

CENTER FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

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University of  
Michigan  
**January 2023**  
Newsletter

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# Letter from the Director



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**Cover photo:** Haji Piyada Mosque, Afghanistan by Jane Sweeney/Alamy

**Editors:** Sonia Mishra, Clemente Beghi

### Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am delighted to wish you all peace and joy in the new year! Last spring, the Center, like most of the University, tentatively returned to in-person events, and happily, we could gather in person for all of our fall events.

Let me first highlight the arrival of Sonia Mishra, our communications representative, who joined us in September. She comes to us with years of public relations experience working for Ford and deep ties to the S. Asia community of Southeastern Michigan (see our profile, p.17). I hope you have already read some of her articles online, highlighting not only Center events but the faculty activities and alumni engaged with S. Asia. We are grateful to Michigan alumni for the generous donations that made Sonia's position possible.

I would like to thank Pinki Vaishnava (Asian Languages and Cultures), David Brick (Asian Languages and Cultures), Madhumita Lahiri (English Language and Literature), and Christi Merrill (Asian Languages and Cultures) for their work on our Executive Committee. And welcome new Executive Committee members, serving since September: Syed Ekhteyar Ali (Asian Languages and Cultures), Inderjeet Kaur (School of Music, Theatre, & Dance), Savithry Nambodiripad (Linguistics), Joyojeet Pal (School of Information). Finally, I would also like to recognize the dedicated work of our administrator, Clemente Beghi.

We had some significant events in 2022. Our fourth Kavita Datla Memorial Lecture on South Asian

history was given in October by Prof. Bhavani Raman of the University of Toronto on the early history of preventive detention laws in India.

For the fall semester, we hosted Anand Patwardhan, India's leading documentary filmmaker, as a Hughes Fellow. He was a featured speaker for our Scholarly Lecture Series on artistic freedom in India, he led eight screenings of his films, including introductions and question-and-answer sessions, and he visited classes in the Departments of Film, Television, and Media, and Asian Languages and Cultures. In addition, with our sponsorship, he was able to screen his films in many US cities, from Los Angeles to New York.

We joined forces and brought together courses, students, and faculty from the Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design, the School of Information, the Departments of Film, Television, and Media (FTVM), History and Anthropology, and CSAS for "Co-Creating with Swinery." Swinery is one of South Asia's most beloved comedy accounts on Instagram, featuring short clips of original animated characters that challenge norms.

We have an exciting line-up of talks and conferences for the 2023 winter semester. The Thomas Trautmann Honorary Lecture of Pre-Modern India will be given in April by Prof. Daud Ali of the University of Pennsylvania on how the medieval king Bhoja is remembered by different communities in S. Asia. This year's 12th Annual Pakistan conference at the end of March, "The Country's and the City," examines the role played

by kinship, domesticity, religion, institutional and technological change, and everyday governance across the rural-urban continuum. Finally, our influencers conference on Social Media and Society in India will return this year in April (see story on last year's conference, p.7).

With the acute phase of COVID behind us, we are pleased to restart our Summer in South Asia program and expect to send as many as ten undergraduates abroad for internships and research. We are also renewing our student exchanges with premier South Asian universities, Ashoka University, Habib University, and Shiv Nadar University.

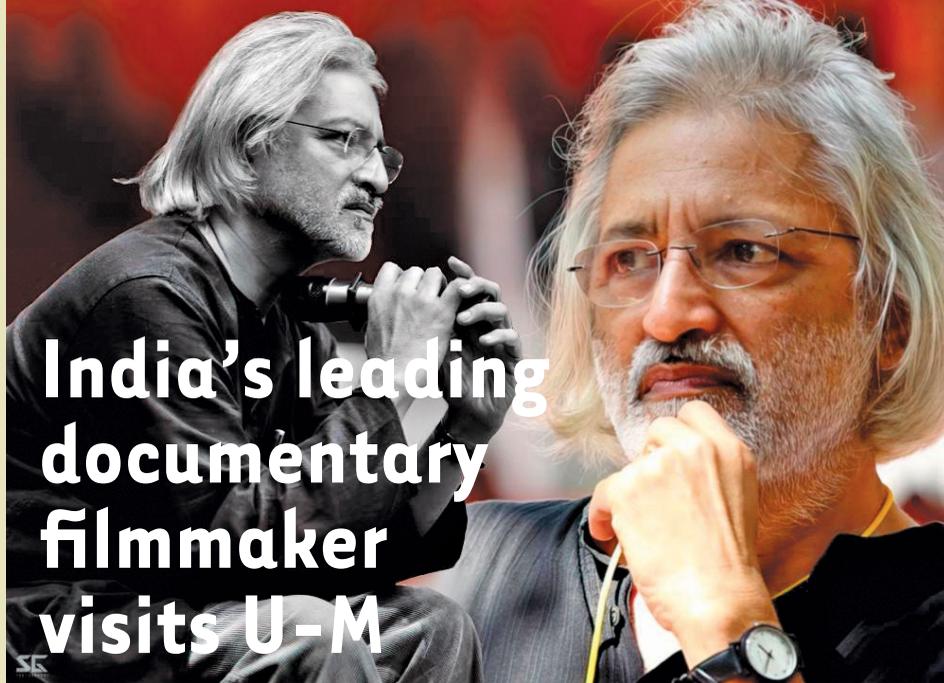
In the following pages, you'll find more information on the Center's activities over the past year and those we have planned for the coming semester. You'll also read about research on and engagement with South Asia across U-M.

I and all of the staff members at CSAS consider it our privilege to join you in building an understanding of South Asian societies and cultures as an integral part of our lives here in Michigan. I look forward to seeing you at upcoming events, which are free and open to the public.

### Matthew Hull

*Director, Center for South Asian Studies*

*Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology*



# India's leading documentary filmmaker visits U-M

**Anand Patwardhan, India's foremost documentary filmmaker,** visited the University of Michigan in the fall of 2022 as a Hughes Fellow.

Patwardhan is known for his sociopolitical, award-winning films. He has spent decades capturing Mumbai's slum-dwellers, the reality of the caste system, the rise of Hindu nationalism, and tensions between India and Pakistan. Though his films have won many international and publicly funded awards, he has had to fight the Indian government's censorship and restrictions with almost every one of his films.

While in Ann Arbor from September through December, Patwardhan was a featured speaker for the Center for South Asian Studies' Scholarly Lecture Series. He led screenings of his films, which included both introductions and question-and-answer sessions, and conducted a panel discussion on human rights and cinema. He also visited classes in the Departments of Film, Television, and Media, and Asian Languages and Cultures.

"Anand Patwardhan represents an important voice for human rights in India and around the world, and it was an honor for us to be able to host such an acclaimed filmmaker," said Matthew Hull, director of the Center for South Asian Studies.

The purpose of the Hughes Fellowship program is to promote understanding of South Asia by bringing scholars and artists to the U-M campus for extended visits that enable deeper engagements.

The CSAS series included free public screenings of 10 of Patwardhan's documentaries and music videos. Included was his latest work,

*Reason (Vivek)*, a documentary on the relationship between faith and rationality. This film has won Best Feature-Length Documentary at the International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam and the Audience Award at the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles.

In the Indian Express' review of *Vivek/Reason*, writer Shubhra Gupta said, "*Vivek* stands tall for what it manages to piece together: a portrayal of India today, and how it is a country on the edge of an abyss."

Other Patwardhan films in the series were *In the Name of God* (1991), *Father, Son, and Holy War* (1995), *A Narmada Diary* (1995), *In Memory of Friends* (1990), *War and Peace* (2002), *Jai Bhim Comrade* (2012) and *Bombay: Our City* (1985). Combined, these documentary films have won more than 20 awards from around the world.

In a December 2020 *New York Times Magazine* feature on Patwardhan, the author said, "Frustrated by the certification process, many Indian documentary filmmakers give up on their dreams of a sizable audience. Patwardhan has persevered, I suspect, for the same reason that he sells DVDs of his films for less than the price of a paperback: a belief in the political efficacy of documentary making."

Patwardhan was born in Mumbai. He completed a bachelor of arts in English literature at Elphinstone College in Mumbai, a bachelor of arts in sociology at Brandeis University and a master of arts in communication studies at McGill University in Montreal. He also is a member of the Oscar Academy.

**"Anand Patwardhan represents an important voice for human rights in India and around the world, and it was an honor for us to be able to host such an acclaimed filmmaker."— Matthew Hull**



**Patwardhan's films have won more than 20 international awards combined.**

# CSAS Welcomed Artists, Curator Behind the Sindhu Project



**On Wednesday, September 7, 2022**, the Center for South Asian Studies (CSAS) at the University of Michigan hosted artists Mahwish Chishty, Gunjan Kumar, and curator Shaleen Wadhvana for a virtual discussion on their research and artwork in *The Sindhu Project: Enigma of Roots*.

*The Sindhu Project* is a multi-site exhibition that debuted at the South Asia Institute in Chicago in June 2021. The show was later reconfigured into two displays to honor the partition of India and Pakistan, with one half in Lahore, Pakistan, at Zahoor-ul-Akhlaq Gallery, National College of Arts, in November 2021, and the other half in New Delhi, India, at Exhibit320 Gallery in June 2022.

“As a curator, the thing that drew me to this project was both artists’ love and dedication to not just the artifacts, but the entire region and its history,” says Wadhvana, an independent researcher and curator. “We are talking about one of the oldest civilizations on earth.”

*The Sindhu Project* embodies the responses of contemporary artists Chishty and Kumar to explorations of archaeological sites and artifacts in the expansive Sindhu (Indus) watershed, a geographical region stretching across present-day India and Pakistan. The cities of Indus, spanning from 3300 BC to 1300 BC, were noted for their urban planning, baked brick houses, elaborate drainage systems, water supply systems, clusters of large non-residential buildings, handicraft techniques, and metallurgy.

Gunjan Kumar is an artist and scholar based in Chicago. Her process involves ground earth and organic matter used as core mediums, applied on natural surfaces with techniques inspired by traditional methods that she has spent years observing in India and other South Asian countries. Her works have been shown worldwide, and she has been a resident fellow at the Edward Albee Foundation, Montauk, NY (2016-2017). In 2020, Kumar also started a course on nature as a medium in arts, focusing on prehistoric cave art. She earned her bachelor’s in economics from Mehr Chand Mahajan DAV College for Women, Chandigarh, and is a postgraduate from the National Institute of Design and Technology, New Delhi.

“The most interesting thing about our exhibit, to me, is the connection between Mahwish and me,” says Kumar. “We met in Chicago - a world away

from South Asia - and started discussing how similar our backgrounds are. My family moved from Pakistan to Punjab, India, during the partition and her family moved from Punjab to Pakistan. We eat the same foods and speak the same language, Punjabi, yet we would be worlds apart in those two countries. Being in the US allowed us to come together in this way.”

Mahwish Chishty combines new media and conceptual work with materials and techniques of South Asian art and craft traditions. Her work has also been exhibited worldwide in both public and private collections. Chishty is an art associate professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She also is a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and other fellowships and awards. She holds a BFA with a concentration in miniature painting from the National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan, and an MFA in Studio Arts from the University of Maryland in College Park.

“The challenge for me was to work off of Gunjan’s art and her methods,” says Chishty. “Her work is full of color, textures, and our heritage. I tried to contrast that by working with laser-cutting and plexiglass, acrylics - something I had never tried before, but I just thought it was a beautiful compliment to her pieces.”

Following the CSAS lecture, the two artists and the curator were asked how their audiences reshaped their work for this exhibit.

“The best part for me was seeing my family’s reaction to the exhibit in Pakistan,” says Chishty. “I’m not sure if they understand what I do, so to watch them as they saw my work in person is something I will never forget.”

“The biggest thing I realized was there are so many more possibilities than differences,” says Wadhvana. “Both countries, our heritage, our history, it’s all so connected. Sharing our historical roots in this exhibit connects all of us to where we came from.”

Shaleen Wadhvana’s curatorial practice explores meta-narratives in global history and artistic responses to contemporary social issues. She has worked with National Museum, Delhi; Chemould Prescott Road Gallery, Mumbai; and cultural institutions like the British Museum, London; National Museum, Delhi, and Chemould Prescott Road Gallery, Mumbai. Wadhvana is visiting faculty at the MIT Institute of Design, Pune, and her academic research for *The Unfiltered History Tour*, which is on display at the British Museum, won India 12 awards at the Cannes Lions Festival.

“It was so interesting to hear about the inspiration behind this exhibit,” says Matthew Hull, director of CSAS. “I haven’t seen anything quite like *The Sindhu Project*. The combination of the contrasting work of the two artists was fascinating, and the innovative virtual tour of the exhibition in Delhi added a whole new perspective.”

You can see their work and learn more about the artists and the curator on their websites, [www.mahachishty.com](http://www.mahachishty.com), [www.gunjankumar.com](http://www.gunjankumar.com), and [www.linktr.ee/shaleenwadhvana](http://www.linktr.ee/shaleenwadhvana).

# CSAS Kavita Datla Memorial Lecture

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Dr. Rama Mantena

**On April 15, Dr. Rama Mantena,** a history professor at the University of Illinois Chicago, delivered the 2022 Kavita Datla Memorial Lecture, titled

“Political Futures and the Ends of Empire: Self-Determination and Federation in Twentieth-century South India.” The lecture explored “implications of federation in late-colonial India broadly, as well as anticolonial nationalism’s engagement with federation more specifically.”

“I did my doctoral and undergraduate work here [at the University of Michigan’s Center for South Asian Studies]...In fact, when I started my graduate career here, Kavita [Datla] was finishing up her undergraduate years so we overlapped at

that time,” Mantena said. “This project is fully the result of the conversations I began with Kavita.”

When Mantena met Datla, the two U-M students were working on separate projects. Discovering the overlap in their studies, they began to combine the princely state literature and historiography of Datla’s work in Urdu with Mantena’s work on British Indian materials in Telugu. They had hoped to draw in more collaborators to do justice to the multilinguality of Hyderabad as a city.

“Anti-colonial thinkers at the turn of the 20th century already had a long history of grappling with concepts of liberty, equality and self-rule in British India,” Mantena said. “Ever since the beginning of colonial rule Indians had been debating the very meanings of liberty.”

The early 20th century did, however, mark the height of anti-colonial nationalism, as well as apparent growth in demands for provincial autonomy in British India and autonomy for

**“Ever since the beginning of colonial rule Indians had been debating the very meanings of liberty.”**

Indian native states. Mantena’s research visits this period to chart the history of democracy and democratic institutions that began at this time.

Professor Mantena’s books include *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India: Antiquarianism and Philology, 1780-1880* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) and *Political Imaginaries and the End of Empire: Anticolonialism, Self-determination and Civil Liberties in Twentieth-Century India* (book manuscript). We were touched by this incredible scholar’s tribute to her former collaborator and grateful for her knowledge of anti-colonial movements in British India and the princely state of Hyderabad.

# Thomas R. Trautmann Honorary Lecture

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Dr. Stephanie Jamison

**Dr. Stephanie Jamison,** professor of Asian languages and cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles, delivered the virtual Thomas R. Trautmann

Honorary Lecture, titled “(Indian) Animals Are Good to Think With.” The lecture explored lesser known examples of animal lore in the Indian Classical and Vedic periods.

“I am a great admirer of [Professor Thomas R. Trautmann’s] work, which has helped shape scholarly views of South Asian history and socio-political organization for many decades,” Jamison began.

“As much as I appreciate [Trautmann’s] work on kinship, the Aryan question, and the gripping text of the *ArthaShastra*, I confess that my favorite book is indeed the recent *Elephants and Kings*.” Jamison then linked her fondness for the book—which spans time, space, and cultures to argue that the fates of elephants and Indian kings were inherently intertwined—to her own scholarly origins.

In her first week of Sanskrit lessons, Jamison encountered a sentence that translates, roughly, to “Where do I lead the elephant now?” “It was an elephant that made me a sanskritist, albeit a grammatical elephant,” she explained. “I knew at once that a language that delivered me an elephant in the first week was one worth pursuing.”

Both religious and secular literatures of ancient and medieval India feature remarkably accurate details about animal behavior and physiology. The significance of these details—which include the number

of toes on a rhinoceros and the mating behaviors of frogs—has been the subject of Jamison’s work.

**“I knew at once that a language that delivered me an elephant in the first week was one worth pursuing.”**

Professor Jamison’s books include *Sacrificed Wife / Sacrificer’s Wife: Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India* (Oxford University Press, 1996), *The Ravenous Hyenas and the Wounded Sun: Myth and Ritual in Ancient India* (Cornell University Press, 1991), and *Function and Form in the -āya-formations of the Rig Veda and Atharva Veda* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983). We were delighted to host this linguistics scholar and are grateful for her insights into the human and animal worlds alike.

# In and Out of South Asia: Race, Capitalism, and Mobility

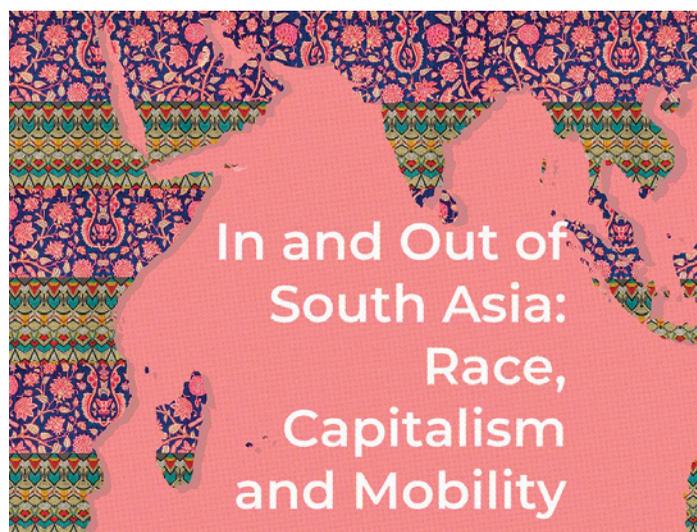
In February 2022, the Center for South Asian Studies hosted a virtual conference titled “In and Out of South Asia: Race, Capitalism, and Mobility.” This dynamic event brought together a number of scholars and practitioners whose work uses scale and time to explore the tension between mobility and immobility in and out of South Asia. The conference was led by associate professors of anthropology, Jatin Dua and Matthew Hull; doctoral students in the joint anthropology and history program, Anisha Padma and Swagat Pani; and doctoral student in sociocultural anthropology, Irene Promodh.

Hull and Dua delivered the opening remarks. The first panel – Part I of “Critiquing the Nation-State” – was led by Nurfadzilah Yahaya, assistant professor of history at Yale University, and Neelofer Qadir, assistant professor in the English department at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. These scholars reflected on the work of paper presenters Vipin Krishna from UCLA, Vindhya Butthipitiya from the University of St. Andrews, Uttara Shahani from the University of Oxford, and Haider Shahbaz from UCLA. The panel highlighted the inextricable connection between oceanic linkages and ethno-linguistic specificities in relation to modern nationalism, citizenship, political claim-staking, race and marginality, and surveillance in transnational migration.

The second panel was titled “Transregional Placemaking.” Neha Vora, professor of Anthropology at Lafayette College, responded to the ongoing work of four panelists – Pallavi Gupta from UNC-Chapel Hill, Tariq Rahman from UC Irvine, Carmen Ervin from Stanford University, and Nithila Kanagasabai from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. The panelists’ paper contributions spanned several closely intertwined themes: the risks, exclusions, and promises of mobility within and beyond nation-state borders; diasporic (un) belonging and contested ideas of citizenship; the ethno-racial and caste hierarchies which mobile populations weave in and out of; knowledge, labor, and profit-making networks along caste, gender, and class lines; and new intimacies that arise as people traverse vast distances, moving in and out of South Asia. Professor Vora situated the papers’ themes within the wider scholarship on South Asian experiences of (im)mobility in the Indian Ocean, relating their histories to colonial precedent.

The third panel, “Trade, Markets, Capital,” began with discussions by Ka-Kin Cheuk, assistant professor in the Department of Chinese and History at the City University of Hong Kong, and Andrea Wright, assistant professor

of anthropology and Asian and Middle Eastern studies at William & Mary. They offered incisive and generous feedback to the papers submitted by three panelists: Ping-hsiu Alice Lin from Harvard University, independent researcher Sana Quadri, and Shikha Dilawri from SOAS, University of London. This panel traced the making and working of resource markets and longstanding merchant networks across the Indian Ocean, especially concerning their junctions in South Asia. How race, caste, and capital come together in these oceanic political economies – both historically and today – lay at the heart of the panel’s discussions.



“Resistance and Solidarities,” the fourth panel of the conference, was led by Darryl Li, assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Chicago, and Gabriel Dattatreyan, senior lecturer in the anthropology department at Goldsmiths, University of London. They offered fresh ways of thinking about comparison, connection, and relation between populations and places, sharing collective experiences of struggle and violence, as well as visions of hope and freedom. The papers they responded to were submitted by Sushmita Pati from the National Law School of India University,

James Evans from Harvard University, Nico Millman from the University of Pennsylvania, and Anisha Gogoi from Jawaharlal Nehru University. These papers offered new and provocative insights into the transoceanic fluidity of political claim-making and crisscrossed geographies of racial capitalism and caste across the Indian Ocean.

The final panel – Part II of “Critiquing the Nation-State” – was joined by Mandana Limbert, associate professor of anthropology at CUNY, and Anneeth Kaur Hundle, assistant professor of anthropology at UC Irvine. Working across disciplines and regions, panelists Kelvin Ng from Yale University, Darakhsha Qamar from Jamia Millia Islamia University, Arshad Said Khan from the University of Alberta, and Sonia Qadir from the University of New South Wales in Sydney drew on their archival and ethnographic work to shed light on the cross-regional affinities that tie spaces, histories, and people together in ways that confound nationalist understandings of mobility and citizenship. Bringing the panelists’ papers into the conversation, Limbert and Hundle reflected on what is ultimately an ethical project – critiquing the nation-state and its privileged status in our readings of modernity, race, and territory. One theme, in particular, ran across the panelists’ papers: the importance of historical contingency in the making of regional identities and ethno-racial formations.

# U-M Hosts Symposium on Social Media Influencers' Effect on Society, Politics, and Economy



## **An international cohort of social media influencers will arrive at University of Michigan** for a two-day symposium on April 7-8.

The “Social Media Influencers and the New Political Economy in South Asia and Africa” symposium will highlight the role of social media in societies around the world, especially the Global South, and showcase how influencers impact politics, economy and culture. The event will be held in-person and virtual.

Invited speakers represent social media influencers from a wide array of platforms, and include film stars, politicians, lawyers, journalists, artists, dissidents, comedians and scholars from two of the fastest growing internet-using regions in the world: South Asia and Africa.

Co-organizers Joyojeet Pal, associate professor at the U-M School of Information, and Omolade Adunbi, associate professor and associate chair at the U-M Department of Afroamerican and African Studies, say the inspiration for a symposium like this has been the significant shift in media landscape over the last decade.

“Several independent social media based channels have gained mindshare among hundreds of millions of people around the world, across age and language boundaries,” says Pal. “This has also led to dramatic changes in political and artistic communication, leading to new forms of polarization, and new means of building and articulating public power.”

“South Asia and Africa are the two regions with the fastest growth in internet and social media adoption in the last five years, making this a good regional focus for the conference,” says Pal.

## **The methods and reach of social media influencers**

While social media is often researched, there have been scant studies into the influencers themselves and how individuals play a role in economies and discourses.

“Studies that focus on social media often tend to interrogate social media use either as a political or social tool for communication,” Adunbi says, adding that the social media users themselves — including activists, celebrities and politicians — are missing from these studies. “Our goal in this symposium is to bridge this divide by creating a space where all these voices can engage in a conversation with each other.”

The symposium is divided into themes that were carefully selected by the organizers. Adunbi says they wanted to create a space for constructive and critical engagement among scholars, practitioners, industry and activists.

“Social media influencers have totally changed politics; in part politicians themselves have become influencers,” says Pal. “But likewise, culture — things like food, travel, body image — are all changing as a result of how they are depicted and appropriated on social media.”

“The participants are leading voices in their own field, and the experiences they plan to share with members of our community will be invaluable,” says Adunbi. “Our expectation is that participants will shed more light on the ways in which social media have become an important factor that shapes economic practices in a variety of ways in many of the countries where we are drawing our participants from.”

## **Global influence in local discussions**

Although the symposium is concentrating on South Asia and Africa, the topics have international ramifications. “I am looking forward to the inter-regional exchanges,” says Pal. “We find that the patterns of social and political upheaval are remarkably similar not only in nation states in the two regions we studied, but also across the two oceans.”

Adunbi agrees, adding that it will be interesting to see how scholars will engage with public intellectuals, political and social activists, industry, politicians and artists. “These are groups that ordinarily wouldn’t see themselves sitting in the same room for a conference, so it is a plus for the University of Michigan to be bringing these array of individuals to sit in the same room to deliberate on the place of social media in society.”

The breadth of speakers is a huge draw, says Pal. “This sort of panel is very hard to find in a single location,” he notes. “The majority of the speakers are coming in person, which is a great opportunity for our students to engage them directly.”

This event is sponsored by Center for South Asian Studies, Department of Afroamerican and African Studies, African Studies Center, UMSI, Ethics, Society, and Computing, and Rackham.

*This article was originally published on the U-M School of Information website on March 25, 2022, by Sarah Derouin, UMSI public relations specialist, in the days leading up to the conference.*

*A full list of archived talks is available at: <https://influencers.conference.si.umich.edu/>*

# Interview with Swara Bhasker

**On April 7, award-winning Hindi film actor and activist Swara Bhasker** delivered the keynote speech for the event “Social Media Influencers and the New Political Economy in South Asia and Africa.” CSAS Director Matthew Hull caught up with Bhasker to discuss activism, Bollywood, and issues of representation in film.

Swara Bhasker is an award-winning Hindi film actress and activist who has been recognized for her major roles in both indie and mainstream productions. She is the winner of a Screen Award for Best Actress and has been nominated for the Filmfare Award for Best Actress. As her career has adapted to her activism, she remains firmly committed to speaking her mind.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**MH:** You spoke in your keynote talk about becoming a star and inadvertently becoming a Bollywood activist. Your activism has subjected you to threats, online abuse, professional challenges, and other kinds of backlash. But with all the constraints placed on Bollywood celebrities, I'm wondering whether it's been liberating as well.

**SB:** In Bollywood, our identity and “relevance” are linked to the films we are acting in. You're only relevant so long as you're getting work, maintaining that celebrity identity in some way. When there is a lull in an actor's career you'll hear things like, “Oh, that person disappeared.”

In my case, what I've noticed is that my identity is no longer bound by Bollywood releases. I have a public voice and identity that has emerged independent of the films I act in. Twitter—and I say this purely from an analytical perspective, not out of arrogance or hubris of any kind—has ensured that I remain relevant. It's very strange, but much of that relevance can just happen on its own because of platforms like Twitter.

My body of work is small. I've done only 13-14 films and 5-6 web series. A lot of the films have been indie films. But there is a recognizability factor at this point which is far greater than the films I've done.

I am often recognizable not just to Bollywood audiences, but to politicians and political activists, people who don't necessarily follow Bollywood. These are some of the cause-and-effect dynamics



Swara Bhasker (L) responded to a question from moderator Swapnil Rai (R), assistant professor for Film, Television, and Media at the University of Michigan.

of social media at play. These dynamics complicate our understanding of celebrity identity and, ultimately, what makes a celebrity relevant. I don't need to play the “trying-hard-to-stay-relevant-somehow-game” anymore.

**MH:** So it has liberated you a little bit from some of the some of the less appealing parts of being a celebrity.

**SB:** I think so. There's both a cost and a reward to it.

**MH:** How has your activist identity shaped the films you do and the roles you take?

**SB:** I get a lot of offers from people who make political-themed films. I also receive offers from people who are not in the film industry, but who believe they have a good, socially-conscious subject to work with. But not every subject that is socially-conscious is necessarily tantamount to a good script. Films are ultimately a form of literature; it isn't a political pamphlet. So, while I may be on the same political or ideological page as the person who is making the film, that doesn't mean I'm going to take the job. I have to retain a sense of integrity to my craft as well.

When you are a newer, younger actor, you are limited in your agency. But at this point in my career I can be much more discerning when it comes to what I am agreeing or refusing to do. I have turned down parts after reading the script and feeling that the writer was misrepresenting an event or social issue. Films last forever; we must always remember that.

There are times when I have been able to convince a director to change a certain line of dialogue because it was insensitive or offensive. As an actor, however, it sometimes feels like our power on set is actually very limited. Of course, we can interpret the part our way, but we have a very limited impact in terms of what will finally make it to the screen or to the edit. People outside of the industry sometimes don't know this, because actors walk away with so much of the glamor.

**MH:** Have you ever thought about becoming a director or producer?

**SB:** Producer, yes. I don't know about becoming a director. There's a lot more I'd need to learn.

**MH:** You've been very outspoken on issues of gender and sexuality, and many of your roles have pushed the boundaries of how those are represented in Bollywood. Can you talk about changes you've seen during your time in the industry? How have Bollywood movies addressed questions of gender and sexuality, and what changes would you like to see in the future?

**SB:** More women have gotten behind the camera; there are more women writers and directors now than ever before. Because of that, there is a new crop of female characters and stories that did not exist before. For a long time, Bollywood directors and writers were overwhelmingly male. There were few women behind the camera in Bollywood prior to this century. Same thing goes for members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Social media has changed the landscape in terms of representation as well, because everyone with an account can tag the producer, the director, and the actors. They can give their own reviews, so to speak. So, today, there is no way for a director or producer to shy away from audience reactions. Bollywood is actually quite conscious of this. Social media may or may not lead to box office ticket sales, but online perception is still very palpable, and Bollywood tracks it.

**MH:** In terms of characters' issues or relationships with men, what kinds of themes do you see in recent Bollywood films that you might not have seen before, say, the early-2000s?

**SB:** I think that films like *Tanu Weds Manu* and *Jab We Met* gave Bollywood a new type of heroine. For the longest time, the Bollywood heroine was this very angelic sort of person who was a symbol of everything pure and good. Now you have commercial, mainstream heroines who are chaotic, messy, and confused—and in the case of *Tanu*, maybe not even very good people. There is a darker, more manipulative side to these types of heroines. These heroines smoke and drink—characteristics that would typically be reserved for the “vamp” in earlier Bollywood movies.

The fact that by 2017 we could have a character like Anaarkali [in *Anaarkali of Aarah*] in a Bollywood film is a sign of this same type of progress. [*Anaarkali of Aarah*] was a small indie film, but the fact that it got watched and spoken about as much as it did is something that would not have happened earlier. To have a sexually-liberated Indian film heroine—it's almost unheard of, because so much of the goodness of the Hindi film heroine lay in her chastity, her “purity,” her sexual integrity.

Before, it was always the angry young man, the hero who had negative qualities. He had a chip on his shoulder, carried a lot of angst, or had a dark secret. Bollywood gave that space to men, and women had to bear the burden of being good. That burden has lifted a little bit from the shoulders of the Bollywood heroine. Not enough, but a little bit.

**MH:** What other kinds of films would you like to see more of in Bollywood?

**SB:** I think that films change when audiences change. I'd like to see an audience appetite for more thought-provoking content in general. When that happens, characters and relationships between characters will also change accordingly.

One of the biggest hits of the past few months is a film called *Gangubai Kathiawadi*. It's a biopic of a sex worker in Bombay and it's based on a real person. It's great to see that kind of cinema being made successfully, because it's a film that has basically no hero, so it's a heroine-lead film. And it's done superbly well.

I'd like to see more audiences interested in watching a film for the sake of the film, without caring as much about which actor is in it. Some of that is starting to happen, thanks to streaming services and their investment in India. I'd love to see less of this gratuitous, masculine violence because, unfortunately, these films do seem to be making a comeback in Bollywood. It's interesting that these films are coming back alongside the emergence of these female-lead films that are doing very well.



**MH:** Do you notice connections between contemporary Indian politics and movie themes?

**SB:** During Modi's first campaign especially and his first term and since then too, he spent a lot of time portraying himself as a really strong, power-

ful male leader. So yes, there is an association in our national discourse between masculinity and a certain kind of virile- decisive- easily visible- male strength, that must be performed. Movie themes have always been influenced by national discourse.

I remember a scene from *Bahubali 2* which is a good example of how this discourse influences mainstream cinema, of any language. In a scene meant to glorify the protagonist Amarendra Bahubali, he decapitates the head of a courtier who molested his wife. I remember watching the film in a cinema hall and the moment that happened the crowd burst into cheers and claps and hoots.

This association has always been there, and has never really gone away. And when you see such scenes being embraced so readily by today's audiences, I don't think that's really a coincidence. Remember, this is the same audience that witch-hunted actor Sushant Singh Rajput's ex-girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty after Sushant died by suicide. This audience bought into a totally hysterical and fake narrative that many mainstream media channels peddled and basically subjected Rhea to a mob-trial.

We have also become a very polarized culture. In a polarized society, people forget how to appreciate or think in terms of nuance. This leads to a lot of black-and-white themes, your cinema tropes, your stock characters, the easy tropes of good-versus-evil. You see this in Hindi films too. Then of course there is the abiding theme of Modi's India reflected in our cinema as well: The vilification of Muslims and the equating of Muslims with terrorists.

The power of cinema is grossly underestimated. And interestingly, again, I think that it is in fact this particular government that is very aware of the power of Bollywood, which is why there is so much focus on both suppressing dissent in Bollywood films and equally propping up these propaganda films. So this particular administration has also recognized how it can use Bollywood to support its own agenda.

**MH:** What is the broader role of Hindi cinema in the politics of today?

## Interview with Swara Bhasker *cont'd*

**SB:** Bollywood is becoming a very contested space. On one hand, Bollywood has had a very secular legacy both in terms of its representation and its workers—not just in terms of actors, either. There has been a historically high representation of non-Hindus behind the camera. Even culturally speaking, Bollywood is influenced by Parsi theater, Urdu, and Nautanki as a form. So it's a form that has taken inspiration from diverse cultural sources. And in some sense, it has been a good representation of what's called the Ganga–Jamuni Tehzeeb [Ganges-Yamuna culture], because the spoken language of Bollywood is actually Hindustani, with a very high degree of Urdu represented in it. For the longest time, Bollywood was a vehicle of Indian secularism, always staunchly defending secular values of India and standing up for the idea of fraternity between Hindus and Muslims.

Now, the traditional Bollywood has been under attack as being dynastic, nepotistic, and a den of drugs and sex. There have been a lot of controversies fanned by the lapdog media in India around Bollywood. The second thing that's happened is that it's gotten appropriated by filmmakers, govern-

ment pressure, and money from the right wing, where you see this emergence of films that are parroting the narrative of the RSS and the Hindu nationalist right. Where you see this the most is actually in historical films, because rewriting medieval history is one of the biggest projects of the RSS—this idea that all medieval Muslim kings were cruel invaders and murderers. They paint the Mughals as being these plunderers, which is not true at all, but that's the image. So there are all these historical films being made in Bollywood with really cruel Muslim villains. Sometimes, they claim to be historical but write a disclaimer saying that no such historical event has taken place. It's very strange. It would be amusing if it wasn't so dangerous.

One section of Bollywood is basically being employed as a loudspeaker for the RSS narrative. It's a time of very strange and sometimes unfortunate flux and I don't think it's going away anytime soon. The manner in which the rules and regulations are framed render filmmakers highly dependent on government permissions. Bollywood hasn't been able to do much about that.

**MH:** I think of films like *Veere Di Wedding*, which is not an explicitly activist film but which definitely has a message that is quite different from these historical rewritings you're talking about. And this is a mainstream, popular film. How would you express the politics of a movie like that?

**SB:** I think *Veere Di Wedding* didn't have a self-conscious politics in that sense. *Veere Di Wedding* represents the aspirations of one part of India. It's this desire in what is basically a conservative and traditional society for a certain kind of individual liberty and self-expression. And in that sense it is liberating, because even within Bollywood or Indian society in general, women want to have the space to be able to make mistakes. Sometimes just having the space to be human and flawed is itself very liberating, especially in a society that is still largely conservative. I think that's why *Veere Di Wedding* resonated so deeply. While it was not an explicitly political message, a lot of people called it a feminist film, even though we never use the word feminist anywhere in the film.

## Michigan India Conference



**The Michigan India Conference** began from an idea originated by the late Dr. C.K. Prahalad and Dr. M.S. Krishnan at the Ross School of Business in 2009. Featured twice on Thinkers50, Prahalad revolutionized corporate strategy in India and across the globe through his teachings and research on both India as a prod-

uct market and a source of global talent. Prahalad's book, *Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid*, highlighted the enormous benefits in alleviating poverty through innovative business models. It is with their great intentions that we continue the tradition of hosting this conference on an annual basis.

In 2022, we conducted the 13th annual Michigan India Conference (MIC) during the month of April. The theme for this year's conference was "India@100 Years of Independence", with a deeper dive into India's emergent presence in the Digital and Startup space as well as continued growth in the Healthcare and Finance industries. It was a three-day conference with eminent speakers like Rajeev Chandrasekhar (Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology), Rekha Talluri (CFO, Microsoft India), Dr. V. Anantha Nageswaran (Chief Economic Advisor, Gov't of India), Rajan Navani (CEO, Jetline), Rajesh Bansal (CEO, Reserve Bank Innovation Hub), Dr. Vijay Raghavan (Principal Scientific Advisor, Gov't of India), Dilip Asbe (CEO, NPCI), and more. This year's conference received great support from the University and several sponsors like Center for South Asian Studies, Global MBA and Ross Executive Education.

# Midwest Institute for Property and Being Under Colonial Conditions in Asia and Africa



Day 1, from left: Jatin Dua, Tara Weinberg, Amelia Burke, Dipanjan Mazumder



Day 2, from left: Sanne Ravensbergen, Fusheng Luo, Halimat Somotan and Meenu Deswal

**This hybrid conference was organized** by graduate students in the Department of History, Meenu Deswal and Tara Weinberg. The interdisciplinary conference explored how comparing intellectual, cultural, social, political-economic, and legal histories of property from African and Asian colonial contexts helps rethink ideas about land, ownership, dispossession, rights, credit, subjectivities, and political imaginations. The conference invited participants to engage with the entanglements of colonial policy and indigenous practices in their specific research contexts. Eleven participants compared thematic issues across colonial Morocco, Lagos, Nigeria, Gambia, South Africa, Uganda, China, India, and Philippines.

Weinberg and Deswal offered opening remarks. They were followed by a panel called “Racial Logics of Property,” which included presentations by Xafsa Ciise (University of California, Santa Cruz), Claire Cororaton (Cornell University), and Sajdeep Soomal (University of Toronto), and was chaired by Brian Klein (University of Michigan).

The second panel, “Of Collective Property, Communities, and Claim-Making,” featured presentations by Amelia Burke (University of Michigan), Dipanjan Mazumder (Vanderbilt Uni-



**The interdisciplinary conference explored how comparing intellectual, cultural, social, political-economic, and legal histories of property from African and Asian colonial contexts helps rethink ideas about land, ownership, dispossession, rights, credit, subjectivities, and political imaginations.**

versity), Sauda Nabukenya (University of Michigan), and Tara Weinberg (University of Michigan), and was chaired by Jatin Dua (University of Michigan).

Closing the first day, keynote speakers Nafisa Essop Sheik (University of Johannesburg) and Rohit De (Yale University) offered insights on the themes of the conference from their own research. Sheik in her address talked about cultures of sex and debates around the age of Consent Law in colonial Natal. De’s address, “Tales of the Custodian: Property and Being in the Postcolony,” explored the idea of the “knowledge of” property, joint and evacuee property, and how the constitution of family and reconstitution of land went hand-in-hand in postcolonial India.

The second day of the conference opened with a panel on “Property, Contracts, and Being,” featuring presentations by Fusheng Luo (University of Michigan), Halimat Somotan (Carnegie Mellon University), Lamin Manneh (University of Michigan), and Meenu Deswal (University of Michigan), chaired by Sanne Ravensbergen (University of Michigan).

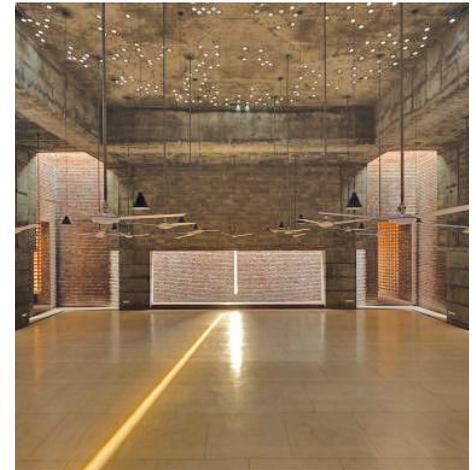
In the concluding session of the conference, William Glover (University of Michigan), De, and Sheik offered closing reflections.

This conference was made possible by the generous support of the Center for South Asian Studies, the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies, and the Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies.

# Muslim Modernity in South Asia Workshop



L to R; Justin Jones, Kathryn Babayan, SherAli Tareen, Mrinalini Sinha, and Muhammad Qasim Zaman



On May 20-21, the Center for South Asian Studies hosted an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars for a workshop on “Muslim Modernity in South Asia.” Co-organized by Farina Mir (Department of History, University of Michigan) and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Departments of Near Eastern Studies and Religion, Princeton University), the workshop provided an opportunity to reconsider established understandings of Muslim modernity in South Asia, particularly as they relate to questions of gender, colonialism, the status and role of the ulama, Islamic law, and notions of political and religious subjectivity.

The workshop was opened with introductory remarks from Mir and Zaman. This was followed by hour-long discussion of each participant’s pre-circulated paper. A University of Michigan faculty member opened each session with a response. The workshop featured the following papers and participants:

**“Material Modernities: Tracing Janbai’s Gendered Mobilities Across the Indian Ocean”**

Julia Stephens (*Associate Professor, Department of History, Rutgers University*)

Respondent: Gaurav Desai (*Professor and Chair, Department of English Language and Literature, U-M*)

**“Islamic Feminist Thought and Islamic Modernism in Modern India”**

Justin Jones (*Associate Professor, Faculty of Theology and Religion, Oxford University*)

Respondent: Mrinalini Sinha (*Alice Freeman Palmer Professor, Department of History, U-M*)

**“The Fault Lines of Traditionalism and Modernism in Muslim South Asia: The Aligarh-Deoband Divide”**

SherAli Tareen (*Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Religious Studies, Franklin & Marshall*)

Respondent: Juan Cole (*Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor, Department of History, U-M*)

**“Urdu Akhlaq Literature and Secularity in Colonial, South-Asian Islam”**

Farina Mir (*Associate Professor, Department of History, U-M*)

Respondent: Kathryn Babayan (*Professor, Departments of History and Middle Eastern Studies, U-M*)

**“Spiritual or Political Equality?”**

Humeira Iqtidar (*Reader in Politics, King’s College, London*)

Respondent: Webb Keane (*George Herbert Mead Collegiate Professor, Department of Anthropology, U-M*)

**“Law and Sufism in Modern South Asia: A Changing Relationship”**

Muhammad Qasim Zaman (*Robert H. Niehaus Professor of Near Eastern Studies and Religion, Princeton University*)

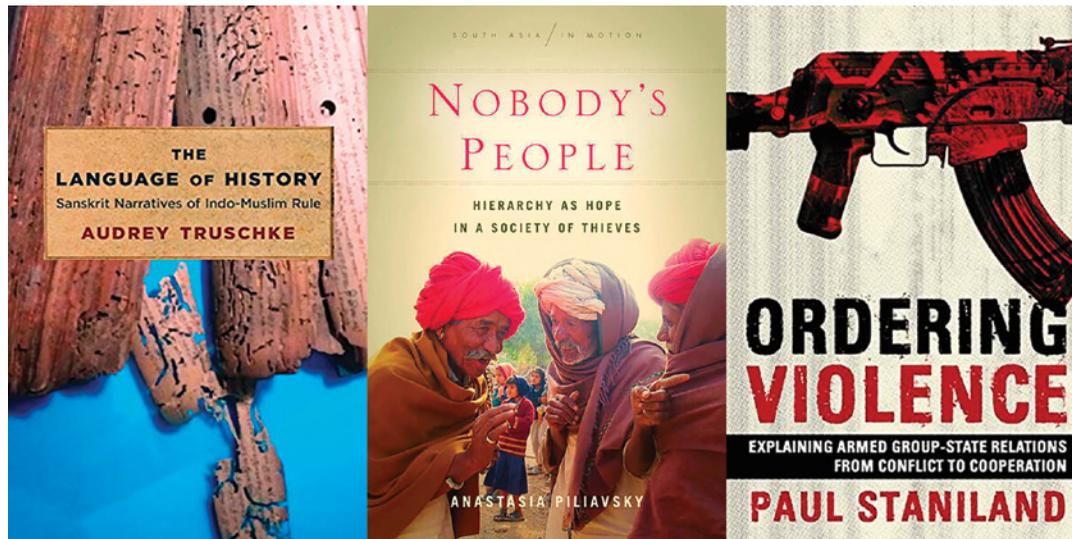
Respondent: Alexander Knysch (*Professor, Department of Middle Eastern Studies, U-M*)

The workshop resulted in a day and a half of vibrant in-person discussion among participants and with members of the audience. The organizers are grateful to the Center for South Asian Studies for its support, and to the Department of Education for support through the Center’s National Resource Center Grant.



Webb Keane

# Graduate Reading Symposium



During the semester of Winter 2022, the Center for South Asian Studies funded graduate student-led monthly book symposia to discuss recently published monographs with their authors. The symposia were organized by three doctoral students at the University of Michigan in Asian Languages and Cultures (ALC) and anthropology – Avina Kohli, Shekha Kotak, and Irene Promodh. Graduate students from various departments were invited to participate in the book discussions, each followed by focused Q/A sessions with the authors. Over the semester, the symposia's organizers invited three authors – professors Paul Staniland, Anastasia Piliavsky, and Audrey Truschke – to discuss their cross-disciplinary monographs and speak to the varying research interests of graduate students across departments at the University of Michigan.

In January 2022, Dr. Paul Staniland, associate professor of political science at the University of Chicago and associate director of the Chicago Project on Security and Threats, discussed his latest monograph, *Ordering Violence: Explaining Armed Group-State Relations from Conflict to Cooperation* (Cornell University Press, 2021). Dr. Staniland spoke to the graduate students about the process of writing a monograph, including navigating doctoral research, and the significance and difference between first and second monographs. He shared his journey of researching and writing his latest monograph and addressed book-specific questions from graduate students about the workings of political conflict and the ideologies of armed groups.

Later in February 2022, guest author Dr. Anastasia Piliavsky, senior lecturer in anthropology and politics at King's College London, discussed her groundbreaking new monograph titled *Nobody's People: Hierarchy as Hope in a Society of Thieves* (Stanford University Press, 2020). Dr. Piliavsky drew on her extensive ethnographic research in rural Rajasthan to shed new light on questions of hierarchy, patronage, and relatedness that lie at the heart of ethico-political life in South Asia. She also addressed specific concerns that graduate students in attendance shared about making sense of one's ethnographic findings about an existing scholarship.

**Graduate students from various departments were invited to participate in the book discussions, which were each followed by focused Q/A sessions with the authors.**

Dr. Audrey Truschke, associate professor and Asian studies director at Rutgers University, Newark, was invited as the final guest author of the semester in March 2022. Dr. Truschke discussed her monograph, *The Language of History: Sanskrit Narratives of Indo-Muslim Rule* (Columbia University Press, 2021), and responded to student queries on the recent rise of Hindutva, diasporic Hindu nationalist movements, and what it means to persist in academia during times of crisis. She also addressed practical research-related questions from graduate students at varying stages of their Ph.D. programs, citing her own experiences as examples.

## CSAS IS DEDICATED

to promoting a broader and deeper understanding of the region—its histories, cultures, languages, and people—through research, education, and outreach programs. CSAS is committed to creating a supportive environment where scholars, educators, students, and the community have the opportunity to engage in dialogue and to study current and historical events related to South Asia.

CSAS gifts help support internships, student groups, faculty and student travel, workshops and lectures, visiting scholars, artists and performers, and special courses related to South Asia.

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Thank you for considering making a gift to the **CENTER FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES!**

# 11th Annual U-M Pakistan Conference

## The 11th Annual University of Michigan Pakistan Conference

was held on April 1, 2022. This year's theme was "Trade Networks, Economy, and Sovereignty." Several scholars from various disciplines attended the event in-person as well as online and discussed questions of mobility, contact, identity, trade, freedom, and sovereignty. The conference was organized by the Center of South Asian Studies, which showcases emerging research on Pakistan while also giving a platform for researchers to establish connections and forge an intellectual community.

Mathew Hull welcomed the attendees and gave opening remarks at the conference. The first panel, composed of Noman Baig (Habib University) and Ping-hsiu Alice Lin, talked about cross-regional connectivity through trade networks. Baig's paper "Khaip: Trade Flows between Karachi and Dubai" focused on the informal currency trade between Karachi and Dubai. In her paper entitled "Connectivity and Shifting Markets on Pakistan's Borderlands", Lin talked about how the colored stone trade from Afghanistan to Pakistan was reshaping identity in Peshawar's gemstone market.

In the second panel, Hassan Karar (Lahore University of Management Sciences) and Jason Neelis (Wilfrid Laurier University) talked about (im)mobility, its history, and the impact of trade on politics and religion in the upper northern region of Pakistan. Karar's paper entitled "Trade, Local Networks, and Sovereignty along the Karakorum Frontier 1891-1969" focused on the changing connectivity in the frontier region through road building and trading regulations. He concluded that ideas of sovereignty are represented in trade and cross-border networks. Neelis presented his ongoing research on ancient "capillary networks" traversing the region by studying graffiti and rock carvings in the northern region. The merchants on these networks, he argued, shaped the "economy of merit" that contributed to adding commercial ethos to Buddhist ideology.

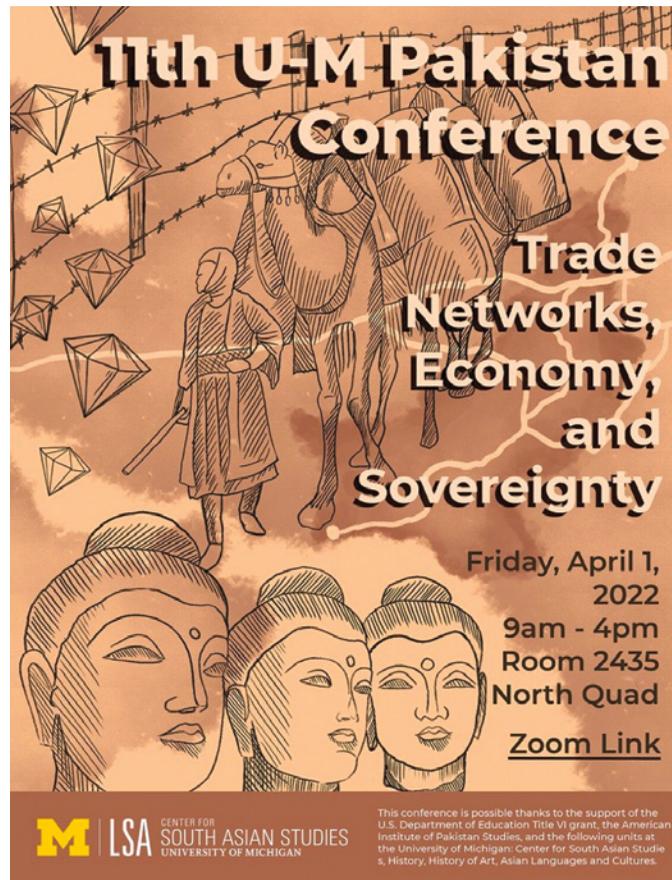
In the third panel, Sheetal Chabria (Connecticut College) presented a paper titled "Histories of capitalism and capitalists?" that sought to rethink histories of capitalism in the region with a particular

This year's keynote speaker was Aditi Saraf (Utrecht University). Her paper entitled "Trade Artifacts: Mobility, Sovereignty and the Edges of Empire" talked about the cross-border LOC trade and the history of Kashmir as a frontier. The shift from empire to the nation state has resulted, she argued, in exchange of similar objects across the Pakistani and Indian frontiers in the region that was once part of a differentiated commodity chain. This trade has allowed the people to uphold some notion of community which shows a different genealogy of commerce and sovereignty in the region.

In her closing remarks, Saraf summed up three important take-aways from the conference. First, the presentations showed how a region is produced through trade, minerals, petroglyphs, currency, geography, and topology—and yet these have also allowed for the re-politicization of the spatial. Second, the ethnographic mode of inquiry opens the categories of economy to other domains: morality, ethics, fairness, freedom, spirituality. Third, the figure of the trader should get due attention. Traders are like anthropologists who take care of the needs of the

people, cultivate relationships, build trust, and at times expose themselves to risks.

This year's conference was organized by Saifullah Nasar (Department of Anthropology) and Swagat Pani (Departments of Anthropology and History). CSAS is thankful to The Pakistani Student Association for its active participation in making the conference a success. The conference was generously supported by the American Institute of Pakistan Studies and the following units of the University of Michigan: Institute for Humanities, Residential College, Department of Middle Eastern Studies, and Department of American Culture.



## Scholars from various disciplines attended the event in-person as well as online and discussed questions of mobility, contact, identity, trade, freedom, and sovereignty.

focus on Sindh. In the same panel, Umair Javed presented a paper titled "Formal Politics and Informal Commerce: The Bazaar in Urban Pakistan." Through fieldwork in bazaars of Pakistan Javed's paper challenged the notions and boundaries of "informal economy" and "informal commerce" by showing its intricate imbrication with formal politics.

# Record number of participants attend 2022 U-M School of Nursing Global Health Summer Institute



Attendees from Shanxi Medical University in China watch a presentation during the 2022 Global Summer Institute. (Photo: U-M School of Nursing)

**Women's health has always been an important topic** in health care, but specifics regarding care differ vastly on a global scale based on geographic, social and economic elements. Learning from researchers and experts gave participants of the 2022 U-M School of Nursing Global Health Summer Institute a unique opportunity to obtain relevant knowledge and skills as well as network with practitioners and professionals.

Topics covered throughout the May 10-12 conference included HIV, mental health, obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular conditions. Started in 2017, by the U-M School of Nursing, the Global Health Summer Institute is an opportunity for attendees from around the world to come together and learn from others in the field. This year's institute attracted a record 430 registrants with over 300 participants attending each day from 31 countries. The conference was hosted exclusively on Zoom, allowing attendees to login remotely from across the globe. Many sessions were available in Spanish with English interpretations or in English with Spanish interpretations to reach an even broader audience.

Dean Yang Hui from the Nursing College at Shanxi Medical University in China explained the impact of his students attending the conference.

"My students gained a lot, especially in the area of global burden of disease statistics and have expressed a strong interest in further hands-on learning," Hui said. "My Ph.D. students were inspired by the fact that mental health care in developing countries needs to be further developed and disseminated, especially in terms of developing country-specific toolkits."

Attendees received up to 9.25 CNE credits and a U-M School of Nursing Certificate of Attendance.

This year, the institute welcomed 24 global presenters covering 18 topics and concluded with a WHO Collaborating Center Panel: Nurses Leadership in Addressing Chronic Disease in Women's Health led by professors from the University of Michigan, University of Chile and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Visit the Global Health Summer Institute web page to learn more about the presenters and topics.

For the first time, students and global scholars had the opportunity to present a snapshot of their current global health projects through two Flash Presentation sessions. Eighteen individuals representing U-M School of Nursing DNP students, as well as a global scholar, gave three minute flash presentations on topics such as disaster preparedness, menstrual hygiene and management and gender-based violence.

"I appreciate the support and help from the School of Nursing and am especially grateful for the platform you have built for us so that we can broaden our horizons enough and think globally and act locally," said Hui.

For more information and to receive details regarding next year's global institute, contact the Office of Global Affairs.

*(This article was originally published on the U-M School of Nursing Website on May 27, 2022)*

## Library News



**Over the years** the Center for South Asian Studies has generously supported the University Library with funding to enrich holdings and ensure that the faculty and students have the best electronic information available. In addition to the many e-books in the library holdings there are several databases that the Center has helped to fund:

### South Asia Open Archives (SAOA)

<https://www.crl.edu/programs/samp/saoa>

### South Asian Archive

<https://search.lib.umich.edu/databases/record/40995>

### Raj & Empire

<https://search.lib.umich.edu/databases/record/42512>

### East India Company

<https://search.lib.umich.edu/databases/record/43613>

### Foreign Office Files for India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, 1947-1980

<https://search.lib.umich.edu/databases/record/33328>

These databases are all accessible in the library's online catalog. If you would like more information about them, please feel free to contact CSAS.

The University of Michigan Library is one of the founding members of the South Asia Open Archives (SAOA). This is a curated archive of materials on South Asia, and it is completely open so now, especially for researchers located throughout South Asia, they will be able to access a wealth of materials online for free.

# WHaLI 2022 | Democracy in World History and Literature

by Rima Hassouneh, Community Outreach Coordinator at CMENAS and the International Institute



**WHaLI 2022 garnered 39 registered teachers** from Michigan, California, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Depending on geographic location, the teachers all engaged in a/synchronous learning about this year's theme at the June 13th workshop or via WHaLI's new Canvas Catalog Course, which was produced by the new design team of School of Education Professor Michelle Bellino and Darin Stockdill of the Center for Education Design, Evaluation and Research (CEDER). Stockdill and CEDER are longtime collaborators with the II-NRCs in multiple outreach programs, including the UM-UPR Symposia and the MENA-SEA Teacher Program at CMENAS and CSEAS.

WHaLI 2022 featured the innovative and welcome addition of an in-service teacher consultant, Amy Perkins, who served on the design team to devise impactful learning experiences for the participating teachers, and researched and created teaching resources thematically relevant to settings in Myanmar, India, and Chile. Based on a three-year relationship with Ms. Perkins since her membership in the Title VI-funded MENA-SEA Teacher Program, this new stage of collaboration benefitted from her 20 years of teaching expertise and vast networks of colleagues in the field.

The synchronous and in-person segment of learning occurred on June 13th, 2022, on the tenth floor of Weiser Hall. Twenty teachers attended and participated, including nine from Puerto Rico, thanks to the concerted efforts of Alana Rodriguez and LACS. From 9:30 a.m. until 11:10 a.m., "Democracy in World History and Literature" featured three 30-minute presentations and discussions about pro-democracy and grassroots movements in China (speaker: Jundai Liu), India (speaker: Joyojeet Pal), and Armenia (speaker: Jane Kitaevich.) Periods for Q&A and discussion about pedagogy and content were scheduled throughout the workshop.

**To increase accessibility and diversity in teacher representation, WHaLI was offered for free with respect to registration, attendance, and acquisition of earned SCECHs.**

During the afternoon, the teachers engaged in interactive hands-on learning in small groups. They built their knowledge of case studies in Egypt, Hong Kong, Myanmar, and India, using "jigsaws" modes so that teachers first practiced with their peers to

better prepare to teach their students these global and thematically-connected case studies.

The Canvas Catalog Course also offered rich multimedia resources, e.g. presentations about artistic resistance in Egypt's Arab Spring (Christiane Gruber) and about the export of U.S. understandings of democracy to 1930s Mexico (David Tamayo), readings about Armenia's "Velvet Revolution," etc. The course also featured a conceptual overview delivered by Michelle Bellino which contextualized democracy over time and across national contexts, discussion prompts and fora (e.g. teachers were invited to respond to: "How can I use targeted examples or case studies to teach about broad concepts like democracy across space and time? What does this kind of instructional planning look like?").

The work that both Stockdill and Bellino contributed this year extended and deepened learning and involvement by engaging with the responses posted on the course's discussion boards even before the in-person workshop on June 13th.

The registered teachers completed their learning/professional development in the period between June 1st and July 15th, 2022. Depending on self-directed study completed at individual pace and interest, the teachers gained up to 14.5 State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECHs) from the Michigan Department of Education and 6.5 SCECHs just from participating in the June 13th workshop and completing two hours of mandatory prep work on the Canvas Catalog Course. To increase accessibility and diversity in teacher representation, WHaLI was offered for free with respect to registration, attendance, and acquisition of earned SCECHs.

A follow-up and final report was generated by Evan Hoyer after the deadline of July 15th. FERA also prepared and issued initiative evaluations and an accompanying report to all NRCs. These were expected some time in the first two weeks of August 2022, before the termination of the 2018-2022 grant cycle.

# A Strong Partnership between the Center for South Asian Studies and the Midwest Institute for IIE

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By Theo Sypris, Director of MIIIE

**Since 2008, the Center for South Asian Studies** has been a strong partner in providing support to community college faculty affiliated with the Midwest Institute for IIE (MIIIE) consortium.

CSAS has co-sponsored several week-long curriculum workshops for community college faculty to develop curricula on and related to South Asia. These workshops are designed to provide exposure to resources and ideas of how to infuse curriculum packets (modules) with various global themes. Examples of global themes co-sponsored by CSAS have been human rights, conflict and cooperation, languages and culture, world food, water, energy issues, global interactions and exchanges, poverty and inequality, environmental stewardship, and global norms and values.

All workshops are interdisciplinary, interactive, and tailored to the curriculum needs of community college faculty. Typically, the workshop participants are limited to fifteen faculty in order to provide personal attention, quality programming, and a strong focus on their professional interests. One of the workshop's main objectives is to provide strategies and resources for infusing curricula with a global theme, with focus either on a geographic region like South Asia or

comparisons across two or more regions. A second objective is to encourage interdisciplinary instructional sharing and develop critical pedagogy. The curriculum workshops offer short presentations (about 45 minutes) of expert faculty, followed by discussions, working groups, informal networking, opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, and the development of curriculum plans.

Following the workshops, faculty develop curriculum modules and receive feedback and support from assigned mentors. The faculty are expected to finalize their curriculum packets and implement them in the classroom for the following academic year. All faculty are expected to assess the curriculum work with their students and report back during the following two years.

In '21-'22, CSAS co-sponsored two workshops for community college faculty on "Climate Change and People's Livelihoods" and "Human Migrations and Global Consequences". Following the workshops, faculty were invited to submit proposals to develop curriculum modules with a focus on South Asia. This same year CSAS co-sponsored a team of eleven faculty at Harper College to develop and undertake co-curricular projects with a focus on South Asia.



## Sonia Mishra joins CSAS staff as India Communications Specialist

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**CSAS is excited to welcome Sonia Mishra**, who will work jointly with the CSAS and Michigan News in the Office of the Vice President for Communications. She will help CSAS deepen our connections with Michigan undergraduates and expand our relationships with the Michigan community throughout the state. She also will highlight the many ways the University of Michigan is engaging India to better our shared world.

"We are thrilled that Sonia is joining us," said Matthew Hull, Director of CSAS. "She brings a wealth of experience to help us communicate our mission and widen and deepen our relationships with the South Asian community in Southeastern Michigan and beyond."

"I'm very excited about this opportunity that allows me to tap into my professional experience and my Indian heritage," says Mishra. "I've only been here a few weeks, but I'm already overwhelmed with the university's connection with India and the amazing Indian and Indian American faculty, students, and alumni. They really are changing the world."

For almost a century, the University of Michigan has engaged with India to educate scholars and leaders and to develop innovative programs and research. The university, its faculty, and its students have had a global impact and made meaningful contributions to India's development. The university's academic and research partnerships in India span numerous disciplines – from medicine to public health, business, engineering, art, and the humanities.

Mishra comes to Michigan with more than 15 years of public relations experience for companies like the Guerrilla Politic and Ford Motor Company, where she represented a variety of areas, including employee communications, Ford Credit, international relations, and product development. She has a bachelor's degree in communications from Michigan State University and a master's degree in communications from Wayne State University. Mishra also has personal ties to the university. She is married to a U-M dental school graduate and has two children, Armaan and Maya. Armaan graduated from Michigan with an undergraduate LSA degree last spring, and he will be attending U-M med school in the fall of 2023.

# K-12 Teacher Fellow+trip to India

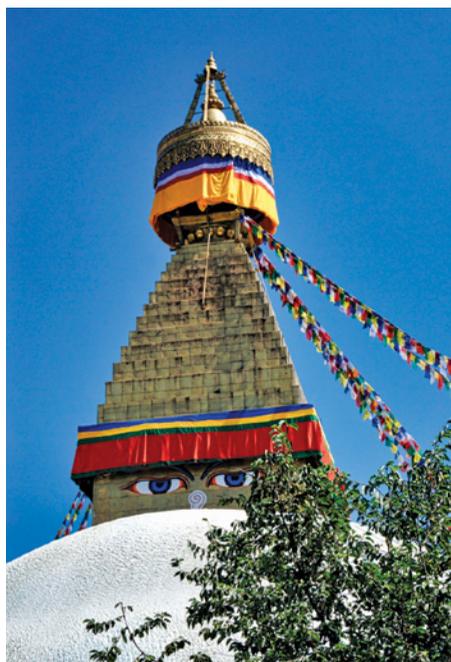
By Steven Boyce, Ann Arbor Public School Teacher



**In order to better understand the complex realities of South Asia,** I was privileged to travel there in the summer of 2022 along with two other Michigan school teachers. The Center for South Asian Studies has begun a new teacher fellow program for public school educators as part of its commitment to improve the way this region is presented to students. We arrived in India during a particularly significant moment as the country celebrated its 75th year of independence from the British empire.

While attempting to photograph the Taj Mahal's overwhelming beauty, I met a college student who began talking to me about his future plans. He said he was committed to using his engineering studies to address the problems of rural poverty. "What is the point of being independent," he asked, "if we do not have a government that serves the people?"

Later, in Pokhara, Nepal, I talked to a Tibetan jeweler who lamented the absence of tourists to whom she used to sell exquisite silver brace-



Photos: Steven Boyce Photography

lets adorned with semi-precious stones and decorated with symbols of Vajrayana Buddhism. She related that she had recently heard the Dalai Lama say he still held hope that he would return to Tibet but after her own lifetime in exile, she no longer believed this would happen.

Driving to the airport during the Cow Festival I passed a religious procession led by a brass band. It was then that I began to reflect. To say this was a memorable experience is a great understatement but now the hard work begins. Thinking about the miserable nature of our World History textbook (whose authors and advisors include not a single scholar of South Asia) and other readily available reference materials, the commitment of the Center for South Asian Studies to educational outreach is essential. With that support I am confident that the story of South Asia can be told in a way that is more compelling, more accurate, and more useful to students trying to understand the world right now.

# Faculty News



CSAS affiliate **John Ciorciari** delivered a paper at the U.S. Army War College on U.S. strategy in the Indo-Pacific Region. The paper is part of a collaborative project examining the "Quad"—an initiative of India, the United States, Australia, and Japan—and related diplomatic ventures from the perspectives of key regional states.



**Juan Cole** edited a book, *Peace Movements in Islam* (IB Tauris, 2021), which has a chapter on Abdul Ghaffar Khan. He also published a journal article, "British Policy towards the Iraqi Shiites during the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary Iraq and the Arab World*, 15, 3 (2021):285-304, which has a strong South Asia dimension.



*The sounds weight in anticipation of their song, hum tum tanana nana, nana nana ray*, is a sound installation that interprets the sounds and iconographies of South Asia through a decolonizing position and contemporary lens. Stamps Professor **Osman Khan's** installation was included in the group show *Kissing Through a Curtain*, curated by **Alexandra Foradas** and exhibited at Mass MoCA 2020-2022. The installation takes its formal inspiration from Mughal miniature paintings of the extravagant throne commissioned by Shah Jahan. The throne was encrusted in gems and decorated in ornate enamel and inscriptions—colloquially known as the "Peacock Throne" because of the two jeweled peacocks, perched atop its canopy. The Peacock Throne was the seat of Mughal emperors for a century before being looted by the British during their colonial occupation of India. The installation reclaims this symbol of power, offering a royal staging for the subversive electronic dance music emitted from the speakers. The music compositions puns on the power dynamics implicit in the use of "master" and "slave" in electronic programming and music



**Osman Khan.** *The sounds weight in anticipation of their song, hum tum tanana nana, nana nana ray*, 2020.

(here through MIDI), wherein one device (the "master," an electronic Tabla placed on the throne) controls the parameters of 'slave' devices on the network (dictating the rhythm and notes of the various 'slave' drum machines and synthesizers). Such that the seemingly 'western' sounding techno music playing is actually rooted and based on Indian rāga and taals (rather than derived from the Western traditions). The sound element of the installation, staying true to the tradition of rāga, in which compositions have particular associations with time, season, and mood, activates only at particular, pre-appointed times of day—providing an occasional anti-colonial dance party.



**Ram Mahalingam** received the Harold R. Johnson award, a lifetime achievement award, in recognition of his diversity leadership and his contributions to developing a culturally and ethnically diverse University of Michigan community. Mahalingam also received the Distinguished Contributions to Qualitative Inquiry in Teaching and Mentoring Award from the American Psychological Association (Division 5, Methodology).



Assistant Professor **Swapnil Rai** was named Institute of Humanities Richard and Lillian Ives Faculty Fellow for 2022-23. She was selected to join the board of Consoling Passions, an organization that brings together feminist media scholars and artists looking to create a space to present work and foster feminist scholarship on issues of television, culture, and identity.



**Kentaro Toyama** continued work on several projects in South Asia including research in India regarding gig work platforms that build "faux infrastructure" and work in Pakistan to understand how immunization supervisors detect fake data submitted by frontline vaccinators. Two previous lines of work (with mosques in Bangladesh and Buddhist meditators) also led this year to co-organizing a community of Human-Computer Interaction researchers interested in religion and spirituality, about which South Asia provides bountiful inspiration.

# CSAS Events 2022-23

All events are free and open to the public. A complete and updated list can be found on our website, [ii.umich.edu/csas/news-events/events.html](https://ii.umich.edu/csas/news-events/events.html)

**September 16, 2022 • Friday**

**Savithry Namboodiripad**,  
University of Michigan  
**Deconstructing language boundaries and transnational identities: Malayalees in Kerala and the US**  
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

**September 23, 2022 • Friday**

**Artistic Freedom and the State of Democracy in India: A Conversation with Documentary Filmmaker Anand Patwardhan**  
Panelists: **Anand Patwardhan**; **Priya Jaikumar**, University of Southern California; **Siddharth Vardharajan**, journalist  
Chair/Moderator: **Swapnil Rai**, University of Michigan  
4:30 pm • Room 411 • West Hall

**September 24, 2022 • Saturday**

**Screening of Reason/Vivek** (2018, 218 mins)  
with Film Director **Anand Patwardhan**  
12:00 pm • Michigan Theater

**September 30, 2022 • Friday**

**Sachin Rao**, Founder of Sangam  
**India at 75, Reflections on Society and Politics**  
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

**October 7, 2022 • Friday**

**Kavita Datla Memorial Lecture**  
Bhavani Raman, University of Toronto  
**The Law that Refuses to Die: The Early History of Preventive Detention in India**  
4:30 pm • Room 411 • West Hall

**October 12, 2022 • Wednesday**

**Screening of We are not your Monkeys** (1993, Music Video, 5 mins), **Sanctum Santorum** (2013, Music Video, 5 mins), **In the Name Of God** (1991, 75 minutes)  
with Film Director **Anand Patwardhan**  
7:30 pm • MLB Lecture Room 2

**October 14, 2022 • Friday**

**Ven. Tenzin Priyadarshi**, President of the Dalai Lama Center for Ethics and Transformative Values, MIT; **Running Toward Mystery**  
4:30 pm • Room 1010 • Weiser Hall

**October 26, 2022 • Wednesday**

**Screening of Ribbons for Peace** (1998, Music video, 5 mins), **Father, Son and Holy War** (1995, 120 mins) with Film Director **Anand Patwardhan**  
7:30 pm • MLB Lecture Room 2

**November 2, 2022 • Wednesday**

**Screening of A Narmada Diary** (1995, 60 mins), **In Memory of Friends** (1990, 60 mins) with Film Director **Anand Patwardhan**  
7:30 pm • MLB Lecture Room 2

**November 4, 2022 • Friday**

**Vidya Dehejia**, Barbara Stoler Miller Professor of Indian and South Asian Art, Columbia University  
**The Thief Who Stole My Heart: The Material Life of Chola Bronzes**  
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

**November 9, 2022 • Wednesday**

**Screening of War and Peace** (2002, 130 mins) with Film Director **Anand Patwardhan**  
7:30 pm • MLB Lecture Room 2

**November 16, 2022 • Wednesday**

**Screening of Jai Bhim Comrade** (2012, 169 mins) with Film Director **Anand Patwardhan**  
7:30 pm • MLB Lecture Room 2

**November 30, 2022 • Wednesday**

**Screening of Bombay: Our City** (1985, 75 mins) with Film Director **Anand Patwardhan**  
7:30 pm • MLB Lecture Room 2

**December 2, 2022 • Friday**

**Neepa Majumdar**, University of Pittsburgh  
**Wiring for the Talkies: Bombay's Cinema Theaters, 1927-1940**  
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

**January 20, 2023 • Friday**

**Joel Lee**, Williams College  
**How to be heard but not seen: on caste concealment in the music industry**  
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

**February 10, 2023 • Friday**

**Rakesh Ranjan**, Columbia University  
**Teaching Hindi in the United States: Strength and Challenges**  
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

**February 17, 2023 • Friday**

**Sahana Udupa**, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München  
**Digital influencers and the business of "data tested" campaigns in India**  
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

**March 10, 2023 • Friday**

**Jennifer Dubrow**, University of Washington  
**The Aesthetics of the Fragment: Prose Poems and Reportage on Partition**  
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

**March 24, 2023 • Friday**

**Mircea Raianu**, University of Maryland  
**The Global Corporation That Built Indian Capitalism**  
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

**March 31, 2023 • Friday**

**12th U-M Pakistan Conference: The Country and The City in Pakistan**  
9:00 am-5:00 pm • Room 1010 • Weiser Hall

**April 7, 2023 • Friday**

**Thomas Trautmann Honorary Lecture**  
**Daud Ali**, University of Pennsylvania  
**Bhoja Among the Gonds: Place, Memory and the Afterlives of Kingship in Medieval India**  
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

**April 7 & April 8, 2023 • Friday & Saturday**

**Social Media and Society in India Conference**  
9:00 am-5:00 pm • Space 2435 • North Quad



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