The Newsletter of the American Institute of Indian Studies

Summer 2018 Mughal Persian students visit Dewa Shareef

A Perso-Indian Summer in Lucknow
by Shaahin Pishbin

These days, to hear of Iran and India in the same breath is most likely to be in the context of natural gas projects, oil imports, or regional security agreements. But for Persian speakers and aficionados of Persian verse, the shared heritage of these historic civilizations runs far deeper and longer than the recently proposed 1,300 km subterranean

Exhibition on Step Wells and Reservoirs of Western India

The AIIS Center for Art and Archaeology organized an exhibition on the step wells and reservoirs of western India that traveled to several locations and attracted large audiences. The exhibition included photographic panels, Virtual Reality presentations comprising 3D walk-thrus, Virtual Reality 360 degree walk-thru and Augmented Reality Presentations (the virtual reality walkthrough of Ranki Vav step well was the most popular digital exhibit of the exhibition). There was also a slide show of the images.

The exhibition highlighted the unique architectural forms developed to provide sufficient water under the challenging conditions of sandy soil and scanty rainfall that prevail in western India, especially Gujarat and Rajasthan. The stepwells such as Ranki Vav, Patan and Rudadevi Vav, Adalaj, would have been full of water, serving as important means of water resource management. They were accessed by flights of stairs and elaborately decorated with carvings. Hundreds of such stepped wells and reservoirs remain, a testimony to the ingenuity of architects and engineers who created solutions to the critical problems of water scarcity and soils incapable of water absorption. The photographs also reveal that many of these magnificent structures are now overgrown with weeds and used as refuse dumps. Presenting this disturbing reality will hopefully alert viewers to problems caused by the collapse of traditional water management systems and to the utility and cultural value of keeping these structures well maintained. Such ancient monuments are a unique heritage and have a practical value in addition to giving a sense of character to the towns and villages of western India.

Rani Ki Vav step well in Gujarat

The exhibition was first held for two days, September 1 and 2, at the University of Chicago Center in Delhi where the inauguration on September 1 featured a talk by Dr. Arvind Jamkhedkar, the Chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research, and a welcome by Professor Gary Tubb of the University of Chicago. It then traveled from September 3 to October 6 to the Art Gallery and Science Center at Surat, the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in Vadodara, the Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum in Ahmedabad, the Kachchh Museum in Bhuj, the Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Art Gallery in Rajkot and the Junagadh Museum in Junagadh. Visitors included large groups of school children at Surat and Vadodara. The exhibition was covered by the prestigious *Times of India* when it was in Vadodara and Ahmedabad.

Those pondering the photographs had a range of responses. Former AIIS president Ralph W. Nicholas for instance opined that "it is so much nicer to look down those wells in photographs than to climb up all those steps with a large pot full of water." Meanwhile AIIS director-general Purnima Mehta speculated that the late CAA director M.A. Dhaky would have expected to encounter friendly ghosts while walking down the steps.

Visitors can get a virtual 3D experience by wearing special glasses

The exhibition was sponsored by GRUH Finance Limited and supported by the Gujarat Tourism Corporation Limited. Dr. Kirit Mankodi of the Project for Indian Cultural Studies, Mumbai served as the consulting curator. Dr. Susan Bean, the chair of the AIIS Art and Archaeology Committee, and Dr. Vandana Sinha, the director of CAA made substantial contributions to the success of the project.

School children visit the exhibition in Surat

pipeline ever could. In the summer of 2018, I was fortunate enough to spend eight weeks in Lucknow studying Mughal Persian at the American Institute of Indian Studies, diving head first into the Persian language's rich history in the subcontinent – and bearing witness to its continued, living legacy today.

Persian was established as the political, intellectual, and literary *lingua franca* in the Mughal era under the reign of Akbar I (r.1556-1605) and remained a language of central importance to social elites in the subcontinent until the twentieth century. Its influence on Indian culture, however, dates back even further, and as the great Mughal philologist Sirāj al-Dīn ʿAlī Khān Ārzū (d.1756) discovered, Persian even shares a common linguistic ancestor with Sanskrit. As a scholar of early modern Persian poetry of Iranian heritage, I was excited to follow in the footsteps of the many seventeenth-century Iranians who travelled to India to participate in the flourishing literary-economy of Persian.

Although lacking the legendary opulence of the Mughal courts (good grades were never rewarded with our weight in gold – though we may have consumed our volume in chai), the AIIS institute, located in central Lucknow just south of the Gomti river, provided a most hospitable setting for our group's Indo-Persian undertaking. A cohort of 15 graduate students from American universities represented the Mughal Persian program's largest ever single cohort of students. Spending two months with so many professional Persophiles was in itself a rare and productive treat, as well as a testament to a growing scholarly investment in Mughal history and Persian literature.

Divided into four groups (named after four great Persian poets: Rumi, Hafiz, Saʿdī, and Fayzī), the program accommodated both relative newcomers to Persian who had only studied the language for a semester or two, in addition to more seasoned Persianists. The syllabus of texts was broad and exciting. Our professors expertly guided us through a comprehensive corpus of pre-modern Persian texts covering poets from both the Iranian (Ferdowsi, Saʿdī, Rumi, Hafiz, Ṣāʾib) and Indian (Amir Khusraw, Bīdel, Ghanī Kashmīrī) literary canons, as well as historical chronicles (e.g. the *Tarīkh-i Firishtah* and the *Akbarnāmah*), ethical treatises (e.g. *Akhlāq-i Naṣirī*), philosophical works (e.g. al-Ghazālī's *Kīmīyā-yi Saʿādat*), and Sufi biographical dictionaries (e.g. the *Akhbār al-Akhyār*).

Particularly invaluable was the hour or two we would spend each week being trained to read handwritten Mughal documents. Deciphering primary sources of this nature is invariably one of the toughest challenges facing less-experienced researchers, and so the guidance we received in reading a variety of calligraphic hands - from property deeds written in the *shikastah* style to manuscripts of chronicles in elegant *nastaʿlīq* - gave us all a much-needed confidence boost in our occasionally fraught relationships with the archives.

Representing three generations of Persian scholarship in India, our five *ostād*s had a wide range of expertise between them, each with an exceptional command of Urdu and Arabic, as well as Persian and English. "In order to understand Persian well, it is essential to first know the Arabic language," Dr. S. Ahsan ul-Zafar, the most senior instructor would patiently remind us (following our repeated failures to parse, translate, and identify Quranic references off-the-cuff). Zafar Sahib, a retired reader in Persian at Lucknow university, is one of India's foremost experts on Bīdel, and would spend an entire class with us forensically dissecting just a few choice lines of the great seventeenth-century poet's verse. Steadfastly good-humoured himself, he sometimes liked to single out Bīdel's more amusingly didactic verses for us to mull over:

Be careful of bad company in potential sites of learning
By the crime of one ugly face, a thousand mirrors are insulted

We weren't always sure what to make of them.

We had the opportunity to further flex our poetic muscles in our weekly meetings, in which Basharat Sahib, the program coordinator, encouraged us to recite and discuss any Persian verses (or jokes) we had memorized. A modern-day *mushaira*, it struck me as a poignant, even defiant counterpoint to prevailing attitudes that consider Persian a dead and strictly historic language in twenty-first-century India.

In less bookish moments, our host families spoiled us with delicious food and a relaxed home environment in which to unwind. We learnt as much from dinnertime conversations as we did in the classroom, and my host mother's gracious and generous hospitality (spanning shopping tips for the best chikan-wear to homemade remedies for an upset

stomach) taught us something about the true meaning of Lucknavi *tahzīb*.

Even though Persian's role has diminished in modern times, we didn't have to go far to witness the visible legacy of Persianate high culture. Lucknow might not be at the top of most tourists' agenda in India, but sites like the old Residency and the Bara Imambara (built in 1784) provided a breath-taking introduction to the lifestyle of the Nawabs of Awadh and their impressive cultural achievements. Many students also took the opportunity to visit archives scattered around the city, most of which boast significant collections of Persian manuscripts. The Shibli Nomani Library at the Nadwat ul-Ulama, a historic madrasa in Lucknow, was a particularly welcoming space, where I spent one afternoon flicking through their catalogue, examining an unidentified biographical dictionary of Persian women poets, and being offered an endless stream of chai.

As the two-month course was coming to an end, our minds turned to the final projects we were to present (in Persian) to our classmates and teachers. I decided to research the opinions visiting Iranian poets had of India when they travelled to Mughal courts looking for fame and fortune. Did their experiences echo those of the modern traveller? "The [Indian] weather is so hot," wrote the notoriously churlish Iranian intellectual Ḥazīn Lāhījī (d.1766), "that if a cold wind blows, I listen to its blowing in vain." It was hard to argue with that in 120-degree heat and 95%
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humidity. In our more sentimental moments, however, the lament of Kalīm Kāshānī (d.1651), poet laureate of Shah Jahan's court, as he returned to Iran struck a more resonant note:

I am a captive of India, how I grieve this misplaced journey home.
Where do fluttering feathers take this sacrificial bird?

Dragged along by the eagerness of his caravan,
Kalīm returns to Iran sadly,
Like a bell tied around the camel's neck, passing by a comfy bed

Longing for India, my regretful eyes look back in such way,
That even if I keep going on this path, I can't see what the future holds

Shaahin Pishbin is a graduate student in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. The translations in this piece are his.

AIIS will be holding a Mughal Persian archives workshop at the conclusion of the 2019 summer Mughal Persian program. The workshop will include Indian scholars, AIIS students and staff, and other scholars interested in Mughal Persian and the greater Persianate World of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries

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AIIS Receives Grant from the U.S. Embassy in India for a Museum and Heritage Conservation Summit

AIIS received a grant to hold a three-day Museum and Heritage Conservation Summit which will bring together museum professionals in India including curators, administrators and conservationists, as well as some alumni of the Art Conservationist Fellowships, to engage with each other and American counterparts on important aspects of running museums and other heritage institutions in the twenty-first century, and to share best practices and develop creative, innovative, and sustainable programs. The summit will result in a draft white paper outlining pressing issues for India's museums and suggesting steps to address them, to be presented to India's Ministry of Culture. The outcomes of these activities will advance capabilities to deploy India's artistic heritage to enrich the lives of local, national and global audiences and enable India to take its rightful place as a world leader in the preservation and presentation of artistic and cultural heritage in the new millennium. The museum summit plan is intended to be an innovative program for galvanizing India's diverse museum sector to articulate new, ambitious, aspirational goals for India's museums – to move them decisively beyond the role of caretakers of India's artistic heritage with the aim of helping to chart a path towards becoming cutting-edge leaders, using twenty-first century technologies (from smart phones to state of the art gallery lighting) in the deployment of cultural heritage in its broadest sense for diverse audiences (whether local or international; school children, families or the disabled). The summit and resulting white paper are also aimed to inspire and involve the Ministry of Culture to take a proactive role in harnessing India's unmatched artistic resources as a key national resource for the benefit of the nation, its people and the world. In order to support, sustain and advance achievements of the summit, AIIS will advocate for a 'museum task force' to be formed as a bi-national committee of cooperation between US and Indian museums to monitor progress, assess needs, and assist in finding support for new undertakings.

The American Institute of Indian Studies is Pleased to Announce that the Following Scholars have been Awarded Fellowships to Carry Out their Projects in India in 2018-2019:

Roy Bar-Sadeh, a graduate student in the Department of History at Columbia University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out his project, "The Transnationalization of Islamic Modernism: Religion, Politics and Anti-Colonialism Between India and Egypt, 1857-1947." Mr. Bar-Sadeh is the recipient of the Thomas R. Trautmann Fellowship.

Ananya Chakravarti, an assistant professor in the Department of History at Georgetown University, was awarded a senior fellowship to carry out her project, "The Konkan: Regional History on an Indian Ocean Coast." Professor Chakravarti's fellowship is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Swati Chawla, a graduate student in the Corcoran Department of History at the University of Virginia, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Between Homelessness and Homecoming: Tibetan Migration in Late Twentieth Century India."

Cathleen Cummings, an associate professor in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Alabama, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, "Sacred Architecture and the Transformation of Urban Space in Eighteenth Century Nagpur." Professor Cummings' fellowship is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) through the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC).

Ishani Dasgupta, a graduate student in the Departments of Anthropology and South Asia Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Eternal Flame: Self-Immolation and the Culture of Resistance in the Tibetan Community." Ms Dasgupta is the recipient of the Joseph W. Elder Fellowship in the Social Sciences.

David Farris, an independent scholar and director of the Shabistan Film Archive in Bangalore, was awarded a senior fellowship to carry out his project, "The Celluloid Collapse in India." Dr. Farris' fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Andrew Flachs, an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Purdue University, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out his project, "Environment and Development in South Indian Organic Agriculture." Professor Flachs' fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Joyce Flueckiger, a professor in the Department of Religion at Emory University, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, "Migration and Belonging on Mullingar Hill: Oral Histories of a Himalayan Hill Station." Professor Flueckiger's fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Jed Forman, a graduate student in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out his project, "Yogic Perception." Mr. Forman is the recipient of the Ludo and Rosane Rocher Research Fellowship in Sanskrit Studies. Mr. Forman's fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Curt Gambetta, a graduate student in the School of Architecture at Princeton University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out his project, "Cement, Paint and Plastic: Materials and Architectural Reproduction in Postcolonial India." Mr. Gambetta is the recipient of the Vina Sanyal Research Award. Mr. Gambetta's fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Jazmin Graves, a graduate student in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Music and Mediumship in the Sidi (African Indian) Sufi Devotional Tradition of Western India." Ms Graves is the recipient of the Rachel F. and Scott McDermott Fellowship. Ms Graves' fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

David Haberman, a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out his project, "Angry Gods and Raging Rivers: A Climate of Change in the Char Dham Region." Professor Haberman's fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Mark Hauser, an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology at Northwestern University, was awarded a senior scholarly development fellowship to carry out his project, "Shifting Landscape: Archaeological Exploration of

Tranquebar and Danish Colonial Engagement on the Coromandel Coast." Professor Hauser's fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Ayesha Irani, an assistant professor in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Massachusetts, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, "Situating the Bengali Darves: Texts, Practices, and Communities of Reception in Bengal."

Manpreet Kaur, a graduate student in the Department of Religion at Columbia University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Performance Traces of Paper Trails: Locating Farid Across Time and Space." Ms Kaur is the recipient of the Thomas W. Simons Fellowship.

Joel Lee, an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at Williams College, was awarded a senior fellowship to carry out his project, "Caste Passing in Urban Uttar Pradesh." Professor Lee's fellowship is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Patricia McDonough, a graduate student in the Department of Linguistics at Indiana University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Documenting the Structure of the Thangal Naga Language." Ms McDonough is the recipient of the Joe Elder College Year in India Junior Fellowship. Ms McDonough's fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Shaivya Mishra, a graduate student in the Department of History at the University of California, Berkeley, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Revolutionary Lives in Colonial India: Nationalism and Colonial Surveillance in the United Provinces, 1907-1944." Ms Mishra is the recipient of the Kumkum Chatterjee Memorial Fellowship in Indian History.

Daniel Jacobius Morgan, a graduate student in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out his project, "Mysticism, Manuscripts and Applied Cosmology in Mughal Delhi." Mr. Morgan is the recipient of the Metcalf Fellowship in Indian History.

Harshita Mruthinti Kamath, an assistant professor in the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies at Emory University, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, "Temple Poems on Copperplates: The Material Life

of Annamayya's Telugu Padams." Professor Mruthinti Kamath's fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Uponita Mukherjee, a graduate student in the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies at Columbia University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Evidencing Crime: Law, Science and Detection in British Bengal, 1840-1930."

Fareen Parvez, an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, "Debt, Dowry and Labor Migration: Reconfiguring Family Life Among the Indian Muslim Urban Poor." Professor Parvez's fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Yael Rice, an assistant professor in the Department of Art and History of Art at Amherst College, was awarded a senior fellowship to carry out her project, "The Reconstitutive Codex and the Limits of Mughal Albums." Professor Rice's fellowship is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Eleonore Rimbault, a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "On the Training Grounds: Duty, Tradition and the Politics of Innocence in Kerala." Ms Rimbault's fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Jeremy Simmons, a graduate student in the Department of Classical Studies at Columbia University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out his project, "Gold and Wine: The Lives of Roman Imports in Ancient India (100 BCE-400 CE)." Mr. Simmons is the recipient of the Daniel H.H. Ingalls Memorial Fellowship. Mr. Simmons' fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Tulasi Srinivas, an associate professor in the Institute for Liberal Arts & Interdisciplinary Studies at Emerson College, was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out her project, "The Absent Goddess: Ecology, Religion and Politics in an Accidental Megacity." Professor Srinivas' fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Shivani Sud, a graduate student in the Department of History of Art at the University of California, Berkeley, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Rajput Painting and its Transcultural

Histories: The Jaipur School of Painting, 1866-1916." Ms Sud is the recipient of the Asher Family Fellowship. Ms Sud's fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Kelsey Utne, a graduate student in the Department of History at Cornell University, was awarded a junior fellowship to carry out her project, "Landscapes of Death: War Memorials and Military Cemeteries in South Asia." Ms Utne's fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Charles Weitz, an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology at Temple University,

was awarded a senior short-term fellowship to carry out his project, "Behavioral Factors Related to Heat Stress Among Elderly Poor of West Bengal." Professor Weitz's fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

Tyler Williams, an assistant professor in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, was awarded a senior fellowship to carry out his project, "In God's Bazaar: Merchant Religion, Literature and Early Modernity." Professor Williams' fellowship is funded by a grant from the ECA through CAORC.

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A Final Gift to AIIS from the Late Donna Park
by Ralph W. Nicholas

In August 2018, AIIS received a generous bequest from the estate of the late Donna Park. Donna was the widow of the late Richard Park (1920-1980), a Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan. Along with Norman Brown, Henry Hart, and Milton Singer, Dick Park, as he was known to colleagues, was one of the founders of AIIS. His connection with India began in 1943 when he went to Bengal as a Captain in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

Dick and Donna married later in life, when he was a senior faculty member at Berkeley. They moved to Michigan in 1959. Donna remained in Ann Arbor for these 38 years after his death. Barbara Ramusack, who knew Donna during the 1960s when she was a graduate student at Michigan, said "she was a generous, caring, and smart woman." Donna remembered Dick's deep commitment to Indian studies and to AIIS with frequent donations throughout her long life, and she remembered them in her estate as well.

I last spoke to Donna about two years ago. I was trying to locate a written text for one of Dick's unpublished works. At the 1967 Bengal Studies Conference, which Dick organized at Ann Arbor, he gave an after-dinner talk that he called "My Gurkha Regiment."

When he served in Bengal one of his assignments was to devise a way of keeping cattle off the runways to avoid collisions with American heavy bombers. He located several Nepalis who were prepared to work as guards, but they insisted that they could not do such service unless they had proper uniforms, which consisted principally of khaki shorts and belts with substantial brass buckles. Figuring out how to secure these necessities was a critical part of learning his way around Calcutta. One can find just about anything in Calcutta, but you need to know where to look. Dick's telling of how he found a stock of khaki twill and brass belt-buckles was very funny, although it had elicited considerable exasperation in the event. He fielded his Gurkha Regiment, preventing what might have been a horror equally for the crews of the B-29s flying over "The Hump" to China and the Goalas who were pasturing their cattle near the runways.

It was a wonderful story, well-told by Dick. Donna, alas, did not have a copy, but she enjoyed my condensed retelling. She was a lovely person whose connection to India was indirect, by marriage, but nonetheless meaningful. AIIS is deeply indebted to both Parks for what they have given to AIIS over the last 57 years.

Goddess in the World: Ethical Self-Making Among Thirunangai Transgender Women in Chennai
by Aniruddhan Vasudevan

In 2016-2017 I conducted fieldwork for my Ph.D. dissertation with a group of Thirunangai transgender women in Chennai. My focus was on the importance of the worship of Goddess Angalamman to the Thirunangai life-world, so I worked closely with those Thirunangais who were deeply involved in goddess worship and articulated this special attachment in various ways. I arrived at this particular phenomenon quite fortuitously when my earlier project became unviable. But, as I proceeded with the earlier decision to meet elders in the community in order to understand the various dimensions of Thirunangai kinship, I soon found that Goddess Angalamman had a central role in their lives. The Goddess kept showing up in various ways: in self-narratives, in the striking visuality of home shrines, in the way others spoke of Thirunangais, etc. This was particularly true of those who lived in north Chennai and those who lived elsewhere in the city but considered the various neighborhoods of north Chennai as their home. In my dissertation, I use pseudonyms for all my interlocutors from the field.

Those who embody the goddess in moments of trance are called 'Maruladigal' in Tamil – a term that applies to all genders. And those Thirunangais who perform this ritual function of trance embodiment, divination, and healing are called 'Thirunangai Maruladigal' – literally, 'Thirunangais who dance the trance' (Tamil plural forms such as 'Maruladigal' and 'Thirunangaigal' often become anglicized plural nouns when used in English language texts – 'Maruladis' and 'Thirunangais'). I spent a great deal of time with such Thirunangai Maruladigal and recorded their stories of engagement both as priestesses to the goddess and as elders in the Thirunangai community. They balance their significant roles in, at least, two different worlds: the world that revolves around their intense attachment to the goddess, and the world of Thirunangai kinship in which they hold important places as community elders, mothers, gurus, etc.

A younger Thirunangai helps a senior Thirunangai Maruladi dress up as Goddess Angalamman the night before Mayana-k-kollai ritual

In addition to working with Maruladis, I also worked very closely with those Thirunangais who were not themselves ritual trance-movers/ trance-dancers, but were still very committed to goddess worship. They served as aides to senior Maruladis and were experts in ritual preparations. Their commitment to this ritual-religious world was embodied in a different way; it was through hard, physical labor and kinesthetic involvement in a range of activities:

cleaning and preparing the various ritual objects needed for worship; cooking various dishes; supervising other, less experienced, participants in the ritual; ensuring protocol is maintained and everything runs smoothly.

I documented two major festivals: the celebrations during the month of Aadi (mid-July through mid-August) and the Mayaana-k-kollai ('the pillage in the cremation grounds') ritual in late February. In addition to these two key annual moments, I also documented several rituals and conversations related to everyday worship. Mayaana-k-kollai festival, in particular, and the goddess myth that anchors it have become of special interest to me. This is because they serve as luminous moments not only to understand the devotional practices and cosmologies that ground goddess worship for Thirunangais, but also to see how closely Thirunangai lives are tied to the lives of other working-class, non-Brahmin communities with whom they share streets, neighborhoods, and forms of piety.

The questions that have guided my research and which I will address in my doctoral dissertation include: What is the place of goddess worship in the Thirunangai life-world in Chennai today? How is it related to the construction and maintenance of kinship structures and to the transgender rights politics that Thirunangais engage in with the state? What is the relationship between this religious-ritual world and the secularized identity politics that Thirunangais have taken up in the last twenty years or so? What is the place of North Madras/ North Chennai as a particular kind of urban space that facilitates the thriving of Thirunangai life-worlds?

The poetics and practice of ethical world-making has become central to my dissertation. This intense attachment to Goddess Angalamman provides Thirunangais with a set of resources which enable particular kinds of ethical action in the world: How to respond to a crisis situation? How to express anger and outrage? How to perform resistance in the face of social forces that are both hostile and powerful? And, very importantly: What does it meant to be a Thirunangai? How must one conduct oneself in the world? In other words, this attachment to the Goddess is not primarily, if at all, a question of belief. It is one of practice – and one of making a world for themselves with others and of exercising some control over that world's capacity to offer them, and to others, some continued well-being.

Aniruddhan Vasudevan is a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Texas. He was the recipient of the 2016-2017 Joe Elder College Year in India Junior Fellowship.

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Untouchability in India's IT City: Urban Waste and the Materiality of Power in Bangalore
by Shreyas Sreenath

The initial motivation behind proposing a project that examined urban waste in the South Indian city of Bangalore (officially known as Bengaluru) was to further elucidate how contemporary forms of waste re-alter social relations in urban India. Specifically, the problem of municipal waste management was interesting because it offered a window into understanding the relationship between capital accumulation and caste exploitation in Indian cities. Moreover, both the reproduction of urban waste and caste power seemed to pose stumbling blocks for certain elite forces in Bangalore who envisioned for the city a more seamless transition into technological modernity, building on the city's reputation as an international IT hub. Thus, the research project sought to flesh out such dynamics through an ethnographic exploration of the labor regimes that underpinned solid waste management in the city.

The working hypothesis of the project was that the hegemonic forces that facilitated capital accumulation in the city had an ideological interest in disavowing two aspects of city waste. First, such forces obscured the process that produced unregulated municipal waste and unfettered urbanization, by focusing on technocratic and bureaucratic solutions. Second, they obscured the concrete conditions of waste work and the labor regime that underpinned it by failing to address caste relations. Through these disavowals, an ideology of civic outrage at deteriorating waste management hegemonized public discourse, just as it tacitly accepted social relations that exacerbated caste exploitation and ecological degradation. Initial fieldwork in the city informed the general outline of these dynamics, especially when the city faced a recurring garbage crisis in 2014. But a need to further elaborate on the relationship of these two dynamics to each other, and the need to clarify the forces underpinning them, necessitated extended ethnographic research.

The first stage of the project was an ethnographic exploration of daily municipal solid waste collection by city *pourakarmikas* (sweepers and sanitation workers). Out of the approximately 20,000 workers in Bangalore city,

17,000 are hired on a contractual basis and only 3,000 are directly hired by the municipality. Because my focus was on understanding the relationship between the contract system and solid waste management, I chose to work closely with around 250 contract workers in two adjacent municipal wards. To understand the specifics of their daily work routine, I visited these two wards a few times a week and accompanied workers on specific collection and cleaning routes. Through extended interactions with contractors, supervisors, auto rickshaw drivers, cleaners, street sweepers

Contract sanitation workers organized under AICCTU protest outside of the Bangalore municipal corporation

garbage compactor drivers, and neighborhood residents, I attempted to understand the complex relationships and negotiations that are channeled to haul the city waste everyday. This fieldwork allowed me to think of the way trust networks, formed through kin and rural-urban relations, reproduced particular caste formations. Most municipal solid waste work was contracted out to closely affiliated members of the Reddy caste, prominent land owners in and around the city, in the wake of economic liberalization in the early 90's. This marked a dramatic shift in the provisioning of municipal services, as most, if not all, municipal cleaning was formalized up to this point. The onset of the contract system, which recruited powerful landowning castes as managers of municipal services, also coincided with an exponential increase in the quantity and complexity of municipal waste, the management of which required an expanded reserve of nimble workers. Therefore, contractors belonging to the Reddy community, overwhelmingly drew upon the reserve pool of labor that they had historically depended upon—Dalit (formerly untouchable castes) laborers from drought-stricken parts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Because the contract system was an active, as opposed to a passive, informalization of sanitation work, recruitment, placement, advancement, reward and penalization all hinged not upon formalized labor management, but a carefully calibrated activation of patron-client relationships, trust and kin networks, arbitrary imposition of reprisals and extraction of favors, and even a general sense of paranoia and fear. In a very precise way, this relationship between the dominant and dominated caste communities reproduced what B.R. Ambedkar famously called "the graded inequity" of the caste system, "a system full of low cunning which man could have invented to perpetuate inequity…inviting people to share in the inequity in order that they may all be supporters [of it]."

The second aspect of my fieldwork sought to comprehend, both theoretically and concretely, the necessity for the informalization of waste work arose under the current political economic framework in the first place. To explore this question, it was necessary for me to closely examine the changing political economic, symbolic, and material properties of municipal waste. I began my exploration of this topic by conducting fieldwork in selected waste centers across the city. Along with 20,000 municipal workers, around 10,000 waste collectors, segregators, and aggregators are involved in a complex network of waste trading and recycling. After selecting three waste centers in different parts of the city, I volunteered a few times a week in waste segregation, aggregation, and packing, learning how to sort through different types of plastic, cardboard, metal, e-waste and paper, in effect, any kind of material that could fetch a price on the market. This fieldwork not only allowed me to understand the kind of knowledges that were required to process the city's waste, techniques that went unrecognized, but it also alerted me to a crucial problematic that connected the extraction of value from municipal waste to the dissemination of particular power

relations. Soon after my fieldwork in these centers, I started seeing how much of the value extracted from trading waste was realized through obfuscation of systems of measurement and accountability. For instance, plastics polymers that resembled each other in appearance but differed significantly in pricing would be piled together. My research as well as documentary analysis of government, journalistic, and trade union reports revealed that the city municipality was being billed for double the labor and capital that was concretely deployed. Municipal garbage had in effect become one of the most important sources for the extraction of surplus value in the city, its overproduction was closely interrelated to regular bouts of speculation. A demonstration of this could be seen in the rapid increase in the amount of municipal funds allocated for waste collection and disposal—it would increase from approximately 300 crore rupees in 2000 to an estimated 900 crore rupees in 2016, forming the largest section of the budget.

In effect, the informalization of waste work creatively reimagined labor recruitment, management, and deployment, as well as the extraction of surplus value from municipal waste using techniques that, on the surface, seem to be out of the reach of formal bureaucratic purview. Here, I mark some crucial points that differentiate my argument from narratives that derive a more or less direct relationship between neoliberalism and the informalization of work. I do so by emphasizing a shift in perspective away from the category of the "informal economy", a category which often functions as an empty signifier which explains away nuances in social reproduction rather than highlighting them. Such a bracketing off of socio-cultural analysis is especially problematic at a time when classical relations of labor exploitation—a centralized managerial regime facilitating the exchange of labor power with wages—constitutes a quickly diminishing proportion of the capital accumulation process. Instead, the case of waste work in Bangalore outlines how classical labor relationships, taking root in post-independence but pre-liberalization India, quickly eroded to reveal a new organizational template, one based on a system of graded inequity. While classical relations of production are generative in the transformation of concrete labor into discrete, exchangeable, and measurable social abstractions, the relations of reproduction at work in Bangalore's waste sector are uneasily engaged with the task of managing the accumulation of social surplus in the context of material overproduction. I argue that such managerial exigencies search out and find historical antecedents, caste relations in this case, transforming such categories to function within a regime of speculation, secrecy, and arbitrary exercise of social control. By weaving caste into the quotidian reproduction of city life, waste work in Bangalore demonstrates to the extent to which capitalist modernity hinges on the reconditioning of archaic relations to obfuscate the concrete costs of urban accumulation.

Shreyas Sreenath is a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at Emory University. He was the recipient of the Joe Elder College Year in India Junior Fellowship and conducted his research in Bangalore from September 2017 to March 2018.

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ARCE Preservation and Collaborative Projects

In June 2018 AIIS was notified that its Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology (ARCE) was awarded an Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) Grant from the British Library for "preservation of audio recordings and accompanying documentation of the music and folklore of Western Rajasthan." The project involves the digitization of the Rupayan Sansthan reel recordings and related documents and photographs. Rupayan Samsthan is an extensive folklore archive in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, founded by the renowned folklorist Komal Kothari. The project is to digitize the open reels that were made mostly in the 1970s, though some were made earlier. Rupayan Sansthan has agreed for these recordings and documents to be made available on the EAP website on a Creative Commons License.

The Endangered Archives Programme supported by Aracadia has as its goal "to contribute to the preservation of archival material that is in danger of destruction, neglect or physical deterioration world-wide. This is achieved principally through the award of grants in an annual competition. The grants provide funding to enable successful applicants to locate relevant endangered archival collections, to arrange their transfer to a suitable local archival home where possible, to create digital copies of the material and to deposit the copies with local institutions and the British Library." The grant received by ARCE stresses bringing collections in need of preservation to archives that have an infrastructure for preservation, and thus the reels will be stored at ARCE as part of the Rupayan Sansthan Collection. The recordings will be made available on the British Library site. There is also a training component to the grant. All digitization and metadata creation will be carried out according to the standards provided by the EAP. The project includes creating metadata in the local language as well to enhance access to local users and

communities in Rajasthan. A major challenge for ARCE is dealing with the digitization of documents on a large scale. Equipment for a digitization station will be set up following the recommendations and standards set by the British Library. Training sessions for audio digitization and document digitization will be held for staff of ARCE and Rupayan Sansthan. The grant supports project staff at ARCE as well as Rupayan Sansthan. The project started on August 1 and will last for one year. Shubha Chaudhuri, Project Director, visited Rupayan Sansthan in Jodhpur for three days in early August to carry out an assessment and to bring the first lot of materials to be digitized which include 43 reels, 150 black and white photographs and 218 documents.

The British Library Sound and Vision Division began a new research project with ARCE focused on South Asian audiovisual heritage collections. The project is funded through a grant from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, part of the Rutherford Fund which is a British government initiative to promote international research collaboration. The International Fellowship in South Asian Audiovisual Heritage: Preservation, Research and Engagement is a collective endeavor, involving the exchange and sharing of resources of two audiovisual archives - the British Library Sound Archive and ARCE. It aims to facilitate the exchange of knowledge of archival practices and of collections, or information about collections, held in each location. As part of the project, Dr. Sangeeta Dutta, the ARCE archivist, carried out research in the World and Traditional Music section of the British Library Sound Archive since March 2018. She has had the opportunity to explore various South Asian collections, especially the recordings made in India, and to become familiar with the workflows of the British Library Sound Archive. Dr. Dutta was also involved in the cataloguing process of both the field and published recordings in the World and Traditional Music section of British Library Sound Archive, creating catalogue entries, working with newly acquired collection items and dealing with born-digital collections. The project allowed her to compare, develop and share approaches towards making sound heritage accessible for wider dissemination. Another component of the project has been the appointment of Collection Assistants at both archives: Christian Poske of the British Library Sound Archive and ARCE's Dr. Divya Shrivastava. They exchanged knowledge around respective cataloguing formats and worked on shared collections, as well as on the classification and cataloguing of musical instruments. One of the most valuable outcomes of the sharing of recordings between the two audiovisual archives will be the wider level of dissemination, particularly where users cannot visit the actual site where the recordings are preserved. The project will make information and expert knowledge of ARCE collections available for the first time to British Library users and audiences in the UK. In India, on the other hand, where ARCE is a primary research center for ethnomusicology, providing access to British Library collections will be of great value to users.

As part of this project, ARCE received digital copies of valuable collections of ethnographic wax cylinder recordings from the British Library. These include the recordings from the Linguistic Survey of India by George Grierson from 1913-1929, the Madras Museum Cylinder collection recorded by K. Rangachari and Edgar Thurston between 1905-1910, and the Baluchi cylinder recordings made in 1911. Janet Topp-Fargion, the lead curator for World and Traditional Music visited ARCE in July 2018. She gave a public talk at the India International Centre about the ethnographic collections which were shared with ARCE. Dr. Shubha Chaudhuri also visited the British Library in July 2018, meeting with the Sound and Vision Division. Dr. Topp-Fargion and Dr. Chaudhuri are working on a detailed study of the workflows, metadata and record-keeping at both institutions. Thus the Rutherford Fellowship has facilitated a substantial international collaboration between the British Library and the ARCE.

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AIIS Sponsors Junior Fellows' Research Panels at 2018 Association for Asian Studies Conference

AIIS sponsored two panels at the annual Association for Asian Studies conference in Washington DC on March 24, 2018, showcasing the research projects of its recent junior fellows. The first panel was called, "Texts in Contexts: Genres as Socio-Cultural Agents in South Asia" and featured Aaron Sherraden whose talk was called, "Śambūka's Fight for Education and the Dramas that Tell His Story"; Aleksandra Gordeeva Restifo, whose talk was "Constructing a New Identity for Jain Literati in Rāmacandra's Dramatic Works": and Janet Um whose talk was "The Making and Remaking of a Genre: The Prose Romance in Early-Medieval South Asia." Professor Allison Busch of Columbia University acted as respondent. The second panel was called "Land and Labor: Changing Forms of Legality, Regulation and Employment." Panelists were Diya Paul (Forests, Wildlife and People on the Margins: Permeable Landscapes in the Eastern Ghats, India") and Kartik Misra ("Heterogeneous Wage Impact of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural") with Professor Neera Singh of the University of Toronto as respondent.

AIIS, Ashoka University, and British Library Sponsor Archiving Workshop at AAS in Asia Conference

AIIS collaborated with Ashoka University and the British Library to organize a three-day archiving workshop held in conjunction with the Association of Asian Studies in Asia Conference at Ashoka University in Delhi on July 4-6, 2018. The workshop brought together archivists, librarians, museum curators, and researchers from five countries: the US, the UK, Australia, Cambodia and India. The presentations covered individual and institutional archives of science, art, poetry and heritage. The discussions and Q and A sessions were also very successful. The participants also went on a tour of the AIIS Centers (the Center for Art and Archaeology and Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology) to showcase various aspects of their archives of audio-visual media and images. On the second day, the participants were taken for site tours of the National Archives of India and Sangeet Natak Akademi to acquaint them with the conservation, preservation, upkeep and dissemination practices of the national-level institutions of India, which deal with document and music archives respectively. A workshop on digitization standards and workflow was organized on the third day by the British Library, which covered practical aspects of undertaking digitization of archives and library materials.

AIIS president Sumathi Ramaswamy Lighting the Lamp at the Archiving Workshop in Delhi

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AIIS Collaborates with The National Centre for Performing Arts Mumbai for Living Traditions Event

The AIIS Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology (ARCE) collaborated with the National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA) in Mumbai March 17-18 for its 2018 Living Traditions event on Yakshagana – the ritual theatre form of coastal Karnataka. The performances showcased the two variants of this tradition – Badagu Tittu of the northern part of the coast, and Tenku Tittu of the southern belt which neighbors Kerala. The Badagutittu performance was of the Yakshagana prasanga "Jatayu Moksha" from the Ramayana and the Tenkutittu Prasanga was "Chakravyuha" from the Mahabharata. AIIS had partnered with Yaksha Ranga and the Yakshagana Centre at Udupi for this festival. The performances were directed by Guru Sanjeeva Suvarna an eminent performer and choreographer. ARCE has collaborated previously with NCPA, Mumbai for its annual Living Traditions events highlighting the Music of Goa, narrative traditions of Rajasthan, music from Kutch and a festival of Li from Nagaland. Both performances were sold out and were positively reviewed in the *Hindustan Times*. Shubha Chaudhuri, director of ARCE and Purushothama Bilimale, former head of AIIS language programs and a noted Kannada scholar also co-authored an article on Yakshagana for *On Stage* – the NCPA magazine.

AIIS 2018 Book Prizes Awarded to Eric Huntington and Gabrielle Kruks-Wisner

The Edward Cameron Dimock, Jr. Prize in the Indian Humanities was awarded to Eric Huntington for *Creating the Universe: Depictions of the Cosmos in Himalayan Buddhism.* To be published by the University of Washington Press, it presents an interdisciplinary analysis of Buddhist depictions of the cosmos across two thousand years of history in India, Nepal, and Tibet. In chapters that deal with primary texts, ritual ideologies, material practices, and art and architectural history, the book reveals the immense significance and complexity of cosmological thinking in Himalayan Buddhism.

Across the Himalayas, ubiquitous portrayals of the universe provide versatile frameworks for expressing disparate ideas about everything from scholastic knowledge to ritual practice, poetic rhetoric, and architectural space. Like geographic maps, which can vary to communicate surface topology or weather patterns even as they describe the same places, Buddhist depictions of the world change according to function. By characterizing inhabited realms in distinct ways, these representations help define the scope of human experience. Bridging disciplines, the book incorporates the perspectives of many fields, including Buddhist studies, religious studies, art history, and area studies. By grounding cosmological thinking in specific and diverse examples, *Creating the Universe* retrieves the study of cosmology from theoretical debate and relative obscurity. Employing comparisons across medium, function, culture, and history, the work exposes cosmology as a fundamental mode of engagement with numerous aspects of religion, from preliminary lessons to the highest rituals for enlightenment.

The AIIS Book Prize Committee, chaired by Professors Anand Yang and Susan S. Wadley, praised the manuscript as "an innovative and compelling interdisciplinary study of cosmological thinking in a variety of contexts, including texts, ritual practices, images, and architectural spaces across the Buddhist world of the Himalayas," and noted that its publication will make a significant contribution to the disciplines of Art History and Religious Studies.

Eric Huntington is a postdoctoral fellow at the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford University. Prior to this appointment, he served as a Cotsen Postdoctoral Fellow in the Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts at Princeton University and earned a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

The Joseph W. Elder Prize in the Indian Social Sciences was awarded to Gabrielle Kruks-Wisner for *Claiming the State: Active Citizenship and Social Welfare in Rural India*, which was published by Cambridge University Press in August 2018. It explores the conditions that shape whether and how citizens in rural India make claims on the state for social welfare. The book's central questions—who makes claims on the state for social welfare, how, and why?—will be important to those interested in welfare provision, citizenship practice, and local governance.

Citizens around the world look to the state for social welfare provision, but often struggle to access essential services in health, education, and social security. This book investigates the everyday practices through which citizens of the world's largest democracy make claims on the state, asking whether, how, and why they engage public officials in the pursuit of social welfare. Drawing on extensive fieldwork in rural India, Professor Kruks-Wisner demonstrates that claim-making is possible in settings (poor and remote) and among people (the lower classes and castes) where much democratic theory would be unlikely to predict it. Examining the conditions that foster and inhibit citizen action, she finds that greater social and spatial exposure—made possible when individuals traverse boundaries of caste, neighborhood, or village—builds citizens' political knowledge, expectations, and linkages to the state, and is associated with higher levels and broader repertoires of claim-making.

The AIIS Book Prize Committee noted that, "drawing on a wealth of qualitative and quantitative data, the author makes a persuasive argument about the ways in which citizens engage the state to make claims for services, infrastructure, and resources relating to social welfare. It is a study both of the claims that citizens make on the state and the forms their claim making assume. The book will have broad appeal across the social sciences."

Gabrielle Kruks-Wisner is an assistant professor of Politics & Global Studies at the University of Virginia. Prior to joining UVA, she was an Academy Scholar at the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, and an assistant professor of Political Science at Boston College. She received a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Members of the American Institute of Indian Studies