

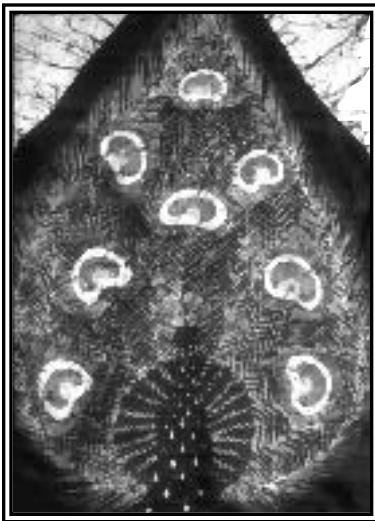
CHICAGO SOUTH ASIA NEWSLETTER

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A HANDICRAFT REVOLUTION

When most people think of batik, it is Indonesia rather than India that springs to mind. Yet there has been a long tradition of batik-making in India: batik fabrics have been commonly used in homes, for apparel, or for ornamental hangings. Like many other handicrafts in India, batik-making has seen a decline in the recent past. Batik artists Abdul Majid



Peacock. Batik painting on silk (in shades of violet, green and orange).

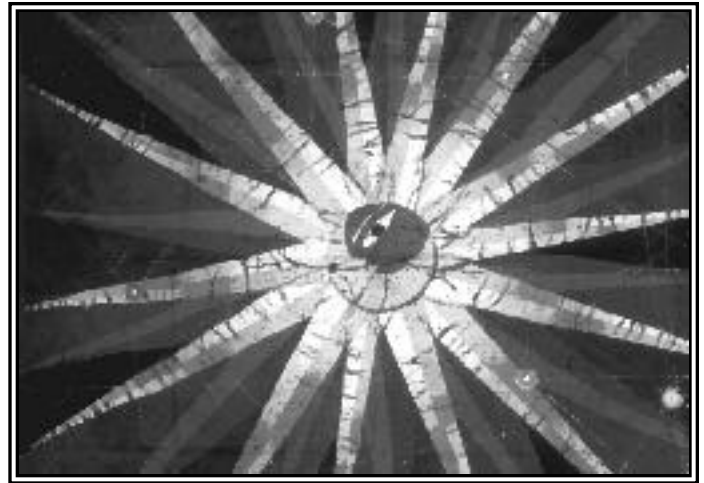
and Rashida Banu are working to revive the craft, and to bring confidence and prosperity to disadvantaged communities, to women, and to unemployed youths in India.

Through their shop in Udaipur, Rajasthan, "Apollo Arts," the couple sells batik scarves, tablecloths, and wall hangings of silk and cotton produced in their home workshop. Through their workshop, Rashida Banu provides much-needed employment to poor Muslim women in her neighborhood who are discouraged from working outside the home. She has been training and assisting needy women to become self-sufficient through batik-making since 1970. Abdul Majid, who studied fabric arts at Shantiniketan in Bengal, also leads training workshops in batik-making, and has brought together craftspeople from a range of textile crafts such as woodblock print and tie-dying, as well as batik, for workshops and demonstrations all over India and abroad.

Abdul Majid and Rashida Banu have devoted their lives to a "handicraft revolution." By bringing traditional fabric art skills to the youth and disadvantaged of India, they hope to not only bring them income, but also instill the confidence and peace of mind that comes from creative activity and self-sufficiency. Abdul Majid is president of the Batik Art Research and Training Institute (BARTI India), which he founded as a private organization for bringing Indian batik arts to the international community. Through the institute and private lessons, Abdul Majid and Rashida Banu have taught both Indians and visitors from abroad including many American students from the School for International Training. They have also travelled with fellow Indian craftspeople to Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Russia, and China to participate in conferences and demonstrations. Their stated goal is to bring the hidden abundance of Indian textile arts onto the world-stage, thus reviving craft culture in India and bringing hope to depressed Indian craft traditions.

Cassie Adcock

University of Chicago



Sun. Detail from 5'x7' batik painting on silk of the planets (multicolored).



Christ-like figure. Batik painting on silk (in shades of blue and red).

For more information about Indian craft programs, contact Sheikh5@hotmail.com

श्रीलंका २०००-२००१ च्या वर्षासाठी काढण्यात आलेली अंदाजिते

...NEWS...news...NEWS...news...NEWS...

Faculty, Visitors and COSAS News

Elena Bashir has joined SALC this year as a lecturer in Urdu. She has lived for many years in Pakistan, and is a linguist who works primarily on the languages of Northwest Pakistan, with a large component of field work. Her dissertation (U of Michigan, 1988, linguistics) was on "Topics in Kalasha Syntax: An Areal and Typological Perspective." Work on Kalasha led into her current long-range project, a reference grammar of Khowar, projected as a three-volume set including Grammar, Texts and Glossary. Both Kalasha and Khowar are Northwest Indo-Aryan languages belonging to the constellation of languages often called Dardic. Prior to coming to Chicago, Bashir taught Urdu, Hindi and Panjabi at the University of Michigan.

Carol Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty (all SALC) co-edited Public Culture's issue on "Cosmopolitanism" (vol. 12, no. 3). Pollock and Chakrabarty contributed articles as did **Arjun Appadurai** (SALC). The volume is dedicated to the memory of D. R. Nagaraj, Bangalore University who was a visiting professor in SALC 1996-98.

Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* was published by Princeton University Press this year. An Indian edition by OUP, Delhi is forthcoming.

Martin Clayton, Visiting Professor in Music for the autumn quarter, is teaching *Music of South Asia and Time, music and discourse*. A lecturer in Ethnomusicology at the Open University (OU) since 1995, he received his PhD in Musicology from SOAS in 1993. His research interests include Hindustani classical music, rhythmic analysis, comparative musicology and early field recordings, British-Asian music and Western music in India. Clayton has taught a wide range of ethnomusicological courses at numerous other UK universities besides contributing to OU teaching materials. Clayton is currently Chair of the Musics and Cultures Research Group, based at the OU, co-editor (with Dr Suzel Reilly) of the *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, and committee member of both the British Forum for Ethnomusicology and the European Seminar in Ethnomusicology. His book, *Time in Indian Music: Rhythm, metre and form in North Indian Rag performance* (OUP) is due out shortly.

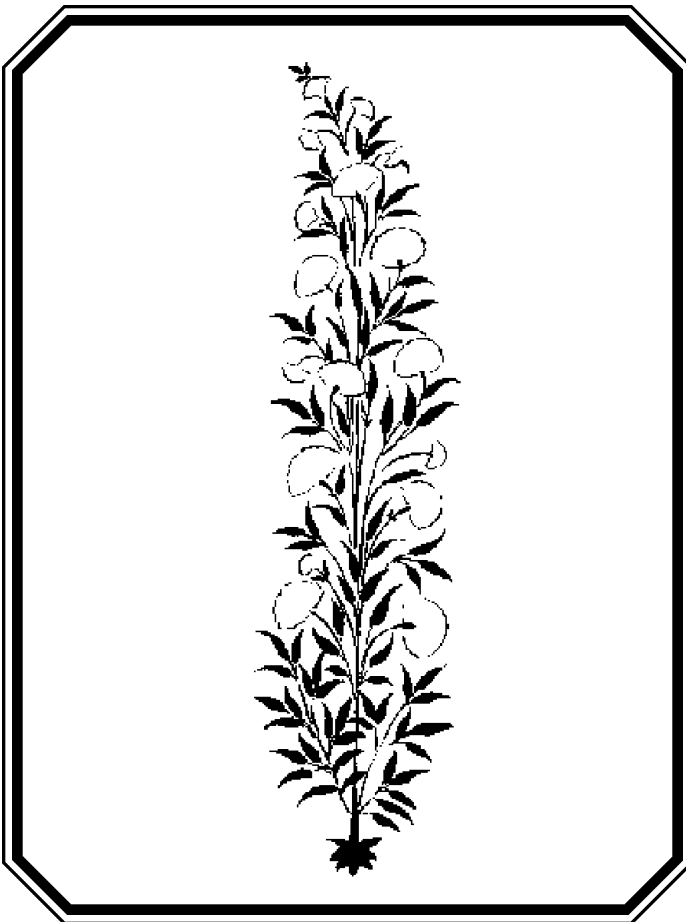
Joan Erdman (COSAS) presented a paper, "Empowering Performance: The Choreographic Techniques of Uday Shankar" at the European South Asia Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland in September. She also presented a paper, "Creating Choreographers: The Uday Shankar Method," at the Dancing in the Millennium conference in Washington, D.C. in July. She will be on sabbatical for the spring 2001 semester, working on completing her book-length manuscript on Uday Shankar.

Ngawang Jorden joins SALC this year as lecturer in the Tibetan language. He received a traditional Tibetan education at the Sakyapa College in Mussourie, Uttar Pradesh before coming to the US to study Sanskrit and Buddhist Studies at Harvard. His special area of research has been the development of the doctrine of Buddhahood in the Tibetan scholastic tradition.

Matthew Kapstein (SALC) will be lecturing at the Sorbonne during the Winter Quarter 2001 on aspects of the early history of Tibetan Buddhism as known from the Dunhuang documents.

B.G. Karlsson, a post-doctoral fellow from Uppsala University, was awarded a Swedish international mobility grant and is an Associate Member of COSAS for the academic year. He received his PhD in Social Anthropology at Lund University for his dissertation on the Rabha people's struggle for forest and identity in northern West Bengal (Curzon Press). His current project, "Community Forests, Mining and Wild-life Conservation: A Political Ecology of an Indian Hill State," deals with rights and conflicting claims to the forests in Meghalaya. Karlsson is editing a book with Amita Baviskar on the relevance of the concept "indigenous peoples" in India based on a workshop held in Uppsala in April. He teaches Anthropology and organizes a seminar on development studies at Uppsala University.

Kathleen Morrison (Anthro) was on leave last year with an AAUW (American Association of University Women) fellowship and gave talks at UPenn, New Mexico State and UMichigan. She is co-editing a book



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entitled *Empires: Historical and Archaeological Approaches* (forthcoming, Cambridge University Press). Her article, "Naturalizing Disaster: from Drought to Famine in South India," will be published in an upcoming issue of *Environmental Disruptions and the Archaeology of Human Response*, edited by G. Bawden and R. Reycraft (Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, Albuquerque). Morrison has also started a research project re-analyzing the notes and artifact collections from Brahmagiri and Chandravalli in Karnataka. These sites were excavated in 1947 and are still being used to define the chronology and ceramic typology of southern India from the Neolithic (ca. 2400 BC) through the Early Historic (ca. AD 500).

In May, **Sheldon Pollock** organized an exploratory workshop on Sanskrit Knowledge Systems on the Eve of Colonialism. Participants included Madhav Deshpande (University of Michigan), **Lawrence McCrea** (SALC), Christopher Minkowski (Cornell University), **James Nye** (Collection Development, Regenstein Library), Karin Preisendan (Institut für Indologie, Vienna), Gary Tubb (Columbia University) and Dominik Wujastyk (The Wellcome Trust, London). A larger research initiative is being planned.

Visiting Professor **Kumkum Sangari** is teaching *Gender of Diversity: Debates on Multiculturalism* for SALC and Gender Studies in the autumn quarter. A Professorial Fellow at the Centre for Contemporary Studies, New Delhi, Sangari's research interests include widow immolation, medieval hagiographies, Mirabai and issues of personal law. She is currently working on beauty contests in India and popular late 19th and early 20th c. Hindustani writing in the context of gender, religious identity and nationalism. Her most recent publications are *Politics of the Possible: Essays on Gender, History, Narratives, Colonial English* (Tulika, 1999) and *From Myths to Markets: Essays on Gender*, co-edited with U. Chakravarti (IIAS and Manohar, 1999).

Sally A. Noble is the new Assistant Director of SALAC/ COSAS. In recent years, Noble has worked as an adult education instructor and administrator at a local community college and as the Associate Director of a local foundation. Noble received her PhD from SALC in 1990 with a dissertation focused on classical and folk tellings of *Cilappatikaram*. She is glad to be returning to the University and to work related to South Asia.

Student and Alumni News

Jayson Beaster-Jones and **James B. Jones** (both Anthro) are on the AIIS Hindi language program in Udaipur for 2000-2001.

Allison Busch (SALC) received a Fulbright and is in India researching "The Courtly Vernacular: The

Transformation of Braj Literary Culture, 1590-1675".

Patrick Eisenlohr (Anthro) presented "Hindu nationalism and ideologies of popular linguistic culture in Mauritius" at the European Conference on Modern Southern Asian Studies in Edinburgh in September.

Gautam Ghosh (alum. Anthro) presented papers at the AAA and AAS meetings, U of Iowa and UPenn. He was selected to be a Fellow at Stanford and is currently Asst Professor of Anthropology at U Penn. His review of Christopher Pinney's *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* is forthcoming in *American Ethnologist*.

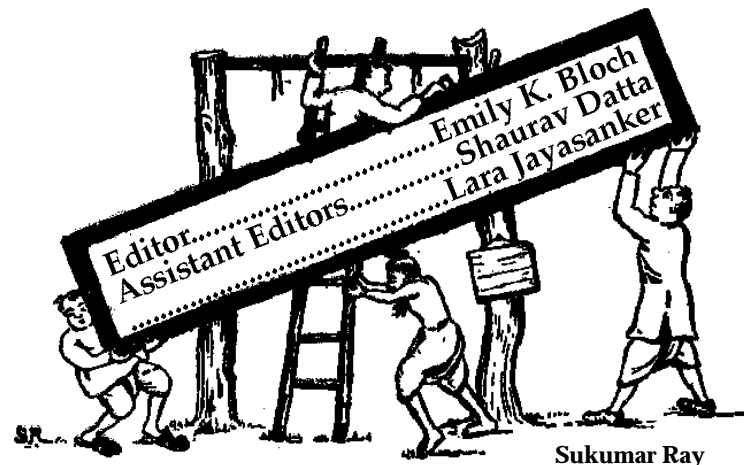
Jennifer Huberman (Anthro) received a Fulbright for her research proposal, "'Working' Banaras: A Study of Tourist Encounters, Sentimental Journeys, and the Business of Visitation."

Two U of C graduate students received AIIS research fellowships: **Ernst Kirchner** (HumDev) will be researching, "Amplified Sound and Cultural Meaning in Urban South India." **Guy Leavitt** (SALC) received a fellowship for his project, "The Poetics of Saivism in Kashmir, 800-1150 C.E."

Shreyash Palshikar (SALC), a student on the AIIS Marathi language program in Pune, 1999-2000, has been conducting preliminary research for his dissertation on Marathi nationalism. This summer, he worked all over the Chicago area as a speaker and entertainer, performing Indian magic. Visit his web site at www.palshikar.com.

Kamal Sadiq (PoliSci) has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for his work on immigration-related conflict in South and Southeast Asia. He has also been awarded a Hewlett Packard Fellowship by the University of California - San Diego to finish his comparative research on India and Malaysia.

Kara Stanek (Anthro) is on a Fulbright-Hayes dissertation research grant in Delhi.



Sukumar Ray

மின்மொழி அறிவியல் ராஜஸ்தானி தேசிய இலக்கிய அறிஞர்

JOURNEY THROUGH DANCE

Twenty-five years ago, internationally renowned dancer, choreographer and educator Hema Rajagopalan founded Natya Dance Theatre (formerly the Natyakalalayam Dance Company) dedicated to the propagation of the art form, Bharata Natyam, a classical dance theater of India. According



to Rajagopalan, Natya's 25th Anniversary provides an opportunity to recognize the company's many achievements. "Natya has brought to Chicago and the United States 25 years of high quality Indian classical dance performances and programs, visiting artists, and dance classes. We are a Chicago institution, deeply committed to the City of Chicago, its young people, and to the diversity of its

communities. With continued support, we will continue to thrive for another 25 years!"

NDT is celebrating with a year full of events. "Our new name, Natya Dance Theatre, more accurately reflects the organization's sustained and continued growth and development, as well as our intention to serve more diverse audiences while retaining our Indian identity," says Board President Anita Kancherlapalli.

Most recently NDT held its first gala benefit on October 19 at the Chicago Cultural Center in its historic Preston Bradley Hall. *The Rasa Experience* was not only a birthday party for Natya, it was a celebration of Chicago's diversity and the unity of the Indian community. NDT is committed to forging links between Indian, American, and other cultures, as seen through the collaborative work the company has done with Irish, African, and modern art organizations.

"We wanted to expose a taste of Indian culture to a diverse audience," says Artistic Director Rajagopalan. Gala attendees enjoyed a multi-sensory experience, including food, henna artists, a dance history exhibit, an exhibit highlighting Indian organizations, a dancer demonstrating the process of *Aharya*, or decoration, and tales by *Sutradharas*, or storytellers. Entertainment was provided by Fareed Haque, Kalyan Pathak and Jazz Ensemble. The highlight of the evening was a collaboration between the invited musicians and Natya Dance Theatre. WGN News' Robert Jordan was the Master of Ceremonies.

The 25th Anniversary Season events continue with a collaborative performance with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The program, *Mitra- The Sounds and Legends of India*, will feature the dancers and musicians of NDT and the Chicago Symphony orchestra in an interpretation of Indian

folktales. The birthday celebrations will culminate in the U.S.'s first-ever National Conference on Bharata Natyam in September 2001 at the New Dance Center of Columbia College, Chicago (co-sponsor of the event).

Since its inception, NDT has created over 400 works of choreography and 40 full-length productions. The style and choreography of Natya Dance Theatre is ever evolving, but the motivation behind Rajagopalan's work, to both entertain and provoke thought, remains unchanged, "My art is going towards making the world a better place...It is about having a compassionate heart." The same intentions inspire her traditional Hindu mythology-based works and her more modern creations. A production from last year, *Ahimsa*, focused on the theme of nonviolence. Twenty-five years ago, Natya Dance Theater took one small step onto the stage to serve as an agent of cultural preservation, presentation and exchange. Today it jumps, twirls and leaps across the floor and across cultures.

Puja Lalmalani

Natya Dance Theatre

For more information about events or classes, call NDT at 773-296-1061 or visit their new website: www.natya.com



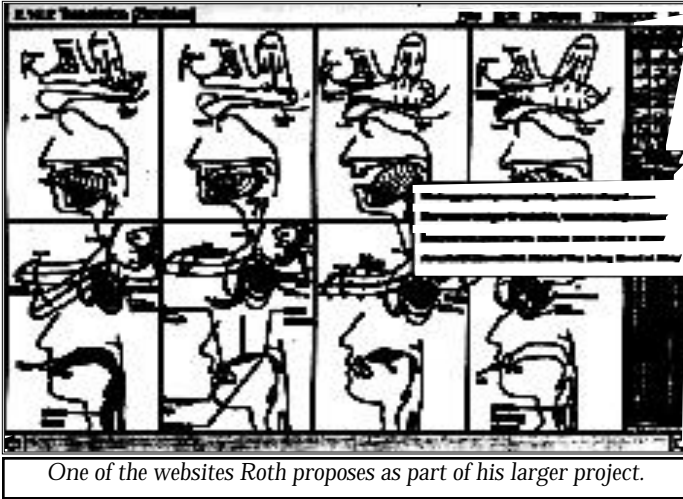
Love in a Dead Language: A Romance. by Lee Siegel. University of Chicago Press, 1999.

This hugely inventive and vastly entertaining novel has for its hero the middle-aging Leopold Roth, a Sanskrit scholar and Professor of Indian Civilization at the Western

University, Los Angeles, who with all his professional accomplishments suffers from one severe deprivation: "never, never in my life have I made love to an Indian woman." Presently, the alluring young Lalita Gupta turns up to enroll in his class, and Roth not only artfully lends her the *Kamasutra* to read in Richard Burton's classic translation but even begins to translate the treatise afresh for her as a labor of love. He then beguiles her into coming on an educational trip to India with him alone, takes her round New Delhi, Agra, Khajuraho, Varanasi and Puri, and along the way, at the Holiday Inn Khajuraho, fulfills his long-standing ambition. Back home, though, he is promptly accused of sexually harassing his student and shortly afterwards is found mysteriously dead at his desk, apparently bludgeoned on the head with his own hefty copy of Sir Monier Monier-Williams' Sanskrit-English

Dictionary, an indispensable tool about which he had once said, "I'd be dead without it." His obituary in the campus paper is titled "Dead Language Professor," with the epithet transferable.

As may be already apparent, this is the kind of novel in which the tale lies in the telling. The narrative frame is provided by Roth's new translation of the *Kamasutra*. Each chapter begins with a short extract from it, and is followed by a long 'Commentary' which has little to do with Vatsyayana and everything to do with Roth's own life. After Roth's death, this translation is edited with copious footnotes by Roth's graduate student, Anang Saighal; this is the text we read. In another coat of varnish to the meta-frame, Roth is succeeded temporarily in his job by his hated rival Professor Lee Siegel who too is a Sanskritist and who too is translating the *Kamasutra* on the hallowed American principle that where there's a McDonald's there should also be a Burger King to offer the consumer a choice. This doppelganger is of course



One of the websites Roth proposes as part of his larger project.

the namesake of our very author and like him teaches at the University of Hawaii. Siegel however refuses to help Saighal (get it?) edit the present work, calling it too 'frivolous' for his own serious scholarly concerns.

We have thus all the way through many takes on what is going on, many deep folds of the texture in which the kernel of the story is embedded like the pea of the princess. Ironies and reversals abound, often at the narrator's self-reflexive expense. Lalita (once suggestively misspelled Lolita?) may seem to Roth to be the long-desired essence of India he seeks intimately to possess, but as he soon finds out she is not an Indian really but a born Californian, one of those heritage kids whose pompous *paramparik* parents have pushed her into enrolling in a class on India. She herself adores a black sports superstar, the dumb stud Leroy Lovelace, who believes America is "the greatest country in the history of mankind, at least as far as basketball is concerned." On their trip to India, it is Roth who knows the ropes including Hindi; it is Lalita who is the ignorant foreigner. Anang Saighal, too, though born and brought up in India, has been taught nothing of India at

either Scindia School or St Stephen's College; he has to go to L.A. to learn his Sanskrit. Behind all the postmodernist larking around there is thus a kind of postcolonial message.

Love in a Dead Language offers many other textual delights. There's a page that's blank and another that's black, in humble homage to that granddad of all po-mo novels, Tristram Shandy (1760). There's verbal and visual spoofing all the way, including a term paper by Lalita Gupta, printed here actually as a typed term paper, with Teaching Assistant Saighal's handwritten scathing remarks all through and finally Roth's own overriding "A+ an excellent paper -- see me for further discussion." There are also mots and epigrams on all subjects, but especially on love, on novels, and on India which is for Roth "the inconstant subcontinent of my incontinent subconscious." "Coitio ergo sum." "To be in love ... is to be in a story (thus romance means both love affair and narrative). Although not necessarily a poet, every lover is obligatorily a fabulist. There is a literary complicity between lovers, conscious or not; they co-author a text in which they themselves are the hero and heroine." In the Monier-Williams Dictionary, "there are more words for 'pure love' than there are words for 'white snow' in the Eskimo dictionary. 'I understand kama, but not the translation - not love. Only what is dead can be truly understood.'"

Like a true Sanskritist, Siegel is more foot-sure when he treats of the Indian past than of the Indian present. The only little sentence of Hindi in the book has an elementary error ('Aap ke naam?'), the spellings of both 'd(h)atura' and 't(h)andai' suffer from a typical Western lack of aspiration, the Guptas are not all Bengalis, and Saighal could not have learnt Latin at St Stephen's where it was never taught unless he did so autodidactically from a book such as Hints Towards Latin Prose Composition (1872), still to be found in the college library. My one major cavil against Siegel, however, is that he is so busy being clever that he seldom pauses to be thoughtful. I for one would have gladly traded several narratorial and verbal turns and tricks for a couple of contemplative pages on the general nature of American imaginative engagement with India and in particular the fuddled orientation of Indian Studies in America. Born in post-Sputnik panic and funded by the Department of Defense, the few university programs in the USA on 'South Asia' (a Pentagon term originally) still seem caught between the contrary impulses of good old Sanskritic orientalism and high theoretical anthropological globalism, with their slim enrolment fortuitously boosted in recent years by roots-seekers like Lalita Gupta who come with yet another set of expectations altogether. It would have been nice to know what insiders like Roth, Siegel, Saighal and Gupta make of it all, in moments stolen from their obsessive engagement with *kama* and the *Kamasutra*.

But this is merely to wish that a very good book were even better. *Love in a Dead Language* falls into three broad categories, the campus novel, the international novel, and the *premakhyan*

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or love-story, and it makes a new and welcome contribution to each of them. Talking of an even broader, if still quite sparse category, the American novel on India, it merrily holds its own against ponderous earlier efforts by bigger names such as John Updike and John Barth. They may be better novelists, but Lee Siegel is incomparably better on India, especially Indic India.

Harish Trivedi

University of Delhi

The Karma of Brown Folk.

by Vijay Prashad.
University of Minnesota Press, 2000.



It would have appeared, from the glee and applause of the media reports by both the U.S.-based Indian news magazines and Indian papers on the economic successes of Indians in the U.S. that reached a crescendo on the occasion of Clinton's visit to India, that it would only be a short while before the masses would be airborne, albeit in yogic posture, to a silicon Ayodhya. The achievements, such as they are - a disproportionate number of Indians/*desis* in scientific or computer fields and elite universities, high per capita incomes - are hardly to be belittled, though even here, the exact nature of these achievements bears examination. For instance, a recent fracas in Texas between the INS and some two dozen H-1 visa holders that prompted the desi press to decry the manifest racism exhibited towards the Indians in this episode, did not prompt any reflection as to what exactly these Indians were up to working on Defense Department sponsored contracts. That such contributions have some links to the unabated growth of the military-industrial complex, or the undiminished bombing of Iraq, is not a notion that seems to enter the calculus of those who would continue to recite statistics about the number of Indian-owned Silicon firms, millionaires, etc. This may be slippery logic indeed, for no one may be altogether exculpated from dirty hands simply by virtue of benefiting from a system that consumes so disproportionately of resources; nonetheless it bears emphasizing that *desis*, in good measure, have ridden the wave of corporate ascendancy that has brutalized good sections of the population here and the increasingly exported working class overseas. And what does it reflect of our esteem and values that we haven't even begun to ask who might be the

community builders or great humanists, poets and artists?

A more sober and honest assessment by the self-congratulatory desi would also have to acknowledge the role of the Indian state in fostering and promoting higher education via the fabled IITs and medical institutes (at the expense of primary education, it might be added) that furnished the U.S. in the sixties, with the scientists, engineers, and doctors that it needed on the heels of the race to the Moon. To be sure, the Civil Rights movement and a minimum regard for consistency arising from the vexed crusade for democracy and a free world in Vietnam, Latin America and elsewhere, played roles in the overhauling of the virtual decades-long moratorium on immigration from the non-West. However, the preponderant numbers of technicians and the educated in the first wave of immigrants to the States testifies to the marriage of virtue and interest for the United States in opening its doors. The desi was therefore poised - and granted, with the odds of occasional racism and cultural isolation - to succeed. As one entrepreneur puts it, "The common thread running through the Indian community is that this is the Promised Land, and that if you work hard, you are going to make it."

The U.S. Army more likely had the poor Latino and African-American in mind, when it coined its slogan, "be all you can be," but the desi is likely to be among the most fervent believer of it. Such however is the power of historical amnesia and an exaggerated and distorted ideology of meritocracy, that perhaps the triumphant desi cannot be accused of outright disingenuousness. The 'learned' desi understands and speaks only too well in the depoliticized language so characteristic of the fattened classes here. But the discontents, as they may well be labeled, are speaking up.

In his book, *The Karma of Brown Folk*, Vijay Prashad, in turns both censorious and solicitous, takes on the challenge of upbraiding his fellow *desis* of their disengagement with politics in their adopted 'homeland.' Troping on W.E.B. duBois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, in which DuBois posed the question, "How does it feel to be a problem?" Prashad wants his readers to ponder, "How does it feel to be a solution?" The average benighted desi might be forgiven for feeling mystified by such a rhetoric unless he is reminded, and Prashad does this amply, that his vaunted achievements, based, as he believes, on just hard work and merit, are deployed by the ruling class, to construct an image of the model minority (various Asian groups having been given this mantle in turns), with which to curmudgeon the working-class - and, in particular, the black working class - and poor of this country. The desi may disavow any active role in this maneuver, though the likes of Dinesh D'Souza and conversations with *desis soto voce*

might indicate otherwise. However, the desi needs to acknowledge how the relative absence of racism towards him rests on the collective struggles of blacks.

Furthermore, a consideration of the structural barriers to equal opportunity, of aspects of social capital and a minimal regard for fair play may compel the desi to actively join in common cause with those of his later-day compatriots, after the wake of the Immigration reforms of 1986, which brought in lower-class immigrants who were soon to take up jobs in the less lucrative or prestigious fields of domestic help, taxicabs, groceries, Dunkin' Donuts, motels and the like - and, as if this is not already too much to hope for, other poor minorities.

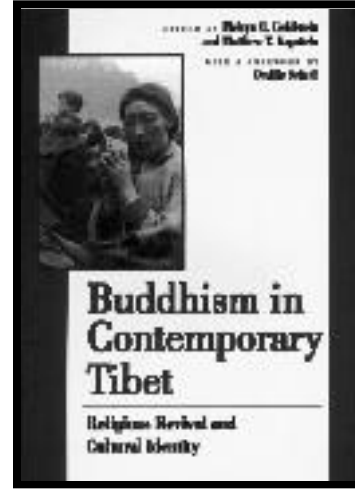
Prashad's bristling 'red' rhetoric, commendable as it is in a post-ideological time, is probably less persuasive than the appeal that he makes to the enlightened self-interest of the *desi* who, after all, has frequently been the subject of racism, scorn and ridicule or, of piquant interest, as a guru or swami, and attacks against desis even now - witness the dot-busters in New Jersey - are not uncommon. This gambit is joined to the historical memory of Indians in sporadic solidarity with black struggles - The Ghadar Party, Martin Luther King's reworking of Gandhi - and the present-day engagements, such as the strike of the taxi-drivers in New York for decent working conditions. The other aspect of historical memory is the Orientalist fantasy, that runs from the past - from Whitman's "A Passage to India" ("*Passage O Soul to India/Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables*"; "*the map incognita, blanks to be fill'd*") to Indian midgets in Barnum's circuses, from the orangutan named "Rajah" at the Bronx Zoo in the 1920s to Rajneesh - up to its post-modern versions in the likes of Deepak Chopra.

However, it appears now that desis have been more than eager to divide the spoils of this fantasy. Doesn't the image of the Indian computer programmer who would save his toils at the corporate factory with a retreat to Bollywood films and religious ceremonies conform to the division where the West is connected to the material world and the East with the preserve of the cultural and spiritual? An earlier generation may have been excused from such cultural and political work that acknowledges one's imbrication in a certain topography, but surely it is time for desis to own up to their responsibilities and connect in bonds of fellowship. Their minority status affords them a privileged site for political intervention in the struggle for justice. Prashad's book gives wings to that hope.

Not the least of the virtues of *The Karma of Brown Folk* is that it is a welcome breeze from the overheated rhetoric of some of the post-colonial literature. Cultural innovation disconnected from considerations of power and political economy cannot be made to bear the onus of the political. When even advertising campaigns can

pitch lines like, "Don't worry, if Mahatma Gandhi had bought a luxury car, ours is the one he would have chosen," then it's time to conjoin cultural work with some old-fashioned organizing and "shouts on the street." Defying genres, and using scholarship at service of a much-needed polemic, Prashad serves up a heady brew. Where it sometimes lacks in nuance, it more than makes up in verve and passion.

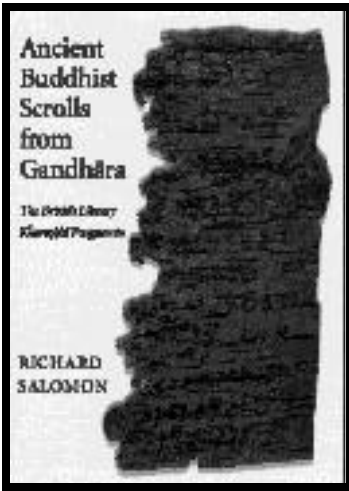
Anil Lal



Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity. edited by Matthew T. Kapstein and Melvyn C. Goldstein. University of California Press, 1998.

In the past few years, U.S. Tibetan studies has lifted its bespectacled nose from ancient Tibetan translations of Sanskrit texts and begun to pay attention to contemporary Tibetan culture, history and politics. Changes in Chinese policy over the last two decades have made it easier for foreigners to conduct research in Tibet. Together with the international campaign launched by the Dalai Lama in the mid-eighties, which won him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 and brought increasing popular and scholarly attention to the international politics of Tibet, these changes have led to an explosion of scholarship on contemporary Tibet. Matthew T. Kapstein and Melvyn C. Goldstein's 1998 edited collection *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity* stands out as a landmark in this new scholarship. This slim but important collection of essays presents a responsible, historically informed set of impressions of religious life in post-Cultural Revolution Tibet, illustrated by abundant black and white photographs supplied by the authors.

Buddhism In Contemporary Tibet explores the dynamics of the religious revival that has taken hold of Tibet since the death of Mao and the rise of Deng Xiaoping in 1978. In his introductory essay, Goldstein provides a useful context in which to frame the subsequent essays as he outlines the history of Chinese communist policy on religion and its effects on Tibet. He traces the impact of a half-century of changes and contradictions in CCP religious policy, Mao's early professed support of the freedom of religious belief



**Ancient Buddhist
Scrolls from
Gandhara: The
British Library
Kharosthi
Fragments.** by
Richard Salomon.
University of
Washington Press,
1999.

The University of
Washington Press is to be

congratulated on its very fine production of this work from University of Washington paleographer Richard Salomon. This handsome edition, lavishly illustrated with color plates, exemplifies the production values of a coffee table book which makes it likely that Salomon's work will reach a much larger audience than it might otherwise have been expected to. This is as it should be; for while an abstract of the book's contents might make it seem of interest only to the small number of linguists who work on Middle Indo-Aryan languages, Salomon's work in fact has the kind of far-reaching implications that make it well worth the attention of all scholars not only of Buddhism, but of ancient India more generally. This is at least in part because the manuscript remains surveyed here are, as Salomon says, "likely to be the oldest Buddhist manuscripts, as well as the oldest Indian manuscripts, known to date."

The birch-bark manuscripts in question were acquired by the British Library in 1994. They appear to have been found in southeastern Afghanistan, and to have been interred in pottery jars that provide some interesting corroborating evidence. (Unfortunately, their original disposition is uncertain, since the collection had already been handled prior to the British Library's acquisition.) They are written in the Kharosthi script. Having been adapted from Aramaic, this has the unique distinction, among Indic scripts, of being written from right to left. Kharosthi has the further distinction of having been closely tied to the Gandhari, or Northwestern Prakrit, language, which was thus isolated from other Indo-Aryan dialects which were invariably written in Brahmi and related scripts. Prior to the discovery of the British Library's fragments, the only widely known, published manuscript evidence for the Gandhari/Kharosthi tradition (the other main evidence being numismatic and inscriptional) had been discovered in western China, and published in a respected edition and translation by John Brough as *The Gandhari Dharmapada* (Oxford University Press, 1962). Brough's work permitted tantalizing but largely tentative speculation about, among other things, whether there was

likely to have been an entire "Gandhari canon," and if so, what that might tell us about the role of vernacular languages in early Indian Buddhism.

Salomon is, to be sure, careful to characterize the present study, too, as tentative, resulting from what has necessarily been a preliminary study of the numerous fragments (the ongoing study of which is taking place under the aegis of the British Library/University of Washington Early Buddhist Manuscripts Project). Nevertheless, the abundance of the new materials marks a significant advance over the manuscript available to Brough, and Salomon is clearly justified in his conclusion that "the new collection shows beyond any doubt that there was a large - perhaps very large - body of Buddhist texts that were translated into, and in some cases probably also originally composed in, Gandhari." Indeed, the generally cautious and measured character of Salomon's presentation makes it all the more striking when he quite convincingly concludes, "We now know, much more clearly than before, that the Kharosthi/Gandhari textual tradition was not, as it might once have appeared, an isolated and ephemeral provincial phenomenon but rather was well entrenched, widely used, and highly influential over a vast area of south and central Asia...Gandhari was a major Buddhist language and cultural vehicle in the early centuries of the Christian era."

These conclusions are warranted by the breadth of the collection which is as striking as its antiquity. This fact of a uniquely broad assortment of textual genres permits some interesting speculation about how written texts such as these were actually used. One of the more interesting of Salomon's hypotheses about this performative aspect is that the collection represents something like a "Buddhist Genizah." That is, the texts seem likely to have been ritually interred after they had been worn out by use. As one piece of evidence for this hypothesis, Salomon adduces the striking fact that many of the manuscripts bear the interlinear notation "it is written" (Gandhari, *likhidago*). Salomon persuasively speculates that this notation may have indicated that the copying out of a fresh manuscript had been completed, so that the worn-out original from which the copy had been made (i.e., one of the texts that has come down to us) could be discarded. Thus, "the contents of the scrolls could be expected to reflect a more or less random sampling of the contents of the library from which they came and the most detailed analysis of the texts that has ever been found."

This impressive edition of Richard Salomon's work is in every way an auspicious beginning to the Manuscripts Project, and there is much reason to look forward to the future works of those engaged in the analysis of this collection - analysis which promises to raise altogether new questions about the composition (not to mention the very idea!) of Buddhist canons, the history and role of Middle Indo-Aryan dialects, the role of writing in ancient India,

कृत आर्य-द्वन्द्व-भाषा-सुख-प्रति-सर्वदा-उप-रति-अत्रे-ब्रह्मिन



M.G. Peter Surasena (left) performed traditional dances from Kandy, in Sri Lanka, with his Dance and Drum Ensemble at the University of Chicago in October.



I.G. Sirisoma and A.Y. Sirisena



Indu Vibha Meddegama and Deepamalika Damayanti

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