

CHiTra SYMPOSIA

कार उदयान री वेद्योतिका

Regional
Traditions

March 20-22

March 20-22

घातिंग सुतिपरिदइ

Gender, Globalization
& the Politics of
Consumption in
South Asia

March 22

Presented in
conjunction with
**An Ocean of
Devotion:
South Asian
Regional Worship
Traditions**
at the Samuel P. Harn
Museum of Art.

Temple cloth at a Sri Nath-Ji shrine (the Shatad Purnima Festival), Nathdwara, Rajasthan, India, late 19th-early 20th Century, Painting on Cloth. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas J Needham.

program

An Ocean of Devotion: Regional Traditions

**Convened by Amy Bard, *African and Asian Languages and Literatures*
Jason Neelis, *Religion***

Thursday, March 20, 2008, 7:30 pm, Keene Faculty Center

Keynote Address: Humoring the Saints: Mirabai and her Guru

*John Stratton Hawley
Barnard College / Columbia University*

Friday, March 21, 2008, 9 am – 12 noon, Pugh Hall 210

Imagined Landscapes: Space and Place in the Haridwara Mahatmya

Jim Lochtefeld, Carthage College

Legal Diglossia in Premodern India, Cambodia, and Java

Tim Lubin, Washington and Lee University

Rewriting the Sacred Center: the Kasikhanda and Varanasi's Visvesvara Temple

Travis L. Smith, University of Florida

Friday, March 21, 2008, 3pm

Ocean of Devotion Exhibit at the Harn Museum

Saturday, March 22, 9 am – 12 noon, Pugh Hall 210

The Persistence of Erotic Devotion: Telugu Javali Songs in South Indian Courtesan Traditions

Davesh Soneji, McGill University

An Assembly of Love Songs: Gender, Genre, and Performance in Contemporary Sufi Practice

Kelly Pemberton, George Washington University

Sikh Langar: Sharing the Fruits of Labor

Gurinder Singh Mann, University of California, Santa Barbara

Eating Cultures: Gender, Globalization, & the Politics of Consumption in South Asia

**Convened by Anita Anantharam, Center for Women's
Studies and Gender Research
Whitney Sanford, Religion**

Saturday, March 22, 2 pm – 5 pm, Pugh Hall 210

The Rice Ball with a Stone Inside: Food Metaphors and
Women Sanskritists in the Neo-Liberal Economy of India

Laurie Patton, Emory University

Gandhi's Environmental Legacy: Food Democracy,
Globalization and Social Movements

Whitney Sanford, University of Florida

Global Food, Global Religion: Gandhi and
the Cosmopolitan Cow

Mark Juergensmeyer, University of California, Santa Barbara

*Vishnu Trivikrama, Bengal, India,
Pala period, 12th Century, Phyllite.
Museum purchase, funds
provided by the Kathleen M. Axline
Acquisition Endowment and gift of
Dr. and Mrs. David A. Cofrin.*



The symposia are proudly presented in conjunction with

An Ocean of Devotion: South Asian Regional Worship Traditions

An Exhibit of Indian Art from the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art's
Permanent Collection. Opens March 1.

Curated by Vasudha Narayanan and Jason Steuber

Sponsored by the Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere in conjunction with the Yulee Endowment. Co-sponsored by The Center for the Study of Hindu Traditions (CHiTra), the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Department of Religion. Harn exhibition made possible by the Dr. Madelyn M. Lockhart Endowment for Focus Exhibitions.



Humoring the Saints: Mirabai and Her Guru
Professor John Stratton Hawley, Barnard College/ Columbia University

It's no secret that religion is a very serious thing—*de la vie sérieuse*, Durkheim says somewhere. This is no less true of *bhakti* religion than of any other kind, and in many ways more so. *Bhakti* touches the heart and is constitutive of relationship itself, the very thing that brings us into this world.

Yet in the lives of the *bhakti* saints, as told in north India, there is often an element of humor. What is this humor about? Who gets to smile at *bhakti*—sometimes perhaps even poke a little fun at the saints—and who is allowed to get the joke?

Global Food, Global Religion:
Gandhi and the Cosmopolitan Cow
Mark Juergensmeyer, University of California, Santa Barbara

This paper explores the universalization of spiritual values related to eating. Gandhi didn't just like cows, he loved them, and Gandhi's emphasis on food is closely connected to his ideas about spirituality and the body. All these themes play out in issues about eating and living and issues of gender. What is interesting in an age of globalization is how much of this is universalizable; that we are, most of us, well most of the cosmopolitan among us, Gandhian believers already. We accept this way of thinking—the spirituality of eating and the reverence for

all life—as if it were a global dictum. So Gandhi's cow has, for many of us, become quite a cosmopolitan beast.

Imagined Landscapes: Space and Place
in the Haridwara Mahatmya
Jim Lochtefeld, Carthage College

The *Haridwara mahatmya* is the older of Hardwar's two extant mahatmya traditions (panegyric textual genre). Its two earliest manuscripts were copied in the early seventeenth century, but internal clues suggest both that the manuscript tradition precedes the earliest manuscript, and that the present text has been amended several times. Descriptions of Hardwar in the text show that the original compilers were familiar with the site, and so these texts are an important source for data about Hardwar—or at least for ideas about Hardwar—in an era when other sources are remarkably thin. Since many of the sites mentioned in the text have effectively disappeared, or are now associated with completely different charter myths, the text also clearly tracks how religious places change over time.

Yet even though a current observer can identify many of the "spaces" (physical sites) mentioned in the text, the compiler(s) were even more interested in these sites as "places"—as spots sanctified by divine activity or manifestations. Since historical records suggest that the *Dashanami naga sanyasis* controlled the Hardwar region,

it is noteworthy that the *mahatmya's* images and mythic referents are overwhelmingly Vaishnava, and these and other clues hint at the hands that put this text together.

Legal Diglossia in Premodern India, Cambodia, and Java

Tim Lubin, Washington and Lee University

Along with Indic religions, Indic legal models, expertise, and institutions were prestige imports into Southeast Asia. As with other Indic cultural traits, the legal elements underwent various sorts of adaptation as they were established. These factors cast into relief somewhat analogous processes that were always present in India. The most basic of these is the elusive interplay between the scholastic textually codified system of the Dharmaśāstra and regional, local, and group-specific customary legal traditions which generally remain unwritten (*lex non scripta*). One point of intersection between them that is still accessible to the historian is the inscription.

A comparative survey of Indian and Southeast Asian inscriptions with legal bearing reveals both the common tendency for 'legal diglossia', the use of two distinct registers of languages (or even different languages altogether) to express different but ostensibly complementary notions of justice and legality: Sanskrit language to denote overarching ideals and jurisprudential categories, as well as citations of Śāstric authority; and the local vernacular to frame pragmatic concerns and circumstantial particulars. The relatively more self-conscious adoption of Śāstra-based law in Southeast Asia seems to be the reason for the greater frequency of recorded decisions (e.g., *jayapattra*), and references to Śāstric texts.

Sikh Langan: Sharing the Fruits of Labor

Gurinder Singh Mann, University of California, Santa Barbara

The presentation begins by situating the origins of food sharing within the foundational Sikh beliefs and then goes on to trace its evolution in later Sikh history. In the process, the presentation will deal with the religious, social, and political aspects of food sharing among the Sikhs.

The Rice Ball with a Stone Inside: Food Metaphors and Women Sanskritists in the Neo-Liberal Economy of India

Laurie Patton, Emory University

This paper will use a database of 91 interviews with

women Sanskritists over the course of the years 2000–2007, to explore the dimensions of women, globalization and food. With the liberalization of the Indian economy, the majority of Brahmin men (the traditional guardians of the Sanskrit language) have pursued technology, medicine, and science in their career options. As a result, Hindu women have increasingly become, and have seen themselves as, caretakers of the Sanskrit tradition. Many of them articulate this caretakership as "*stridharma*" and use household metaphors to think about their social responsibilities as Sanskritists, including an abundance of metaphors concerning the preparation and eating of food.

My paper will examine the uses of these metaphors in detail. I will argue that, in this new postcolonial economic situation, food and food preparation are "mediating" images that allows these women to bridge the "authority" gap that still exists as they take on roles that have been traditionally prohibited to them for millennia. Even more important for the purposes of this conference, the actual preparation of food accompanied by Sanskrit recitation takes on a new, more global significance. In these women's eyes, it both allows the tradition of Sanskrit learning to remain intact at home (and in the kitchen), while at the same time supporting and literally "feeding" the new work of science, engineering and technology in the international marketplace.

An Assembly of Love Songs: Gender, Genre, and Performance in Contemporary Sufi Practice

Kelly Pemberton, George Washington University

In Sufi devotional circles around the world, music and singing have long been regarded with ambivalence, whether in the classical texts of Sufism or in discourses about the permissibility of such performances from the perspective of Islamic *Shari`a*. The increasing presence of female performers in contemporary Sufi devotional assemblies has raised further controversy among Sufi practitioners, yet this presence remains largely unknown and un-discussed by scholars of Islam and Sufism in the Subcontinent. This paper assesses traditions of devotional singing by Hindu and Muslim women at a number of Sufi shrines in North India and the Pakistani Punjab. By investigating the ways in which contemporary performances by these women may serve as points of departure for debates about "authentic" Sufi practice, it challenges common assumptions about religious and

community identities (and identifications) in South Asia. Drawing upon some of the very paradoxes in Islamic mystical discourse—gender and genderlessness; divine unity (*tawhid*) and idolatry; *Shari`a*, *tariqa*, and *haqiqa*, my paper appraises two criteria of “difference” commonly articulated within the surveyed Sufi circles: one, between “commercial” and “Sufi” performers and performances, and two, between female and male singers in Sufi *mahfils*. I argue that instead of underscoring religious differences between Hindu and Muslim devotees, these criteria suggest the opposite: the religious identity of performers is of little importance within the *mahfil* setting. Rather, articulated “differences” in the *mahfil* setting may be better understood as an index of relationships of power among groups and individuals competing for influence and prestige. To facilitate such an understanding, my paper will also briefly comment upon the ways in which symbols of sanctity, piety, and devotion as they appear in these *mahfil* settings reflect recent shifts in social and economic relationships among men and women within Sufi circles, and concurrently, changing conceptions of self and the sacred within these performance contexts.

The Persistence of Erotic Devotion: Telugu Javali Songs in South Indian Courtesan Traditions

Davesh Soneji, McGill University

The *javali* is a musical and literary form that likely has its origins in the nineteenth-century court of Mysore, under the patronage of Mumtaz Ali Krishna Raja Wodeyar III (1799–1868) and Chamaraja Wodeyar IX (1881–1894). Composed in Telugu and Kannada, these distinctively “modern” songs are parodies of the older Telugu *padam* genre, from which they derive their structure and narrative contexts. In late nineteenth and early twentieth century Madras, *javalis* become the most popular compositions performed by *devadasi*-courtesans during salon performances patronized by elite Brahmin and land-owning communities. Unlike the apotheosized *padam* poets Annamayya and Kshetrappa, the majority of *javali* composers (*javalikartas*) worked in the civic heart of the colonial city, employed as Taluk clerks or post office workers.

Almost ubiquitously dedicated to Krishna, *javalis* are concise, colloquial lyrics that are tuned to popular ragas. As texts, they are sites for multiple experiments in syncretism with regard to language, music, and devo-

tion. Incorporated into Parsi-theatre inspired Tamil plays, sometimes written in a combination of Telugu and English, and subject to Orientalist analyses, *javalis* are distinctively “modern” songs. As with most late literary forms, *javalis* are self-reflexive lyrics that convey a peculiar kind of “ironic devotion.” But the life of the *javali* is short-lived. The genre loses its popular status in light of social reform movements directed toward courtesans in the region that begin around the same time the form emerges. This paper examines the multiple historical, aesthetic, and religious registers through which the texts and performances of *javalis* are understood and performed in colonial and contemporary South India.

Gandhi’s Environmental Legacy: Food Democracy, Globalization and Social Movements

Whitney Sanford, University of Florida

Free-trade policies and globalization are contributing to the growing corporate control of the world’s food supply. Despite rhetoric of “feeding the world” and increased production, the concentration of control into fewer hands has led to increased hunger, environmental degradation and social inequities. This paper explores Mohandas K. Gandhi’s influence on agrarian movements in the global South and demonstrates that food and water sovereignty movements use Gandhian social thought to reclaim local control over food production. This research traces Gandhi’s environmental legacy in social movements that emphasize food and water sovereignty as a form of social justice. Gandhi’s stress on non-violent resistance, social equity and self-reliance (*svaraj*) at the individual, village and national level have inspired a range of movements and leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr., Via Campesina, and Vandana Shiva. Increasingly, Gandhian thought is shaping the discourse used to respond to the environmental and socio-economic problems wrought by large-scale agricultural systems. This project is broadly comparative between India and Mexico, both post-colonial nations, and is based on initial fieldwork at the Instituto Tecnológico del Valle de Oaxaca, Mexico and Navdanya in Dehra Dun, India.

Rewriting the Sacred Center: The Kasikhanda and Varanasi’s Visvesvara Temple

Travis L. Smith, University of Florida

The *Kasikhanda*, by far the most detailed and best-known

text of Puranic “glorifications” (*mahatmyas*) of the city of Varanasi, is an iconic text. Few scholars to date, however, have seriously queried the socio-historical circumstances of the production of this grand literary monument.

Departing from long-held scholarly views that place the text considerably later, I argue that the bulk of the *Kasikhanda* was composed to commemorate a late-eleventh century construction of an imperial temple dedicated to Śiva as Visvesvara. This temple, moreover, marked a dramatic shift in Śaiva patronage, one that privileged Śaiva Siddhānta over the original Śaiva “settlers” of Varanasi, the Pasupatas. The *Kāsikhanda* was in fact a state-sponsored literary project, written with purpose and precision, and the literary sophistication of the text testifies to this fact.

Specifically, I argue that both text and temple are attributable to the emergent Śaiva Siddhānta lineage known as the Mattamayūras, prominent teachers of which served as royal advisers to the kings of the Kalacuri dynasty. The grand temple may have been the so-called “Karnameru” of the feared Kalacuri conqueror Karnadeva, a temple that is mentioned specifically in Kalacuri inscriptions and alluded to in other sources. While the *Kāsikhanda* does not explicitly mention this temple as such, I will show that the text carefully encodes a legitimation of its construction by means of several intentional narrative strategies in evidence throughout the text.

Vishnu-Vaikuntha (Narsimha – Varaha),
Mathura Area, India, late 3rd–early
4th Century, Pink Sikri sandstone. Museum
purchase, acquired with the generous
support of Ed and Doris Wiener.





participants

John Stratton Hawley is Professor of Religion at Barnard College, Columbia University and chair of the department. He is the author or editor of some fifteen books, most of them having to do with Hinduism and the religions of India. He has served as director of Columbia's Southern Asian Institute; has received multiple awards from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Smithsonian, and the American Institute of Indian Studies; and has been a Guggenheim Fellow. Educated at Amherst College (A.B., European History, 1963), Union Theological Seminary (M. Div., Hebrew Bible, 1966), and Harvard University (Ph.D., Hinduism and Comparative Religion, 1977), he has taught at Barnard and Columbia since 1986.

Hawley's research especially concerns the devotional religion of North India. He has explored the worship of Krishna and his consort Radha in a series of works including *At Play with Krishna*, *Krishna*, *The Butter Thief*, and *The Divine Consort*, the latter edited with Donna Wulff. The 16th-century poet Surdas, widely regarded as North India's finest poet of Krishna, is featured in *Krishna*, *the Butter Thief*, *Sur Das: Poet, Singer, Saint*, and a major forthcoming book entitled *Sur's Ocean*. *Sur's Ocean*, named after the vast collection of poetry that came to be attributed to Surdas, presents a verse translation and poem-by-poem commentary for each of the 400+ compositions that can be confidently traced back to the 16th century itself. The second volume of *Sur's Ocean*, by Kenneth E. Bryant, is a critical edition displaying those

results in the original Hindi or, to be precise, Brajbhasa. In another forthcoming work Hawley pares back *Sur's Ocean* for a paperback readership interested in the world's literary classics. *The Memory of Love* (Oxford University Press) will soon be released.

Other poet-saints who anchor the religious imagination of Hindus and others living in North India also figure in Professor Hawley's work. *Songs of the Saints of India*, written with Mark Juergensmeyer and recently revised for a second edition, introduces the lives and compositions of six of the most important of these; it has been widely used in English-language classrooms. A deeper probing of issues of memory and interpretation that surrounds these poet-saints can be found in *Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas, and Kabir in Their Time and Ours*.

Hawley has worked with other scholars on a series of edited volumes. Some of these concern India—*Sati: The Blessing and the Curse*, *Devi: Goddesses of India*, and most recently *The Life of Hinduism*, a students' guide to Hinduism as a lived tradition co-edited with Vasudha Narayanan. Other volumes Hawley has edited are comparative in nature—one on religious exemplitude (*Saints and Virtues*), another on *Fundamentalism and Gender*. Gender also emerges as a major theme in Hawley's most recent co-edited book (with Kimberley Patton), called *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination*.

Two current projects point in different directions. One is firmly Indian: how did we come to have the commonsensical idea that something called "the bhakti move-

ment" was a major force in the religious history of South Asia? The second project is less Indian than American, less historical than ethnographic. *God's Vacation* explores three religious utopias in the United States—one Hindu, one Buddhist, and one Protestant Christian—and asks about the special relationship that binds religion to memory and retreat.

Mark Juergensmeyer is Director of the Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies and Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is an expert on religious violence, conflict resolution and South Asian religion and politics, and has published more than two hundred articles and a dozen books.

His widely-read *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (University of California Press, revised edition 2003), is based on interviews with violent religious activists around the world—including individuals convicted of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, leaders of Hamas, and abortion clinic bombers in the United States, and was listed by the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* as one of the best nonfiction books of the year. A previous book, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (University of California Press, 1993) covers the rise of religious activism and its confrontation with secular modernity. It was named by the *New York Times* as one of the notable books of the year. His book on Gandhian conflict resolution has recently been reprinted as *Gandhi's Way* (University of California Press, Updated Edition, 2005), and was selected as Community Book of the Year at the University of California, Davis.

His most recent work is an edited volume, *Global Religions* (Oxford University Press 2003), and he is working on a book on religion and war, and an edited volume on religion in global civil society.

Juergensmeyer has received research fellowships from the Wilson Center in Washington D.C., the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, the U.S. Institute of Peace, and the American Council of Learned Societies. He is the 2003 recipient of the prestigious Grawemeyer Award for contributions to the study of religion, and is the 2004 recipient of the Silver Award of the Queen Sofia Center for the Study of Violence in Spain. He received an Honorary Doctorate from Lehigh University in 2004. Since the events of September 11, 2001, he has been a frequent commentator in the news media, including CNN, NBC, CBS, BBC, NPR, Fox News, ABC's *Politically Incorrect*, and CNBC's *Dennis Miller Show*.

James G. Lochtefeld is Professor of Religion and Director of Asian Studies at Carthage College. His primary research interest has been Hindu pilgrimage, and his work seeks to examine the connections between texts, tradition, and modern Hindu religious life. His dissertation research on Haridwar led naturally into research on the *Kumbha Mela*, as well as on pilgrimage sites in the Garwhal Himalaya; his most recent work examines how Haridwar and these Himalayan pilgrimage sites have been affected by the promotion of tourism and other social changes.

Timothy Lubin (MTS, Harvard; PhD, Columbia) is Associate Professor of Religion and Director of the East Asian Studies Program at Washington and Lee University, and an affiliated researcher of the Institut Français de Pondichéry. He currently co-chairs the Hinduism Group of the American Academy of Religion. His work combines philological and historical study of Vedic and Classical Hindu traditions, fieldwork on contemporary Vedic ritual practice, and studies on the relations of law and Hinduism past and present. Philological publications include critical editions of two late Upanisads. A pair of volumes on Brahmanical tradition and its authority is in preparation: the first on the internal dynamics of the tradition (the interrelations of ascetical discipline and ritual praxis as a technology for creating and transmitting knowledge), and the second, on its external dimensions (the promotion of Brahmin expertise as human capital through institutions and patronage networks, and the interaction between elite models and regional cultures). In this connection, Lubin is also lead editor of *Law and Hinduism: An Introduction* (appearing from Cambridge University Press in 2009).

Gurinder Singh Mann (Ph.D. 1993, Columbia University) is a Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His interests are in Punjab Studies, particularly in the nature of interaction between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, the three major religious communities of the region. Professor Mann's research focuses on the evolution of Sikh institutions and the challenges facing the contemporary Sikh community both in the Punjab and the Diaspora. Some of his recent publications include: *Sikhism* (2004), *"Sikhs in America"* (2001), and *"Sikhism in the USA"* (2000).

Laurie L. Patton, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Early Indian Religions at Emory University, earned her B.A.

from Harvard University and her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. For several years during the last two decades she has made her Indian home in Pune, Maharashtra. Her scholarly interests are in the interpretation of early Indian ritual and narrative, comparative mythology, literary theory in the study of religion, and women and Hinduism in contemporary India.

In addition to over 45 articles in these fields, she is the author or editor of seven books: *Authority, Anxiety, and Canon: Essays in Vedic Interpretation* (ed., 1994); *Myth as Argument: The Brhaddevata as Canonical Commentary* (author, 1996); *Myth and Method* (ed., with Wendy Doniger, 1996); *Jewels of Authority: Women and Text in the Hindu Tradition* (ed., 2002); *Bringing the Gods to Mind: Mantra and Ritual in Early Indian Sacrifice* (author, 2004) and *The Indo-Aryan Controversy: Evidence and Inference in Indian History* (ed., with Edwin Bryant, 2005); *Notes from a Mandala: Essays in the Indian History of Religions in Honor of Wendy Doniger* (ed., with David Haberman, forthcoming). Her book of poetry, *Fire's Goal: Poems from a Hindu Year*, was published by White Clouds Press in 2003, and her translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* is forthcoming from Penguin Press Classics Series. Her next book of poetry, just completed, focuses on the weekly parshiyot of the Jewish ritual year.

She has worked as a Fulbright scholar in Israel in 2000, and again in 2004 where she was completing research for her forthcoming book, *Grandmother Language: Women and Sanskrit in Maharashtra and Beyond*. She is also completing a methodological work, *Scholar and the Fool: The Secular Scholar of Religion and 21st Century Publics* (contracted with University of Chicago Press).

Professor Patton served as Chair of the Department from 2000–2007, as Co-convenor of the Religions and the Human Spirit Strategic Plan from 2005–2007, and as Winship Distinguished Research Professor from 2003–2006. She was the recipient of Emory's highest award for teaching, the Emory Williams Award, in 2006.

Kelly Pemberton is an Assistant Professor of Religion and Women's Studies at George Washington University. After receiving a BA in French from Vassar College, Kelly Pemberton went on to complete an MA in religion at the University of Washington, and a PhD in religion at Columbia University. Her research has covered mysticism and reform in South Asian and Middle Eastern Islam, especially as these relate to gender issues. She is working on a monograph about women and Sufi shrines in India and is also in the process of editing a volume of collected essays on identity in South Asia. She has published sev-

eral articles and book reviews in academic journals.

Whitney Sanford is an Assistant Professor of Religion at the University of Florida. Professor Sanford received her BA in English and Philosophy from Bowdoin College and M.A. and PhD in Religious Studies from the University of Pennsylvania, specializing in north Indian devotional traditions.

Professor Sanford teaches and researches in two main areas: Religion and Nature and Religions of Asia. In the area of Religion and Nature, she focuses on religious attitudes towards agricultural sustainability, particularly in South Asia. Her second book *Agriculture: Hindu Narrative and Ecological Imagination* explores how Hindu agricultural narratives provide the foundation to expand the ecological imagination in terms and rethink agricultural practice. She conducted fieldwork in Baldeo, India, examining narratives and practices related to Balaram, a deity associated with agriculture. Current research interests include the relationship between agricultural biotechnology and forms of neo-colonialism, particularly in Latin America and India. Her new project "Gandhi's Environmental Legacy: Food Sovereignty and Social Movements" investigates Gandhi's influence on sustainability and food and water sovereignty movements.

In the Religions of Asia area, she focuses on Braj devotional traditions. Her first book *Singing Krishna: Sound Becomes Sight in Paramanand's Poetry* (SUNY 2008) explores the role of devotional poetry in ritual practice. She has published articles in *JAAR*, *International Journal of Hindu Studies and Alternative Krishnas*, edited by Guy Beck (SUNY Press, 2005).

Additionally, she is interested in how participation in outdoor recreation activities functions as religious experience and to what extent this participation leads to a practiced environmental ethic.

Davesh Soneji is Assistant Professor of South Indian Religions in the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University, Montreal. His research and teaching focuses on gender, ritual and performance in Tamil and Telugu-speaking South India. Professor Soneji currently holds grants from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture (FQRSC) for a major project on *devadasis* in modern South India. Using archival, literary and ethnographic sources, this work explores the resignifications of courtly and temple ritual, performance practices, and female identity in the context of colonial modernity. Professor Soneji is co-editor, with

Prof. Indira Viswanathan Peterson of *Performing Pasts: Reinventing the Arts in Modern South India* (Oxford University Press, 2008). He has also been commissioned to create the *Oxford Anthology of Writing on Indian Dance*, and is presently completing a monograph entitled *Recalling a Gesture: Devadasis, Modernity, and Memory in South India*.

Travis Smith (Ph.D. 2007, Columbia University) is an Assistant Professor of Religion at the University of Florida. His research and teaching interests center on Sanskrit literature, in particular the epic, Puranic and Tantric traditions. His current research explores the relationships between traditional genres of Kavya ("poetry"), Purana ("ancient lore"), Tantra ("esoteric doctrine") and Itihasa ("history").

He has a special interest in the religious history and literary constructions of the sacred city of Varanasi, especially as represented in its classical Puranic "glorification" (*mahatmya*) literature. He continues to explore the importance of this city in the early formation and development of Saiva theistic traditions such as the Pasupatas and Saiva Siddhantins.

He also initiated and co-directs the UF in India study abroad program.

Acknowledgments

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Dancing Ganesha, 13th Century, Black Stone. Museum purchase, gift of Michael A. Singer with additional funds provided by the Kathleen M. Axline Acquisition Endowment. 2002.1



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Jason Neelis, Religion

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