

February 3 - NOON
6203 Social Science

DR. JOE ELDER (Professor, LCA and Sociology, UW-Madison)
"A Traveler's Tale: Views from being in South Asia after the Tsunami"

Joe Elder has just returned from his annual trip to India and Nepal - he arrived in India just after the Tsunami hit. He will talk about the general state of affairs, and possible political aftershocks in India and Sri Lanka.

February 10-NOON
206 Ingraham Hall

Dr. Davesh Soneji
Assistant Professor, Religious Studies, McGill University

"Dancing Disjunctures: Memory, Identity, Performance and the Devadasis of Telugu-Speaking South India"

In 1948, five women Manikyam, Anusuya, Varahalu, Seshachalam and Maithili were expelled from the temple of Krishna in the village of Ballipadu, Andhra Pradesh after the Government of India implemented and enforced the Anti-Devadasi Act of 1947. Today, they live in the town of Duvva, adhering to their traditional patterns of kinship as kalavantulu or devadasi women. Whereas in the public sphere, devadasis oscillate in and out of sets of historical and moral discourses in which they occupy a highly contested position, in their homes, contemporary devadasis embody fragments of their past by remembering (and in some cases re-enacting) precisely those aspects of their identity which they can no longer express or display in public. Their music and dance repertoire, their extra-domestic sexuality, the lack of menstrual taboo in their community, and their own experiences during the anti-devadasi movement in the early part of the twentieth century figure prominently in these private journeys of recollection.

Based on over a decade of research with several devadasi communities in the East and West Godavari districts of coastal Andhra Pradesh, this presentation focuses on the importance of such performances of memory that allow for the articulation of devadasi identity in post-social reform South India. These performances that occur regularly behind closed doors in the homes of devadasis, also present us with new ways of reading devadasi identity through living repertoire. Citing examples of a nineteenth-century javali (Telugu poem) that discusses menstruation and a salam-daru (song of salutation) dedicated to the Maratha kings of Tanjavur, I show that these journeys of memory highlight the disjunctures between past and present, and are the primary modalities through which devadasis are able to re-constitute and represent their identities in contemporary South India.



February 17-NOON
206 Ingraham Hall

Dr. Sthaneshwar Timalisina
Lecturer, Asian and Near Eastern Languages and Literatures,
Washington University

"The Language of Images: Reflection upon Tantric Visualizations"

The dazzling diversity of images in Hinduism perplexes many viewers from outside the respective culture or from within. Tantric images, emerging from a deep cultural and philosophical background, are particularly misunderstood due to the secretive nature of the tradition. Attempts to decipher these symbols have raised challenges, compelling further reflection. The first and foremost problem concerns the authenticity of any interpretation. Both etic and emic perspectives assert that images of worship, in addition to being objects of devotion, contain meaning and can be deciphered. Within this background, I explore some emic perspectives in interpreting cultural symbols.

Utilizing Tantric images, my presentation suggests a method of interpretation following internal categories. To support my arguments, I examine Ksemaraja's understanding of Bhairava, formulated in 11th century Kashmir, and analyze the contemporary Sarvamnaya Nepalese Tantric tradition that weaves a multitude of divinities within a single stream, showing the evolving and generative nature of Tantric images.

February. 24 - NOON
206 Ingraham Hall

Dr. Patrick Olivelle, Professor and Chair,
Department of Asian Studies, University of Texas-Austin
"Manu's Code of Law: Text, Ideology, and Social History"

Born in Sri Lanka, Olivelle received his B.A. (Honours) in 1972 from the University of Oxford, where he studied Sanskrit, Pali and Indian Religions under Thomas Burrow and R.C. Zaehner. He was awarded a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1974 for a thesis containing the critical edition and translation of Yadava Prakasa's Yatidharmaprakasa. Between 1974 and 1991 Olivelle taught at Indiana University. Since 1991 he has been Professor of Sanskrit and Indian Religions in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.



March 2 - 5pm - 6:30pm
PYLE CENTER AUDITORIUM
Langdon Street

P. Sainath, Development Writer and Author

"When Farmers Die: the Agrarian Crisies, Farmers Suicide and the Media in India"

Mumbai-based P. Sainath is Asia's leading development journalist, writing frequently about issues such as poverty and the effects of industrialization on India. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen describes him as "one of the world's greatest experts on famine and hunger". Through his work on the livelihoods of India's rural poor, Sainath has changed the nature of the development debate in his own country and across the world. His landmark book, *"Everybody Loves a Good Drought"*, is a devastating portrait of Indian government economic policies gone awry. He received international recognition after he spent two years in the poorest districts in India, reporting about the daily struggles of the citizenry. He covered everything from agriculture subsidies to starvation deaths. That work formed the basis for his book. Sainath has won numerous awards for his reportage, including the European Commission's Natali Prize in 1994 for articles related to development and poverty as well as working and living conditions of vulnerable social groups. In November 2001, he won the Boerma Journalism Prize from the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization -- the most important award in development journalism.

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March 3 - NOON
ELVEJHEM MUSEUM

Dr. Dina Bangdel, Art Historian, Ohio University

"Images of a Sacred Landscape:

Visual Constructions of Religious Identity in Nepal"

Talk Description: Is this Buddhist, Hindu or both? Addressing this often-cited question in the context of the religious environment in Nepal, the talk will discuss the polemics of "religious syncretism" in the Kathmandu Valley, and the ways in which religious identity may be constructed through a visual discourse.

Dr. Dina Bangdel is a specialist in Himalayan and Indian art, and is the Director of Special Collection at The Ohio State University. Dr. Bangdel will be joining the Department of Art History at Virginia Commonwealth University as Associate Professor in Fall 2005.

March 10 - NOON
206 Ingraham Hall

Dr. John Cort, Professor of Religion, Denison University

"God as King, God as Ascetic: Jain Theology and the Ornamentation of Temple Images"

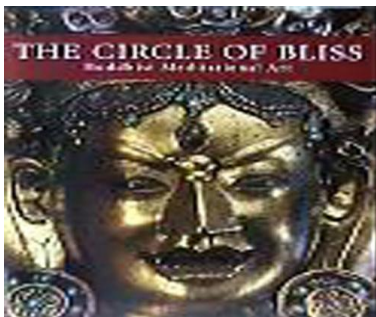
This talk investigates a key theological difference between the Digambar and Shvetambar Jains concerning the nature of the Jina--of the divine, of God. This difference is rarely articulated in texts, but is immediately apparent to anyone who enters both a Digambar and Shvetambar temple. The talk therefore also addresses issues of methodology in the study of religions, and the relative weight given to texts and material culture.

John E. Cort is the author of *Jains in the World: Religious Values and Ideology in India* (Oxford University Press, 2001); editor of *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History* (State University of New York Press, 1998), and Kendall W. Folkert's *Scripture and Community: Collected Essays on the Jains* (Scholars Press, 1993); and translator of Bhartrhari, *An Old Tree Living by the River* (Writers Workshop, 1983). He is also the author of several dozen articles on the Jains, and religion, culture, and society in western India.

March 17 - NOON
206 Ingraham Hall

Mary Des Chene, Co-editor, Studies in Nepali History and Society

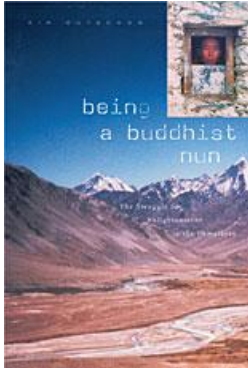
"The Wars in Nepal "



April 7 - NOON
Location to be announced

David Washbrook, History, Oxford University, Director of the South

Asian Studies Programme
M.A., Ph.D.
Reader in Modern South Asian History
St Antony's College

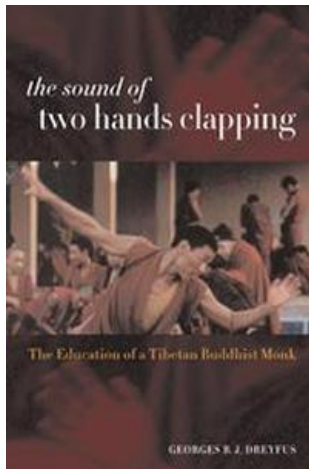


April 14 - NOON
206 Ingraham Hall

**Dr. Georges Dreyfus Professor,
Department of Religion, Williams College**

“Debate and Commentary in Tibetan Monastic Education”

An expert in Buddhism, he was the first Westerner to earn the title of “Geshe,” the highest degree awarded by Tibetan Buddhist monastic universities and presented by the Dalai Lama himself. His latest book, “The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk” was published by the University of California Press in 2003. In addition to Tibetan Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy, his research interests include the study of religious intellectual practices, traditions, and identity in addition to post-colonial and cross-cultural studies. He received his baccalaureate at La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, and his Ph.D. in the history of religions from the University of Virginia.



Apr. 21 - NOON
206 Ingraham Hall

**Dr. Kim Gutschow Visiting Assistant Professor,
Department of Religion, Williams College**

*“Being a Buddhist Nun: the Struggle for Enlightenment
in the Himalayas”*

They may shave their heads, don simple robes, and renounce materialism and worldly desires. But the women seeking enlightenment in a Buddhist nunnery high in the folds of Himalayan Kashmir invariably find themselves subject to the tyrannies of subsistence, subordination, and sexuality. Ultimately, Buddhist monasticism reflects the very world it is supposed to renounce. Butter and barley prove to be as critical to monastic life as merit and meditation. Kim Gutschow lived for more than three years among these women, collecting their stories, observing their ways, studying their lives. Her book offers the first ethnography of Tibetan Buddhist society from the perspective of its nuns.