India@70

Historical and Cultural Perspectives on 70 years of Indian Independence

Thursday 21 September, 2017

Highfield House, University of Nottingham

iAPS
Institute of Asia and Pacific Studies

The University of Nottingham

Schedule Summary

9.00-9.30am Registration - Tea/Coffee - Highfield House Cloisters

Session 1: 9.30-11.00am

Panel A - *Partition Then and Now* - Highfield House, Room A01

Chair: Máire ní Fhlathúin, University of Nottingham

Confronting the Enemy Within: Fear and Collective Violence in Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan.'
Giuseppe De Riso, Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'

The Youngest Citizens' Speak: The Orphans of India's Partition
Menka Singh, University of Delhi

Views from the edge of the Report Card: Literature in India @70
Sukeshi Kamra, Carleton University

Panel B - *Internal and External 'Others': The Politics of Resistance at Home and Abroad* - Highfield House, Room A02

Chair: Stephen Legg, University of Nottingham

Indian Independence in West Africa, 1944 to 1960
Oliver Coates, University of Cambridge

Experience of the Left in Indian Theatre: 1942 to the Present
Arjun Ghosh, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi

The RSS' 'Village Republics'
Rakesh Ankit, Jindal Global University

11.00-11.30am Break - Tea/Coffee - Highfield Cloisters

Session 2: 11.30-1.00pm

Panel C - *Ethnic Democracy, Regionalism and Nationalisms* - Highfield House, Room A01

Chair: Carole Spary, University of Nottingham

India@70: Democracy Under Threat?
Katharine Adeney, University of Nottingham

Encountering the Best and the Worst of the Indian State: A Comparative Study of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in Two Indian States
Sujoy Dutta, Tata Science Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad

Contested Natures and Tribal Identities: Regional Nationalism as Ethnography – Rereading Rajam Krishnan's 'When the Kurinji Blooms.'
Anita Balakrishnan, Queen Mary's College, Chennai

Panel D - *Kashmir: Performativity, Gender and Trauma* - Highfield House, Room A02

Chair: Ruth Maxey, University of Nottingham

'Half-widows' and the Travesty of Justice in Indian administered Kashmir
Sohini Chatterjee, South Asian University, New Delhi

Dark and yet darker: "seeing" the valley's conflict in the post-millennial Indian graphic novel 'Kashmir Pending'
E. Dawson Varughese, University of Delhi

1.00-2.00pm Buffet lunch served in the Highfield Cloisters

Session 3: 2.00-3.45pm

Panel E - *Identity Politics in Contemporary Context* - Highfield House, Room A01

Chair: Ibtisam Ahmed, University of Nottingham

Performing Sub-nationalism Online: (Re) thinking Assam's Encounter with 'India's Independence.
Kankana Talukdar, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Becoming Indian: Nagaland and the Relevance of the Question of Being
Kekhrongu-u Dazo, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad

Poetry amidst Violence in Northeast India
Rajashree Bargohain, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati

Panel F - *'Indianness,' Visual Narratives and Nation Building* - Highfield House, Room A02

Chair: Paul McGarr, University of Nottingham

Nation-building in India: Conceptual and Visual Dimensions
Lion Koenig, University of Oxford

Muslim Masculinity in India: Sketching the portrayal of Muslim characters in Bollywood films post-independence
Mohammad Reyaz, Aliah University, Kolkata & Roddur De, Chandannagar Government College

Cartooning Politics: Reading Daily Mail, Dawn and Hindustan Times
Nassif Muhammed Ali, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

3.45-4.15pm Break - Tea/Coffee, Highfield House Cloisters

Session 4: 4.15-5.15pm

Keynote Lecture, Highfield House, Room A01/02

Chair: Katharine Adeney, University of Nottingham

Kashmir @70
Andrew Whitehead, IAPS/King's India Institute

University Park Campus

The University of Nottingham
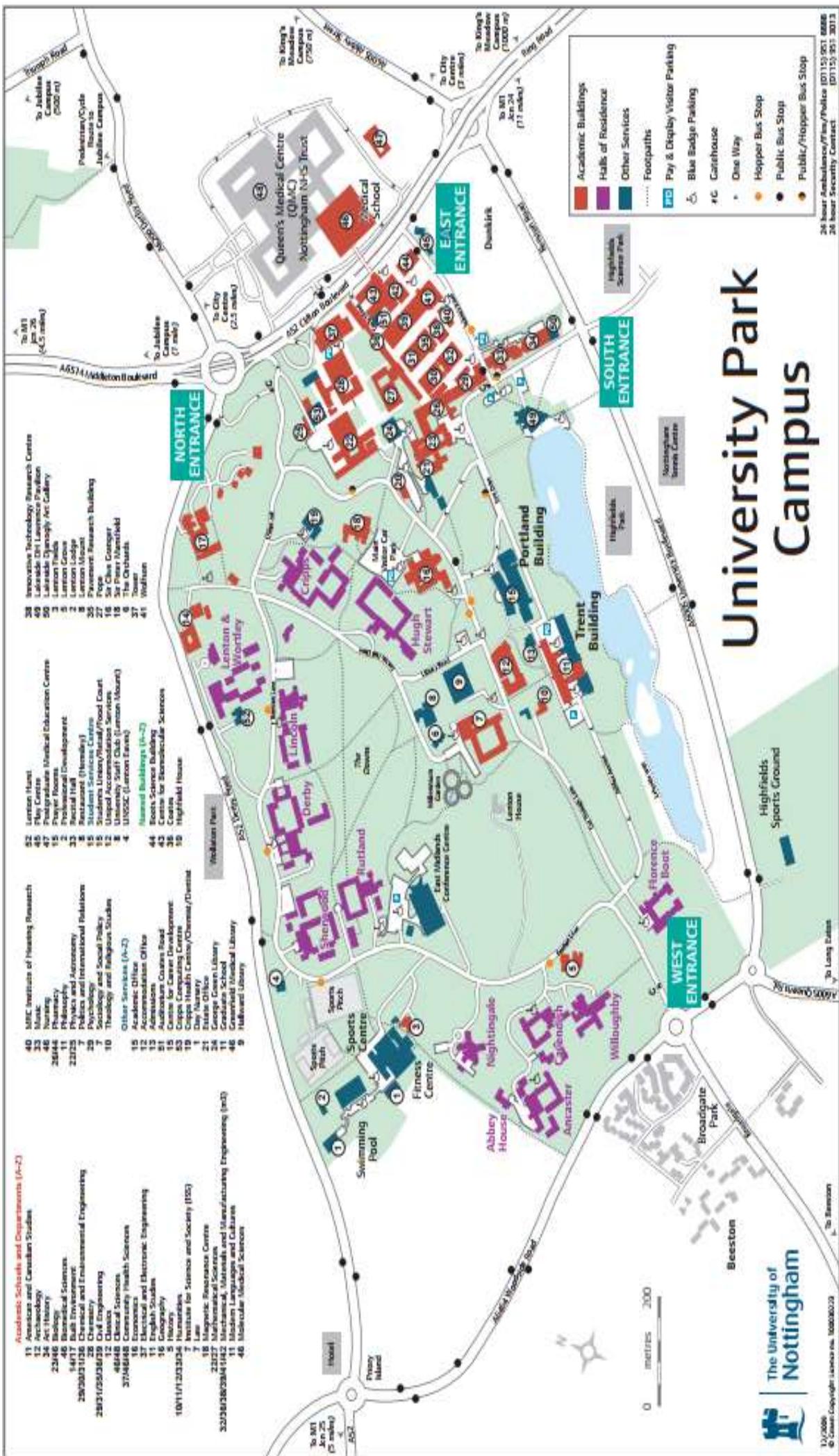
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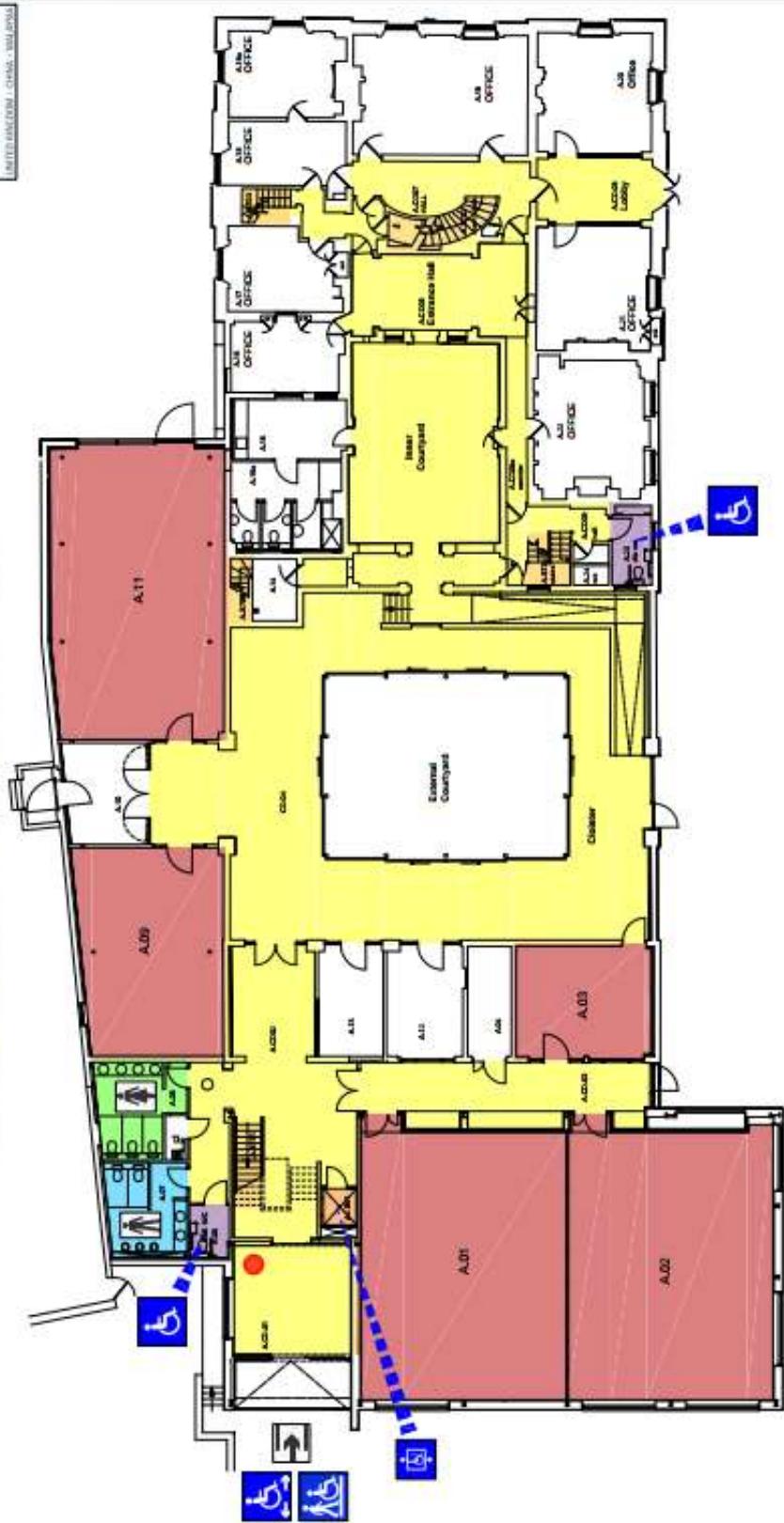
Event Programme – Abstracts and Brief Biographical Information

Session 1: 9.30-11.00am

Panel A - *Partition Then and Now* - Highfield House, Room A01

Chair: Máire ní Fhlathúin, University of Nottingham

Giuseppe De Riso, *Confronting the Enemy Within: Fear and Collective Violence in Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan.'*

This paper proposes an analysis of Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) to discuss how sentiments of fear and insecurity related to episodes of ethnic, religious and gender violence at the time of Partition spread, both affectively and emotionally, through the circulation of different cultural manifestations. More specifically, the paper focuses on the importance of rumours and stereotypes, which had developed especially during the colonial past of the sub-continent, whose reactivation at the time of Partition created perceptions about the Other affecting not only distant and never-seen-before people or ethnic groups, but also one's own neighbour, that is somebody one spent time with in day-to-day relationships or even long-time friends. Theoretically, fear is being referred here after the Deleuzian distinction between affect and emotion. Whereas the latter is seen as a 'qualified intensity', that is a qualitative dimension of experience which is fixed through sociocultural operations and later appropriated by the subject, affect, on the contrary, refers to pre-subjective, non-representational and non-rational forces which too often pass as an unacknowledged component in cultural communication. The paper focuses on Singh's ability to describe the way rumours, appealing to emotional states such as fear and resentment, seem to be able to cause a temporal short circuit in which the stigmatisation of the Other reopens deep cultural wounds. They, in turn, trigger networks of collective mobilisation which legitimate the recourse to violence even towards previously trusted communities and individuals.

Giuseppe De Riso is Research fellow at the Department of Literary, Linguistic and Comparative Studies of the Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale". He is Editorial assistant for *Anglistica AION, An Interdisciplinary Journal* at the Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale".

Menka Singh, *The Youngest Citizens' Speak: The Orphans of India's Partition*

The orphans of India's partition are a known but forgotten category in the annals of academic history writing. Historians have mentioned them in the narratives about the Abducted Persons Recovery and Restoration Act. But they have occupied only tangential space. The narrative hovers around the women victims and the children born to them are consigned to statistics and footnotes. Children it seems were only passive agents in the partition years and after. This paper seeks to plug this lacuna by using orphans as a category to challenge the partition narrative. These orphans can be divided into three categories. First were those children whose parents were killed in the riotous forties. Second were those who got lost amidst all the commotion and thus were separated from their parents. And third were those poor unfortunates who had either one or both parents alive and were born as a result of rape. The child symbolized shame, a loss of face of the entire community and most importantly, a breach in the communal divide. The state also saw them as a major obstacle in smooth governance. The best alternative therefore was to decide on behalf of the youngest citizens by the adults. History with its focus on adults once again failed to hear or narrate the voice of the child. But literature not only gave these children a space but also a voice. The children in partition literature are active agents with their own minds, imaginations, thought processes and beliefs. They deal with the question of identity and chart out their own ways to maintain a harmonious balance between the pulls of two conflicting faiths, in a way in which the adults could never have imagined. At the same time, the child is also as much a product of the society as the adults. He/she has his/her own methods of resistance against integration in a so-called enemy faith. This paper thus seeks to write a fragmentary history using Partition literature to question the meta-narrative. One of the ways to remember the un-utterable is to fictionalize it. Literature in this case does exactly the same. The various stories show that orphans were not silent spectators. They were contesting the Indian state, its policies, the contending religions, community and humanity. These stories are used to interrogate the 'truth' or 'truths' in history and offer a memorial to these silenced victims. Literature as a substitute secondary archive in place of historical evidence thus opens up a space for discussion, reflection, and perusal. Freedom meant something

vastly different to midnight's orphans. No history can ever be fully recovered some of it can only irrupt. The history of midnight's orphans therefore needs to be heard to understand their silence, hidden transcripts, and the truncation about them in history.

Menka Singh is completing a PhD at the University of Delhi entitled *Khonoma: The Memory and Legacy of Colonialism in the Naga Hills, c. 1832-1947*

Sukeshi Kamra, *Views from the edge of the Report Card: Literature in India @70*

In a speech titled "India @70: A Historian's Report Card", delivered at the 2017 Kerala Literary festival earlier this year, Ramachandra Guha posed the following not unexpected question: "How have we done"? In the talk that followed, Guha reflected on the idea, history, and practice of democracy in independent India. Literary culture in India has emerged as a pre-eminent forum for the (attempted) embedding of this important question in the everyday of civilian life, with increasing urgency and alarm, some would argue. The sometimes unasked question hangs uneasily in the air in literary engagements of the question of violence, in particular as it (violence in its many forms) continues to be constitutive of India's aspirational narratives of an Indian modernity. In this paper I look at two recently published collections of graphic stories that form part of this literary tradition. Written from the margins, and published by non-commercial presses, one is organized around gender violence and the other around the cathected of 1947, partition. Both are contemporary texts in all ways, not least in their recourse to the graphic narrative as the genre most suited to telling stories of the violence that hides in plain sight in 21st century India. They are nothing if not a poignant comment on the increasing gap there is between public recall of/engagement with these histories of violence on the one hand, mediated in large part by legal and political narratives, and the victims of violence on the other.

Sukeshi Kamra is Professor in the Department of English at Carleton University and author of *The Indian Periodical Press and the Production of Nationalist Rhetoric* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Panel B - *Internal and External 'Others': The Politics of Resistance at Home and Abroad* - Highfield House, Room A02

Chair: Stephen Legg, University of Nottingham

Oliver Coates, *Indian Independence in West Africa, 1944 to 1960*

This paper will explore the history of non-elite West Africans' engagements with Gandhian mass nationalism in India. World War Two led to the presence of around 73,000 Africans on the sub-continent, and provoked significant cultural exchange between soldiers and local people (Killingray:2010). Gandhi's influence in Africa has been understood either biographically, from his time in Natal (Guha: 2014), or otherwise as exercising influence over such statesmen as Nkrumah, Nyerere, and Kaunda (Weber: 2004). Taking a different approach, we will explore the intellectual lives of those Africans who professed a personal interest in Indian politics, as well as the seemingly everyday interactions of rank and file soldiers with Indian merchants and civilians, to ask what type of legacy Indian mass nationalism had in West Africa. Unlike the Horn of Africa and the Swahili coast, West Africa had no prior history of contact with the sub-continent, yet non-elite Africans used their military service to converse with locals, visit historical sites, and learn a smattering of Hindi. Some men went much further and met the Mahatma himself, putting to him their thoughts and fears for Africa's post-war future. Our purpose is not to contend that African soldiers became Gandhian nationalists on a large scale, but rather to illustrate the intellectual engagement of a minority of Africans who despite having few previous privileges in terms of education or travel, were nonetheless captivated by Indian politicians challenge to British rule. In doing so, we aim to globalise our understanding of this crucial chapter in India's independence, moving our existing understanding of Gandhi's international audience away from a focus on elites. More generally, we seek to stress the historical depth of south-south relations (Burton: 2015), by showing how the India's Independence took on a life of its own in African intellectual history.

Oliver Coates completed his PhD entitled 'A Social History of Military Labour in Southwestern Nigeria, 1939-1960' at the University of Cambridge in 2013. His research interests are in colonial and post-colonial history and

literature. He teaches at Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Université de Paris, and the University of Cambridge.

Arjun Ghosh, *Experience of the Left in Indian Theatre: 1942 to the Present*

The setting up of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) in 1942 marked a watershed moment in the history of Indian theatre. It shaped aesthetics which broke free from the colonial frames of reference. They sought to represent the reality of the rural and the urban poor with the help of indigenous cultural forms. Yet there remained a contradiction between the proletarian goals and the middle class backgrounds of the left cultural activists. This translated into a conflict between the aesthetic and political goals of the IPTA. Despite its achievements the IPTA disintegrated immediately after independence. Yet the aesthetic vision of the IPTA remained hegemonic in the field of culture for few decades after independence. The Drama Seminar organized by the Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1956 adopted a resolution noting the ineffectiveness of colonial-European forms in representing Indian realities. It called for the adoption of indigenous forms and the representation of the concerns of post-independence India in the theatre – goals which were very much in consonance with the vision of the IPTA. However, though the aesthetic goal of the IPTA continued to sway theatre practice, the Indian Left could not overcome the organisational contradictions that had led to the demise of the IPTA. It was in the 1970s – around the movements against the imposition of emergency – that the Indian Left once again turned to culture activists to build solidarity and support. The Jana Natya Manch from Delhi has been one of the foremost theatre groups that have been active in the post-emergency period. My account shall traverse the field of left-wing intervention in Indian theatre since the 1940s. It will offer a critical look into the questions surrounding the relations between culture and organised politics.

Arjun Ghosh is Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. He has occupied fellowships at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla and the Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster.

Rakesh Ankit, *The RSS' 'Village Republics'*

This is an account of how, in India today, there is – more than ever before – a spectre that hangs over prayer in public by ordinary Muslims. It comes from a small village of 500 families called Devru (Haryana), which was reported as 'another Ayodhya in the making', and forms part of a pattern that is starting to take shape in recent times: a *Hindu Rashtra* is on the make in north India, village-by-village – from Atali to Bishara to Jhabar to Devru. The old and dilapidated village mosque is the site of the current dispute, for it is sought to be converted into a community hall, by the local BJP MLA and RSS branch – supported by the local police, media and judiciary. At heart of this is the unease that surrounds Muslims as a 'political category' in India since the aftermath of Partition. Tracing this case from 1965, through 1985-2005-2008, to 2016, this paper contextualises it within the paradigm of 'incorporative violence'; Muslims' fate in India. If the absence of physical violence signals normalcy, then the situation in Devru is 'normal' but, for the Muslims there, as in most of India, it is a 'new' normal. On the one hand, the Sachar Committee (2006) shows their pitiable place in the Indian state-apparatus, on the other, the RSS and the BJP (especially post-UP election, 2017) show them their separate and unequal place in the Indian society. Seventy years since 1947, have yielded to Muslims an afterlife as India's 'internal other'.

Rakesh Ankit is Assistant Professor (History) and Assistant Director, Centre for Law and Humanities, Jindal Global Law School. He is the author of *The Kashmir Conflict: From Empire to the Cold War, 1945-66* (Oxford: Routledge, 2016).

Session 2: 11.30-1pm

Chair: Carole Spary, University of Nottingham

Katharine Adeney, *India@70: Democracy Under Threat?*

India is often cited as being the world's largest democracy. It scores well on international democracy ranking measures such as Freedom House or Polity IV. Turnout rates have risen and much of the electorate has become savvier in using the political system to achieve benefits for their group. This political empowerment has resulted in the proliferation of parties at the centre and the state level. However, these positive developments should not conceal the fact that India's democracy has not had an unblemished record, especially in its 'peripheral' regions. In addition, since the election of Narendra Modi, many academics and activists have raised concerns about Hindu Majoritarianism. But how do we understand this phenomenon within the wider literature on the quality of democracy? One way of doing so would be to see whether India fits the concept of an ethnic democracy, defined by Sammy Smooha as a country which combines 'viable democratic institutions with institutionalized ethnic dominance'. To do so requires the development of a triangulated methodology – including different features of a political and social system. This paper first sets out the concept of an 'ethnic democracy' and then proceeds to discuss the methodology of testing it, before making a preliminary sketch of its application to the Indian case.

Katharine Adeney is Professor and Director of the Institute of Asia and Pacific Studies (IAPS) in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Nottingham, having previously held positions at Sheffield, Balliol College, Oxford and the LSE. She is also the editor of IAPS Dialogue, the knowledge exchange platform of IAPS. Her principal research interests include: the countries of South Asia, especially India and Pakistan; ethnic conflict regulation and institutional design; the creation and maintenance of national identities; the politics of federal states, and democratisation in South Asia. She is co-editor of *Government and Opposition* (Cambridge). You can follow her @katadeney

Sujoy Dutta, *Encountering the Best and the Worst of the Indian State: A Comparative Study of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in Two Indian States*

In India, lack of accountability is considered the key reason for the failure of most poverty alleviation programmes. Most poverty alleviation programs are riddled with inefficiency, absenteeism, incompetence, and corruption. This has resulted in poor service delivery, and to ordinary citizens losing trust. This paper critically examines whether Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is accountable to ordinary citizens, and civil society's role in making the Act viable. In trying to addresses the objective it answers three questions: why has MGNREGA performed unevenly across states of India? Can social audits become effective instruments of accountability? What is the role of civil society organisation in making social audits vibrant? The data collection lasted for a period of six months and focused on two villages each in Andhra Pradesh (district Kurnool and Anantpur) and Uttar Pradesh (district Sitapur). Data is collected from 300 households and in three levels – village, household and *panchayat* (local level governance). The findings suggest that this Act has been implemented relatively well in AP, despite the state's dismal performance in the implementation of most welfare programs. The political class in AP has taken a keen interest in the Act's rather than in using it to amass wealth for their political activities. Social audits have been institutionalized with the help of civil society organisations, providing a platform to the beneficiaries to voice their concerns and negotiate their entitlements with the state machinery. But implementation has lagged in a politically vibrant state like Uttar Pradesh were local leadership, is accountable neither to citizens nor to elected representatives, misappropriating resources from developmental funds and nurturing factional politics. This has resulted in poor participation in rural institutions and loss in faith on the part of citizens.

Sujoy Dutta is Assistant Professor at the Tata Science Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad. He has completed fellowships at Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung Berlin, and the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras.

Anita Balakrishnan, *Contested Natures and Tribal Identities: Regional Nationalism as Ethnography – Rereading Rajam Krishnan's 'When the Kurinji Blooms.'*

Noted Tamil writer Rajam Krishnan in her novel *Kurinjithen*, translated into English as *When the Kurinji Blooms* (2002) by Uma Narayanan and Prema Seetharaman examines the impact of colonialist development on the distinctive culture and way of life of the Badaga tribe. The Badagas lived in the Nilgiris region of Tamilnadu and practiced a unique lifestyle that was centred on dairy farming and agriculture. Rajam Krishnan's ethnographic narrative allows two mutually exclusive discourses to cohabit; the text seeks to recuperate oral histories, tribal customs, habits, rituals and everyday practices of the Badaga tribespeople while simultaneously critiquing the devastation arising from the construction of the Pykara Dam in the region. The text highlights the growing disjuncture between territorial spaces inhabited by tribals and the spaces occupied by development projects. The Pykara project strikes the death knell for the traditional Badaga culture and way of life and the tribals who live in the area are reduced to being 'ecological refugees' in noted environmentalists Ramachandra Guha and Juan Martinez-Alier's terms. Prior to the construction of the dam, these Badaga tribespeople had lived in harmony with the land revering it and depending on it for their livelihood. Jogi, the protagonist, is rendered a subaltern, marginalized and impoverished by the hegemony of the colonial state. As Guha and Martinez-Alier observe industrial development in India has benefited only a tiny elite while exacting huge social and environmental costs. Paradoxically, while the tribals are marginalized by such development, this does not make them coalesce into a homogenous protest group. Rather, the forces of modernity serve to splinter the tribe into opposing factions who react variously to the ecological crisis. This reading explores the ramifications of this crisis through the concept of 'ecological nationalism', where cultural and political aspirations are linked with programs of nature conservation and environmental protection, while observing their expression in a rhetoric of civil and human rights.

Anita Balakrishnan is Head of the Department of English at Queen Mary's College, Chennai, India. She has an M Phil and a PhD from The University of Madras, Chennai. Her doctoral work was on the revitalization of the *Bildungsroman* form by American Ethnic Women Writers. She has been published widely both nationally and internationally in journals such as *South Asian Review* and *Language in India*. She is the author of *Parnassus: Focus on Women's Issues* (Saarbrucken: Lambert Academy Publishing, 2010) and *Transforming Spirit of Contemporary Indian Women Writers* (Authorspress: New Delhi, 2012).

Panel D - *Kashmir: Performativity, Gender and Trauma* - Highfield House, Room A02

Chair: Ruth Maxey, University of Nottingham

Sruthi Muraleedharan, *Performing Security: Visualizing Kashmir @ 70*

Using images from Kashmir, this paper will attempt to analyze performative nature of Indian state's conception of securitization. India occupied Kashmir has been at the brunt of Indian state's use of excessive force against the civilian population irrespective of the political party in the centre. This paper aims at analysing the effect of visual cultures in politics. Specifically it looks at photographs or images to demonstrate how images can reflect the underlying shifts in domestic/foreign policy narratives and consequently ideas of security. Contextualizing this discussion within the theoretical frame of Butler's idea of performativity and visual securitization, it will demonstrate the paradigm shift. This paper will trace the evolution of Indian security forces role in Kashmir as a "disturbed area" within Indian security parlance since independence and argue that the above two images reflects the fundamental shift in Indian state's strategy of dealing with people's resistance in the India occupied Kashmir. Both the images are from the period after Modi (2014) became the prime minister of India, however, they signify the crucial trajectory that Kashmir unrest has taken both domestically and internationally since Independence. The first image is that of a civilian victim of use of pellet guns by the Central Reserve Police

Force (CRPF) against unarmed protestors in July 2016. The second image is of Indian army's decision to use a civilian as a human shield during elections in April 2017. Both these images signify how for the Indian State the "Kashmir problem" is acquiring a dangerous threshold violating thus Kashmiri citizen's right to protest or even right to live.

Sruthi Muraleedharan is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Politics and International Studies, SOAS, London. Her thesis is entitled, 'Symbolic Encounters: Identity, Performativity and Democratic Subjectivity in Contemporary India.' She has taught courses modern South Asia and gender and nationalism in the Middle East, North Africa and the Indian subcontinent at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Sohini Chatterjee, *'Half-widows' and the Travesty of Justice in Indian administered Kashmir*

For several decades now Kashmir has been the hotbed of conflict and violence leading to the production of different gendered identities, and proliferation of their associated vulnerabilities, which have lingered on with the lingering tragedy in the valley, more so because justice has been elusive to the wronged. Investigating this gendered nature of violence is imperative given the "malestream" of International Relations' gender-neutral pretences and critical omissions which have dire consequences for those rendered redundant by its obsession with high politics. This paper contributes to the conversation that has now begun focusing attention on half widows as legitimate research subjects. Half-widows of Kashmir are simultaneously victims and survivors of violence—which they have systematically been subjected to for years and decades on end—owing to the specificities of their geographical location as well as their location in the social hierarchy. My interest in this paper is to understand how different forms of violence are experienced by women being identified and identifying as "half widows" and how justice, in all its economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions, have been denied to them or that to which their claims have not been entertained by the Indian state and society. The paper aims to widen the understanding of both violence and justice by demonstrating how they remain inextricably linked in Kashmir and how a comprehensive exploration of one cannot be made without reference to, and, understanding of, the other to address concerns of almost 1500 half-widows who are leading less than livable lives in Indian administered Kashmir.

Sohini Chatterjee recently concluded an MA in International Relations from South Asian University, New Delhi. She holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Presidency University (erstwhile Presidency College), Kolkata. Chatterjee is an editor of HYSTERIA, a feminisms radicalism periodical and activist platform. She identifies as a feminist and has written widely on gender, culture and politics. Two of her photo essays have appeared on Huffington Post India on Rohingya and Tibetan refugees in India.

Rajashree Bargohain, *Poetry amidst Violence in Northeast India*

The inclusion of the Northeast region in the Indian union after it was formed in 1947 remained largely a matter of default. In the post-independence period, the region found itself existing on the fringes of the nation, in all senses of the term. A sense of dissatisfaction started brewing among various communities in the Northeast, leading to secessionist and inter-group conflicts as well as state retaliations, which have turned it into a virtual war-zone. Confronted with the politically charged climate of the region, it is impossible for writers from Northeast India to ignore the socio-political realities around them. Poets from this region often write about the turbulent political atmosphere with an apocalyptic or prophetic voice. Contemporary poetry from the Northeast also qualifies as what Carolyn Forché has described as the "poetry of witness" (Forché 1993; Forché and Wu 2014). The poets stand witness to the pervading atmosphere of terror in the region, in spite of its being a task fraught with risk.

This paper will analyse the ways in which poets of Northeast India have responded to the atmosphere of perpetual violence haunting the region in the postcolonial period. It will lay especial focus on the works of poets writing in English although works produced in other languages from the region will also be taken up for discussion.

Rajashree Bargohain is a Research Scholar in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, India.

Session 3: 2.00-3.45pm

Panel E - *Identity Politics in Contemporary Context* - Highfield House, Room A01

Chair: Ibtisam Ahmed, University of Nottingham

Kekhrongu-u Dazo, *Becoming Indian: Nagaland and the Relevance of the Question of Being*

Whenever the Indian news media, pundits or politicians talks about the complexities of the Naga issues, it opens up a can of worms. The long unresolved socio-political and cultural catastrophes of Naga people within the limits of Indian democracy have sadly contributed to a systematic disorder of a shared sovereignty. Following the independence of India, Naga integration into the nation proved to be difficult and conflict-ridden. Even after 70 years of India's independence, Nagas remained elusive to the grand narrative of India's nation building project. After 6 decades of peace talks between Indian Government and Naga National leaders, it has become a mere formality. To add up to the already problematic issue, the two Naga factional groups (NSCN-IM and NSCN-K) find it impossible to sort out their differences which have resulted in unending bloodshed and violence within the state by the so-called Nationalist leaders. Against this background, my study seeks to understand this moment of transit. Recalling Homi Bhabha, I would like to argue that the moment of transit spaces provide the terrain for elaborating the grounds and strategies for selfhood. For the Naga's narrative, this moment of transit is where negotiations are undertaken within the contemporary realities- the process of 'becoming' Indian, the processes of tracing the history to identify a Naga. Additionally, in recent times, claims by Nagas to a unique ethnic identity as well as state- sponsored staging of Naga ethnicity have led to very complex identity-formations, especially in the ways in which these involve the reconfiguration of 'tradition' and 'modernity'. In an attempt to understand the Naga in context of the Indian identity, I ask two central questions: What or who is a Naga subject? And whose homeland is Nagaland? As these small intersections of anomalies and questioning enable us to negotiate larger structures of power while permitting to survive the real (the daily routine) and the frequent bristling of the politics of everyday life.

Kekhrongu-u Dazo is currently pursuing PhD in Cultural Studies from The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. Research interests include tribal narrative; performance studies; Southeast Asian studies; cultural anthropology; nation and nationalism; and cultural politics.

Kankana Talukdar, *Performing Sub-nationalism Online: (Re) thinking Assam's Encounter with 'India's Independence.*

As India enters its seventieth year of independence, rethinking the idea of 'independence' in terms of its varied socio-political realities, deserves critical engagement. While nationalism has seen an upheaval in various ways in its symbolic homogeneous public sphere, the simultaneous presence of sub-nationalist heterogeneous spheres stand in a relation of tension with the journey of India's independence. While Kashmir stands as one of the most visible symbols of this relation, the state of Assam in India, with its history of sub-nationalist resistance and conflict with the 'gestures' of the Indian nation-state also constitutes a relatively lesser known, yet unique case. This paper as such, is interested in engaging with the concept and practice of sub-nationalism as has been witnessed in the case of Assam with India. Tracing the trajectory of Assam's varied encounter with the story of India's independence beginning with an active involvement in the independence movement, to the emergence of sub-nationalism and separatism in the later years of post-independence, to the recent trend of bringing back sub-nationalism onto the nationalist stage via social media spaces online, provides interesting ways of interpreting the idea of being in a state of ambiguity vis-à-vis the idea of the greater nation-state. Having traced the historical trajectory, this paper is especially interested in examining the questions of sub-nationalism, alienation and ignorance from the purview of new media spaces. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis on digitalising India fast reflects the latest aspirations for new media spaces that are increasingly seen to shape the imagination of the 'modern' Indian publics. This process, while homogenising the publics at one level, has also facilitated the recreation and performance of voices of resistance and multiple sub- nationalisms in social-media spaces,

including, but not limited to posts, comments and counter-comments. In this context, this paper seeks to explore how the cultural geographies of online spaces interact in the meaning-making and mitigating localised tales of sub-nationalism of citizen-publics of Assam today.

Kankana Talukdar is a PhD Candidate at the Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Talukdar's thesis is entitled, *Democratic Citizenship, New Technologies and the Public Sphere in Assam, India.*

Rajashree Bargohain, *Poetry amidst Violence in Northeast India*

The inclusion of the Northeast region in the Indian union after it was formed in 1947 remained largely a matter of default. In the post-independence period, the region found itself existing on the fringes of the nation, in all senses of the term. A sense of dissatisfaction started brewing among various communities in the Northeast, leading to secessionist and inter-group conflicts as well as state retaliations, which have turned it into a virtual war-zone. Confronted with the politically charged climate of the region, it is impossible for writers from Northeast India to ignore the socio-political realities around them. Poets from this region often write about the turbulent political atmosphere with an apocalyptic or prophetic voice. Contemporary poetry from the Northeast also qualifies as what Carolyn Forské has described as the "poetry of witness" (Forské 1993; Forské and Wu 2014). The poets stand witness to the pervading atmosphere of terror in the region, in spite of its being a task fraught with risk. This paper will analyse the ways in which poets of Northeast India have responded to the atmosphere of perpetual violence haunting the region in the postcolonial period. It will lay especial focus on the works of poets writing in English although works produced in other languages from the region will also be taken up for discussion.

Rajashree Bargohain is Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, India. Research interests include, contemporary Literature of Northeast India in English; Literatures from Northeast India in Translation; Poetry in English from Northeast India,; Women's Writings from Northeast India, Assamese Literatures.

Panel F - *'Indianness,' Visual Narratives and Nation Building* - Highfield House, Room A02

Chair: Paul McGarr, University of Nottingham

Lion Koenig, *Nation-building in India: Conceptual and Visual Dimensions*

The Indian case provides an analytical insight into problems of nation-building and the creation of resilient and functioning institutions in post-colonial contexts. One learns from the post-independence India scenario that with regard to citizen-making, the constitution, law and history matter: India's relative success at turning subjects into citizens is a function of India's political structure, process and memory, woven together in an institutional arrangement that draws its inspiration both from the modern state and the traditional society. This first part of the paper will therefore explore to what extent conceptual hybridisation, the devising of a 'third way' between the exogenous and the endogenous, contributes to the resilience of a political system. An analysis of the visualization of politics in India in the form of monuments, national day parades, and carriers of symbolic meaning like national flags, coins, banknotes, and stamps is further relevant to understanding the citizenship discourse, as it provides information on who the heroes of the nation are, and in what ways they are represented. This raises further questions of how cultural memory and the canon of nationhood is constructed, established and organized in a society divided along deep cultural fault lines. It reveals insights into competitions of cultural-symbolic meaning and memory, and their significance for the larger effects on the legitimacy of the political system connected with it. It will be examined here how power is reproduced in visuals and how these visuals then substantiate or challenge existing power relations in the struggle to shape the Indian nation.

Lion Koenig is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at St. Antony's College, the University of Oxford. His research interests include nation-building, citizenship and identity politics in the South Asian context. Among his recent publications is *Cultural Citizenship in India: Politics, Power, and Media* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

E. Dawson Varughese, *Dark and yet darker: "seeing" the valley's conflict in the post-millennial Indian graphic novel 'Kashmir Pending'*

The darkness of the pages in *Kashmir Pending* (2007) echoes the darkness of its narrative; one set in the valley of Kashmir amidst violence, imprisonment and death. The prologue begins in silence. A series of long, stretched panels shows a young man on a boat on a lake. The boat is redolent of the canopied *shikara* found on Lake Dal in Srinagar. From a *shikara*, a young man throws a stone across the water in the direction of some other boats, boats which are patrolling the lake, boats containing security forces. As the stone falls near one of the boats, the young man jumps out of his *shikara* on to the lakeside whilst one of the security force team raises his gun and breaks the silence, and a speech bubble reads: 'Kid's going to run into trouble one day'. (Ahmed and Singh, 2007, 4). Growing in presence and significance post millennium, I argue that Indian graphic narratives are inviting their readers to 'see' Indianness in challenging and inauspicious ways through both narrative content and form. This paper is interested in how the medium of the Indian graphic novel visually encodes the dark experiences of fighting for a 'free Kashmir' and discusses artwork, panelling, colourways, (Kashmiri) leitmotifs and narrative structure.

E. Dawson Varughese is a cultural studies scholar interested in examining the encoding of modernity in post-millennial India through popular literary and artistic expression. She publishes on popular Indian genre fiction, graphic novels, domestic Indian book cover design and public wall art, employing textual analysis and ethnographic research methods in her work. Her latest book is *Genre Fiction of New India: post-millennial receptions of 'weird' narratives* (Routledge, 2016). She is currently writing a book on visuality and Indian graphic narratives for Palgrave to be published in 2017. She divides her time between the U.K and India, she is an independent scholar and a Visiting Fellow at the University of Delhi in 2017. See her work at: www.beyondthepostcolonial.com

Mohammad Reyaz and Roddur De, *Muslim Masculinity in India: Sketching the portrayal of Muslim characters in Bollywood films post-independence*

Muslims in India are quite heterogeneous; in fact, it would be misleading to study 'Indian Muslim' as a community. However, rising communal politics, as also the taint of partition, have made them the 'other' in the larger meta-narrative of the country. In popular perception thus Muslims are seen as anti-India, predatory to larger honour and integration of the country; and are often suspected of disloyalty to the nation. In Bollywood films, Muslim masculinity have been presented in crass stereotypical ways in different decades, from honest, dedicated friends in 60s and 70s to terrorists of 90s and first decade of the current millennium. In last decade, however, some very interesting and complex portrayal of Muslim masculinity came on silver screen. The rise of feminism in our time has posed a severe challenge to this stereotypical stereotype. In present time, we see intense debate on gender construction and masculinity studies, and see gender as culturally mediated practices. While there has been some attempts at understanding the masculinity question in India and in Hindi films in general, similar prism to gaze at Muslims have not been used adequately. This is part of larger project that the two authors hope to work on, but for this paper researchers will choose one film from each decade as representative to sketch the portrayal of changing Muslim characters in Bollywood films after independence in an attempt at understanding the masculinity of Indian Muslims in popular narratives.

Mohammad Reyaz is Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Aliah University, Kolkata and Roddur De is Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Chandannagar Government College.

Nassif Muhammed Ali, *Cartooning Politics: Reading Daily Mail, Dawn and Hindustan Times*

As a medium that targets the incongruities by taking sides and hitting hard, newspaper cartoons can provide fresh perspectives into political discourses. It is by leaning on such an assumption, that this study steps forward. In a political scenario rife with conflicting interests, how are cartoons used to depict disagreements and differences in arguments? What do these depictions tell us about the cartoonists? Above all, how do these cartoons enrich the existing historical narratives? These are the questions that this paper attempts at addressing, by reading the cartoons from different newspapers, during the last years of colonial rule in India. The socio-political scenario during these years was complicated to say the least. On the one hand, demands for and against separate nations on religious lines were in the air while on the other, the society was being polarized along the same lines. Newspapers, as a medium that influenced the public opinion as well as reflected it, took sides along these lines too. Thus we find *Dawn* and *Pakistan Times* sticking to the Muslim League band wagon whereas *Hindustan Times* and *Tribune* stuck to the Congress lines – these being the largest political parties in the picture. Such allegiances on part of the newspapers were bound to reflect in the cartoons they published as well and thus, Shankar's cartoons for *Hindustan Times*, Enver Ahmed's works for *Dawn* and Leslie Illingworth's cartoons for *Daily Mail* (a British daily), form the focal point for this study.

Nassif Muhammed Ali completed an M.Phil in Modern India at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, with a dissertation entitled 'Cartooning Politics: Reading *Daily Mail*, *Dawn*.'

Session 4: 4.15-5.15pm

Keynote Lecture, Highfield House, Room A01/02

Chair: Katharine Adeney, University of Nottingham

Kashmir @70
Andrew Whitehead, IAPS/King's India Institute

After 35 years with the BBC as correspondent, presenter and latterly Editor of BBC World Service News, Andrew Whitehead is now a historian, lecturer and freelance journalist. He is honorary professor at the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, University of Nottingham; honorary professor in the School of History, Queen Mary University of London; Senior Visiting Research Fellow at the King's India Institute, London; and teaches American undergraduates in London for Global Education Oregon. He has been visiting professor at the Asian College of Journalism in Chennai, south India. Principal research interests include the modern history of Kashmir, which has extended into working on a biography of Freda Bedi (1911-77), an English woman who became active in leftist and nationalist movements in India, including Kashmir, before taking ordination as a Tibetan Buddhist nun. He is the author of *A Mission in Kashmir* (Delhi; Viking Penguin, 2007).