



# South Asian News

Spring 2005

Center for South Asian Studies at the University of Hawaii, Manoa  
www.hawaii.edu/csas

## South Asia In Hawaii



S. Shankar  
CSAS Director

### Director's note:

I returned from a year in India at the beginning of the fall semester and jumped right into the position of Director of the Center for South Asian Studies. Since then it has been a matter of learning one thing after another about how the Center works and what its relationship is to the university. Of course, I was on the executive committee before I became the director—but that's never the same, is it? So, I want to begin by thanking Monica Ghosh, who preceded me as director, for leaving the Center in such good shape and helping make my transition into the position so smooth.

(continued on page 2)

## Durga, Inscrutable Mother of her Father

By Arindam Chakrabarti, Professor of Philosophy, University of Hawaii at Manoa

Her name means “hard to get.” She appears in the sky in the Vedic text the Kena Upanishad, dazzling the gods with her beauty, as “Uma, the daughter of the Himalaya.” She appears in order to shatter the pride of the gods as they celebrate their victory over the demons. She is not really born of anyone.

“I gave birth to my father; deep inside the primordial oceans lies my womb.”



(continued on page 11)

In a Vedic hymn, uttered by a mortal woman named “Vak,” who is possessed by the spirit of Durga, the great Goddess announces:



## A Journey through Bharatanatyam with Izumi Sato

Join Indian classical dance artist, Izumi Sato, as she takes you on a journey through Bharatanatyam, one of the classical dances from south India.

A student of Indian Dance for over seven years, Izumi Sato is a graduate student and instructor in the University of Hawaii's Dance program thanks to the generous support of the Watumull Family. She will perform at the Honolulu Academy of Arts on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005 as part of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Spring Symposium.

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## From the Director

(continued from 1)

Monica of course remains on the executive committee and so is very much involved with the affairs of the Center--that is, when she is able to steal time away from her busy and valuable work in the library. Along with Monica, the Center has lost Stu Dawrs, the coordinator, who has graduated from the university and moved on to other responsibilities in the real world. All of us appreciate the fine work Stu did for the Center and wish him the very best! In his place, Lisa Velez is the new coordinator and she has already demonstrated in innumerable ways how appropriate she is for this position. With her on board, I'm sure the Center will keep up the fine standards it has set for itself.

The varied activities of the Center are described in the pages of this newsletter. A magnificent South Asia related activity was the Durga exhibit at the Honolulu Academy of the Arts during the fall. The Center was happy to play a supportive role for this event that brought Honolulu residents to the Academy in spectacular numbers. For the first time in the university's history, a Bharatanatyam class (over-subscribed) was offered because of Center support. There were other well-attended lectures and musical performances, too. The growing interest in the activities of the Center and in South Asia in the city and within the university community is heartening indeed.

### Congratulations to the Spring 2005 J. Watumull Scholarship Recipients:

**Lara Marie Mitias**

**Eric J Shearer**

**Michael C Skinner**

## Congratulations to Monisha Das Gupta



Monisha Das Gupta was recently hired to the UH Faculty with a joint appointment in Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies.

Her areas of specialization include migration, globalization, and race relations in the U.S. She approaches each of these areas from a transnational feminist perspective.

And now, preparations are in full swing for the annual spring symposium (30<sup>th</sup> March-1<sup>st</sup> April). The theme this year is "After Postcolonialism?: South Asia in the Twenty-First Century." Our guests are Rakesh Sharma (award-winning director of the documentary Final Solution, which will be screened at the Honolulu Academy of the Arts as part of the symposium), Sangeeta Ray of University of Maryland, and S. Akbar Zaidi, the Pakistani economist. In addition to presentations by these guest speakers, the symposium will include a roundtable discussion of postcolonial studies by scholars working in areas other than South Asia. (It is necessary for us to think outside our disciplinary boxes at least some of the time.) And then there will be the usual panels with papers on a wide variety of topics. The fare will be rich. I hope members of the university community turn out in large numbers to partake of it. South Asia is a vital part of the contemporary world. The Center is committed to fostering knowledge and dialogue about it at the university and beyond.

--S. Shankar

## **Faculty News:**

### **Kazi K. Ashraf (Architecture)**

Kazi Ashraf presented conference papers "Taking Place: The Notion of Landscape in Kahn's Architecture," at Louis I. Kahn Symposium, Yale University; "Where is Architecture," at ARCASIA (Asian Architects Regional Council Annual Meeting) in Dhaka; "The Horizon of Hometown," at 33rd Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Madison; and "The Topography of Hometown: Towards a Theory," at the 20th South Asia Conference, University of California at Berkeley. He also wrote entries for the upcoming "Oxford Companion to Art," and produced a web profile on Dhaka City for the Architectural League of NY at <worldviewcities.org>. He curated an exhibition, titled "A Place of Transcendence: Louis Kahn at Dhaka," at the Kroiz Gallery, University of Pennsylvania. And recently, he completed the manuscript of a book, "The Last Hut: A Study in Asceticism and Architecture."

### **S. Charusheela (Women's Studies)**

S. Charusheela spent Spring 2004 on leave at the South Asia Program Jackson School, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and returned (having just receive tenure) this Fall after spending the summer visiting family and colleagues in India and the UK. In addition to presenting at the South Asia Conference of the Pacific North West at University of British Columbia last year, she presented papers at a workshop on 'Class and Coloniality' organized by Sanhati at the Center for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkutta (July 2004), and at the International Association for Feminist Economics 2004 Summer conference at Oxford UK (August 2004). Since her return in the Fall, she has presented papers at the South Asia Conference at Madison (October 2004), and South Asia Conference at Berkeley (February 2005). Charu's new book, *Structuralism and Individualism Economic Analysis: The 'Contractionary Devaluation Debate' in Development Economics* has just been published (Routledge).

### **Monica Ghosh (Hamilton Librarian)**

Monica Ghosh attended the 33rd Annual Conference on South Asia, October 15-17, 2004, in Madison, Wisconsin.

### **Lee Siegel (Religion Department)**

Lee Siegel's most recent book, "Who Wrote the Book of Love?" will be published in April by The University of Chicago Press. He is also residing in Spain for the semester as the Resident Director of the UH Study Abroad Program in Seville.

### **S. Shankar (English Department)**

In the last year, S. Shankar's novel NO END TO THE JOURNEY, has been sold to Steerforth Press (distributed by Random House) and will be published in Fall 2005. His anthology CROSSING INTO AMERICA: THE NEW LITERATURE OF IMMIGRATION, published in hardback in 2003 by New Press, will be released in paperback in May 2005. His critical essay "Midnight's Orphans, or A Postcolonialism Worth Its Name," published in *Cultural Critique* in 2004, was reprinted in India in *Rethinking Modernity*. An essay entitled "Edward Said, Critical Humanist" was published in the *Journal of Contemporary Thought*. In addition, a review article on Edward Said, will also appear in a forthcoming issue of MELUS. Shankar published cultural journalism in two Indian publications, *The Hindu Literary Review* and *Outlook*, and gave invited lectures at the University of California-Davis, and Madras University, in India.

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## **Freeman Foundation Invites Prof. Aslam Syed**

Prof. Aslam Syed, of Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad and Humboldt University in Berlin, will be a guest lecturer in Asian Studies for the Fall 2005 semester thanks to the Freeman Foundation Initiative.

## Raw Silk Poetry Review

by Ruth Hsu



Raw Silk (2004) is Meena Alexander's latest of six books of poems and five books of prose, two of which are novels. Alexander's prose is often lyrical, proffering multi-layered soundings of lives enriched ironically in the soil of uncertainties. Similarly, her poems contain glimmers of many lives vividly "narrated" in juxtaposed images of peace, beauty and trauma and pain:

grandmother coaxed mulberries  
from monsoon soil, clouds ran riot,

silkworms coiled under the skins of leaves,  
berries dripped free,

the courtyard was a sea of blood.  
When grandmother died ("Raw Silk" 34-35).

The silk was made into a wedding sari that was somehow "saved from the bonfire Gandhi has ordained" at the last minute, perhaps, just as ordinary lives can be forever changed in a split second, by "guns, grenades" or the officious hands that stamp an immigrant's passport, allowing her to pass from what is often merely one hard, fractious landscape to another, one terrible uncertainty to another. Alexander's poetry is most moving when it focuses on the daily minutia that makes up the realities of people living in the margins of society, the poor, the unnoticed, or the victims of mass destruction: "Not so long ago in Hiroshima/woman in kimono, bird, and cloud/turned to shadows staining the ground" ("September Sunlight" (17). This poem is important as a counterpoint to the poems written in the aftermath of 9-11 and as a beginning to the collection: "Aftermath" (9); "Invisible City" (10); and "Pitfire" (11). "Aftermath" begins quietly enough: "There is an uncommon light in the sky/Pale petals are scored into stone" and ends in words that seem to fall with a thud onto the poet's canvas, "An eye, a lip, a cut hand blooms/Sweet and bitter smoke stains the sky" (9). In "Pitfire," the speaker wonders "Shall a soul visit her mutilated parts? How much shall a body be home?" (11). "Hard Rowing," can perhaps be most profitably read as the fourth of the poems on 9-11: "Take my arm right/where it was blown off/and set it in your sleeve . . . Do you see/the sash of blood/ where the shops were?" (12).

One realizes, in reading Alexander's poems, that ordinary people's lives can never be separated out from global forces: "she pulls out a pocket mirror, puckers her lips/she tries to make small-scale order . . . out of bristling confusion . . . There is no homeland anymore/all nations are abolished, a young man cries" ("Rumors for an Immigrant" 37). The poems come most alive when they are about lives lived along the margins, in the fault-lines as it were between nationalistic struggles and confrontation of differing cultures that cannot speak to each other even in translation because the realities are too disparate. Only on the poet's page can the common and the un-common, or ancestral voices and the present, or the native and the immigrant be linked together through images and metaphoric language into a reality that belongs to the otherwise disenfranchised or marginalized.

The poems in Raw Silk are peopled not just by "ordinary" folks. Personae quote French poetry, refer to Rimbaud and Ginsberg, yet no lives are untouched by the global flows of multinational capital or the marauding army of the latest imperialistic power. Even the "western educated" have to live in the margins in one way or another.

by Ruth Y. Hsu  
University of Hawaii, Department of English

## Spotlight on Professor Muthusami Kumaran

With a genuine love of academia and a passion for research, Professor Muthusami Kumaran has joined UH faculty as the newest assistant professor in Public Administration and the first appointee to the Public Policy Center at UH, Manoa.

**How did you become interested in urban development planning and policy?** I was a small town boy in southern India who found myself in a huge city of 5 million people. I had moved to Madras to study chemistry at the university, but I kept thinking to myself, "Who runs this? How does it all work?" The housing issues in Asia really sparked my interest ...which is actually what brought me to Hawai'i the first time around. I was invited to the East-West Center in June of 1991 to present at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Summer Seminar on Population. (The presentation was titled, "A Critical Appraisal of Slum Formation and Upgrading Policies in Asian Megacities.")

**Did you know then that you would return to Hawai'i?** No. I remember being attracted to the community in Hawaii with its diversity and multiculturalism, but I returned to the University of Madras to complete my Ph.D. in Public Administration in September of 1991.

**What prompted you to pursue a second doctorate in urban and public affairs?** A senior professor at the University of Norte Dame, Prof. Dallmayr, was influential in that decision. I had a respect for research and academia and I knew that I wanted to come to the U.S. It didn't take much to convince me to apply to programs in the US. In fact, I applied to 11 universities and in deciding where to go, out of 11 to choose from, I picked Milwaukee, Wisconsin ....at least for my first year. There were four seasons of winter, talk about change. It wasn't long before I found a program that suited me better and weather that was more to my liking. I moved to Louisville, Kentucky to complete my second doctorate in Urban and Public Affairs with a specialization in planning and development. I also spent time in Washington D.C, but it was in Kentucky that I was really able to see my research really make a change.

### **How does your academic and professional path shape your teaching and research?**

I feel that all of my experiences will contribute to my students' learning. The ability to relay your own experiences and share examples from your life, it is that reality that strengthens their understanding and enhances the learning experience.

### **And lastly, what do you think of Hawaii?**

My wife, Leela, and I came here to raise our daughter (15 month-old Janani) in a city of cultural diversity, tolerance, and opportunity. I like that the minorities are collectively the majority. It is a beautiful and exciting place, not to mention the scenery!

### Seeking J. Watumull Scholarship Applicants

The J. Watumull Scholarship for the Study of India was established to promote understanding of India through scholarship support of University of Hawai'i students with a focused and well-developed proposal to study for a minimum of two months in India. The scholarship, which is generously supported by the Watumull Fund, provides up to \$5,000 to students in areas of study such as the visual and performing arts, history, philosophy, religion, and politics, as well as any other field, including the professional schools and community college programs.

Further information and applications are available online at <http://www.hawaii.edu/csas/watumull>, by email at [csas@hawaii.edu](mailto:csas@hawaii.edu), or by calling the Center for South Asian Studies at (808) 956-5652

Deadline for submissions is April 1<sup>st</sup>.

## *A Preview of What's to Come*

### *The 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual CSAS Spring Symposium*

“After  
Postcolonialism?:  
South Asia in the  
21<sup>st</sup> Century”

#### **March 30<sup>th</sup>**

Honolulu Academy of Arts

*Final Solution*  
Film Screening, Q&A  
with Rakesh Sharma

#### **March 31<sup>st</sup>**

Korean Studies Auditorium

Dr. Sangeeta Ray  
“Postcolonialism in  
Question: Rage, Riots  
and Revivalism”

Rakesh Sharma  
“Telling the Truth: A  
Conversation with  
Rakesh Sharma on  
Censorship and  
Documentary  
Filmmaking in India”

#### **April 1<sup>st</sup>**

Korean Studies Auditorium

Dr. S. Akbar Zaidi  
“Pakistan: The Other  
South Asian Post-  
colonial.”

An Interdisciplinary  
Roundtable  
“Area Studies After  
Postcolonialism”

#### **April 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Honolulu Academy of Arts

“Dancing around the  
Ramayana with stories  
of Sita and Rama”  
by Izumi Sato

#### **Dr. S. Akbar Zaidi**

Dr. S Akbar Zaidi is a Karachi-based social scientist who undertakes research on social, economic and development issues. He has published in numerous international professional journals on themes as diverse as devolution, health sociology, local government, fiscal policy, and on international financial institutions.

S Akbar Zaidi has also published eleven books, two of which, *Issues in Pakistan's Economy* (OUP, 2005) and *The New Development Paradigm: Papers on Institutions, NGOs, Gender and Local Government*, (OUP, 1999), have become standard textbooks for graduate and postgraduate students of Pakistan's Economy and on Development Economics, in Universities in Pakistan and abroad.

More recently, his books include *The Dismal State of the Social Sciences in Pakistan*, (COSS, Islamabad, 2002) and *Continuity and Change: Socio-Political and Institutional Dynamics in Pakistan*, (City Press, Karachi, 2003). His most recent book is *Pakistan's Social and Economic Development: The Domestic, Regional and Global Context* (Rupa and Co, New Delhi, 2004).

Currently, he is a visiting professor at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

#### **Dr. Sangeeta Ray**

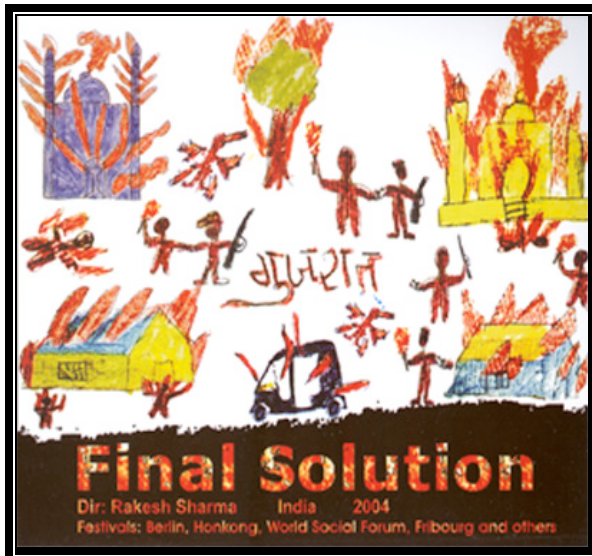
Associate Professor at the University of Maryland, Dr. Sangeeta Ray's primary research and teaching interests include postcolonial theory; Indian, African, and Caribbean literature; feminist theory; US Ethnic literatures; cultural studies; and contemporary literature.

Sangeeta Ray was a co-founder and president of the MLA Discussion Group on Postcolonial Literature and is the MLA delegate from the Division of English Literature Other than British and American. She helped organize and was the first director of the UM Asian American Studies Certificate. In addition, in 1994 she was awarded a Lily teaching grant and membership grant for an NEH summer seminar. She won a university wide teaching award in 1992 and was named UM Woman of Color of the Year in 1997-98. She is a co-organizer of the first Cultural Studies Association Conference.

Her books include: *En-Gendering India: Woman and Nation in Colonial and Postcolonial Narratives* (Duke, 2000) and *Edition: A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (with Henry Schwarz, 2000). Furthermore, she has published 15 articles and reviews in such collections and journals as *Gender and Language*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Ariel*, and *Genders*.

## CSAS Sponsors Final Solution Screening

with filmmaker Rakesh Sharma



Final Solution is a study of the politics of hate. Set in Gujarat, India, the film graphically documents the changing face of right-wing politics in India through a study of the 2002 genocide of Muslims in Gujarat.

The film examines the aftermath of the deadly violence that followed the burning of 58 Hindus on the Sabarmati Express train at Godhra on February 27 2002. In "reaction" to that incident, some 2,500 Muslims were brutally murdered, hundreds of women raped, and more than 200,000 families driven from their homes.

Borrowing its reference from the history of Nazism, the title of the film exposes what the film director calls 'Indian Fascism' and seeks to remind that "those who forget history are condemned to relive it."

Final Solution was banned in India by the Censor Board for several months. The ban was recently lifted after a sustained campaign (an online petition, hundreds of protest screenings countrywide, multi-city signature campaigns and dozens of letters to the Government sent by audiences directly). Final Solution was also rejected by the government-run Mumbai International Film Festival, but was screened at Vikalp: Films for

Freedom organized by the Campaign Against Censorship. Rakesh Sharma has been an active member of the Campaign since its inception.

To date the film has won several awards including: Wolfgang Staudte Award & Special Jury Award (Netpac) at the Berlin International Film Festival, Humanitarian Award for Outstanding Documentary at the HongKong International Film Festival, Silver Dhow (Best Doc category) at the Zanzibar International Film Festival, Best Feature-Length Documentary at the Big MiniDV (USA), the prestigious Grierson Award (UK), and a special award by NRIs for a Secular and Harmonious India (NRI-SAH), NY-NJ.

**Rakesh Sharma** began his film/TV career in 1986 as an assistant director on Shyam Benegal's *Discovery of India*. His broadcast industry experience includes the set up/launch of 3 broadcast channels in India: Channel [V], Star Plus and Vijay TV and several production consultancy assignments. He has now gone back to independent documentary filmmaking.

His last film *Aftershocks: The Rough Guide to Democracy* won the Best documentary film award at Fribourg, Big Mini-DV and at Big Muddy and won 7 other awards (including the Robert Flaherty prize) at various festivals in US and Europe during 2002-03. It has been screened at over 90 international film festivals.

Join us for **"Telling the Truth: A Conversation with Rakesh Sharma on Censorship & Documentary Filmmaking in India"** March 31<sup>st</sup> at UH Manoa.

### ***Final Solution***

with filmmaker Rakesh Sharma

**March 30<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 p.m.**

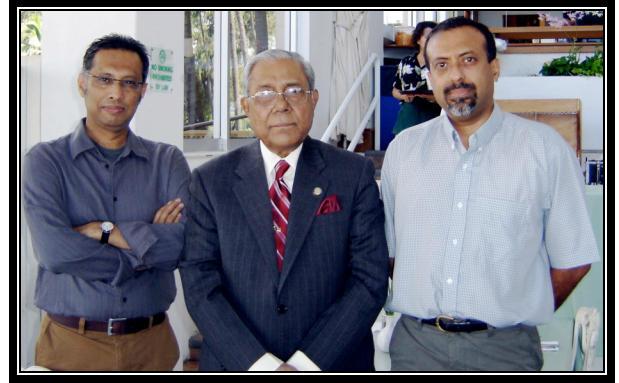
The Honolulu Academy of Arts

Doris Duke Theater

Free to the public

## Ambassador Ahmad of Bangladesh visits UH

A roundtable presentation and discussion featuring Ambassador Syed Hasan Ahmad of Bangladesh, was held February 10 at the East-West Center's Burns Hall. The Ambassador is pictured (middle) with Kazi Ashraf (left) and CSAS Director, S. Shankar (right)



## “Shankuntala” Performed at Mid Pacific Institute

by Jason Ellinwood

Few people outside of India have seen a Sanskrit drama. Fewer still have performed in one. To have done so in high school, though, is unheard of. However, I and seventeen other students at Mid-Pacific Institute can now claim that distinction, after our participation in *Shakuntala*, directed by R. Kevin Doyle.

The main challenge of staging *Shakuntala* was learning the movement and acting style of Sanskrit drama, made difficult by the fact that Sanskrit drama, like the Sanskrit language, has been extinct since ancient



times. The closest available style was that of Bharatanatyam, an Indian dance form.

Our instructor in Bharatanatyam was Izumi Sato, who also choreographed all of the dance sequences in the show. Besides walking and stomping dance steps, she also taught us 56 *hastha mudras*, or hand gestures, which allowed us to mime props and to emphasize literal and emotional meanings of our lines.

After learning Bharatanatyam, we worked on the vocal style, which we took from Kutiyattam, an Indian theater form performed in temples. While most of the lines were spoken with only slight stylization, a number of poetic lines were done as drawn-out chants. Kutiyattam also inspired the show's make-up, which ranged from slight accenting of the eyes, lips and eyebrows to elaborate designs for the green-faced god characters.

The combination of both Bharatanatyam and Kutiyattam, when applied to Kalidasa's script of *Shakuntala*, created the theatrical experience that we presented to our audiences. Learning these traditional forms took large amounts of time and energy, but the excitement of performing a Sanskrit drama was a reward well worth the work.

by Jason Ellinwood  
Senior at Mid-Pacific Institute



## *A Journey through Bharatanatyam*

with Izumi Sato

Join Indian classical dance artist, Izumi Sato, as she takes you on a journey through Bharatanatyam, one of the classical dances from south India to reflect the South Asian art in the Honolulu Academy of Art's exhibit.

The lecture, entitled, "Dancing around the Ramayana with stories of Sita and Rama," focuses on the theatrical technique of Indian performing arts, called *Abhinaya* which means expression or presentation.

Observe firsthand how the internal qualities of emotions are expressed in Bharatanatyam. The Bharatanatyam dancer performs the art of storytelling. In her performance of Bharatanatyam, Izumi will tell the story of episodes from the *Ramayana* – one of the great epics of India. The experience of individual audience members, *Rasa*, is included in all Indian arts. She will introduce the relationship between the artist and audience in the Indian aesthetic theory; harmonizing the expressions of the artist and the experiences of the audience.



**Izumi Sato**, from Japan, is a graduate student pursuing a Master of Arts degree in Dance at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. She studied Bharatanatyam with Shuba Dhanajaya in Bangalore, and with Guru Saroja Vaidyanathan in New Delhi.

Izumi was thankful to have the generous support of the Indian Cultural Council Relations Scholarship from the Indian Government.

After seven years of study in India, Izumi came to the U.S. to pursue her Master's degree.

In 2001, Izumi received the "Indira Gandhi Priyadarshini Award" in New Delhi, India. She has performed for international audiences in India, Japan, Taiwan, Ukraine, and around the USA. Izumi also performs with the UH Dance Ensemble as a solo Bharatanatyam performer at outreach programs in communities among the Hawaiian Islands. Currently Izumi teaches Bharatanatyam at UHM and the Mid Pacific Institute.

### **Dancing Around the Ramayana with Stories of Sita and Rama**

by Izumi Sato

**April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4:00-5:30 pm**

The Honolulu Academy of Arts  
Doris Duke Theater  
Free to the public

## **"Area Studies After Postcolonialism"**

An Interdisciplinary Roundtable at the University of Hawaii

Colin Danby, NoeNoe Silva, Jungmin Seo, Katerina Teaiwa, Melly Wilson, & Mari Yoshihara

Friday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at the Korean Studies Auditorium

Visit [www.hawaii.edu/csas/symposium](http://www.hawaii.edu/csas/symposium) for more details

## Durga Puja Celebrated in Hawaii

### Honolulu Academy of Arts



The Honolulu Academy of Arts presented an exhibition honoring the Indian goddess Durga, entitled "**Durga: the Great Goddess Revealed,**" from September 9<sup>th</sup> through December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004. During the festival, or Durga Puga a number of activities were planned, including lectures, dance and music workshops and performances, films and demonstrations.

Visitors to the Academy were invited to watch the construction of a ritual Durga image and pandal, beginning September 13, culminating in the consecration of the image, "Where in the World?: India!", on October 17.

The construction took place in the Central Courtyard. Made of clay and straw, the building housed an image of Durga, which was also built on site by craftsman from West Bengal. The Honolulu Academy of Arts worked coordinated the project with Ruby Palchoudhuri, Executive Director of Crafts Council of West Bengal.



## *Inscrutable Mother...* (continued from page 1)

Many are the stories of Durga. In one story, she emerges from the collective righteous rage of the chief gods such as Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma, when they get angry at the sight of the three worlds being plundered and ravished by power-crazy demons, the virtuous and the just being routinely vanquished by the evil. She pretends to be a beautiful virgin waiting to get married to whichever male is ready to fight with her and win. Shumbha and Nishumbha, twin Demon Kings, seduced by the challenge, come to fight her with all their armies and weapons of mass destruction. She then organizes an army of goddesses, the power of each male god personified as a distinct female goddess: Brahmani, Rudrani, Vaishnavi, Indrani, and so on. At the end, after soldiers and even his brother Nishumbha had been killed, the lonely Demon King Shumbha complains that this has turned into an unfair battle. He is alone on one side and so many angry celestial women are fighting him on the other. In reply, Durga thunders, "Where do you see a second one? Don't you see that in this universe I alone exist?" And struck by Durga's trident, the demonic male-ego dies, taught at the end this lethal lesson in the Non-Duality of the Goddess, who alone sets up this show of creation and destruction, of virtue and vice, of war and peace. An eighteenth century Bengali song by Ramprasad goes:

Not just any girl, that girl.  
Saying her name, Mohesh lived, though poison  
he had gulped.  
She creates, preserves, brings chaos, as she  
turns her eyes' glance.  
Stuffs th'endless universe, God's egg, into her  
tum.

.....  
Proshad says, Embattled, she marches off to  
war.  
With a roar she kills Shumbho, Nishumbho,  
giants both.

(From Song for Kali, translated by Gayatri Spivak,  
Seagull Books, Calcutta 2000)

The grateful gods praise Durga. Heaven is  
regained by the forces of the good, thanks to  
Durga, the perennial protector of the pious

and the seductress-killer of egotistic empire-  
builders. They praise her as that Goddess  
who lives in every heart as a mother, as a  
creative power, as grace, as wrath, as  
memory, as illusion, as modesty, as sleep, as  
wisdom, as peace, as talent, as hunger, as  
faith, as innumerable other capacities.



Following the gods, all over India, but mostly  
in Bengal, in late Autumn, Durga is  
worshipped, with great pomp and enthusiasm.  
Stone and metal images of lion-riding.

Durga as the killer of the Buffalo-Demon are  
found all over India from the fourth or fifth  
century CE. But the currently popular clay idol  
which shows her with ten hands, busy killing a  
demon springing up from the decapitated  
body of a buffalo, and surrounded by her two  
daughters Laksmi and Sarasvati and two  
sons Ganesha and Kartikeya is not older than  
three hundred years.

Durga Saptashati, a holy book of seven  
hundred Sanskrit verses, recited during this  
annual festival, describes Durga's inscrutable  
nature and actions. This text tells us:

All Sciences and the Arts are you, Durga, and  
all Women are your images.  
Mother, with you alone are all these worlds  
and the words filled up!  
How can one praise you with words that are  
distinct enough to mean you?

Durga, for the Vedic-Puranic imagination, is  
the power of fearless creative speech that  
gives birth even to her speaker-father and  
that ultimately overpowers violence and the  
mad militarism that abets violence.

by Arindam Chakrabarti

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See us at:  
[www.hawaii.edu/csas](http://www.hawaii.edu/csas)

### CENTER FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

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Honolulu, HI 96822



## About Our Organization...

Strategically located, and with a multicultural heritage, the state of Hawai'i has always been uniquely international in outlook. The people, traditions, and cultural milieu of this island state in the Pacific provide a strong and continuing bond with Asia.

Beginning with the establishment of the Oriental Institute in 1935 and an ongoing series of East-West Philosophers' Conferences, South Asia became an intellectual focus at UH. This emphasis continued with the establishment of the journal *Philosophy East and West* in 1951 and the Asian Studies Program.

The Center for South Asian Studies was created in 1985. Since then the objective of the Center has been to coordinate and integrate, by juxtaposing humanistic with scientific scholarship, and historical and contemporary data. The Center thus serves to illuminate specific questions of regional interest, and complements and bridges the disciplinary departments directly related to it.

The Center studies both past and present societies and cultures of South Asia and promotes faculty interaction across departmental lines to foster comparative and interdisciplinary research on the region. South Asia includes contemporary Afghanistan, Pakistan, India (including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands), the Maldives, Lakshadweep, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Tibet.

## 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Spring Symposium: March 30<sup>th</sup>-April 3<sup>rd</sup>



### “After Postcolonialism?: South Asia in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”

Guest Speakers to Include:

Filmmaker Rakesh Sharma,  
Dr. Sangeeta Ray,  
Dr. S. Akbar Zaidi,  
and Izumi Sato.

