I write this on my return from 8 months of research leave spent largely in Trivandrum, Kerala. India, when I left, was in its usual state of indifference to the rest of the world, having held another successful general election, more or less weathered the global recession and starting to look forward to an uptick of economic growth. By contrast, the US, when I arrived, was full of doom and gloom -- the Great Recession, Iraq, Afghanistan, health care, unemployment, the list goes on -- and, moreover, it was hotter in Austin than in Chennai!

Things picked up considerably when I got back to the fourth floor of the Hogg building. Kamran Asdar Ali, who had served as interim director for the spring and summer, had done a superb job keeping the Institute moving along smoothly; our many constituents on and off campus were delighted with the way things had been managed. In this short time, Kamran has successfully managed to leave large shoes behind to fill. My sincere thanks for his generosity and efficiency!

Most of you reading this attend our events regularly so you know what we’ve been doing. But, in case you missed, or have forgotten, some of the highlights of the last year, let’s do a brief walk-through. The fall seminar series Image/Text/Sound was organized by Kathy Hansen (Asian Studies). We got a chance to listen to scholars from North America and Europe working on such diverse topics as Hindi cinema, Parsi theater, histories of book publishing, and genealogies of visual representation. A number of participants had recently published books related to their talks which allowed the discussion to range beyond the bounds of their presentations. The spring series, Border Subjects: Emergent Themes in South Asian Studies, was organized by Kaushik Ghosh (Anthropology). With talks ranging from contemporary borders in northeast India to the borders of the social sciences and law, the series attracted large audiences and generated lively conversations. Thanks to both for the always-considerable effort in putting together these exciting series. As always, a full list of participants, past and future events, can be found on our newly renovated website http://www.utexas.edu/cola/insts/southasia/.

The Institute hosted a number of distinguished international visitors last year, including the Pakistani sitar ustaad Ghulam
Farid Nizami, who received a Fulbright award to spend the year in Austin. Music professor and fellow sitarist Steve Slawek was his faculty host and Nizami soon found himself a part of the Austin global music scene. In the fall, we were fortunate to host P. Sainath, India’s only ‘rural affairs’ correspondent, who spoke to a packed Thompson Center. In the spring, journalist, playwright, and Pakistani media personality Imran Aslam spent a week here. Aslam is the head of Geo TV in Pakistan. Excerpts from a long interview with Kamran Ali of Anthropology may be found in this issue of the newsletter.

The Institute sponsored a number of conferences in the last year, notably Martha Selby’s (Asian Studies) fascinating interdisciplinary workshop titled Vital Signs: Prediction, Prognosis and do an event targeting members of the Houston business community. The Institute director, a member of the business school faculty, and a graduate student in Anthropology spoke to the assembled group about the risks and prospects of doing business in India.

For all its strengths in philology, ancient history, and rarely spoken languages, let it not be said that the Institute is not up to speed with 21st century technologies. The Institute now has a Facebook site and is plugged into Twitter, both of which have become popular ways for our students and friends to correspond with us from far away. The next step, clearly, is to develop a Second Life avatar (after all, we do have some special claim on that word, don’t you think?)

Looking forward, I am delighted to welcome three new faculty members to the Institute: Ipsita Chatterjee in Geography, Heather Hindman in Asian Studies, and Snehal Singhvi in English. You will find interviews with each of them in this issue. All of them work on contemporary South Asia, an area that the Institute and College of Liberal Arts administration has targeted for growth. These hires allow us to expand our coverage of modern South Asia region significantly. Over the next few years I hope this area will expand still further, especially as we fill our newly created chair in Pakistan studies.

All in all, in spite of the gloom that dominates public commentary on the state of the country, I am very pleased that thanks to the strong involvement of a diverse and committed faculty and the support of the College of Liberal Arts and federal government, the South Asia Institute can look forward to continuing the good work and maintaining the high standards it has come to be known for. Now, all we have to do is work on the weather....

Itty Abraham
Director, South Asia Institute
Itty Abraham, Associate Professor in Government and Asian Studies, was on leave during the spring and summer thanks to a $100,000 Scholar’s Award from the National Science Foundation. Based in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, his research took him up and down the Malabar coast. He was invited to give the inaugural lecture at the Centre for Cross Cultural Communication in South Asia, School of International Studies, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam; he gave talks in Hyderabad and Ahmedabad, and spoke at the national anti-nuclear conference held in Kanyakumari. He was invited to participate in workshops hosted by the National University, Kottayam; he gave talks at the national anti-nuclear conference held in Kanyakumari. 

His edited collection, *South Asian Cultures of the Bomb* is finally out from Indiana University in March and August 2009 respectively. His edited collection, *South Asian Cultures of the Bomb* is finally out from Indiana University Press, and he has a chapter “Contra Non-proliferation” in Scott Sagan’s new edited volume *Inside Nuclear South Asia* (Stanford UP).

Kamran Asdar Ali, Associate Professor of Anthropology, received a Fellowship to spend the 2010-2011 academic year at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Institute of Advanced Study). He co-edited the volume *Comparing Cities: Middle East and South Asia with Martina Rieker*, published by Oxford University Press. http://www.oup.com.pk/shopexd.asp?id=1724. In addition to the introduction for the volume he contributed the chapter, ‘Men and their “Problems”: Notes on Contemporary Karachi’. He also wrote the Foreword for *Muhajirs and Nation: Bihar in the 1940s*, a book written by the late Professor Papiya Ghosh published by Routledge India. His most recent publication was “Pakistan’s Troubled “Paradise on Earth” for *Middle East Report* (April 2009).

Kathryn Hansen, Professor of Asian Studies, traveled to four foreign countries to present public lectures on her research during the past year. She especially enjoyed her first visit to the UAE, where she presented “Passionate Refrains: The Theatricality of Urdu on the Parsi Stage,” at a workshop on Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema organized by the NYU Abu Dhabi Institute. She gave talks at the 20th European Conference on South Asian Studies at the University of Manchester, UK; at an ethnomusicology conference at the University of Amsterdam; and at the University of British Columbia, Canada; in addition to presentations at the Biennial Norman Cutler Conference on South Asian Literature at the University of Chicago, the University of Colorado, and the annual AAS meeting. Her article “Staging Composite Culture: Nautanki and Parsi Theatre in Recent Revivals” is being published in the current issue of *South Asia Research*.

Gail Minault, Professor of History, is in the prepress stage of *Gender, Language, and Learning: Essays in Indo-Muslim Cultural History* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2009). The contents will include 12 of her previously published articles, edited, updated, and conveniently located in one book.

Patrick Olivelle, Professor of Asian Studies, was the Shivadasani Fellow for the Trinity Term (April-June) at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies at the University of Oxford. During his stay there he gave a serious of talks on the Upanishads, and delivered the Majewski Lecture. He also gave papers at a conference on the future of Indology at the University of Karakow, Poland, and at the conference “Cultures et constructions historiques dans l’Asie du Sud de la première modernité” organized by the Centre d’Etudes de l’Inde et de l’Asie du Sud de Sorbonne. In the Spring Olivelle delivered the Michael Ondaatje Lecture at the University of Toronto. Olivelle was appointed the “International Mentor” of The Cardiff Centre for the Study of Asian Religions of the University of Cardiff and delivered the inaugural talk at the opening of the Center. His edited volume, *Ashoka in History and Historical Memory* was published by Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi.

Carla Petievich, Visiting Professor of Asian Studies, completed two scholarly essays: “The World Changes and it Doesn’t: Notes on Pakistani Culture,” which will appear in the catalogue for *Hanging Fire: Contemporary Art from Pakistan* (Yale 2009) and which accompanies a show by the same name that just opened to great acclaim at the Asia Society in New York, and, “Innovations Pious and Impious: Expressive Culture in Nawabi Lucknow” which will be published in the catalogue for a major exhibition, *Captured Hearts: the Lure of Courtly Lucknow* to be launched in 2011 at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

MarthaAnnSelby, Associate Professor of South Asian Studies, published...
an article titled “Discursive Shifts in Early Ayurvedic Narratives of Conception and Gestation” in Divins Remedes: Medicine et Religion en Asie du Sud, Ines G. Zupanov and Caterina Guenzi, editors (Purushartha 27). She presented a paper titled “The Zoomorphic Impulse: Selfhood, Romance, and Borderland Identities in Tamil Cankam Poetry,” at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies (Chicago, March 2009). She also gave a paper, “Form, Style, and Rhetoric in an Early Fourth-Century Tamil Anthology,” at a workshop organized by Dr. E. Annamalai titled “Tamil Literary Culture: Past and Present” at Yale University (April 2009). Selby has been named Distinguished Alumni Fellow by the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Iowa, and will be honored with a two-day celebration in Iowa City in early September. Her translation of Ainkurunuru, an anthology of Old Tamil love poetry, will be published by Columbia University Press in late 2010. She has also been elected to the Executive Committee of the American Institute of Indian Studies, and will begin service as AIIS Language Program Chair in March 2010.

In December 2008 Jishnu Shankar, Senior Lecturer of Asian Studies, began a five lecture tour which started at the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, California, and took him to Japan for an invited lecture on “Teaching with Authentic Materials.” Then on to Jaipur for an AIIS-HUF presentation on Register in Hindi for teacher-training, finally culminating in Delhi with an talk on the HUF at the Aksharam Hindi conference. The last talk was in Agra, at the Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, on a general discussion on of the state of Hindi teaching in the US. In the summer he began work on the Language for Health project, a three year project to develop a health-profession specific language curriculum in Hindi.

Stephen Slaweck, Professor, Butler School of Music, was invited to lecture and perform in Baylor University’s Lyceum Series in April. His performance of traditional ragas on the sitar, accompanied by Gourisankar Karmakar on tabla, was enthusiastically received, as was his presentation of a paper entitled “Recent Experimental Compositions in the Classical Music of North India.” Earlier in the year Professor Slaweck traveled to Amsterdam to deliver his paper, “A Tale of Two Concertos: Inauthentic Authenticity and Authentic Inauthenticity in Ravi Shankar’s Orchestral Works,” in a major international conference on the music of India, India and the World: Intercultural Performing Arts, hosted by the University of Amsterdam and the Indian Musicological Society. In November, Professor Slaweck coordinated the visit of master Indian instrument maker Sanjay Sharma, of the reknown Rikhi Ram family of sitar makers of New Delhi, to recondition the BSOM’s aging sitars and tanpuras. During the year, Professor Slaweck maintained a hectic pace of teaching and service, getting four of his doctoral students through their dissertation defenses; doing his best to continue instructional activity of the BSOM’s Javanese gamelan during the absence of its regular instructor; Bapak Rasito Purwopangrawit; serving as faculty liaison for a visiting Fulbright Exchange musician from Pakistan, Ustad Ghulam Farid Nizami; continuing as editor of Asian Music, Journal of the Society for Asian Music; and continuing to represent the interests of the Archive and Research Center for Ethnomusicoology of the American Institute of Indian Studies. In his role as Chair of the Ethnomusicoology committee of AIIS, he traveled to Chicago and New Delhi to report on the activities of the Archive and Research Center before the Board of Trustees of AIIS and the Indian Advisory Committee of the Government of India.

Cynthia Talbot, Associate Professor of History, spent the 2008-2009 academic year working on a book on Prithviraj Raso and other narratives about the twelfth-century king Prithviraj Cauhan, with the support of a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship. Her article “Becoming Turk the Rajput Way: Conversion and Identity in an Indian Warrior Narrative” appeared in the January 2009 issue of the journal Modern Asian Studies. She completed the editorial work on a volume titled “Perceptions of India and Its Pasts: Essays in Honor” of Thomas R. Trautmann to which sixteen scholars contributed essays; it will be published by Yoda Press (Delhi) in spring 2010. She presented a paper last fall at the conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia, which met in Delhi, and she served as the chair of the program committee for the spring 2009 annual meeting of the Association of Asian Studies in Chicago.
People

Patricia A. Wilson, Graduate Program in Community and Regional Planning, hosted her co-author Varun Vidyarthi last fall for a series of talks and book signings for their recently published book *Development from Within: Facilitating Collective Reflection for Sustainable Change*. Varun is the founder and director of Manavodaya, The Institute of Participatory Development, based in Lucknow. SAI co-sponsored a reception for him with the School of Architecture. The book is available at amazon.com.

Graduate Students

Amber Abbas (History) is currently in India on a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship. She was also offered an American Institute of Indian Studies Junior Fellowship which she declined. Next spring she will utilize a 3-month American Institute of Bangladesh Studies Fellowship to continue her research in Dhaka. She intends to present “Multiple Realities: Continuity and Cleavage in Partition Narratives” at the UT Austin Institute of Historical Studies’ Independence and Decolonization Seminar in April 2010.

Aun Ali (Sociology) was awarded a Pre-doctoral Dissertation Fellowship by the American Institute of Pakistan Studies (AIPS) for his dissertation proposal titled “The Politics of Sectarianism: State, Islamism, and the Making of Shia Politics in Pakistan”. Aun spent last summer in Pakistan traveling between several cities conducting interviews and archival research. His next destination is going to be London this winter where he will examine colonial archives at the British Library.

Hafeez Jamali (Anthropology) was awarded a Pre-doctoral Dissertation Fellowship by the American Institute of Pakistan Studies (AIPS) for his dissertation proposal titled ‘Between Global Dreams and Local Realities: Baloch Identity and the Politics of Place in Gwadar, Pakistan’.

Suzanne Schulz (Radio-Television-Film) accepted an American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) Junior Fellowship for her work on local and informal media in Lucknow and Delhi. She will begin research in February 2010. Based on work conducted in January 2009, Suzanne and Subah Dayal (UCLA) recently completed a visual essay for the Tasveer Ghar project. The essay is entitled “Outside the Imambara” and can be viewed at www.tasveerghar.net

Jolie Wood (Government) has been awarded a Fellowship for Doctoral Candidates by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Austin Branch in 2009-10 for her continuing work on her dissertation entitled, “White-collar Agitation, No-collar Compliance: The Privilege of Protest in Varanasi, India.”

Elliot McCarter (Asian Studies) recently returned from Kurukshetra, Haryana where he traveled with the blessing of a departmental grant to witness the mela accompanying the solar eclipse. In the days following the celestial event, he continued his research in the region, conducting interviews and gathering data about the stories, places and practices of Kurukshetra. Apart from failing to secure a batch of fresh homemade lemon pickles, the trip was tremendously successful and the research conducted will greatly enhance certain aspects of his dissertation titled “Kurukshetra: Place and Narrative.” Elliott will present a paper based on this research during this year’s Southwest Conference on Asian Studies being held at the University of Texas. Elliott was also honored with a Graduate School Continuing Fellowship for this academic year which he will use to continue writing his dissertation.

Recent Ph.D. Graduates

Mark McClish (Asian Studies) successfully defended his Ph.D. in Asian Cultures and Religions in August. He was invited this summer to attend the conference “Asoka and the Making of Modern India” in New Delhi where he presented a paper on The Textual History of the Arthasastra. He is currently a Carnegie Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Ripon College.

Reena Patel, a 2008 alumni, recently signed a book contract with Stanford University Press. Based on her UT dissertation research in India, the book, *Working the Night Shift: Women's Employment in the Transnational Call Center Industry*, will be available early next year. She currently works as a Foreign Service Officer at USAID.
Meet our Foreign Language Teaching Assistants...

I am Rohan Banerjee and presently working as a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) in Bengali at the University of Texas at Austin. I am from Kolkata, often referred to as the “cultural capital” of India, and by the very spirit of it, bear in my heart a true sense of cultural pluralism. I did my M.A. in English from Presidency College, one of the leading academic institutions in India, under the University of Calcutta. I am a passionate reader of poetry and I write some as well. However, my major interests lie onstage. I have performed as an actor with “Rupokolpo” in several theatre festivals that occur in and around Kolkata and suburbs. Philosophically, I am inclined to post-structuralism and psychoanalysis. I am planning to do my PhD on the symbols of violence and grotesque and (de)construct how essentially they narrate multidimensional representations of fragmented selves. Professionally, I taught English Literature (primarily British and Indian) at Behala College under the University of Calcutta. I have also taught Bengali to a group of people from a European NGO. I am sure my experiences here at UT will enrich me and will sharpen my vision and intellect. Although I didn’t start here, but the prospect of changing the world seems inspiring to me as well!

I am Shilpi Agarwal from Lucknow, often known as the City of Nawabs, City of Manners and Etiquette and famous for its lyrical language – an amalgam of Hindi and Urdu. I received my Bachelor’s degree in English Literature, Mass Communication and Video Production; Master’s and M.Phil in English Literature from University of Lucknow, Lucknow. My M.Phil. dissertation was on Indian Diaspora writers settled in America like Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. In the future, I will pursue my Ph.D. in English Literature, specializing in Post-Colonial Studies. Though I am a student of English Literature, I enjoy teaching my mother tongue Hindi at The University of Texas, because I like to help people know more about my language and culture.

I am Aqsa Iqbal from Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan. I received my Master’s is in English Language, Literature & Applied Linguistics from National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad in August 2005. Since receiving my degree, I have been teaching at the same university. I have taught English language courses from beginner to advanced levels and have taken the English language courses specially designed for PLA (Chinese Officers) and Saudi Royal Officers. I am happy to be an FLTA for Urdu at The University of Texas. As a language teacher, I love to teach languages, but it is a unique experience for me here in Austin because I am teaching Urdu, my mother tongue.

Telugu Javali Songs: Salon to Cinema
South Asia Seminar Series: IMAGE/TEXT/SOUND
October 2, 2008
3:30 PM-5:00 PM
Meyerson Conference Room, WCH 4.118
South Asia Institute
http://www.utexas.edu/cola/insts/southasia/
Davesh Soneji
McGill University
International Collaborations

School Inauguration

On June 8, 2009 the new school building for al-Hamd Educational Girls High School was officially inaugurated. Dr. Carla Petievich, Executive Director of the Hoshyar Foundation, was on hand together with Mrs. Farida Tanveer, the school principal. The eight-room school building was the first capital project of Hoshyar, established in 2007 to support human empowerment through female education. The ceremony was attended by a large number of students and their parents, along with Ghazanfar Ali, the vice-principal, and Shahnaz Hassan, Lecturer in Urdu at UT-Austin and a member of the Hoshyar advisory board.

“When we arrived at the new school building we found it festooned with balloons, many of the classrooms painted, and a huge crowd awaiting us,” Dr. Petievich said. “As Mrs. Tanveer cut the ribbon with me, students showered us with rose petals, and a couple of the balloons festooning the ceiling grates succumbed to the heat and exploded. We spoke about our dream of Pakistani children becoming educated and changing the world around us. Then the students sang the Pakistani national anthem, and Shahnaz and I sang ‘We Shall Overcome.’ We distributed sweets and juice, then gave the parents a tour of the school. It was tremendously emotional and exciting.”

Cooperation between Asian Studies and the University of Oslo, Norway

Oliver Freiberger

In the fall of 2008 a conversation was initiated between the Department of Asian Studies at UT (DAS) and the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages (IKOS) at the University of Oslo, Norway. The main objective was to explore possible forms of exchange in both research and teaching. The two departments have a strikingly similar structure, in that research, teaching, and language training are related to a variety of geographical areas (and time periods) of Asia. Just like DAS, IKOS houses a number of renowned scholars in several fields of Asian Studies, especially for South and East Asia. In early 2009 Dr. Ute Hüsken, professor of Sanskrit at IKOS, received a grant from the University of Oslo for organizing explorative talks. A delegation from Oslo visited Austin in April 2009, and a group from UT paid a counter visit to Oslo in August.

The formal and informal conversations that took place during these visits were extremely productive. It became obvious right away that in some fields, members of the two departments have a number of common research interests. In other fields the specializations complement each other. It was concluded that collaborations on concrete research projects could be extremely fruitful and that teaching exchanges could fill the respective ‘blind spots’ for the benefit of students.

These explorative talks resulted in finalizing an ‘Academic and Scientific Cooperation and Exchange Agreement’ between UT and the University of Oslo, which will facilitate future exchange efforts. A number of cooperative initiatives on the research level are being underway or in the planning phase. The first teaching exchange will take place in the spring semester of 2010. Dr. Ute Hüsken (IKOS) will give a series of talks and seminars related to her field of expertise, South Indian temple culture, which is otherwise not taught at UT. In turn, Dr. Joel Brereton (DAS) will teach Vedic Sanskrit at IKOS, a field in which UT is one of the leading universities in the world. Plans for other upcoming teaching exchanges are currently being made.

The cooperation agreement between the two sister departments opens up many exciting possibilities of academic exchange. Faculty and students alike will benefit greatly from this initiative.
New South Asia Faculty

Blair Shultz, Asian Studies

I noticed that you have several publications of translated short stories. What inspires you to work on the particular pieces you have chosen?

Both projects, Premchand’s Sevasdan and the Angare stories, grew out of my own literary and intellectual preoccupations. The kinds of stories about India that I grew up with were larger-than-life and mythological narratives: somewhere between Amitabh Bachchan and Amar Chitra Katha. And the consequence was a more or less sanitized and romantic vision of India which became the emotional bedrock of immigrant communities from South Asia in the US. At the same time, though, it was clear to me that there was a vast gulf between that India and the India that I encountered, and I began to seek out narratives which helped me to explain that India, how it came about and how it felt about itself.

The most interesting thing for me, then, was the combination of the turn towards realist fiction (which begins at the beginning of the 20th century) and the development of the All-Indian Progressive Writers Association (at about the 1930s). Both of these developments put into stark relief the social dilemmas which preoccupied intellectuals at the height of the nationalist agitation: women’s uplift, caste abolition, the stultifying effects of religious orthodoxy, the overwhelming problems of rural poverty. And for me, this was an India that was both emotionally compelling and politically engaging.

Premchand, of course, is synonymous with the social novel in Hindi. The Angare stories, on the other hand, are infamous, but because of British censorship policies, the collection was unavailable until very recently to most Urdu readers. Sajjad Zaheer and Rashid Jahan’s stories in that collection produced some of the most contentious literary-cum-religious debates in the 1930s and it actually rallied writers from all over India to defend artistic freedom against the twin forces of orthodoxy and colonialism. I wanted to find some way of making that material available to English-speaking audiences. I also find them wonderfully interesting and, dare I say, salacious.

Could you tell me about the courses you will be teaching this Fall?

I am very lucky to be teaching only one class this fall. It’s entitled “The Literature of Modern, South Asian Islam” and it attempts to trace a genealogy of Muslim writing in the subcontinent over the course of the 20th century. I was inspired in some ways by Ayesha Jalal’s very interesting book Self and Sovereignty in which she attempts to show how the advent of colonial modernity in the subcontinent contradictorily affected the ways that Muslims understood individuality and community belonging. I also wanted to challenge Rushdie’s own notion that his writing had nothing to do with the traditions of vernacular fiction in the subcontinent.

So, the class begins by looking at debates between Islamic reformers (Ashraf Ali Thanawi and Syed Ahmed Khan), but moves to considering the decline of aristocratic culture (Ruswa’s Umrao Jan Ada), the development of Muslim nationalism (Ahmed Ali’s Twilight in Delhi) and middle-class feminism (Chughtai’s Crooked Line and Atiya Hossain’s Sunlight on a Broken Column), the effects of Partition (Sa’adat Hasan Manto’s short stories and Rahi Masoom Reza’s Adha Gaon), and ends with contemporary narratives of the India-Pakistan conflict (Rushdie’s Shame and Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist).

I’m hoping that the combination of Anglophone and Hindi/Urdu literature will add some much needed complexity to the arguments about the development of South Asian fiction as a whole while at the
same time putting Muslim writers in conversation with one another across the twentieth century in some provocative ways.

How do you feel about the artistic, “keep Austin weird” vibe of the city?

I spent the last decade at UC Berkeley, at the heart of the weirdest, most Bohemian city in the US. Austin feels like coming home in that respect. The weirder the better, I say.

Ipsita Chatterjee, Geography

Could you tell me about your part with the Urban Studies track of course work in the Geography Department?

I am an urban geographer, who studies issues of globalization, labor, spatial transformations, conflict and violence in the urban context, naturally I am looking forward towards developing upper division undergraduate courses on topics like: Globalization and the City, Violence, and the City, that can work towards fulfilling course requirements in the Urban Studies Track. At present, I am teaching GRG 356 T, Global Societies, an upper division undergraduate topics course that deals with social, political, cultural, and economic issues in the pre and post-globalization context, in the latter half of the course, I tie these issues with urban exclusion, violence, and war.

On what projects are you currently working?

I am currently working on expanding and deepening my investigations on the nature and mechanisms of urban exclusions that have become common place with market-oriented globalization -- I am focusing on Ahmedabad city in India, which embodies these contradictory aspects of the ‘new’ entrepreneurial urbanism. This ‘new’ urbanism in the Global South in general, and Ahmedabad in particular, entails adoption of urban renewal policies that beautify, clean and dress-up the city in anticipation for global investment, in the process intentionally excluding the urban poor, and socio-culturally marginalizing the ethnic poor. Outward looking economic policies are creatively juxtaposed with parochial hatred and ethno-phobia to chalk-out new tropes of urban exclusion. I am investigating these mechanisms of urban exclusion.

My other passion at the moment is to understand how class and gender identities are being reformulated in the context of disappearance of formal factory-based employment and the emergence of informal and sweatshop style working conditions -- what does this do to class consciousness, union movement, feminist consciousness, and hence, how can class and feminist identity be re-conceptualized in the context of a post-industrial world?

What do you make of the Urban development here in Austin?

Austin has been popularly referred to as the ‘creative city’, a site where creative classes (software engineers, artists, singers, academics, experts) settle to produce a vibrancy and prosperity that is in direct contradiction to the rust belt cities. In many ways, Austin does capture that vibrancy and creativity, the urban landscape is a kaleidoscope of vibrant colors, graffiti, twinkling lights, sago palms celebrating and worshipping quaintness, weirdness, difference, I wonder however, how much of it is real? I live in an apartment complex with a huge pool, all the complexes in my area have one or multiple pools, gyms, club houses, this is the kind of urbanism that is desirable for the creative class -- what does this do in terms of water use, resource use, in a place where drought is an important issue? I am interested in exploring the grit and grime, the ‘underbelly’, if you will, that supports this creativity and vibrancy.
Could you tell me a bit about your interest in expatriate communities?

My interest in expatriates came as a result of a longer interest in Nepal. Kathmandu has long been a crossroads for travelers and traders and that continues to the current day. The capital city in many ways dominates the economic and political life of the modern nation-state, with some from rural areas referring to going to Kathmandu as going to Nepal. In addition to the large population of backpack travelers, adventure tourists and Buddhist seekers in Kathmandu, there are a significant number of foreign aid workers, diplomats and expatriate business people. The presence of such a large number of foreigners was something that was a part of my everyday experience of the city as I was doing research on Newari nationalism and gender. The move to my research on expatriates in Nepal came as a result of a conversation with fellow scholars on Newari culture that drifted into our experiences with the world of aid workers in Kathmandu. We observed that no one had written about this large population, likely deemed not “exotic” enough for anthropologists. I took this as a challenge and have been writing and researching zones of contact since then. I was fortunate that when I returned from this early, transformative fieldwork trip to be able to work with scholars of globalization and diaspora studies with whom I found a great deal of shared interest in the mobility of people and the politicization of territorial rootedness.

Please talk about your course this Fall, “Global Markets and Local Cultures” – what critical issues are you excited about relaying to your students?

The “Global Markets and Local Cultures” class is very much designed to bridge an intellectual gap in scholarship on globalization. There is a significant mass of research on global theory, often coming from political science and economics, that claims to explain the operations of global finance and the generalized rules of the market in a newly global age. Meanwhile, in the humanities, history, and anthropology, there is a different conversation about local impacts of globalization that generates “case studies” of how external forces influence a particular population. Too often, these two discourses do not intersect – resulting in a lack of real dialogue between those lauding the effects of globalization and those concerned about its negative repercussions. Carla Freeman has captured this divide in the title of her 2001 article “Is Local:Global as Feminine:Masculine?” The course seeks to bridge this gap, beginning with an introduction to general theories of globalization, including the economic and political concepts that can often be intimidating to cultural researchers. With this background in place, the class then looks at a diverse set of writings that seek to see how these theories play out in the world. In the end, globalization looks not like a flattening of the world, but a source of friction that has unintended and unexpected effects.
Ali: How was the relationship between the media and the state similar or different between the martial-law of Zia ul-Haq and the military rule of Gen. Musharraf?

Aslam: In essence, the role of the media will be and should be adversarial. I say that because as a member of the media, one is essentially the opposition to anti-democratic forces in government. Ultimately, both regimes were usurpers who came to power through extra-constitutional measures. Initially, the government would try to coopt the media. But inevitably fissures emerge and once the leadership realizes that reporting that will be critical of their tenure, they clamp down on the press.

In the case of Zia ul-Haq the relationship between the news media and the government was openly adversarial. During Zia ul-Haq’s rule the press saw a lot of pre-censorship and a lot of advisories coming in. If you did not heed warnings, you faced imprisonment or the possibility that your publication would be shut down. As a result many good journalists indulged in self-censorship and this was most debilitating.

Excerpts from an interview by Professor Kamran Asdar Ali (Anthropology), during Imran Aslam’s recent visit to Austin. The full interview may be found in MERIP no. 251, Summer 2009.

Imran Aslam is the president of Geo TV Network, the channel that “changed the media landscape” of Pakistan, as the New York Times put it.

In 1983 Aslam became the Editor of the Star, an evening newspaper that was to blaze a trail in investigative journalism during the days of General Zia-ul-Haq. Working with a team described as ‘typewriter guerillas,’ the Star refused to play it safe and finally Aslam was given a choice: soft pedal or resign. He resigned.

For the next two years he earned a living by writing advertising jingles and working in the theatre and on television. Aslam returned to journalism in 1990 when he helped found The News, Pakistan’s leading English language newspaper. He was part of the team that launched Geo on 14 August 2002. The network has taken strong positions on sensitive societal and political issues and has helped to enlarge the space for discussion, dissent and debate in Pakistan. In spite of repeated efforts by the Musharraf regime to close them down, Aslam and Geo resisted this pressure successfully.
During the 1990s when Pakistan enjoyed a period of civilian rule, there was a small opening. Still, the government continued to attempt to buy or coerce journalists. Since working journalists could not be bought, the management was targeted through tactics such as news print quotas and cutting government advertising.

During Nawaz Sharif's second term in office (late 1990s), and even during Benazir Bhutto's rule before him, we received visits from information officials in the government. Mr. Haqqani (the current ambassador of Pakistan to the US, then a close political advisor to the PPP government), I remember, came into the office one day. We were running a story about the corruption allegations against Asif Zardari (the current President of Pakistan and the spouse of the deceased Prime Minister) and him not being allowed to contest elections. Haqqani came and tried to persuade us to drop the story.

When Nawaz Sharif was in power, the owner of the Jang Group of newspapers, Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman was asked to fire a number of his news staff. He refused and the following morning when he arrived at his office he found 18 tax notices on his table from decades back, which they had probably kept as a weapon to be used at the appropriate time. As the pressure started to mount, a list was submitted by the so-called democratic forces (meaning the democratically elected government of the time) of a few important members of the news who were to be sacked. They confiscated our news print and brought us down to about four pages. But we continued to fight. We called it a “war on Jang,” Jang being the parent newspaper, which in Urdu means war.

The owner of Jang, Shakil, gathered journalists at the mosque and announced that the government was blackmailling him. Shakil had taped conversations with Saifur Rahman and Mushahid Hussain (both high level functionaries in the Sharif government and personally close to the Prime Minister) in which they openly asked him, on tape, to sack these people and promised him they would take away the tax notices if he complied. Once the tapes came out it created a lot of waves and the government backed off.

In 1999 when Pervez Musharraf came to power there was a little hope. In his first speech he talked about opening up the air waves. We started talking about electronic media to see how the new dictator would take this and sure enough he opened up the air waves. This was a new type of dictator with a new agenda.

About a year after the September 11th attacks, we launched a television news channel called Geo TV from Dubai. This was one of the first news channels. Other channels had emerged that also had news content but they were hybrid channels. We had to operate from Dubai because for all Musharraf’s claims of opening up the air waves, the license to operate in Pakistan was not forthcoming. The reason he gave for not allowing us to operate within Pakistan was cross-media ownership – print and broadcasting – too much of a monopoly.

Geo TV had a formidable impact because it was reaching many more people than a local television station could. Initially there was shell shock. The people in power didn’t understand technology — how were things being shipped out of Pakistan? How was the footage being sent to Dubai?

The impact was instantaneous. I've never before seen the kind of impact we were able to create in a very short period of time. Of course the Iraq war was starting and also within Pakistan there was turmoil and excitement. Things were changing in a very interesting way and I think we were able to give a snapshot of the whole thing in a different way. To the credit of Gen. Musharraf, he took a lot. He took criticism, parodies, ridicule. So we said this was a benevolent dictator, somebody who wanted to be loved. We talked about his uniform and we talked about the military’s role in politics.

Musharraf was very telegenic and used the media as much as possible to get his point across. He was very fond of pontificating...he loved talking. There was a little boom taking place thanks to the American aid coming in. Good management in certain areas...governance issues were resolved in certain areas, banks becoming a little more interesting, more credit facilities available, the telecom boom, some investment was coming into Pakistan. The stock market was performing well. These were the pleasant days of Musharraf. We were lulled into this feeling of security...thought it was open ended and we could keep pushing the audience. But when the two assassination attempts took place against him he went back into his shell. We saw a whole series of bomb blasts, suicide attacks. He felt his hold was slipping.
His tour of America and the book that he wrote showed him to be a very shallow person at the end of the day. When he asked Chief Justice Chaudhry (the Chief Justice of Pakistan who was dismissed by Musharraf in March of 2007) to resign the media found a cause they could relate to. The coverage of the Chief Justice, twenty-four hours a day, was unprecedented. In this period the two main political leaders, Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, were out of the country. In his pursuit of legitimacy, Musharraf started to make deals. And one of the deals he made was with Benazir. We know for a fact that the British and Americans were involved in that. They wanted to bring someone who would toe the line and maybe work with Musharraf side by side.

(...)

There were other things Musharraf did not forgive the Chief Justice for. One of them was his ruling on the privatization of the steel mill. In 2006, during the process of privatizing of state industries the Chief Justice had blocked the sale of the Pakistan Steel Mill to private investors, bringing upon him and the judiciary the ire of the then Prime Minister and other government officials which was a major disaster for Shaukat Aziz, the prime minister. The whole privatization process brought back the stigma of corruption. Many believed that the steel mill is a strategic part of Pakistan’s economy and should not just be sold to people who don’t have the ability to run it. So the media played a role here. We decided this is an issue we are going to support, openly and publicly and no matter what happened. And as the support grew and the lawyers’ movement gained momentum, Musharraf acted like dictators are wont to do and declared emergency rule and banned all television channels.

Slowly, channels kept coming back. Musharraf said we had to sign a code of conduct in order to operate, which was like a death sentence. Plus, there was a list of people he said would not be allowed to conduct talk shows. Not only did he ban news channel, he banned entertainment channels, the youth channel and sports. So there was a huge financial loss, but luckily people came out in support of the channels. They arrived with flowers and wreaths and danced in the streets. The atmosphere became like a carnival. It gave the owners of the channels and all of us confidence that we could take a stand. Finally, when Musharraf lifted the emergency decree, we came back on TV just in time for the elections in February of 2008. But Musharraf was so obsessed by this Frankenstein monster that he went to Dubai to pull the plug on our station. The last chance of us beaming out to the rest of the world was killed.

So you see, nothing really changes. Both Musharraf and Zia ul-Haq proved similar in the end, even if their styles were different.

But what needs to be stressed is that technological change and the instantaneous nature of the news today caused a change in the whole dynamic. The reaction time to events has become very small. The information sectors of government were caught by surprise and unable to react instantaneously. Often the media would break the news and the government wouldn’t know about it. You call them for a response and they say “well we’re just seeing this on your channel.” I don’t think they understood how to respond to it.

ALI: There are ebbs and flows in your relationship with the current government as well...

ASLAM: The big debate post-Musharraf was the “war on terror” and whose war it was. Whether we were to take ownership of it or whether we were just the fixers and the story was being written by somebody else. There was an attempt by the powers that be to channel this debate so that they could do the bidding of their masters. But public sentiment is something that you always have to be careful of. You can create public opinion, but you cannot create an artificial public opinion.

The initial euphoria of the February 18 elections evaporated quickly because it soon became clear that the electorate had delivered a hung mandate and there would have to be some sort of a coalition to run the country.  

(continued p. 25)
South Asia Seminar Series

Fall 2008 - Spring 2009

Neepa Majumdar
University of Pittsburgh
Saying More: Innuendo and Constructions of Female Stardom in Indian Cinema of the 1930s

Chris Pinney
Northwestern University
Lessons from Hell: Popular Hindu Imagery and Governmentality

Kathryn Hansen
UT Austin
A Hindu “Mythological” in the Parsi Theater: Betab’s Mahabharat

Richard Eaton
University of Arizona
Architecture and Power in the Deccan: an Historical Typology

Anand Pandian
Johns Hopkins University
Framing Feelings: Landscapes of Affective Expression in Tamil Cinema

Kaushik Ghosh
UT Austin
Nano: The Story of the Big ‘Small Car’

Davesh Soneji
McGill University
Telugu Javali Songs: Salon to Cinema

Bina D’Costa
ANU
Strangers within our Borders: Human (in)security in South Asia

Ulrike Stark
University of Chicago
‘Government’s most energetic servant’ or ‘Traitor to his country’? Rediscovering Raja Shivaprasad, Sitara-e Hind

Nandini Sundar
Delhi School of Economics
Citizenship in a Looking-Glass World

Sanjib Baruah
Bard College
The Partition’s Long Shadow: Politics of the Blurred Citizen-Alien

Sumathi Ramaswamy
Oxford
Of celestial gods and terrestrial globes

Saloni Mathur
UCLA
Split Collections: Partition, the Museum and Material Culture
In November 2008, the poet and translator Arvind Krishna Mehrotra was a guest of the Hindi Urdu Flagship. Besides being an English-language poet in his own right, Dr Mehrotra (who teaches English literature at Allahabad University) is well known for such translations as those in The Absent Traveller: Prakrit love poetry from the Gathasaptasati of Satavahana Hala (1991), a classic volume with an afterword by UT’s very own Martha Selby. In his HUF talk, Mehrotra presented his new and unpublished translations of poetry attributed to the 15th-16th-century Hindi poet Kabir, the greatest mystical poet of the vernacular ‘Nirgun’ tradition; discussion following his readings addressed both the Kabir tradition itself and the broader process of literary translation.

Kabir was again the subject of a larger event that took place in April 2009, when the Hindi Urdu Flagship sponsored a short festival of film and music celebrating the poet’s work and persona. The centerpiece was an unforgettable concert by a group of devotional singers, Prahlad Singh Tipanya and his accompanists, held in UT’s Jessen Auditorium, at which a range of different ‘Kabir’ songs was presented to great acclaim. (The inverted commas around the poet’s name here reflect an academic fastidiousness about authenticity that is wholly absent in Prahladji’s dynamic style: for while scholars like to ‘problematize’ the contestable attribution of such verses, the devotee sees them as a source of spiritual solutions rather than academic problems.) The concert was compared by Shabnam Virmani, a prolific filmmaker whose documentary Had-Anhad: Journeys with Ram and Kabir had been shown the night before the performance. During their three-day visit to UT — part of a tour across numerous campuses and communities in the US — Prahladji and his ensemble also engaged with Hindi students, and temporarily transformed Rupert Snell’s Panorama of Hindi Literature class into an arena where the vision of Kabir was encountered face to face, rather than through the questioning lens of academic discourse.
The two-day conference Beauty in the Worlds of Islam was attended by a number of K-12 teachers as well as many other scholars and students. The conference explored the manner in which beauty is created, judged, negotiated, and relayed in Muslim societies from Asia to the Americas. It emphasized the several ways in which the diverse imaginative spirit of Muslim peoples is manifested in architecture, music, poetry, rhetoric, and calligraphy; it also examined how issues of gender, sexuality, disenfranchisement, and modernity shape ideas of beauty. Dr. Ayesha Jalal, MacArthur and Carnegie Fellow at Tufts University, gave the keynote address, impressing the audience with a wide-ranging analysis of the relationship between ethics and beauty throughout the areas of the world inhabited by Muslim peoples. The first night of the conference ended in a Sufi musical assembly conducted by visiting Fulbright fellow from Pakistan, Ustaad Nizami.

Within the conference, Professor Syed Akbar Hyder held a workshop and roundtable discussion on the most pressing issues related to the teaching of Islam in high school and colleges. Thus the conference succeeded in its two-fold task of enriching American high school and college pedagogies relating to social studies, while enhancing interdisciplinary conversation among scholars of literature, visual arts, history, anthropology, political science, architecture and jurisprudence.
SAI's outreach program includes AIM: South Asia (Area Instructional Methodologies for South Asia), as well as working collaboratively with UT's other three NRCs through Hemispheres. Both initiatives focus intensively on the development of resources for K-12 and post-secondary education by providing workshops, in-service teacher training, curriculum design, and classroom outreach programs.

In Fall 2008, AIM: South Asia hosted a K-12 workshop, “Land and Landscape in South Asia,” for middle and high school teachers and social studies coordinators from the Austin area. Twenty participants joined the event from the Independent School Districts of Austin, San Marcos, Round Rock and Pflugerville. The workshop addressed topics concerning land and landscape that are often studied separately. Participants were asked to consider ways of thinking about the importance of the addressed topics in order to understand the significance of culture (including religion, literature and art) and geography in South Asia. Speakers included Janice Leoshko and Michael Charlesworth of the Department of Art and Art History at UT, Rupert Snell of the Department of Asian Studies at UT, and Kathleen O’Reilly, from the Department of Geography at Texas A&M University.

AIM: South Asia, along with the Hindu-Urdu Flagship (HUF) Program, co-hosted a second Spring outreach conference, “Beauty in the Worlds of Islam,” in April 2009. The two-day event, led by Prof. Akbar Hyder, was attended by more than seventy-five middle and high school teachers and social studies administrators from across the state, as well as fifteen post-secondary faculty from community colleges and small universities in California, Florida, Kansas, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Texas.

The cornerstone of the Hemispheres partnership is its annual Summer Institute for K-12 educators. This year’s Institute, “Sense of Place: Intersecting Geography, History, and Culture,” featured four speakers sponsored by SAI. Presenters from UT’s faculty included Ipsita Chatterjee from the Department of Geography and Shanti Kumar from the Department of Radio, Television and Film. Outside speakers included Kathleen O’Reilly and Laxmi Murthy, Associate Editor of Himal Southasian. During the four-day event, forty-five teachers and twelve speakers examined how changing perceptions of place related to its political, economic, social, and cultural background.

Hemispheres also extends the impact of its Summer Institutes by creating curriculum related to workshop themes. Hemispheres has completed a first draft of a curriculum unit based on last year’s “Restoring Women
The outreach program also fostered new partnerships with two global academies in the Austin Independent School District. The first program, The Academy of Global Studies (AGS), which is housed at Austin High School, opened its doors to its first batch of 125 freshman students in Fall 2008. SAI is supplying on-going assistance by providing classroom speakers and curriculum resources to support the Academy’s mission to engage students in educational experiences that foster international understanding and diversity of thought for a globally interconnected world. SAI worked through Hemispheres to provide a full day Open House for all 125 students and their teachers in November 2008 by hosting a series of talks and hands-on activities on the UT campus. SAI is looking forward to hosting another open house in October. A second global studies academy, Eastside Memorial Global Tech, opened at Eastside Memorial High School in September 2009. SAI served on the planning committee leading up to the school’s opening and will provide on-going assistance with teacher training and curriculum support.

SAI also conducted many in-service teacher training and classroom outreach events. Rachel Meyer, SAI’s outreach coordinator, presented at fifteen national and state teacher training conferences and in-service teacher training at regional and district centers across the state. Meyer also presented to UTeach, the pre-service educator program run by the College of Liberal Arts, where she reached 118 students at UT. SAI’s graduate student speakers conducted presentations at three Diversity Days events, and during regular class time at four high schools and five middle schools in the Austin area. SAI expanded its presence in Explore UT (the UT Open House which attracted 50,000 participants of all ages), consisting of two hands-on booths (Scripts of South Asia; Henna Designs) and an Indian Dance performance. More than 5,000 participants visited the three SAI events. Through its outreach activities, SAI has reached more than 485 teachers and 57,750 students during the 2008-2009 academic year.

The redesigned outreach website features new lesson plans authored in collaboration with SAI’s FLAS Fellows and local teachers.

http://www.utexas.edu/cola/insts/southasia/outreach/overview.php

New K-12 Lesson Plans

“Partition in the Classroom” for High School Social Studies

“Outsourcing: understanding new business relations between India and the US Call center in India” for High School Social Studies

“Photography in India” for High School Social Studies, Art/Art History, Literature and Language Arts (with modifications for Middle School)

“Holi, the festival of colors” for Middle School Social Studies

“Women in the Indian Independence Movement - The Salt Protests of 1930” for High School Social Studies

“Juki Girls: Clothing, Factory Work, and Changing Gender Roles in Sri Lanka” for High School Social Studies

“Teach India Project - Salem Trade: Artifacts from India” for High School Social Studies

“Teach India Project - An Indian Folk Tale” for Kindergarten and First Grade

New Hemispheres Curriculum

Explorers, Traders & Immigrants: Tracking the Cultural and Social Impacts of the Global Commodity Trade for Grades 9 – 12

Restoring Women to World Studies: A Document-Based Question Curriculum Unit for Grades 9–12

Outreach
The Public and the Bus

Mubbashir Rizvi, Graduate student in Anthropology

The Bus as Microcosm

I traveled extensively in buses while I was doing fieldwork in Pakistan during 2007. Most of my research was based in rural Okara district, Punjab. However, during the course of the year I traveled in city buses while visiting family in Karachi, and while commuting back and forth between Lahore and Okara. During this time I marveled at how the bus is a great object to think about the perils and pleasures of public life in Pakistan, if not South Asia. As a mobile milieu the bus brings together a cross-section of classes, ethnicities, locales in a rotating cast of passengers, bus conductors and itinerant vendors who hop on and off between stops. One can buy newspapers, roasted nuts, tikkis (vegetable fritters), plastic toys, cures for common ailments, and male strength tonics all in the span of a single ride across the city. The social intermingling in transit buses is not without limits nor is it without its own rules. Most city buses are segregated by gender where the small front section is the ‘family’ or ‘lady’ section, whereas the remaining two thirds of the passenger space serves the ‘public,’ meaning men. However, it is not uncommon to find older women and younger women accompanied with families in the back when the front section is overcrowded.

Routes and Roots

Most of my travels to Okara started with a ride on New Khan Metro company buses, which I took to the cross-country bus terminal at Multan Road. NKM like most bus companies in Pakistan is a privately operated enterprise. The NKM route starts near the Wagah border in Lahore’s eastern suburbs, moving toward the working class neighborhood of Mughalpura, before reaching the posh city center at Mall road in Gulberg. The bus moves slowly along the congested canal road making its way west past Punjab University and ends at Thokar Niaz Baig. I usually caught the bus at Jail road in the center of the city. I was pleased to see a bus stop sign and was doubly surprised when the bus made a full stop in front of me, a sole passenger, at the designated bus stop. I had gotten used to hopping onto slowly moving mini-buses in Karachi, a tacit rule understood by all who wish to get on a bus as a single passenger. It is no wonder that the bus transport system is held in higher esteem in Lahore than in Karachi. The relative orderliness and civic sensibilities of Lahore are much admired by middle class Karachiites, but then again Lahore is a much smaller and slower city.

The chatter in the bus changes seamlessly as the bus moves across the city, switching from Punjabi, to Urdu to Urdu-English and than back to Punjabi as the bus nears the last stop. The body language and fashions change as the bus meanders through different parts of the city. While most of the passengers are dressed in shalwar kameez at the start, somewhere in the middle of the route you start seeing more young men wearing jeans, pant-shirts, one hears loud conversations on cell phones, the excited speech of college students, blaring headphones and then by the tail end of the route, the shalwar kameez is ubiquitous again.

The NKM bus empties out between Punjab University and Jauhar Town. Most of the remaining passengers are laborers, domestic workers, farmers and students, on their way back to their villages and market towns in interior Punjab. However, there is one small hurdle. The New Khan Metro bus stops half a mile short of the bus terminal due to a bypass intersection, thus spawning a niche industry of Qinqui motorickshaws (especially made to carry up to 8 passengers) and wagons that take the country bound passengers to the bus terminal. At the terminal one has to steadily walk to a coach as any sign of confusion or doubt will result in a rush of bus touts trying to lure you into their bus. The general fare between Lahore and Okara hovered between 80-110 Pakistan rupees depending on your haggling skills and the departure time of the coach.
Cross-country buses vary from the bare bone variety to rag tag AC coaches that play Bollywood or Lollywood ‘Jat-Gundasa’ genre films (a hyper macho genre depicting an angry peasant who fights the injustices of landlords and corrupt government officials). Walking up to a queue of buses one hears a cacophony of Urdu, Punjabi songs and recordings of Quran recitation. Conductors work the terminal to fill the bus to capacity. Windows of the coaches are draped with thick velvet curtains for insulation, but curtains also block potential passengers from peeking inside to see if the bus is full or not. There are more tickets than seats. Very often I found myself with a ticket but no seat. The conductors were happy to place a stool in the aisle, which served as my seat for the next two hours. Single male passengers were often moved around when large families or female passengers needed to be accommodated. I got reacquainted with Bollywood films on these bus trips and I was surprised to see that conductors wouldn’t flinch from playing jingoistic films like ‘Ma Tujhe Salam’ with anti-Pakistan content. There was cheering and booing and occasionally passengers asked the conductors to change the films.

Bus trips didn’t always go as planned. Once I was traveling to southern district of Dera Ghazi Khan when the coach stopped at the main bus terminal (Lari Adda) at Okara where over half the passengers got off. The conductor patiently waited for the bus to fill again. However, the bus didn’t leave the station even after it was full. I could see the conductor and bus driver from the passenger window having an animated conversation. After a short while, the conductor came back to announce that the driver had decided to turn around and go back to Lahore. The bus driver and conductor had sold the tickets (and passengers) to another bus company. Passengers hoping to continue their travels would have to present their ticket to so-and-so bus at the terminal. The DG Khan bound Ravi Express was turning around and going back to Lahore.

Karachi’s Minibus Culture

The bus culture changes in Karachi. Mini-bus operators take great pride in the look of their buses and adorn the body with one liners like ‘Dekh magar payar sey’ literally ‘look but only with love’ or ‘Dollar aur hasina ki talash’ which roughly translates to ‘in search of dollars and beautiful women’ and the ubiquitous ‘Pappu yar tang na kar’ which means ‘Pappu (generic nickname) friend don’t bother me’. The frenzied pace of life in the city is reflected in the seemingly undisciplined way the bus passes through slums, large thoroughfares, commercial streets, ethnic enclaves and neighborhoods for millionaires. There are informal rules to observe when getting on a mini-bus in Karachi. If you find yourself as the lone passenger at a stop, don’t expect the bus to stop for you. You must gesture or make eye contact with the driver to show your intention of getting on the bus, and pace yourself to hop on as the bus slows down to a speed of 3-5 Km/hr. During rush hour it is wishful thinking to expect to find a spot in the bus. It is much more likely that one has to find a perch on a railing, a spot on the roof, or the edge. The bus conductor makes his rounds all over the moving bus, including the roof, railings and sides. The perils of these unsafe conditions stand in contrast to the pleasures of surfing through the city on top of the bus, the loud sounds of darde-disco blaring and the rotating neon light on some newer buses that create a party-like atmosphere. The thin profit margins of the mini-bus industry keep the fares low and affordable despite the unprecedented hike of petrol prices.

The Personal is Public

I was thrown off the first time someone asked me my income in a crowded bus, but “How much do you earn?” is a common refrain while traveling by bus in rural Pakistan. There is no shying away from personal matters in crowded buses. The thin line between public and private information breaks down in mass transportation: personal questions can come up in overstuffed mini-buses in Karachi, buses in Lahore or in the AC coach hurtling down Multan Road in
southern Punjab. All’s fair provided you show a willingness for small talk and a friendly disposition rather than the aloof contemptuousness that is on display in city buses. It usually doesn’t take long for the conversation to turn to one’s whereabouts, income, jobs, and marriage status. If married, then, for how many years? How many kids? If not married, then, ‘why not?’

Traveling through the Punjab countryside, I constantly met people whose life histories went beyond anything I expected to find. Take for example Ayaz, a shy 16-year-old rickshaw mechanic from Gujranwala, who was returning from Okara after visiting his newlywed sister. Our conversation started when he shared some roasted channa (chickpeas) with me. As we talked I learned that Ayaz had been working at his uncle’s repair shop since he was 10 years old. After two years at the shop he got bored and hatched a plan to visit India with his friends. Being street-smart Ayaz knew the different routes used by smugglers. He made his way across the border through the outskirts of the industrial city of Sialkot. Once across the border he befriended “sardar” (Sikh) bus drivers by telling them that he was from Gujranwala in Pakistan and wanted to see India. The truck drivers gave him rides all the way down to Bombay. He has been to India three times and he plans to go once every year. Ayaz saves his earnings to travel and covers his travel expenses by taking pictures of girls in India and selling them to his friends back in Gujranwala. As odd as the story might sound, Ayaz is aware of the risks of border crossing but he still loves the adventure.

In contrast to the wanderlust adventures of Ayaz, most of my conversations revolved around more mundane topics: current affairs, the search for stable jobs and sometimes religion. I met Niaz in May 2007. Niaz was a big fan of General Musharraf and he was greatly upset about the growing opposition to Musharraf’s rule. He came from a middle class family of sweet makers from Mandi Bahauddin who supported the pro-Musharraf PML-Q. Niaz had opted to break out of the family business and he had moved to Lahore to work at a Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise (where his cousin helped him get a job). He explained his decision to take up work at KFC as a pathway to going abroad to work in the Gulf or even Europe. He had heard about the potential of transfers to other KFC franchises abroad.

“Ayaz saves his earnings to travel and covers his travel expenses by taking pictures of girls in India and selling them to his friends back in Gujranwala.”

The Public and the Bus

Attitudes towards taking the bus vary greatly from city to city, neighborhood to neighborhood, and across classes. For example, most residents of Karachi depend on mini-buses to get around their sprawling traffic congested city at an affordable price. Yet the affordable mini-bus is a source of great consternation for middle class residents because it brings up questions about respectability. Many lower middle class families prefer perilous rides on motorcycles and scooters rather than taking a harrowing trip on a crowded mini-bus. The prospect of rubbing shoulders with day laborers and ethnic others, along with genuine issues about safety and overcrowding has made mini-bus travel unpopular among middle class urban dwellers.

In Pakistan’s large cities, there are multi-tiered transportation systems, rather than one that serves all classes. There are company vans, buses, school vans, lady worker vans, high priced AC coaches, and entrepreneurial residents who finance their cars or trucks by lending it out as a local commuter or school van. The bus as a means of mass transport raises questions about the meanings of the ‘public’ in South Asia. The meanings of ‘public’ vary greatly in Pakistan. One meaning implies slum dwellers, undisciplined crowds and faceless masses that fall short of middle class respectability. However, public can just as easily stand in as a ‘popular collectivity’ joined in the shared depredations of commuting, load shedding, failures of municipal planning, etc. Certainly there are common problems of mass transit in all major urban cities but there are also some unique features and tacit codes that have to be understood in their own context and historical development.
The Hindi Urdu Flagship Program, directed by Herman van Olphen in UT’s Department of Asian Studies, is part of the national Language Flagship (www.thelanguageflagship.org) funded by the Institute of International Education. The first cohort of students entered the Hindi Urdu Flagship in the fall of 2007; by the fall of 2009 there were 30 students at three levels.

HUF remains the only program of its kind in the United States. Its special features include a four-year program of intensive study of Hindi and Urdu; an intake of students who have already achieved an ‘Intermediate’ level of proficiency in either Hindi or Urdu before beginning the program; specially-designed immersion study in India for both semesters of the third year; language study that transcends the usual ‘language and literature’ model to include training in the broadest possible range of registers and contexts; individual tutoring and mentoring of students by Faculty and teaching assistants; and the development of innovative kinds of instructional materials that are made publicly available through the HUF website, www.hindiurduflagship.org.

HUF is the only Flagship program in which students study two parallel languages: HUF students achieve ‘Advanced’ proficiency in both Hindi and Urdu, while taking their skills to the ‘Superior’ level in at least one of the two, depending on their interests and preferences. Currently, HUF students take at least thirty-six hours of upper division Hindi and Urdu language and literature courses in a curriculum that is constantly being updated and developed to give the students the best possible language learning experience. In 2008-2009, the language courses were taught by Herman van Olphen, Director of HUF; Rupert Snell, Associate Director for Hindi; Akbar Hyder, Associate Director for Urdu; Jishnu Shankar, Senior Lecturer; and Shamshad Zaidi, Lecturer.

Because HUF’s four-year program of study begins at the ‘Intermediate’ level, entering students have acquired some knowledge of Hindi-Urdu elsewhere, either in a Heritage context or through formal study. About ten new students are recruited each year, and they represent a wide array of majors including Biology, Business Honors, Finance, English, Economics, Government, Public Relations, and Linguistics, as well as Asian Studies and Asian Languages and Cultures. From Fall 2009, there is a new ‘Flagship-bound’ track for beginning students; the first students to follow this track are currently in first-year Hindi classes and intend to join HUF in the fall of 2010 after additional intensive language study during the summer.

As mentioned above, the third year of the four-year program comprises an ‘immersion’ program in India: students follow an intensive program of specially designed courses at the American Institute of Indian Studies, overseen by HUF Overseas Program Coordinator, Dr. Rajesh Kumar. In addition to language courses, the students take courses for credit in their UT majors, and also undertake internships in various organizations in India, thereby gaining valuable experience in using Hindi and Urdu in professional contexts.

In August 2009 the HUF’s first cohort of students has just started studying in India. After an initial period of Hindi studies in Jaipur, the students will move to Lucknow, where they will study both Urdu and Hindi; they will also travel to Varanasi, Hyderabad and New Delhi to experience the cultural and linguistic range of these very different cities. While in India, students will begin gathering materials for the Senior Projects that they will undertake in their final year, back on campus at Austin.

As the program continues to grow and expand, HUF is gaining a strong reputation nationally among students interested in learning Hindi and Urdu. Though the majority of students currently on the HUF program hail from Texas, a growing number of students from other States are joining the program.

In Spring 2009 Hindi Urdu Flagship students created a new student organization called The Hindi Urdu Society. This Society has so far held Hindi film screenings in the HUF Center and organized both a banquet and a picnic to celebrate the year’s accomplishments. In the future the organization hopes to expand its activities and include all students interested in learning and exploring Hindi and Urdu.

Part of the Hindi Urdu Flagship’s mandate is to produce
new kinds of language-teaching materials for all students and teachers of these languages. Month by month, an increasing amount of material is being made available through the Resources section of the HUF website by HUF’s Hindi-speaking Media Coordinator, Jonathan Seefeldt. Numerous kinds of written materials are already available for download, mostly in PDF format; two books, Herman van Olphen’s Hindi Praveshika and First-year Hindi Course, and Christopher Shackle & Rupert Snell’s Hindi and Urdu Since 1800: a Common Reader, are the most substantial items on a long list of materials designed to address learners’ needs. In addition, a series of Powerpoint presentations by Jishnu Shankar provides invaluable material for class teaching and private study.

Several innovative audio and video materials are currently under development: in HUF’s Hindi Spoken Thesaurus (a series of podcasts designed to help learners develop their vocabulary and appreciate distinctions of register), Rupert Snell and Neha Ladha, a UT student from Jaipur, discuss words and meanings in Hindi-medium conversations; Mera Shahar is a series of video monologues in which speakers of Hindi or Urdu describe their hometowns; in Hamaarii Boli, speakers of Hindi and Urdu discuss language usage and conventions; and in the forthcoming Meri Yaaden, selections from Hindi autobiographies are presented online with oral commentary by Rupert Snell. The idea behind all these projects is to provide learners with lively and varied materials that go beyond traditional book-based learning, and which will both inform and inspire learners wherever they may be. HUF’s online resources also include numerous recordings of talks and poetry recitals by the several visitors mentioned elsewhere in this report. Many visitors also record interviews with HUF faculty, and these too are available online. These projects are ongoing, with new resources being added all the time.

Language for Health Project
The goal of this project is to devise a curriculum for the medical field which goes beyond the day to day translation service needs in the emergency room or the doctor’s office, although that would very much be a part of it. We envisage a comprehensive curriculum which will include the practical needs and cultural traditions of the medical outlook and practices of people who use Hindi and Urdu and will facilitate communication as well as research for those who wish to communicate with health professionals in South Asia, and South Asians – professionals as well as patients—in the US.

The project includes a number of one hour video modules produced in India by a professional filmmaker. They will highlight medical communication between doctors and patients belonging to various medical traditions, treatment
of various diseases, the gender-based nuances of medical interactions, and the difference between urban and rural health provisions and interactions. We will also produce lessons and exercises for health communities in the US to facilitate easier communication where language is an issue.

Hindi Urdu Distinguished Speakers Series 2008-2009
In the 2008-09 academic year, HUF sponsored visits by some of the most distinguished Urdu critics and writers. The fall semester began with the most prominent living Urdu critic, Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, who has more than 25 books to his credit; Faruqi spoke about Ja’far Zatalli, a fierce satirist from early 18th-century Delhi, highlighting issues of resistance, sexuality and aesthetics in the author’s work. The second speaker in the series was Muhammad Mujtaba Hussain, modern Urdu’s wittiest prose writer, who read from his masterpiece Diimakon Kii Malikaa (The Queen of Termites), a satire that captures the plight of Urdu libraries and archives in modern South Asia.

In Spring 2009, Mohsin Naqvi presented his research on Urdu elegies, connecting them to the aesthetic conventions of Arabic and Persian. Elegies were followed by the Urdu ghazal: Zaki Shadab from Hyderabad discussed the role of music within the structural constitution of this essential poetic form. He also discussed the aesthetic transitions of Urdu as the language migrated from its well-known centers of Delhi and Lucknow to Hyderabad and the Punjab. The spring semester culminated with readings by Ishrat Afreen, who spoke about feminist poetry in modern Pakistan. Afreen discussed the manner in which women drew from the Progressive Writers tradition and created a poetics of resistance during and after the reign of General Zia.

All these distinguished guests spent generous amounts of time with the Flagship students as well as other undergraduate and graduate students. Zaki and Afreen also conducted Urdu creative writing workshops for the HUF program. The students were asked to compose an original ghazal – by no means an easy literary exercise! – and each one of these ghazals was read, re-read and improved with the spirited feedback of Zaki Shadab and Ishrat Afreen.

Martha Berry, Student Advising and Recruitment HUF

ASLAM (continued from p. 14)

That was not a bad thing, but we realized that there were personality issues rather than ideological issues among the main players. Immediately, the stability of the state started falling apart, mainly on the issue of the judges. President Zardari’s fear that the Chief Justice would start talking about the abandonment of the cases against him kept him from reinstating the Chief Justice, which did not happen until nearly a year later.

Because of the media’s commitment to the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, we continued to support the Chief Justice. This government has actually done what the others did – they call us, they tell us to moderate our stories, they put the same kind of pressures on us, but in a more subtle way. But some government officials actually openly said to us, “you better not back the judges and if you do we’ll pull the plug.” We asked for some compensation for last time we were shut down by the government under Musharraf’s rule, and Mr. Zardari openly told the owner of our channel that if he backed off on the judiciary issue he would make sure the courts paid up the money. We refused this bargain. But of course there were other demands about toning down the type of criticism and removing some of the anchors whom the government felt were enemies of the ruling party.

So again, the same government intimidation of the media started happening from day one. Nothing really changes…

Ali: Let’s move towards a scenario where there is some hope. You have talked about ways in which the intensity of conflict can be lessened. You mentioned negotiations for a future distinctly different from the present where coexistence can develop. Within that scenario there are other actors, including Islamists.

ASLAM: Yes, Islamists, the media, the judiciary, civil society. There is a youth bulge which has its own aspirations and energy. Leadership is critical at this juncture—when you have so many crises you need something to navigate through them. Balochistan needs to be solved so you can access its resources. Also, the whole business of how do we engage these people and what will dialogue be requires leadership.

But I don’t think this is happening now. Yet sometimes leadership emerges that can take on these very large issues.
Upcoming Events

Women’s Autobiography in Islamic Societies: Defining the Genre

An International Workshop
January 28-30, 2010
AT & T Conference Center, University of Texas at Austin

Sponsored by: Arts & Humanities Research Council of the United Kingdom and The South Asia Institute, University of Texas

Participants:

- Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, Chair (History, Loughborough University, UK)
- Gail Minault, Local Representative (History, University of Texas, Austin, TX)
- Hulya Adak (Cultural Studies, Sabanci University, Istanbul, Turkey)
- Sonia Nishat Amin (History, Dhaka University, Bangladesh)
- Margot Badran (Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University, Washington, DC)
- Afshan Bukhari (Art History, Suffolk University, UK)
- miriam cooke (Arabic Literature and Culture, Duke University, Durham, NC)
- Nawar al-Hasan Golley (Arabic and Translation Studies, University of Sharjah, UAE)
- Ruby Lal (Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, Emory University, Atlanta, GA)
- Anshu Malhotra (History, Delhi University, Delhi, India)
- Ellen McLarney (Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Duke University, Durham, NC)
- Roberta Micallef (Modern Languages and Comparative Literatures, Boston University, Boston, MA)
- Farzaneh Milani (Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA)
- Mildred Mortimer (French and Italian, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO)
- Amina Yaqin (Languages and Cultures of South Asia, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, UK)

This workshop is the first of three to be held by an international network of scholars working on women’s autobiographies in Muslim societies. Dr. Siobhan Lambert-Hurley of Loughborough University, the Chair of the network, has received a grant from the Arts and Humanities Council of the UK, and the cooperation of local sponsors, to hold this series of workshops. The first will convene at the AT&T Center at University of Texas in Austin, January 28-30, 2010, with papers to be given by members of the network. Subsequent workshops will be held at the India International Centre in New Delhi in late 2010, and at the University of Sharjah, UAE, in late 2011. It is a great honor for the South Asia Institute of the University of Texas to co-sponsor and host this inaugural gathering, which will be of interest to scholars of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Women and Gender Studies, and Comparative Literature.
Against the Grain: Ancient Roots and Modern Branches

September 24
Martha Selby
University of Texas at Austin
Form, Style, and Rhetoric in an Early Fourth-Century Tamil Anthology

October 1
Eliza Kent
Colgate University
Sacred Groves and Local Gods: Religion and Environmentalism in Tamil Nadu

October 8
Sheldon Pollock
Columbia University
Crisis in the Classics

October 15
Gananath Obeyesekere
Princeton University
Kali and Lord Buddha: Sense and Reference in a Buddhist Tale on Vengeance and Violence

October 29
Mary Beth Heston
College of Charleston
Building a Polity: Royal Architecture and Authority in Colonial Era Kerala

November 5
Donald Lopez
University of Michigan
Burnout and the Birth of Buddhist Studies

November 12
Jack Hawley
Columbia University
Modern Roots, Ancient Branches: The Bhakti Movement--Since When?

November 19
Barbara Metcalf
University of Michigan
Nawab Shah Jehan Begum of Bhopal: Becoming a Muslim Ruler in Colonial India

December 3
Joel Brereton
University of Texas at Austin
An Inconvenient Text: On Translating the Rigveda

The South Asia Institute Seminar Series features lectures by distinguished South Asian specialists from UT and abroad. Regular seminars occur on Thursdays at 3:30 pm, preceded by a reception at 3:00 pm, in the Meyerson Conference Room (WCH 4.118).

Seminar co-conveners: Patrick Olivelle and Janice Leoshko

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With over 50 faculty members in a dozen schools and departments, the University of Texas at Austin has one of the most distinguished South Asia programs in the country.

The South Asia Institute was established as part of a university initiative to promote South Asian programs, especially those pertaining to contemporary issues, across the entire university and in the larger community. As a National Resource Center for South Asia funded by a Title VI grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the institute sponsors major conferences, scholarly symposia and a weekly South Asia Seminar. The institute also provides Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships to students pursuing graduate degrees relating to South Asia in any department or school of the University.

Additionally, the Title VI grant also provides resources for outreach programs to K-12 schools, post-secondary institutions, business and civic organizations, and the Texas community at large. Another central mission of the Institute is to promote the study of contemporary South Asian languages in cooperation with the Department of Asian Studies and the Hindi-Urdu Flagship Program. Bengali, Hindi, Malayalam, Sanskrit, Tamil and Urdu are currently taught in the department.

The South Asia Initiative underscores the University's commitment to making the University of Texas South Asia program the best in the country within the next several years.