shaped South Asia, examining the forces that foster order and those that disrupt it. Gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing this vibrant part of the world. This conference promises to be a thought-provoking journey through the fascinating tapestry called South Asia.

The countries of South Asia in alphabetical order: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka.

SCHEDULE

* All times in Pacific Time

Friday March 1

Morning **(8:30-10:30am)**
Session 1 (4 Panels)

Afternoon **- Field Trip to Asian Art Museum**

Dinner Reception at CIIS (5:00pm)

Evening **(6:30-8:30pm)**
Award Presentations for Deepak Nayyar & Swapan Chaudhuri followed by contemplative Raga music with Jonathan Kay (esraj)

Saturday March 2

Morning **(8:30-10:30am)**
Session 2 (4 Panels)

Afternoon **- Field Trip to Ali Akbar Khan School of Music**, San Rafael with Indian Classical Concert featuring Manik Khan (sarod) & Nilan Chaudhuri (tabla)

***Early Dinner at Lotus Cuisine of India*, San Rafael (4:00pm)**

Evening **(6:30-8:30pm)**
Session 3 (3 Panels)

Sunday March 3

Morning **(8:30-10:30am)**
Session 4 (4 Panels)

Evening **(6:30-8:30pm)**
Session 5 (3 Panels, online only)
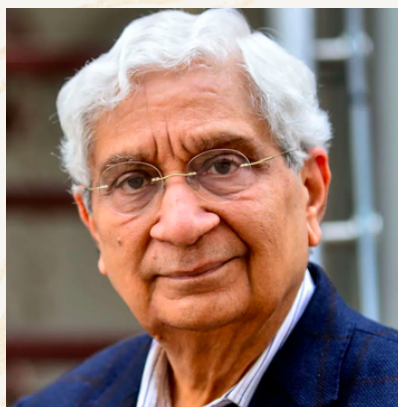
2024 SASA Honorary Awardees
Deepak Nayyar

Deepak Nayyar is Emeritus Professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He has been invited to the Kluge Chair in Countries and Cultures of the South at the United States Library of Congress in Washington DC for 2022-23. He was Distinguished University Professor of Economics at the New School for Social Research, New York, from 2008 to 2012. And he was Professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, from 1986 to 2011. Earlier he has taught economics at the University of Oxford, the University of Sussex, and the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta. He was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Delhi from 2000 to 2005.

His distinguished career in academia has been interspersed with short periods in the government. He was, to start with, in the Indian Administrative Service. Later, from 1983 to 1985, he worked as Economic Adviser in the Ministry of Commerce. He served as Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India and Secretary in the Ministry of Finance from 1989 to 1991.

He was educated at St. Stephen's College and the Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi. Thereafter, as a Rhodes Scholar, he went on to study at Balliol College, University of Oxford, where he obtained a B. Phil and a D. Phil in Economics.

Deepak Nayyar is an Honorary Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford. He is a Distinguished Fellow of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. And he is a Distinguished Professor at the Council for Social Development, New Delhi. He is Chairman of the Sameeksha Trust, which publishes Economic and Political Weekly.

2024 SASA Honorary Awardees
Maestro Swapan Chaudhuri

Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri is a phenomenon in the arena of Indian Classical Music. Musicians honor him as one of the most respected Tabla players, worthy of highest regard all over the world. Today a two time Grammy nominee, it was Swapan's beloved parents, through their own passion for music, who initiated his formal musical training and inspired him in the field of Tabla, paving the path that would eventually lead him to virtuosity. Swapanji holds a pedigree of awards and accolades reserved for artists of only the highest caliber. He is a recipient of the prestigious Padma Shree Award and Sangeet Natak Academy Award from the Government of India, as well as the American Academy of Artists Award, accolades which are reserved only for those artists who have attained the highest level of artistry. He is also the recent recipient of a Doctorate of Letters from Rabindra Bharathi University in Kolkata, India.

Swapanji has received the Excellence in Performing Arts Award from the Global Indian Congress in San Francisco, and has been nominated into the esteemed International Percussive Arts Society's Hall of Fame. In 2016, and again in 2019, Swapanji was awarded the Master/Apprentice Award from the Alliance for California Traditional Arts. Swapan Chaudhuri started learning Tabla at the age of five. He bases his style on the intensive training he received from his Guru, the late Pandit Santosh Krishna Biswas of Kolkata, an eminent exponent of the Lucknow Gharana. He holds a Master's Degree in Music and has been conferred honors for his distinguished contributions in the field of Tabla by various academic and musical institutions. In addition to academic degrees in music, Swapanji also holds a Master's Degree in Economics from Jadavpur University, Kolkata.

Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri's music is the spontaneous expression of his powerful emotions and his deep knowledge of Tabla. His ingenuity has ushered in a purely new style of Tabla playing. It is undoubtedly through his clarity and elegance of performance, both as an accompanist and as a soloist, that he has achieved such notoriety throughout the world as a true master of Tabla. As a soloist and accompanist Swapanji has traveled throughout Europe, North and South America, and Asia accompanying Maestros such as Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Vilayat Khan, the late Pandit Nikhil Banerjee, Ustad Amir Khan, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, Pandit Jasraj, Dr. Balamurali Krishna, Pandit Birju Maharaj, Dr. L. Subramanium, and Pandit V.G. Jog as well as other eminent artists. His concert career has taken him to the most prestigious stages in the world including Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Queen Elizabeth Hall, and the United Nations. In addition, he has produced numerous recordings, including his own Tabla solos and videotapes, and has appeared extensively on television and radio. Two records, Legacy (1997) and Passing on the Tradition (1998), were nominated for Grammy Awards, on which Swapanji collaborated with Asha Bhosle and Ustad Ali Akbar Khan.

Saturday, March 2nd (3-4pm PT)

North Indian Classical Music Concert
with Manik Khan (sarod) & Nilan Chaudhuri (tabla)

Manik Khan has been steeped in the ancient melodies of North Indian classical music since birth. The youngest son of the legendary Sarod maestro, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, he grew up listening to his father in countless concerts and attending his classes at the esteemed Ali Akbar College of Music in San Rafael, CA. He initially studied Tabla under the guidance of Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri, but the greater call to follow in the footsteps of his family brought Manik, at the age of 13, to formally train on the Sarod with his father. He spent his formative years accompanying his father on stage, touring for the last decade of his father's extensive and iconic performance career. Manik's own solo career has brought him throughout India, South America, and the U.S.

Manik has had the honor and privilege of performing alongside some of India's greatest tabla masters, including Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri, Pandit Tanmoy Bose, Pandit Yogesh Samsi, and Pandit Bickram Ghosh. As a musician committed to tradition and innovation, Manik Khan actively collaborates with musicians and ensembles to present his rich legacy of Hindustani classical music to both seasoned enthusiasts and newer audiences. His dedication extends to educational initiatives, where he partners with Bay Area schools to introduce Indian Classical Music to youth orchestras, nurturing the next generation of musician.

Nilan Chaudhuri has spent his life immersed in the tradition of Indian classical percussion. Initiated into Tabla studies at the age of five by his father, Pt. Swapan Chaudhuri, Nilan has performed as a Tabla soloist and accompanist for over two decades. He's shared the stage with some of Indian Classical Music's most celebrated artists at venues such as Carnegie Hall, The Fillmore, Fox Theater, and San Francisco War Memorial & Performing Arts Center, and The Kennedy Center. In addition to maintaining a busy performing schedule Nilan has dedicated his life to teaching Tabla worldwide privately and as a faculty member at the Ali Akbar College of Music in San Rafael and Chitresh Das Institute in San Mateo, California.

Full Panel Title & Abstracts

Session 1
Friday, March 1st - Morning (8:30-10:30am PT)

Panel 1: **Women and Cultural Agency**

Camp or Couture? Interrogating the Festive Ladies of the Gāthā Saptaśatī

Nairita Ghosh (Graduate Student, Department of History & Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi)

This paper is written based on five verses from the Prākrit kāvya text, the Gāthā Saptaśatī, composed by multiple poets, and complied by the later Sātavāhana king Hāla, in the Deccan peninsula, of the Indian subcontinent. This paper attempts to elucidate the Camp in the women's fashion choices as reflected in the selected verses, and raises pertinent questions such as, whether the "innocence of extravagance" can be considered a plausible tool to gauge the narratives of fashion as existed in the said time period, and whether it can inaugurate the discussion on class divisions as implied between the urban and peripheral, between the floral accessories and fine jewelleries, between overtly expressive yet simple Camp styles, or the well-heeled subtle and couture vestments.

An Exploration of Women in the African Diaspora in India

Purnima Bhatt (Professor (Emerita), History, Anthropology and Interdisciplinary Studies, Hood College, Bethesda, MD)

In this paper I examine the role of women in the African slave trade in India and their contributions to the preservation and perpetuation of African culture and traditions in their new homeland. The paper is the result of fieldwork carried out among the diasporic African communities and the archival and other sources available on the subject. While the subject of the Transatlantic Slave trade has been extensively studied, researched and documented by numerous scholars, we know very little about the African presence in India and even less about the women who constituted not an insignificant part of this trade which lasted for nearly a thousand years. My paper draws from oral interviews with the Sidi women, their mention in the historical records, and an examination of the paintings from the Deccan, Bengal and Oudh.

Panel 1: **Women and Cultural Agency**

Women's Anti-War Poetry from Northeast India: Claiming Indigeneity, Denouncing Militarized Violence

Brinda Mehta (Faculty, Mills College at Northeastern University, Oakland)
The northeastern states of India have been positioned as India's postcolonial other in mainstream politics with the aim to create xenophobic binaries between insider and outsider groups. Comprising the eight "sister" states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura, this region represents India's amorphous shadowlands in arbitrary political markings between the mainland and the off-centered northeastern periphery. These satellite states have been subjected to the neocolonial governance of the Indian state and its implementation of political terror through abusive laws, militarized violence, protracted wars against civilians and insurgents alike, and gender abuse. Women poets from the region, such as Monalisa Changkija, Temsüla Ao, Mamang Dai, and others, have played a leading role in exposing and denouncing this violence. This presentation examines the importance of women's poetry as a gendered documentation of conflict, a peace narrative, a poet's reading of history, and a site of memory.

Nasima Had a Dream

Jannatul Maoa (Graduate Student, Claremont Graduate University)
A movie called No Dorai was released in Dhaka, Bangladesh in November 2019, which is about the struggle of a woman surfer named Ayesha to survive with her passion for surfing. It was based upon the true story of a passionate surfer in Bangladesh who was forced to stop surfing due to social pressure. If viewed through a post-colonialist lens, we would discover that there are many layers at play in the movie: international NGO's who were funded to train the surfers, Western media, as well as Ayesha's family, religion, and society. Amidst all these layers how can we explore Ayesha's voice? It is my contention that Ayesha's moving body on her surfboard speaks to us her stories. In this case, we see that subalterns can speak, they speak through their bodies. As a Women and Gender Studies in Religion student with six years of experience in media and journalism, visual research methods will provide an important approach for my research.

Panel 2: Mind and Body in South Asia

The Dead King's Body: Karma and the Mind-Body Interplay

Loriliai Biernacki (Faculty, University of Colorado, Boulder)

Drawing on the Kashmiri "Ocean of Stories," the Kathāsaritsāgara, this paper addresses the interplay between the body and the mind within a medieval India philosophical landscape. I suggest that these medieval Indian narratives script a conception of mind-body interaction not simply confined to the idea of karma affecting future births and hence the shape and form of the body in future lives, but that the mind itself acts as the generative link for the karma that the body then displays. I also suggest that even while the mind is the power player in this yogic interaction between body and mind, still the body itself ineluctably retains the power to transform the mind as well, as we see in the stories of yogis who use their yogic skills to hop into other bodies, the bodies of dead kings, in particular.

Symmetry of Body and Mind: Crooked Karma and Its Resolution

Christopher Key Chapple (Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology, and Director, Master of Arts in Yoga Studies Loyola Marymount University)

The Tattvartha Sutra of Umasvati describes multiple bodily asymmetries. These contrast to the descriptions of bodily perfection of the Siddhas such the Buddha and the Tirthankaras. The Yoga Sutra promises "beauty of form, strength, and adantine stability" (III:46). Drawing from texts of Hatha Yoga and Jain karma theory, this presentation will explore ways in which physical forms of Yoga seek and effect emotional, physical, and spiritual release.

Stages of Mind and Body in Jainism

Abhishek Jain (Faculty, Loyola Marymount University)

The South-Indian Digambara Jain Ācārya Śubhacandra (9th century CE) in the Jñānārṇava provides for various states of mind for meditation. These stages of mind can be both good and bad kinds. Good stages of mind in the form of psychological perfection cannot be attained by anyone. The Jain meditation restricts such perfection to only those meditators who have certain bodily symmetries. Asymmetric and symmetric bodies are described in the commentary Gommaṭasāra by Ācārya Nemicandra to the Ṣaḍkhaṇḍāgama. The presentation will explore many folds of meditation and the relevance of those bodily symmetries (saṃsthāna) that are provided by the arising of name-determining karma (nāmakarman) for psychological perfection.

Gurudīkṣā: Body/Mind Symmetries & Asymmetries

Roy Pereira (Faculty, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles)

The theme of order and disorder plays out with respect to the body and mind symmetries and asymmetries of those considered viable candidates for being priests within the Catholic Church which has existed in India for over 2000 years. We shall examine the tradition as well as Canon Law to spell these out. What are the body and mind symmetries necessary for gurudiksha? Can or some of these be dispensed with? What are some of the impediments that could prevent gurdiksha? Under what conditions can something considered "disordered" be accepted as "ordered"? What are some of the changes that have taken place along the course of time?

Panel 3: Nepal: Where Past and Present Collide to Create a New Nation

The panel will explore the story of Nepal—past and present. The three speakers will delve into the rich history, cultural heritage, and the dynamic present of this Himalayan nation. They will navigate the intricate intersections of tradition and modernity, shedding light on Nepal's evolution into a unique and resilient nation. Join us for a compelling discussion on how the fusion of the past and present shapes the identity of Nepal, paving the way for a harmonious future out of the current forces of cultural and political collisions.

Moderator: Deepak Shimkhada (Professor, Chaffey College, Rancho Cucamonga, CA)

The Story of Nepal: Making and Unmaking of a Shangri-La
Iswari Pandey (Professor, California State University, Northridge, CA)
Despite being labeled "another El Dorado" (Kirkpatrick, 1811), a mysterious Shangri-La, or "a" unique land and culture untouched by external influence until recently, Nepal has always been a space where diverse cultures and languages converge and conflict. Its transition to a secular republic from a 240-year Hindu monarchy to a secular republic has brought to the fore competing visions of what constitutes the unique South Asian nation-state of Nepal. Iswari Pandey's presentation highlights some of the salient features of these visions as articulated in contemporary popular culture and political rhetoric.

Tika Lamsal (Faculty, University of San Francisco)
Invoking Gayatri Spivak's call for "a strategic use of positivist essentialism" for progressive political reform and intervention for identity, Tika Lamsal argues against the enactment of what Bhabha calls "symbolic violence" and reification of symbolic domination by evaluating rhetorics of representation in the context of recent movement in Nepal for inclusive ethnic representation. In its effort to maintain power, the regime, i.e. the ruling majority, always produces knowledge that helps reify the notion of difference by reinforcing superiority of the ruling body and inferiority of those that are marginalized and are in minority. Examination of racialized mimicry and stereotypes on the other as tools of subversion helps question the validity of symbolic violence against ethnic minorities.

Santosh Khadka (Associate Professor, California State University, Northridge, CA)
In the context of recent political and socioeconomic changes in Nepalese society, as well as globalization and technological advancements, the university education system and the culture of teaching/learning in Nepal is in transition. The diversity of views and evidence of change was apparent between discourse about undergraduate and graduate curricula, which was further illustrated by the difference between how teaching was approached in the annual system and semester system. As reflected in my study of how academic writing is taught and represented in teachers' discourses, gradual change is occurring in Nepal's higher education, and the waves of that change could be moving from private and new public institutions to the old public institutions and from graduate programs to the undergraduate.

Panel 4: Fundamentalism, Hindu Nationalism and Reservation Politics among Himalayan Tribes

This panel explores Hindu nationalism among Himalayan tribes. Ethnographic examples are drawn from Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh. Collectively, we examine the inroads made by Hindutva-aligned groups to recruit from marginalized tribal communities. Their impact can be seen in political alliances, reservation politics and ritual change. While attuned to dynamics in India, our papers advance global debates on indigenous spirituality as intangible cultural property, the commodification of ethnoreligious experiences, and rightwing recruitment of ethnic minorities. The panel consists of four interlocking papers.

Changing Dynamics of Himalayan Tribal Spirituality: A Mixed Data Model Approach

Stephen Christopher (Faculty, Marie Curie Postdoc at the University of Copenhagen)
The last decade has seen a flourishing of anthropological studies of reservation (positive discrimination), specifically on the 'social life' of the state category 'Scheduled Tribe' (ST). While we now know much more about how ST reservation impacts tribal subjectivity and social organization, we know comparatively little about how it impacts tribal spirituality, especially in the politicized domains of Hindu nationalism, animal sacrifice, new animism and religious conversion. This presentation outlines a project that I hope to begin in 2025. It explores how the politics of tribal belonging trigger 'tribalizing' practices that change tribal spiritualities.

The Struggle Continues: Ladakh Post-2019

Radhika Gupta (Assistant Professor, University of Leiden)
After over two decades of waging a struggle for autonomy from Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh was designated a Union Territory (UT) in 2019. The moment was marked by celebrations in Buddhist Ladakh, while Muslims were shrouded in anxiety as they had never supported separation from Kashmir. This communalized split in Ladakh's politics ironically gave way to the emergence of new unity between Buddhists and Muslims as the UT threatens Ladakhis' loss of control over their land, environment, and identity. This paper will outline the contours of a new phase of struggle in Ladakh and how it engages with tribal slot.

Transforming relationships: Hindu Nationalism Vis-à-vis Deity Traditions in Kullu, India

Ishita Mahajan (PhD Candidate, University of Edinburgh)
In the largely rural landscape of Kullu district in the North Indian hill-state of Himachal Pradesh, most villages are presided over by indigenous territorial deities which exercise significant influence over the everyday lives of their followers. Many of these deities are recognised as land-owning 'perennial minors' by the district administration, and continue to function as governing authorities within their

(cont.) territories. This paper looks at the agency of the deities within the public sphere, and traces how this agency responds to the rising influence of Hindu nationalism. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2021-2022, the paper unpacks the efforts of Hindu nationalist organisations to bring about changes religious change regarding deity worship, animal sacrifice rituals, casteism and mediumship.

Contestations and Negotiations: Exploring the Hindutva Assertion in Arunachal Pradesh, India

Ingo Mitalo (PhD Candidate, Guwahati University)

Arunachal Pradesh, a federal unit of the Indian union, is home to about 68.79 percent of the tribal population, which is comprised of twenty-six major tribes and more than one hundred ten sub-tribes, each with its distinct socio-cultural traditions. This unique diverse region has, however, been more disputed space in recent decades, as Hindutva, a political ideology emphasizing Hindu nationalism, seeks to establish its presence in this ethnically heterogeneous state. In this context, they have been attempting to strategically navigate their ideological narratives through the complex socio-cultural settings to establish itself in the cultural and political imagination of the tribal people that were hitherto considered as outsiders. Thus, the intend of this study is to explore and understand the ways in which the Hindutva narrative contends with ethnic tribes, as well as the negotiations that take place between proponents of this ideology and the indigenous communities throughout the spectrum. Further, it aims to examine the impact of these interactions on social cohesion, political structures, and cultural landscapes. This analysis will provide a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics between Hindutva and the region's distinctive socio-cultural context.

Being a Female Migrant in the Indian Himalayas, (In)direct Discourses of Fundamentalism Processes in Padum, Zanskar

Salomé Deboos (Lecturer, Centre for Himalayan Studies, New Delhi)

*I*n recent years, the debate on the place of women in social dynamics has caught the attention of the public, especially in socio-economic and social-political research. What we know about the empowerment of women in their way to handle their life and to give them more confidence, is to a significant extent the result of programmes shaped within geopolitical dynamics of the 20th century. However, no research has been conducted on the female migrant impact in the religious radicalization process. This paper aims at considering the key protagonists and institutions in Zanskar and their connections with world gender/social/political/security policies. My scientific approach consists in making field observations and comparing my results within current events: how or why does the local or national migration of women influence the positions taken by younger generations within the community? What are their views and what is their involvement in the face of religious radicalization, economic change and state politics?

Session 2

Saturday, March 2nd - Morning (8:30-10:30am PT)

Panel 1: Revisiting the Yoga Sutras

Who Wants to Know? Implications of Sāṃkhya for Natural Versus Artificial Intelligence

Geoff Ashton (Faculty, University of San Francisco)
In a well-known paper on Sāṃkhya philosophy and artificial intelligence, Paul Schweizer claims to overcome "the difficulties that would haunt a naturalized version of Descartes' model" of a mind-body (puruṣa-prakṛti) dualism (1993: 859). In its place he theorizes a duality of mind (prakṛti) and consciousness (puruṣa), and thus stimulates a compelling inquiry into the possible contributions of Sāṃkhya for debates about artificial intelligence. But while Schweizer overcomes some aspects of Cartesianism and its lingering influence in Sāṃkhya scholarship, he nevertheless imputes some of Descartes' core presuppositions. With a view to uprooting these hidden Cartesian traces, this paper approaches Sāṃkhya through the lens of biosemiotics, which rests upon the premise that living systems and semiotic processes are identical.

She's All That: The Evolution and Practice of the tattvas in Yoga and Sāṃkhya

Zoe Slatoff (Faculty, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles)
The Yogasūtra speaks of the "practice of a single true principle" (eka-tattva-abhyāsa), thought by some commentators to refer to īśvara (God). This practice is given as a remedy in Yogasūtra 1.32 to eliminate the physical and emotional obstacles to the mind, elaborated in the preceding sūtras. In Sāṃkhya, however, the word tattva, which literally means "that-ness," is used to refer to the twenty-five "true principles" which evolve from the conjunction of puruṣa (the self) and prakṛti (material nature), disrupting the delicate balance of her unmanifest form, through the interplay of the three guṇas (qualities). Translations of the traditional commentators on this kārikā often interpret this through an Advaitan lens, explaining tattva-abhyāsa as "practice of knowledge of the truth," however I would argue that Vācaspati Miśra, like Gauḍapāda, is speaking of the twenty-five tattvas that constitute prakṛti, in all her glory. This paper presents a Sāṃkhyan theory of liberation that finds order in chaos through a process of increasing subtilization, independent of the yoga tradition with which it is often closely intertwined.

Dissolving the Illusion of Order: Viveka Through the Gateway of Bhūta-jaya and Indriya-jaya – A Visual Meditation

Melissa Townsend (Independent, The Society for Yoga and Philosophy)
In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, liberation, kaivalya, is through viveka – the clear realization that our true nature is not the individuated being, but consciousness itself. The way to viveka is paved by the meditation technique of Yoga (the last three limbs, dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi, together called saṃyama). This practice has the power to transform the relationship of the practitioner to prakṛti, material reality. Significantly, the sūtras about the siddhis culminate with mastery of the elements (bhūta-jaya) and of the organs of sense perception (indriya-jaya) (sūtras 3.44-3.48).,bhūta-jaya and indriya-jaya can result in some of the most extraordinary siddhis in the text, including mastery over pradhāna, (prakṛti), but the real fruit is not external. It is internal: the realization that the order we typically impose upon experience is far more porous than previously imagined. Through Art we experience this powerful practice intuitively, revealing aspects that might evade our rational mind.

Panel 2: **Regional Histories**

The Multifarious Temple-Art of Jayavarman VII and the French Orientalist Interest in Cambodia-II

Punam Madhok (Faculty, East Carolina University, Greenville)

Some of the most impressive Angkor temples (9th-13th centuries CE) were built by Jayavarman VII (reigned c. 1181-1218 CE), a devout Buddhist. Jayavarman's Bayon is magnum opus of the acclaimed Khmer Empire. Carved into its towers are large faces. Are they Shiva, Brahma, Lokeshvara, or Hevajra? Jayavarman 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, are common features of these temples. A project with remedial power that has survived is Neak Pean, dedicated to Buddha Bhaisajyaguru. Dancing maidens, Apsaras or Yoginis, are carved on many temple walls. Living damsels would perform ritual dances in them. They have inspired the creation of classical Cambodian ballet that entranced Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). It was after Henri Mouhot (1826-61) made sketches of Angkor's major shrines that they caught Europe's attention. After Cambodia became a French protectorate in 1863, Louis Delaporte (1842-1925) usurped many temple statues that are now in Paris' Guimet museum. George Groslier (1887-1945) founded a school and museum in Phnom Penh to protect the treasures of Cambodian art. Drawing upon my recent field trip in Siem Reap, Cambodia, I wish to explore further the amalgamation of Hindu and Buddhist imagery on these temples as well as the French orientalist interest in this region.

Two Agencies: Appropriation of Mughal Court Painting in Contemporary Art Practice

Meenakshi Sengupta (Faculty, Sister Nivedita University, Kolkata)

Use of traditional iconography (both local and court tradition) was pitted up against the colonial institutional paradigm. Thus there was an urge to take the private practice into the public. Therefore practice of miniature as part of traditional art became powerful in the 19th century. It was very crucial during the first decade of twentieth century India, to develop a uniquely Indian artistic practice while also being part of a broader nationalist discourse without being nostalgic about the past. Bengal School consciously used pre-modern court painting and village crafts as a form of creative resistance to Western academic realism, but it eventually became a form of academic exercise in itself. As such, two distinct practices developed in the same time, one was the professional miniature painters and second, the art school-trained urban artists. This article will focus on the artistic practices of Vinita Sharma, (Jaipur, Rajasthan, India) who being known as 'traditional miniature painters' have pushed the boundaries of tradition within their institutional framework and Karine Rougier (Marseille, France) who was fascinated by magic rituals later appropriated the iconography of Mughal court painting in her practice.

Panel 2: **Regional Histories**

Transformative Dynamics: Braj in the 18th Century - Navigating Patronage, Pilgrimage, and Socio-Religious Resurgence

Surabhi Pandey (Graduate Student, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University, Delhi)

The 18th century in North India marks the transition from medieval to modern history. Scholars have extensively examined this period, once considered a 'dark period,' suggesting slow or no growth until the arrival of the British. However, recent region-centric studies challenge this perception, revealing a nuanced picture. The Braj region, a significant pilgrimage center associated with Krishna's abode, witnessed lesser-known patronage connections. Despite the Vaishnavite movement's acceptance of societal caste norms, the 18th-century Sampraday dynamics suggest a nuanced resurgence of Brahmanism within Vaishnavism. This paper focuses on the ever-dynamic Braj and the shaping and reshaping of the pilgrimage center. The survival and continuity of a pilgrimage region depended largely on the patronage it received. The varying economic circumstances worked as offshoots of a decaying Mughal empire, which further offered newer opportunities for employment, profit, and, of course, social mobility for the Jats. The regional histories produced in the vernacular indicate a newfound historical sensibility and political change that was underway.

Braj : Episodic Degeneration, Recovery, Re-creation, and the Eternality of a Region (16th to mid 18th centuries)

Swati Goel (Faculty, University of Delhi)

Braj Renaissance was result of the pilgrimage, which earned it a status of a vibrant destination for inviting political and mercantile patronage. During the 15th and 16th centuries, as a part of religious exercises or in the quest for the land of Krishna, the propagators of various sampradayas (sects) reached the region seeking spiritual solace. These propagators mapped the scriptural Braj onto the physical landscape of the area surrounding Mathura. During the latter half of the 17th and early 18th centuries, new avenues of patronage emerged at the regional courts, which provided support to the sects for shifting deities from Braj to their respective kingdoms. With the exodus of the deities, the pilgrim traffic also shifted, thus diminishing the popularity the pilgrimage sites of Braj commanded. This paper will elucidate the transitory nature of the popularity of pilgrimage centers, which was closely associated with the temple shrines belonging to particular sects, deities and various forms of patronage which contributed to the emergence and reemergence or decline of pilgrimage centres. The cosmic presence of a religious space is eternal, however, its physicality is certainly momentary.

Panel 3: **Perspectives on Music and Culture**

Transformation of Buddhist Musical Practices from the 7th-13th Centuries as a Response to Political and Social Disorder in Medieval India

Stephen Ithel Duran (Independent, Kyoto City University of the Arts, Kathmandu University, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science)

From around the 7th century on the Indian sub-continent, the political and social stability previously provided by the Gupta and Vākāṭaka empires (320CE-550CE) gave way to fragmentation and the rise of regional centers of power. In the midst of the political and social disorder characteristic of this episode in South Asian history, esoteric Buddhism emerged, in the words of Ronald Davidson, "as a response to the feudalization of society". From the 8th century, non-institutional forms of esoterism developed and, thereafter, began to exert their influence on the rapidly changing institutional forms. In this presentation, it will be demonstrated that the musical effects of these responses to social and political disorder on the Indian sub-continent on both institutional and non-institutional forms of Buddhist musical practice were profound and long lasting. This presentation will use as its point of contemporary reference evidence from the surviving lineages of Sanskrit esoteric Buddhist chant and song from Nepal and Japan.

Bhojpuri Folk Songs of India: A Study of Gender Marginalisation

Sonu Sah (Independent, Institute of Language Studies and Research, Jadavpur University, Kolkata)

This study will try to undertake an interdisciplinary study of Bhojpuri folk songs of North India relating it with the concept of Caste, Class, Gender and Culture. This study will try to situate these folk songs in an interdisciplinary context of social exclusion and marginalisation of peoples on the basis of caste, class, gender and culture and will consequently explore the traumatic experiences on people's life. These folk songs can be considered as performances and reflection of socially excluded people, especially women and its physical and mental effect on them. At the heart of the book, ' Unearthing Gender: Folk songs of North India ' by Smita Tiwari Jassal is a library of songs, in their original Bhojpuri and in English translation, framed Jassal's insights into the complexities of gender and power. The songs offer an entry into the everyday cultures of marginalized groups of women who have rarely been the focus of systematic analytical inquiry.

Panel 3: **Perspectives on Music and Culture**

Disorderliness and Ghettoization: Narrating the Quest for Homecoming with Popular Songs

Sudipta Dutta (Faculty, Derozio Memorial College, Kolkata)

Ghettoization, a consequence of societal disparities, breeds urban disorder, fragmenting communities along economic fault lines. Ghettoization in South Asia does not necessarily mean 'Basti' but the aspects of deprivation and disorderliness are anyway very real. The metro cities are flooded by a huge number of migrating youth, who are white-collar employees, living away from home in shared apartments in a not very healthy manner because they cannot afford a higher standard of living. During the struggle for survival, music can play a vital role in taking care of their emotional health. Their everyday playlists are prone to containing songs that narrate the dreams of homecoming, as among the supposed disorderliness, they lack the comfort of home. In a critical attempt to define their quest for homecoming, this research work will mainly take up select songs, from different genres, different languages and different ethnocultural settings, that statistically seem to be popular amongst the said population.

Raga Music as Transindividual Sono-Ritual in the Context of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga

Jonathan Kay (PhD Candidate, East-West Psychology, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco)

This paper explores Raga music within the framework of transcultural psychology and philosophy, delving into the realms of individual and collective transindividuation. Departing from the prevalent perception of Raga music as a consumable taste within the cultural marketplace, the discussion reframes it as a transformative sono-ritual integral to the spiritual journey of an aspirant. Drawing on Banerji's ontology of ownership, the paper distinguishes between the motivations and goals of Raga music as encountered in the culture industries as a flavor of consumption, with that of the spiritual aspirations of a sadhak committed to psycho-cosmological self-exceeding and transformation. Based upon the socio-spiritual objectives of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, I posits that a sadhak and participant of a Raga sono-ritual can engage with the sublime experience of Rasa, not merely for personal liberation out of life, but also as a conduit for Divine enjoyment in life, transforming the nature of collectivity in musical ways. From this vantage point, the sono-ritual emerges as a means to cultivate an intuitive sense (taste) of social unity in plurality, and can acts as a shared collective aspiration as a future-oriented and transformative social practice giving rise to new forms of political, ethical and aesthetic futures.

Panel 4: **Jain Studies and Ecology**

Biodiversity Governance in India: A Study from a Climate Change Perspective

Tushti Chopra (Independent, NALSAR University of Law, Shamirpet, India)

Akin to any South Asian Country, India is one of the richest in terms of its biodiversity but affected profusely by climate change. In India, the law remained scattered in several legislations until passing of the Biodiversity Act, 2002 (based on the United Nation Convention on Biodiversity) and rules and regulations under the act. The act provides for conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of biological resources. Accordingly, the researcher shall study the law governing biodiversity before the Biodiversity Act, 2002 came into force, the features of the Biodiversity act, 2002, the mechanisms of governance under the act and the efficacy of provisions of law will be put to test especially to tackle difficulties posed by climate change along with its detection and mitigation.

Contesting Freedoms at the Berlin Wall's East Side Gallery: Translating the Visual Message in Narendra Kumar Jain's mural, the Seven Stages of Enlightenment

Christopher Miller (Faculty, Arihanta Institute, San Francisco)

The Berlin Wall was and remains a site of competing understandings of what constitutes freedom and enlightenment. In 1989 and 1990, Delhi-born Dr. Narendra Kumar Jain (1937-) painted "The Seven Stages of Enlightenment," a popular mural at the Eastside Gallery at the Berlin Wall, where he contributed his own South Asian message to these competing discourses. His mural features a meditating yogi with seven cakras, Mahāvīra, and a number of other religious and spiritual symbols and figures. Dr. Jain's mural emphasizes the apophatic nature of his artistic work and a universalistic Jain and yogic identity. Interpreting the mural's religious bricolage nevertheless requires an interdisciplinary approach drawing from not only Jain Studies and Yoga Studies, but also from art history and the anthropology of art. Drawing from Sonal Khullar's notion of "worldly affiliations" in South Asian art, this paper demonstrates that Jain's engagement with all of the manifold influences and people in Berlin in the lead up to his painting of the mural indeed place his work in a very particular socio-historical location. As this paper argues, his work presents a message that is both transcendent and contextualizable, and which contests other seemingly universal notions of enlightenment and freedom born from the European and American enlightenments which are found in the other murals surrounding his own on the Berlin Wall.

Panel 4: Jain Studies and Ecology

Contesting the Jain form of Mūrti-Pūjā: Ātmārāmajī Mahārāj's Vision for the Reforms in Modern India
Venu Mehta (Faculty, Claremont School of Theology)

Ātmārāmajī Mahārāj (1836-1896) is the popular name of the Jain ācārya Vijayaānanda Surī, a Śvetāmbara Mūrtipūjaka Jain mendicant leader in the late 19th century. While Vīracanda Gāndhī represented Ātmārāmajī at the World's Parliament of Religions convened in Chicago in 1893, Ātmārāmajī's activities entail many reform projects at the Jain religious and social level in the western and northern parts of India. This paper mainly explores the ways in which Ātmārāmajī worked on the project of contesting for and re-establishing the Jain ideals of mūrti-pūjā, image-worshipping as a response to the challenges and refutation for it by Muslim rulers, Sthānakavāsīs (non-image worshipper Jains), and especially his contemporary Hindu reformation leader Dayānanda Sarasavatī of Ārya Samāja, a Hindu Indian reform movement. The paper will discuss how Ātmārāmajī saw image-worshipping, a traditional Jain tenet, as an essential source to upholding Jain identity and developing sense of a unified Jain community in modern India.

Religious Shift: From Transcendental Towards Practical
Rohini Pragya Samani (Faculty, Jain Vishva Bharti Institute, Ladnun, India)

'Samadari' (Rajasthan) a religiously active small town of Jain Terapanth Order, half a century ago has turned into barren land in that respect. In course of the community getting urbanized by moving in various cities, religious activities of these members have taken a radical shift. From rural to urbanization and further globalization, nevertheless, has strengthened the community in many respects, educationally, economically, inter-culturally, socially, and religiously as well. The traditional religious culture and practices, however, seems to have been disrupted in the spell of urbanization. The paper is an endeavor to investigate those shifts from transcendental towards practical concerns in this community that could be entitled as 'upside down' shift.

Session 3

Saturday, March 2nd - Evening (6:30-8:30pm PT)

Panel 1: Interaction Between Image and Text: Narrative Modes and Structures in Indic Art

Reading' of images has been to clarify its complexity, and to interpret within a historical/cultural context. Recent studies have raised challenging issues about its narrative (story telling) elements, function, intention, and properties that interact with verbal (textual) narratives. The focus of the panel is on the nature of narrative, informational and experiential transmission, techniques used, and similarities and differences between visual and verbal communication. The panelists take specific examples from the two distinct means of communication to analyze the iconographic, stylistic, philosophical, religious and experiential aspects of order/disorder for a profound understanding of image and text.

Moderator: Nalini Rao (Associate Professor, Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, CA)

The Bhagavata Purana : Where Text and Image Dance in Divine Harmony
Deepak Shimkhada (Professor, Chaffey College, Rancho Cucamonga, CA/Indic Foundation)
The Bhagavata Purana manuscript, written and painted in Mewar in 1648, is not just a collection of sacred words; it is a symphony of words and images, where text and illustrations intertwine to weave a tapestry of morality. This synchronization is not merely aesthetic; it is a deliberate and masterful technique employed to enhance understanding, provoke reflection, and ultimately, guide the reader towards spiritual enlightenment. Copiously illustrated with 129 paintings, the manuscript transcends the limitations of text. Where the words end, the artist takes over, taking us on the flight of visual ecstasy. Together, they become a multi-sensory experience, where words and images dance in unison, illuminating the path of morality with the light of visual storytelling. It is a testament to the belief that true understanding lies not just in reading, but in seeing, feeling, and contemplating the divine message woven into the very fabric of the manuscript.

Narrative and Experiential Elements in Krishna Lila Scenes
Nalini Rao (Associate Professor, Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, CA)
This paper explores the pictorial narratives related to Krishna Lila Scenes in a textual, historical, and cultural context. it examines Jayadeva's twelfth century text, Gita Govinda and its impact on early manuscript paintings to later Western Indian and Pahari works of art. Within a broader concept of Krishna Lila, few thematic topics are selected that have both a denotational and connotative meaning and encompasses the aesthetics of rasa as well. The paper raises questions regarding the function of intentional ideology, and complementary nature of the visual and textual within their respective modes. While substantiating the literary narrative, the focus is on the narrative structure of the visual and the re-inventiveness of the artist.

Panel 1: Interaction Between Image and Text: Narrative Modes and Structures in Indic Art

Freedom and Creativity in Abhinava's Philosophy

Sthaneshwar Timalsina (Endowed Chair, Stony Brook University, New York)

Abhinavagupta (11th Century) is a Kashmiri polymath, a philosopher, theologian, aesthete, and a mystic. He is one of the first philosophers to relate creativity with freedom. Expressed in terms of pratibhā and svātantrya, freedom and creativity in Abhinava's philosophy relate both to the absolute and the individuals since the individuated beings are nothing but a microcosm of Śhiva the macrocosm. In Abhinava's metaphysics, citi/caitanya or consciousness is the absolute in the sense that it cannot be negated even in negation and it cannot be terminal since it also constitutes the sense of temporality. This citi/caitanya is both autonomous and endowed with creativity, or is free and therefore creative, or creative and therefore free. Since all the sentient beings enjoy certain degrees of creativity and freedom, with vitality being defined in terms of exercising freedom and creativity, individuals are never bereft of the tropes that determine the absolute, and liberation in this account is an actualization of these very tropes to their fullest extent.

Textual and Contextual Imagery of Mahishasura Mardhini

Choodamani Nandagopal (Dean/Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Jain University, Bengaluru)

Academic dialogues on the process of transformation and application of textual to visual dynamics, are serious subjects. The expressive dynamism of contextualizing text through the visual arts such as painting, sculpture or illustration is very effective because in this process the text is recorded contextually into visual imagery. Further, the text when contextualized in visual form has a strong impact in the cultural memory of the society gaining permanent place in the ethos. One of the most powerful and popular forms of Devi is the Mahishamardhini. This all-pervading energetic form of Shakti is worshipped in a ritualistic and popular way. Devi Mahatmya, the most popular text has several regional versions that describes the goddess in the gorgeous form as Mahishasuramardhini. The artist's creative power is heightened while portraying Mahishsura Mardhini that is depicted in more than hundred ways in Indian painting and sculpture.

Panel 2: **Shifting Perspectives: Bay Area Indian-American Artists on Narrative Disruption and Artistic Expression**

These four Bay Area-based South Asian artists/community organizers work within the scope of their mediums, be it dance, music, or visual arts, to tell stories that explode patriarchal tropes and frameworks to examine the pluralities of the South Asian identity. To evolve the art with authentic narrators is to preserve the art beyond the current era. These artists and community organizers will discuss the intrinsic tensions between the love for and the limitation of tradition, the politics of making intersectional art as a diasporic, Bay Area-based artist, and their insights on the role of diasporic art on the current sociopolitical landscape within South Asia.

- *Moderator: Divya Chandran (Graduate Student, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco/Community Organizer, Artist hypewoman)*
- *Nadhi Thekkek (Artistic Director, Nava Dance Theatre)*
- *Joti Singh (Artistic Director, Duniya Dance and Drum Company)*
- *Roopa Mahadevan (Indian Classical Vocalist, Performance Artist)*
- *Manu Kaur (Emerging Curator Fellow, Asian American Women Artists Association)*

Panel 3: Gandhi and Practices of Community

Booker T. Washington and Mohandas K. Gandhi's Model Communities: Toward the Goal of Bringing Order in Disorder

Veena Howard (Faculty, California State University, Fresno)

Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) and Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948), although contemporary, lived worlds apart and in different environments. However, they shared the moral and economic disorder caused by racism and colonialism against African Americans and Indians in the British colonies, including South Africa and India. Instead of acquiescing to the external forces, they both worked to create parallel systems for creating self-reliant and defiant communities. First, I expand on the specific ways Gandhi sought to apply Washington's exemplary methods for building institutions, providing vocational training, and creating an education system based on the principles of equity. Second, I will explore that Washington's example helped Gandhi to see the parallels between India's customs of untouchability and the United States' colored based racism—both of which dehumanized to a group of people, causing moral disorder. Finally, this paper reveals the value of interchange between various groups addressing economic, moral, and social disorder.

Gandhi's Abhinaya: De-mystifying Aesthetics as the Political

Ayan Chakraborty (Independent Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)

Walter Benjamin in his seminal "Critique on Violence" (1921) elaborates on the operations of "law-making violence" and "law preserving violence". In his text, Benjamin anticipates an alternative to this binary and calls it 'divine violence'. Such violence, to him, would oppose the conflicts of 'ends' and 'means' or the dichotomies of law-making/law-preserving violence and would, on the contrary, "annihilate" the 'violence' of 'law' through the 'violence' of "pure means". Intriguingly, Benjamin had a contemporary who, as I argue, may have exhibited the traits of his 'destructive character'; one may find this figure in M K Gandhi. In this paper, I argue that Gandhi's politics and his ethics may be studied in terms of an aesthetics which is neither exclusively abstract nor material but deeply steeped within both while moving beyond them. Gandhi's political aesthetics or Gandhivaad, as I intend to depict, may be understood in terms of his everyday performances (abhinaya) and the evocative conditions of bhava and rasa. Such performances, I contend, may be observed as the politics of pure means. I also propose that these everyday performances de-sanctify the sacred while purifying every act of the self and the community. In contrast to Benjamin's 'politicization of the aesthetic', what I argue for is not the 'aestheticization of the political' but for a politics which would be a de-mystifying aesthetics in itself.

Panel 3: Gandhi and Practices of Community

Mahātmā Gandhi and the 'Three A's' of Jain Dharma

Cogen Bohanec (Assistant Professor in Sanskrit and Jain Studies at Arihanta Institute & Visiting Assistant Professor at Claremont School of Theology)

It is interesting to note the degree to which Mahātmā Gandhi is revered within the Jain community. Gandhi's pragmatic applications of ahiṃsā (nonviolence), a central ethos for Jains, has inspired a kinship or communitarian blurring of religious distinctions on the part of many Jains who see Gandhi as not only exemplifying Jain religious precepts, but as perhaps validating the core teachings of the Jain tradition. Although Gandhi was undoubtedly primarily Hindu, his approach to religion was hybridized enough that we might ask: was Gandhi also Jain? Whether we would answer in the affirmative might depend on our own philosophical and theological commitments regarding the viability of hybridized religious identities, and what constitutes a religious identity. This is further problematized by centrality of Gandhi's rhetorical and practical expressions of what Jains commonly refer to as "three A's of Jainism"—namely ahiṃsā (nonviolence), aparigraha (non-consumption), and anekānta-vāda ("many sidedness," "relativity," or "intellectual ahiṃsā," etc.)—key beliefs and practices of their own tradition that are shared by all of the dharma traditions. We can ask to what degree, if at all, Mahātmā Gandhi was a Jain practitioner, or an advocate of Jainism, or how else we might categorize his relationship to the Jain tradition. But perhaps more important than the question of whether or not Gandhi might be considered "Jain" (or to what degree), it is obvious that he was a great proponent of these essential elements to Jain teachings, and arguable provided evidence for their veracity through his social application of these principles.

Interfaith Dialogue in Bangladesh: Its Necessity and Implication

Md Abu Taher (Graduate Student, University of the West, Rosemead, CA)

Dialogue between adherents of different religions is more vital than ever. Lack of harmony amongst peoples is a major issue in today's world. Efforts to foster peace and understanding amongst different religious communities should be built on the commonalities shared by their respective traditions' founding principles and most pressing issues. Furthermore, it has to promote mutual understanding amongst the different groups involved in order to lessen the misunderstandings that lead to intergroup conflict (Andrabi, 2020). In spite of the country's "frozen conflicts," ethnic and religious tensions in Bangladesh remain high. After half a century after the end of the war in Bangladesh, one of the most pressing needs is still the same: rebuilding trust and national unity. In recent years, several initiatives have been started to promote harmony amongst people. The most prominent writers in this study focused on two primary areas: the outcomes and results of interfaith conversation, and the outcomes and effects of interfaith dialogue on participants. They were thinking about the problem on a worldwide scale when they should have been paying more attention to the particulars and learning more about the situation in their local region. Therefore, this research aims to learn more about the problem's foundations. The study, significance, and implications of interfaith conversation centered mostly on religion and religious organizations due to their outsized impact and importance in the quest for peace. Tolerance of other faiths and peaceful cooperation are important topics to learn, but there is a lot to cover. The purpose of this study is to discuss the political, social, cultural, educational and organizational implications of interfaith dialogue in Bangladesh.

Session 4

Sunday, March 3rd - Morning (8:30-10:30am PT)

Panel 1: Memory and Emotion in Nationalism

Continuity and Discontinuity: Memory-Making at Memorial Sites in South Asia

Leena Taneja (Faculty, Zayed University, Dubai)

This paper draws from ongoing ethnographic fieldwork on memorial sites in South Asia, specifically the Vaishnava religious community in Northeast India. It argues that sacred memorial sites associated with saintly persons are sites of continuity and discontinuity with the past. For one, these sites offer insight into community history, theology, and models of devotion. Memorial sites are places of stability, order, and continuity where community identity is forged through connections with the past. More importantly, as sites of remembrance, they connect devotees with the past presence of saints helping to 'restore' the past. At memorial sites, models of devotional behavior and theological teachings are reinvigorated and re-embodied through practiced ritual actions. But memorial sites are also places of disruption and change. They are sites of continuous reimaginations. Remembering is not a static process. Remembering is a social practice subject to discursive power, a mediated process of (re)/(de)construction rather than a process of retrieval or transcription, or the production of a static object for study. Simply stated, memory is not just what is remembered, but how it is remembered, by whom, for what purpose, and with what effect. As both a process and a product, memory is dynamic, constructed, and political. Thus, at memorial sites, there is both continuity and discontinuity as old memories and new memories converge, merge, and emerge in new and different ways over time and in different social contexts.

Understanding South Asia's Culture: In the Light of Modernistic and Non-Biformity of Nationalism

Abhishek Das (Independent, Swami Vivekananda University, Kolkata) & Aheli Chaudhuri (MA, Department of English, University of Delhi)

The idea of nationality in the post-partition Indian subcontinent has always been a matter of discussion and debate. Being born in a particular political territory and demographic region provides us with our objective identity but what lies beyond this is the cognitive realisation of one's subjective identity and sense of association. Language, religion, and nationality have always been used as qualifiers or markers of perceived identity. In the light of the modernistic approach, nationalism doesn't stand according to the traditional theories of nation and its natural entities, but nationalism becomes a flower of the modern epochs. It also emerges as a modern phenomenon as it demands a new state of nation. This idea of Nationalism as a modern approach becomes significant when we look at the history of it, as in the classical writings on social theories it was not conceptualized with any uniform importance and during the Second World War, it was looked at with suspicion and disbelief. During World War II and even after that, modernistic theories on Nationalism were considered to be reluctant and way too simple to deal with any complicated situation due to their apolitical nature.

(cont.) This paper aims to highlight the blurring of such strict characterization of identity based on the preconceived ideas and understanding concept of "probable nationality" in the context of Salman Rushdie's "Imaginary Homelands", Aijaz Ahmad's "In the Mirror of Urdu".

Examination of the Interest in the Ram Mandir and Other South Asian Topics in the U.S. Based on Google Trends Data

Rohin Relan (Independent, New West Charter High School, Los Angeles)
Media coverage suggests increasing attention to the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, India, which was inaugurated on January 22, 2024. This analysis examines the collective interest in the Ram Mandir as well as other South Asian topics stemming from the U.S. using Google Trends Data. Analyzing Google Trends data can provide unique insights into collective interests of people by place and over different periods of time. Google Trends data offers a look at the popularity and search interest of specific terms and allows comparison between queries made by people on Google Search. This abstract explores the patterns and trends revealed by Google Search queries related to the Ram Mandir during the week of the inauguration in the U.S. assuming that much of these queries are driven by the South Asian diaspora community. This study compares these search queries with other topics related to South Asia. This study aims to shed light on the growing curiosity and engagement with the Ram Mandir project among people in the U.S. as well as their interest in religion, politics, and culture.

Politics of the Heart: Emotional Regimes and Demands for Political Representation in Colonial India

Ameya Balsekar (Faculty, Lawrence University, Appleton)
How might attempts to establish political order sow the seeds for political disorder? Drawing on an explicitly multi-disciplinary, interpretive analysis of archival documents (especially 19th century newspapers), this paper explores the dynamics of this paradoxical relationship in the specific case of British colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent. It demonstrates, first, that the political order which the British sought to establish in their Indian colonies was constituted in part by a set of informal rules of emotional management and expression. It then uncovers the pathways through which these "feeling rules" created opportunities for resistance and, ultimately, for the articulation of demands for more substantive political representation. It concludes with reflections on the ways in which closer attention to emotional regimes might shed light on various aspects of post-independence Indian politics, including the early establishment of constitutional democracy and some specific manifestations of identity politics. Ultimately, the paper makes the case that tensions inherent to any emotional regime may create crucial opportunities for rhetorical resistance against the very political orders these regimes help .

Panel 2: Caste, Outcast and Indigeneity

The Deity-based Customary Law System in the Himalayas with Special Reference to Shimla, Kullu and Mandi Districts of the State of Himachal Pradesh

Kuldeep Singh (Faculty, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla)

Himachal Himalayas is known for its deity tradition, the other name of Himachal is called Dev-Bhoomi (land of God) is the strong evidence of this symbolic naming. This paper is an effort to highlights all the existing deity-based customary law practices which are prevalent in these districts of Himachal Himalayas from ages. As every village of these district are associated with some form village gods. The people of these villages have full faith on their respective deities. The worship these deities on daily bases and ask them for their day to day problems. As living in society people have many conflicts among them for which they ask these Gods for retrieval. There are many ways by which the deities resolves their conflicts by imposing different customary laws. The Deity-based customary law system is followed by the these village societies of Himachal Pradesh in the Shimla, Kullu and Mandi districts, and codification of this system is widely advocated for better justice administration. The paper focuses on the diverse forms of deity-based customary law mechanisms that have been practised by these districts of Himachal Pradesh since time immemorial.

Education, Identity and Social Justice: A Study of Dalit Student Politics in India

Bagesh Kumar (Faculty Member, CHRIST (Deemed to be University, New Delhi)

In India, the trajectory of Dalit identity formation has a history of radical, reformist and resistance movements. The Dalitbahujan identity has been shaped by the historical struggles resulting in the proliferation of new discourses on social identity in the university, and in the wider society. In recent years, Dalitbahujan students and activists have forged a new collective identity, through university politics wherein caste is no longer only typified as a tool of oppression but also as the means to assert themselves. This study examines how the young Dalitbahujan activists articulate the anti-caste ideology and assert their identity. This paper is based on a year-long ethnographic study from January 2019 to February 2020 at the University of Hyderabad, Telangana, India. The paper reflects upon the anti-caste politics on the public university campuses by examining case studies of student activists from Dalitbahujan communities. More importantly, this paper attempts to understand the role of education in identity assertion. Also, this paper is expected to shed light on the collective struggles based on Dalitbahujan identity for inclusive space on university campuses.

Panel 2: Caste, Outcast and Indigeneity

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and His Contribution to Social Anthropology
David Blundell (Faculty Member, University of California, Los Angeles)
This presentation is on the contributions of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to social anthropology. I am now designing a curriculum for teaching the value of Ambedkar in terms of anthropology. This research features three aspects. (1.) Ambedkar's early academic contribution to anthropology and the understanding of caste. (2.) How Dr. Ambedkar proactively applied social sciences, law, and economics to uplift people from the grassroots for increasing awareness and consciousness to their humanity. (3.) Applying his beliefs and his understanding of South Asian heritage for developing social transformation. Currently, the influence of Dr. Ambedkar has inspired international communities as one of the most far-reaching social movements worldwide. In anthropology, there is a focus on local heritage as a cultural resource utilized for defining a people's ethos, and facilitating a consciousness for cross-cultural understanding. Dr. Ambedkar inspired an application of cultural and social heritage with emphasis on self-worth as human beings that has transcended his native India to the world.

Figuring Caste in Development: Thoughts and Practices from Nepal
Raj Deol (Graduate Student, Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, CAN)
Caste-based inequality remains a formidable impediment to the envisioned progress and development initiatives, particularly in Nepal and the broader South Asian context. The entrenched historical roots of the caste system persist as a pervasive mechanism of systemic exclusion and discrimination. Meanwhile, the inclusive development paradigms have emerged with significant importance over the past decade, notably with the UN development system leading the charge on their transformative social inclusion agenda of leaving no one behind. Against this backdrop, a significant gap exists in understanding how the caste question is conceptualised and operationalised in development programmes and within development organisations. This research aims to target that gap with the overarching research question as such: Given the ingrained caste context in Nepal and the UN's transformational development policy of leaving no one behind, how does caste figure in development thought and practice within the UN system in Nepal? The paper embarks on its exploration by (i) scrutinizing the framing of caste within the development landscape in Nepal, followed by an assessment of (ii) the efficacy and relevance of the "leave no one behind" policy. Additionally, it delves into (iii) an examination of programmatic practices related to caste inclusion, culminating in (iv) a critical evaluation of the organizational culture within the development landscape, exploring factors that either support or hinder caste inclusion. Through this novel multifaceted analysis, the paper aims to contribute valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on caste and inclusive development in Nepal and beyond.

Panel 3: Postmodern and Posthuman Imagination in Abanindranath Tagore

Posthuman Imagination in Abanindranath Tagore's Theoretical Writings

Santanu Banerjee (Assistant Professor, Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol) & Saikat Chakraborty (PhD Student, Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol)

In this paper we would try to examine the posthuman tendencies in Abanindranath Tagore. For that, our primary focus would be on two of his seminal works- Banglar Brata and Bagishwari Shilpa Prabandhabali. Banglar Brata has often been read as anthropological as it overtly speaks on religious issues and ritual practices, in reality however, the artist-author's profound ecological concerns is greatly overlooked. Through tales, doggerels, drawings, performances; historical, socio-political, ethical and philosophical issues it provides such a human articulation where culture is metonymic to nature; while catching the one, the other is also grasped. The later paintings of Tagore show a visible tendency towards Tagore's abandoning of lines in his paintings. This, we would try to read from a Heideggerian sense of 'being' or 'being-with-the-world'. Put simply, the panel would try to analyse whether anthropocentric practices like alpana and paintings manifest a way of being that entails 'co-existence with others' or being there with the 'other'.

Abanindranath's Found-Wood Relatives: Narration, Nomadic Subjectivity and Transubjectivity in Multimedia Rituals of Destitution and Restitution

Debashish Banerji (Professor, Chair of East-West Psychology, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco)

For the last ten years of his life, Abanindranath Tagore mostly retired his brush and spent his time working with small tools on objects, both natural and cultural discards. He called these objects katum-kutum or found-wood relatives. Nameless and shapeless, these objects received names and lives in intersubjective communities through narration by the artist. This talk outlines how this practice is a ritual performance of collective nomadic subjectivity in posthuman diasporic communities guided by narrative multivocality towards the transubject.

Multimedia Dialogic Practices in Abanindranath's Jatra Texts

Debdatta Gupta (Professor, St. Xavier's College, Kolkata)

Abanindranath Tagore spent some of his later years writing folk plays (jatra). Khuddur Jatra, meaning "story of the little people" is his version of the Ramayana, written for the children of his extended family in Kolkata. It is also a reference to "everyday Ramas," the commonplace modern life of the legendary hero. In his manuscript, Abanindranath incorporates visuals of various origins such as advertisements, newspaper cut-outs, movie posters, cigarette packets, chocolate wrappers and even marriage invitation cards into the text. Decades before the advent of Pop art in the west, Abanindranath, seems to have experimented with his own variety of Pop art in Khuddur Jatra. This paper traces a large chunk of the visual repository of Khuddur Jatra to identify the sources and understand the logic of the artist, questioning the long-standing notion of Abanindranath as a traditional artist and demonstrating his postmodern imagination.

Panel 4: Dream and Sleep Studies: South Asian Perspectives

Rethinking Sleep and Homelessness: A Critical Anthropological Perspective on the Politics of the Sleeping Body

Rafia Khatoon (Graduate Student, University of Chicago)

This anthropological study explores sleep as a social practice that goes beyond biology, specifically focusing on homelessness in Delhi. It challenges the conventional perspective of sleep as purely physiological, emphasizing its deep connections to societal norms, values, and socioeconomic contexts. The research combines theoretical insights with empirical data, primarily drawn from the documentary "Cities of Sleep," to examine the complex dynamics of sleeping in urban public spaces. It investigates how city infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and marketplaces, serves as both sources of suffering and hope for the homeless population, while also exploring the resilience of these individuals in the face of adversity. The paper critically engages with Agamben's concept of "bare life" and Weheliye's notion of "relational flesh," contrasting these ideas to gain a deeper understanding of the homeless individuals' experiences in relation to power dynamics and the interaction between human bodies and their environment.

In Search of Sleep: Applied Yoga Studies in the University Undergraduate Population

Sara Ivanhoe (Graduate Student, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA)

This presentation will demonstrate research exploring the historical and philosophical underpinnings of specific yoga postures, breathwork, and meditation techniques aimed at enhancing sleep quality. These practices provided the framework for the formulation of an undergraduate course entitled "Sleep for Peak Performance" at the University of Southern California. In collaboration with USC's Institute of Integrative Health and Wellness, the efficacy of these interventions was evaluated through a two-year study involving nearly 200 student volunteers, with selected preliminary findings to be discussed during this seminar.

Session 5

Sunday March 3nd - Evening (6:30-8:30pm PT)

Panel 1: **Partition, Postcolonial Condition, and Post 9/11 Wars: An Analysis of the Poetics of Disorder in South Asian Fiction**

Order, Disorder, and Entropy: Thermopoetics of Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke
Qurratulaen Liaqat & Abeeha Ayub
Moth Smoke by Mohsin Hamid was written at a very significant juncture of the history of the South Asian region as it explores that specific point in time when Pakistan tested nuclear weapons and the text portrays economic, environmental, and socio-political impact of these nuclear weapon trials on a common Pakistani's life. It surely was a time of political and economic turmoil. The purpose of this study is to carry out Thermopoetic analysis of Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke (2000) and to explore how themes and motifs of the first and the second law of Thermodynamics, closure, and entropy respectively, unpack the economic, political, and social chaos in this postcolonial novel. Generally, science and literature are considered unrelated fields of studies, but a closer analysis reveals that scientific concepts have significant implications in literature. This research draws upon Barri J. Gold's work on Thermopoetics, Tina Young Choi and Eric Zencey's analysis of influence and translation of themes of closure and entropy in literature written after the inception of thermodynamic laws. Using the theorized framework of Gold's Thermopoetics, this paper argues that Mohsin Hamid has portrayed the concerns about energy dissipation and death raised by the two fundamental laws of Thermodynamics. By analyzing the plot and the lives of main characters of Moth Smoke (2000), this paper demonstrates that the novel embraces the themes of closure and entropy. Also, the novel portrays characters like Aurangzeb, Darashikoh, Khurram Shah, and Mumtaz as thermodynamic figures "Maxwell's Demon" who use their intellectual ability and try to reverse the chaos in their lives.

Post 9/11 Wars and Pakistani Fiction: Thermopoetics of Uzma Aslam Khan's Thinner Than Skin
Maryam Raza (Lecturer, Institute of English Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore)
The aim of the study is to explore Uzma Aslam Khan's novel Thinner Than Skin from the critical lens of Thermopoetics. The paper unravels the symbiosis of order and disorder in the structure of the narrative, characterization, and the setting as an aftermath of a country steeped in the perilous quagmire of the War on Terror. The significance of the study lies in unpacking the chaos depicted in the novel as an inevitable and a constant situation in the aftermath of 9/11, and to demonstrate contemporary socio-political dynamics through an amalgam of literature and science. The primary focus of this research is Uzma Aslam Khan's novel Thinner Than Skin which illustrates the harrowing effects of War on Terror on the psyche, society, and politics of Pakistan. Khan's text unravels the disorder and chaos which ensued in Pakistan's territory in the aftermath of post 9/11 wars. The theoretical framework of Thermopoetics by Barri J. Gold which is based on a theory of physics, called Thermodynamics will be applied to critically analyse the text. There is a dearth of research based on sciences and Pakistani literature, therefore, this research will add new knowledge in the field of scientific analyses of the literature from this part of the world. Future researchers can view the novel through the lens of mathematical theories, specifically on probability and intuition. It is qualitative and inter-disciplinary research, merging the study of literature and physics.

Panel 1: Partition, Postcolonial Condition, and Post 9/11 Wars: An Analysis of the Poetics of Disorder in South Asian Fiction

Heimat and Home in Disorder: Representation of the Psycho-Social Effects of the Partition in Rajinder Singh Bedi's Lajwanti

Aniba Hassnain (Postgraduate Student, English Department, Forman Christian College, Lahore)

The Partition of the Subcontinent was one of the most chaotic instances in the individual lives of the residents of the Subcontinent. This research aims to explore the impact of the psycho-social impact of the turmoil of the Partition and ensuing displacement and its connection with an individual's sense of self, sense of belonging, and the concept of nation in Rajinder Singh Bedi's short story Lajwanti. By applying the theoretical propositions of Bill Ashcroft's Heimat and Gaston Bachelard's Home, this research contends that the character of Lajwanti shows a relationship between the sense of self and the possibility of transformative regeneration amid displacement. Lajwanti's experience during the 1947 partition of India highlights the connection between her sense of belonging, and the concept of nation. In the story Lajwanti, Sunderlal struggles to find his wife, who is kidnapped by a Muslim, which shows his struggle to look for a home. For Sunderlal, his wife Lajwanti is where he feels a sense of belonging and comfort. Thus, Lajwanti is the home of Sunderlal. However, Lajwanti's absence in Sunderlal's life not only impacts his identity and sense of home but also highlights the relationship between one's sense of self and the transformative potential of displacement during the times of commotion.

The Chaos of the Partition: The Psycho-Social Impacts of Forced Migration in Jamila Hashmi's Short Story Exile

Kushmala Mariam Moghal (Postgraduate Student, English Department, Forman Christian College, Lahore)

The Partition was a chaotic event in the political history of the Subcontinent which had far-reaching impact on the society, politics, and psyche of this part of the world. This study examines the adverse impacts of forced migration and exile during India-Pakistan's partition on the identity of the main character in Jamila Hashmi's short story, Exile. Using a qualitative research approach based on textual analysis, the study takes a close look at the themes and characters in the literary work, Exile. The theoretical framework of postcolonial studies, particularly drawing from Edward Said's concept of exile as elaborated in Reflections on Exile. By exploring the psychological and cultural implications of exile within the context of the partition in Exile, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the human cost associated with forced migration, emphasizing the enduring consequences on individual identities.

Panel 2: **Literary Affects and Cultural Transformations**

Promoting Stability within Chaos: South Asian Literature and the Importance of Empathy

Deka Mayuri (Faculty, University of the Bahamas)

The diversity of the South Asian region has historically ensued in dynamic societies where diverse socio-cultural, ethnic, economic and political contexts come in constant contact. While this has contributed to the immense richness of the societal fabric, there are also many occasions of confrontation and chaos. This is very apparent in the current climate of the region where religious intolerance, political extremism and growing economic inequality are being exacerbated with man-made and environmental disasters. The promotion of empathy-focused exercises within the South Asian literature classroom which enables students to see similarities with cultures and people they see as distant and alien while securing their self-identity would enhance their prosocial thinking and action. South Asian literature would provide students unfamiliar with the socio-cultural and economic ethos to enter a distant world and engage with the characters in the text. With empathy-focused pedagogical strategies, the instructor could encourage students to expand their circles of similarities. Thus, by expanding the students' core identity-contents to include diverse information and people through their engagement with South Asian texts, empathy-focused pedagogical strategies would reduce the prejudices and biases of the Self and result in prosocial change in a chaotic ethos.

Protean Mimesis of Kali and the Sym-Pathos of the Secular: Re-reading of Rushdie's Shame

Debojyoti Dan (Faculty, Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya, Kolkata)

Mimetic contagion of violence is cathartic in Rushdie's Shame. Here Kali is neither an anomaly nor a religious icon but Neitzsche's irrational violence that moves in the realm of pathology and ideology. She does not purify the absolutism of the Islamic state of Raza but de-sanitizes it in unconscious. She brings out Neitzsche's idea of self as dynamite as well as the mimetic pathos and human vulnerability. Rushdie prepares the ground for the ground for the rise of the beast and kali by suggesting that both the polyvocality of democracy and the polytheism of Hinduism have been repressed by Islamic militarism. The mix of repression and religion creates an invisible, underground realm, a bizarre collective unconscious seething with violence. A Neitzschean 'ubermanch' will rise to pathologically remove the virus of militarian absolutism and Saracen Puritanism and Philistine monotheism. Zia's mounted "Operation Fairplay" in 1978 is the political oxymoron as it eventually terminates with the Ali Bhutto's hanging in April 1979 and the beginning of Saracen Puritanism. This reign of terror is downloaded in our consciousness through the sym-pathos of Rushdie where we see the primal Hobbesean Leviathan coming back with its instinctual violence.

Panel 2: Literary Affects and Cultural Transformations

Breaking Boundaries: Reshaping the South Asian Literary Canon Through Translation

Jenny Bhatt (Graduate Student, University of Texas at Dallas)

This paper investigates the disruptive potential of literary translation within the context of South Asian literature. It examines how works translated from Indian languages into English can challenge established or accepted norms of Anglophone South Asian literature, reshape literary paradigms, and introduce fresh new tropes and traditions. The study will consider how literary translation can be a catalyst for cultural and sociopolitical change by destabilizing conventional expectations, countering biases and prejudices, and fostering new voices. By exploring the ways in which translated texts can disrupt linguistic and literary hierarchies, the paper seeks to demonstrate their transformative impact on South Asian literary landscapes. Ultimately, the paper aims to illuminate how literary translation can be a dynamic force, capable of subverting traditional narratives and contributing to the evolution of a more inclusive and diverse South Asian literary canon.

Little Magazines: An Alternative History and Counterculture in South Asia

Yashashwani Srinivas (Graduate Student, School of History, University of Leeds)

Social movements across the globe that strive against marginalization – social, economic and political in the present-day nation-state have used various mediums to propagate their thoughts and ideas. One such medium in the literary realm would be little magazines. Little magazines have been a common factor across movements against social stratification such as gender, class, sexuality and within the south Asian region, they it would the case of caste. Movements, agitations and resistance against caste in south Asia have proactively used Little Magazines. While these magazines have been studied in the realm of literature, knowledge production etc. – with a focus on the themes such as language, resources, translation, nature of content etc. However, there exists a knowledge gap on these magazines in the disciplines of Political Science and History. There is need to pay attention towards these magazines as a source of history that lie outside conventional archival setups, or state sponsored spaces. This paper is one such case study of an Indian Language little magazine by name 'Panchama' that was produced as part of the anti-caste movement in southern part of India between the 1970s and 1990s. Through this paper, I attempt to elucidate how such counterculture literary production that are quite often non-profit making enact as a rich source of history, often regarding as 'alternative' or 'subaltern'. I explore reasons for the lack of documentation of such sources both in print and digital and the potential issues arising from this such as misrepresentation and appropriation of historiographies.

Monsoon

South Asian Studies Association Journal

Monsoon: South Asian Studies Association Journal publishes peer-reviewed selected proceedings of the annual SASA conference and periodic special topics issues. The South Asian Studies Association highlights scholarly research related to South Asia (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, and Maldives) through the prism of multiple disciplines including history, political science, economics, communication and media studies, philosophy and religion, the arts, and archaeology.

This open access peer reviewed journal seeks to reflect the multi-disciplinary work of the South Asian Studies Association (SASA). SASA, established in 2007, is a non profit educational association that supports academic studies and public awareness related to South Asia.

Website: www.southasianstudiesassociation.org/monsoon
You can read the mission statement here: https://sasaonline.net/mission/

Asian Contemplative and Transcultural Studies
California Institute of Integral Studies

Join the ACTS Concentration in the East-West Psychology Department at CIIS

The Asian Contemplative and Transcultural Studies (ACTS) is an online MA concentration in East-West Psychology, which teaches and researches the contemplative traditions, practices and spiritual experiences of South and East Asia as agents for change in the modern world. The program offers a field of study for scholar-practitioners interested in experiencing personal transformation and in becoming leaders who catalyze world transformation from inside out.

A reflective and practical engagement with the contemplative traditions of Asia can play a significant role in restoring meaning and wholeness for modern populations as well as diasporic Asians seeking deep connections with their roots.

The study of these traditions in the academy aims to provide a safe, neutral and critically conscious space away from ideological, political or cultic identities. It also provides frameworks for transcultural understanding and informed engagement. It offers historical and cultural context and depth absent in popular or sectarian approaches.

We are accepting applications now!

Please contact *jcheco@ciis.edu* for more information or visit the CIIS website: www.ciis.edu/academics/graduate-programs/east-west-psychology/about-the-asian-contemplative-and-transcultural-studies-ma

Please subscribe to our Youtube page to receive notifications about uploaded videos from past lectures and cultural events. We have a fast growing archive!

Please follow the ACTS Facebook page to keep up to date with events. Also, don't be shy to share your activities with the growing community!

THE EAST-WEST PSYCHOLOGY PODCAST

The East-West Psychology Podcast

Exploring global intersectionality of spirituality, psychology and philosophy

www.east-westpsychologypodcast.com