

**Tense Times:
Intimacies, Enemies, and Strangers in South Asia**

2nd Annual South Asia by the Bay Graduate Student Conference
Stanford University
May 17 & 18, 2013
Cummings Art Building, ART 4

Friday, May 17, 2013

8:30-9:30 am Registration

9:30 -10:30 am Welcome and Keynote Speech

Anjali Arondekar, UC Santa Cruz

“The Kala of the Archive: Sexuality, Historiography, South Asia”

10:30am-1:00pm

Panel 1: What’s Love Got to Do With it? The Politics of Being Together & Apart in Contemporary South Asia

Mara Green (University of California Berkeley) “The Work of Love: Language and Politics in Nepal's Deaf Society”

This paper draws on my ethnographic work in Nepal’s *bahiraa samaaj* (deaf society) to examine the idiom of love in a context where language is politics. Deaf leaders invoke both the normative power of love and its potential failure when they exhort parents to love their deaf and hearing children equally. Yet love within the space of the home is not enough. As Joshi said in the same speech mentioned above, “When I was born deaf, my parents were sad, but they did not oppress me. They went ahead and *sent me to the deaf school* – and now I’m a member of the CA” (emphasis added). Within deaf society itself, love for other deaf people is articulated both as a natural outcome of the bond of being deaf, and as a moral endeavor which persons must undertake as responsible participants in deaf society and which often takes the shape of linguistic practice, as when fluent signers teach newcomers how to sign. According to a deaf politics, then, the work of love must be accompanied by the work of language, and the labors required by members of the family and members of deaf society are

distinct. This vision asks that we consider not only how love overcomes difference but also how love must take difference into account.

Dolly Kikon (Stanford University) “Pure Love: The Politics of Ethnic Purity & Transgressions in the Foothills of Northeast India”

In this paper I examine how politics of ethnic purity in the militarized and violent frontiers of Northeast India constructs and lay claim to exclusive homelands and ethnic nations. On the basis of a 24-month ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the foothill border between the state of Assam (plains state) and Nagaland (hill state) in Northeast India, I highlight how attachments and intimacies routinely territorialize and naturalize belongings and memories to the “hills” or “plains”. I present how such spatialized affections and attachments frames the language of love, purity, and sacrifice in the foothills and explore these pure nationalist love demanded by the insurgency in conjunction with the stories of “transgressive”, difficult and “impure” relationships that characterize ordinary life in heterogeneous and heavily militarized places like the foothills.

Sophia Powers (University of California, Los Angeles) “*Khirkee Yaan*: Window onto the World (of your neighbor)”

It is nearly impossible to classify “*Khirkeeyaan*”—it lies at the crossroads of art, ethnography and activism. My paper explores the potential of this new mode of art/activism through a close reading of how the “*Khirkeeyaan*” project uniquely illuminates the complex social relations that animate the ancient village of Khirkee. However, I conclude that Anand’s project does not succeed in simply enhancing and emancipating community as the artist claims in prose that echoes the broader aims of the “participatory art” movement that has emerged as a trend in global high-art over the last decade. Rather, in at least one episode, the participants used the new media platform to express their prejudices rather than critically examine them. Remarkably, Anand’s reaction was to plant a trained actor in a follow-up session in order to promote less inflammatory dialogue. Hence, the conflict that arose as a result of Anand’s “open” platform for communication could only be resolved by the artist re-imposing her authorial voice in the guise of a planted actor.

Giulia Mazza (Stanford University) “Diffidence of Democracy in Bhutan”

Political scientists and other observers have admired how smoothly the transition was effected in Bhutan (the country’s first elections, in 2008, proceeded without incident), but

were struck by the marked lack of enthusiasm among many Bhutanese. The general attitude appeared to be a combination of wariness, resistance, and indifference; some Bhutanese later claimed that they were only queuing up to vote because they thought the king was instructing them to. This paper seeks to illuminate the complex dynamics behind this deeply ambivalent Bhutanese response to democratization by investigating how “love of politics” may be indexical, for many Bhutanese, of the unrest they have witnessed unfolding elsewhere in the region. The paper will also examine the role of the Bhutanese monarchy as a treasured institution that is both actively engaged in governing, yet considered above the fray of mundane politics. How might “love of kings” inform the Bhutanese political imaginary and provide a potential counterpoint to “love of politics”?

Bharat Venkat (University of California, Berkeley) “Out of Love, a Death Forestalled”

In 2011, while I was conducting research in HIV clinics in South India, the media began presenting daily coverage of a Supreme Court case that had become a *cause célèbre*. Newspaper editorialists and television pundits regularly expounded their views on the theological, medical and legal issues at stake. The case itself involved a nurse from the southern state of Karnataka, Aruna Shanbaug, who had been working in the King Edward Memorial Hospital in Bombay. In 1973, Shanbaug had been raped and beaten by a ward boy, putting her into a vegetative state. Turning from the tragic story of Shanbaug, I want to recount certain clinical encounters in which HIV-positive patients were understood by clinicians and counselors to be asking for death. The ubiquity of the Shanbaug case in the media, as well as the timing of these requests for death in the clinic, make it highly likely that these patients knew something of the euthanasia ruling. As in the Shanbaug case, the question of legality emerged, in the form of Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code, which prohibits suicide. But at the same time, the seemingly stronger argument that appeared in the court and in the clinics was about love: out of love, the love shared between those who might want to die and those who want them to live, death must be forestalled. This paper considers how love and law converge in the insistence that the living must continue to live.

1-2 pm Lunch

2-3 pm Keynote Speech

Suryakant Waghmore, Tata Institute for Social Sciences

“Of Peasant Kings and Untouchable Citizens: Changing Caste Relations and Civility in Western India”

3-4:30 pm Parallel Panel Session

Panel 2: Law, Property and Propriety

Vashra Iyengar (Stanford University) “The Indian Supreme Court & Transformation in Access to Food: A Case Study on the Right to Food Litigation in India”

The Indian Supreme Court is considered highly “active” in widening the legal framework to include specific social rights of education, health, food etc. However, the key aspect of any social rights initiative is the perception of stakeholders on what resources are to be allocated for its implementation and how. One of the most celebrated cases on enforcement of social rights is *Peoples Union of Civil Liberties v. Union of India*, popularly known as the Right to Food case. In this decade long case, the Supreme Court has issued close to 150 orders to Central and 26 State Governments on the implementation of not only food security schemes but also employment guarantee, mid day meals in schools, pension, maternal health and night shelter schemes. This case not only witnesses the key role of the Supreme Court in destabilizing the status quo on hunger and malnutrition in the country, but also presents diverse political debates on the allocation of resources. This paper is a case study on the Right to Food case that demonstrates how civil society campaigns, political leaders and the Supreme Court came together to debate on their perceptions of the central question of resource allocation to address poverty and hunger in India. Content analysis of court documents and interviews with parties to the case reveal that arguments on resources were far from economic. Rather, they reveal a clash of three cultures: a political culture that disconnects development from political accountability; a legal culture that prods accountability while maintaining legitimacy; and a human rights culture that frames relief from poverty as a rights-based strategy. However, this litigation provided unique incentives for parties to transcend their own political interests to achieve some progressive changes dialogically against food insecurity.

Sudev J Sheth (University of Pennsylvania) “Genealogies of the Urban Present: Land laws, city planning & political practice in ' rural ' Delhi”

New Delhi’s expansion was met with resistance from villagers whose farm lands were being taken for urban development. As a conciliatory gesture to them, the Delhi Development

Authority decided that village residential areas (Hindi: *aabaadi*) would not be acquired and would remain independent from municipal bylaws. As small pockets of unregulated territories, these 'urban villages' have become increasingly valuable to low-level developers because they provide an alternative space for unregulated growth. From the 1980s, overvalued real estate in the city combined with the desirable location of these old urban villages has led to unprecedented residential and commercial development in them. The consequences of this include structural changes in the built environment, shifts in the social and political hierarchies of the village, and new relationships with the municipal body. My project examines Hauz Khas, an important archaeological site and the most popular urban village in New Delhi. By focusing on historical transformations in boundary and land use along with the contemporary politics of urban planning at this heritage site, I seek to understand how seemingly discrepant alternatives and interests converge in remaking a place. My work highlights how India's urban villages can help us think about the complex and contradictory nature of historic preservation, the political and economic nature of neighborhood change, and the gaps that exist between land acquisitions, ideologies of official planning, and the local realities that shape small pockets within big cities.

Peter Samuels (Stanford University) "Sovereignty, Governmentality, or Primitive Accumulation?: The Problem of Land Acquisition in Colonial and Postcolonial India"

In recent years, the Indian state's commitment to accelerated economic growth, as well as the aspirations of the burgeoning urban middle class, have brought about a dramatic expansion of the built environment. This process has resulted in the clearance of substantial areas of urban, rural, and forest land for the construction of new highways, airports, hydroelectric dams, power plants, residential complexes, recreational facilities, municipal infrastructure, and industrial enclaves known as Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Since the land on which such projects are intended to be built is often under habitation or cultivation, their construction requires the displacement of people, a process which evokes strong and divergent responses from those who experience it, as indeed it does from the growing number of scholars from across the contemporary social sciences who have sought to analyze it. While some scholars have sought to understand changes in land use and the built environment in terms of concepts such as "governmentality" and "political society," which highlight the ambiguous and negotiated nature of these transformations, others see a strong "sovereign" state, that is brutal and repressive in its instrumental use of the Land Acquisition Act 1894 in order to facilitate the "primitive accumulation" of land and natural resources in the hands of

the state, the urban middle class, and big capital. This paper considers some of the reasons for why land acquisition in contemporary India produces such divergent social scientific analyses, by placing the contemporary context within a longer genealogy of expropriation law and practice. It does so by providing an account of the expropriation process which preceded the construction of the East Indian Railway in the Bengal Presidency in the early 1850s-- the first major project for which land was acquired in modern India and out of which the first Land Acquisition Act was formed. The paper argues that although much of the interpretive divergence over land acquisition in the present arises out of the theoretical and methodological orientations of different disciplines, and is therefore unlikely to be resolved, a historical perspective enables us to appreciate actual divergences in the experience of expropriation as also being products of the unusual genealogy of expropriation in India, wherein a set of legal tools fashioned under conditions of authoritarian statehood and limited negotiation became lodged in the structure of the state and have survived into the democratic era of negotiated sovereignty which, by its nature, enables and produces divergent outcomes.

Panel 3: Meaning of Violence

Sanchari De (Jadavpur University) “Is Secularism Blasphemy? A study of Bengali Print Media's Response at the Protest in Shahbag, Bangladesh”

This paper is a study of protest in Shahbag square, Bangladesh in demand of death penalty of war criminals. However the primary aim of this paper is to underline the India-Bangladesh relation as perceived through the mainstream Bengali News papers of West Bengal (*Ananadabazar Patrika, Ei Samay*) and Bangladesh (*Prothom Alo*). Richa Jha in her article ‘India Slept Through a Revolution in Bangladesh’ notes the pittance of a coverage by mainstream media in India. This is, however, according to her is the result of ‘don’t-care’ attitude from India’s end. This paper would take into consideration her view to study the mainstream Bengali news papers in India. Bengali newspapers are decisive in this context for two main reasons. First, West Bengal is nearest to Bangladesh not only by its geographical location but also by language and culture. So response of West Bengal to the events of Bangladesh deserves a special mention. Secondly, the recent political tension between the West Bengal State Government and the central Government of India should be referred in this context. I would like to study the extent to which Bengali news papers in India problematize these issues and brings forward the notion of conviviality among strangers. Moreover as on 2nd April Awami Government in Bangladesh decides to put a full stop on the Shahbag Protest and shows inclination towards Blasphemy law, my point would to be

underline Bengali media's reaction at first at the secularist demands in the Shahbag protest and secondly at the imprisonment of three bloggers on account of their practices which ,according to the state ,demean religious values.

Mariahal Hoole (Columbia University) “Surviving Love: Remembering Life & Loss Among the Families of Sri Lanka's Vanni”

As Tamils return to their homes in the shadow of Sri Lanka's violent civil war, ghosts seep out of the land. Stories of spirits and hauntings abound, from the sound of children's crying in Puthukudiyiruppu, to the souls of Sri Lankan soldiers patrolling the roads of Mullaitivu for a lift home. Death continues to mark its presence in life, even as Northern Tamils reclaim life under the sovereignty of the Sri Lankan government and begin the process of rebuilding family and home. While new relationships of power and belonging are being negotiated in the emerging home space of the post-war, old relationships of love and community are being revisited and revised. Some make their presence known in animate stories, memory, and human connections, while others exist in the traumatic silence that marks their loss. Here, in the midst of the ravaged family, the dead linger. Having been stolen or sacrificed for the survival of the Tamil nation, the dead bear many shades of love and belonging. Their presence is evoked in a politically precarious practice of mourning – the mourning of nationhood, homeland and political community, mourning of personal identities and connections, and mourning of security, future, and hope. This paper thus examines narrativized relationships of love and loss to ask what such a future could mean for the women who survived the final battleground of the civil war, when their husbands and children did not.

Qudsiya Contractor (Tata Insititute for Social Sciences) “ ‘Jab Babri Masjid Shaheed Huyi:- Memories of Violence & its Spatial Remnants”

The city of Mumbai is considered a symbol of cosmopolitanism and multicultural urbanism. This paper interrogates secularist notions of Mumbai's public life through the tensions between mainstream cityscape as (Hindu) nation space and Muslim locales as excluded territories. While shared conceptions of locality play an important role in the creation of 'imagined communities', political violence plays a significant role in the way urban localities are ruptured, created and transformed. The violence that followed the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 remains a landmark in the communalisation of Mumbai's landscape. In this paper, I trace recollections and memories of communal violence

decades later, which have come to transform Shivaji Nagar, a predominantly Muslim *basti* (locality) in Mumbai. Based on ethnographic material, I argue that intense political contestation that juxtaposed notions of nation, locality, community and individual, as experienced during these events is significant to the construction of belonging in Muslim localities. The experience of communal violence has made the notions of belonging to a locality a political process, contributing to the construction of collective identities. The violence not only reconfigured communal identities locally but the transformation of localities and neighbourhoods that followed stand as signifiers of these processes even today.

Ather Zia (University of California, Irvine) “The Good Half Widow: Women in Search of the Disappeared Men in Kashmir”

Since 1989 Kashmir has been engulfed in an anti-India armed militancy. Approximately 8,000 to 10,000 men have disappeared in the Indian counter-insurgency actions. Kashmiri women have organized to search for those who have been subjected to enforced disappearance after being arrested by the Indian army. These women mainly Muslim mothers and wives (called half-widows), of the disappeared men have become tireless human rights activists, a form of gendered civic engagement unprecedented in a conservative, majority Muslim society. In this paper I will focus on the life of an activist to trace the micropolitics of agency. Agency can appear in various modes: at one end it is an active manifest form, on the other it can be more nuanced, hence different than just a simple notion of resistance to oppression (Das 2008). The use of performative politics by the activists engages the dramaturgical elements of costume and dialogue. Thus, the “body” becomes a performative site (Taylor 2003). I use performance as a metaphor through which “one can consider things that are in-process, existing, and changing over-time, in rehearsal” (Phelan and Lane 1998). I trace the discursive practices through which the activists produce a body as a “spectacle” of, what is known as “Aasal Zanan” (Aasal” in Kashmiri means good and “Zanan” means “woman”). By foregrounding the “bodies” performance as an Asal Zanan, the women subtly push the boundaries of the social and political norms.

4:45 pm: Reception

Saturday, May 18

9:30am-10:30 am Keynote Speech

Lawrence Cohen, UC Berkeley

“De-duplication, or, the Immateriality of Governance: Reflections on Universal ID, Sex/gender, and AIDS”

10:30 am- 1pm

Panel 4: Lasting Friendships? Tracing Alliances Across Genre, History, and Geography

Rachel Fleming (University of Colorado) “Friends, Colleagues and Intimates: Friendship and New Site of Emotional Intimacy for Professional Women in Bangalore”

The Southern Indian city of Bangalore is a rapidly urbanizing hub of high-tech outsourcing and a key site of social change in South Asia. As more women in Bangalore enter professions in information technology and other high-skill sectors, their spaces of socializing and social networks are shifting from previous generations to include after-work pubs and clubs, and friend groups that are increasingly diverse in terms of gender, community background, and social ties. These new social options and intimate relationships shed light on negotiations over gender equality, familial relations, and what constitutes a modern Indian woman. Even as Bangalore urbanizes and experiences a panic over gendered spaces of belonging, seen in anxiety over harassment and “moral policing” of women in public spaces, women and their friends are claiming new spaces and roles in the modern city. Based on participant-observation and interviews with middle and upper-middle class professional women and members of their friend groups and residential families, conducted over nine months in Bangalore in 2011-12, this paper uses the relatively unconventional lens of friendship to analyze how these women are establishing new forms of identity, spaces of belonging, and ideas about gendered modernity. Through examining women’s friendships, both same-sex and mixed-gender, over multiple generations, I speak to debates about the role of professional women in the “new” India, and propose friendship as a rich, yet understudied arena for understanding shifts in women’s lives and gender relations in times of social transition and uncertainty.

Lily Shapiro (University of Washington) “Handia and Public Health: Tracing Alliances Through History”

This paper is based on fieldwork in Orissa in the summer of 2011, in connection with my work on a larger public health research trial. Little research has been done involving *handia*, an alcoholic beverage made from rice water and consumed by several, primarily Adivasi, groups in Eastern India. Tracing the links the people I spoke to indicated, I use Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory to explore how *handia* is embedded in numerous networks through which it gives and is given meaning (Latour, 2005). These alliances connect women brewing the *handia*, manual laborers drinking it, the *handia* itself, government rice subsidies, rituals and religion, physical pain, bodies in labor, heat and the sun, public health and colonialism, and more. Bearing in mind Latour's emphasis on the importance of description, I also use Donna Haraway's work, to conceptualize power as non-hierarchical (Haraway, 1989). Instead, I assert, power can be seen in the relative stability of networks. I explore in detail the implications of the colonial history of public health in India, questioning not only parallels between the past and the contemporary moment, but actual linkages between the two. What does it mean that researchers from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine continue to study water and sanitation in Orissa (and elsewhere in India and other post-colonies)? Arguing that the network linking water and sanitation, public health interventions, and research has changed little over the past 150 years, and therefore represents a relatively stable network, this paper uses the example of *handia* to examine agency and affinity across historical connections in new ways.

Brian Bond (City University of New York) “Brooklyn Raga Massive: Indian Classical Musicians of New York City”

Brooklyn, often considered New York City's most musically eclectic borough, is home to a weekly open- mic event known as “Brooklyn Raga Massive.” At this event, musicians of diverse musical and cultural backgrounds gather in a cafe-bar in one of the city's wealthiest neighborhoods to perform Indian and Indian-inspired music. For most of these musicians, musical ‘pilgrimage’ to India plays a central role in their development as students. Others rely on local Indian music schools, while still more utilize video chat technology to maintain connections to their gurus in South Asia. “Brooklyn Raga Massive” is only one, albeit uniquely cosmopolitan, example of how the South Asian diasporic community is actively creating new spaces for learning, teaching, and performing Indian classical music in the

metropolitan area. The focus of this paper is on the lived musical and social moments shared by this diasporic community and non-South Asian-American musicians as they engage with one another through a shared passion for South Asian classical music. How does an event like “Brooklyn Raga Massive” forge friendships, alliances, and connections between South Asians, South Asian-Americans, and non-South Asian-Americans? This paper additionally explores my interest in how non-South Asian musicians become enculturated into South Asian forms of discipline and learning during the formation of these relationships, and how they begin to imagine themselves as embodying South Asian classical music lineages. I necessarily examine how music, travel, and technology collapse space and engage ethnic identity during the formation of international and cross-cultural relationships.

Kathryn Zyskowski (University of Washington) “Negotiating Boundaries, Making Friends: African International Students in Hyderabad, India”

India is a burgeoning hot spot for international education and as of 2012 ranked second only to the United States in terms of the number of foreign students attending institutions of higher education. These new educational migratory paths towards India have received little scholarly attention though migration from India to the West for education, and to the Gulf Countries for labor, has been well documented. This paper is part of my larger research project on international student migration to Hyderabad and on the attendant transnational flows of ideas, bodies, and objects. This research, based on pilot fieldwork conducted in December, 2012 focuses on the narratives of five students who arrived in Hyderabad for university education, originally coming from Nigeria and Ethiopia. Part of this paper focuses on the history of Africans living, working, and studying in India and on the race politics surrounding this minority population. The second part of this paper focuses on the recent shift in number of African students studying abroad in India, and on how this is changing the politics of race, culture, and ethnicities in India. The third part of this paper looks at the emergence of new mega churches in urban India, and on how this becomes a central space for friendship building for Ethiopian and Nigerian students. Through this, an analysis of this migration has the potential to shift understandings of social boundaries in South Asia, and the traditional social networks through which friends are allowed. How has the city shifted to accommodate for this student population? How are social boundaries constructed for African students living in India, both between Indian nationals, other international students, and other African nationals? How are perceptions of safety, aspiration, and cosmopolitanism constructed by students home countries and social networks, encouraging an increase in student migration?

1-2 pm Lunch

2-3 pm Keynote Speech

Sudipta Sen, UC Davis

“The Confessions of an Unfriendly Spleen: Medicine, Murder and the Mysterious Organ of Colonial India”

3-5:15 pm, Parallel Panel Session

Panel 5: Strangers and Neighbours

Babyrani Yumna (State University of New York, Binghamton) “Strangers & Neighbours in South Asian Cities Strangers in the Back yard Migrants in Citycape”

Every year, thousands of migrants flock to these urban centers from all over the country, contributing to a vibrant amalgamation of cultures and communities. Migrants from India’s Northeast constitute a sizeable proportion of the service industry workers, working in a range of high to semi-skilled professions. Their steady influx into *mainstream India*, after decades of existing at the margins of dominant national and political consciousness, is seen as ‘encouraging’, particularly in the context of liberal anonymity that urban spaces offer as an alternative to traditional caste and class-based social hierarchies. But does such an *incorporation* mean the dissolution of their marginality? How are conventional boundaries of culture, ethnicity/race, and identity challenged or reinforced in India’s metropolitan centers today? Do liberal ideologies inherent in economic development blur these boundaries? Or, do they (re)produce new faultlines of political volatility and social tension? My paper examines these questions in the specific context of the recent “mass exodus” of Northeast Indians from Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, and Mysore in July-August 2012. I argue that dynamics of inter-community differences and cultural stereotyping lie at the core of localized prejudice that migrants of all classes are subject to. The issue acquires special significance if they belonged to marginalized communities whose political identity is always questioned. That rumors and unsubstantiated news about attacks on anyone *looking like a Northerner* could fuel panic and an unprecedented exodus raise important questions about how contemporary transformations of the economy and politics evoke past conceptualizations of group politics and the “insider-outsider” complex. Through this paper, I contend that such incidents, amongst others, expose the myth that urban spaces, both public and private, are far from liberal melting pots of various subsumed identities. Rather, they open up the

importance of re-looking at the larger questions of the state and society in India today.

Megha Vyas (Columbia University) “From the Colonial to the Contemporary: Contested Identities and Epistemic Reconfiguration of the Hijra and Devadasi (1857-1947)”

My project knowledges the recent shift in colonial studies that examines how colonial power remakes everyday life, especially gender and sexuality. I employ a historical methodological approach to cross-examine two South Asian communities that were defined as “deviant” through colonial discourse, the *hijras* and the *devadasis*. I heavily focus on the effect and disruption the British colonial campaign, and its Western notions of a gender binary, sexuality, and deviance, posed on these two communities. To contextualize the *hijras* and *devadasis* in a pre-colonial era, I analyze ancient Indian cultural and religious material; the ancient scriptures and canonical literature date as far back as the second century. To focus my colonial contextualization, I use colonial narrative (from the British colonial period, 1857 – 1947) such as legislation, court cases, political campaigns, documented meetings, missionary campaigns, and reflections/diary entries. The last chapter dissects the workings of a postcolonial identity in the *hijra* community. Through an analytic combination of postcolonial theory and film theory, it deconstructs documentaries about *hijras* that are made for a Eurocentric audience. Furthermore, it analyzes and explores how these documentaries place the *hijra* figure into a Euro-American trans-narrative, as well as into Euro-American gay and lesbian discourse.

Katyayani Dalmia (New School for Social Research) “Beauty and Modern Bodies in South Asia: The Colour of Caste”

This paper is interested in exploring the intense preoccupation with skin color in everyday social life in urban South Asia. Across scholarship in different world regions, the social significance of skin-tone has been approached predominantly through two frameworks: firstly, the framework of race, and secondly, as a part of processes of commodification, in connection with globalization and consumption. This paper asks if in the South Asian context, the experience of bodily appearance and color can be thought of in other ways; if the conceptual schemes of race and commodification do not, in fact, exhaust ways of understanding the imaginative force of skin-tone. In particular, it asks if one of the factors that inflect the experience of color in contemporary South Asian urban life is caste: In the context of everyday social interactions, are linkages imagined between caste-status and bodily presentations of self? Is caste “read” or assessed, felt or lived through color? This paper

addresses this problem through an inversion of sorts, by turning to the literature that analyzes caste in terms of the body. This includes ethnomethodological and substantive approaches that understand the imagination of caste as an imagination of bodily substance, including recent ethnographic work that studies how religious communalism is fostered by notions of bodily matter ((Muslims as non- vegetarian, Hinduism as “vegetarianism”, Ghassem-Fachandi 2012). It also brings in, and examines the difficulties with, older anthropological approaches that conceive of caste itself as a kind of race. Through this, the paper seeks to ask: is there a connection between substance and color? Given work that looks at substance in the context of caste and religion, is there a broader link between substance and community? And, given the problems with colonial ethnography’s notion of caste as race, how can we now think of the relationships between the three terms of caste, color, and race? The aim of these questions, finally, is to see if either the substantive or the caste-as-race approaches help us make sense of how bodily appearance and aesthetics may be significant for the everyday experience of caste.

Julia Kowalski (University of Chicago) “Seva through Speech: Violence Counseling and the Politics of Kinship in Rajasthan”

Anthropologists of South Asia have long observed that family relationships on the subcontinent are deeply material, demonstrating the importance of everyday intimate transactions of food, household resources, sentiments, and care-work in making up families and people, often described as *seva*, or service. These transactions are, in the ideal, ordered by gendered and generational differences within the household. In this paper, I argue that these transactional kinship ideologies also shape language ideology, using material based on 16 months of ethnographic research at anti-violence family counseling centers in Jaipur, Rajasthan. At these sites, counselors intervene in household life by making clients aware of the poetics and pragmatics of their language use. I outline an ideology, shared by clients and counselors, about how language use marks and enacts appropriate forms of intimacy that I call “asking-and-giving.” When family members enact asking-and-giving, they index their family life as one in which family members fulfill the obligations generated by their hierarchical, gendered and generational roles. When counselors intervene, they make clients aware of the pragmatics of asking-and-giving, reshaping authority, dependence and vulnerability in the household while also appearing to support household hierarchies. Family counseling has come under increasing criticism from women’s rights activists in North India and abroad because it appears to enforce familial norms at the cost of supporting vulnerable women. However, through tracing the role of asking-and-giving in counseling sessions, I demonstrate that counselors mobilize seemingly patriarchal ideologies about hierarchy,

dependence, and care in innovative ways, advocating for women's rights as relational subjects from within, rather than outside, the family. In other words, as they make clients aware of the language ideologies that shape their lives as dependent female family members, counselors mobilize familial love itself as a political resource.

Panel 6: Violence, Witnessing & Performance

Katherine Lieder (University of Wisconsin, Madison) “Ethical Witnessing & Affective Reationality, or Can the Subaltern Scream”

Theatrical representations of modern Indian women often exceed easy interpretations of how gender has been written into the imagination of the postcolonial Indian state and its inhabitants. In light of the recent international attention brought to the issue of violence against women in India through the 2012 Delhi gang rape case, the question of how to engage in ethical practices of witnessing this violence in both performances and daily life becomes particularly compelling. *Lights Out*, a modern Indian play by Manjula Padmanabhan, depicts an incident in which a woman (who, importantly, never appears on-stage) is being gang-raped in an abandoned apartment building directly next-door to the building in which the play is set. The only thing visible to members of the audience is the interior of a middle class apartment and the interactions between its middle class inhabitants as they attempt to interpret the sound and sight of a woman in pain. I read this woman's visually absent body combined with her lack of dialogue (beyond her repeated cries for help) as both a concretely suffering individual woman and a metaphor for the unrepresentable quality of woman as she is constituted through specifically gendered violence. With this reading, I argue for the importance of our inability to represent her fully—a full representation risks re-performing exactly the kind of gendered violence the play is speaking out against—and the role of performance in creating a space in which a partial representation can be wholly affectively moving precisely because of its fragmentation.

Shashank Saini (University of Pennsylvania) “Urban Modernity & Women: The Appropriation of Middle Class Subjectivity as a Technique of Governmentality in New Delhi”

On December 17, 2012, a young woman was “gangraped” by four people in a moving bus in New Delhi. This incident had the whole city up in a furor with protests that lasted weeks sending ripples in the upper echelons of major intuitions of governance. The Prime Minister blamed ‘footloose migrants’ who are unable to keep abreast with urban modernity, while

local and transnational newspapers blamed “patriarchy”, “a culture of rape”, and “rural mindsets” for such recurrent acts of violence. In this paper I argue that ‘safety of women’ is a crucial hinge on which the legitimization of the state’s agenda of developmental modernism- manifested in Delhi’s urban spatial realignment- is being attained. On December 24th, 2012, the Delhi government announced the start of a three digit helpline number, “181”, to enable women to make complaints regarding gendered violence directly to the Chief Minister’s office. I examine infrastructural responses such as this to argue that the state in Delhi is politicizing life not through exception (Agamben 1994), or illegibility (Das and Poole 2004), but instead through the appropriation of middle class subjectivity that is exposed in the “cul-de-sac” of the double bind between, as I conceptualize, the empathetic state, and the non-empathetic state. Urban spatial realignments in Delhi are in the interest of the middle class, yet these agendas are arrived at after tenuous negotiations with the state. I see these negotiations as techniques of governmentality, and I argue that infrastructural adjustments opens up cracks in the double bind of the state exposing the production and appropriation of middle class subjectivity in the production of truth.

Malvika Maheshwari (Center for Policy Research) “Heroes in the Bedroom? Iconoclasm & the Search for Exemplarity in India”

The increasing influence of religion in politics and the socio-political strengthening of religious nationalism since the 1990s in India have among other things, impacted art practice in unprecedented ways. Artists and works of art were dragged into controversies and violent attacks focusing on the religious identity of the artists, their depiction of gods and goddesses or their representation of women; in some cases these attacks addressed more political concerns and were conceived as an embarrassment to the ruling government. The paper addresses the issue of violent, controversial attacks on artists and works of art in India, which have been increasing with the rise of religious nationalism since the 1990s. It argues that understanding the attacks solely on the basis of macro religious and political ideologies, though demonstrable, may not be adequate, for it overlooks the most important agent of action: the individuals who lead the attacks and indulge in violence. I argue that a common theme that defines the micro-sociological make-up of this violence is the choice for glory through a collective imagination, a self-perception of the cult of the hero.

Najia Mukhtar (School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London) “Resisting religious intolerance in contemporary Pakistan?”

Pakistan is seeing expanding formats of religious violence and protest against religious violence. Large-scale killings of *Ahmedi's* in Lahore (2010) have given way to tremendous attacks on Shi'as in Quetta (December 2012, February 2013) and in Karachi (March 2013). In response, *dharnas* (sit-ins), heavily participated in by women and children, have entered a repertoire of protest previously largely comprised of men rioting, burning tires and looting public property. But protest against religious violence and extremism is also occupying ideational and discursive planes, and facilitated by new technologies, it is occurring increasingly in virtual realms. This paper traces the discourses and activities of two prominent 'tolerant' movements in Pakistan; the 'moderate' Sunni scholar, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi and his Al-Mawrid organisation, and the successful Sufi music initiative started in Pakistan, Coke Studio. I examine how these social actors seek to disrupt the hegemonic, 'intolerant' notion that *there can be only one true "Islam"* with alternative, more embracing conceptualisations of how aspiring "true" Muslims should approach a heterogeneous societal reality. A different epistemological approach to religious understanding attempts to 'reason with' the religious and sectarian other; a Sufi inspired 'love, peace, harmony' musical discourse hides complex layers of meaning. Further the 'performance' of each of these discourses carries intriguing modes of conveying credibility. Finally, how do these ideas and performances intersect with other forms of protest such as sit-ins?

5:30-6:30 pm Film: Bengali Harlem
Featuring Director, Vivek Bald