**Reading List**

**Articles**


**Abstract:** Neil Devotta describes the political “ethnic outbidding” that has led to civil war in Sri Lanka. The two major ethnic groups of Sri Lanka are the Tamils (18.2%) and the Sinhalese (74%). These groups are distinguished by not only their ethnicity, but also their language and religion. Tensions between these groups date back to the 1920’s, when Tamil politicians raised fears concerning the Sinhalese majority vote in future elections, if the nation were to gain independence.


**Abstract:** How is Islam taught in American Schools? Teaching Islam to young Americans is a relatively recent phenomenon. The Israeli-Arab conflict shaped the contours of the study of Islam with images and stereotypes inherited from the Crusades and Colonialism. Islam has been taught not as an essential ingredient of the World History but through the political conflicts of Israelis and Arabs as well as the American global agenda within which Qaddafi, Hafez al-Asad, and Ayatullah Khomeini emerged as the representatives of Islam. The Muslim population in America grew dramatically in the twentieth century, and curriculum was devised to include Islam without disturbing the unitary narrative of the Western Civilization: The textbooks disconnect Islam from the Judeo-Christian tradition even as they emphasize how Islam borrowed from Jewish and Christian scriptures. Textbook writers portrayed Islam in the light of Arab nomadic society and the life of the Prophet of Islam while deliberately downplaying the Abrahamic legacy in Islam.


**Abstract:** In this text, originally presented as the Kingsley Martin Memorial Lecture given in Cambridge on 1 June 1988, Thapar challenges what she describes as the “constituents of Hindu communal ideology which claim legitimacy from the past, namely, that there has always been a well-defined and historically evolved religion which we now call Hinduism and an equally clearly defined Hindu community.” She argues that such constituents are “part of a modern search for an imagined Hindu identity from the past.”
**Books**


**Abstract:** The role of the visual image is essential to Hindu tradition and culture, but many attempts to understand India’s divine images have been laden with misperceptions. *Darsan*, a Sanskrit word that means “seeing,” is an aid to our vision, a book of ideas to help us read, think, and look at Hindu images with appreciation and imagination.


**Abstract:** Anthropologist Sandya Hewamanne spent several months in a Sri Lankan free trade zone (FTZ) working and living among the workers to learn about their lives. “They were poor women from rural areas,” Hewamanne writes, “who migrated to do garment work in transnational factories. Their difficult work routines and living conditions have been examined in detail. When I was with them I often wondered whether anyone noticed the smiles, winks, smirks, gestures, tones of voice, the movies they saw, or the songs they sang.” Hewamanne deftly weaves theories of identity, globalization, and cultural politics throughout her detailed accounts of the worker’s efforts to negotiate ever-shifting roles and expectations of gender, class, and sexuality.

By analyzing how these workers claim political subjectivity, Hewamanne’s *Stitching Identities in a Free Trade Zone* challenges conventional notions about women at the bottom of the global economy. The book offers a fascinating journey through the vibrant subaltern universe of Sri Lankan female migrant workers, from the FTZ factory shop floor to boarding houses, from urban movie theaters to temples and beaches and back to their native rural villages. *Stitching Identities in a Free Trade Zone* captures the spirit with which women confront power and violence through everyday poetics and politics, exploring how female workers construct themselves as different while investigating this difference as the space where deep anxieties and ambivalences over notions of nation, modernity, and globalization play out.


**Abstract:** As the world’s largest democracy and a rising international economic power, India has long been heralded for its great strides in technology and trade. Yet, it is also plagued by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and a vast array of other social and economic issues.

Here, noted journalist and former *Financial Times* South Asia bureau chief Edward Luc travels throughout India’s many regions, cultures, and religious circles, investigating its fragile balance between tradition and modernity. From meetings with key political figures to fascinating encounters with religious pundits, economic gurus, and village laborers, *In Spite of the Gods* is a...
fascinating blend of analysis and reportage that comprehensively depicts the nuances of India’s complex situation and its place in the world.


Abstract: This lively anthology of ethnographic writing on South Asia explores the ways ordinary people live and make their worlds in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Organized around key areas of daily life, these essays provide an engaging introduction to the questions involved in understanding the family and the life course, gender, caste, and class, religion, nationalism, violence, globalization, diaspora, and other important issues. The men and women whose perspectives and experiences are presented here include peasant girls in rural Rajasthan and advertising executives in Mumbai: “untouchable” sharecroppers and high-caste landlords; intimate, multi-generational households and street youth involved in “modern” gangs; South Asian-American children of high-powered professionals and refugees displaced by national conflict, among many others. Scholars and students alike will welcome this vivid compelling text.


Abstract: Kamala Viswewaran and Mani Shekhar Singh have put together an art catalogue featuring the work of Mithila artist, Santosh Kumar Das, along with articles about his series of Mathil paintings. The artist produced the paintings to confront an episode of violence between that occurred in Gujarat, India in 2002.