

South Asian Resilience: Environments, Politics, Economics

2023 South Asian Studies Association Zoom conference

Hosted by Loyola Marymount University

Pacific Daylight Time: Friday, March 24 morning, 8 a.m. through Sunday, March 26 evening, 10:30 p.m. PST

Indian Standard Time (concurrent): Friday, March 24 evening, 9:15 p.m. through Monday, March 27 morning, 11:30 a.m. IST

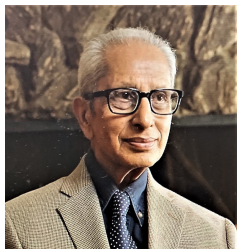
South Asian countries emerged as independent resilient nations from the mid-20th century. These milestones ushered in new political and economic structures, as well as created fertile ground for national pride and a redefinition of religious and even gender identities. Our SASA gathering will examine the intersections of tradition and modernity from multiple perspectives.

Opening segment: Welcome; SASA Exemplar Awards

Friday, March 24 morning, 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. Pacific

Friday, March 24 evening, 8:30 to 10 p.m. India

SASA Exemplar Honorees 2023: Drs. Deepak Shimkhada and Rita Sherma



Dr. Deepak Shimkhada was born in Darkha, a remote village nestled in the foothills of the Ganesh Himal mountain range in West Nepal. He studied fine arts in India at the University of Baroda in Gujarat. There, he began his training in art, which would prove a life-changing experience for him. Upon earning an M.A. degree in Fine Arts, he was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to study art history in the United States. He attended the University of Southern California, the University of Chicago, Ohio State University, and finally Claremont Graduate University, where he received a Ph.D.

Dr. Shimkhada's area of academic interest is the relationships between art and religion and between religion and science. He has taught subjects ranging from art history to culture, semiotics, and religions at a number of universities and colleges, including Scripps College, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont School of Theology, and California State University at Northridge. He has traveled widely, learning the languages and social customs of many new cultures.

As a member of several academic and social organizations, Dr. Shimkhada has served as president of the Nepal-America Society of California, the Himalayan Arts Council of Pacific Asia Museum, and the Asian Studies on the Pacific Coast and South Asian Studies Association. Currently, he is president of the Indic Foundation.

Dr. Shimkhada has appeared in many televised episodes on the History Channel, Australian Channel and BBC. He is a widely-published author who has contributed many articles and chapters to academic works. These include *Himalayas at the Crossroads: Portrait of a Changing World* (1987); *The Constant and Changing Faces of the Goddess: Goddess Traditions of Asia* (2008); *Nepal: Nostalgia and Modernity* (2012); *South Asian Studies: Bridging Cultures* (2020); *As the World Churns: A Legend Where Reality and Myth Blend* (2020); *Nepal: Historical Study of a Hindu Kingdom* (2022); and *Nepal, a Shangri-La? Narratives of Culture, Contact and Memory* (2022).

Dr. Shimkhada's autobiography, *Nepal to California: A Life of Adventure and Memories* (2022) is a fascinating journey through his life. He also writes stories for children, to encourage them to expand their minds beyond what is visible. As a writer, he believes that "reality is not what it seems": there is so much in this world about which we don't know that anything could be possible.



Dr. Rita D. Sherma is founding Director of the Graduate Theological Union's Center for Dharma Studies (CDS) in Berkeley, California. She served as Chair of the Theology & Ethics Department, GTU Core Doctoral Faculty, and as Co-Chair of Sustainability 360, an interreligious and intercultural environmental humanities initiative. Her responsibilities at GTU, Berkeley, have included the development of the structure and curriculum for two MA and four PhD Concentrations, as well as two Certificates—including a forthcoming one in Sustainability Studies. She holds an MA in Religion, and a PhD in Theology & Ethics from Claremont Graduate University, CA. Prior to coming to GTU, she served as the Swami Vivekananda Professor of Hindu Studies at University of Southern California (USC), Los Angeles.

Dr. Sherma serves on the Editorial Board of the American Academy of Religion's *Reading Religion Journal*, the Advisory Board of the *Yale University Forum for Religion and Ecology*, and is Co-Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Dharma Studies: Asian and Transcultural Religion, Philosophy, and Ethics*. She is Co-editor of *Hinduism and Tribal Religions* in the multi-volume *Encyclopedia of Indian Religions* (2022).

Released in June 2022, her 35-chapter edited volume titled *Religion & Sustainability: Interreligious Resources, Interdisciplinary Responses* was published in the UN Sustainable Development Goals Series | Springer-Nature, (with P. Bilimoria). Her monograph *Radical Divine*

Immanence: An Emancipatory, Ecofeminist, Hindu Eco-Theology of Shakti (Bloomsbury) in pending publication in 2023. She has published nine books including *Swami Vivekananda: His Life, Legacy, & Liberative Ethics* (2021); *Contemplative Studies and Hinduism: Meditation, Devotion, Prayer & Worship* (2020); *Woman & Goddess in Hinduism* (2011); *Hermeneutics and Hindu thought: Towards a Fusion of Horizons* (2008), and more than 35 academic book chapters and journal articles. *Contemplative Studies & Jainism: Meditation, Renunciation, Prayer, and Veneration* (with C. Bohanec & P. Bilimoria) is pending publication (2023). Her works have appeared in publications released by NYU, SUNY, Georgetown University Press, and other notable publishers.

She has produced two documentaries through GTU, titled (1) *Ecospirituality: Environmental Pathways to Healing*, and (2) *Greening Spirituality* (with Dr. Devin Zuber), and has collaborated on the video *Sacred Rivers*. Dr. Sherma served as the religion and culture advisor on the animated movie, *Soul*, which won two academy awards including best animated feature. Rita Sherma has presented over 100 scholarly research papers at major academic forums such as the American Academy of Religion and other eminent venues. She is a meditation teacher of long-standing.

Session One: The Resilience of Gandhi and the Bhagavad Gītā

Friday, March 24 morning, 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Pacific

Friday, March 24 evening, 10 to 11 p.m. India

The Tartan Gandhi: Mahatma Gandhi and Scotland

Professor Chandrika Kaul, Professor of Modern History, University of St Andrews

Scotland and India have a long and chequered history. This paper will examine Scotland's imperial past as well as contemporary concerns through the prism of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi never visited Scotland, though he made multiple visits to England and lived in London for a few years. The talk will focus on the legacies of empire in the light of the recent and ongoing - and often acrimonious - debates over the fate of public monuments, through an analysis of the busts and statues of Gandhi in the UK, and especially the installation of the first full length statue of Gandhi in Ayr during 2019.

Talks on the Gītā: An Opportunity for Interfaith Intersection

Dr. Swasti Bhattacharyya, 2023 Fulbright Nehru Scholar, Banaras Hindu University

Dr. Bernadette McNary-Zak, Associate Professor, Rhodes College

In this paper, we examine an intersection of religious traditions in Thomas Merton's encounter with Vinoba Bhave's *Talks on the Gītā*. Thomas Merton (1915-1968) was a Trappist monk at the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani in Kentucky. Vinoba Bhave (1895-1982) was Mahatma Gandhi's disciple, confidant, and spiritual successor. We demonstrate how Vinoba's *Talks on the*

Gītā provided Merton with a framework and language to contemplate the importance and meaning of action and nonattachment in pursuit of his svadharma. Since beginning this project, we have presented papers on Merton's encounter with Vinoba's text to a number of scholarly groups. At this stage of our work, we are especially interested in presenting this paper at this conference to receive feedback from scholars working directly in South Asian Studies.

Session Two: Environmental Difficulty and Resilience in South Asia
Friday, March 24 evening, 8 p.m. to 10:15 p.m. Pacific
Saturday, March 25 morning, 8:30 to 10:45 a.m. India

Exploring 'Tribal Ecologies' in Post-Independent India: A Panel Discussion

Stephen Christopher, University of Copenhagen

Raile Rocky Ziipao, India Institute of Technology, Bombay

Matthew Shutzer, Bard College

This panel brings together scholars working at the intersections of tribal studies and ecology, drawing primarily from the fields of sustainability studies, political ecology and anthropology. Our contribution stems from a 2022 workshop, hosted at the University of Copenhagen's Centre for Applied Ecological Thinking (CApE), and a forthcoming special issue in the Journal of the Tribal Intellectual Collective India. In this panel, we advance the idea of 'tribal ecology' and consider its applicability at different scales of analysis. We advance two interrelated arguments. First, how debates about nature are one of the primary ways tribal identities are negotiated in contemporary India. Second, and relatedly, how nature represents a terrain of politicization by which tribal communities contest state developmentalism, extractive economies, and military-paramilitary violence. These arguments are grounded in a variety of ethnographic and historical case studies across India.

'How Can We Leave Our Lands Barren?': Climate Change Induced Threats to Tribal Ecology and Subsistence Farming

Jay Sharma, Syracuse University

A visible impact of climate change induced erratic weather pattern, rising heat level and drying water resources can be seen through shrinking livelihood avenues of the Ho tribe in the state of Jharkhand, India. These impacts run deeper when seen through the prism of community's relation to local landscape, that includes land, forest, and water resources. The Ho tribe's sense of history and identity being rooted in the local landscape, thus become equally contingent upon the climate induced changes. Drawing on the idea of 'tribal ecology' evoked in the introduction of this special edition, that is 'enabling a deeper understanding of the specific ways that idea about nature enter into processes of tribal identity formation,' my paper analyses the intergenerational impact of climate change in shaping the community's notions around land, livelihood, and labor with specific reference to the subsistence farming—a major source of livelihood for the community.

Conservation and Displacement in the Dampa Tiger Reserve Forest in Mizoram

Shyamal Chakma, PhD, SOAS, University of London

This presentation investigates the failure of a conservation project to conserve wildlife and biodiversity, sustainability, and the results of conflicts at multiple levels. The DTR is an imposed and top-down or colonial conservation project that engages with discourses of 'tribal ecologies' that may, in reality, disrupt the local socio-ecological systems of tribal people.

Climate Change: Origins and Outcomes on Pakistan and Prospect Resolutions

Iram Ahmad, Faculty Member, Forman Christian University

Human progress is being subverted by temperature transformation, which has a severe menace in this century. In fact, environment variation is the aspect by which the meteorological developments take place, which contributes towards alternations in the international eco and bio fields through instinctive processes. In this backdrop, this research measures that universal atmosphere catastrophe presents a lot of hazards to the survival and growth of the Pakistan. The research examines that why Pakistan is going through persisting heatwaves and droughts, riverine and outburst torrents, landslides, and ocean storms or windstorms. There will be considerable increases in temperature across the state and in the snow-capped highland north, which will bring to quicker polar melt, culminating in adjustments to the Indus River flows downstream. Besides, the study has developed Anthropogenic Global Warming theory (AGW) to prove the reliability of the key arguments in this paper. Which believes that man-made carbon dioxide is accountable for tsunamis, droughts, extreme weather, crop declines, species extinctions, dissemination of viruses, sea coral bleaching and starvation. Whereas the primary sources from Asian Development Bank, Climate Risk and Adaptation Country Profile; Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Climate Change, National Climate Change Policy Islamabad, Human Cost of Floods in Pakistan, Annual Report have taken. Overall, the inquiry strives to not only determine the reasons and effects of climate transformation in Pakistan but also to confer viable solutions to alleviate the shift of environment change in Pakistan.

Political Ecology: A Framework for Analysing Water Quality Conflict

Aditya Raj Kashyap, Banaras Hindu University

Conflicts over water use, allocation, upper-lower riparian debate, transboundary water and related issues are widely known and oft-repeated. In recent years, conflict over water quality has assumed imperative between water users. Water quality conflicts are generally inter-sectoral involving industry versus agriculture or industry and agriculture versus drinking water. This study is concerned with the conflict over water pollution in Palar River basin. Palar River has been supporting a flourishing leather industry in Tamil Nadu. Since the 1970s, with the growing use of synthetic tanning, the conflict of interest between tanners and farmers has been severe. The study uses four arguments of political ecology to analyse this conflict: First, extent of degradation of water quality by leather industries is examined. Second, worst affected proportions

and groups are identified based on the sustenance costs incurred. Third, state policies and governance are investigated to compare the degree of their control against local control. Fourth, processes of ‘politicization of ecology’ and ‘ecologization of politics’ in the Palar River water pollution conflict are untangled. And last, Environmentalism of the people affected is studied and inferences drawn on their becoming environmental subjects.

Laying Down Pipes, Connecting Households Unequally: Transnational Contractors Constructing a Water Distribution System in Khulna, Bangladesh

Sonia Ahmad, Cornell University

Despite the continuous efforts of the international community to address water scarcity, there are considerable inequities in access as millions of poor people continue to lack access to safe drinking water and sanitation services. Political ecology scholars examining inequalities in drinking water access suggest paying attention to the underlying power structures perpetuating those injustices, however, they have primarily focused their research on inequalities during water provision and have yet to examine how the construction also produce inequities. This paper addresses this lacuna by using an actor-centered political ecology lens to explore the construction of a water distribution network by a Chinese transnational contractor in the coastal city of Khulna, Bangladesh. It follows the everyday practices of a Chinese transnational contractor and their local Khulna staff as they lay down pipes to connect households and finds that even though the planning process rendered the distribution network technical, its construction involved politics, technology, and constant struggles between multiple people and actors. It argues that these struggles, politics, and interactions with both physical infrastructure and abstract/technical water plans during construction which then produced the unequal water provision landscape in Khulna city.

Negotiating Environmentalisms: Indigenous Ecology and the Bishnoi of North India

Vincent Burgess, Cornell University

Founded in the fifteenth-century CE by Guru Jambha (or Jambheshwar, “lord Jambha”), the Bishnoi of northwest India are both a religious movement and caste primarily located throughout Rajasthan and Haryana, as well as parts of Punjab. Today, the Bishnoi are often referred to as the “original tree huggers,” and primarily associated with their environmental efforts. This aspect of their identity is discursively produced “on the ground” via melas, organized ecological efforts, and Bishnoi-centered media; and reproduced both by media outlets in India and abroad, as well as within contemporary academic scholarship on the Bishnoi. This paper will argue that although this aspect of contemporary Bishnoi identity—their environmentalism—can be traced back to their earliest tenets, it owes much of its contemporary articulation to the spread of a “western,” secular environmentalist discourse in the 1960s and 1970s. Following the relative success and popularity of the Chipko movement in the early 1970s, in 1978 the Bishnoi of central Rajasthan began a commemorative mela at Khejarli (the site of an 18th century massacre near Jodhpur, whereby 363 Bishnoi were killed while protecting a grove of sacred khejarli trees). Prior to the 1970s their ecological ethos was rarely presented at the forefront of their religious identity,

however since the 1970s it has become their primary discursive identity. The goal of this paper is to more thoroughly examine the historical lineage of the moniker “environmentalists” with regard to the Bishnoi sect—along with the matrix of myths intertwined therein—in order to move towards a more fully developed, critical understanding of the sect’s history, especially their modern or recent history, alongside the development of their contemporary cultural identity. Thereby, this paper broadly engages the intersection of tradition and modernity during the post-Independence period through the examination of environmentalism and ecology within a north Indian religious tradition.

Ecological Sustainability and the Resilience of the Buddhist Community in Tamil Nadu, India, Gauthama Prabu, Director of the Foundation of His Sacred Majesty, Chennai

This presentation concerns ecological sustainability based on the resilience of the Buddhist community in Tamil Nadu, India. It is generally believed that Buddhist activities were mainly concentrated in central, northern, and eastern India. Yet, recent explorations have revealed more than a hundred sites of ancient Buddhist heritage remains in Tamil Nadu. These sites have been geo-registered and documented as a digital database including a description of Buddhist artifacts and locations. These findings have further encouraged our Dalit community, a historically oppressed community, to initiate programs for sustainability of the environment and heritage conservation in South India with the goal of creating an eco-temple space as an institute for permaculture, museum, and teaching anthropology based on the pioneering efforts and legacy of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. In this context, it has been the suffering throughout Asia brought about by environmental degradation from the modern industrial development process, such as deforestation and the destruction of numerous habitats. A critical aspect of this process has been the economic marginalization of rural communities and the exploitation and destruction of their environments for the creation of massive energy projects for the creation of high consumption urban lifestyles — e.g. massive dams that have relocated hundreds of thousands of people and nuclear power plants that endanger the entire fabric of life in rural areas. The Eco-Temple Community Development Project is a plan to bring many of these activities in different regions together to bolster the integrative efficiency of each individual project and support and advance a wider movement among Buddhists, other communities of faith, and wider civil society, business, and governmental initiatives to build sustainable and ecological societies. The ancient Buddhist temples represented the inclusiveness of socio-enviro-spiritual-architectural activism which needs revitalization at the present. These efforts will result in sustaining our ancient ethos in India for the present and future.

Session Three: The Resilience of Women in South Asia

Saturday, March 25 morning, 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Pacific

Saturday, March 25 evening, 8:30 to 11 p.m. India

Behind the ‘First Great Mughal’: Khanzada Begum

Chandini Jaswal, Panjab University, India

The history of India will always be synonymous with the greatness of the Mughals. Like everything else, however, history has also always been synonymous with ‘his-story’. Whilst a plethora of research has been done on the lives of the Great Mughal Emperors, little is known about the women behind them and the role the harem collectively played in the political dynamic. Through this research paper, an attempt has been made to provide a biographical account of one such veiled woman— Khanzada Begum, the elder sister of Babur, the first Mughal Emperor. Few who know about her sacrifice have rightly attributed it to have made the establishment of this glorious empire possible. Even less known fact is that when she returned from her exile years later, Khanzada played a significant role in the political scene. Although the Begum never penned a memoir, she was discussed in various contemporary accounts. For example, Babur’s autobiography ‘Baburnama’, Gulbadan Begum’s memoir ‘Ahval-i-Humayun Badshah’, Mirza Haidar’s ‘Tarikh-i-Rashidi’, Shaibani Khan Uzbek’s ‘Shaibaninama’. All these records have been quoted in this paper. Khanzada Begum’s existence is an enigma—although respected all her life and even in death, she is rarely mentioned both in contemporary and present-day records. This research paper argues that the Begum was intentionally obliterated from the records of one of the most documented histories owing to the probable source of humiliation her sacrifice became. In the end, an attempt has also been made to ‘demythicise’ the Mughal harem, which has today become synonymous with promiscuity in popular thought.

The Systemic Erasure of Feminine Voices from Indian History and Mythology: Panel
Moupia Basu, Nandini Sengupta, Koral Dasgupta, Independent Scholars

This panel will explore the systemic erasure of feminine voices from Indian history and whether this is a trend within mythology as well. India’s post-Independence history has acquired a male gaze that has willy-nilly obliterated powerful female monarchs from the mainstream history narrative. Sometimes, they become footnotes in the great game that’s focussed on Delhi. Sometimes, they are deliberately mythologised in an effort to deny they even existed.

In this context we would like to discuss two such queens on whom we are currently doing extensive research – the brave tribal queen Rani Durgawati and Bhagmati, the queen of the fifth Qutub Shahi ruler Mohammad Quli Qutub Shah. Through these two very different women – both queens, both forgotten, both remembered and mythologised – Nandini and Moupia will talk about how Indian history needs a retelling in a way that allows the brave, ruthless, sassy, stubborn women from its past get their voices back in the present. Koral will talk about the powerful feminine voices from Indian mythology.

Transformation of Tradition from Buddhism to Hinduism:

The Footprint of the Goddess at Sannati

Chandrika Sunkad, Deccan College

The paper aims to understand the mythological origins, iconography and influence of a local Goddess Chandralamba in Sannati, in Karnataka, South India. The unique and sacred icon of the goddess is a synthesis of Durga, Laxmi and Sarasvati and is considered to be a family goddess.

The focus of the paper is on the footprints of the goddess which can be related to the footprints of the Buddha that has been found in the nearby recent archaeological excavation at Kanaganahalli. It raises questions of conceptual transformation of meaning within the tradition, between religions and finally about the three Goddess traditions in visual and textual contexts.

Discovering the Yoginis: Women and Cultural Diplomacy

Sowmya Ayyar, Malviya Center for Peace Research, Banaras Hindu University
Pragya Bhatt, Independent Researcher

Music and mantra, art and architecture, dance and storytelling are forms of third level diplomacy for women in the field of yoga. In the modern global yoga scene, most of the schools of yoga are "founded" or "headed" by male figures, who trace their lineages back to other male figures. Juxtaposing this is a phenomenon of female practitioners of all shapes and sizes.

Where can women yoga practitioners find their roots? We posit that from the 5th-15th centuries, the yoginis were very much central in Indic traditions. They were matrikas or mothers; kula devis or village goddesses; ferociously strong beings who either refused to submit to the prevalent patriarchal systems that dominated the society or chose to step out and away from them. They were captivating the world around them, and shone a light on the power of women to be the producers of culture and founders of a yogic lineage that has been largely ignored, often marginalized today. Energetically feminine, Yoginis can be seen as third level diplomats, representatives of a sub-culture within Indic lore which is not often referenced today in modern yogic circles. Monuments to Yoginis in India abound, such as those in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh; textual references and stories from Skanda Purana (Kashi Khanda) and Yogini Tantra. Academic literature from researchers such as Stella Dupuis and Vidya Dehejia attests to their importance, as well as popular cultural references and blogs. Through analysis of these, we argue the Yoginis were/are as cultural diplomats and peace builders. Defining peace builders as anyone who works towards positive peace in spiritual, cultural, or structural realms, we see that the yoginis were just this. They developed sangha in which they supported one another in their spiritual journeys. They further provide roots for today's woman to understand a feminine path of sadhanas to spiritual enlightenment, including a wide variety of aspects of an individual: through ridding themselves and the world of negative energies.

In this presentation, we engage with the stories of Yoginis serving as emissaries between gods and humans. We explore the centrality of the Yogini figure in society and culture. We develop dance movements combining mudra elements from the Abhinaya Darpanam, yogasanas and Kalaripayattu, evoking a range of feminine forms that depict various emotions and feelings which we can relate today, which ultimately provides a cultural connection to Indian history. Through these many cultural forms, we see the Yoginis to be an inherent part of India's history of diplomacy, who can bridge the divide between a patriarchal system and one that breaks social norms and creates space for women to rise and shine through their own merit. Yoginis provide a baseline understanding of the possibilities of the feminine energy's capacities, a reference point for Indian women and people around the world to recognize their own lineage.

Biography as History

Purnima Bhatt, Hood College

Of the thousands of biographies and autobiographies published each year, very few are of women. This could be because of the prevailing stereotypes: that women's lives are monotonous, uninteresting and uneventful and therefore, don't warrant serious examination. As a result, we know very little about women's interior worlds and exterior lives, the texture of their lives and lived experiences. This paper tries to rectify this by examining the life and contributions of an Indian feminist, educator, social reformer and freedom fighter. Her autobiography published in 1938 gives a penetrating glimpse into her life but more importantly, it is a record of the momentous changes sweeping over India—from the age of maharajas to the stirrings for India's independence and the freedom struggle which swept over and transformed the society. Thus, her writings provide a glimpse into the political upheaval and social transformations as witnessed through the eyes of an Indian woman.

Session Four: Buddhism/Jainism/Meditation

Saturday, March 25 evening, 8 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Pacific

Sunday, March 26 morning, 8:30 to 11 a.m. India

The Practice of Mindfulness in Sri Lanka

Sirinanda Unaleeye, University of the West, Rosemead, California

Mindfulness means being aware of the body and the mind. Mindfulness is a broadly spoken topic nowadays all around the world. On the one side, political, economic, and health crisis issues are growing faster while some people seek to develop inner peace and spirituality. My paper will discuss the contemporary mindfulness practice carried out in Sri Lanka. One of the significant concepts is "Sathi Pāsala" in English mindfulness school. This program primarily focuses on younger generation rather than adults so we can make hopes about the spiritually developed next generation.

The Digital Dhāraṇī Project: Preserving Rare Incantation Manuscripts from Nepal

Miroj Shakya, Associate Professor, University of the West

Dhāraṇī" is a Sanskrit term that means "holding" or "grasping." It usually refers to a type of magical phrase or incantation believed to have mystical power. Dhāraṇīs are a significant part of Mahayana Buddhist literature and are often recited in ritual practices. This paper will focus on the groundbreaking initiative called the Digital Dhāraṇī Project of the Nagarjuna Institute of Buddhist Studies (NIBS), Nepal and Asian Legacy Library, Sedona, its goals, and the importance of preserving endangered, precious, and rare Dhāraṇī manuscripts from Nepal through digital preservation methods.

Collection of Records Concerning the Buddhist Canon:

A Catalog of South Asian Texts by Seng You

Alex Amies, University of the West

The paper will discuss the text *Chu San Zang Ji Ji* 'Collection of Records Concerning the Chinese Buddhist Canon', which is the oldest extant catalog of the Chinese Buddhist canon, dating to 502-557. It is a catalog of South Asian texts in Chinese translation and commentaries on those. The text was compiled by Seng You (445-518) in the Liang dynasty in 15 fascicles. It can be found in the *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, Volume 55, No. 2145 in addition to other versions of the canon. The text is a foundational work in Buddhist bibliographical studies.

Redefining Religion: Jain Śetāmbara Terāpantha Saman Order Initiation (1980)

Rohini Pragma Samani, Associate Professor, Jain Vishwa Bharti Institute

A reform movement took place in the eighteenth century within the Jain Śetāmbara ascetic tradition. It was started by a monk named Bhīkhaṅgī in accordance with his belief based on Jain scriptures in absolute non-interference with any living being, either to help or hinder, except for ascetics who should still be given alms for soteriological reasons. In contrast to this ideology, with the changed political and economical structures of India in the post colonial period the terāpantha ācārayas (leaders) made significant efforts to contact and influence Indian and Jain community of the home country and dispersed abroad as well. The changed structure brought the opportunity to visualize a new form of ascetic order which could pave the way between the existing ascetic model and the lay following. The great legends of modern times H.H. Acharya shri Tulsi and H.H. Acharya shri Mahaprgyaji set an admirable example before the world by introducing a new order in the name of Samana Shreni. The paper argues that the establishment of Samana Shreni was not devoid of criticism, however, the changed Indian political and economic structure welcomed this needed change by redefining religion in more secular terms.

Meditation in the Yoga of Gurāṇi Añjali: Panel Presentation

Keren Eshed, Colure Caulfield, Christine Gabaly, Christopher Key Chapple, Loyola Marymount University

Gurani Anjali (1935-2001) founded Yoga Anand Ashram on the south shore of Long Island, New York, in 1972, teaching Patañjala Yoga as she learned it in Calcutta during the 1940s. This panel will investigate her teachings on Yoga from four perspectives, based on archival material, including songs and lectures recorded in 1980. The members of the panel are all students and faculty at Loyola Marymount University, addressing the following topics, respectively: the importance of breath, meditation, the comings and goings of the mind in motion, and Puruṣa, Prakṛti, and the four *bhāvas* in song.

Session Five: Resilience in Literature, the Arts, Maritime Trade, and Dalit Communities

Sunday, March 26 morning, 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Pacific

Sunday, March 26 evening, 8:30 to 11:00 p.m. India

Literature and Empathy: Leadership within the South Asian Context

Mayuri Deka, Assistant Professor, University of the Bahamas

South Asia has established itself as a global economic force. As the world becomes increasingly fluid and more diverse populations come in contact, it is generating novel forms of socio-cultural and economic identities. Within the business sphere, leaders are accepting the importance of incorporating strategies within their practices to interact and negotiate with diverse ethno-cultural demographics. Traditionally identified as a soft skill, empathy is being recognized as an important skill for perceiving and accepting a common ground of reference and similarity of experiences. In analyzing the leadership of 6,731 managers in 38 countries, the Center of Creative Leadership found a positive co-relationship between job performance and empathy. The ability to imagine oneself in the Other's experience while envisioning their affective responses, ideas or thoughts could not only improve personal experiences but also drive substantial business results. It leads to more effective communication and better understanding of the needs and goals of the team. Indeed, empathy is now considered a key component of emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. A literature classroom that emphasizes the faculty of critical analysis underlining emotional intelligence required to question the non-contradictory rationality of biases (racial, ethnic, gender etc.) is dependent to a large extent on the process of induction that an individual undergoes. The crucial role that empathy based education can play in creating a broader base of identification is an effective tool in realizing the options that critical reading and analyzing offer in a literature classroom. Promoting empathic reasoning, imaginatively structured around discerning and understanding the experiences and space occupied by a diverse demographic within the business sphere, literature can arouse emotions and direct them through linguistic, imagistic and affective registers.

Indigenous Stitch-Arts of India: Tradition and Revival in a Global Age

Punam Madhok, Associate Professor, East Carolina University

In bygone days, the special sewing skill of embroidery or stitch-art was an engrossing and calming recreation in India. With a well-stocked repertoire of motifs at their fingertips, needleworkers adorned the cloth and documented their observations. Marginalized women who are now the main practitioners of stitch-arts in India depend on their artistic production to earn a living and thereby overcome barriers. This applies in varying degrees to four notable stitch-arts of India known as chikankari, rabari, phulkari, and kantha. Shaped by environmental factors, regional customs, and individual circumstances, each of these stitch-arts has developed a specific style and practitioners are adapting their methodologies to meet the requirements of global trade. My paper discusses how organizations are striving today to revive the engaging and narrative potential of stitch-arts as well as to convert them into an income generating enterprise, and how present-day artists are expanding their scope by applying distinctive renditions of them to their artwork.

Tradition and Modernity in South Asian Arts: Panel Presentation

Debashish Banerji, Nalini Rao, Deepak Shimkhada

This panel aims to examine the characteristics, polarities and similarities of traditional and modern art in South Asia in a historical context. It discusses the two 'styles' under artistic forms, norms, meaning, in the light of contemporary society. Certain key issues, such as transformations from tradition to modern, process of modernization, adaptation and reshaping of traditional values, conflict and displacement of traditions, and response of tradition towards 'modernity' will be touched upon. The panelists will attempt to answer some key questions: How can we define traditional and modern art, and what are its assumptions. Do we need to deconstruct these terms or are they useful to art historians. What are the characteristics and traits of the two forms? How do they relate to changes in society and culture? How has the modern reshaped the traditional? Can we understand non-Western art using these terms?

Modernism in the Bengal School of Art: Reflections on the Centenary of a Bauhaus Exhibition in Calcutta, 1922

Debashish Banerji, Haridas Chaudhuri Professor of Indian Philosophies and Cultures, California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS)

In December 2022, an artists' collective named Sahayāna held a research exhibition at a small gallery in South Kolkata to memorialize the centenary of an exhibition of Bauhaus artists in Calcutta organized by the Indian Society of Oriental Art. This talk will outline the context of this exhibition and reflect on the historiography of modernism in India and its variant versions and what uses if any the politics of such historiographies serve.

Portrayals of Women and Neo-Tantrism in Indian Modern Art

Nalini Rao, Professor of World Art, Soka University of America

The paper compares two topics in Indian Modern Art: Women and Neo Tantrism in relation to their portrayals in Indian traditional art. It investigates into the manner of depiction by placing them in a historical and sociological context, reasons for transformation/ re-invention or deconstruction. It queries whether modern art are embodiments of Indian psyche or Indian aesthetic values.

Nepali Art at the Threshold

Deepak Shimkhada, Adjunct Professor, Chaffey College

Nepal's contemporary art scene is a complex tapestry woven with threads of tradition and modernity. On one hand, traditional art forms such as Thangka painting, stone and wood carvings continue to be an integral part of the country's cultural heritage. These art forms are deeply rooted in religious and spiritual beliefs and often reflect the country's unique history and way of life. On the other hand, modern art in Nepal is rapidly evolving, reflecting the changing times and cultural influences. Artists are now experimenting with different styles and mediums,

incorporating elements of Western art and blending them with traditional techniques. This has led to the creation of new forms of contemporary art that are unique to Nepal. One of the key features of Nepal's contemporary art is its ability to bring together the past and the present. For example, traditional art forms are often updated with modern techniques, leading to a harmonious blend of the old and the new. This creates an art form that is fresh, dynamic and relevant to the current generation, while still maintaining its connection to the country's cultural heritage. Another important aspect of Nepal's contemporary art is its emphasis on social and political commentary. Many artists are using their work to address current issues and raise awareness about important social and political topics. This is a departure from traditional art forms, which were typically created for religious or spiritual purposes.

Resilience Through Kirtan in India and Beyond

Gustavo Moura, PhD, Wilfrid Laurier University

Institutions, understood as culturally defined sets of rules or patterns of interactions, can be of various types. For instance, there are 'hard institutions', characterized by centralized authority with the power for coercive sanctions, and there are also 'soft institutions' consisting of symbolic means for consolidating, perpetuating, and propagating a group's value orientations. I argue that kirtan, which is a broad term referring to various forms of devotional singing in South Asian traditions, constitutes a 'soft', yet powerful means of institutionalization supporting the resilience of communities in the past and present, in India and beyond. I also examine patterns of transculturation revealing how innovation and adaptation can be of crucial value for preserving the vitality of traditions. Overall, this paper looks at Hindu and Sikh communities established in medieval India asking how their modus operandi centered on the practice of kirtan relate to their transcultural and transnational counterparts in America today.

Indo-Pacific Historical Continuity and Transformation: A View of Understanding Local Change and Global Impact through Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

David Blundell, University of California, Los Angeles

In recent years, the Indo-Pacific has expanded on the world stage in terms of current trends and historical networks. The region is witnessing rapid economic growth, cultural awareness, natural resource exploration, and military buildup. The concept of the Indo-Pacific is relatively new, since when in the Second World War the Pacific came to world attention to its importance in terms of contesting vast areas of geo-resource space inhabited by numerous cultures and languages. This research is to bring studies that illustrate different historical approaches to understanding regional economies, bridging distinctions between the humanities and social science using digital solutions. This research shows Indo-Pacific economies as transmitters for rapidly transforming global environments of multicultural diversification to trans-regions from very different geo-cultural areas that could increasingly find common denominators utilizing best scientific practices by understanding local changes and global impacts across time that could produce new historical and economic paradigms.

Researching Dalit Rights

Neel Agrawal, JD, MLIS, Digital Projects Librarian, Loyola Marymount University

This presentation highlights an array of research strategies and methods to better understand the long history of civil and human rights abuses toward the Dalit community and focuses on the sources of law aimed at protecting these vulnerable populations worldwide. Researchers are introduced to a variety of sources to help document human rights violations committed against Dalit people in India and around the world, in efforts to advocate for much needed reform. Participants will come away with a better understanding of how to find primary and secondary historical sources through online research databases and library catalogs, identify social and political movements affecting the Dalit community, and locate current civil and human rights law. The presentation places an emphasis on both domestic and international law for the protection of caste-based violence and abuse.

Session Six: The Jain Haribhadras: Traditions of Tolerance
Sunday, March 26 evening, 8 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. Pacific
Monday, March 27 morning, 8:30 to 9:45 a.m. India

Several Scholars Named Haribhadra

Abhishek Jain, Bhagwan Mallinath Visiting Assistant Professor, Loyola Marymount University

This presentation will discuss various authors by the name of Haribhadra revered in the Jain philosophical tradition. The biography of Haribhadra Sūri Yākinī Putra from the Prabandha (biographical) corpus will be presented which identifies him as the son of Sādhvī Yākinī. Haribhadra is regarded as a teacher, author, scholar, and philosopher.

Haribhadra's Philosophy in the *Yogabindu*

Alba Rodriguez, University of California, Riverside

In the *Yogabindu*, Haribhadra Virahanka presents Jainism as a system of religious practice that can stand by itself without a need of external confirmation or agreement. This paper will explain his main arguments against Sāṃkhya, Buddhism, and Vedānta in the last section of the text. as well as his points of agreement or validation. We will explore whether pragmatism underlies his approach to philosophy and religious life.

A Non-Absolutist (*anaikāntika*) Apology for Philosophical Disagreement

Ben Zenk, University of Hawaii at Hilo

In this paper, a close reading of Haribhadra's non-absolutist arguments in the first chapter of his *Anekāntajayapatākā* is utilized as the philosophical basis for a resolution to an apparent paradox at the basis of philosophical discourse. Using both a close scrutiny of our experience of

objects and a *reductio ad absurdum* argument regarding our assertions about objects, it is shown that a non-absolutist account is both congruent with experience and lacking contradiction. This same account is then employed in a non-absolutist defense of the inherent tension between the subjective and objective in philosophical discourse.

Haribhadrasūri's Buddhist Influences and Opponents

Anil Mundra, Alka Siddhartha Patel Post-Doctoral Fellow, Rutgers University

Among the many other works attributed to him, Haribhadra is credited with the only extant commentary on the *Nyāyapraveśa*, the most distilled early primer of the logical system developed by the Buddhist philosopher Dignāga. This paper will show how his *anekāntavāda* takes up, expands, and challenges some central notions in Buddhist logic, which he develops in his commentary and then redeploys in his magnum opus, the *Victory Flag of Non-One-Sidedness* (*Anekāntajayapatākā*).

Remembering the Eight Yogas of the *Yogadr̥ṣṭisamuccaya*

Christopher Key Chapple, Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology, Loyola Marymount University

In the *Yogadr̥ṣṭisamuccaya*, Haribhadra Yakini Putra concatenates four distinct styles of Yoga attributed in the commentary to four different scholars: Patañjali, Bandhu Bhagavaddatta (Vedānta), Bhadanta Bhaskara (Buddhist), and, by inference, Umāsvatī. This paper will highlight similarities and differences across these four Yogas with discussion of how each reflects the common concern of karmic reduction.

Session Seven: RaagRang Visual Exploration

Sunday, March 26 evening, 9:15 p.m. to 10 p.m. Pacific

Monday, March 27 morning, 9:45 to 10:30 a.m. India

RaagRang: A Visual Exploration of North Indian Classical Rāgas

Dipankar Goswamy, DreamWorks Animation, Glendale, CA

What does music look like? My project explores this question in the context of North Indian classical music. In a great concert, the audience initially focuses on the musician who is playing or singing the raga. However, as the raga unfolds, the binaries disappear. The musician becomes the rāga and the rāga the artist. Finally, only the music remains. The artist has achieved sublimation. As a visual artist and computer graphics professional, I have attempted to semantically express this musical process. I have chosen a few rāgas that have touched me deeply and allowed me to discover different nuances after repeated listening. My project visualizes one rāga from each artist's diverse oeuvre. The project consists of a series of traditional paintings that focus on the musician and the music emanating from them. The pieces present an intimate view of the music and the musicians, enhanced by colors and calligraphic notations that reflect the mood of the music. These paintings allow the audience to absorb the

essence of the rāga and its relationship with the artist. I have created a total of fifteen themes till date. A list of the themes is given at the end of this presentation.

Session Eight: Is Nepal a Shangrila? A Roundtable

Sunday, March 26 evening, 10 p.m. to 10:45 p.m. Pacific

Monday, March 27 morning, 10:30 to 11:15 a.m. India

Nepal, a Shangri-La? Narratives of Culture, Contact and Memory

Deepak Shimkhada, Iswari Pandey, Santosh Khadka, Tika Lamsal, Janice Sacherer, Khem K. Aryal, Khusbu Mishra, Mathusami Kumaran, Aryaa Rajouriya, Riti Shimkhada, Leepi Shimkhada, Sayam Moktan, Maureen Drdak, Yuvak Tuladhar, Subodh Ghimire, Benjamin Linder, Sadhana Ghimire, Charles Whitney, Bhikshuni Trinlae

This roundtable is based on an anthology by the same title, published in 2022 by Mandala Book Point in Kathmandu, Nepal. It has been organized to accommodate as many contributors as possible in order to showcase a wide array of disciplines and experiences. About a dozen of the 48 contributors will share their experiences of Nepal. These participants include researchers and scholars of the humanities and social sciences—individuals uniquely qualified to give insight into diverse aspects of Nepal and Nepali life over the last 70 years. Contributors, both Nepalis and non-Nepalis with significant experience in Nepal, will relate their most remarkable descriptions, observations, reflections, and memories.