



## A Philadelphia Architect In Dhaka

The following are excerpts from a conversation between Nathaniel Kahn and Kazi Ashraf. Nathaniel Kahn, an emerging film-maker from New York, has just completed and released a documentary, *My Architect: A Son's Journey*, on his father, the illustrious architect Louis I. Kahn. The Capital Complex project in Dhaka, designed by Kahn, takes a prominent place in the film.

The conversation was taped in Philadelphia in August 2003, and took place in the light of recent and unwarranted building interventions in Kahn's Complex.

**Kazi Ashraf (KA):** How did you as a film-maker come to realize the importance of this group of buildings in Dhaka?

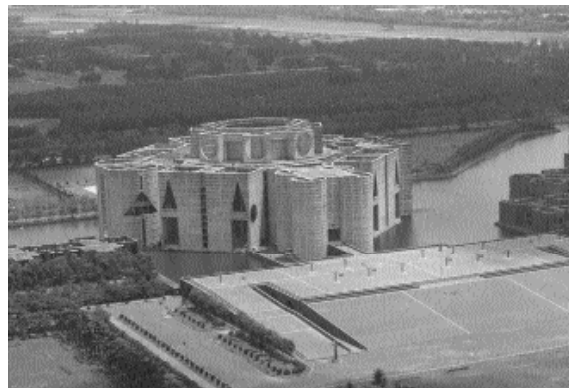
**Nathaniel Kahn (NK):** There are a few things that come to mind. One is the importance of Lou [Kahn] and his work to the world of architecture, and also the importance of this project in the process of his work, and also, thirdly, my perception of what Lou did with the government of Bangladesh. My first access to it is because I've been traveling around the world seeing the places that my father built. I saved Dhaka for last because I remember as a little boy the passion he had for this project, and as

a little boy in his office seeing the way he worked on this project for years and years, even when the war [of 1971] was on. Lou was somebody who

believed in the ability of architecture to transform the world and to create a better society. We would consider him here an idealistic person. But I think he found in Dhaka a commission to design a center of government, really his dream project because it was a new country and he knew if he did it right and if he was able to get his

vision done it could change the world.

See "KAHN" on page 8



Assembly Building, Dhaka, Bangladesh

photo: Chetana

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# Pikake People

By Monica Ghosh

Every time I walk to campus I pass alongside a green hedge. The other day, as I walked along, I was overwhelmed by the sweet familiar fragrance of pikake. Looking at the hedge, I noticed it was covered in clusters of the fragrant, white blossoms. Pikake (jasmine) is an introduced plant from India.

According to one source, the blossom was a favorite of Princess Kaʻiulani, who named it after her favorite bird—another South Asian import—the peacock. Besides Hawaiian royalty, pikake was a

beyond food and flavor to people—for instance, the interviews with Akbar Abbas (who was here as part of the Hawaiʻi International Film Festival [HIFF]), and the documentary filmmaker Nathaniel Kahn. Abbas is best known for his scholarship on Hongkong cinema, but his HIFF presentation went beyond those boundaries to include an analysis of films from both Hongkong and Turkey. In our conversation, we were able to expand the geography even further, discussing Abbas' South Asian ancestry (traced through his maternal grandfather), and the issues and concerns of the South Asian diaspora

*“The potential to strengthen South Asian Studies by exploring interactions and exchanges between Asians and the Pacific are endless...”*

favorite among the kings of Afghanistan, Nepal, and Persia. In the Philippines, jasmine is called sampguita and it is the national flower of that country. It is also one of the national flowers of Indonesia. In China, jasmine is used to flavor tea. The essence of jasmine is used to flavor and scent a wide variety of foods and body products. In Hawaiʻi, pikake is also used for leis: The simple white flower with its strong, beautiful scent symbolizes purity, simplicity, humility, strength, and divine hope.

Pikake, which has its origins in South Asia, traveled across other parts of Asia and the Pacific to Hawaiʻi. It is a flower with a fragrance that inspires different uses and it has been adopted by various cultures uniquely. It is in the spirit of the pikake that the work of the Center for South Asian Studies takes its inspiration, where we emphasize the influence and connections of South Asia to other parts of Asia and the Pacific, while respectfully recognizing differences. The potential to strengthen South Asian Studies by exploring interactions and exchanges between Asians and the Pacific are endless, and can be very productive in developing stronger research and academic programs.

This issue of the newsletter was inspired by the origins, adoption, and adaptations of pikake

to Hongkong. Likewise Kazi Ashraf's interview with Nathaniel Kahn, who created a documentary—also part of the film festival—on the work and life of his father, the architect Louis Kahn. The elder Kahn's projects spanned the globe, from the United States to India and Bangladesh. Both Akbar Abbas and Louis Kahn (and, for that matter, Nathaniel Kahn and Kazi Ashraf) are people who evoke the qualities and characteristics of pikake.

As the semester ends, I would like to congratulate and wish Professor Jagdish Sharma a very happy retirement. He has taught South Asian history at the University for over 30 years and begins his retirement in January. Every semester the Center Coordinator, Stu Dawrs, and my assistant in the Library, Lisa Nguyen, provide excellent support at many different levels. Congratulations and good luck to Lisa, who graduates this semester with a Master's in Library and Information Sciences. More pikake people.

Through this note, I hope to pass the pikake, so you may be inspired by its simple beauty and memorable fragrance. In the New Year, may all the protests against war, the Patriot Act, and military expansion succeed—Pikake Peace.

Aloha and Happy Holidays!

# Jagdish Sharma

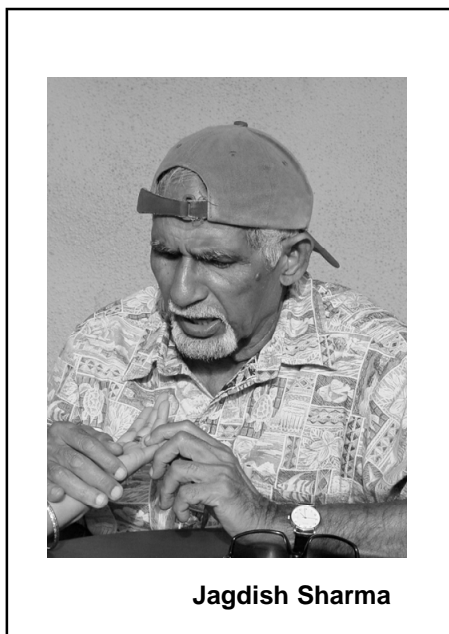
By Stu Dawrs

When Jagdish Sharma first arrived on the University of Hawai'i campus in 1964, his colleagues outside of the Islands didn't expect him to stay too long. Two years after he'd received his Ph.D. from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, Jagdish was one of only three historians in the United States focusing on ancient India, and was being courted by such prestigious universities as Columbia, the University of Virginia and Syracuse. But even when Columbia offered to triple his salary, he refused to leave the University of Hawai'i.

"Everybody at Columbia said that this is such an isolated and provincial place, that I would be fed up with it within a couple years and would be back," he says. "But I found it better actually, because everybody came to the East-West Center and to the University. And anybody can teach at an elite university—they can buy anybody—but I wanted to teach the kids who were like the village kids in India, the plantation kids, so I stayed here."

By the time Jagdish retired in December of this year, thirty-nine and a half years after he started his UH career, he had certainly accomplished that goal: At last count he had either chaired or sat on the committees of more than 150 students who received either an M.A. or Ph.D., several of whom went on to join the faculty in various departments of the

University. In addition, he extended his educational reach even further by serving as a consultant to the South Pacific Commission, where he worked to rewrite the basic high school curriculum for South Pacific students.



Jagdish Sharma

Now that he has retired, Jagdish has no plans to slow down. In the Spring of 2004 he will serve as an affiliate faculty member at the University of London, and in the fall will travel to Vietnam to teach for a semester there. At present, he also has somewhere in the range of a half-dozen book projects in various stages of completion. Among others, he is revising and expanding his seminal historical work *Republics in Ancient India*, which will be reprinted by New Delhi's Munshiram Manoharlal in 2004; working on the final manuscript of a new book, *Jinism, All the Teachings of the Jinas*; serving as editor (and a contributor) for the forthcoming *Individuals and Ideas in Traditional India: Ten Interpretive Studies* (which

will also be published by Munshiram Manoharlal); compiling a volume tentatively titled *Shramanism: Six Interpretations* (to which he will contribute a piece on Buddhism as a Messianic movement); and working on two other manuscripts, *Jinism: A Historical Perspective* and *Jaina Heroes*.

"I've been working for twenty or thirty years on some of these projects," he says. "You can't really produce everything while you're teaching—and I've been offered grants in the past, but only if I do projects that they tell me to do. I've never accepted that: I'm a scholar and I choose my own subjects to write on. So now I'll do them on my own time: I have several such manuscripts that are practically finished, so I plan to finish one per year."

## Faculty Profile

## Kazi Ashraf

By Stu Dawrs

**T**o understand how Kazi Ashraf came to be teaching in the University of Hawai'i's School of Architecture, you first have to draw a physical line from Bangladesh to the Eastern United States and on into the Pacific. You also have to describe a theoretical arc from India to Japan, through Germany and beyond.

"I was getting more and more interested in Japan, and I thought Hawai'i would be a nice place to be in the United States and looking at Japan," he says. "My dissertation is about asceticism in architecture. Thematically, it has to do with the hermit's hut: People renounce and then in some way they configure a house—through old Buddhist texts I was trying to figure out the significance of these huts. And that led me to Japan, to the tea house."

The short version of this trek begins with the ancient Sutra Vimalakirti, which tells the tale of an extremely wealthy yet enlightened businessman. Hearing that a Bodhisattva was approaching his home with a huge retinue—and knowing that he would be unable to entertain such a throng—Vimalakirti empties out his home.

"It's a parable about emptiness and cleansing oneself," says Kazi. "That text really grabbed the imagination of the Japanese: Emptying things out so that everything can come in. That is the basis of the tea house. If you look at Japan now, you would think that the aesthetic has always been sparse and minimalist, but a lot of medieval Japanese houses were pretty Baroque. So this was an imported aesthetic. It didn't come directly from India of course, it was refracted through China and all of that. And what the Japanese did with the tea houses was to convert their architecture to show this lesson of renunciation."

But how does Germany enter the picture?

"Modern architectural minimalism was really

perfected by Mies van der Roh, the German architect who was working in Chicago. Prior to the 19th century, the Europeans were not doing minimalist architecture—

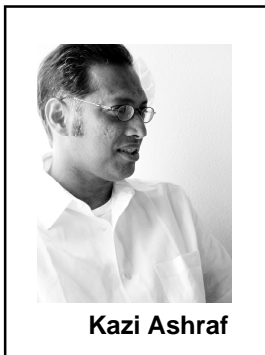
it was all baroque, gaudy stuff. So where is this minimalism coming from? The Germans were very interested in Japanese architecture. ... So this has been my work and will be part of my work for the next few years: If I can argue that the Japanese tea house had an impact on modern aesthetics, and that the tea house was influence by Vimalakirti's house, then I am making a link between Vimalakirti's house and modern minimalist aesthetics."

This type of boundary crossing on

Kazi's part extends into all aspects of his life. Born in Dhaka and holding post-graduate degrees from MIT and the University of Pennsylvania, he cites as influences the famed Marxist-minimalist Bangladeshi architect Mazaharul Islam (with whom he worked for two years after receiving his professional degree), and the equally famous American modernist architect Louis Kahn, whose work he has studied extensively. Although he doesn't adhere to a specific architectural movement, he says he takes a certain amount of inspiration from the modernists. And, like Mazaharul Islam, he is quick to assert that architecture is not isolated from society.

"You can destroy a city by building in it—you think it's progress? It's not progress," Kazi asserts. "You can disrupt civic culture, you can disrupt the social matrix, the sense of space, everything. The kind of building typologies that are prevalent all over the sub-continent—go to any city in India—it's an enclave, the first thing you do is put up walls: It tells you what people are thinking."

Since arriving in Honolulu in Spring 2001, Kazi has also become actively involved in the local community. Among other projects, he currently sits on the Advisory Committee of the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Arts' "Shangri La" Museum. In the Spring, he will be teaching Intermediate Architecture, Studio B.



Kazi Ashraf

## “Asian Cities, Asian Cinemas”

This year's Hawai'i International Film Festival (HIFF) featured several South Asia-related film screenings, symposiums and public forums. As in past years, it also brought together some of the world's leading filmmakers, actors, and film theoreticians—among them the University of Hongkong's Ackbar Abbas, who came to this year's HIFF as the keynote speaker for a symposium titled *GLOBAL/LOCAL/EXOTIC:*

*Transnational Production and Auto-Ethnography*. His presentation—“Asian Cities, Asian Cinemas”—was meant to address the ongoing debate over globalism, globalization, and the way these movements are reconfiguring the exotic from the other to “the unknown-within-the-known.”

Abbas is well qualified to speak on the subject, having published numerous essays and a widely regarded book—*Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minnesota UP, 1997)—covering much of Hongkong's multi-faceted culture, including its cinema.

Among other things, he is currently co-coordinating (along with University of Chicago professor of art history Wu Hung and the Berlin-based House of World Cultures) “On Beauty,” an exhibition and conference to take place in 2005.

A Hongkong native, Abbas has roots in North India, via his maternal grandfather. The following conversation with CSAS director Monica Ghosh took place during a brief break in this year's HIFF events.

**Monica Ghosh:** I wanted to talk more about your ideas on “crossings” in films. ...

**Ackbar Abbas:** You know, this idea of crossings, it's something to do with the whole issue of visibility—my key example would be the preserved building, which looks old and traditional but is the

matrix for responding to change. What is it you are seeing in what you're seeing? There is a kind of split there, which seems to parallel this split between different forms of urbanisms, like suburbia

and what my friend Mario Gandelsonas calls “x-urbia.” He doesn't emphasize this too much, but the point that really strikes you about how he describes it is that suburbia and x-urbia might in fact look the same—the difference lies in the way they're framed in relationship to the global. Because suburbia has a kind of relationship to the city of skyscrapers—the urban site of big business, which people in the sub-

urbs live outside of. But x-urbia obeys completely different rules: It's the moment when some of these new industries—information industries—can move outside the main city and still be in touch and in control. So they moved to the suburbs and the suburbs are now transformed: It's not just a residence, it's a place of entertainment, and everything you find in the city you can find replicated in x-urbia.

The key idea I wanted to develop from Gandelsonas' writing (*X-Urbanism: Architecture and the American City*, Princeton UP, 1999) is in one little footnote which he doesn't expand upon. And I don't know yet if you can expand upon it: He says these x-urban sites are found in the United States, but he also says that some of the most powerful examples are now in Asia. So that's how I read these “x's” and the whole question of the visual, which brings us to cinema—cinema and cities.

**MG:** I'm interested in the representations of South Asians in Hongkong. There is a tendency to represent Hongkong as more Sinic and not as cosmopolitan—or rather, particularly cosmopolitan: More of a caucasian or white influence, that kind of



Ackbar Abbas

Please see “ABBAS” on page 7

# Religion and Politics In India: Culture, History and the Contemporary Experience

**T**he Asian Studies Development Program, a collaborative effort of the University of Hawai'i and the East-West Center, will conduct an NEH-funded summer institute on *Religion and Politics in India: Culture, History and the Contemporary Experience* over five weeks (June 7-July 9, 2004). The Institute begins from the premise that the study of contemporary worlds must be grounded in a historically rich appreciation and understanding of culture and the humanities. Because of the broad ambi-

evolution of its electoral democracy today; and

- Considering the implications of a rising tide of Hindu fundamentalism for the survival of a pluralist ethos in this part of the world.

Prior to the workshop, participants will be asked to read three texts that will provide them with shared perspectives on Indian history, culture, politics and sensibilities. They are:

- *The Bhagavad Gita: Krishna's Counsel in*

"The Institute begins from the premise that the study of contemporary worlds must be grounded in a historically rich appreciation and understanding of culture and the humanities."

tions and interdisciplinary nature of the program, it will pay critical attention to primary texts (in the broadest sense, including classical literatures and scriptures, oral narratives, artworks, rituals, films and novels) drawn from both the core cultural canons of India and their many, often subaltern, folk and marginalized, alternatives. The central concerns during the Institute will include:

- Demonstrating that the relationship between the political and the religious has been deeply pacific and constructive, as well as conflicted or martial;
- Developing insight into the diverse ways in which religious sensibilities have infused the political realm with both ethical boundaries and a moral aesthetic;
- Examining the ways in which political power has been deployed in extending and refining the reach of religious traditions, most notably in the case of Buddhism and Islam;
- Unpacking the importance of religion in framing the political ethics of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar;
- Understanding the extraordinary importance of caste as an institution and practice both for religious traditions of India and, increasingly, for the

*Times of War*, ed. and trans. Barbara Stoler Miller, New York, Bantam, 1986.

- Shashi Tharoor, *India: from midnight to the millennium*, Penguin, 1997.

- Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, New York, Avon, 1982.

In addition to these texts, on arrival participants will receive a collection of readings selected by the presenting faculty to provide: pertinent background for individual program lectures and discussions; scholarly resources useful for further research; and textual materials useful in building India-focused course modules, syllabi and curricula.

*Religion and Politics in India: History, Culture and the Contemporary Experience* is designed to meet the needs of faculty from the humanities and social sciences who are interested in deepening the role of comparative cultural studies through the infusion of Indian materials into their teaching. The lectures, films, readings and discussions will be oriented towards helping Institute participants construct engaging, well-informed, and critically robust course modules and syllabi that will meaningfully integrate India into existing and planned curricula. For more information, e-mail [krishna@hawaii.edu](mailto:krishna@hawaii.edu).

## Neoliberalism in South Asia: Culture, Gender, and Labor

**T**he 21st Annual Spring Symposium of the Center for South Asian Studies at the University of Hawai'i is scheduled for April 15-16, 2004. This year's Symposium is titled "Neoliberalism in South Asia: Culture, Gender, and Labor."

In the 1980s and 1990s, South Asian countries adopted neoliberal policies that led to increased foreign investment, export-oriented economies, and cuts in public spending. With these transformations, South Asia has become increasingly enmeshed in global and gendered flows of culture and labor. What localized responses have these processes generated? The CSAS Spring symposium will focus on such key themes as:

- economy/poverty
- state practices and policy
- popular culture, film/media/TV
- gender and sustainability
- women's movements
- religion
- migration (domestic: rural/urban)/diaspora
- labor rights
- technology

Papers addressing theoretical innovations in understanding neoliberalism in these different contexts are also invited.

Paper proposals must include presenter's name, contact information (including e-mail address, mailing address, and telephone number), paper title, and abstract (no more than 250 words). If a paper proposal is accepted, two nights accommodation for presenters visiting Hawai'i will be provided on campus. Travel to and from Hawai'i must be made at the presenter's expense.

Submit paper proposals to:

Center for South Asian Studies  
223 Moore Hall  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa  
Honolulu, HI 96822

Or:

csas@hawaii.edu

**PROPOSALS ACCEPTED FROM  
JANUARY 1, 2004-MARCH 1, 2004.**

*The CSAS Spring Symposium is made possible via the generous support of G.J. and Ellen Watumull and The Sidney Stern Memorial Trust.*

### ABBAS, continued from page 5

intersection and not so much with other Asians....

**AA:** That's a really good point. It's something you find in Hongkong and China as well: They seem to pretend that South Asia doesn't exist. There's no discourse in it: India for example—India might be very interested in China, but China doesn't seem interested in India. There's no reference; it's not present, it's not onscreen at all.

We were talking today about the Bruce Lee film—the way in which South Asia existed would be in the same way this Indian character is treated in this extremely racist and prejudicial way, which

seems to go against the main ideology of the film ... the idea of the underdog rising up, you know? So instead you have the Chinese underdog finding another underdog.

**MG:** Yes, I thought that was interesting: That kind of racism and xenophobia embedded in a kung fu film, even though ultimately the victor seems like the person who needs to have some voice. ...

**AA:** Yes, a lot of liberatory discourses can be extremely ambiguous. Fissures and margins and cracks: Not all cracks are progressive—they could just be alibis.

Continued on page 15

**KAHN, Continued from page 1**

**KA:** Let me ask you this way, because other people will raise it, so why should we now be concerned about this man coming to Dhaka from Philadelphia with his dream project?

**NK:** Well I think that's a good question. There are several answers. One, I found in the people of Bangladesh tremendous respect for what someone has given, more respect there than we have here. This is about a man who really gave his life for this project. And I think that so many times people have given their lives for something and maybe it hasn't turned out that well. What amazed me is how wonderfully this project turned out not only as a national treasure but an international treasure. This isn't just my father's dream project, it's also an example for the world... It's an amazing place. I didn't know how wonderful it was until I went there.

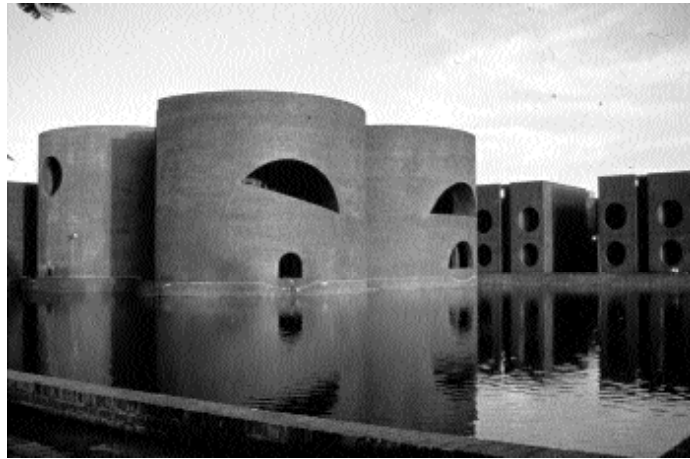
The first day I was in Dhaka my architect guide Nurur Rahman Khan blindfolded me, and we drove through the streets and as you know Dhaka is very noisy. The sound of the baby taxis, the sound of the trucks, the constant honking and yelling and shouting and rickshaws and everything, it's very exciting but it's also very, very loud. And we drove through the streets... So we pulled up front and I got out from the taxi



photo: Syed Zakir Hossain

and suddenly there was soft ground under my feet. And we started walking up, I was being led blindfolded into this area. I didn't know what it was yet. And it was soft ground under my feet and sounds of the city started to recede and Nurur Khan said, "Are you ready to see this

building?" And I said "I'm not ready yet, not ready I just want to stand here for a moment and feel this place." I have to say that standing on



**Residences, Kahn's complex.**

photo: Chetana

that lawn you could feel the building, you could feel the space around the building. It was as if something was breathing there, it was air around it, it was space. It's really being in the presence of something spiritual. It's like being in the presence of a great temple. You feel it. You can feel a great monument by the silence around it and my father talked about the silence...

**KA:** You need a silence like that in the city.

**NK:** Absolutely, a city must have silence. And of course you can call it a park, you can call it whatever you want to call it but a city must have silence somewhere in the core because that is a place of calm from which action comes. You can't have action if it's all just nervousness and energy. You have to have a calm space. So there I stood in the calm space, breathing deeply, and I said, "okay, I'm ready," and he took off the blindfold and there was the south lawn in front of me, the south plaza and the building rising above it with the flag, the Bangladesh flag, and I burst into tears. I actually burst into tears and it is the only building of my father's that has ever made me cry because I felt this was worth everything he gave, giving up obligations to family, giving up worldly goods that he could have had, money he could have had, all



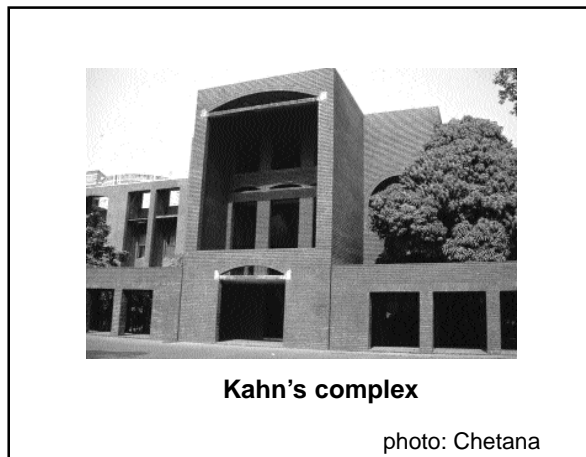
kinds of things he gave up for this. It was worth it because this building is a timeless work of great spiritual power. My immediate impression was, I didn't see anything else around it but this building, this form. There was nothing encroaching upon it. It was a pure, very pure view, and that view also talks about how a government has to act with great clarity and definition and be a symbol for its people. That's something that deserves space around it. You can't just shove that in the middle of buildings in a city...

**KA:** Yes, one has to realize that architecture is not just buildings, the material physical objects. The space around it, that's architecture too. People should realize that you need those spaces. A city is a matrix of buildings and spaces.

**NK:** Absolutely, and the Parliament Building is the centerpiece of that matrix, no matter what happens in the rest of Dhaka City. Let them build elsewhere... progress is good but it is not progress if you squeeze the Parliament by building all around it.

**KA:** I like that.

**NK:** That is not progress, this is actually going backwards. Think of what New York would be without Central Park, the city would not exist. I live in New York City, the city would be utterly unlivable if we didn't have Central Park. It is the only place where the city breathes and the city can stop and collect itself and remember who it is. You take a run through that park and you remember this is a wonderful city. I live in the middle of all this din but I can get away from it. I was also deeply impressed by the fact that everybody I've met in the far flung places of the world, Bangladeshis, everybody has a story not just about the parliament building but the space around it. Everybody has a story about meeting a friend on the plaza, playing a game on the



lawn, being a child on the lawn, walking around the Crescent Lake, exploring the area that the streets go past the hostels. Everybody has a story about it, and they're wonderful stories. Some of them are romantic: "I met my wife there." Some of them are dramatic: "I had a political confrontation, an important political discussion there." Some of them are artistic: "I had an idea for a book while walking around that lake every morning."

A very famous American architect,

I.M. Pei, told me before I went there, "Look, I've seen pictures of this building but I've never seen how it's used by people..." I was there for a week, two weeks actually, and every time I went I saw the building being used in different ways and that is a sign of a great space.

**KA:** There is something else I would like to bring up, Kahn's interest in landscape. I don't know when he really became interested in landscape, although he was interested in how buildings emerged from the landscape in a profound relationship between the two. His buildings look very crisp, cubic and crystalline, but they arise from the ground in a sort of mythical manner. I think that especially in Bangladesh Kahn was really amazed by the aquatic landscape and talked about how he should do "an architecture of the land" here, what I call a hydrological architecture. I know that your mother is a landscape architect and she worked with him for a while even on this project. I would think, and people would say too, that Lou Kahn brought his own American, western ideas, and what have you, but at the same time he engaged very poetically and in very imaginative ways with what's already there, with the landscape of Bangladesh. The result is a very new creation in Dhaka, especially the matrix not just the buildings.

**NK:** Beautifully said. A couple of things come to mind. When the Aga Khan Award was given, they said that the Parliament Building is a universal kind of architecture but it could only exist here, it could

Continued on page 14

**Kazi Ashraf (Architecture)** presented a paper, "Sundarnagar: The City in Cinematic and Architectural Imagination," at the Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Madison. He also presented the paper "Where Is Architecture" at the ARCASIA (Regional Council of Asian Architects) Seminar *Globalization and Asian Architecture* in Dhaka. In 2004 he will present the paper "Taking Place: The Notion of Landscape in Louis Kahn's Architecture" at Yale University. He was recently made a member of the Advisory Committee to the Doris Duke House, and is also a member of the Advisory Committee, Islamic Arts World International.

**S. Charusheela's (Women's Studies)** new book, co-edited with Eiman Zein-Elabdin (Franklin and Marshall College), *Postcolonialism meets Economics*, was just published by Routledge this Fall. She attended the International Association for Feminist Economics conference at the Centre for Gender and Development Studies at the University of West Indies, Barbados, this summer; and presented at the International Gala conference of *Rethinking Marxism*, "Marxism and the World Stage." Charu will be on leave in Spring, and will spend her time visiting with the Department of Women's Studies and the South Asian Studies Program at University of Washington.

This semester, **Monisha Das Gupta's (Ethnic Studies / Women's Studies)** article, "The neoliberal state and the domestic workers' movement in New York," appeared in *Canadian Woman Studies*. Her book manuscript, *Unruly Immigrants: Post-1965 South Asian Activism in the United States*, is under review. At the end of last summer, she served as a discussant on an American Sociological Association meetings panel on Gender and Globalization. She went to the 32nd Annual South Asian Studies conference in Madison Wisconsin in October to present a paper on a panel organized by CSAS Director Monica Ghosh. The paper was based on her research on the impact of 9/11 on New York City taxi drivers, the majority of whom are South Asian. She continues to develop the 9/11 research into articles.

**Peter H. Hoffenberg's (History)** essay, "Photography and Architecture at the Calcutta International Exhibition," was published in *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation, 1850-1900* (Maria Antonella Pelizzari, ed. Yale Center for British Art and Canadian Centre for Architecture). His article "Promoting Traditional Indian Art at Home and Abroad: The Journal of Indian Art and Industry, 1884-1917," will be published in a forthcoming, special issue on South Asia of *Victorian Periodicals Review*.

In the Fall 2003 semester, **Gregory G. Maskarinec (Family Practice and Community Health, John A. Burns School of Medicine)** was an invited scholar in the "Milieux, Sociétés et Cultures en Himalaya" Division of France's Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). There he worked toward completing his next volume of *Nepalese Shaman Oral Texts* (to be published by Harvard University Press in 2004). He was simultaneously guest professor of Anthropology at the University of Paris X (Nanterre), where he presented a series of lectures on Himalayan culture, language, medicine and religion. He was also an invited participant of the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme's project "Les archives audiovisuelles de la recherche en sciences humaines et sociales," in which parts of his audio-visual field collections from Nepal will be archived.

**Chennat Gopalakrishnan (Natural Resources & Environmental Management)**, has been selected Fellow of the American Water Resources Association, the leading association of water professionals in the U.S. The selection recognizes Gopalakrishnan's record of scholarship in a branch of water resources science or technology and his outstanding contributions to the water resources community. Gopalakrishnan is one of three Fellows selected in 2003. He was

presented the award at a special function of the American Water Resources annual meeting held in San Diego on November 2, 2003. Gopalakrishnan's edited volume of original papers titled *Water Institutions: Structure, Performance, and Prospects* (Springer) is scheduled for publication in 2004. His paper, co-authored with Phuong Dang and titled "An Application of the Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) to Estimate the Loss of Value of Water Resources due to Pesticide Contamination: The Case of the Mekong Delta, Vietnam" was published in the December issue of the *International Journal of Water Resources Development* (Oxford).

Gopalakrishnan presented two invited talks on water institutions, economics, and policy in the American West at two major professional conferences—the first at the Western Economic Association annual meeting held in Denver in July 2003 and the second at the American Water Resources Association annual meeting held in San Diego in November 2003.

**Monica Ghosh (South Asia Librarian, CSAS Director)** organized and chaired a panel titled *Transnational Crossings: Film, Sexuality, and Work* and represented a paper titled, "Mohamed Rafi rocks and Amir Khan swings (a bat) as Bollywood crosses over on a two-way street," at the 32nd Annual Conference on South

Asia in Madison, Wisconsin, October 24, 2004.

**Sankaran Krishna, (Political Science)**, working in association with the Asian Studies Development Program of the East West Center, was awarded an NEH grant for \$ 180,000 to conduct a summer institute on "Religion and Politics in India: History, Culture and the Contemporary Experience." The Institute will be held at the East West Center between June 7 and July 9, 2004, and will include, among others, Gyan Pandey, Sunil Kumar, Ram-Prasad Chakravarthi, Parna Sengupta, Itty Abraham, M.S.S. Pandian, Lalitha Gopalan, Ruby Lal and many others. Those interested in knowing more about the Institute may contact Krishna at [krishna@hawaii.edu](mailto:krishna@hawaii.edu).

During his Fall 2003 sabbatical, **Lee Siegel (Religion)** has been a resident fellow at the Rockefeller Foundation's Villa Serbelloni in Bellagio, Italy. He was one of thirty-three featured authors at the Internationales Literaturfestival in Berlin, and was a speaker and panelist at the South Asian Literary and Theater Arts Festival in Washington, D.C. He lectured on and performed traditional Indian street magic at the Academie de Magie in Paris and at Williams College in Massachusetts. His essay on Hawai'i was published by Nation Books in John Leonard's *These United States: Original Essays by*

*Leading American Writers on Their States Within the Union. L'Amour dans une langue morte*, a French translation of his novel *Love in a Dead Language* was published by Editions Philippe Picquier in Paris. And his novel, *Love and Other Games of Chance*, will be issued in paperback by Penguin Books in January.

### Student Notes

**Matthew Lopresti (Philosophy)** currently serves as Lecturer of Buddhist Philosophy and Field Research Advisor on the Antioch College Buddhist Studies Abroad program in Bodh Gaya, India. As a language fellow with the American Institute of Indian Studies, Matthew completed an advanced Sanskrit language program at Deccan College in Pune, India, this past summer. In April 2004, Matthew will complete the comprehensive examinations for his M.Phil. and will submit his dissertation proposal for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy on existentialism, embodiment, and religious experience.

**John R. Pincince (History)** is completing his dissertation on V.D. Savarkar, which he will defend in August 2004.

**Ashwin Raj (Political Science)** presented a paper in November 2003 at the Rethinking Marxism Conference at University of

continued on page 12

**Student News, continued from page 11**

Massachusetts (Amherst) international gala conference—Marxism on the World Stage. The paper was titled “‘Good’ Governance: Nirvana in an age of Global Capitalism.”

As part of her work funded by the J. Watumull Scholarship for the Study of India, **Jessica Schmidt (Political Science)** spent six weeks of her summer in Mumbai, Dhaka, and Kolkata, to get acclimated to life in India and to undergo language immersion in preparation for an extended trip during the spring of 2004. While she is still in the process of finalizing arrangements, she will most likely spend next semester at Calcutta University as a visiting scholar, attending classes and seminars in the fields of political science and economics.

## Seeking Watumull Scholarship Applicants

**T**he 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 Foundation, 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.html>, by e-mail at [csas@hawaii.edu](mailto:csas@hawaii.edu), or by calling the Center for South Asian Studies at (808) 956-5652

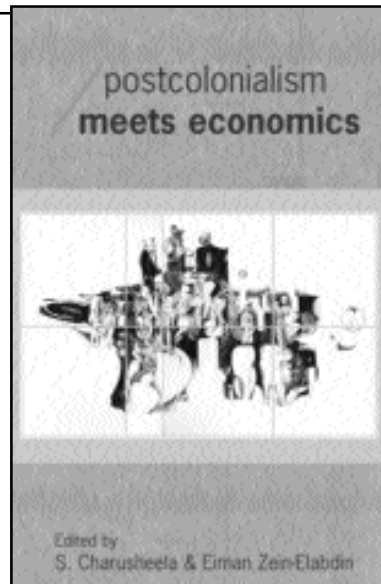
## Spring Courses

AMST 318	Asian America: Survey	TR 9:00 - 10:15	M. Das Gupta
ART 791	Hindu Art of South Asia	R 1:30-4	N. Dowling
HNDI 102	Elementary Hindi	MWF 10:30 - 11:55	R. Sharma
HNDI 202	Intermediate Hindi	MWF 8:30 - 9:55	R. Sharma
SNSK 182	Intro to Sanskrit	TR 9:00 - 10:15	R. Sharma
SNSK 282	Intermediate Sanskrit	TR 11:00 - 12:15	R. Sharma
SNSK 381	Third-Level Sanskrit	TR 2:30 - 3:45	R. Sharma
HIST 241	Civilizations of Asia	MWF 1:30 - 2:20	T. Goodman
HIST 241	Civilizations of Asia	MWF 11:30 - 12:20	L. Kelley
HIST 302	History of India and Pakistan	MWF 2:30 - 3:20	S. Gupta
PACE 412	Gandhi, King, and Nonviolence	TR 3:00 - 4:15	S. Dixon
PHIL 360	Buddhist Philosophy	TR 9:00-10:15	R. Perrett
PHIL 750	Seminar in Indian Philosophy	M 12:45-3:15	TBA
POLS 615	Feminist Theory	M1:30-4:00	M. Das Gupta
REL 662B	Indian Religions	M1:30-4:00	L. Siegel
ASAN 312	Contemporary Asian Civilizations	TR 12:00 - 1:15	L. Carlile
ASAN 491I	Topics in Asian Studies: South Asia	TBA	M. Sharma
ASAN 493	Globalization in Asia	MWF 8:30-9:20	S. Gupta

## Postcolonialism Meets Economics

S. Charusheela and  
Eiman Zein-Elabdin, eds.  
Routledge Press, 2003

“The orthodox left silences postcolonial theory with the economic instance. And the discipline of economics has remained untouched by postcolonial theory. *Postcolonialism Meets Economics* steps into the breach. It is historical: going from Nassau Senior to colonial Peru; from contemporary



Israel to ante-bellum South. It is theoretical: embracing not only postcolonial theory and the full range of economic theory from regression analysis to post-Keynesianism, but also feminism, critical race theory, and subaltern studies. Of particular interest are the critical essays that carefully orient the reader into the directions of the interventions. A much-needed compendium.”

—Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,  
Avalon Foundation Professor in the  
Humanities, Columbia University;  
Director, Center for Comparative  
Literature and Society.

## Love and Other Games of Chance

Lee Siegel  
\Viking, 2003

“This second novel by Siegel (*Love in a Dead Language*) lives up to its subtitle: it's organized as a game of Snakes and Ladders, with each chapter representing a square on the game board; the reader can choose between a traditional reading, from start to finish, and a playful one, letting the roll of the dice decide. The story follows Isaac Schlossberg, a swindler, circus performer and entertainer. As Schlossberg travels around the world (and across the board), his stunts—from childhood appearances in sideshow acts with his Jewish immigrant parents at the

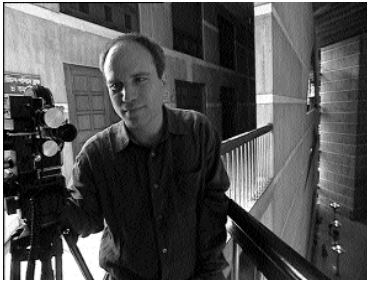


turn of the century to his attempts to beat Sir Edmund Hillary to the top of Mount Everest—are woven together into one exceptionally tall tale. Depending on one's point of view, this is either the book's failing or its forte: the reader hardly has time to take in Schlossberg's romance with a Hindu snake charmer, for example, before he flies off to a different corner of the earth, a different occupation and a different woman. At the beginning and end of the novel are somewhat more grounded first-person accounts by a writer called Lee Siegel, Schlossberg's estranged son, who explains that "a person's lies always reveal some truth about them." The whole enterprise is finally redeemed by Siegel's amusing deadpan style: "The end of the war was... a blow to my father... without a government paycheck... my father had to take agricultural work, using [his plane] to spray citrus groves with a poison that, developed for use on German infantrymen, proved lethal to American fruit flies.”

—Publisher's Weekly

**Kahn, continued from page 9**

only be in Dhaka. It is a timeless building but it is also very specific to this place. My father's first response when he came to Dhaka was to go on the river because he realized that flying in, and you realize that flying in, that this is delta country. It is



**Nathaniel Kahn at the Capital Complex, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

a land that is floating on water. And he took a boat on the river and the first thing he drew was—there's a beautiful little series of

drawings—little boats... When we were figuring out how to get to the building in the film, we decided it has to rise out of the water. It is like an impossible, wonderful castle that lives in the middle of the water. The fact that Lou put it in water is very significant for several reasons. There's a practical reason, the water rises and falls. Yes, it's on dry land but really this whole place is floating on the water. And so I think his specific response to the place, to the landscape was very, very strong, and that building was not something he just kind of stuck there. It was something that grew out of his experience of the land of Bangladesh. And I think that it was very clear to him—he actually said this, which is interesting, that his dream more than anything else, more than designing individual buildings, was to design the basis on which buildings would be built. So you're worried about matrix. That's a plan, that's a master plan. It's something he couldn't do anywhere else in the world. He tried in Philadelphia, he was denied. And Philadelphia now is suffering the consequences... Anyway I think his response was very strong: I want to create not just a building that serves a parliamentary purpose but a building in a landscape, a building in a landscape that responds to and expresses the actual landscape that is native.

**KA:** And at the same time it's a city, so there is a

twin thing, to live with the landscape and it is a city. It's not an anti-city, that landscape and city are not antithetical. That I think was a challenge.

**NK:** I'm sure. And he didn't impose the western grid. It is much freer, more like the delta country. It is not rigid, it's not canalised, it's meandering. The river goes this way and it goes that way.

**KA:** Even through the geometry of Kahn.

**NK:** Sure. It has a porosity to it. Water passes through, air passes through and this is space. So it's taking a chunk of space and defining it.

**KA:** That's what I've also been saying, that if there is a model or a paradigm of a so-called Bengali city, it is perhaps this. Even though it has been proposed by a Jewish architect from Philadelphia, it is a model of a Bengali city. One doesn't have to be a Bengali to do that.

**NK:** Absolutely, and this raises something wonderful which is that what Lou was after...an architecture that came from before the beginning of history. He was interested in creating an architecture that was so ancient that it was more ancient than anything you've ever seen and I think in Dhaka he did that. And this is part of what people respond to from all over the world. They go there and they think, "God, where is this from?" It belongs here yet it has this resonance of something enormously ancient. Was it built ten years ago, was it built 10,000 years ago? You don't know. And that is something, that wonderful ambiguity and that reach for something very ancient and very fundamental.

**KA:** You know this idea of a Bengali City could be entertained in two ways. This sense of very archaic as you just mentioned, this idea of Volume Zero if you like. That sort of Bengali City could have been there 2,000 years ago. But at the same time it could be the Bengali City that could be 2,000 years from now. We're getting into wild speculation but it's that sort of a model as you said Kahn gave the foundation to. From the foundation any kind of building can come up in any style and material, glass, aluminum, steel, brick... that is not important, what is important is the way the matrix is set up, that's what he gave here and what we really need to analyze.

**ABBAS, continued from page 7**

**MG:** And that makes so much sense in terms of middle class allegiances and alliances among people of color in the west: You're a "crack," but your crack is aligned with the dominant perspective, so you don't end up changing anything.

I'm curious about the South Asian community in Hongkong ... could you tell me a little about your own experience?

**AA:** In a way, I was always in Hongkong but not—you understand that a lot of us were like that, in that my family was English speaking, or tried to be English speaking in a situation which is predominantly Chinese speaking. Of course, in those days, *not* knowing Chinese was a sort of a qualification, it placed you in a special class. So, they sort of deliberately avoided learning Chinese, and they inculcated these attitudes in their children. When I was growing up in the 1940s and 1950s, Hongkong was a very different kind of place and China was a very different place. All you saw from China in those days were the more corrupt things that came through—the more debased things like the merchandise. And that really molded one's view—it was some time before I was able to get out of that prejudice, and I did it in the usual way—through art. You see the art and how great it is, and then you start rethinking the history.

**MG:** The project you are involved in in Berlin, "On Beauty," is it something that is Sinic, or is it wider than that?

**AA:** It's wider, it's several things: One is an exhibition, which is being created by Wu Hong. But the other component is a set of conferences on how we approach a topic like beauty today. So we take many different angles on it.

**MG:** The reason I was curious about the topic of beauty is that one of our faculty, Arindam Chakrabarti, does comparative philosophy of Western and Indian philosophers. He's looking at a Kashmiri philosopher's views on the grotesque and then reading Western art through that theory of the grotesque. ...

**AA:** One of the things we're trying to get away from is Kant, which is not an easy thing to do.

[Laughter.] But one of the things I was introducing to the discussion was an essay by Tenazaki—"In Place of Shadows." One of the things about that essay is that he talks about toilets; how the best place to see beauty in Japan is in these toilets, which are basically outhouses. And he makes these cultural comparisons: In America you want to separate the dirty and the clean; in Japan, the dirty and the clean are linked to each other, and that produces a different kind of aesthetic. He also talks about lacquerware: It might look extremely garish in the daytime. But if you think about the dim lighting of a traditional Japanese house, under those circumstances, you understand why it's done that way.

**MG:** It's in a particular reflection and light and tradition that the beauty really emerges. ...

**AA:** That's right—so it's a kind of comparative aesthetics. I have an ambivalent relationship toward [Theodor] Adorno—his *Aesthetic Theory* is certainly a great book ... but at any rate, the reason I mention him is that he starts out with ugliness—the whole question of the ugly and the grotesque.

**MG:** And it seems to me that the grotesque and the ugly are currently of much more interest with the grotesqueness of wars and political policies....

**AA:** Yes, it's like this continuation of intellectual enlightenment: He's basically saying that in a sense you begin with fear and the ugliness of the world, and beauty is a kind of recuperation—that's why it's always something that's slightly compromised. When you're negating something, the way you negate it also negates itself. In a way, it's a kind of illusion, but it's a necessary illusion. So we'll do things with that kind of double move back.

**MG:** And beauty provides an avenue of hope rather than despair.

**AA:** Yes. It doesn't sentimentalize the idea of beauty, but at the same time it's not taking the opposite view that ugly is more important. So it's a way of historicizing the argument: Under what circumstances would certain ideas of beauty become dominant?

**SOUTH ASIA NEWS STAFF****Monica Ghosh**

CSAS Director

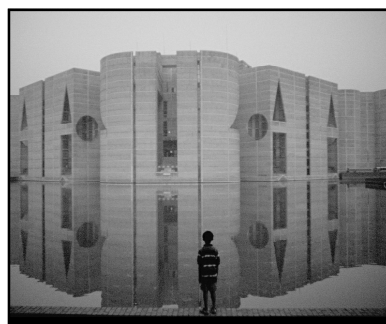
**Stu Dawrs**

CSAS Coordinator

Contributions of articles, book reviews and commentaries are welcome. Please send them to us at [csas@hawaii.edu](mailto:csas@hawaii.edu)

We also thank those who have supported the Center with monetary contributions in recent years. These funds provide a flexible resource to supplement our (rapidly declining) university operating budget and permits us to augment our South Asia activities.

Your tax-deductible contributions are greatly appreciated and can be made payable to University of Hawai'i Foundation Account No. 130910, c/o Center for South Asian Studies Moore 411, University of Hawai'i Honolulu, HI, 96822 USA.



**Nathaniel Kahn's *My Architect* screened as part of this year's Hawai'i International Film Festival. For an interview with the filmmaker, please see Page 1. An interview with festival participant Ackbar Abbas can be found on page 5.**

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