



WATSON INSTITUTE
BROWN UNIVERSITY

A photograph of a city skyline at night, featuring several tall skyscrapers with illuminated windows. In the foreground, there is a beach with waves crashing onto the shore. A promenade with streetlights and some people is visible between the beach and the city.

CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY South Asia Annual Report 2016-2017

Research Themes

The research themes of the Center for Contemporary South Asia are explored through public lectures, seminars, conferences, films, research projects, and outreach.

The Center currently conducts research on the following themes:

- ① Urbanization: Governance, Politics and Political Economy
- ② Economic Inequalities and Change
- ③ Pluralism and Diversities
- ④ Democracy



Watson Director, Edward Steinfeld, welcomes a crowd to the first semester of the new Center for Contemporary South Asia

Message from the Director

Last year, combining the Brown-India Initiative and the South Asia Studies Concentration, the University created the Center for Contemporary South Asia. This is the second year of our new incarnation. I use this opportunity to summarize our previous year, as well as highlight some of the major upcoming events.

In keeping with the enlargement of our intellectual focus, our programmatic offerings have become broader. Last year, we invited Manan Ahmed, Barkha Dutt, Sunila Galapatti and Nile Green to cover topics that concern, or relate to, South Asia in general, not simply to India after 1947. Similarly, in this semester, we will have talks by Saad Gulzar, Tarun Khanna, and Raza Rumi, as well as events organized by Leela Gandhi and Bhri Gupta Singh, which will take us beyond India.

We welcome a new faculty member, Holly Shaffer, who will teach in the department of the History of Art and Architecture; and two postdoctoral fellows: Aarti Sethi, an anthropologist, and Adaner Usmani, a sociologist.

This fall, David Mosse of SOAS, London, will be our Jindal Distinguished Lecturer. He will present his thoughts on caste in general and Dalits in particular. In the spring, Amitav Ghosh, a novelist, will give the spring Jindal lectures. Pratap Bhanu Mehta (Centre for Policy Research) and Nayanjot Lahiri (Ashoka University) were our Jindal Distinguished Lecturers last year. Mehta spoke on Iqbal and Aurobindo, Lahiri on archaeology.

Our visitors this year will include Swati and Ramesh Ramanathan (Janaagraha), who used their last two visits to Brown to write an article on the paradoxes of India's universal franchise and publish it in the *Journal of Democracy* (July 2017);



Sudhir Krishnaswamy (Azim Premji University), who is writing a book on social justice and India's constitution as a legal scholar; Rana Dasgupta, a British novelist residing in India, who will continue his teaching at the Department of Modern Culture and Media (MCM) in the spring; Srinivas Reddy (IIT, Gandhinagar), who will teach in the Department of Religious Studies.

Under the leadership of Leela Gandhi and Bhri Gupta Singh, efforts have been made to re-imagine and expand the SAS concentration. This fall, Brian Horton will offer a new course, titled Introduction to Modern South Asia. Starting next year, we will have the pleasure of sponsoring two classes each year by Finnian Moore-Gerety.

Our programs will continue under five heads: South Asia seminar; Book Adda; Brown-Harvard-MIT Joint Seminar on South Asian Politics; Jindal Lectures; and the Film Series. In addition, we are revitalizing our student programs, both for graduate and undergraduate students. We seek a more vigorous student participation in our collective life.

I hope the year is intellectually productive, meaningful and enjoyable, just as the first year of the center was.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashutosh Varshney'.

Ashutosh Varshney
Director, Center for Contemporary South Asia
Sol Goldman Professor of International
Studies and the Social Sciences
Professor of Political Science

OP Jindal Distinguished Lecture Series

To promote a serious discussion of politics, economics, and social and cultural change in modern India, Sajjan and Sangita Jindal have endowed, in perpetuity, the OP Jindal Distinguished Lectures by major scholars and public figures.



Pratap Bhanu Mehta

Fall 2017

Pratap Bhanu Mehta, is president and chief executive of the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), New Delhi. He is a political scientist who has taught at Harvard University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and the New York University School of Law. His areas of research include political theory, constitutional law, society and politics in India, governance and political economy, and international affairs.

Dr. Mehta has served on many central government committees, including India's National Security Advisory Board, the Prime Minister of India's National Knowledge Commission, and a Supreme Court-appointed committee on elections in Indian universities. Mehta is a prolific writer; he is an editorial consultant to the *Indian Express*, and his columns have appeared in dailies including the *Financial Times*, *The Telegraph*, the *International Herald Tribune*, and *The Hindu*. He is also on the editorial boards of many academic journals, including the *American Political Science Review*, the *Journal of Democracy*, and *India and Global Affairs*.

Dr. Mehta holds a BA (first class) in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics from Oxford and a PhD in politics from Princeton. He received the 2010 Malcom S. Adishehshiah Award and the 2011 Infosys Prize for Social Sciences in the category of Political Science.



Mehta, Singh, Reginster, and Varshney



Crowd listening to Jindal Lecture

The Nietzschean Moment in Indian Intellectual History

OCTOBER 26

*The Melody of Discord:
The Self and History in Iqbal*

Commentators:

Bhargupati Singh, Anthropology
Bernard Reginster, Philosophy
Ashutosh Varshney, Political Science

OCTOBER 28

*Metaphysics of Avoidance:
Self and History in Aurobindo*

Commentators:

Stephen Bush, Religious Studies
Paget Henry, Sociology
Ashutosh Varshney, Political Science

OP Jindal Distinguished Lecture Series

Nayanjot Lahiri

Spring 2017

Nayanjot Lahiri is Professor of History at Ashoka University. She was previously a professor in the Department of History at the University of Delhi. Educated at St. Stephen's College, Delhi, and at the Department of History, University of Delhi, she taught at Hindu College from 1982 till 1993, and thereafter at the Department of History. She has served as Dean of Colleges at the University of Delhi from 2007 till 2010 and as Dean of Inter-national Relations from 2006 till 2007. Nayanjot Lahiri has been Member, Delhi Urban Art Commission (2007-2010), and currently serves on the Council of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and on the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Society (New Delhi). She was also member of a committee set up by the Government of India in 2010 to analyze the impact of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and Validation) Ordinance, 2010 and to draft an alternative bill for Parliament. The bill became law in March 2010.

Dr. Lahiri's research interests include Ancient India, Indian archaeology, and heritage studies. She is author of *Pre-Ahom Assam* (1991),

The Archaeology of Indian Trade Routes (1992), *Finding Forgotten Cities: How the Indus Civilization was Discovered* (2005), *Marshalling the Past: Ancient India and its Modern Histories* (2012) and *Ashoka in Ancient India* (2015). She is co-author of *Copper and its Alloys in Ancient India* (1996), editor of *The Decline and Fall of the Indus Civilization* (2000), co-editor of *Ancient India: New Research* (2009), *Buddhism in Asia – Revival and Reinvention* (2016) and an issue of *World Archaeology* entitled *The Archaeology of Hinduism* (2004). Her writings have also appeared in peer-reviewed journals like *Antiquity*, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, *World Archaeology* and *Economic and Political Weekly*.

At present, she is working on a history of Indian archaeology since Independence. Nayanjot Lahiri won the Infosys Prize 2013 in the Humanities-Archaeology. *Ashoka in Ancient India* was awarded the 2016 John F. Richards Prize by the American Historical Association for the best book in South Asian History.

APRIL 28

Are Archaeological Discoveries like Scientific Discoveries? The Curious Case of the Indus Civilization

Commentators:

Tamara Chin, Comparative Literature
Yannis Hamilakis, Archaeology
Ashutosh Varshney, Political Science

MAY 1

At the Crossroads of Politics and Progress: India's Archaeological Heritage Since Independence

Commentators:

Johanna Hanink, Classics
Peter Van Dommelen, Archaeology
Leela Gandhi, English



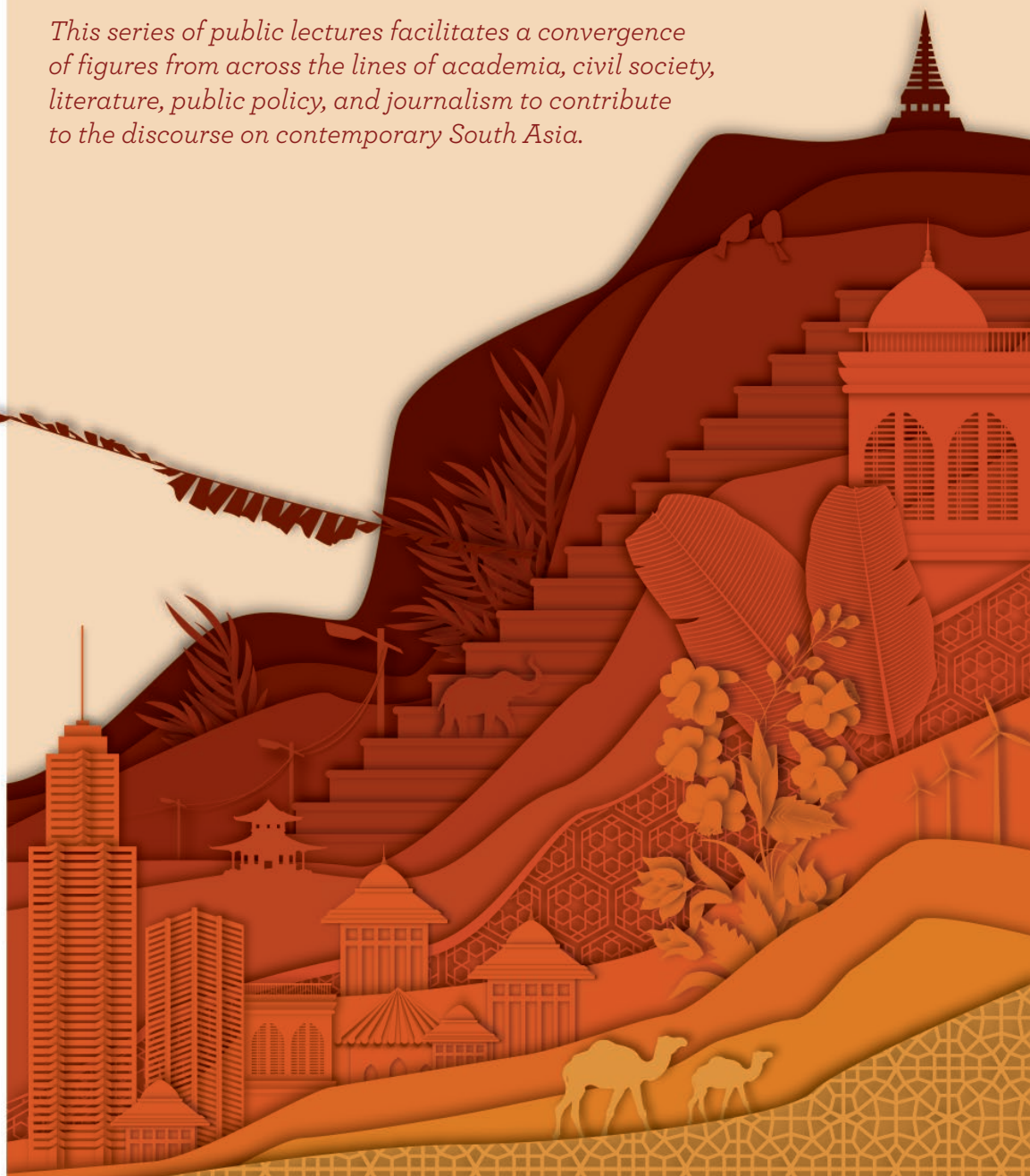
Nayanjot Lahiri



Lahiri, Van Dommelen, Hanink, and Gandhi

South Asia Seminar

This series of public lectures facilitates a convergence of figures from across the lines of academia, civil society, literature, public policy, and journalism to contribute to the discourse on contemporary South Asia.



FALL 2016

- ① **SEPTEMBER 30**
Lawrence Liang, Alternative Law Forum
Just and Not Just Animals: The Legal Challenge of Animals in Contemporary Cases in India
- ② **OCTOBER 7**
Kamran Asdar Ali, University of Texas
On Female Friendships: Saheli and Sexual Politics in 1960's Cinema
- ③ **OCTOBER 12**
Barkha Dutt, Consulting Editor, NDTV
India—Pakistan: Can They Come Back from the Brink?
- ④ **OCTOBER 20**
Sunila Galappatti, Author
A Long Watch: War, Captivity and Return in Sri Lanka
- ⑤ **OCTOBER 21**
P. Sainath, People's Archive of Rural India
The Everyday Lives of Everyday People
- ⑥ **NOVEMBER 4**
Saeed Naqvi, World Report
Being the Other: The Muslim in India
- ⑦ **NOVEMBER 29**
Sayed Akbaruddin, India's Representative to the United Nations
Is India Doing Enough at the United Nations in the New Century?
- ⑧ **DECEMBER 2**
Gail Omvedt, Sociologist & Rights Activist
Contemporary Relevance of Dr. Ambedkar's Theory for Annihilation of Caste Today

SPRING 2017

- ① **FEBRUARY 10**
Sudipta Kaviraj, Columbia University
Must We Say What We Don't Mean? On the Language of Indian Social Science
- ② **FEBRUARY 24**
Kris Manjapra, Tufts University
Apprentice, Pauper, Coolie, Convict: Laboring Subjects and the Global Plantation Complex in the 19th Century
- ③ **FEBRUARY 27**
Mahesh Rangarajan, Ashoka University
Nature's Present Environment, Society and Science in Contemporary India
- ④ **MARCH 3**
Manan Ahmed, Columbia University
A Conquest of Pasts
- ⑤ **MARCH 20**
Nile Green, UCLA
The Afghan Discovery of Buddha: Towards a Transnational Intellectual History
- ⑥ **APRIL 21**
Naisargi Dave, University of Toronto
On context and Contradiction: The Politics of Humans and Animals in Contemporary India
- ⑦ **MAY 5**
Rahul Mediratta, Brown University
Globalization in the Shadows: Smuggling and India-Pakistan Trade Normalization

Book Adda

Adda means a site for collective deliberation in South Asia. This series, features panel discussions of important new books written by our colleagues, or those significantly involved with us as intellectual interlocutors.

SEPTEMBER 16

*How Solidarity Works for Welfare:
Subnationalism and Social Development in India*

Author: Perna Singh, Brown University

Commentators:

Andreas Wimmer, Columbia University
Ashutosh Varshney, Brown University
Irfan Nooruddin, Georgetown University
Melani Cammett, Harvard University
Peter Hall, Harvard University
Sanjay Reddy, New School

APRIL 24

The Other One Percent: Indians in America

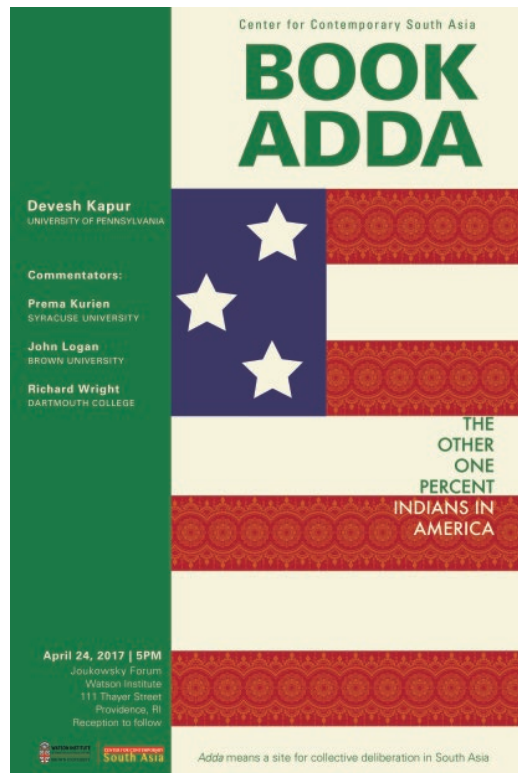
Author: Devesh Kapur, University of Pennsylvania

Commentators:

John Logan, Brown University
Prema Kurien, Syracuse University
Richard Wright, Dartmouth College



Crowd fills Joukowsky Forum for Singh Book Adda





Devesh Kapur



Brown-Harvard-MIT Joint Seminar on South Asian Politics

The Brown-Harvard-MIT joint seminar on South Asian politics approaches some of the big questions of politics, political economy and security, on which the South Asian region offers engaging perspectives. The series is co-sponsored by the Watson Institute at Brown University, the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and South Asia Institute at Harvard University, and the MIT Center for International Studies

1 SEPTEMBER 23

Aruna Roy, Activist & Founder, MKSS
Development and Politics in Indian Democracy

2 OCTOBER 14

Perna Singh, Brown University
New Potions in Old Bottles: Explaining the Differential Control of Smallpox in 19th Century Canton and Calcutta

3 NOVEMBER 18

Simon Chauchard, Dartmouth College
Who Influences Voters in Rural India? An Experimental Approach

4 DECEMBER 9

Paul Staniland, University of Chicago
Armed Politics: Violence, Order, and the State in Southern Asia

5 FEBRUARY 3

Pavithra Suryanarayan, Johns Hopkins
Hollowing Out the State: Status Inequality and Fiscal Capacity in Colonial India

6 FEBRUARY 17

George Perkovich & Toby Dalton
Not War, Not Peace: Motivating Pakistan to Prevent Cross-Border Terrorism

7 MARCH 10

Emmerich Davies Escobar, Harvard University
The Lessons Private Schools Teach: Using a Field Experiment to Understand the Effects of Private Schools on Political Behavior

8 APRIL 7

Yusuf Negggers, Brown University
Enfranchising Your Own? Experimental Evidence on Bureaucrat Diversity and Election Bias



ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:

CHAIR

- 1 Ashutosh Varshney**
Sol Goldman Professor of International Studies
and the Social Sciences, Brown University

CO-DIRECTORS

- 2 Vipin Narang**
Associate Professor of Political Science,
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- 3 Patrick Heller**
Professor of Sociology and International
Studies, Brown University
- 4 Prerna Singh**
Mahatma Gandhi Assistant Professor of
Political Science and International Studies,
Brown University
- 5 Akshay Mangla**
Assistant Professor of Business
Administration, Harvard Business School

www.southasianpolitics.net

Films & Additional Programs

In its first year the Center co-sponsored events with many departments across campus.

1 SEPTEMBER 23

Bhrigupati Singh, Brown University
Conversations Between Anthropology and Philosophy

2 OCTOBER 5

Subasri Krishnan, filmmaker
What the Fields Remember
Film Screening

3 OCTOBER 11

Jennifer Lambe, Brown University
Theory from the South: Decolonializing Time

4 OCTOBER 25

Brian Meeks, Brown University
Theory from the South: Radical Caribbean

5 NOVEMBER 1

Rebecca Nedostup, Brown University
Theory from the South
Beyond the Spectral Metaphor: The Displaced Dead

6 NOVEMBER 15

Selvi & Ellisa Paloschi, Director
Driving with Selvi Film Screening

7 NOVEMBER 22

Evelyn Hu-Dehart, Brown University
Theory from the South
Spanish Manila: Latin America in Asia

8 MARCH 1

Shaunak Sen & Aman Mann, Directors
Cities of Sleep Film Screening

9 MARCH 17

Iram Ghufuran, Director
There's Something in the Air Film Screening

10 APRIL 4

Mahabano Abidi & Naiza Khan, Artists
The Disappearance of Things/City As Archive

11 APRIL 10

Bikram Choudhary, Jawaharlal Nehru University
Universities in Distress: Reflections on the JNU Experience of Right Wing State Intervention into University Life

12 APRIL 12

Rian Thum, Loyola University
Chinese Pilgrims, Indian Pirs

13 APRIL 20

Sarah Besky, Brown University
How Nature Works Book Workshop

14 APRIL 12

Jay Gandhi (Flute) & Nitin Mitta (Tabla),
An Evening of Indian Classical Music



Aruna Roy presents to the South Asia Seminar



Sudipta Kaviraj

Visiting Fellows & Scholars

Fall 2016



Ramesh Ramanathan

Ramesh Ramanathan is a social entrepreneur, and works on urban issues in India. He is co-founder of Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, a non-profit focused on transforming quality of life in Urban India. He is also Chairman of Janalakshmi Social Services, a not-for-profit social business holding company that has promoted enterprises in urban financial inclusion and urban affordable housing.

Ramanathan works closely with government on urban issues in a pro-bono capacity. His current positions include being the National Technical Advisor, Government of India for the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, the country's flagship urban mission. Prior to his social initiatives, Ramesh held leadership positions with Citibank in New York and London, in the bank's capital markets business. Ramesh has an MS in Physics from BITS Pilani, an MBA from Yale University and a CFA from AIMR. In 2007, he was chosen as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum.



Swati Ramanathan

Swati Ramanathan is co-founder of Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy — a thinker-practitioner “do-tank” — committed to transforming India's cities and citizenship. Janaagraha takes a systems approach to addressing urban challenges, working both with citizens at the grassroots, as well as with all three federal tiers of government. Ms. Ramanathan leads Janaagraha's innovations in technology for greater government accountability and citizen participation. She has received international recognition for ipaidabribe.com on retail corruption; and ichangemycity.com on hyper local citizen participation, most recently winning Google's Global Impact Challenge, 2013.

Ms Ramanathan is also Chairperson of Jana Urban Space Foundation, committed to improving urban planning and urban design in India's cities. She was honored by the Government of Rajasthan with the Rajyotsava Puraskar — Rajasthan's highest civilian award — for her work on the Jaipur 2025 Master plan. She has prepared the National Urban Spatial Planning and Development (NUSPD) 2013 Guidelines, for planning India's cities, at the behest of the Ministry of Urban Development, and the Planning Commission, Government of India.



Nirupama Rao

Nirupama Rao, former Ambassador of India, returned to Brown in the fall of 2016 to teach an international relations class, "India in the World." In 2014, Rao served as the Meera and Vikram Gandhi Fellow. In recent years Rao has been appointed as a Public Policy Fellow for the Wilson Center Asia Program and as a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, India.

Rao joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1973. In a diplomatic career spanning four decades, she served, inter alia, as India's foreign secretary, ambassador to China, high commissioner to Sri Lanka and ambassador to the United States.



During their fall 2016 visit, the Ramanathans wrote an article, "**The Impact of Universal Suffrage**," which was published in the *Journal of Democracy* in July 2017.

Visiting Fellows & Scholars

Spring 2017



Rana Dasgupta

Dasgupta returned to Brown in spring 2017 to teach a course titled, "The Collapse of the Nation-State System: An Intellectual Preparation." Dasgupta has taught at Brown through a collaboration between CCSA, the Dean of the Faculty and the Department of Modern Culture and Media.

Dasgupta is an award-winning novelist born in the UK in 1971. As an adult he lived in France, Malaysia and the US before moving to Delhi in 2000.



Siddharth Swaminathan

Siddharth Swaminathan is a Professor of Political Science at Azim Premji University in Karnataka, India. Swaminathan teaches courses on Politics in India, Welfare Rights, and Empirical Policy Analysis. He received an MA and PhD in political science from the Claremont Graduate University. His research focuses on political demography, voter behavior, citizenship, and urban governance in India. Prior to joining Azim Premji University, he held faculty positions at the Institute for Social and Economic Change, La Sierra University and California State University.

His most recent publications include: *Statistical Methods and Political Analysis: Examining the 'Economic Vote' in Indian Parliamentary Elections* (Knowing the Social World: Challenges and Responses, 2015) and *Politics, Development, and Deaths: Comparing China and India* (Konark Publishers Private Ltd, 2015).

Research Partnerships



In August, 2017 a research paper by Ashutosh Varshney, Patrick Heller, Siddharth Swaminathan, and Ebony Bertorelli, titled, "**Does Citizenship Abate Class? Evidence and Reflections from Bangalore,**" was published in India's leading peer-reviewed social science journal, *Economic and Political Weekly*. The research was based on work conducted for the Janaagraha-Brown Citizenship Index (JB-CI) project.

The work of the JB-CI project has been completed in Bangalore, Mysore, and Shimoga. The project has two aims: (i) construction of various measures of citizenship, including a citizenship index - a measurable statistical index assessing the quality of citizenship across individuals within a city; and (ii) examination of the determinants of basic service delivery in urban centers. The research asks how citizenship is distributed across the various categories of class, caste and religion. Who shows higher levels of citizenship? The project also asks how basic services - education, health, power, sanitation, water, etc. - are provided to the city and how citizens experience the bureaucracies and organizations associated with such services. How does citizenship matter relative to caste, class and religion?



Assistant Professor of Anthropology, **Bhrigupati Singh**, is conducting a multi-year study with faculty at the All India Institute of Medical Studies (AIIMS), New Delhi. Professor Singh spent his 2015-2016 sabbatical year conducting ethnographic research on mental health and illness, as a Visiting Faculty member at the Department of Psychiatry at AIIMS. While Singh's proposal was framed around the cultural life of diagnostic categories, such as depression and anxiety, the actual research became wider in focus.

Patient interviews during ward rounds at AIIMS led Singh to a community clinic in the lower-income neighborhood of Trilokpuri (in East Delhi), described by news media as a "riot laboratory" of contemporary India. Forms of subjectivity, tensions and everyday life in this neighborhood became a major focus of Singh's research. In Trilokpuri Singh also continued his longstanding interests in spiritual healing, in particular working with a popular healer in the neighborhood known as "Sufiji," who took him on a journey to a Sufi Muslim shrine in Badaun, Uttar Pradesh, one of the leading sites for the treatment of mental/spirit afflictions in north India. Singh made numerous visits to Badaun with Sufiji, including one visit where they took along a team of psychiatrists from AIIMS to study the kinds of clinical diagnoses one might find among treatment-seekers in a shrine such as Badaun.

Gradually, Singh realized that the ethnographic journey between AIIMS, Trilokpuri, and Badaun was not random. Rather, in what is globally beginning to be called the "post-asylum era," this journey between hospital, home, and shrine is quite common and may even be the norm for mental health trajectories in India. To further examine concepts of the normal and pathological in popular culture, Singh also teamed up with a filmmaker to create an archive of film and media material related to mental health (available at indiancine.ma). Singh is now at work on his next book, tentatively titled *Lunar Enlightenment: Essays on Life-Force*.

Singh's research was funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the American Institute for Indian Studies, CCSA and the Watson Institute.

Urban South Asia Reading Group

Launched in fall 2013, the reading group meets occasionally during the academic year with the goal of bringing together people at Brown with an interest in urban South Asia, including both those with a specific India focus, and those interested in developing a comparative understanding of South Asian cities. The group has two primary activities: 1) small, informal workshops at which ongoing research work on urban India, both at Brown and by visitors, is presented to the group for discussion; 2) key publications and research on urban India are read and discussed. The group includes graduate and undergraduate students, as well as faculty from the Watson Institute, Anthropology, Political Science, and Sociology.

①

OCTOBER 6

Ramesh Ramanathan, Jana Group
*Financial Inclusion in Urban India:
Challenges and Possibilities*

④

MARCH 9

Rama Srinivasan, Anthropology
*Between Kinship and Courts:
Legal Tales of Love and Marriage
in North India*

②

OCTOBER 13

Swati Ramanathan, Jana Group
*Solving the Spatial Chaos in India's Cities:
Case Studies from the Trenches*

⑤

MAY 4

Poulomi Chakrabarti, Brown University
*Two Logics of Middle Class Collective
Action: Evidence from India*

③

NOVEMBER 10

Jamie McPike, Brown University
*Fast Policies, Slow Governance:
Understanding Urban Policy
Implementation in Globalizing India*

CCSA Fellows 2017

The Center awarded funds for research projects and summer internships to three undergraduate students and three graduate students. The projects selected for funding represent a variety of research topics related to social, political, cultural, and economic change in South Asia. In the fall, student fellows from the previous year presented their work in two workshops.

Returning Fellow Workshops:

- 1 SEPTEMBER 23**
Returning Undergraduate
Fellow Presentations
- 2 OCTOBER 6**
Returning Graduate
Fellow Presentations



Sydney Tan presents her summer research



Sachin Pendse presents his summer research

GRADUATE FELLOWS



Pavitra Govindan

Economics | Tamil Nadu, India

*Are Moderate Laws More Effective than
Radical Ones in Changing Individual
Behavior Governed by Social Norms?*



Shishav Parajuli

Political Science | Nepal

*The Paragon of Animal, The Quintessence
of Dust: An Invitation to the General
Assembly of Humans and Dust in Kathmandu*



Suvaidd Yaseen

History | United Kingdom & India

*Islam in Politics: Kashmir at the Turn of the
Twentieth Century*

UNDERGRADUATE FELLOWS



Ivan Hoffman

History | Various, India

Perspectives on Critical Religious Ecologies



Sebastian Lucek

Economics | New Delhi & Kolkata, India

From Maihar to Monterrey: The Globalization of Indian Classical Music & Internship at the Centre for Policy Research



Divya Santhanam

Health & Human Biology | Mumbai, India

Investigating psychological and social stressors faced by married men who have sex with men (MSM) in India

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Front cover photo features Colombo, Sri Lanka.

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