



# THE SOUTH ASIA INITIATIVE AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

## 2012 STUDENT GRANT REPORTS



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Top: Shalini Pammal; Stephanie Spray

Bottom: Radhika Jain; Sophia LaJaunie; Daniel McMann

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# 2012 UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH REPORTS

## ANGELA FRANKEL – 2014, Human Development

### Research with the Harvard-Bangalore Science Initiative, Bangalore, India



This summer I was afforded the incredible opportunity of traveling to India to conduct research at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, located just north of Bangalore. My experiences over the course of 10 weeks in south India were certainly transformative: I was able to catch a glimpse of the chaos and commotion existing every day in an Indian metropolis, while gaining new perspectives on research conducted abroad. Despite an in-depth review of available resources to prepare for my visit, I found that every aspect of life in India presented new and unexpected experiences. Within my very first hour in the country, I was bombarded with new sights – vibrant silk saris draped off shoulders of women who stared back, the discordant sounds of auto rickshaw horns, the enticing steam from a street pani puri

vendor corrupted by the distant odor of a cow trotting down the busy street. Sure, I had read about all of this before arriving, but only then could I truly understand what it meant to travel in India.

Luckily, my new home at NCBS was located just north of the city, and the campus served as a paradise and oasis away from Bangalore's forceful attack on the senses. The Principal Investigator of my lab, Dasaradhi Palakodeti, assigned me to work alongside Pranavi Dasari, a junior research fellow studying planarian regeneration on a post-transcriptional level. My summer research allowed me to gain a better understanding of stem cell function in regeneration. I was able to learn and develop a wide range of research techniques, including RNA-interference knockdowns of proteins involved in stem cell function, as well as a variety of standardization procedures for immunofluorescence labeling and fluorescent in-situ hybridizations for planarians. All in all, I learned a great deal from my research experiences in Bangalore, and gained a broader perspective on scientific inquiry.

Beyond my research, I highly value the relationships I forged during my travels. Pranavi, my research mentor, and I became great friends during my stay in Bangalore, and she kindly invited me to stay with her and her family in Hyderabad for a week during the program. During my stay, I tasted some fantastic cuisine (Hyderabadi biryani is life changing), spoke with Pranavi and her relatives about life and culture in India, and gained a strong sense of the warmth and welcoming spirit of Indian families. Later, I was invited to dine with the family of a Harvard alumnus in Bangalore, and once again I was taken aback by the kindheartedness and generosity of the people I met. The very same family brought me to see their daughter's classical dance performance and took me shopping to purchase some traditional Indian garb to bring home.

All things considered, my ten-week journey in south India was incredibly rewarding. Although I often found myself lost in translation, I quickly learned that from the chaos of miscommunication and cultural misinterpretation arises a deeper sense of understanding and unity. There is an entrenched sense of humor and optimism that keeps this crazy nation running. Often times, the best thing to do is nod your head and go with the flow.

## KATHLEEN GOODWIN – 2013, Social Studies

### Senior Thesis Research on 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots, New Delhi, India



Shortly after completing my last exam on May 11, I left for New Delhi to complete 4 weeks of senior thesis research, made possible by a grant from SAI. In 2008 I lived in Delhi for three months through a program called Cross-Cultural Solutions, teaching English and math at a school run by a local NGO, Vidya. Returning to Delhi this summer felt like coming home. Unfortunately, it was a much hotter home, as temperatures throughout May and June regularly hit 112 degrees Fahrenheit. I lived in an all-girls hostel for students at Delhi University, conveniently located on the edge of campus and only a few steps away from the Vishwa Vidyalyaya metro station. My housing was arranged by my Harvard roommate's family friends, whose daughters attended Delhi University. My stay at the hostel included three meals per day and laundry service despite its very low fee, which seemed even lower compared to the overpriced apartment in New York City where I spent the rest of my summer.

My senior thesis is about the riots that occurred in Delhi in 1984 in the days immediately following Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination. Approximately 3,000 Sikhs, most of whom were men, were killed by mobs of Hindu men who also looted, burnt houses, and ignited cars. At first glance, the riots seem to be the result of a canon of historical events that reached an apex on November 1, 1984. Indira Gandhi ordered the demolition of the holiest of Sikh sites, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, in order to stamp out a violent Sikh militant holed up inside with a small army in June 1984. Five months later, Mrs. Gandhi's Sikh security guards opened fire as she walked to work, and by that evening Delhi was in flames as Hindus started attacking Sikhs. In reality, as my research reflects, each of these events is densely complicated by political and economic factors and deserves a much deeper analysis than the simple explanation of religious violence in the world's largest and most diverse democracy.

While I had originally planned to have all of my interviews scheduled before even landing in Delhi, in fact I only had one arranged with the owner of my hostel, whose photo shop had been burnt to the ground in 1984. Even he could not speak with me until a week after I arrived. Arranging interviews turned out to be the biggest challenge of my research, but thanks to connections from Harvard professors and TFs and an extremely influential contact at the Times of India through a fellow Harvard student, I was able to conduct 18 interviews and now have 14 hours of recorded conversations to transcribe. Almost all of my interviews were conducted in English and I used a friend at my hostel when a translator was needed. I spoke with journalists, academics, lawyers, government officials, direct victims of the 1984 violence, and those who arranged the relief efforts in the aftermath when thousands of Sikh families were displaced. I am extremely excited to finish my research and to begin writing my thesis!



## RADHIKA JAIN – 2014, History of Science

### Undergraduate Fellowship at Shots for Shots, Baroda, India



My research this summer took me to Baroda, Gujarat, a dry, inland city known for its fine arts educational institutions and relentless heat. My family in Mumbai puzzled at my decision to work there but kindly cautioned me to avoid the sun, a lesson I quickly realized the native inhabitants take to heart: women and men alike tie up their faces so that only their eyes are visible beneath brightly colored scarves that may or may not match the rest of their attire.

As an undergraduate fellow for Shots for Shots, an American non-profit organization that provides basic vaccinations to children under five in India's semi-rural and rural villages, it was my responsibility to survey as many mothers as possible in the organization's target villages to determine the biggest

barriers to early preventive healthcare, what percentage of families were providing their children with immunizations, and the scope of knowledge about the purpose of vaccination.

After meeting countless families, braving a fair number of power and water outages, and gradually improving my cobbled Gujarati, what I discovered was a thorough system for providing immunization that took me by surprise and changed my outlook on community medicine and local empowerment. The administration of vaccinations by Shots for Shots in this area may not, in fact, be the best use of the non-profit's resources. In the last 15 years, the Gujarati government has integrated efforts by government-employed healthcare workers, village preschool teachers, and families to maximize childhood vaccination. At the heart of this initiative is "Mamta," or mother. Every month, traveling teams of nurses visit local preschools (almost every village has one), where mothers congregate to weigh their babies and toddlers, receive prenatal check-ups and shots, and, of course, vaccinate their children. The mothers are summoned every month by the preschool teacher and community link workers (CLWs), all of whom keep copious records of each child's immunization history and family information. The CLWs also offer mandatory family-planning counseling to mothers with at least two children, and a traveling bus makes monthly trips to serve villages without a school as well as temporary laborers who are living on the streets with their families as they complete local construction jobs. All of these services are provided by the government.

I too made the rounds in six different villages, accompanied either by a preschool teacher or a CLW. Together we were invited into nearly two hundred homes (Gujaratis are very hospitable, regardless of their means), where I asked – in Gujarati or Hindi – about the vaccinations given to the youngest children in the home and if the mother knew about the purpose of immunization. In nearly 100 percent of the homes we visited, mothers ensured that their children were up-to-date on vaccinations; and of that contingent about 70 percent confidently stated that they recognized the term "vaccine" or could tell me why their children needed to be immunized. Even those who could not name the benefits of specific vaccinations understood that these precautionary measures were good for their children – many told me simply that vaccinations were given for the good health of the child. They trusted the





local teacher enough to hold their children as they cried through shots every month. Developing this trust has taken years of careful effort by the teachers and CLVs; initially, parents were wary and would not bring their children to the preschool for shots, multiple teachers told me.

Witnessing the system firsthand has taught me critical lessons about rural medicine and global health. As a hopeful doctor, these lessons are helping to define my own perspectives toward medical care and relationships. Firstly, a patient's community can often play a very important role in his or her medical care – the immediate doctor-patient relationship is not always the most important. In each village I visited, teachers, social workers, nurses, and families worked in concert to ensure that children were cared for; the system would not work if any of these characters were missing. Secondly, understanding local community is critical to providing care. Especially in India, I do not think that a non-profit consisting of foreign volunteers can come in on a short-term basis and start providing vaccinations to local villagers without first spending a considerable amount of time earning their trust and gaining familiarity with attitudes towards healthcare.



Thirdly, preventive medicine is an important medical tool that has significantly reduced disease rates, but there are other strategies that may be just as critical. According to health care workers, measles and tuberculosis have become much less common as immunization has increased, but other illnesses such as malaria and typhoid—the vaccines for which are not provided for free by the state—are still prevalent. But my observations over the summer suggest that subsidizing more vaccines does not necessarily need to be the next goal: improved sanitation, greater access to clean water, and more extensive education efforts could make a big difference.

Finally, I was moved and inspired by what struck me as a wonderful example of female empowerment. From teachers to nurses to the mothers themselves, every important role in the system was played by a woman. While girls are traditionally considered the inferior sex in many parts of India, the immunization system in Gujarat was an excellent example of women quietly changing the lives of the next generation for the better - seemingly simple and yet so powerful.

I believe the model that I have studied is a very effective one and could be applied in similar environments around the world. It is not perfect – immunization coverage is inevitably limited by funding and resources – but the collaboration between government and community can definitely be emulated.

It has been particularly intriguing for me to compare my experiences this summer to my knowledge of the American healthcare system, where I know of no community, school-based healthcare system, and also to experience such a strong integration of education and healthcare. As a result, I am interested in pursuing further coursework not only in global health but also on the American healthcare structure and educational systems here and abroad. It is early yet, but I want to try to incorporate these lessons into my own medical career and am more seriously considering working on public health issues abroad. My experiences also make me want to incorporate education – of both children and their families – into my medical endeavors.

## SIVAKUMAR SUNDARAM – 2013, Social Studies Senior Thesis Research on Mental Healthcare Provision, Chennai, India

A little over two months ago, I stepped off a plane at midnight into the oppressive heat of the city of Chennai in southeastern India, an act that I had repeated several times before on family trips to visit our relatives in our place of origin. This iteration of the familiar ritual, however, was marked by several important distinctions. On the one hand, I was traveling alone to India for the first time. On the other hand, I was now armed with three years' worth of classes in Tamil, the mother tongue that I had failed to learn from my mother. More importantly, I set foot in this time with a mission rather more difficult than attending weddings and fulfilling my social obligations, although I ended up accomplishing those as well. I had two short months to perform ethnographic fieldwork that would be the basis of my senior honors thesis in Social Studies, the capstone of my academic career at Harvard and the validation of four years of sustained study in a program that sounded like the easiest classes at my middle school.

**“...within a couple of weeks of spending time with the incredibly welcoming organization [The Banyan], I realized that I could learn a great deal by studying what was in front of me.”**

I knew, more or less, what I needed to get done. Through initial exposure in a course on global health (Societies of the World 36) taught by four renowned physician-anthropologists, I had developed an interest in the field of medical anthropology as a subject that could inform my future career as a physician. I had explored this interest in greater depth through a graduate-level course (Anthropology 2795) that surveyed major themes and debates in medical anthropology. I met with professors such as Arthur Kleinman and Byron Good to discuss my own upcoming thesis project, for which I had decided to focus on mental healthcare in India. Finally, for a Social Studies junior tutorial (Social Studies 98kg) on health and development, I had submitted a detailed research design that explained and defend-

ed my methodology for fieldwork in Chennai while drawing on the rich secondary literature regarding mental illness and healthcare in India.

As it turned out, unfortunately, all of this significant preparation did not prevent me from suffering severe self-doubt and fear of failure as I confronted the challenges of being in charge of my own academic work for the first time, without classes or assignments to structure and motivate my efforts. It certainly did not help that I soon discovered that my proposed plan of investigating causes of change in the actual practice of psychiatric treatment in government settings was quite infeasible given the impenetrability of Indian bureaucracy. Luckily, I had already reached out to a local mental health NGO called The Banyan to help orient me in the field and make connections to potential interviewees, and within a couple of weeks of spending time with the incredibly welcoming organization, I realized that I could learn a great deal by studying what was in front of me.

Thus, my fieldwork ended up being a comparative case study of two mental health NGOs in Chennai: The Banyan and the Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF). I focused on these organizations' urban outpatient clinics, where people could come, consult with healthcare professionals, get medicines, and leave to go back home, although both organizations include residential care as an important part of their services. I interviewed staff at all levels: senior management (founder, director, CEO), mid-level (pharmacists, project managers), and direct care provision (psychiatrists and social workers). I also observed at least 100 consultations of these psychiatrists and social workers with clients and/or their family members, and I interviewed about 25 clients and caregivers myself. In my observations and interviews, I gradually narrowed in on ascertaining how all of these different stakeholders thought about, used, understood, described, and prescribed psychopharmaceutical drugs. These drugs made for a particularly fascinating analytical lens because of their intimate connections to political and economic issues of licensing, marketing, and manufacturing in addition to their obvious importance as

therapeutic and even cultural objects. The Cliff Notes version of my (preliminary) conclusions: although both of these NGOs espoused admirably progressive models of care with equal emphasis on medical and non-medical forms of therapy, in practice the cultural status, apparent simplicity, and relative affordability of psychopharmaceutical drugs caused them to dominate the actual provision and experience of care at the expense of other forms of intervention.

The results of my research this summer, which began with despair and ended with unexpected clarity, will occupy the majority of my intellectual energies during the upcoming year, but the influence of the past two months on my life promises to be much larger. My experience forced me to confront several truths about myself, some of them unpleasant but all of them crucial to understand, at the same time as it offered me the chance to learn deeply outside of the classroom. For the first time, as I compared my observations with the literature I had already explored, I was able to see that the theories and abstractions that preoccupied my education really did relate to and help me explain a more concrete reality. I should also mention the significance of the fact that these profound discoveries took place in a city and culture that I thought I knew well and that I had felt helped to define me; my time in Chennai destroyed many of the misguided assumptions I had unwittingly held about India and the people who live there. Finally, I now feel much more confident that a career in both medicine and social science is a good fit for me – or, more cautiously and probably more accurately, that pursuing such a career is my best next step. I have witnessed firsthand how medicine and healing are integral parts of social, economic, and political reality and, conversely, how knowledge of social, economic, and political context can and must inform the practice of medicine and other forms of healing. What is left is to act on these observations.

**“I have witnessed firsthand...how knowledge of social, economic, and political context can and must inform the practice of medicine and other forms of healing.”**

I cannot, of course, end this reflection without thanking the South Asia Initiative for its generous funding of my research. To have had the privilege of such a powerful intellectual and personal experience as an undergraduate is a rare opportunity indeed, and I very much appreciate my good fortune in obtaining SAI's financial support. I hope that as I move forward in my career, I may prove worthy of the honor.

## TARA SURI – 2013, Social Studies

### Senior Thesis Research on the Anti-Prostitution Pledge, Sangli, Maharashtra and Kolkata, India



*Save us from saviors.*

It was a refrain I heard from Indian sex workers throughout the summer, and its pithiness cut through my swirl of questions and struck at the core of my research. *Save us from saviors.* Prior to arriving, I had read how subaltern sex workers were challenging dominant discourses – most especially, the trope of enslaved victimhood that plagues representations of the Global South – but there was a profound power to being there, to attempting to connect to and understand these women's realities, that reading the literature could not capture.

I was in India to investigate the impact of the anti-prostitution pledge, a U.S. aid conditionality that can be conceptually traced back to attempts to control prostitutes under the British Raj. The pledge, which is embedded into 2003 legislation that committed \$15 billion to fight HIV/AIDS, has required that NGOs declare their moral opposition to prostitution to receive government funding. Many have criticized the policy for undermining HIV/AIDS care by defunding health programs run by sex workers and increasing stigmatization. I was in India to understand what the pledge has meant for Indian sex workers.

I spent five weeks in Sangli, Maharashtra – a small town several hours from Pune – and four weeks in Kolkata, West Bengal, speaking to sex worker collectives, NGOs, and government agencies that have interfaced with U.S. aid policy. On the daily, the research process was exhausting and frustrating. While scheduling and conducting interviews with sex workers was quite easy, connecting to local government officials required extensive amounts of energy; finding accurate contact information was the beginning of a long struggle.

Research was also incredibly disorienting. I started out narrowly focused on the anti-prostitution pledge in the context of HIV/AIDS legislation, but my initial interviews did not yield very much; I started to realize that I needed to reframe my questions to understand what the policy meant at the local level. To do this, I had to reconsider the pledge as not an isolated policy, but as part of a nexus of policies; indeed, it has been implemented for U.S. aid programs – for example, the Global Trafficking in Persons grants – outside the HIV/AIDS context that have had a very real impact on sex workers. Reframing my research highlighted that the pledge has not only had ramifications for HIV/AIDS programs for sex workers, but has also strengthened “raid-and-rescue” anti-trafficking efforts that understand all sex workers as victims and forcibly remove them from their homes and place them in prison-like “rehabilitation” homes. The sex workers explained the situation best: they needed “saving” from “saviors.”

Through my research, I also got to attend a number of exciting events, including a U.S. Consulate anti-trafficking event and the Sex Workers' Freedom Festival. The latter event brought together sex workers from forty-two countries in protest of the U.S. State Department's denial of visas to sex workers; as a result of this denial, for the first time sex workers were unable to attend the International AIDS Conference, which was held in Washington D.C. this summer. At the conference, I learned about sex workers' efforts to tackle state oppression, run health and education programs, and use their local knowledge to combat real instances of sex trafficking. I am still confused about my data, and I am excited and nervous to pore through it and start making sense of it through the thesis-writing process. I do know, though, that this experience will shape my academic projects for years to come.

# 2012 UNDERGRADUATE INTERNSHIP REPORTS

VISHAL ARORA – 2014

## Operation ASHA, New Delhi, India

**“By talking to patients like Vipin and delivering medications to them, my resolve for serving others grew even stronger.”**

It was a scorching day as we travelled through the slum, dodging street animals, rickshaw pullers going to work in the city, and kids laughing and playing in the street. I looked around and tried to absorb everything. Middle-aged women peered from their cramped living quarters, and old men were on cots, taking their afternoon naps. Although I am Indian, I was shocked at the discrepancy between my world in the U.S. and the world these individuals inhabit.

We finally reached the patient’s home. His two children were standing outside sharing a piece of bread while his wife ushered us to come inside and see him. Vipin was a middle-aged man who had relapsed on his tuberculosis medications and was bed-ridden, barely even able to see us as we entered the room. There were pictures of Indian gods and goddesses along the wall over his head. After all of the talks and classes I had gone to about public health, I was face-to-face with one out of hundreds of thousands of patients afflicted with tuberculosis. By talking to patients like Vipin and delivering medications to them, my resolve for serving others grew even stronger.

Despite the growing tuberculosis epidemic, Operation ASHA has made significant strides in the realm of tuberculosis care. Case detection rates within the clinics are much higher than the national average, which is due in part to well-trained health workers. In addition to meeting with patients, I was tasked with initiating how we could use OpASHA’s training model of health workers to persuade government officials to replicate it in other healthcare NGOs around India not only for tuberculosis, but other infectious diseases as well. By the end of the summer, I had learned so much about how tuberculosis treatment in India works that I am indebted to those individuals who trained with me and took the time to let me see patients in such diverse regions of New Delhi.

## OMER AWAN – Applied Math, 2014

### Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), Islamabad, Pakistan

**“Besides doing some great work in the field, the intern team got to spend several nights together and form unique bonds of friendship that will last forever.”**

My internship at the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) was a terrific experience that enabled me to comprehensively explore the development sector in Pakistan as a career and at the same time visit several rural locations across the country. Our internship started off with a five-day training program where we were briefed on the functions of the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, the challenges it faces, its vision, and the expectations that executive management had for the intern team. After the first week, the intern team – which consisted of around twenty students – was taken to visit several rural regions across the provinces of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. PPAF is responsible for funneling development funds it receives

through the World Bank, the German Development Bank, etc. and ensuring that they are given to effective and efficient local NGOs across Pakistan. Afterwards, it oversees and monitors the functions of these rural NGOs and ensures that all funds are adequately utilized.

As interns, it was our job to accompany our chaperones to visit various sites and assess the work done by these local NGOs. The organizations we visited were doing work mainly in microfinance, natural disaster management, healthcare provision, education, energy, and institutional development. While at these visits, we were taught several critical skills required to do field work in the development sector. We were given detailed questionnaires that we had to fill based on the information we could gather. After that, we would use the notes we had collected to write individual case studies and present our observations in the form of presentations.

Besides doing some great work in the field, the intern team got to spend several nights together and form unique bonds of friendship that will last forever. As a Pakistani who has spent all his life living abroad, I was able to understand my own culture from a different perspective. The internship did a tremendous job of dispelling myths that have severely damaged Pakistan's reputation over the last decade or so. The nation, which according to latest estimates has a population of around 197 million, has a beautiful heritage and history. Several diverse and distinct cultures make up its identity. For anyone interested in learning about Pakistan's other side, which is rarely covered in the news media, this internship can be a magnificent experience.

**“The internship did a tremendous job of dispelling myths that have severely damaged Pakistan's reputation over the past decade or so.”**

Also, the main headquarters of PPAF is located in Islamabad, which is a very beautiful place in itself. During the first and last week of the internship, the interns got to spend valuable time together at the organization's headquarters. During this time, I had the chance to connect with quite a few Harvard alumni who allowed me to gain valuable insight into Pakistan, its future, and whether I could ever return to pursue a career there. Overall, the internship was an all-encompassing experience that allowed me to learn a lot and at the same time meet extremely interesting and accomplished individuals from across the country. These two months perhaps made this summer one of the most remarkable summers of my life.

*Omer's documentary from his summer internship in Pakistan is available online at <http://www.southasiainitiative.harvard.edu/>*

## ROHIT CHAKI – 2014, Physics

### Taktse International School, Sikkim, India

“What makes you write poetry?” This phrase holds the heart of the time I was privileged to spend at Taktse International School in Sikkim, India, thanks to the generosity of the South Asia Initiative. The query came from Dawa, an eighth grade student who went bald exactly one week before I did. His question, directed at four poets during a writing conference held on June 23, prompted a discussion among students probing the intrinsic and spontaneous pleasures in creative art, including the sciences. It was by no means the strangest thing that Dawa uttered; that may have been the time he exclaimed, “Did you know that cats see in more than 58 colors?” in the middle of a mathematics class on infinities.

**“These are drops in a multitude of moments that I shared with the students. Not only did we explore the frontiers of knowledge, but we examined our reasons for learning in the first place.”**

These are drops in a multitude of moments that I shared with the students. Not only did we explore the frontiers of knowledge, but we examined our reasons for learning in the first place. And this, in turn, might be why I teach.

Perhaps not surprisingly, our teaching and learning took place as much outside the classroom as in it. I mostly taught physics and mathematics, working with enthusiastic teachers like Priyanka and Gyan. Especially with the never-long-enough time I would spend at the school, I wanted to inspire students with a love and curiosity for the underpinnings of our universe, and hand them the tools to (try to) quench it, especially once they leave formal education. To this end, we rediscovered what the textbooks had already written so rote, only through the lens of our so-called “common sense.” We reinvented the laws of magnetism with a compass and magnet, electricity with battery and bulbs, and motion with a meter stick and cricket ball. The students were mightily empowered to find that they already know physics, so to speak.

During the last few weeks, we decided to talk about the “cool” topics, like general relativity (or how space and time could be almost the same thing), quantum mechanics (the probability that you will fall through the ground), black holes, nuclear bombs, and such. Soon enough, I would run into students in the hall and find them asking all the “stupid” questions, like “why doesn’t the Earth fall into the sun?” or “how fast can a shadow move?” After watching the string theory documentary “The Elegant Universe,” ever more intrigued, the students started picking up copies of Stephen Hawking’s *A Brief History of Time* and other titles like *Chaos* and *The Matter Myth*. It really excited me to see the students learn on their own, and to enjoy it! I think that this might be the key to a successful education – to learn how to enjoy becoming self-learners.

**“I think that this might be the key to successful education - to learn how to enjoy becoming self-learners.”**

Over the students’ ten-day summer vacation, I stayed at Taktse to lay the groundwork for the Taktse Robotics Club with Abhishek, an enthusiastic ninth grader, and had a blast in the process. We used two Lego Mindstorm kits and hit the ground running by tackling design challenges, including an obstacle avoiding robot, a line follower, and an edge finder. The week blizzed by as we played. Getting stuck began to be as amusing as seeing things work. This was probably a good development, as we got stuck about five times as often as seeing things work. The experience reinforced my belief

that a school education can and should make learning into play, not work. After our efforts, we had a huge first meeting of the Robotics Club, where we demonstrated the robots in action and their inner workings. According to Abhishek, the club has only been having more and more fun since. As learning should be.

## LOUIS CID – 2014, Economics

### The Center for Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi, India



The Center for the Study of Developing Societies, Lokniti Programme for Comparative Democracy – the name is a mouthful, and appropriately so. I interned at this social science research center in New Delhi that focuses on explaining trends in electoral politics and that is widely known for its rich collection of data. For decades now, the organization has conducted interviews throughout the whole of India to make sense of electoral trends and characterize the Indian voter. I had the privilege of interning at Lokniti and, for six weeks, becoming a part of this community of engaged thinkers and academics. I mainly tackled personal investigations on the salience of ethnic and religious identities in politics that were both academic/formal and empirical/conversational. The more I learned about specific groups’

identities, historical contingencies, and regional differences, the more I became aware of just how monumental the questions I was pondering were. In India, it is almost always impossible to make generalizations and quite crucial to employ rigorous methods to describe causal relationships.

Weekend travels deeply influenced my learning and guided my research during my time in India. My wonderful English co-intern, Lucy Coley (M.A. candidate at SciencesPo, Paris), and I voyaged first to Agra to experience the Taj Mahal and a vibrant city center full of shop owners eager to haggle. The following weekend we travelled to Jaipur, where we again discovered a city full of commerce as well as elephants. Our trip to Amritsar the following weekend was my favorite. The tranquility of the Golden Temple, the excitement of the Wagah border, and the loquaciousness of our fellow train passengers made the trip truly wonderful. It was because of my visit to the Wagah border that I began thinking more and more about the separation of mosque and state. Stories of Sikhs inviting Muslims to celebrate Eid in their temples because of heavy rains in Punjab inspired me to bring the intersection of religion and state directly and empirically into my inquiries.



Our final weekend stay in Shimla provided magnificent views of the mountains and a quiet rest from our hectic Delhi life. The rain did not discourage us, and we enjoyed meeting a lovely couple from the northeastern part of the country. However, I did have the unique – and hopefully once-in-a-lifetime – experience of being attacked by monkeys. Seven of them surrounded me and pounced, stealing a wrapped book out of my hands. As soon as the alpha monkey realized it was but paper and ink, he bit and tore at it before throwing it 15 feet back at me. Certainly an unforgettable summer.



## VIRGINIA FAHS –2014, History and Literature

### Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centers, Mumbai, India



Mumbai is India's New York City, but 1.5 times larger and growing faster. With a population of 12.5 million people and approximately 5,000 people moving to the city every day, Mumbai is one of the fastest growing metropolises on the planet. But Mumbai is also an island city, a peninsula surrounded by seven beaches and the Arabian Sea. Where do these 5,000 newcomers settle when they arrive?

Since Mumbai cannot accommodate a geographical expansion, recent migrants and the urban poor squeeze themselves into every nook and corner of the city; they make their homes on the pavement, railway tracks, airport runways, overpasses, and slums. People sleep on the roofs of cabs and on the sides of busy streets, heads tilted against the

concrete below them. They have no other housing options, or so they think.

This summer I lived in Mumbai and worked at an NGO called SPARC that specializes in community organizing and housing and sanitation initiatives in slums. At first my internship gave me very little direction: I was asked to read up on SPARC's past projects and political and social philosophy. After two weeks of reading reports, I still could not understand the organization's purpose and goals; it seemed like SPARC had grown so fast that the staff had not had time to record its success stories or to verbalize the organization's identity, purpose, or goals.

Crystallizing SPARC's work into a succinct mission statement and then retracing and reconstructing stories of the organization's past work became my project. I set out to interview members of SPARC's community-based organizations and to sift through a substantial paper trail in the SPARC office. During interviews in the field, I spoke with women whose homes had flooded away with the monsoon rains and women who had lived so close to the railways that they could touch commuters on the trains whizzing by. I interviewed people who had lived on the same square of pavement for nearly 60 years only to wake up one day to the sound of government bulldozers demolishing their homes.

Despite these adverse conditions, the people I spoke with in slums and relocation sites did not let their poverty or lack of education deter them from taking action. They had responded with energy and tact, mobilizing their communities to save money, survey surrounding lands, and begin negotiations with the government about how to actualize plans for more secure living conditions. One group of women began savings programs and surveyed lands in Mumbai for eight years until they found a suitable plot to purchase from the government. Others rallied to design and construct public toilet blocks so that they no longer had to defecate on the side of roads and railways.

I used my interviews and research to write new text for SPARC's website and promotional materials, and I also initiated the launch of a private donations program which would allow independent donors to give to SPARC through a "Donate Now" web platform. In addition to serving SPARC's internal purposes, stories of progress and resilience may be seen as key precedents of empowerment and achievement in urban poor communities. To broadcast these stories, I started a SPARC CityWatch blog to share the words and experiences of slum-dwellers with a broader audience. As part of the blog, I also wrote opinion pieces in response to current events pertaining to India's urban poor. SPARC will continue to contribute to the blog moving forward, with the vision that it will become an educational hub and worthwhile resource for those seeking to learn more about urban poverty.

## SOPHIA LAJAUNIE – 2014, Social Studies

### Taktse International School, Sikkim, India



The monsoon's thick clouds kept the majestic mountain peaks hidden from our sight every day – these snow-covered giants that our eyes and hearts chased, and were sometimes rewarded to see in the early mornings when the students woke up for their 5:30am exercise. SAI's generous grant enabled me to spend my summer in these Himalayan mountains, the tallest in the world, interning at the Taktse International School in Sikkim, India. Nestled between Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet, this ancient kingdom is rich with historical, cultural, and environmental diversity. The children at the school came from all around the region, including countries as far away as Thailand and Japan. Taktse is an extremely unique scholastic community, not only in its area but also in the world. It embodies values of creativity,

student empowerment, respect, dedication, and a constant eagerness to learn. All members of the community – students, teachers, cooks, maintenance, administrative faculty, and hostel managers – are deeply committed to one another and to the flourishing of Taktse not only as a place of academic advancement and achievement, but also as one that engages with the world in a genuine, respectful, and enthusiastic way.

As an intern, my responsibilities included both teaching and administrative work. The students were always a pleasure to teach and the learning was consistently a two-way street. One of my favorite projects was a school-wide flash mob. About one third of the students board at Taktse and live in the hostel. The hostel kids and I choreographed a dance that we performed as a surprise flash mob during a Scholastic Books fair that the school held. The students' creative talents always astounded and deeply moved me – whether it was Malisha and Hansel's guitar strumming at every tea break, Pomme Pomme's ukulele songs and inspiring singing voice, or Sagun's and Ugyal's dance moves, the school was always alive with a sweet melody.



Being at Taktse opened my eyes to the potential of a school that is founded on strong and beautiful values, and that actively lives them every day. In addition, it showed me the positive effects of fostering a community that feels safe, respected, and confident to explore new horizons and dedicate itself to the betterment of the lives of others. I saw the beauty of education done right, and am committed to taking what I have learned to schools in my own community at home, some that so desperately need the magic and success of Taktse.

## JENNA LOUIE – 2014, Social Studies Yuva Unstoppable, Ahmedabad, India

During the summer of 2012, I received funding from the Harvard South Asia Initiative to pursue research for MOBILIZE! Digital Libraries, a social enterprise that resulted from one of my courses during the fall semester of 2011. Our project's mission is to provide access to innovative educational materials through intuitive modern technology, thus motivating self-directed learning, supporting existing academic infrastructure, and catalyzing positive social change. In particular, our team realized that tablets, with greater mobility, new capabilities, and lower costs, offer a new way forward for students everywhere.



Arriving in Ahmedabad in early June, I connected with the local non-profit organization Yuva Unstoppable to meet with schools across the city and begin our pilot research with students. Over the course of the summer, we achieved over 200 hours of aggregate participant-technology interaction for over 120 students in six different schools, offering over 30 educational applications on each device. Some of these children had never used computers or phones before, much less brand new tablets, and it was a wonderful experience to provide them with the opportunity during these sessions.

In all, my days were filled mostly with visits to schools scattered across the city, developing aptitude tests and surveys to gauge student interest and measure their progress, and exploring Ahmedabad by auto rickshaw when I had some time off. By nature of visiting a diverse cross-section of schools across the city, I was able to see an incredible range of people and walks of life and to value the diversity of experience this afforded me. From working with students at an elite private academy to playing with students at a community center in the city's largest slum, and traveling across the Sabarmati River from the most posh areas in the New City to some of the most impoverished in the Old, I saw both great disparities and quintessential similarities common to the Indian way of life, if only from a foreigner's perspective.

Being in Ahmedabad these past months was an amazing experience, in many personal ways as well as in terms of providing perspective on what I would like to do in the future. Although there was a good amount of culture shock in adjusting to life in India, I learned a lot about myself during these past two and a half months – my personality, habits, and interests – from the time I spent working on MOBILIZE! and interacting with others. And while I am happy to be coming home to the familiarity of Cambridge, I will miss the essence of Ahmedabad, with its vibrant colors, pattering auto rickshaws, and frequent chai breaks that are worlds away from life at Harvard.

As for thinking about the future, I went into this summer hoping to have a better understanding of the developing world and have definitely come away with a changed perspective on what it means to not just study, but live, in a foreign place. Whatever happens in the next two years and after that in life, I know after being in India that I want to continue venturing to new places and exploring the world as much as possible. I am deeply grateful to the South Asia Initiative for allowing me this opportunity – the first significant portion of time in my life spent outside the US – and hope I am able to explore India even further in the coming years with its support!

## RENA MEI – 2013, Human Evolutionary Biology

### St. Jude India ChildCare Centres, Mumbai, India



My internship at St. Jude India ChildCare Centres provided a comprehensive array of responsibilities and day-to-day activities. St. Jude is an organization that provides free hygienic accommodations and services for poor families with children undergoing cancer treatment. My main role was to launch a project titled, “What happens when the child goes back home?” The objective of this study was to determine the impact that St. Jude has on the quality of life of these poor families even after they return home. During my seven-week stay at the center, I worked on the first part of the study, which consisted of collecting baseline data to assess the patient–families’ quality of life before and during their stay at St. Jude. This data, which was both qualitative and quantitative, was gathered by conducting focus group

discussions with mothers and fathers at each of the seven centers; holding one-on-one interviews with several families; and analyzing four years’ worth of data from exit questionnaires distributed by the centers. Because there was such rich data available for the first part of the study, the center decided to use it to write a patient satisfaction article. I spent the remainder of my internship writing, revising, and formatting the article in preparation for submission to journals.

In addition to working on my project, just spending time at the center has made my internship at St. Jude a rewarding experience. I participated in many of the activities that the staff prepared for the families, from playing games with the kids, to weaving baskets with the mothers, to competing in food-eating contests with the fathers. Despite the language barrier, I got to know many of the families residing at the center, as well as the staff. I especially loved playing with the children, who ranged in age from nine months to fourteen years old, whenever I could. Although most of them were undergoing chemotherapy and/or other cancer treatments, they always had the energy and the morale to smile (sometimes a little too mischievously!) and laugh during our games and activities. It was great to be able to have such personal interactions with the families while working on my own project. Although I could not converse with many of the families, we were able to communicate through the heart.

Finally, living in Mumbai is a whole experience in and of its own. I loved being able to explore the different corners of Mumbai, whether they be publicized or hidden. I found that within the hustle and bustle of an incredibly busy city lies some of the kindest people I have encountered. For seven weeks, I learned to navigate this foreign city on my own. With the help of acquaintances along the way, I immersed myself into the vibrancy and spontaneity of what I now understand to be the City of Dreams.



## NISHIN NATHWANI – 2015

### Project Dharma, Delhi, India

My co-worker, Pankaj, and I waited under a tree for an hour and a half surrounded by the bustling noises of Patna – the capital of Bihar. Having travelled sixteen hours by train from Delhi, I found myself exhausted and yet reveling in the newness of my surroundings. “It must seem like Somalia to you,” were Pankaj’s first words when we met at Patna Junction railway station, as I gazed out for the first time at the buildings of the city. His hyperbole was not without a basis. Pankaj explained to me that poor governance had left Bihar – especially its rural regions – suffocated from the rest of developing India for nearly fifteen years. As I soon discovered, improving quality of life in Bihar’s villages was infinitely more complex than I had previously understood.



My visit to Bihar was the culmination of a two-month internship at Project Dharma – a social enterprise based in Delhi, India focusing on empowering entrepreneurs and distributing life-enhancing products in remote regions of rural India. I had been hired to devise a social impact assessment framework by which the company could better gauge the effects of its initiatives. My countless hours of research, theorizing, and data-crunching in Project Dharma’s Delhi office allowed me to prepare a generic framework for for-profit social ventures working at the ‘bottom of the pyramid’ to more effectively determine their social impact.

As I witnessed in Bihar, the work of social entrepreneurs in rural India is complicated by issues of caste, religion, and political conflict. While travelling, I witnessed caste tensions as ‘forward caste’ individuals were agitated when our door-to-door marketing model included ‘backward caste’ individuals. So, too, were religious tensions salient; a Hindu-Muslim riot the night before one of our village visits resulted in closed roads and a postponement of our marketing campaign.



Ongoing conflicts between Naxalite communist militias and government forces constrained our reach, especially when small dukhans, or shops, were forced to close. Ultimately, my experience with Project Dharma allowed me to explore how business strategies could be anchored to address social issues. I found myself doing market segmentations, franchise design, and marketing initiatives; however, unlike in a conventional corporation, these efforts were geared toward maximizing the venture’s impact on its beneficiary population – rural Indians. I got a glimpse of the challenges and triumphs of social entrepreneurship in India, and left with the confidence that the burgeoning field of social entrepreneurship is becoming one of India’s greatest hopes in addressing rural development.

## GRACE O'NEALE – 2014, South Asian Studies

### VidyaGyan, Uttar Pradesh, India



Many evenings this summer, I sat beneath swirling fans surrounded by a sea of adolescent girls and their excited exclamations in fluent Hindi and broken English. “Brijlata, gano! Kajal, dance!” There, in the hostel of the VidyaGyan school, the girls would perform Bollywood hits as well as classical pieces. Then they would say, “Grace didi, tell us about America.” During these impromptu sessions, I found myself learning the limits of my personality, knowledge, and experience. Would I attempt to dance, or would I just sing “By Your Side” once more? What was it about my country, my university, and my faith that I wanted them to know? In fact, my eleven weeks in India were less of a literal monsoon season than a season of asking tough questions and doing necessary self-evaluation as new ways of thinking flooded my mind.

Behind this inundation of reflection was the reality of being in a place and position that was new not only for me, but also for those around me. This was both the first time I was in India and the first time my colleagues and students at the school had met a Caribbean American. While I was bombarded with the sights, sounds, and smells of rural Indian life, they weathered my rushed American mumble and kinky hair with extensions. Adding to the introspection was the opportunity I received to act as one of two inaugural interns at the Shiv Nadar Foundation, which provided a space to define myself and my duties beyond the stereotypical understanding of the intern as a young hopeful performing mundane tasks. I traded the pantsuit for the occasional salwar suit and sari, adopting the role of a curious observer and amateur evaluator. As a testimony to the innovative nature of the foundation that fueled my exploration, the internship concluded with a presentation during which the interns shared our thoughts and recommendations with the head of the foundation and other members of the strategy team. Undoubtedly, working with the Shiv Nadar Foundation gave me a solid basis for understanding philanthropy and education in India and helped to reinforce a passion for those sectors that will lead to further work in the future.



As I begin my junior year, I cannot shed the lessons and experiences of the summer. I now know myself better, both my strengths and weaknesses. Having experienced previously unimaginable diversity in India - villages and cities, men and women, young and gently aged, rich and poor, north and south - I am better equipped to tackle the diversity of experiences that I will be blessed with this semester. I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to travel to, work in, and learn from India.

The southern wall of my dorm room hides behind a couple dozen original works of modern Indian art. The girls in the hostel not only sing and dance – they paint. Every stroke of their paintings tells a story of hope, a story of a future emboldened by creative philanthropy, dedication, and reflection.

## SHALINI PAMMAL – 2013, History and Science

### The Samhita Academy, Bangalore, India



During my visit to Bangalore this summer, I lost all track of time. Each morning I was awoken by tiny feet scrambling down the hostel steps with backpacks and lunch bags. Every night I fell asleep to little voices in the television room discussing action heroes and cartoon characters. I would leave school for the day as the sun left the sky in overwhelming golden hues, and afterward I would play outside with the children just as an evening cool gently swept through the trees. There was no need for a clock. I was in sync with Bangalore and its people, and this vibrant world that was so different from the one I left thousands of miles away. As days turned into weeks and then months, I was struck by how wholly absorbed I had become in my life at The Samhita Academy and how difficult it was to say goodbye.

While serving as the first and only Education Management Intern for The Samhita Academy, I was involved in various projects to enhance classroom efficacy and improve alignment with the overall school aspiration to cultivate future leaders in a caring and creative environment. This is a revolutionary vision coupled with an ongoing effort to provide quality education to children of low socioeconomic status as well as children from more privileged backgrounds. I was drawn to the school both for this vision of transformation in the education system as well as increased access to education for children from disadvantaged families in Bangalore. I taught classes, shared global best practices from my own work as an after-school program director and teacher in South Boston, and listened to stories of triumph and failure that have helped teachers develop in their roles and improve themselves and their students. I also developed a 'Life Skills' program with lessons on character building and trained teachers to engage youth in reflection-based activities that challenged their thinking. I was so passionately invested in this mission and learned the value of working collaboratively to build power within communities toward achieving lofty goals in the face of challenge.



The summer passed in a blink of an eye, but, the relationships I formed with students and families during my time at The Samhita Academy left an incredibly lasting impression on me. My experience was nothing short of transformative, and it reinforced my conviction that young people should be cultivated for a better and brighter future. I was invigorated by every interaction I had with the children I taught and mentored over the summer. It became so clear when I left Bangalore that the people and community I had become part of were what inspired me most during the two months I spent there. In all the smiles and scribbled drawings was a powerful expression of hope in the next generation - a lesson in the value of investing in education, mentorship, and youth empowerment that I brought back with me and will continue to passionately advocate at Harvard and beyond.

## KATHLEEN PIERRE – 2013, History and Literature PRS Legislative Research. New Delhi, India

I headed to New Delhi after a spring semester spent in France, eager to learn and work in an organization dedicated to making the legislative process more transparent and participatory. My time at PRS Legislative Research exposed me to distinguished Indian politicians and political figures, including members of Parliament. In June, as the analysts were completing their assessment of the Parliamentary Budget Session, I was allowed to observe several meetings in which the PRS Legislative Research staff worked together on legislative briefs, short accessible summaries of important bills that Parliament was considering or had passed. These meetings were dynamic, thought-provoking, and inspiring. Analysts from all different backgrounds – law, science, math, social sciences, research, and politics – sat together over one bill, picking it apart, firing questions at each other and trying to reach a consensus about what exactly the bill said and did. This experience prompted me to think more critically about civic engagement and the institutions necessary for the survival or development of a strong democracy.



While I learned much at my internship, I learned more just from living in India. India is a country that has much to teach, but that cannot be well understood without visiting. Before I arrived, I learned many common statistics about the population size and density of India, the social issues surrounding women, caste, and ethnic tribes, and small details about Indian politics. I would rattle off these superficial “facts” to others when asked about my imminent journey, coming to the obvious conclusions. Although, intellectually, I knew the information I had learned was true, I did not truly understand it until I arrived in Delhi and found myself surrounded by poverty so visible that I wondered if I had ever truly seen poverty before. The size of the population made every experience and every problem more visible, and thus lent them an air of urgency and extremeness I had not yet experienced.

Delhi was an exuberant city, whose sprawling forts, majestic avenues, and modern architecture spoke both to its long impressive history and its rapid development. But more than anything, I was taken aback by Delhi’s contradictions. The serenity of green tree-lined streets set against the backdrop of red-sandstone walls was often rudely interrupted by mounds of waste piled up on empty land. Similarly, the dividers and sidewalks of spacious avenues, populated by busy shoppers by day, became the homes of the homeless by night. Having only really traveled in the Western Hemisphere to fairly rich countries, I was (culture) shocked by my own difficulties in adapting, by my own reluctance to understand and integrate myself into the local culture. In Delhi, I was forced to confront my privilege, my preconceptions, and my limitations. While my internship raised stimulating questions and revealed interesting political issues, my day-to-day life in Delhi challenged me to critically examine myself. The lessons I learned were crucial and indispensable to my personal growth and development. This trip will have a lasting impact on me.





## ALLISON ROSENBERG – 2013, Engineering Sciences Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), Delhi, India

**“The village visit allowed me to see how the lanterns, which I had been working on the whole summer from a conceptual viewpoint, actually functioned in people’s daily lives.”**

One of the most interesting experiences I had during my time in India happened during a weekend trip for work to a few villages in Uttar Pradesh, a state near Delhi, where I was based. My co-workers and I were visiting locations where my organization, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), had installed stations for solar lanterns. Meant to replace traditional kerosene lanterns in places with no or little access to electricity, solar lanterns are lamps that charge up from solar panels during the day and can be used for various tasks at night. Our role was to conduct an impact assessment to see how the lanterns were being used in the village and what, if any, difference they were making in people’s lives and livelihoods.

My main role during the summer had been to assess the environmental and health impacts of lantern manufacturing and disposal, parts of the lantern lifetime often overlooked in assessing their impact. This village visit allowed me to see how the lanterns, which I had been working on the whole summer from a conceptual viewpoint, actually functioned in people’s daily lives.

Upon arriving at each village, we were greeted by a large group of people – men, women, and children – that grew in number as the word spread that we were there. They followed us as we walked the brick alleyways from house to house, passing women pumping water and courtyards with cows feeding. We spoke to families, sitting usually in a courtyard or open room. Some were Hindu, some Muslim. Some had kids who went to school, while others did not. Some were weavers, farmers, teachers, or small shop-owners. Some needed the lanterns, and some did not. For some, using them helped a lot, and for others it did not make much of a difference.

Not only did this visit give me some insight into the complexity of development-oriented technology, but it also enabled me to see a side of India that was totally different from life in the crowded Delhi streets. Through travel outside of my internship, I was able to see a few other places as well – from cloud-covered mountains in Kerala to the skyscrapers of Mumbai – and to gain some understanding of the many varied ways of life in such a colorful and complex country.

## ANNIE RYU – 2013, Anthropology

### Parivarthan, Chikkmagaulur & Baranangaram, India

Departing from Bangalore, I felt a surge of optimism. For an entrepreneur who had just scoured the countryside of southern India for suppliers – of an overabundant fruit, no less – and found none, this feeling was aberrant. Yet, for me the feeling overpowered rational doubts. I reflected on the growth of an idea into a company within one year and realized that it was time to reach for the stars once more.

From the way I talk about India (incessantly), new friends assume I have been there many times. However, my first visit to India was in June 2011. My mistaking a jackfruit for an animal only makes sense in the context of my utter disorientation among the abundance of new sights, sounds, and smells. The weeks I spent traveling to visit jackfruit producers and processing groups gave this newcomer more than enough stories to weave through conversations, assignments, and dreams during the next nine months.

I returned to India in May 2012 with four weeks to identify enough suppliers of dried jackfruit to meet the store demand I had developed over the last several months in the U.S. I had decided in August 2011 that I would build a company to import dried jackfruit and other jackfruit products into the U.S. to help Indian farming families gain higher incomes: over 75% of India's jackfruit simply rotted on the ground beneath the trees. Having established the company and received one shipment at the Boston port, I knew a large part of the supply chain was in order. I planned to simply sign supply agreements with the leading processing groups. I was not sure if I would need the entire four weeks.

Within two weeks, I realized it was problematic that I would not remain in India for several months. As I traveled from one processing center to another, I found various types of dried jackfruit that did not meet my expectations for taste, color, texture, or sometimes even cleanliness. I realized that the agricultural supply chain problem I was facing was one of the largest problems in the world's second largest country. I was going to need help.

Fortunately, help found me. Through friends and friends of friends, word of my endeavor had reached an agribusiness professor named Uday, and Paulose, the director of India's first online TV channel. The enthusiasm with which I propounded jackfruit's positive attributes, and perhaps the determination conveyed by the face of one who has just survived six overnight buses in a row, led Uday and Paulose to join the jackfruit cause.



Within one week, Paulose had released a news article which produced a domino effect – over a dozen publications across Karnataka and Kerala published similar articles on my efforts. In the next week, I received e-mails from more than 150 people seeking to support my young social enterprise.

I met with as many as I could while in India but continue to field phone calls on an almost daily basis from persons I have and have not met. Together we are building a supply chain that will bring literal tons of my favorite fruit to the U.S. and help hundreds of farming families in India.

Thank you to the South Asia Initiative for supporting these experiences, which have truly transformed my life.

Annie's video of a jackfruit dissection is available online at <http://www.southasiainitiative.harvard.edu/>

## JORDAN SESSLER - 2013, South Asian Studies/Government Foundations for Joy, Batticaloa, Sri Lanka



This past summer I used my SAI grant to escape the confines of archival research and fellowship applications at Harvard to do nonprofit work in South Asia. Although this is not to say that a decent amount of my summer was not spent in the basement of CGIS, it is to say that this international travel, specifically the experiences I had in Sri Lanka, provided the highlight of my summer.

Almost all of my time in South Asia was spent in Sri Lanka doing field or administrative work for Foundations For Joy. FFJ is a nonprofit that serves at-risk children in the area and is heavily involved with the post-war reconstruction in Sri Lanka. As such, I was based out of Batticaloa (the reconstruction headquarters in eastern Sri Lanka) in the Eastern

Province for most of the time abroad but also moved around the island to Trincomalee, Kandy, and Colombo, among other places. I was able to meet with hundreds of children who are on the receiving end of our efforts and see firsthand what the complicated situation in Sri Lanka is like for those who are affected. I also met with various community, NGO, and government leaders to hear about how things are going on the ground in terms of reconstruction, efforts to improve education, and opinions about new government policies.

As always, I was shocked by the vitality of many Sri Lankans and their ability to stay positive, friendly, and optimistic after the many tragedies that their nation has endured. Time and time again I was impressed by the universal self-description of Sri Lanka as a country of “Muslims, Tamils, and Sinhalese” by people of different regions, backgrounds, and ethnicities, despite the decades of conflict that would be expected to have ripped that identity apart.

So for me, my experience in South Asia was not just characterized by work but also learning – about what is happening in a region of the world far away and how people are dealing with it – buffered by previous efforts to learn about the region through political, cultural, and language study. As I arrive at my final year at Harvard, I can confidently say that the most surprising, rewarding, and memorable part of my Harvard career has had to do with this engagement with South Asia. I will never forget the time I have spent there, experiences I have had studying it, people I have met, and lessons I have learned.



Some are quite simply unforgettable – you never forget the first time you carry on a mini-conversation in Hindi or Tamil or running out of your hotel room in Kandy because a monkey has broken into it (especially when it stole the last Hershey’s bar you smuggled in from the US for snacks). So it is with great thanks and reflection that I submit this final grant report to the South Asia Initiative. I will always be appreciative for the personal growth and adventure that SAI has afforded me.

## MARIA (XINHE) SHEN – 2013, Government/Economics Foundations for Joy, Batticaloa, Sri Lanka

**“Sri Lanka has been perhaps the most beautiful country I have ever had the pleasure to travel to, and its wild, outward beauty is only mirrored by the warmth of the people I met there.”**

Though this was my second trip to Sri Lanka, I still could not adjust to the lushness of the country, the arrogant way the foliage was everywhere along the roads and railroad tracks, the torrential downpours of warm rain, the curious and mischievous monkeys in Kandy, or the clarity of the blue ocean that extended from the shores of Trincomalee. Sri Lanka has been perhaps the most beautiful country I have ever had the pleasure to travel to, and its wild, outward beauty is only mirrored by the warmth of the people I have met there.

With the South Asia Initiative grant, I was able to travel through the country by train, by bus, and occasionally by tut-tut. There, life is to be taken in stride. The trick is not to let yourself be overwhelmed by the tumult of colors everywhere. I went through Batticaloa, Kandy, and Trincomalee, after stopping briefly in the chaotic capital, Colombo. The further north you travel, the more signs of reconstruction you see. My days began around 7AM, with mango juice and hoppers, two things I quickly learned I loved. From there, we would leave wherever we were living and start trekking around the area, sometimes visiting places where we had appointments, sometimes just walking in and hoping for the best. The entire day was spent talking to people and researching each area's region-specific needs. As someone who was working for an NGO helping at-risk and often war affected children of Sri Lanka, I spent a lot of time talking to teachers, local villagers, and other non-profit organizations in the area.

Everyone I met was open and willing to talk to me. There was often a lot of enthusiastic speech from both sides, though the actual message always took a while to untangle. As with anywhere, it is always challenging to have limited knowledge of the local language. Nevertheless, some things in communication are intuitive. As I visited the local schools and orphanages, it was often clear to see which supplies were needed, which rooms needed a bit fixing up, and which places are doing just fine. Putting my finger on the root of the problems, of course, proved much harder. Just as in America or in China – two countries I both call home – the ‘root’ of the problem in the educational infrastructure takes much more than just a summer in the country to understand. However, after traveling and talking to the people, I feel I have gotten a start. Wherever my post-graduation plans take me, I hope to never lose contact with Sri Lanka.

**“As with anywhere, it is always challenging to have limited knowledge of the local language. Nevertheless, some things in communication are intuitive.”**

As a note for future students who will be traveling to the country, the suggestion I have is to talk to everyone you can once you get there. The more you get into smaller villages and out-of-the-way places, the more you will find people eager to help (with no intention of selling you things, I might add). They are usually just as interested in finding out more about your culture as you are about theirs.

## JEANNIE TSE – 2014, Social Studies

### The Empowerment Group of Friends of Women's World Banking, Ahmedabad, India

Thanks to an internship grant from the Harvard South Asia Initiative, I travelled to Ahmedabad, Gujarat this summer to undertake an internship with the Empowerment Group of Friends of Women's World Banking, India (FWWB). FWWB is an 'apex' organization that aims to provide financial and capacity building services to enable the livelihood of women at the grassroots. During my time at FWWB, I worked with one of my colleagues to develop a financial literacy module to be implemented by FWWB's partner organizations in conjunction with the women members of self-help groups (SHGs). I spent most of my time in the office researching the micro-finance sector in India, learning about the work of the many different programs at FWWB, and thinking of ever more creative ways of implementing FWWB's financial literacy curriculum. However, it was not until my visit to one of FWWB's partner organizations in Rajasthan that I fully realized and understood the meaning behind all of this research and writing.

**“I came to a better understanding of the challenges of working in the development sector - including funding constraints, corruption, government bureaucracy, and lack of human capital.”**

Toward the end of my time in India, my coworker, Shubham, and I went on a field visit to conduct an impact assessment of one of the financial literacy trainings that we had previously conducted with that organization. FWWB staff members had trained the field staff at the partner NGO with the intent that they would then transfer their newfound knowledge to all the women members of their community-based microfinance organization. For three days, we travelled to village after village, talking to tribal communities and people from the Sched-

**“...through all of the red tape and struggles, I also met people with the utmost dedication and passion for helping those who are less fortunate to carve a better life.”**

uled Castes about their financial situation and trying to learn whether the training had left an impression on them. The trip impressed upon me the urgency of the need to empower these people economically, and truly put into perspective all the work that I had been doing this summer. While the program was not as successful as its designers had hoped, we took away many valuable suggestions and lessons that we could incorporate into the new version of the module that we had been working on all summer.

Through my internship, I came to a better understanding of the challenges of working in the development sector – including funding constraints, corruption, government bureaucracy, and lack of human capital. However, through all of the red tape and struggles, I also met people with the utmost dedication and passion for helping those who are less fortunate to carve a better life. Amidst the most beautiful mountain ranges and the most destitute villages built upon them, I saw resignation and hopelessness, but also witnessed the power of determination and leadership of a few who have hope. And those moments were enough to make me believe that when done right, programs such as this one really can make a change.

Although not all sailed smoothly during my time in India, I am grateful to have met some of the most warm-hearted, genuine, and hospitable people who took me under their wings and made my stay such a memorable one. Last but not least, many thanks also to SAI for making my dream of visiting India come true – hopefully there will be more visits to come.

# 2012 GRADUATE RESEARCH REPORTS

## CHARLES CARSTENS - GSAS, Religion

### Sinhala Language Study at SASLI, University of Madison, WI



This past summer, the South Asia Initiative was kind enough to support my enrollment in the South Asia Summer Language Institute (SASLI) at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. My time was devoted to the development of my elementary/intermediate Sinhala language skills. I studied alongside two sharp academics of South Asian studies and under the effective instruction of Cornell University's Herath Bandara. We covered a great number of topics and skills ranging from fundamental colloquial conversation to specialized vocabularies in such fields as literature, politics, and religion. We were also introduced to the essential features of the literary style. In addition to language work, we discussed major movements in the history of Sinhala literature and several works of one of its most prolific figures, Martin

Wickramasinghe. Our class work culminated in the creation of a Wikipedia page in Sinhala (composed in literary style). This site displays information about the study of Sinhala language in the United States in general and SASLI in particular.

SASLI, assembling a great range of students of various South Asian languages, supports an rich temporary community of South Asianists including scholars, graduate students, business professionals, and diverse others with interests in South Asia. As a member of this community, I was able to establish many generative friendships and intellectual partnerships that have and will continue to support my intellectual formation in the coming years.

Overall, the program not only was highly enjoyable, but also helped me take a major step in my research trajectories. Having reconstituted a strong foundation in the language, I am capable of reading basic texts on my own and advancing my language skills through future immersion in Sri Lanka itself. I am grateful that the South Asia Initiative made this opportunity possible and I eagerly look forward to the new horizons that have now been opened. Thank you!

## SUPTOPA DASGUPTA – FAS, Study of Religion

### Research on the Annadamangal, London, United Kingdom

**“Ensnconced deep within the labyrinthine corridors of the British Museum archives, I studied several manuscript editions of the court epic poem Annadamangal.”**

This summer a South Asia Initiative award funded my travel to conduct archival research in London amidst the fanfare of the 2012 Olympics. Instead of being a spectator of athletic prowess and national pride, however, I witnessed the exhilarating twists and turns of textual transmission history of early eighteenth century Bengal. Ensnconced deep within the labyrinthine corridors of the British Museum archives, I studied several manuscript editions of the court epic poem Annadamangal (the topic of my research), written by the famed “King of Poets” Bharatchandra Ray. The endless bookshelves lined with centuries of manuscripts from pre-colonial Bengal, in diverse languages - Persian, Sanskrit, Urdu, Hindi and Arabic, to name a few - were reflected in the poem’s circulation history throughout multi-lingual Bengal and up to the northern reaches of the declining Mughal Empire of that period. The poem’s blend of cosmopolitan and vernacular registers, the textures of courtly and temple literature, and the lyrical musical influences of local folk songs of the time are also reflected in the Annadamangal’s reception legacy as a text that found an audience in court assemblies and public marketplaces of Bengal on the cusp of the colonial era.

I was already familiar with the poetic prowess and creativity on display in the Annadamangal before embarking on my research in the British Library. What I did not realize was the extent to which this text was in demand by its audience. It was one of the first texts to be printed in the early printing presses of British-ruled Calcutta. Even a century after its composition, it continued to have a robust circulation, always in demand. This reception history enabled me to catch a small glimpse of the role that a great work of literature might have on cultural consciousness. Despite the shifting tides of political power, the turmoil of changing governments, and the expanding populations in early nineteenth-century Bengal, the Annadamangal was a text that was consistently available and distributed - the literate continued to read it and the illiterate continued to gather to listen to it in temples and public events. Publishing houses kept up the supply of this text to meet a popular demand that I can only describe as a testament to cultural consciousness and an alertness to the Bengali love for literature. I was happy to escape the crowded London streets during Olympic festivities and delve into summer research in the hushed study rooms of the British museum. My experience there can certainly attest to a celebration and cultural pride not unlike what was on display at the Olympics, except I was fortunate enough to be able to travel back in time to witness it in the annals of South Asian history.

**“My experience...can certainly attest to a celebration and cultural pride not unlike what was on display at the Olympics, except I was fortunate enough to be able to travel back in time to witness it in the annals of South Asian history.”**

## ADOREE DURAYAPPAH - HDS, Buddhist Studies

### Sinhala Language Study at SASLI, University of Madison, WI

As a master's student at Harvard Divinity School studying Theravada Buddhism and Sinhalese Literature, the study of Sinhala is very important for my scholarly progress. For this reason, I was very grateful for the opportunity this summer to learn elementary Sinhala at the South Asian Summer Language Institute (SASLI) at the University of Madison, Wisconsin. This opportunity was made possible with the support of South Asia Initiative's Summer Language Grant.

**“I was amazed at our progress in the course... the SASLI program has provided me with a solid foundation upon which to continue building my Sinhala language progress.”**

The SASLI Elementary program is an eight-week intensive program that covers two semesters of colloquial Sinhala. Classes started at 8:30 am and ended at 1:00 pm Monday through Friday. Our instructor was Professor Bandara Herath, who is also the Sinhala Language Instructor at Cornell University and the Intercollegiate Sri Lanka Education (ISLE) Program in Kandy, Sri Lanka. He is not only an excellent instructor of Sinhala but also has studied Sanskrit, Pali, and Tamil. As a current second-year student of Sanskrit and now a first-year student of Tamil, I found his knowledge of Sinhala language and its history and relationship with other languages informative and helpful to my instruction of Sinhala for language study and

for its historical, social, and cultural contexts.

Our class was composed of three students, myself as well as two doctoral students with previous experience studying Sinhala. This provided a wonderful environment where I was able not only to learn from my professor, but also from my fellow classmates. In addition to our classroom instruction, Mr. Herath was available during the afternoon to support our language learning.

In our program, we focused on all aspects of Sinhala language learning, including learning the Sinhala script, writing in Sinhala, reading stories in colloquial Sinhala, listening to dialogues from native speakers, practicing dialogues in class, as well as watching videos of Sinhala songs, plays, and news reports. I was amazed at our progress in the course, including our ability to read long stories, carry on dialogues with classmates for several hours in class, and construct sentences, stories, and even jokes in Sinhala by the end of the program. My mother, a native Sinhala speaker who I had been speaking with nightly on the phone during the program, was impressed with our progress throughout the course. Our work in the program culminated in our final project of the creation of a Wikipedia page about the SASLI program written in literary Sinhala.

The SASLI program has provided me with a solid foundation upon which to continue building my Sinhala language progress. In fact, I will be spending this winter recess in Sri Lanka working with Mr. Herath to continue my progress of colloquial and literary Sinhala. In addition to my progress in Sinhala, I am very grateful for the opportunity of increasing my understanding of South Asian languages in general through the community of students and teachers at SASLI. Watching the final project of the other language classes was a wonderful experience for my education, not just in Sinhala, but also the world of South Asia and the rich expressions of culture, history, and society. I look forward to the opportunity of building upon my rewarding summer experience at SASLI in my master's study and research at Harvard.



## MAHNAZ ISLAM – GSAS, Public Policy

Center for Development Innovations and Practices (CDIP),  
Dhaka, Bangladesh



My research project is a field experiment to determine whether information provision and signals on fertilizer needs of crops can promote balanced and efficient use of fertilizers in Bangladesh. I am evaluating the impact of providing plot-specific fertilizer recommendations to farmers through testing their soil. This tool allows farmers to receive precise information on nutrient needs of their soil that may prevent misuse of fertilizers. I am also evaluating the impact of providing leaf color charts to farmers. Leaf color charts allow farmers to receive signals in real time on whether fertilizers are needed. I am exploring the types of information farmers respond to the most to determine if these can promote returns.

I had set up pilot studies of both interventions last year, with a total sample size of 240 farmers (among which the soil testing pilot includes 60 farmers and the leaf color chart pilot includes 180 farmers). The baseline survey was conducted last fall and the interventions were completed in December 2011/January 2012 where farmers in the respective treatment groups received either soil test results or leaf color charts just before the beginning of the main agricultural season. I had applied for a graduate research grant from the South Asia Initiative to meet a shortage in funding for the endline survey after harvest for the pilots. I proposed to spend any remaining money from the grant for the scale up of these pilots, which is the main paper of my dissertation.

My local research partner is the Center for Development Innovations and Practices (CDIP), a microfinance institute based in Bangladesh whose members are largely farmers. CDIP has been providing support towards the project by providing access to their members. I am also working with their staff and have been able to get access to their local infrastructure when needed. Field officers of CDIP as well teachers who work in their education program have been involved in conducting the surveys. This summer, I finished up the endline survey of the pilots as proposed and spent \$700 from the SAI research grant towards costs of the endline, including costs of training enumerators, photocopying surveys, paying enumerators for finishing surveys, and data entry.

I started activities towards the scaled up project this summer as well. Currently, I am about to start a baseline survey with a sample size of 1200 farmers. The main training of enumerators was completed at the end of August. This survey will focus on the leaf color chart component of the pilot as I am waiting to hear back from other funding sources to see if I can scale up the soil testing component as well, which is more expensive. In addition to a similar treatment as before of farmers receiving leaf color charts and basic training, I plan to assign farmers into additional sub-treatment groups where we encourage them to discuss experiences and problems with using the leaf color charts, with or without supervision of an agricultural extension worker. This will test whether organizing farmers in to groups to facilitate discussion on new technology promotes adoption.



## CAROLINE JAMES – GSD, Architecture

### Research on Architect Laurie Baker, Trivandrum, India



I conducted independent research in India this summer in order to understand more deeply how the British architect Laurie Baker worked with his clients, craftsmen, and local governance to envision and fulfill his building projects. Baker's architectural process sought to create low-cost designs through using non-energy intensive materials and locally sourced materials and by working with craftsmen. Through conducting interviews and numerous site visits to Baker's buildings, I was given insights into Baker's way of working. I discovered how his architecture produced ripples that affected issues of education, public health, and the environment. What can we learn as practitioners from Baker's way of working?

When I first landed in India, I spent a few days in Mumbai, where I met with Vidya Baker, the eldest daughter of Laurie Baker, and Himanshu Burte, a researcher who works in Habitat Studies in Mumbai. Burte teaches the rising workforce in housing issues. Many designers in India are wondering how to provide decent housing for all, given population projections. Burte told me, "When you visit a Baker project, the force of the work lies entirely in the way it's inhabited."

I next moved to Trivandrum, where I would spend the next five weeks. I lived with a middle-class Keralan family in Trivandrum. My host mother introduced me to the public bus system and the *kurta*, the Indian dress that is best suited for the tropical weather, as well as the conservative culture. Taking the bus granted me a lot of independence to visit sites all over the city and beyond.

In Trivandrum, I spent time at COSTFORD, an organization that Baker headed for the last years of his life, and where his close working associates still work. Mr. P.B. Sajan, the director, connected me with numerous clients of Baker, each of whom I visited in their home. I met many fascinating individuals, from a social entrepreneur who works with Muslim fishermen communities to the retired Lieutenant General - second in the whole Indian army. I interviewed craftsmen who worked with Baker, as well as social entrepreneurs such as Nalini Nayak.

From many experiences, I would like to narrate three particularly meaningful moments. These experiences also confirmed one of my research questions: What greater impact did Baker's approach to architecture have on society? Firstly, after meeting Baker's youngest daughter, Heidi, she put me in touch with two nurses who had worked with Baker in the first hospital that he built in Kerala. I visited the Mitraniketan Clinic in Vagamon, and saw how Baker's low-cost construction also produced a beautiful, humane space that delivered healthcare to underserved communities. Up in the mountains, this remote clinic has provided care for thousands of local tea-pickers. His architecture is both durable and sustainable, since the buildings are well maintained and active some sixty years later.



I also was extremely lucky to be in Kerala during the inaugural workshops about Laurie Baker's construction techniques, held at the Laurie Baker Center for Habitat Studies. I attended hands-on construction workshops with 75 Indian architecture students from around the country. We heard lectures about sustainability and energy concerns from economists and the former Minister of Kerala. My colleagues at COSTFORD asked me to deliver

a lecture to the students one evening. It was immensely rewarding to be able to gather my research and solicit feedback from the future practitioners in architecture in India. I also saw how relevant Baker's architectural approach is today.



Finally, I discovered that the clients who commissioned Laurie Baker to build their homes, their institutions, or communities, were often part of a greater network of social entrepreneurs. Thus, my meeting with the clients tapped me into the invisible material that bonded Baker's work: Social capital. Baker's architecture would have been impossible with the social capital that he built in Kerala. His network of friends and colleagues enabled him to source construction

materials at the lowest cost. He was able to weather the storms of criticism from contractors and architects who preferred the normal system of construction, which wasted a lot of materials and energy.

One client who I met, named Lt. General Pillai, had commissioned a house by Laurie Baker in 1971. He was a lifelong friend to both Laurie Baker and his wife Elizabeth. They often spoke about preservation issues. Towards the end of Baker's life, he worked with COSTFORD to implement his design principles. COSTFORD implemented a campus called "Braille without Borders" in Trivandrum. Pillai's close friends, Sabriye Tenberken and Paul Kronenberg, came to Kerala to teach braille to blind people who otherwise would have no access to education. The organization chose COSTFORD to build their center, which welcomes blind people from around the world to spend eight months on their campus, and to develop their own social entrepreneurial ventures. The low-cost and low-energy use buildings developed through Laurie Baker's techniques enabled the center to be built on budget. I spent the afternoon at Braille without Borders, and interviewed participants and the founders.

I am deeply grateful to the South Asia Initiative for granting me this opportunity of research towards my Master's in Architecture at the Design School. Firstly, I discovered that Baker's approach to architecture had a wide impact on society. My further research this year, and hopefully next summer, will start to analyze my findings more deeply. I also discovered the sheer joy of primary source, on-the-ground research. Working in Kerala, I found that establishing social capital is essential, since almost everyone I spoke with had two or three further suggestions. I happily chased many leads, which kept my summer full and very fulfilling. I would like to build upon my research with subsequent trips to India. Thank you again for this opportunity, and I look forward to attending events through the South Asia Initiative this academic year.

## AMBIKA KARNATH - GSAS, Organismic and Evolutionary Biology

### Research on the Fan-Throated Lizard, Virani, Garade, Kagal, Katyayini, and Bidnal, India

This summer, I spent two and a half months in southwestern India collecting preliminary data on the habitat, morphology, and display behaviour of fan-throated lizards, *Sitana ponticeriana*. Endemic to South Asia, these lizards possess a remarkable display mechanism - male lizards have a flap of skin under their throats which they rapidly extend and retract to communicate with each other and with females in social situations. Though both widespread and common, limited research has been conducted on *S. ponticeriana* and only a handful of studies have examined their display behaviour.



In addition to being widely distributed, *S. ponticeriana* shows considerable variation in the size and colour of the throat-fan across the range of the species complex. On contacting ecologists through the Young Ecologists Talk and Interact listserv and perusing photographs of the species, I learnt that the throat-fans of *S. ponticeriana* are one of three types - large and colourful (“coloured”), large and partially coloured (“intermediate”), or small and white (“white”). One of my research interests is to understand the relationship between morphology and behaviour (“does what you look like affect how you behave?”), so I immediately began to wonder whether this extensive variation in throat-fan size and colouration can affect the display behaviour of *S. ponticeriana*.



I shortlisted six field sites across central and northern peninsular India that I planned to visit in the lizards’ breeding season from April to June, the months preceding the monsoon.<sup>1</sup> My goal for this summer was to videotape displays from at least 20 male lizards and measure the morphology of at least 20 male and 20 female lizards per site. Additionally, I planned to measure a suite of environmental variables that described both the locations at which lizards were found and also the overall characteristics of the habitat at each site.

Not surprisingly, many of my plans were foiled when I actually reached the field! My first site was completely devoid of *S. ponticeriana*, my contact at a back-up site did not answer e-mails or phone calls, and I learnt that the forest department was unable to provide an armed guard to protect researchers in a tiger reserve I had hoped to work in. After some rescheduling, however, things began to settle into a rhythm. I collected data from two sites each for the coloured-fan and white-fan morphs, as well as from one site where both morphs co-occurred. Excitingly, I noticed differences between the morphs in not only how frequently the lizards displayed but also in the nature of the movements that they incorporate into displays. I am in the process of quantifying these differences by analysing the many hours of video data I collected. The next step is to understand how these differences in behaviour are related to differences in morphology.

This summer represented my first attempt at planning and executing a field season on my own, and despite some

ups and downs, I am rather pleased at how it turned out - my data are an interesting beginning to what I anticipate will be a longer project on understanding the correlated evolution of morphology and behaviour in this species complex. Moreover, the opportunity to travel on my own in parts of India I had not seen before, to interact and share my work with people from different cultures and walks of life, and to learn from my collaborators and field assistants was a simply phenomenal experience. I cannot thank the South Asia Initiative enough for funding this research!

## ATEYA KHORAKIWALA - FAS, Architecture and Landscape

### Research on Evolution of Public Distribution System, Delhi, Mayapuri, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad, India



The purpose of my trip to India was to track down archival material, meet people of interest, and visit the sites that I have been researching over the past year. My project looks at the architecture and infrastructure built for the public distribution system, in service of the rhetorical end of food security, and the actual end of controlling its price. I research this system as it evolved in India in between 1955 and 1975. The central difficulty of my project is that it attempts an intellectual and aesthetic history of a largely political and technocratic project. What this means is that I constantly need to approach planners, engineers, and IAS officers in the hope that they can point me toward archival and other material that might be of use to me.

This was the task that I embarked upon in Delhi. The Food Corporation of India is an implementation body, a conglomeration of experts whose task it is to execute and manage the laws put in place by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. The technocrats were not just helpful, they were enthusiastic about the project, but knew not if an archive of the department existed in any accessible way. Perhaps there were some files in a basement somewhere. Perhaps they were thrown away. Largely engineers, they were happy to share information about current projects, but unfortunately could only speculate about the past. The ministry is even more inaccessible. Luckily a large number of files have been transferred to the archives.

The other technocrat one might encounter is the IAS officer. Qualitatively different from the engineer, I discovered that IAS officers are profoundly skeptical of “students.” In Mayapuri my camera was locked into a cupboard before I was allowed into the silo. The manager offered me this tantalizing tidbit of information: The silo was built by the Russians. I found no evidence to support this claim, but I have not stopped searching. It would compare well with the other silo I visited, the one at Hapur, built by the Americans: silo building as a proxy for the Cold War. Here, instead of asking for permission, I photographed the building uninhibitedly, and then asked for forgiveness. As a strategy, this works wonders. In Borivali, Mumbai, a retired manager took me for a tour of the storage bins from the 60s, now empty. He proudly let me know that his personal record was 10 years. He had safely stored wheat for 10 years before letting it back into circulation.

Until I saw the buildings themselves, I had not truly understood how silos worked, and I certainly had not anticipated the difficulty of metaphorically freezing in time a living substance such as wheat. A tour of the site and a conversation with its managers quickly remedied my ignorance. “Buffer stock,” and the prices that they help control is an abstract economic idea; paradoxically, nothing is more concrete than ten thousand, one hundred and sixty metric tons of grain, which in economic terms, is borrowed from the future. Unfortunately, it has to be stored in the present. It is easy to forget that grain is a live object, and all the more, it is not simply an object, it is an environment in itself, one that changes over time, and harbors



other creatures. To store grain is to understand this fact, and constantly mitigate the tendency of wheat to change, maintaining its integrity for future consumption.

The last part of the itinerary was Ahmedabad. Both the Indian Institute of Management and the National Institute of Design were important intellectual think tanks for the states management and design of grain storage. The

design history around the question of agriculture is sparse and amorphous and has not been collated and made public. After what felt like a foolish hunt involving numerous emails to professors and administrators I was able to meet one person who spoke to me at length. It was only during this conversation that the extent of the debate around aesthetics, meaning, and communication, and the state's investment in instituting a design culture began to make themselves clear to me.

If there is one thing I learnt during this trip in particular, it is that you need to know what you are looking for before you can find it. But once you find just one person to talk to, the entire field reveals itself, pointing your research in directions that you may not have previously anticipated. This

research trip allowed me to locate the beginnings of many stories, and for this I am grateful to the South Asia Initiative. The rest will be a dissertation.



## IAN MACCORMACK - GSAS, Religion

### Research on Tibetan Political History, Chengdu and Beijing, China

My plans for research were altered somewhat by unpredictable political circumstances and the nature of the Chinese government. However adventitious these events are they are also not entirely unexpected and I was fortunately able to take many contingencies. Still I will not deny that I encountered some considerable difficulties.

Before leaving for China this summer I had taken steps to arrange several contacts in Lhasa. My research involves 17th and 18th century political history in Tibet, including the history of the palace of the Dalai Lamas in Lhasa. The Lhasa Archives holds a wealth of materials that are not only unique but also exist in great number and massive disarray and have only recently begun to be studied in any depth. This work is being done almost entirely by Tibetans working in Lhasa. Many months before departing I began conversations with a leading scholar in the Archives named Dobis Tsering Gyal, and we made plans to meet in Lhasa and to work in the archives. The other invaluable resource of Lhasa is its residents: although much of the traditional political structure was overturned in the process of Chinese occupation, many features remained largely unchanged or in continuity from the inception of these forms in the 1700s until the 1950s. Several political servants of the old system live in Lhasa still and have insights into the structure and the language of Tibetan politics that no text can convey. Through a contact with researchers at the Lhatse library in New York (which I visited in preparation for my trip) I was placed in contact with residents in Lhasa who could serve as informants and reading partners to explain some of the technical and obtuse language of political writing, which in Tibetan is a very unique and bounded discourse that can be difficult even for other learned Tibetans to understand.

**“...on June 6 I received a call from my travel agent to say that the Tourism Bureau in Lhasa had inexplicably shut down, stopped all travel to Tibet and stopped issuing permits, and as part of a larger communications blackout was not announcing when it would open again.”**

The political situation of Tibet is such that visitors to the “Tibetan Autonomous Region” must receive a travel permit from a licensed travel agent. This has the effect of confining travel to preorchestrated “tours” which are under the supervision of Chinese officials and within which one’s movements are entirely predetermined. This makes it difficult (and expensive) to arrange a stay in one place for any significant duration of time. However after much frustration and searching I was able to put together a satisfactory “tour” with an agent who understood my needs as a researcher. Permits are arranged by the agent in Lhasa and mine was to be faxed to me in Chengdu before departure for Lhasa. With this plan in place I made travel arrangements to spend a little less than one week in Beijing, where I made use of resources at the China Tibetology Center and purchased a good number of publications not available in the United States (or only available at 3 or 4 times the cost and with one month or more of shipping time). I then flew to Chengdu where I only planned to stay for two days before flying to Lhasa. My departure for Lhasa was set for June 8.

On May 30, less than a day before my departure, there occurred the first case of Tibetan self-immolation inside the Tibetan Autonomous Region (other incidents have almost all been in Sichuan and Qinghai). In fact this suicide took place in front of the central palace in Lhasa. Word of this event spread quickly along certain channels in the West, but there was much less information in China. However on June 6 I received a call from my travel agent to say that the Tourism Bureau in Lhasa had inexplicably shut down, stopped all travel to Tibet and stopped issuing permits, and as part of a larger communications blackout was not announcing when it would open again. It is common for the Chinese to shut down routes of transportation and communication and additionally to be very circumspect about why, or for how long. This wreaks havoc on travelers. My agent and I suspected that in the usual fashion this lockdown would last one or two weeks at most. So I altered my plans to stay in Chengdu. There are a number of Tibetan towns within two days’ bus ride of Chengdu but there is little to



accomplish on such trips besides language practice and tourism, and as this was a research trip I decided that my time would be better spent working at universities in Chengdu, attending classes and looking for scholars with some knowledge of political Tibetan. Over the next several weeks I found an affordable apartment and using the library at Sichuan University I read and translated from a number of historical sources including the Lo gsar 'bel-gyi gnam and Dwang's shel me long of Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho; the Zhal ke bcu gaum of the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho; the Zhal lce bco lnga attributed to the reign of Gtsang pa Sde srid; and an untitled set of legal codes attributed to the reign Phag mo gru ruler Byang chub rgyal mtshan. These are the primary legal sources for the formation of the Tibetan government in the 17th century. I also attended biweekly lectures in Chinese. A visiting scholar also performed weekly lectures on Tibetan art history. After some time I was able to make contact through mutual acquaintances with Dr. Sonam Tsering, a professor at the Southwest University for Nationalities in Chengdu and the only person in the area who had published on Tibetan political history. Over a series of meetings we became friends and read portions of these texts together.

Only five days after learning that Tibet had been closed for the foreseeable future, during which time I was still staying in a 10-bed dorm room at a youth hostel (where I had only meant to spend a night or two), I realized that one of the residents had been following me closely. I thought little of this until I found one morning that he had risen early and taken my laptop, American phone, and camera from my bag (leaving money, passport, and everything else intact) and left the hostel. I filed police reports but this is largely a symbolic gesture. Given the quality of available merchandise in the dormitory (including several ipads within reach) and the very, very low value of my laptop, I have no doubt that this was not a random theft but a targeted attempt to take my information. As soon as possible I purchased a (used, inexpensive) replacement laptop (which I am currently using) but admittedly this loss hot on the heels of having my Lhasa plans dashed was disappointing to say the least. Also I came to a point at which I had more or less exhausted the usefulness of staying in Chengdu. Around this same time word trickled back from Lhasa that the office might be opening again. Teaming up with several other students to improve our chances of getting a permit (groups are preferred) I quickly designed a new 'tour' and set the dates and submitted the information back to Lhasa. Then ensues another week of waiting around to hear back if the permits will go through or not (if they did come through we would have about 24 hours' notice before getting on a plane). However after about 9 days word started to come not only from my travel agent but from other channels of communication that Tibet was not in fact being reopened by the Tourism Bureau and in fact would most likely remain closed through the remainder of the summer and potentially up through China's political change-over in the Fall. The situation is changing week by week still, but consensus now among scholars in the West is that Tibet is more or less unreachable for the foreseeable future.

At this point I quit Chengdu and returned to Beijing where I made contact with several professors and students at Minzu University and made arrangements to read with one or the other every day. Primarily I worked with Prof. Sonam Dondrub. In the course of this second stay in Beijing I also was fortunate enough to overlap with Dobis Tsering Gyal, my original contact in Lhasa, who was in Beijing on a work-related visit. We spent several days together discussing resources in the archives, reading texts together, and making future plans to meet both in America and (when possible) in Lhasa.

Professionally the trip was entirely a success as I have been able to involve myself in numerous institutions in China that are rising to the fore of Tibetan studies worldwide and will play an ever increasing role given China's privileged place of access to sites and materials. Personally I accomplished a significant amount of close reading of primary sources (and four or so additional contemporary works of Tibetan scholarship that I have not mentioned by name above) as well as informed contributions from living Tibetan scholars. The nature of the academic year at Harvard is such that there is no time to read to this extent or at this level of depth. Additionally the Lo gsar 'bel gnam at least will play a significant role in my dissertation research so I have been able to lay much

**“Professionally the trip was entirely a success as I have been able to involve myself in numerous institutions in China that are rising to the fore of Tibetan studies worldwide.”**

useful groundwork this summer. Add to this the fact that while in Chengdu and Beijing I had to rely entirely on spoken Tibetan and Chinese; again there is no substitute for this level of immersion during the rest of my year. I spent no time as a tourist during this trip and rather spent most days putting in long hours at one library or another or in conversation with a friend or colleague. The loss of my computer (and phone and camera) and the immense frustration of trying to make plans that the Chinese government can effortlessly and with no warning undermine entirely, however, made things a little rougher than I would have preferred under ideal circumstances. Still I cannot stress enough how important the personal and professional connections that only this sort of opportunity makes possible are for my future career.

## DANIEL MAJCHROWICZ - GSAS, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

### Research on Urdu Travel Writing, Lahore, Islamabad, and Gujranvala, Pakistan

**“While little work has been conducted on Urdu travel writing generally, even less attention has been paid to trends in postcolonial Pakistan.”**

Put broadly, the project I proposed to pursue with the support of the South Asia Initiative sought to trace the historical trajectory of Urdu travel writing, or the safarnāma, and explore its current social relevance, including a study of circulation and readership. I was interested in asking how travel and its representation, both privileged acts, inflect social discourse in South Asia, especially those discourses that are tied up with or mediate conflicted spaces like the Indo-Pakistani border. Although my dissertation work pursues these questions within larger spacial and temporal frameworks, with

this project I was interested in focusing specifically on travel writing in Pakistan. While little work has been conducted on Urdu travel writing generally, even less attention has been paid to trends in postcolonial Pakistan. This is particularly unfortunate given that the current critical moment in South Asia affords incredible opportunities to link a history of travel writing with contemporary concerns. Recent economic expansion and globalization have significantly lowered barriers to travel. More than ever, trans-global currents inform debates in contemporary Pakistani society, enhancing the pertinence of travel and travel writing to these concerns.

In pursuing this project, I had a number of goals in mind. The first was to add the subtlety and movement of social discourse in Urdu literature to the historiography of social conflict and negotiation in South Asia. In other words, I sought to inflect the language of historical analysis on South Asian history with the parole of the Urdu safarnāma. Secondly, this work sought to expand our understanding of how ideas, peoples, and materials circulate through Pakistan and across the globe. Finally, I wanted to contribute work to an understudied genre of literature. The paucity of scholarship on the production of travel writing in Urdu belies the fact that this genre continues to be one of the, if not the most, popular form of literature sold today.

In pursuit of these goals, I visited Lahore, Islamabad, and Gujranvala during the summer of 2012. During this time I was able to access a number of collections at libraries across these cities, as well as collections housed at literary institutions. Having already considered monographs at a number of these places on a previous trip, this time I focused on the production of travel writing in journals. I theorized that the increased accessibility and lowered cost of newspaper and journal publications, as well as their circulation, would provide interesting new data on the relationship between social movements and travel writing. I was not disappointed. I found an overwhelming amount of material in the major dailies and literary journals. During the coming academic year I will continue to work through this material and write a chapter on my findings.

**“In pursuing this project, I had a number of goals in mind. The first was to add the subtlety and movement of social discourse in Urdu literature to the historiography of social conflict and negotiation in South Asia.”**

I was also able to meet with some twenty contemporary travelogue writers and to speak to them about their work, the dynamics of publication, as well as whom they perceived to be their readership. These interviews not only taught me about the production of travel writing but also about the often intense environment within which these authors worked. There was not solely a realm of independent, creative production but a contested space where rival authors questioned the authenticity of their assertions.

Finally, I spent a significant amount of time getting acquainted with those involved in contemporary scholarship

on Urdu literature in Lahore. This included meeting top literary critics as well as spending time at the literary departments of several universities. This time was crucial to my research, as the conversations I had here opened me up to new ways of thinking about the material I was reading, and provided new avenues for research. The links I created with these scholars this summer will ensure that my next visits will continue to be fruitful and will not require as much start-up time.

Unfortunately, the final days of my work were less productive due to the fresh outbreak of anti-American sentiment and nationwide protests and rioting. I was forced to restrict my movements to certain parts of Lahore and had to cancel two trips to visit with scholars of travel literature in Sargodha and Faizabad. I hope that in future visits that I will be able to resume the work that remained unfinished due to this instability. More positively, I collected more than enough material during this trip to be able to present a paper at the 2012 South Asia Conference at Madison on my summer research.

## TYLER NEILL - GSAS, South Asian Studies

### Study of Classical Indian Philosophy, Cornell University, New York

**“...there was no shortage of wrestling with particularly tough grammatical, syntactic, and prosodic forms, the bread-and-butter of Sanskrit studies.”**

With the help of my SAI grant, I spent the summer reading and thinking about classical Indian philosophy. My principal project was a voluminous 12th century text, written by Jain philosopher Vādideva Sūri, entitled the Syādvāda Ratnākara, from whose eleven hundred pages I was able to read about forty-five. The issues I focused on were partly intra-tradition and methodological (including expositions of the so-called syādvāda and nayavāda dialectical devices), partly intertradition and argumentative (chiefly an extended epistemological debate with a Buddhist opponent).

Day by day, I would prepare the readings, and twice a week, my teacher Larry McCrea and I would convene to read and discuss a few pages, diving into occasional supplementary tasks as needed, which facilitated a variety of approaches to the text. Most often, the most important task was to relate sympathetically to the philosophical issue presented, using either precedents in the Indian context or parallels in Western intellectual history, in order to manage the text’s technical brevity. Sometimes, textual issues would send us looking for parallel phrases or words either within or outside the text, or they would require an extra-close reading of the context, and this process often resulted in emendations of the text. We would also trace and verify quotations to the best of our ability, and once, we detoured fully into another text, which was relevant and manageable and perhaps the only known example of a Buddhist explicitly attacking the Jain position. Naturally, secondary scholarship was sometimes useful, yet we often found it necessary to question these translations and analyses anew in light of our readings. So, too, did our investigation of the text’s murky manuscript history produce more questions than answers, and yet this process was a good exercise in using the field’s bibliographic resources. And of course, there was no shortage of wrestling with particularly tough grammatical, syntactic, and prosodic forms, the bread-and-butter of Sanskrit studies.

In a larger perspective, despite my intentions at the outset, I cannot claim to have successfully contrasted the Buddhist and Jain approaches to philosophical debate such that I could already present formal findings to others. Nevertheless, I feel fortunate that this project gave me such an opportunity to think about exactly the issues that are foremost in my mind at this point in my graduate career. As concerns Indian philosophy, I obtained a valuable, detailed look at the Jain philosophical perspective - relativist, doxographic, and ontologically realist and dualist - in context with other traditions like those of the Naiyāyikas and Buddhists. As for philosophy in general, I enjoyed questioning to what extent methodological differences, as opposed to doctrinal ones, help us to set various approaches apart, as well as to what degree doctrine and methodology are also intertwined. I feel more confident now that a Jain-centered comparative project could be particularly useful for exploring this interplay, and to that extent, this reading project seems a not-unsuccessful first step toward future writing projects. Furthermore, on the level of individual philological practice, this experience has highlighted for me the importance of reading sympathetically, copiously, and intertextually, whereas on the level of collective philological endeavor (which naturally supports individual mastery), it has helped me to confirm my interest in the development of digital text libraries that could make good-quality e-texts readily available to the scholarly community.

**“As concerns Indian philosophy, I obtained a valuable, detailed look at the Jain philosophical perspective - in context with other traditions like those of the Naiyāyikas and Buddhists.”**

## JAMES REICH - GSAS, Religion

### Ecole Francaise D'Extreme-Orient, Pondicherry, India

**“Meeting other students and scholars from Europe, the U.S., and India was one of the big unexpected benefits of the trip. These students and scholars all study India, but from a variety of different disciplines and perspectives...”**

The only thing I wish I could change about my trip this summer to Pondicherry, India is that I wish it had been longer. By the time I left, I had settled into a productive routine, and I was learning more and more each week, both about my own research and about contemporary India. The trip was really valuable for me, and it benefited me in ways both tangible and intangible. If I could have spent more time there I would have, and I will probably try to go back at some point in the future to continue.

In Pondicherry I was a guest of the Ecole Francaise D'Extreme-Orient, which put me up in their guest house and provided me with an office that I shared with a young French scholar. The EFEO is a great place for scholarship, with a congenial atmosphere, and they were very generous with their resources and time. The school is primarily a research institute, with a team of paid scholars and no regular students. In addition to the EFEO, Pondicherry is also home to the French Institute, which was nearby and also provided a way for me to meet both scholars and students. Pondicherry University is also in the area, but unfortunately the school was closed for the summer months, so I was not able to spend any time there on this trip.

My SAI-funded trip to Pondicherry allowed me to accomplish some specific and valuable goals related to my work. Firstly, I was able to complete a working translation of Ruyyaka's Sahrdayalilā, a 12th century Sanskrit text on aesthetics that will be part of my dissertation. I was also able to work closely with an Indian scholar, H.N. Bhatt, to begin a translation of another text by Ruyyaka, also on aesthetics, this one a commentary on an older text called Vyaktiviveka. In addition to this reading, which was directly related to my dissertation research, I was also able to study more widely with some of the scholars and students that I met, working on some other Sanskrit texts that are indirectly related to my research but still very useful to me, as well as reading some secondary scholarship on South Indian history and studying Hindi. Meeting other students and scholars from Europe, the U.S., and India was one of the big unexpected benefits of the trip. These students and scholars all study India, but from a variety of different disciplines and perspectives, including anthropology, geography, and political science. Meeting these students pushed me to set my own research within the wider contexts of South Asian history and area studies more broadly, and got me thinking more creatively about ideas and future research projects. Finally, the trip allowed me to take some tours of famous temples and historical monuments in south India that I have read about but never visited. Being able to see and physically explore famous and important temples like Cidambaram and Gangaikondacolapuram, the royal library in Thanjavur, and the summer palace of the famous south Indian king Tippu Sultan, made my Sanskrit research come alive in a way that is hard to accomplish any other way. I am sure that my dissertation, my research, and my overall career have all been helped by this trip.

# ANITHA SIVASANKARAN - GSAS, Economics

## Research on Women Textile Workers, Tamil Nadu, India

### 1. Background

In many developing countries, there is a very short window between when a woman finishes schooling and gets married. The research project I worked on this summer studies the impact of employment opportunities for women during the period before marriage. In particular, we attempt to understand the impact of a change in wage contract offered by a large firm on incentives for work tenure for women working at the firm. In particular, we look at the impact on worker productivity, labor supply, and other outcomes such as marriage decisions and savings for the workers who were affected by the change.

Commitment wage contracts for young, unmarried women are prevalent in the textile industry in Tamil Nadu, India.

Under these contracts, women are hired for a period of three years during which they live and work at the firm. Approximately a third of the worker's wage each month is deferred and saved until the end of the contract when it is given as a large lump sum. If a worker fails to complete the duration specified by the contract, she forfeits the entire sum of money. Thus the contract provides a strong incentive for work tenure. The firm whose data we use terminated the commitment wage contract and switched to paying workers regular monthly wages with no money deferred for later. Workers already hired under the commitment contract were given a settlement amount based on the duration they had already worked and the option to continue working under the new contract. The termination of the contract offers an exogenous shock to incentives for work tenure without affecting the selection of workers, and the research exploits this policy change to study the impact of a change in work tenure incentives.



### 2. Motivation from Qualitative Interviews



We carried out a series of long qualitative interviews with employers, managers, and current and past workers from the textile industry in Tamil Nadu. The purpose of this qualitative work was to understand how the different groups involved think about the system – for example, we wanted to understand better the management's stated reasons to offer these contracts, the worker's motivations to enter this type of employment, and their experience working with and without the commitment contracts. These initial interviews motivated the direction and design of the research. I will discuss some of my observations from these interviews.

From the management's side, a commonly stated motivation for hiring female workers is that they are easier to manage and monitor and work more diligently. Moreover, unmarried women are less tied to their homes with domestic responsibilities, and are more able and willing to migrate for work and live away from home, making them good candidates for the employment under the commitment contract. The promise of the lump sum at the end works as an additional incentive to keep these

women in the job and helps the firms reduce labor turnover in a situation where there are other competing firms willing to hire them.



Most workers we interviewed had heard about the employment scheme through people in their villages, both from people who were already working in the industry, as well as from local agents who act as contractors to hire workers for specific firms. It is very common for many young women from an area to join the same firm together. Workers are sometimes even incentivized by firms to encourage others from their village to join the firm they are working at. It is also common for siblings to join the same firm in succession by age - as one sister goes through her tenure, a younger sister may join her and start working at the firm. Occasionally, a younger sister may herself work multiple employment spells at a firm, earning money for the use of both her own and her older sister's weddings. These particular cases might

be a consequence of the cultural norm in this region by which girls are married according to birth order. Thus, locking an older sister into a commitment contract would delay her own wedding as well as her younger sisters' weddings. In general, social networks seem to play an important role in both the hiring process as well as the decision to work.

The workers we interviewed gave us mixed feedback about the employment itself. Most of them felt the work by itself was not difficult, but the commitment period made the employment restrictive. Because of the threat of losing the lump sum, they felt they did not have the flexibility to leave the job, except under extreme circumstances. Most workers felt the commitment contract allowed them to save money that was usually used to buy jewelry and meet other expenses for their weddings. In the absence of this contract, workers felt that even if they did earn more money per month, the money would be consumed without accumulating any savings. They were not confident that they would be able to replicate the scheme on their own by saving a fraction of their wages in a bank account. An interesting outcome of the commitment contract that came up during these interviews was that it could enable girls to delay or avoid undesirable marriage proposals. This is because the contract increased their bargaining power and ability to negotiate with their families due to the value of the lump sum that they would have to forfeit if they stopped working to be married early. Some workers also felt the employment gave them the opportunity to meet people outside their villages and acquire transferable skills.



### 3. Development of Research Methodology and Progress

I visited and collected data from the firm in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu. This data consisted of employee records maintained by the firm and provides a list of all female workers hired since 2004, basic demographic information, contact information provided when the worker started working at the firm, and the start and completion dates of their employment spell at the firm. The records also note if the worker was hired as a fresh recruit or if the worker had previous work experience from working at the same firm or another firm in the industry at the start of the employment spell. I also collected monthly attendance records for all workers starting from year



2005 for information on the number of days worked and absent each month.

I then worked with a local research group to assemble a team of field staff to develop and implement a plan for the follow-up survey. Because the project involves migrant workers who are now spread across different districts in Tamil Nadu, a major component of the fieldwork is tracking the workers in order to conduct the surveys. I based my fieldwork in Thanjavur district, where the research group had a field office for some other projects that they were working on. We originally tried to combine tracking respondents with surveying, but found this to be inefficient in many cases. So we split the fieldwork for this project into two major components - the tracking process and the survey - and we piloted each separately. We spent a considerable amount of time developing the best process to track workers since this is an important component of the study. We had to ensure that our process had a high success rate and that the process was not biased towards tracking certain types (for example, richer or married or currently working) of respondents. The work was iterative and we used the learning from each round to improve the next round during our pilot in Thanjavur. We have now worked out a multi-step process to track respondents:



**Stage 1 - Firm Contact Data (Status: Completed):** We first used the contact data obtained from the firms to group workers by the region they are from and the date of joining.

**Stage 2 - Tracking by phone (Status: Completed):** Following this, we contacted all workers from the list who had provided a phone number in their contact information. 54.64% of our sample had listed a phone number, and of these 27.38% were contacted successfully by phone. The phone tracking success improves for more recent cohorts since phone numbers are less likely to have been changed.



**Stage 3 - In-person tracking (Status: Pilot Completed in Thanjavur District):** Since a large percent of the respondents could not be tracked by phone calls, we piloted in-person tracking in Thanjavur where a member of the research team visits and verifies contact information. During these visits, we realized we could take advantage of the strong social networks between workers by verifying contact information of other workers who had worked at the firm at the same time. Moreover, we also noticed that often identifying one worker in an area allows us to update information for most workers hired from that area since these communities are small

and close knit. Finally, when visiting an area we also clarified any unclear addresses by checking with the local post office and updating this information. Based on the pilot results, we estimate a tracking rate between 75% and 85%. Further, preliminary analysis suggests that the tracking rate does not differ systematically by observable characteristics of the worker.

This final process that we have developed will be replicated in other districts as we expand the study. As the tracking process in Thanjavur was nearing completion, we also rolled out a pilot version of the survey to a sample of 100 respondents who had been tracked in the tracking process. We used the discussions in the qualitative interviews to develop the survey instrument we piloted. The current version we are piloting collects data on

socio-economic background, employment and occupation history, marriage, empowerment, assets, credit and savings, health and social networks. We are also implementing a quality control process to minimize surveyor errors and other type of data collection errors. Once this is completed, the data will be entered and ready for analysis. We will use the pilot data to inform the design of the final survey instrument that will be used in the full study when we move to other districts.



In the coming months, I will wrap up the data entry return to Cambridge and use the findings from the pilot to develop the design for the full study. I will then return to India to expand the study to other districts.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The status of women in many developing countries is poor, with women usually receiving the smallest share of the limited available resources and having very little ability to make decisions on behalf of the family. Employment opportunities for women are important in empowering them and improving their condition. This research will provide insight on the impact of the availability of employment opportunities for young, unmarried women. In particular, it studies the impact of a change in wage policy that removes the incentives for work tenure. If removing incentives to work for a longer period leads to lower work tenure, decreased labor supply and early marriage for women, the findings from this research could be relevant in the design of policies. A policy recommendation for preventing early marriage and child birth that could come out of such a finding is that providing incentives for work tenure is as important as providing employment opportunities for women. Further, by studying the impact of early work tenure incentives, the research also sheds light on whether encouraging women to increase their labor supply when they are young has a long-term impact on their lifetime labor supply. This, in turn, can be a powerful tool to increase bargaining power for women. Finally, the research sheds lights on a relatively uncommon and understudied population in India – migrant female workers. Traditionally, most migration for women in India occurs because of marriage, and migration by women for employment is a recent trend that has emerged because of employment opportunities in the export and garment industries. This type of migration could have interesting long-term consequences for the status of women by expanding their social networks, helping them acquire transferable skills and giving them access to new jobs. The research improves our understanding of such employment-related migration for women.

## STEPHANIE SPRAY - GSAS, Anthropology

### Research on Gandharba Migratory Labor Practices, Nepal

Thanks to the generosity of the South Asia Initiative and its benefactors, I was able to complete an important stage of fieldwork for my dissertation in rural Nepal in which I inquired into the implications of the expanding scope of migratory labor practices among a group of traditionally itinerant musicians. Known as the Gandharba - or pejoratively as the Gāine - the community I worked this summer are dalit by caste and often simply describe their occupation as “wandering” (*dulna jāne*), which refers to the predominantly male practice of traveling to and from villages, towns, and cities while busking, as well as peddling musical instruments on streets near tourist locales. Wandering also has gendered nuances, for when Gandharba women speak of going wandering, they are euphemistically referring to the female practice of begging. Given the uncertainty and social stigma attached to these practices, Gandharbas have been increasingly abandoning them as professions and seeking work as construction workers, seasonal farm hands, or sharecroppers to supplement conventional practices of wandering or replace them as a primary source of income; unfortunately, these jobs too are hard to come by and offer little recompense. In the past decade, wandering has taken on international significance, for many Gandharba men seek work abroad through “manpower” companies, which place them in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, Qatar, and Singapore, where they frequently work as manual laborers.



Rather than focus on these shifts in abstract or structural terms, this summer I was interested in how these changes impact the interpersonal and affective realm of experience. My overarching question was how these individuals sought not only how to earn enough to make a living, but also how to make that living dignified and worth living. My focus in this context was on how narratives of hope kindled action, fueled the imagination, and mediated the realms of deed and affect to shape experience and transform lives. I took linguistic hooks, such as the Nepali metaphor of *āsakhetī*, or “hope’s harvest,” as a conversational springboard into an inquiry into how the survival tactics employed by this small, marginalized community related to larger narratives regarding a more or less hopeful future.

This summer I spent a lot of time on village porches, in rice fields, and at construction sites talking with Gandharba about their work and that of their children and grandchildren. Over the course of a few months, many Gandharba youth dropped out of school and left for India in search of jobs, while the families of a few were able to work with agents at manpower companies to find employment overseas. I observed how these families raised money to send their young men to foreign lands, the process of preparing emotionally and practically for these trips, and how families coped with their absence after departure. In one case, I saw a family’s aspirations for a more prosperous life shattered by the realities of work conditions abroad, a case I will write about at length in my dissertation. The South Asia Initiative enabled this fieldwork, which will enrich my dissertation and allow me to connect the singular experiences of these individuals with transnational trends among the marginalized and impoverished.

## GITANJALI SURENDRAN - GSAS, History

### Research on Buddhist Revival pre-1956, New Delhi, India

**“I have been able to revise my argument to include important thematic discussions on secularism and caste politics through the prism of varying visions of India’s past and future as seen in the writings of Nehru and Ambedkar.”**

This summer, I was able to complete the remainder of my research for my dissertation on attempts at Buddhist revival in India prior to Ambedkar’s conversion to Buddhism in 1956. With the help of a grant from the South Asia Initiative, I traveled to New Delhi and spent two full months in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. In particular, I focused on two sets of documents - the papers and collected works of Jawaharlal Nehru and those of B. R. Ambedkar. These two exemplary collections were easily accessible and helped me to formulate the final two chapters of my dissertation.

The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library is one of the best-run government research centers in India. Besides housing an excellent and ever-growing collection of papers of political and historical importance, it is a vibrant centre of academic exchange and intellection. This summer, NMML hosted numerous talks, seminars, and conferences, many of which I found to be

useful. I will also be delivering a talk there on my work early next year. I continue to work in the library as I write my dissertation in Delhi.

As a result of my research, I have been able to revise my argument to include important thematic discussions on secularism and caste politics through the prism of varying visions of India’s past and future as seen in the writings of Nehru and Ambedkar. In addition to this stint in New Delhi, I also traveled to Sanchi and Patna in early August. At Sanchi is a significant Buddhist site. I conducted a survey of the many new buildings built by Buddhist reform societies. In particular, I spent time at the Chaityagiri Vihara, where in 1952 a major installation of relics took place under the watchful eye of Nehru and several leaders of Southeast Asian countries. This event is discussed extensively in the fourth and final chapter of my dissertation. In Patna, I looked at the papers of Rahul Sankrityayana, a famous Hindi writer on Buddhism, and K.P. Jayaswal, a major historian of ancient India in the 1920s and 1930s, which are housed at the K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute. This research was useful too, and helped me to complete my second chapter on Buddhist revival and modernity in colonial India.

I am grateful to the South Asia Initiative for supporting my research both this summer and over my career at Harvard. As I enter my final dissertation writing year, I often reflect on how much I owe to these summer stints of research, both in terms of my thesis and in terms of the life and work experiences I have accumulated in various South Asian archives. For this, I am thankful.

## ANAND VAIDYA - GSAS, Social Anthropology

### Research on India's Forest Rights Act, Nadinagar, Uttar Pradesh, India

With funds from the Harvard South Asia Initiative's research and study grant, I was able to follow contestations over the implementation of India's Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act of 2006 in Nadinagar, an unauthorized village in the state of Uttar Pradesh whose residents are seeking land rights through the revolutionary new law. Nadinagar's villagers, as residents of forest land, filed claims for land rights in 2008, but the local administration interpreted an ambiguous portion of the law in a way that disqualified them from land rights. Local elites, who subscribed to the same interpretation of the law, attacked Nadinagar in the fall of 2011, destroying 70 of its 120 huts.

**“I was able to spend three months in Nadinagar as its residents rebuilt their village, began the process of planting crops as the rains arrived, and began to rebuild a network of political patronage.”**

With the research and study grant, I was able to spend three months in Nadinagar as its residents rebuilt their village, began the process of planting crops as the rains arrived, and began to rebuild a network of political patronage that would be able to sway the bureaucracy towards an interpretation of the law favorable to them. I used the funds to stay in a flat in Duddhi, near to Nadinagar, and to visit Ruby Gond, the newly elected Congress-affiliated MLA for the area, and Vijay Singh Gond, former MLA for the area and aspiring MP. Both politicians have sought the votes of Nadinagar's residents by promising to help sway local interpretations of the Forest Rights Act in a way favorable to them. Nadinagar's residents, in turn, have made a point of attending every rally held by both Ruby Gond and Vijay Singh Gond, in order to make themselves the most visible portions of the two politicians' constituencies.

In New Delhi, I was able to conduct interviews with Kishore Chandra Deo, the new Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, who explained to me that, in response to pressure from the residents of villages like Nadinagar all over India, he was issuing a clarification of the rules of the Forest Rights Act that would ensure their eligibility for land rights. I was also able to visit the Forest Research Institute in Dehradun to make copies of the working plans of the Forest Department for Nadinagar, as well as the National Archives of India to make copies of all of the gazetteers for Nadinagar.

# 2012 GRADUATE INTERNSHIP REPORTS

## SUMONA CHAKRAVARTY - GSD, Art Design and Public Domain Janaagraha, Bangalore, India



Four years ago, just before the general elections, as an undergraduate student in Bangalore, I had used an exciting new website called 'Jaagore' (Wake Up) to apply for a Voter ID card and find out more about the candidate in my area. The website was a part of a large campaign by Janaagraha, a Bangalore-based NGO, to motivate people to vote, and moreover, to empower them to cast their vote as well-informed, responsible citizens.

As a student studying communication design, I was extremely impressed by the campaign as it comprehensively used mass media, social media, and community organizing to simplify the process of voter registration, which is otherwise a bureaucratic and time consuming exercise. Their

work was an extraordinary example of how design and media can build citizenship and democratize local governance by generating awareness and making information easily accessible.

This year, four year later, thanks to funding from the South Asia Initiative, I interned with Janaagraha for a month over the summer. During the past four years, I have started working on participatory, community-based art and design projects to foster social and civic engagement. My internship at Janaagraha enabled me to understand the challenges of working in this field and helped me to gain a fresh perspective of my own work in participatory media.

Over my four weeks at Janaagraha, I worked on two projects, each with its own approach to using design and media to create civic engagement and improve urban governance.

The TENDER Sure project was a part of Janaagraha's India Urban Space (IUSP) department. The team had developed a set of guidelines for the planning and implementation of urban road networks. At first I felt a bit out of depth; with no training in engineering or architecture I wondered what I could learn from this project, and more importantly how I could even contribute to the team. I started by designing presentations and videos that they could use to leverage IUSP's meetings with the government, and organize support for their proposal. Gradually, I began understanding that

this project was more than a design pitch - it was an exercise in urban governance. I learnt about the tools and methodologies required to mediate an interaction with the government, develop partnerships, implement large scale urban projects, and transform deeply rooted practices and attitudes within the bureaucracy. Design plays a critical role in this process as a tool for communication and influence. It also makes such technical projects



accessible to citizens and other stakeholders - creating participation and ownership, which is critical for the long term success of the project.

The second project I worked on was IChangeMyCity (ICmyC), a project that uses the same ‘Web+Roots’ approach to citizenship as Jaagore. It is a social media platform for improving local governance and community organizing. During the first two weeks I worked with Janaagraha’s field work team, attending meetings with resident welfare associations and students to launch the project. Without an active and informed user base, the website for ICmyC would fail to create any impact, as it was designed to facilitate peer to peer interactions, strengthen community networks and enable grassroots civic action. Keeping this in mind, I worked on the Champions of Change program, a mentorship program for active citizens that would be integrated into the website, as well as the longterm grassroots strategy of the ICmyC project. I created a concept note for Champions of Change, designed the module for the website, as well as developed the programming of the project and the process to maintain the continuity and scalability of the initiative. I also interviewed potential candidates for Champions of Change to get feedback about my proposal and design.



My proposal was approved for implementation and I left Janaagraha feeling satisfied about making a contribution to the wonderful work being done by them. Moreover, I had the opportunity to interact with a wonderful group of interns from different parts of the world, as well as learn from people working on other projects at Janaagraha, who were always willing to share their experiences. It was also exciting to be in Bangalore, and I had a chance to meet artists and designers working in the social context through Jaaga, a vibrant arts organization in the city, who hosted me for a week. Over the course of my internship, I was able to apply my own understanding of the role of art and design in creating civic and social engagement to the complex and challenging context of citizenship and urban governance in India, and I left Bangalore feeling ready to tackle some of the questions that emerged from this immersive experience as I begin my thesis project and start a new semester at school.

## JARED KATSEFF - GSD/HBS, Urban Planning/MBA Institute for Financial Management and Research, Srirangapatna, India



This summer I worked with the Institute for Financial Management and Research (IFMR) on creating a replicable model to finance infrastructure in small Indian cities.

Before I arrived, IFMR had selected as a pilot site a small city of about 25,000 people located 19 kilometers outside of Mysore named Srirangapatna. IFMR also developed a number of financial tools (e.g., land banking with associated derivative products, pooled debt finance) that it had wished to test in Srirangapatna.

On arriving, it soon became clear that what had originally been construed as a financing problem was actually a planning program. To explain, before figuring out how to finance municipal level infrastructure we had to first determine what infrastructure to finance. To understand what infrastructure to finance, we had to first know what type of city we would be dealing with in 20 – 30 years, and this in turn would require a community visioning exercise asking how the town wanted to grow in the future. And even before this, we realized that before we

asked the community how it wanted to grow, we needed to understand collectively where the town was now on key infrastructure metrics.

Therefore, financing was but one step in a five step process that I helped develop: 1) conduct a current state diagnostic; 2) use those results to conduct a community visioning exercise; 3) conduct an infrastructure gap analysis determining what additional infrastructure is needed to get from the current state (step 1) to the desired vision (step 2); 4) finance the identified infrastructure; and 5) monitor and implement the financing plan.

To conduct the current state diagnostic, we needed to undertake our own data collection process. The data that the town of Srirangapatna had was largely out-of-date, not digitized, and incomplete. We needed to get a sense of what physical infrastructure currently existed, as well as how local people and businesses perceived their current level of service. To get this data, I created a set of ward level base maps, as well as a personal and business survey.

We assembled a team of local Kannada speakers in Srirangapatna, and had them use the base maps to physically map the infrastructure in each ward (e.g., street lights, type of drainage, public water taps) and conduct the personal and business surveys. After training the local team and closely monitoring the data collection process, we were able to map the infrastructure of all 23 wards of the city, conduct 260 personal surveys (over 1% of the city population), and conduct 9 business interviews.



With this data, I managed a team of interns who helped analyze and represent the data to reveal spatial patterns regarding existing patterns of working, shopping, and level of infrastructure service. As examples, we revealed





very different patterns of where people shopped in the two principle neighborhoods of the city, and that the slums had much worse infrastructure in certain classes (e.g., toilets) but not others (e.g., solid waste collection, electricity). This analysis is being used to inform the community visioning exercise, the methodology of which is currently in development.

Therefore, this summer I helped IFMR realized that it needed to widen the scope of its financing exercise to encompass a more holistic urban planning exercise. I created a five step methodology for how to undertake this planning exercise, completed the first step for them and got them started on the second step as well.

Over the coming months, IFMR will continue to work with Srirangapatna, and hopefully, the end product of this will be a replicable process that all small cities in India can undertake in order to better plan for, and finance, their futures.

## MADHAV KHOSLA - FAS, Government Centre for Policy Research, Delhi, India

**“I became exposed to the small but swiftly increasing community of scholars who have interests in the fields of law and political theory, and this gave me a flavor of the growing intellectual community in India...”**

During the summer of 2012, I had the opportunity to intern at the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi as a result of a grant from the South Asia Initiative at Harvard University. My prior training is in law and my current research is in political theory, with a specific interest in Indian intellectual history. Through the grant, I was able to spend the summer in Delhi and explore these interests.

The Centre for Policy Research is one of India’s leading think tanks, with considerable faculty resources in fields including history, economics, political theory, and law. In addition, the think tank has numerous interns, especially during the summer, and holds regular seminars and workshops on a wide range of topics. Spending the summer at the Centre helped my re-

search in three important ways. First, it gave me institutional space in Delhi to spend time and conduct research in several archives, such as the Nehru Memorial Library. The archival work I performed has helped me a great deal in narrowing down the precise question I seek to explore in my dissertation, and has exposed me to the vast materials that exist and can facilitate a project in Indian intellectual history and political thought. Second, I learned a great deal from the faculty members at the Centre for Policy Research, and from the regular seminars and workshops in which I often participated. Although I had initially anticipated that the Centre would merely be an institutional space that I could be associated with as I performed archival research in Delhi, quite the opposite happened. I discussed my interests with various scholars at the Centre, who helped me develop them, and more importantly introduced me to and helped familiarize me with the work of a range of Indian scholars who are currently involved in similar research projects. Finally, through spending the summer at the Centre and in Delhi, I became exposed to the small but swiftly increasing community of scholars who have interests in the fields of law and political theory, and this gave me a flavor of the growing intellectual community in India, an experience that will no doubt help me shape future decisions.

I also used my summer, and part of my grant funding, to spend time at the Supreme Court of India and the lower judiciary in Delhi, attempting to find data on the pendency of cases and current litigation patterns. The Indian judicial system is in deep crises in terms of delays, and I was hoping to learn more about the duration that cases take from the moment that they are filed until their final disposal. The data on this question proved to be very difficult to obtain as regards the lower judiciary, although I was more lucky at the Supreme Court. Spending time with the Registrar of the Court, I learned how cases are catalogued and marked, and how pendency in the courts has evolved over time. This research, I hope, will eventually feed into a paper about reforming the Indian judicial system.

The research grant thus was able to facilitate a wide range of opportunities this summer, for which I remain grateful.

## SUJOYINI MANDAL - HKS, Public Policy

### Office of Arun Maira, Planning Commission, Delhi, India

As a public policy student from India, the goal of my chosen internship at the Planning Commission was to gain insight into the heart of policymaking in India and to contribute to it. The Planning Commission was and still represents India's policy intelligentsia, which forms India's 5-year plans in a variety of sectors including, but not limited to industrial policy, tourism, manufacturing, health, education and rural development.

My role as an intern at Arun Maira's office (responsible for industrialization, urbanization, and tourism) was to research and produce a discussion paper on a potential civilian offset policy for India's manufacturing industry.

Since late 2011, a discussion on a civilian offset policy for India has been revived. The purpose of the policy is purportedly to boost India's manufacturing sector vis-a vis FDI and access to critical technologies and markets through mandatory offset obligations.

The discussion paper is intended to inform the government on the possibilities and challenges of a centralized civilian offset policy on certain critical sectors for India's manufacturing, i.e. retail, telecommunications, capital goods, chemicals, commercial shipbuilding, and power. This was done through desk research and personal and phone interviews with stakeholders and industry experts in and around Delhi.

The paper attempts to draw out, on a very broad scale, what has been tried in India so far, lessons learned from India's defense offset policy, global case studies, and hypothesis points that have been developed via desk research and interviews with stakeholders within the Indian industry and government. The two main questions to ask are (i) What exactly is the local capability we are looking for? What are the constraints in building the local capability that we want? and (ii) What inducements and incentives can India offer to foreign vendors? The next steps would be for the Planning Commission to refine the arguments and to circulate the paper internally and with partners to start a dialogue on the subject of civilian offsets. The 6-point hypothesis developed is as below:

1. The primary focus and goal of the offset policy should be to (i) boost domestic manufacturing; (ii) generate local employment; and (iii) close the trade deficit by encouraging more exports. SME technology growth and development should be the key area focus within these three functions.
2. The form of preferred offset that would contribute to manufacturing is 'co-production,' i.e. joint manufacturing and technology transfer, in some form and extent. Quotas and/or subsidies in the form of local content regulations and requirements are to be discouraged.
3. Offsets require pre-qualification metrics, e.g. Which technology is primarily required? Who will be the recipients of the technology?
4. A potential offset infrastructure would require national consensus, but also state involvement and participation, e.g. in the form of bidding for offset FDI.
5. Sectors outside of defense where a civilian offset policy could potentially work are (i) power; (ii) commercial shipbuilding; (iii) retail; (iv) telecommunications ;(v) chemicals; and (vi) capital goods. Offset obligations need to be cross-sectoral but technology-specific.
6. Design principles for the proposed offset policy can include (i) technology transfer via public procurement; (ii) technology transfer via joint venture; (iii) cross-sectoral spin offs; and (iv) local value-add.

## DANIEL MCMANN - HLS, JD

### Supreme Court of Pakistan, Islamabad, Pakistan



After a 14-hour flight from JFK International Airport to Allama Iqbal International Airport, I found myself in a land of hospitality, warmth, and generosity that I was far from prepared for – Pakistan. I was greeted at the airport by the brother of an acquaintance of mine from Harvard Law School. In just three months, I left Pakistan feeling that my earlier acquaintance, his brother, their two sisters and their entire families, and many others I met along the way had become my own family. I was taken into people's homes, I was included in family's weddings, and I was supported at every step throughout my time in Pakistan. Pakistani hospitality, generosity and warmth were echoed in markets (where lassis, mango milkshakes, flowers, and cereal were gifted to me as a guest), in people's homes (where I was repeatedly

invited to take chai or break the Ramadan fast), and in times of distress (where my car was repaired by mechanics at no cost or medicine was shared on buses to combat food-poisoning).

I spent two months working with Justice Khawaja of the Supreme Court of Pakistan interning as a foreign law clerk. As a law clerk, I conducted research and wrote memoranda for Justice Khawaja working on cases of the highest profile enlightening the Supreme Court of Pakistan as to how foreign courts had interpreted similar questions they came across. Even the more mundane tasks of summarizing case files or lower court opinions was accentuated by the high-profile nature of the cases before the Supreme Court. Along with the other law clerks, I was also given the opportunity to sit for daily lunches with justices. And outside the court, I also utilized every opportunity I got to intellectually engage with Pakistan's top flight lawyers and greatest legal academics.

Following the lawyers' movement in Pakistan (a popular mass protest movement started by lawyers in Pakistan who successfully demanded the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court be reinstated), the Supreme Court of Pakistan holds a quasi-democratic aura in the eyes of the Pakistani people. The Supreme Court has made concentrated efforts to stamp out corruption and has pursued this line without sacrificing anyone, including the former Prime Minister, high-profile businessmen, and even the son of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. As such, the opportunity to acquaint myself with the inside operations of the Supreme Court was incredibly timely, immensely enlightening, and ultimately formative as to my understanding of the law, methods of judicial interpretation, and the impact of jurisprudence on the lives of citizens and the functioning of society more broadly.



I am very fortunate to have had the opportunity to share my experiences and learn from such a diverse group of talented law professionals, from the best and brightest of the Pakistani educated legal community, to Pakistanis educated abroad in Europe, America, and Australia who have brought their talents to their homeland, and to exceptional foreign legal minds who shared their skills with Pakistan. I am immensely grateful to the South Asia Initiative for making this opportunity and experience a reality.

## SAI Grant Opportunities

The South Asia Initiative offers internship and research grants for Harvard graduate and undergraduate students. SAI has partnered with 52 organizations in various sectors across South Asia to offer internships to Harvard students. Additionally, SAI welcomes applications for funding for research across all disciplines related to South Asia. For undergraduates, preference is given to thesis research or field work.

### 2013 Deadline and Requirements

For Graduate Students:

**Wednesday, February 13, 2013 at 3:00 pm**

For Undergraduate Students:

**Friday, February 15, 2013 at 3:00 pm**

More information about the specific application requirements for internship and research projects is currently available on the SAI website.

Undergraduate and graduate students from all areas of study are encouraged to apply. Please note that students who wish to apply for funding must be continuing at Harvard for the following year in order to be eligible.

SAI also offers a limited number of Winter Session Grants.

For questions regarding the grant application process, please contact Nora Maginn, Program Coordinator at [maginn@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:maginn@fas.harvard.edu).













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