Harvard University
SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE
2015 Student Grant Reports

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT SAI GRANTS

The mission of the South Asia Institute is to engage faculty and students through interdisciplinary programs to advance and deepen the teaching and research on global issues relevant to South Asia. Our grants program fullfills our mission statement by annually providing funds for students to travel to South Asia for research, language study, or to pursue a hands-on internship.

This year, we have provided $96,500 in grants to sponsor 45 projects. In this grant report, students share their experiences such as first impressions, meaningful conversations, and lasting memories.

Furthermore, we would like to thank our generous donors, KP Balraj, Sumir Chadha, Mukesh and Chandni Prasad, and the Aman Foundation who have made these opportunities possible.

SAI GRANTS AT A GLANCE

Total Number of Students Funded:	45
Total Amount Awarded:	$96, 500
Average Grant Size:	$2,122

GRANTS AWARDED BY SCHOOL

College	13	30.2%
FAS	4	9.3%
GSAS	13	30.2%
GSD	2	4.7%
HBS	1	2.3%
HDS	5	11.6%
HKS	3	7%
HLS	1	2.3%
HSPH	1	2.3%

GRANTS AWARDED BY TYPE

Internship	10	22.2%
Language	5	11.1%
Mobile Technology	4	8.9%
Research	26	57.8%

GRANTS AWARDED BY SEASON

Summer	27	60%
Winter	18	40%

GRANTS AWARDED BY COUNTRY

Bangladesh	4	8.9%
China	1	2.2%
India	31	68.9%
Pakistan	5	11.1%
Sri Lanka	4	8.9%

SAI INTERNSHIP REPORTS
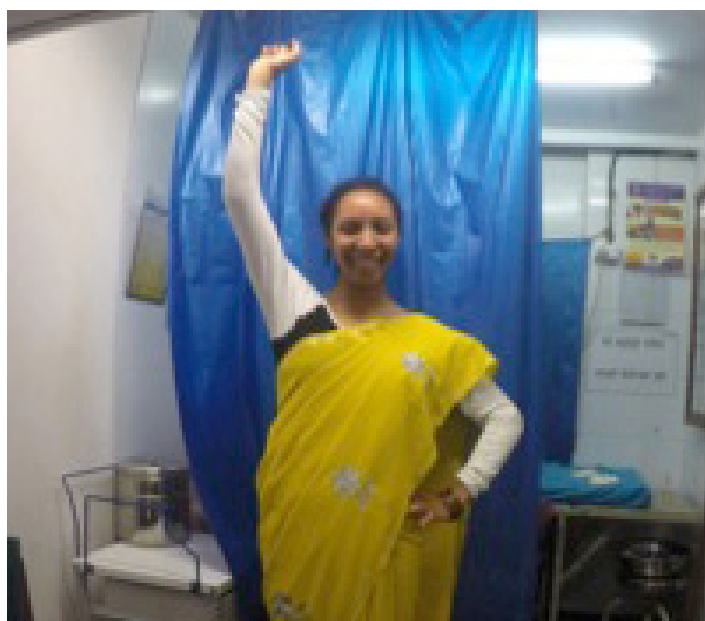
The workers taught Chesley Ekelem how to wrap a sari

Student in Angela Leocata's writing class at Little Stars

The Harvard South Asia Institute internship program supports hands-on experiences in the region for undergraduate and graduate students. We have established relationships with our in region partners to provide fulfilling opportunities for Harvard students. Winter internships are for a duration of at least three weeks while summer internships are at least eight weeks long.

INTERNSHIP SITES

Harvard-Bangalore Science Initiative	Bangalore, India
Cancer Patients Aid Association	Mumbai, India
Chundikuli Girls School	Jaffna, Sri Lanka
Jana Care	Bangalore, India
Little Stars School	Varanasi, India
Heal Asia Medical Relief Trip	Various cities of Sri Lanka
Heal Asia Medical Relief Trip	Various cities of Sri Lanka
GrowLanka	Colombo, Sri Lanka
Swadhaar	Mumbai, India
Aasha Foundation	Mumbai, India

Summer Internship in Bangalore, India

HARVARD - BANGALORE SCIENCE INITIATIVE

Eleni Apostolatos | Harvard College '18 | Intergrative Biology

Embracing the Indian fashion in Agra

During the summer of 2015, I had the privilege to pursue research at the Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine (inStem) in Bangalore, as part of the Harvard-Bangalore Science Initiative. I was very fortunate to have been awarded a grant by the South Asia Institute to work in Dr. Praveen Vemula's prestigious Laboratory of Self-Assembled Materials, under the guidance of Dr. Prakash Parthiban.

During my stay at Dr. Vemula's lab, I contributed to work on alginate hydrogels for their use in different clinical applications. I learned and practiced tissue engineering techniques, with the set goal of applying the findings in regenerative medicine. I was exposed to an incredible academic environment that enabled collaboration and growth. I could also appreciate the importance of multidisciplinary ventures in the fields of biology and chemistry—along with applications in engineering and material science—for the pursuit of a common clinical goal.

While performing compelling research taught me the skills to become a better academic and scientist, being immersed in a vibrant and invigorating culture like India's impacted me personally and helped me grow as a human being. It was in all aspects an enriching journey that has marked me. I absorbed as much as possible from the people and surroundings: memorable conversations with lab members and locals about the Indian culture—food, dress, music and dance, among other fascinating aspects—increased my understanding of and appreciation for the local culture. And I learned some Hindi expressions, too: i.e., acha! Translated to: okay—perhaps the most common reply, which reflects the contagious positivity and good-naturedness of the Indian culture.

Additionally, traveling in India was an exceptional opportunity; exploring Asia was among my biggest dreams. Along with Harvard classmates who were in the program with me, we traveled the South during weekends, taking short trips to Mysore and what is known as God's Own Country, Kerala. We visited tea plantations and impressive waterfalls, took a detour riding a boathouse in Allepey, and rode Indian elephants through exotic woodland. We also explored imposing sand dunes on camels. At the end of the program, we took a weeklong trip to the North, where we visited Jodhpur, Jaipur, and Agra—with a memorable visit to the majestic Taj Mahal. It was a privilege for me to contribute to research at inStem during the summer—and benefit from the invaluable experience of both fulfilling research and spending time abroad in India. I am very grateful for the South Asia Institute's support in financing a summer that has changed me and will always be remembered.

CANCER PATIENTS AID ASSOCIATION

Chesley Ekelem | Harvard College '16 | Organismic and Evolutionary Biology

Females are screened free of charge and referred to proper places for treatment.

I landed in Mumbai at 2 am on Christmas day with no idea what to expect. Two days before my flight I got a call from the booking agency that they overbooked and that I would have to rebuy my ticket, so the fact that I landed in Mumbai was a miracle in itself! I had no idea where I was going to stay or how I was going to find a hostel, but this didn't bother me a bit since I was so happy to be in India! After resting for a couple hours in the airport, I hopped onto an auto rickshaw and as we were passing through the slums, towns, and residential communities, I noticed that Mumbai is teeming with life! No matter where you go or what time it is, you are never alone. By the end of my trip I became accustomed to the background noise of honking, shouting, and clinging.

After Christmas day, I began to volunteer with Cancer Patients Aid Association (CPAA) in Mahalaxmi. It was an experience that changed my life. CPAA is an NGO that deals with the total management of cancer, meaning it does everything from advocacy to patient care. They have individual teams for each outlet of production: awareness, early detection, insurance, treatment, and rehabilitation. It is the biggest cancer NGO in India and is very important to millions of people, especially since cancer is not the top priority for health policy makers in a country that is heavily burdened with infectious diseases and poverty. While interning, I had the opportunity to get clinical experience in the hospitals and exposure to the administrative duties of a huge NGO.

My first few days were spent interacting with cancer patients seeking treatment from Tata Memorial Hospital, the biggest cancer hospital in India. There is a volunteer network in the NGO and they serve as a strong support system of counselors for the patients. Many of the 400-500 new patients that the hospital treats each day have travelled from very far rural villages in order to receive treatment. The family members often sleep on the streets since they do not have enough money to find proper shelter while their loved ones are hospitalized. As a volunteer, I delivered food to the struggling families and their gratitude was very humbling. I also went around from patient to patient in the children's ward with a dedicated volunteer as she offered motivational and emotional support to the families in despair. It was the saddest thing I have ever experienced, but as much as it tore my heart apart, it gave me the motivation to use my good health to the fullest potential to help others.

In the offices, I discussed with each head administrator and they taught me about their duties in each specific sector. It was really great to spend a day in each of the offices, because I had the chance to see the behind the scenes of work of a functioning NGO and learn how it stays organized. On the other days I volunteered at cancer screening clinics in the slums. It was a great opportunity to interact with the locals and doctors, who were extremely informative and open to talk about how they ended up where they are.

Mumbai has a flavor of its own, there is nowhere quite like it. Underneath the hectic hustle and bustle is the sweet aroma of tasty curries and the energizing burst of colorful clothes. My trip to Mumbai was an emotional, intellectual, and spiritual awakening, but what astonished me the most was the immense hospitality of the people. Thanks to the South Asia Institute, I now have a greater appreciation for health, a broader point of view, and an abundance of gratitude for random acts of kindness.

Summer Internship in Jaffna, India

CHUNDIKULI GIRLS SCHOOL

Tamara Fernando | Harvard College '16 | History and Literature

"

One of my closest pupils remarked, "I used to think all Sinhalese were bad people. Now I've met you, I know different.

"

When I applied for an SAI grant to teach English in Jaffna, I expected to get some teaching experience, but did not foresee the immensely transformative effect the summer offered. Henry Miller wrote that, "One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things". My time in Jaffna reinforced the point that we can be so blind to our places of origin.

Returning to Sri Lanka from college in the USA allowed me to observe and make new judgments about the place I had called home. I grew up in Sri Lanka, but only lived in the capital, Colombo. The Sri Lankan Civil War took place for most of my life so while I had heard of Jaffna, it was only in the news, as the Tamil capital, or the locus of intense fighting between the government and rebels. I did not truly comprehend the significance of me being ethnically Sinhalese (another reason that my knowledge of the region was poor). Spending time in Jaffna, making friends and memories, was an exercise in re-learning my country of origin.

I came to know the stories of the students during dinnertime in the hostel over conversations with the hostel matron, Patricia. Several of the students had been picked from orphanages in Killinochchi. The Christian pastors running these orphanages would select certain "specially bright" war orphans and send them to Chundikuli. The Tamil diaspora, powerful and spread over the world, would send in funds to support these orphans through school. Almost every boarder in the school hostel had lost one family member to the Civil War. It was a stark reminder of the costs of war and its impacts on everyday people.

A few days into my program, during a game of netball, one of the girls asked me in what year my family had migrated overseas. Confused, I replied that my family lived in Sri Lanka. She was shocked, 'you're from here?' Until that point, the girls had assumed I was ethnically Tamil, and that my family had moved overseas during the conflict. The news that I was Sinhalese was a shock and caused some discomfort. The day before I left Jaffna, one of my closest pupils remarked, "I used to think all Sinhalese were bad people. Now I've met you, I know different." For that single moment, I am very grateful to the Harvard South Asia Institute.

At the school, I was the object of much fascination. I did not wear a sari, I was young, and most shocking—I had short hair. Often, lounging with the girls after school, they would ask me why I had cut my hair. In comparison their hair had ben grown out over many years, and never cut. They would show me their long plaits, halfway down their backs, and puzzle over why someone would possibly want to cut their hair like a boy's. My time teaching, playing games, conducting art camps or attending church with the girls were wonderful. I made some deep friendships. Most importantly, I was able to connect with the girls and we were each able to share our different worlds.

I cannot say that this was my first trip to Asia, or that I had not visited this country before. In fact, I had spent eighteen years there. However, my time showed me how we can often be, in the gospel words inscribed on the walls of Chundikuli School, "'ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding'". I now understand the Tamil experience of the conflict more fully, as well as the devastation of the North of the island, which the South was protected from. I will carry this more complete picture of national identity and experience with me into what ever future endeavors I am involved in.

JANA CARE

Joanne Koong | Harvard College '17 | Computer Science

" Good food. Good people. A place to sleep. Work that I love. People I care about. People who care about me. "

As a software engineering intern at Jana Care this summer, I had the privilege of exploring and slowly falling in love with Bangalore, India. For eight weeks, I was blessed to do the two things I love most: travel and code. The most meaningful part of being in India, for me, was getting to know the native people. At Jana Care, I worked primarily with the engineering team, and the readiness with which they took me under their wing is something I am grateful for because it allowed me a more authentic experience of the country.

I didn't realize how much I had grown as a person until I had left the country, but I suppose it must have happened in increments: over the daily chai breaks at 4 PM, over the lunches and dinners where my coworkers and I would venture into different regions of Koramangala to try new dishes, over the casual chit-chat with the manager of the sandwich shop five minutes away from the Jana Care office that morphed into real conversations about our family, lives, and desires, over bargaining with the fruit-seller lady for ripe mangos and bananas and then ending with a smile.

One of the things that struck me most about India and one of the things that I miss most is the simplicity of daily living. In India, what is not essential is not deemed needed. The people care less about obtaining material flashy things, about accumulating tons and tons of money, about doing prestigious things off a checklist just to say they did it. The pace of life is slower in India, but I perceive it to be just as, if not more, meaningful. Sometimes, my coworkers and I would go to a restaurant in the middle of the day and just eat lunch for two hours where we'd talk and make jokes and just enjoy each other's company without checking our watches. We'd get chai and though the chai shop is just a block around the corner, it'd take us ten minutes sometimes just to walk there because as we walk, we'd enjoy the sunlight and the wind and the trees and the cows that roam around, and the simple utter fact that we have everything we need and it is enough. Having come back from India, I notice that I take more time to notice the little things. Good food. Good people. A place to sleep. Work that I love. People I care about. People who care about me. Clothes on my back. My desires are more humble, and simple, but also more worthwhile.

Spending eight weeks in India this summer as a software engineering intern was an experience I am grateful I could have as a nineteen year old still trying to figure out what I truly value and want. I am both happy and sad that when I come back to India when I am older, I will be a different person than I was when I first came to the country this summer. But I know, however, that that is how it must be and that that is part of what made my time and experience in India this summer so special to me.

LITTLE STARS SCHOOL

Angela Leocata | Harvard College '18

Students at Little Stars

Over Winter Session I had the opportunity to travel to Varanasi, also known as Banaras or Kashi, through the South Asia Institute. The purpose of my travel was to intern with The Little Stars School, a non-profit organization that provides a tuition-free education to over six-hundred students from underprivileged backgrounds in Nagwa, Varanasi. It is currently the only school in Varanasi that offers a free education to students from pre-nursery to the 10th grade.

My internship focused on helping to develop the English and Writing curriculum. Based on the pedagogy of educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, I supported in developing writing prompts and tools to aid students in the English learning process. I also spent time with students in the residential area of the school, where over sixty girls reside permanently.

Visiting a grassroots organization allowed me to better understand the complexities of community-based action. Asha Pandey, the founder of Little Stars, is one of the most inspiring people I've had the opportunity of meeting. Her daily commitment is not only administrating necessities, but also building upon relationships of trust and care with students, which was unique to anything I have seen in education. The students at Little Stars were eager to learn and dive deeply into the opportunities their school provides. It was very clear that they respect their teachers. Ms. Pandey has created an environment of dignity throughout the school community.

Having lived in Varanasi before, my return reinforced my impression of it as a place truly capturing the sublime. Banaras is a city where religion and spirituality are palpable daily; where 4 am prayer calls greet you out of bed, where hosts practice pooja before meals and occasionally even chai; where a temple is near walking distance to the next. Conversations of life and death seem to be constantly reoccurring, as bodies are carried in ceremonies to be cremated at the Ganga-Ji and ashes are rubbed on faces as a reminder of death's approaching reality. Varanasi is a place where it is not unusual to be awakened in the middle of the night by marching bands and chariots in celebration of a local wedding, to cross streets daily alongside the same cow, bull, or monkey, or to find yourself in indescribable gratitude for seeing the sun rise over the Ganga Ji and watch the world wake up as if it was for the first time.

Having traveled extensively throughout India for the past three years, I would definitely prepare new travelers to having Varanasi as their first place of contact with South Asia. While the complexities and beauties of the city impacted me in a way that I am reminded of daily, I feel that my experience was a product of already having familiarity and comfort within India.

This experience reinforced my passion in education and desire to better understand a context that I am deeply committed to. The questions, challenges, and opportunities of my time in Varanasi have influenced my academic and personal goals for this semester by pushing me to think more critically about grassroots movements and recognize the power of community-based action. My Winter Session experience was incredibly formative in deepening my understanding of a country that continues to challenge, inspire, and influence me.

HEAL ASIA MEDICAL RELIEF TRIP

Fei (Michelle) Lin | Harvard College '17 | Human Developmental and Regenerative Biology

Preparing local medications to be distributed

Thanks to the generous Winter Grant from the South Asia Institute, I was able to experience Sri Lanka over J-term 2015. I participated in the Heal Asia Medical Relief Trip, which was one of the most eye-opening experiences I have ever had. Over the time span of just one week and a half, I feel that I have learned so much about a nation that I knew almost nothing about prior to arrival. Ministry of Health directors, hospital directors, reputed doctors, and a university dean and professor all gave lectures on various aspects of the Sri Lankan health care system, including its present state, history, and future direction. I was incredibly glad to hear how proud the people felt about their universal and free health care system and to hear how optimistic they were about its future and expected improvements. For example, many prominent figures spoke about how Sri Lanka has almost eradicated transmittable diseases and has moved on to the next level of preventing non-communicable diseases. I was particularly impressed

by Sri Lanka's focus on disease prevention rather than disease treatment, as this mindset can lead to very effective results. I was additionally intrigued by the presentations that were specific to South Asian medicine, such as tropical medicine. It never occurred to me how different medicine could be in different places around the world, and I realized the substantial impact of the environment on potential problems. For instance, in Sri Lanka, citizens must be aware of snakes and other parasites that are virtually unheard of in many parts of the United States.

On two separate days, the Heal Asia team provided resources to rural villages in Sri Lanka. On one of the days, we targeted families that were displaced by floods. We travelled to the elementary school that the families were temporarily staying at and distributed blankets, local medications, and basic survival resources to almost one hundred families. On the other day, we handed out eyeglasses to nearly two hundred and fifty patients after an optometrist determined every patient's prescription. Notably, we only told two or three people about this clinic, but within half an hour of letting the word out, it had reached so many people that the line-up extended for hours. The social networks of this small village amazed me, as well as the togetherness of the community; all members seemed to truly care for each other and hope for each other's wellbeing, which was incredibly heartwarming to see.

Lastly, I also had the wonderful opportunity to be a tourist for a few days: I went whale watching and saw multiple dolphins, climbed Sigiriya, and rode an elephant, among other activities. I am extremely thankful towards the South Asia Institute for giving me this great opportunity to travel to a nation and engage in a culture that showed me a completely different side of the world.

Wintersession Internship in various cities in Sri Lanka

HEAL ASIA MEDICAL RELIEF TRIP

Jacqueline Ma | Harvard College '16 | Human Developmental and Regenerative Biology
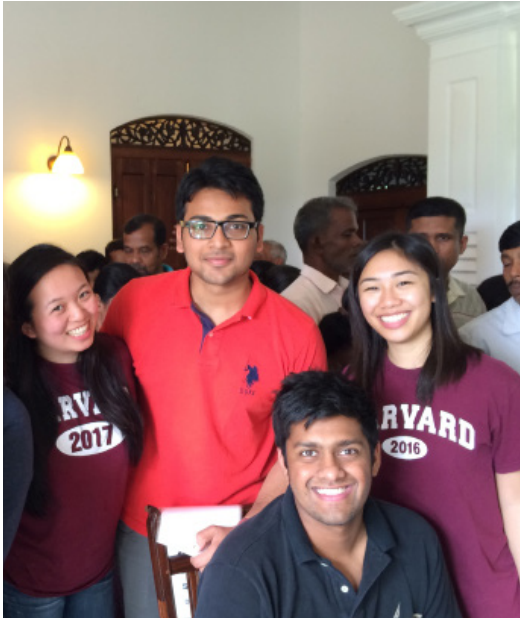
HealAsia Group; Physician Shadowing in Anurardhapura

Upon my arrival in Sri Lanka, I was greeted with cloudy, gray skies and rain showers. The scene was not at all like the bright, sunny weather I had envisioned. Instead of clear skies overlooking white sandy beaches lined with palm trees, I was faced with gloomy conditions. Unfortunately, the rain showed no signs of letting up and continued for the majority of the trip. Reports of flooded roads and dangerous mudslides were unusual even for the natives of Sri Lanka. Yet the heavy sheets of rain could not conceal the beautiful landscapes the country had to offer, nor did it keep the resilient and enthusiastic people of Sri Lanka from going about their days. The weather did not dampen our group's spirits either, as we pressed on with our agenda and tried to reach as many of our planned destinations as possible.

I spent my time in Sri Lanka with a group of three other Harvard students and two students from Penn State. As participants of the HealAsia program, we explored the practice of medicine in Sri Lanka and gained a deeper understanding of the country's health care system. We traveled from clinics in the sacred city of Anuradhapura to hospitals in the capital city of Colombo, and we shadowed doctors of different specialties, including oncologists, dermatologists, obstetricians, and primary care physicians.

All of the clinics and hospitals we visited were government funded. Unlike the system in the U.S., the universal health care system in Sri Lanka ensures that each patient can receive treatments at no cost. Although all Sri Lankans benefit from this system, the doctors we shadowed explained that free health care comes with its own pros and cons. While patients can walk into any public clinic or hospital and expect appropriate care, doctors cannot guarantee that they will have the right medicines available to treat each patient. Some drugs may simply be too expensive and can only be afforded by hospitals in the private sector, which are not funded by the government. Due to limits in government funding, public clinics and hospitals also face issues of overcrowding and limited accessibility to doctors. Thus patients are not always able to receive the same level of care in free, public hospitals as opposed to private hospitals.

Still, as a developing country, Sri Lanka has succeeded in ways that countries in similar situations have not. For example, the mosquito-borne illnesses of dengue fever and malaria are very close to being eliminated in the country. There are future hopes of eliminating measles, tetanus, and diphtheria as well, with the government's implementation of an expanded immunization program. Compulsory vaccinations for these diseases are administered in public clinics across the country. Sri Lanka's largest health burden and main focus is now on the prevention of non-communicable disease, such as cardiovascular diseases and cancer. Increased public health education has encouraged Sri Lankans to limit

" I am thankful not only for the physicians who took the time out of their busy schedules to teach us about their work, but also for the warm and welcoming spirits of the patients we observed. "

their use of tobacco, which is the main contributing factor to non-communicable disease within the country. With an extremely cost-effective and well-organized system, Sri Lanka has been able to achieve these successes by dedicating just a small proportion of its GDP to health care.

Outside of our medical experiences, the group was able to visit a number of historical sites and gain exposure to the unique culture of Sri Lanka. As the majority of Sri Lankans practice Buddhism, the religion permeated the culture and very clearly influenced all aspects of living in Sri Lanka. Thus many of the sites we visited were also important places of worship. At the Sri Maha Bodhi tree, we listened to the story of how the Buddha attained enlightenment through training and meditation. While exploring the Dambulla cave temple, we were surrounded by images and immense statues of the Buddha. At the Isirumuniya temple, we learned more about the influence of Buddhism on the ancient rulers of Sri Lanka. We also climbed to the top of Sigiriya, a 200-meter high rock fortress, where an ancient Sri Lankan king had once built his palace. The wonders that we observed along our journey were absolutely breathtaking and gave us a glimpse of the rich history of the country.

My participation in the HealAsia program would not have been possible without the generosity of the South Asia Institute, and I am so grateful to have had this opportunity to travel to Sri Lanka. The trip contributed to my understanding of a health care system in a context that was so drastically different from America's, but interacting with the doctors helped me realize that the themes of empathy and compassion in medicine are universal. I am thankful not only for the physicians who took the time out of their busy schedules to teach us about their work, but also for the warm and welcoming spirits of the patients we observed. This was an experience that I will not soon forget.

GROWLANKA

Ishani Premaratne | Harvard College '15 | Anthropology

> " **I am always struck by the impression that their day-to-day reality seems frustratingly static—the economic distress.** "

Sri Lanka is a country in transition. With the presidential elections in early January garnering an unexpected result, I was also anxious to be a part of the mealtime conversations that almost certainly focused on politics this winter. The newly elected President, Maithripala Sirisena, will have to take post-conflict Sri Lanka forward in the aftermath of an election in which the incumbent lost for the first time in the country's history.

Though the political situation is inseparable from the economic and social strain experienced in some parts of the country, my task in returning to Sri Lanka was to finalize a partnership with the Government's Youth Ministry towards scaling a project that I co-founded three years ago. GrowLanka is an SMS platform that grew out of a Harvard classroom and has since been implemented in the northern region of the country as a means of connecting war widows to job opportunities. Returning is always a sobering experience and recalls in my mind the famous quote from C.S. Lewis: "Isn't it funny how day by day nothing changes, but when you look back, everything is different..."

In speaking to the war widows who have recently gained employment or to those who are eager to sign up for the GrowLanka system in order to have the opportunity to do so, I am always struck by the impression that their day-to-day reality seems frustratingly static—the economic distress, the ethical quandaries, the family dissolution. And yet, getting a job has the potential to change everything for these women and the children whom they must raise on their own in the aftermath of a decades-long civil war. To extricate oneself from that environment and into one of post-war peace and hope for progress is no easy feat, but I see so many of these women do just that as they remind me that their first "job" will always be in the role of mother to their children. The ability of the human spirit to persevere despite enormous hardship is one that has astounded me in contexts around the world—but never more than in Sri Lanka. The past three years have seen me returning to the country of my parents' heritage many times in between my semesters at Harvard. Now as a college senior, I think back fondly to how this journey began with the tools I was given in a Harvard classroom, an even more so just how incredible it has been to take these tools right back out to the larger world where I have sought to apply them. This is what I hope to do when I leave Harvard after graduation this May—apply the tools I have been given in order to fight poverty in the international development space. Whether that means addressing proximate causes such as a lost job or downstream reasons for structural violence, I am committed to understanding vulnerable populations in a way that will allow me to do something to help.

Sri Lankan Department of Motor Traffic

Traveling back to Sri Lanka this winter allowed me to bring full circle an initiative that has carried me through my time as an undergraduate. In finalizing the project through a government partnership, I can be far more assured that scaling and sustainability are possible, even after our team of undergraduates goes off in separate directions this May. In the long-term, I hope that more jobs will mean rapid economic growth in Sri Lanka's northern region—especially led by women who are newly empowered and ready to invest back into their own communities. The resolve I mentioned to survive against the most dire of circumstances is the biggest lesson I have taken from my experience in Sri Lanka, and one that I have also seen in the patient consult room as a pre-medical student who is eager to one day attend medical school and apply my clinical skills to aid work for vulnerable populations around the world. The will to survive has proven stronger than any medication I have witnessed, and the internal strength we all individually have to fight our negative circumstances is an uplifting notion that reminds me why I chose to be a part of this work in the first place. This is something that the war widows of northern Sri Lanka know intimately well, and something that they have taught me over the years.

SWADHAAR (ACCION INTERNATIONAL)

Rathna Ramamurthi | Harvard Law School | JD 2017

" Sometimes, informal just means different, calling for innovation. "

You might think that microfinance work isn't all that law-related. Like most microfinance providers, my placement organization Swadhaar does not have a large in-house legal team. But the law still creeps into financial inclusion in extremely interesting ways. Here's an (admittedly roundabout) example. One of my favorite places in Mumbai is Dhobi Ghat, the world's largest laundry. Much farther than the eye can see, there are thousands of stalls, where most of Mumbai's and even some of New Delhi's laundry gets washed, dried, and ironed. Apparently the term "stonewashed denim" comes from this style of laundry, which literally entails whacking wet clothes against stone slabs.

Dhobi Ghat is in South Mumbai, where land values are the highest in India. From what I understand, families live and work at their respective laundry plots for generations. But the land technically belongs to the government. Even with its Guinness World Record, Dhobi Ghat is not a heritage site. If the government wanted to evict the residents, it could, with compensation only for their equipment, not the land. Of course, slum eviction is not easy. So, the men and women of Dhobi Ghat live somewhat stably on top of incredibly valuable property without any legal claim to it at all. The same is true of slum dwellers all over the city, including those in the largest slum in Asia, Dharavi. You might ask, if slum dwellers occupy their land, always have, and always will, what does it matter if they technically have legal rights over it or not? For one, the threat of eviction is just credible enough to be a constant bother, as Katherine Boo chronicles in a novel based on first-hand experience. Another answer comes from Reserve Bank of India president Raghuram Rajan. In his first book, Rajan explains that collateral might be the only way to reverse the moral hazard dynamics that go with lending in very poor areas.

If collateral is key, poverty becomes all about the law. Imagine the financial power slum dwellers would have if they could borrow against the land they live on—some of the most valuable land in India. As we learned in my Property class last semester, rule of law is important, but concerns of efficiency and distributive justice can still trump legal title. Indian slums seem like prime candidates for these types of policies to me. While administrability is a huge concern in these largely informal societies, informal does not have to mean impossible. Sometimes, informal just means different, calling for innovation (as with the community engagement model described here.)

Property rights matter all over the world, but the law is especially important for financial inclusion India because there are tons of regulations about everything. Every step of the way, law and business intertwine. Can we make this change, or do the regulations prohibit it? Is this an inefficiency, or a mandated check and balance? Enforcement is of course its own

Dhobi Ghat: The World's Largest Laundry

problem, but the Modi government has been pushing hard. This year alone, thousands of Indian non-profits – including Indian branches of international non-profits like Greenpeace – lost the ability to receive foreign contributions legally for failing to comply with the terms of the licenses under the 2010 Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. Part of the problem seems to be a lack of clarity on what exactly the regulations require. The rules are changing again right now. So one of my main projects was a guide for Indian non-profits on how to stay in compliance with all of the various laws and regulations relevant to them. I loved the project because it felt very much needed, and fitting together statutes, administrative rules, and court decisions from all levels and jurisdictions amounts to a very interesting series of word puzzles. Perhaps most importantly, explaining the law to non-lawyers through the guide is a great test of how well I understand the requirements myself.

AASHA FOUNDATION

Angela Thurston | Harvard Divinity School | Masters of Divinity 2017

Teaching a class on virtues; Helping one of the girls move into a new apartment

I was talking to a local college student, a young man, when Chanda met up with me. "Didi, don't talk to strange men," she chided as he walked away. "Come, let's get food. I'm so hungry." She took my hand and led me to the campus canteen.

I came to call Chanda my bodyguard. She is 19, or maybe 21—it is hard to say because she, like the other girls and young women I got to know this summer, does not have proper documentation. She grew up at the Sharanam Centre, a home for formerly destitute and abandoned girls in the Dharavi slum of Mumbai. Thanks to the support of the Aasha Foundation, Chanda is now studying journalism with the goal of shedding new light on large-scale social problems.

I went to Chanda's campus to interview her about the impact of the Aasha Foundation in her life. She described it as a "new birth," and later made fun of me for calling her poetic. But I could not have described it better. The Sharanam girls, all 36 of them, are taken in from extraordinarily difficult circumstances and raised to become fulfilled young women who reach their potential in the world. In the ten weeks that I was privileged to spend in their company, these girls and their devoted caretakers taught me some of my greatest lessons about love, loyalty, determination, and resilience.

Chanda's interview was part of an appreciative inquiry process by which I documented the work of the Aasha Foundation and recommended areas for improvement. By interviewing and getting to know the girls, I discovered a gap in the Aasha Foundation's Path to Independence, which is the program that equips them to move out of the Sharanam Centre and into their own apartments and careers. I learned that the transition to "independent" life is jarring and lonely, coming as it does after years living in very close quarters with a group of sisters. In response, the girls' caretakers and I set about developing a framework so that, once a girl graduates from the Sharanam Centre, she joins something new. The newly-created Sharanam Sisterhood will be an extension of the experience of family for these older girls, something to be part of after leaving home and before, in many cases, getting married and starting families of their own. I am excited to be returning to Mumbai to facilitate annual summits of the Sharanam Sisterhood, starting next fall.

When I told Chanda I was coming back, she didn't believe me. I understand. A lot of short-stay volunteers say they will come back; most of them don't. For Chanda and the other Sharanam girls, this is part of life, and from a young age they learn to set their expectations accordingly. But I became too invested in these girls and their futures to end the relationships we began. "Chanda," I said, "I look forward to proving you wrong."

SAI LANGUAGE STUDY

Richard Tyler

The Harvard South Asia Institute language study program supports immersive and intensive study of a South Asian language for undergraduate and graduate students. Students can choose to either study the language independently or through an institution. Winter language studies are for a duration of at least three weeks and summer language studies are at least eight weeks long.

LANGUAGE STUDY

Mughal Persian	Lucknow, India
Punjabi	Chandigarh, India
Tamil	Madurai, India
Tamil	Madurai, India

MUGHAL PERSIAN LANGUAGE STUDY

Joshua Ehrlich | Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences | History PhD Candidate 2017

Traffic passing through Hussainabad Gate, Lucknow.

A language grant from SAI this summer enabled me to spend two months studying Mughal Persian at the American Institute of Indian Studies in Lucknow, India. I selected this program for its unique pertinence to my dissertation research, which explores the engagements of South Asian political and intellectual figures with the East India Company in the decades around 1800. In the earlier period especially, many of these engagements were in Mughal (Indo-) Persian, the principal language of commerce, literature, and government across much of early modern South Asia. This form of Persian differs significantly from those taught at Harvard and at other summer language programs. It developed in a multilingual and trans-lingual environment, often becoming inflected with Arabic and local vernaculars. Moreover, it was typically written in highly stylized cursive scripts difficult if not impossible to read without the kind of specialized training available at the Lucknow program. Apart from these advantages, the program also offered a flexible course curriculum, allowing me to designate most of my classes for textual study—including of manuscripts I had copied from archives and needed to understand for my research.

If these were the initial attractions which drew me to study Persian in Lucknow, I discovered others soon upon my arrival. Lucknow is a captivating city for the historian, replete with the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century monuments of the Nawabs of Awadh, drawing on Persian and other Islamic architectural styles. There are also notable examples of colonial architecture, including the former British Residency and the eccentric Constantia, built by the French soldier-adventurer Claude Martin. Prominent in the city's intellectual life is the bookseller Ram Advani, who, nearing a hundred years of age, is a fount of literary and historical knowledge. More often than his eponymous shop, however, I tended to visit the Cappuccino Miniblast near my apartment. Despite its unpromising name and location, next to a mall, this proved an excellent locale to browse antique prints and listen out for Persian cognates in the rotation of vintage Bollywood songs (a nice change from the ubiquitous American club and pop music). Most visitors to Lucknow sigh over its rich, meaty cuisine—biryani, kheema, kebabs—but as a non-meat-eater, I took my culinary delights instead at the Shri Lassi Corner and at Baati Chowka, a traditional Banarsi restaurant. My Persian, especially my reading, improved markedly in the course of just a few months. And I came to know a historic city, connected in significant respects with my research. But a third valuable outcome of my studies at the institute was making a new set of acquaintances, ranging across various disciplines and institutions, in whose research and interests I found both parallels and challenges to my own. Taking weekend trips with these new friends—Varanasi with an anthropologist, for instance, or Daulatabad Fort with an art historian—were experiences as intellectually stimulating as they were congenial.

PUNJABI LANGUAGE STUDY

Neelam Khoja | Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences | History and Culture of Muslim Societies Ph.D. Candidate

Rock Garden, Chandigarh

With the generous support of the South Asia Institute, I lived in Chandigarh—the first planned city in post-colonial India, capital of two provinces, Punjab and Haryana, and part of Union territory—for eight weeks this summer to study immersive, intensive Punjabi through the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS).

Over the course of eight weeks, I progressed from beginner's level Punjabi to a level of proficiency. For my final project, I read Bulleh Shah's (d. 1748) poetry, composed in Punjabi, and secondary material on Bulleh Shah's life. I listened to, transcribed, and translated Abida Parveen's selection of two of his poems. This culuminated in a seven page report in gurumukhi on Bulleh Shah's life and poetry in the context of 18th century Punjab and presented a thirty minute talk in Punjabi to the faculty and other students at the end of the program.

A figure like Bulleh Shah (d. 1748) provides an interesting perspective for my research. For my doctoral dissertation, I investigate changing perceptions of politics, power, language, and space in Punjab from 1707 to 1857. His poetry is exclusively in Punjabi, so his work was inaccessible to me prior to this language program. In reading secondary material on his life, in Punjabi, and his own compositions, I am able to see how some prominent Muslims, such as he, were able to be critical of the injustices they witnessed.

Because most of my primary sources are in Persian, I thought learning Punjabi would allow me ease of access to the libraries and archives in Punjab; but I quickly realized knowing Punjabi also gives me access to scholars and scholarship on Punjab who speak or write exclusively in Punjabi. I have identified many secondary works written in Punjabi that are relevant to my research. I can now be in conversation with scholars on Punjab who are not trained in the western academy will lead to more critical engagement on my part.

I am returning to Punjab this academic year, as a Fulbright Scholar. Having spent the summer in Chandigarh, with the generous support of SAI, I now have a network of scholars and friends to make my research year more productive and pleasant. Knowing Punjabi has also made it easier for me to have academic conversations with scholars on Punjab, who respect that I can speak to them in a language they are afraid is being eroded from the region. This summer was incredibly productive for me and my research, and it would not have been possible without the SAI Summer Language Grant.

TAMIL LANGUAGE STUDY

Tyler Richard | South Asian Studies, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences | PhD Candidate

Tyler and his teammates celebrate after a victorious cricket match at the local roller skating park.

Most doctoral students in South Asian studies don't go to India wondering whether they'll like it or not. In this sense, I suppose, you could say I was an exceptional case. The issue wasn't whether I liked South Asian culture. Of course, I did. I had spent the last five years dancing with Sanskrit literature and philosophy, struggling with its intricate footwork and occasionally swooning to its beauty and sophistication when I'd get parts right. I had spent whole weekends at home reading Mammata and many a trip to the grocery store muttering to myself as I memorized snippets of Sanskrit poetry. I even had to purchase another copy of Kalidasa's The Recognition of Shakuntala because my first copy fell apart from so much use. All this is to say that South Asian culture, especially those cultures that operated through Sanskrit, formed an intimate and meaningful part of my passions and my identity as a whole.

No, my worry was that my idea of India, one I had constructed almost solely through the close study of premodern texts, would in no way resemble the India (or more appropriately, an India) of today. More than that, I was afraid that I wouldn't like the India that I found abroad, that I would be in love with the bygone precursor of a culture rather than with the culture itself. And what would this preference mean for me, an American scholar of South Asian culture and an aspiring proponent and defender of Indian "heritage"?

It was partly in response to this worry that I decided to begin studying Tamil last year. In addition to boasting an extensive and lush classical past, Tamil is also a living language, gracing the tongues and minds of over 80 million speakers. My reasoning was that in learning Tamil—which would entail learning the cultural context surrounding it—I would eventually have to confront an India that existed beyond the gates of Harvard.

Thanks to Harvard's South Asian Institute, I was given just such an opportunity this summer, spending ten weeks studying Tamil language and culture in Madurai at the American Institute of Indian Studies. Here, I found an India radically different my own, not only because I was in South India where Sanskritic culture has left less of a mark, but also because I was in a setting that, unlike a volume of Sanskrit poetry, I couldn't just walk away from.

Instead, I was totally immersed in ways of living fundamentally different from my own.
Although I initially found the pace and intimacy of life in Madurai overwhelming, I eventually realized that unlocking the magic of the city required a new attitude towards life, to wake up and be ready and eager for what unexpected things the day had to offer, to see not accomplishing a task as just as positive an outcome as accomplishing it. Implementing

During a dinner in Chennai, Tyler runs into a professional M.G.R. impersonator; Tyler "holds his peace" at the Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai.

this state of mind, I was surprised to find that the most significant and meaningful portions of my language instruction occurred outside of the classroom in situations that arose organically. Joining a local yoga center, for instance, led to invitations to multiple birthday parties, where I learned that, in India, cake is served before the main course. In seeking out vintage Tamil movies, I discovered Madurai's Central Cinema, which offers three ticket classes, the lowest of which allows for smoking, a timepass that movie patrons would take advantage of as they threw their lit beedies at each movie's villain. Most unexpectedly, a decision to start up a random conversation with a waiter led to me starring as the host of an international robotics conference in a local Tamil film. With each of these experiences came opportunities for linguistic and personal growth, activities that often come as a pair when studying abroad.

My experiences this summer taught me that Tamil is much more than mere glossary and grammar. It is a form of life, and like any form of life, it is messy and full of surprises. Because of my time in Madurai this summer, India is no longer just a research interest. It is a place filled with familiar voices, odors, murals, and movie scores. The bustling streets of Madurai are imbued with past memories. One street corner hums with a past conversation with a flower seller about the weekly price fluctuation of jasmine, while the restaurant down the road resounds with past debates about the qualities of the perfect jigarthanda. Elsewhere, the ever-elusive 11B bus is on its way back to my old neighborhood from downtown.

Looking back at his trials and travails at the end of his journey back home to Greece, Tennyson's Ulysses remarks to himself, "I am a part of all that I have met." Looking back at my own experiences in Madurai this summer, I would agree with him, admitting I left my mark, albeit a small one, on the city and its inhabitants. I would add, however, that all that I met this summer is also a part of me. And as I return to the mundane rituals of my life in Cambridge, I carry with me small tokens of my summer in Tamil Nadu: a dramatically enhanced proficiency in Tamil; new lasting friendships with native Maduraians; a love for the unexpected and for the actor-politician M.G.R.; and most of all, a burning desire to return to an India that I now consider my own.

TAMIL LANGUAGE STUDY

Jason Smith | Committee on the Study of Religion, Harvard Divinity School | PhD Candidate

Tiruvalluvar statue off the coast of Kanyakumari

Thanks to generous funding from the Harvard University South Asia Institute, I spent my summer at the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) program in Madurai, where I enrolled in an eight-week course of intensive Tamil language study.

The AIIS program focuses on four major areas of language development: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Each day, two instructors led classes that emphasized each of these four areas. All of the instructors were native Tamil speakers, and they emphasized the use of Tamil as the primary language of instruction and classroom engagement. As a result, my listening comprehension and mastery of Tamil grammar improved greatly. Additionally, daily written journal entries improved my facility in written Tamil. These daily journal entries were corrected by the AIIS staff every day, and we dedicated at least one hour every week to reviewing and correcting errors in our written Tamil. Weekly radio listening classes and the use of Tamil as a model of instruction provided me with an opportunity to improve my listening comprehension. Finally, the AIIS staff provided us with a variety of reading materials each week, from newspaper articles to poetry to short stories. Reading from a wide variety of genres enabled me to strengthen my reading and interpretation skills as well as my ability to recognize the various literary styles that are available within the Tamil language.

Weekly tutorials with the teaching staff provided me with an opportunity to read some of the literary materials that will likely form the basis for my dissertation research. Primarily, my tutorials focused on a close reading of the Tirukkural by Tiruvalluvar and the Periya Puranam by Sekkilar. While the Periya Puranam is a major work of Śaiva poetry that recounts the lives of the 63 Tamil poet saints, the Tirukkural is well known to almost everyone in Tamil Nadu. You cannot travel in Tamil Nadu without encountering Tirukkural verses on bus walls, on the bumpers of auto rickshaws, or on any other number of public spaces. Reading the Tirukkural in Tamil while encountering it as a living text in everyday life in Tamil Nadu provided me not only with an excellent language-learning opportunity, but it showed me new directions for future research on the role of Tamil narrative literature in everyday life and religious practice.

Beyond the classroom, my experience of being in India was essential to furthering my language skills and developing my research interests. While the classroom instruction was excellent and greatly increased my knowledge of the Tamil language, the fact that I had regularly opportunities to speak Tamil with people in the city of Madurai was an essential part of my experience. Whether I was asking about food options at a local restaurant, seeking directions at the bus stand, or

Sunrise in Kanyakumari

chatting casually with the members of the gym near my house, I was constantly exposed to the Tamil language by living in Madurai and engaging with the community.

Additionally, my eight weeks in Tamil Nadu gave me enough time to venture outside of Madurai and explore some of the other regions of Tamil Nadu. One particularly memorable experience involved a weekend trip to Kanyakumari, situated at the southernmost tip of India. The city is an important site of pilgrimage and one of its most famous landmarks include a temple to the goddess Kanyakumari as well as a statue to none other than Tiruvalluvar, author of the Tirukkural. At the end of the program, I traveled to Puducherry (formerly known as Pondicherry), a former French colony and the site of several important centers of research. During my trip, I was able to visit several of these research institutes and connect with some of the most important scholars of Tamil literature. Such opportunities are essential for doctoral students, who often rely on these personal connections to secure future research opportunities.

All of this would not have been possible without generous funding from the South Asia Institute, and I am extremely grateful for their support of my continued scholarly development.

USING MOBILE TECHNOLOGY TO CHANGE SOCIETIES

With support from Harvard President's Innovation Fund for International Experiences and the Harvard South Asia Institute, the Using Mobile Technology to Change Societies Summer Program enabled Harvard college students to explore the potential of mobile technology to enable economic and social mobility in India.

The eight-week program brought the students to Ahmedabad, Delhi, and Bangalore, and combined academic coursework, experiential learning, and immersive experiences in India's varied contexts. Students followed a reading syllabus, wrote weekly reflections to readings and observations in the program blog, and attended weekly discussions to reflect on their observations with the program faculty. The program culminated in final presentations both in Bangalore and back on campus in Cambridge where the students presented their summer learnings.

The faculty coordinating this program were **Satchit Balsari**, *Fellow, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative*, **Rekha Jain**, *Executive Chairperson, IIMA-Idea Telecom Center of Excellence*, **Malavika Jayaram**, *Fellow at the Harvard Berkman Center for Internet & Society and Visiting Scholar at the Centre for International Security Studies and the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre, The University of Sydney*, **Tarun Khanna**, *Director of the Harvard South Asia Institute; Jorge Paulo Lemann Professor, HBS*, **JP Onnela,** *Assistant Professor, Department of Biostatistics, HSPH*, and **Arvind Sahay**, *Professor at Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.*

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY PARTICIPANTS

Diane Jung	Jana Care
Kais Khimji	EkStep
Pradeep Niroula	Jana Care
Eshaan Patheria	EkStep

JANA CARE
Diane Jung | Harvard College 2017 | Harvard Developmental and Regenerative Biology

Program visit to Microsoft TEM India.

This summer I spent two months with the South Asia Institute's Mobile Technology Program. The program was amazing!! We spent the first week in full lecture at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad with amazing professors who provided a comprehensive overview of the regulation, technology, and user adoption of mobile technology in India and other developing contexts. Even without a background in technology, I was equipped to fully engage with the rest of the program visiting and interning at various startups and organizations that use mobile technology to solve problems in the developing world. We visited organizations that actually had incredible impact on the world, from NGOs that were effectually trying to combat India's tuberculosis epidemic to startups that worked to integrate blue-collar workers into a more effective hiring system. In addition to visiting organizations, we interned at similar startups; I interned at a startup that used mobile phones to diagnose and prevent diabetes through a combination of new diagnostic technology app analytics.

Although I am not particularly set on pursuing the mobile technology field as a career option, the program still very much influenced my thoughts on my future trajectory. The faculty team was not only extremely supportive and personable, but also incredibly inspiring and instructive. Because the faculty was diverse professionally, we were exposed to a range of passions and career fields. Listening to and learning from their personal and professional stories and really getting to know the faculty as mentors was one of the highlights of the summer.

Not only was the program very instructive, India itself was an amazing experience! The program allowed the flexibility we needed to explore and experience India on our own. I not only enjoyed India's beauty but also India's thought-provoking aspects. Walking through the slums, taking historical tours, visiting temples, exploring urban centers and rural villages, all added to a culturally enriching experience. I was able to learn, experience, and reflect on society, religion, and human life in general.

EKSTEP

Kais Khimji | Harvard College 2017 | Social Studies

"

 We were fortunate to have access to Harvard's resources and network while in India and took full advantage of it.

"

I do not think I could have spent my sophomore summer in a more ideal way: studying and working in international development, surrounded by an interdisciplinary faculty all of which have some sort of connection to and confidence in technology, gaining professional experience at a "hot startup" and, lastly, doing all this in India—a place which, despite my Indian-origin, I have never previously traveled.

The structure of the SAI mobile technology program was a perfect way to acquaint myself with the telecom landscape of India—and the landscape of India, in general—as we spent time in three different cities: Ahmedabad, New Delhi and Bangalore. While we predominantly stayed in urban areas, we did undertake field visits to more rural and isolated regions. We were fortunate to have access to Harvard's resources and network while in India and took full advantage of it, receiving lectures from renown

professors at IIM-A, attending Harvard alumni dinners, visiting companies created by former Harvard students, and receiving internships at fast-paced startups.

Our first week involved a set of rigorous readings and lectures, and took place at the gorgeous IIM campus in Ahemdabad. We were taught by telecom policy experts such as Rekha Jain and Arvind Sahay. This week set the foundation for the rest of our time in India and gave us a lens through which to look at the rapidly unfolding technological development transpiring in South Asia. Trends which would seem unintuitive to Westerns were unpacked. For example, the concept that people were first getting on the internet through mobile phones, as opposed to laptops, was a very foreign idea to me, personally.

For the second week, we stayed in New Delhi and visited a myriad of organizations, ranging from incubators, to non-profit organizations, to large telecommunication companies. It was a very useful way to ground and visualize the abstract knowledge we had gained the previous week. We visited a number of Dr. Khanna's companies as well, including Aspiring Minds and Chai Point. In addition, we were fortunate to have intimate interactions with SEWA, the Self-Employed Women's Association, and Operation ASHA.

These two weeks served as ideal preparation for what was to be the highlight of our trip: interning at international development, tech-related startups in Bangalore. I spent six week at EkStep, a non-profit education startup founded by Nandan Nilekani—the man credited with the founding of Aadhaar. EkStep's mission was to roll out a mobile education platform teaching literacy and numeracy to primary students in India; its goal was to reach 200 million kids in half a decade. Ambitious, I know. My partner, Eshaan, and I were tasked with performing a comprehensive stakeholder analysis of the education ecosystem in India in order to help EkStep better understand the incentives of different players.

Along the way, we gained valuable professional experience, developed long-lasting friendships and, specifically for me, better instilled a life-long commitment to supporting the improvement of quality of life in the developing world. I am extremely thankful for having received this grant from the South Asia Institute as I otherwise would have been unable to travel to this part of the world. My summer would not have been half as intellectually enriching had I not been fortunate enough to receive this opportunity.

JANA CARE

Pradeep Niroula | Harvard College 2017 | Joint Concentration in Mathematics and Physics

I spent this summer in India through South Asia Institute's Mobile Technology Summer program. We studied the Indian telecommunication industry and the ways mobile phones and internet are changing the socio-economic constructs. I witnessed technology empowering women, enhancing healthcare delivery and promoting financial inclusion. Indian government's Digital India initiative is a mere testament of how crucial technological growth and information science is in this homeland of world's one-fifth population.

I was particularly fascinated by the Aadhar Unique Identification project. In what could become the world's largest technological intervention to address social issues, the Aadhar project and its implementation reflects both the magnitude of problems like financial inclusion in India and the technological might India possesses to alleviate them. While a technology based solution may offer several benefits through the unprecedented coverage of telecommunication, it is to be understood that technology can only serve as an enabler instead of a panacea. Problems like corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency which Aadhar project aims to eliminate are deep-rooted institutional problems and they will need reforms in an institutional level.

I was also interested by the Net-Neutrality debate in India. This debate emerged differently in India than it did in US and other developed countries. While the major issue of contention in the US was speed of data transmission, access to the Internet became the primary issue in India. A larger portion of Indian population is out of Internet connectivity and the proponents of differential pricing and zero-rating claim that shifting the burden of price from customers to the content-providers will make Internet cheaper and more accessible. The urban users objected on grounds of freedom of choice. This debate demonstrates how a single blanket policy might not adequately govern this market with a vast disparity of connectivity between urban or high income users and rural low income users.

I spent most of the summer working for JanaCare which is a health-care startup developing solutions for diabetes control. It did not come as a surprise to me that the prevalence of chronic diseases and diabetes in India is soaring. The upward economic mobility of India and the ensuring rise in sedentary life and unhealthy diet has made the Indian population very vulnerable to diabetes. Among the several barriers to proper diabetes control is the economic burden. Diabetes control requires patients to monitor their health and change their dietary lifestyle. Patients find it expensive to make periodic doctor visits and to regularly monitor their health. Furthermore, since the hospitals here have to deal with a very large number of patients every day, a patient gets to spend very little time with the health-care providers and it is well-nigh impossible to find personalized health-care.

JanaCare has developed a portable laboratory called Aina device which provide instantaneous laboratory blood test result with a smartphone. Patients now can take several specialized and expensive readings from home. The Aina device is complemented with the Habits program which provide a comprehensive lifestyle changing guidelines. Habits program has a series of educational material to teach diabetes patients about proper health practices. The teaching component is complemented by a tracking component which allows patients to keep track of their diet and physical activity. The Habits program also provides a coach who provides feedbacks to patients about their progress. The Habits program, Aina device, the coach and the doctors together create an ecosystem which provides support to patients and encourages them to be more responsible of their health.

We also studied the doctors' adoption of mobile technology and services like Habits. We found that the medical industry is pretty inertial and there is a fraction of doctors wary of the technological intrusion to their profession. Others were enthusiastic about it and were already using communication services like Whatsapp and Facebook for prescription and followup.

The nature of telecommunication has it made possible quick delivery of services to a large population spread across a large geographic area. The ubiquity of mobile phones and mobile internet has made the telecommunication a new frontier of economic and social development. However, technology is a mere facilitator and not an elixir to all adversity. It would be injudicious to solely rely of technology to reinforce development without making reforms in the institutional level.

EKSTEP

Eshaan Patheria | Harvard College 2018 | Physics

A mobile payment kiosk in Ahmedabad.

I spent my summer learning about how mobile phones have impacted development in my home country: India. Growing up between Ireland and India, I witnessed how mobile phones integrated into society in both developed country and developing country contexts. I believe my summer experience helped me craft two new ways of thinking to understand and figure out how mobile phones may impact development: 1) to look at a mobile phone abstractly (a node in a network with many inputs and outputs) to determine its non-obvious uses in what look like non-applicable contexts 2) to analyze the social fabric to determine how to best weave the technology into it. I hope to continuously develop these skills (through reading, writing, discussion and eventually action), and I believe that my summer laid a strong base for this future work.

As a student of Physics who hopes to address the problems of society's massive energy constraint, I see a deep and fundamental connection between the problems and solutions I encountered this summer and the problem I hope to address. Most importantly, over the past few months I was able to engage with these problems first and second-hand: beginning with my week at the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad, transitioning to multiple case-studies in Delhi, and closing with a six-week internship at EkStep (Nandan Nilekani's new ed-tech start up). These experiences repeatedly immersed me in the nuances and complexity of how some innovation or abstraction lands itself and succeeds in the Indian (or developing country) market rife with institutional voids, trust deficits, disparity and contradictions.

In Ahmedabad, a visit to the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) business venture "RUDI" (Rural Distribution Network) shook the foundations of my prior understanding and preconceptions of development enterprises. Often, particularly from a western academic perspective, the concept of development work is seen as altruistic – "helping others who cannot help themselves." To some extent this is true: after all, citizens of developing countries do lack basic healthcare and education that further contributes to poverty: a "poverty trap". However, RUDI, a massive food sales and distribution network that cuts out the corrupt middle-men from the market is run entirely by villagers themselves (more specifically women from these villages called "Rudibens"). RUDI achieves multiple development goals: it increases digital literacy (mobile phones are a key part of their system), decreases gender inequality and empowers women, promotes fair trade and stifles corruption. However, to the women who run RUDI, these are all just unintended byproducts. In fact, when we asked them, they appeared surprise –unaware of all of these amazing outcomes. Their focus is on RUDI's financial success: repayment of loans, optimizing customer service and minimizing costs. RUDI achieves the highly sought after "development" simply by training and facilitating Indians themselves to work together to solve problems.

RUDI is now a powerful reference point for me to understand and enable the unique ingenuity (or "jugaad") of the Indian people (more broadly, citizens of developing countries). When I consider how I hope to tackle energy problems in the future, armed (hopefully) with a Physics degree from the West, I believe (because of the foundational skill-set and way of thinking I took away from this summer) I will have developed the skill-set to best marry my academic understanding of the problem with the on-the-ground accelerators and complexity in India. I am extremely grateful to SAI for my summer, and for helping to shape and develop my "thinking" about problems I hope to tackle in the future.

SAI RESEARCH GRANT REPORTS

Hardeep Dhillon at a coffee house in Lucknow conducting research.

Jama Masjid, Delhi

Harvard South Asia Institute research grants are awarded to students pursuing field research on specific topics that could contribute to a thesis or dissertation and to students who have done preliminary work on the topic.

SAI RESEARCH GRANT RECIPIENTS

Mou Banerjee	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Asad Liaqat	Punjab Province, Pakistan
Jeff Bryant	New Delhi, India	Muhammad Zia Mehmood	Punjab Province, Pakistan
Rohit Chandra	New Delhi, Kolkata, Asansol, Ranchi, and Dhanbad, India	Maung Nyeu	Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh
Fletcher Coleman	Urumqi, China	Jonathan Phillips	Bihar and Jharkhand, India
Sutopa Dasgupta	Kolkata, India and Dhaka, Bangladesh	Maria Qazi	Islamabad, Lahore, and Quetta, Pakistan
Rakesh Dass	Oxford, United Kingdom	Mircea Raianu	Pune, Kolkata, Jamshedpur, and Mumbai, India
Ishani Desai	Varanasi and Juhapura, India	Sarika Gupta Ringwala	Delhi, India
Hardeep Dhillon	Lucknow, Chenai, Mumbai, and Delhi, India	Jigyasa Sharma	Bangalore and Hyderabad, India
Joshua Ehrlich	Delhi, India	Niharika Singh	Pakistan
Michael Haggerty	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Divya S. Sooryakumar	Chhattisgarh, India
Madhav Khosla	Delhi, India		

SUBALTERN BENGALI MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIAN CONVERSION CONTROVERSIES IN THE 19th CENTURY

Mou Banerjee | Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences | PhD Candidate in History

Professor Firdous Azim introducing Mou Banerjee to the audience at BRAC.

The Muslim "ajlaf" community, centred mostly in the eastern part of the Bengal Presidency (present day Bangladesh) had a very rich, culturally vibrant life, articulated in what is called Musalmani-Bengali or dobashi Bengali. I have been trying to incorporate vernacular sources from Muslim intellectuals in order to counterbalance the range of archival sources dealing with elite Hindu or Brahmo opinions on Christianity and conversion, from western Bengal. I have been fascinated by the stray glimpses of street-market chapbooks with polemics and apologetics against Christian proselytization, which circulated amongst the poorer Muslim communities in Bengal.

Since a number of these chapbooks and fragile Muslim periodicals were available at the Dhaka University's Rare Books and Archives section, I wanted to go to Dhaka this summer and read carefully as many of these rare

chapbooks I could find. I believed that this research would help me to incorporate these sources chronicling the lives of subaltern Bengali Muslims in my dissertation chapter on the Bengali Muslim public sphere and its relationship to Christian evangelicalism.

This was my second visit to Dhaka, and just like the first time, I was overwhelmed by the hospitality of the Bangladeshi people, wherever I went. The affection of my hostess and host, Prof. Firdous Azim and her husband the renowned architect Bashirul Haque, made my life and work in Dhaka as stress-free and enjoyable as possible. Prof. Zabed Ahmed, the Chief Librarian the Dhaka University Library and Alo Apa and Didi in the Rare Books section found for me the fragile manuscripts and facilitated the reprographic services for the documents I needed – my research in Dhaka would not have been possible without their assistance, understanding and support.

I have managed to assemble almost the entire printed corpus of one of the main figures I wanted to know about – a self-taught tailor who became the leader of the movement at the forefront of ajlaf Muslim backlash against Christian proselytizing efforts. Ranging from a series of debates with British missionaries, printed in the form of questions and answers, to ruminating on the evangelical Christian misreading of the Quran, to thinking about the plight of widowed Muslim women - Munshi Meherullah's diverse intellectual interests and highly engaging straightforward prose, enlivened with rustic humour, provides the historian with a startling view into the operation of low and medium thought in the subaltern public sphere among the Muslim peasantry and artisan class in Eastern Bengal towns like Jessore and Rajshahi, away from the intellectual elite Brahmo and Muslim discourses prevalent in the imperial capital Calcutta.

My archival research has often been very fruitful and exciting, but also very lonely. This trip to Dhaka was a bright exception – I felt very safe, very well taken care of, and I made friends whose kindness I shall always cherish. Prof. Firdous Azim, my hostess, is the Chair of the Dept. of English and Humanities at BRAC University, and at her kind invitation I gave a talk at the university on a chapter from my dissertation. The wonderful feedback I received has subsequently helped me to substantially rewrite my chapter.

As always, I am deeply grateful to the South Asia Institute. I thank SAI's benefactors, members and staff, who have, over the last four years, unstintingly helped me in every way to make my research possible. Thank you all, so very much.

BCURE PILOT PROJECT TO INVESTIGATE THE ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE PROCESS IN INDIA

Jeff Bryant | Harvard Business School and Harvard Kennedy School | MBA/MPP Joint-Degree 2017

Horse wagon outside hotel lobby

This January I assisted the New Delhi office of Harvard's Evidence for Policy Design (EPoD) Initiative to implement a "big data" empirical analysis of the environmental clearance process to improve transparency and spur economic development. Specifically, our team worked closely with the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) to analyze data provided by industries to design a data-driven method to identify industries that should be prioritized for fast tracking of clearances and those that should be flagged as potential non-compliers who should undergo a more rigorous screening process. This project sought to address the long delays faced by industries who want to pursue new business opportunities, while ensuring necessary due diligence takes place to make sure environmental sustainability goals are met.

During my time there I was able to compile a large dataset of environmental and forest clearances across all Indian states going back to 1980, standardize the various formatting conventions and merge in information on pollution levels, population and other demographic information. From this information we were able to identify key patterns of delays that we could then take to the CII and the Ministry of Environment and Forests for discussion. The hope is that this, as well as other EPoD projects in India, will kick-start the partnership between EPoD and the Indian government and aid in the improvement of governance.

Learning how the Indian government operated from the inside alongside several talented researchers and professors was fascinating. But, perhaps the most rewarding part of the trip was the immersive experience that I gained each day walking the streets of Delhi and exploring the city. I would wake up in the morning and walk out of my hotel in Mansingh and walk through the local market on the way to the metro. If I was lucky the neighborhood auto-rickshaw driver, who I had befriended at the beginning of the trip, would putter by and offer me a lift. Then I would enter the metro station and after changing lines at Central Secretariat I would emerge at Haas Khaz and negotiate another auto to my office in Shapur Jat, one of Delhi's many village-zoned neighborhoods. Here the convergence of old and new was quite dramatic as large orderly highways gave way to a tangled web of small streets and shops, which ranged from unassuming lunch spots where one could purchase a substantial meal for less than $1 to high-end fashion boutiques with dresses beginning at $600 apiece. This illustrated a surprising realization that the stuck with me throughout my trip, that India is a land of unsegregated extremes. You can have staggering poverty right next to the most opulent building in the city or find captivating beauty in the middle of a wasteland. This is the biggest thing I will remember forever.

EVOLVING STATE CAPITALISM: THE INDIA COAL SECTOR

Rohit Chandra | Harvard Kennedy School | PhD in Public Policy 2017

The main building of the Indian School of Mines in Dhanbad

I spent the majority of this summer continuing my dissertation work on the Indian coal sector. I spent about a month and a half in Delhi, splitting time between working on contemporary coal policy issues by interviewing people at the Ministry of Coal, and working on historical issues by looking through government archives and interviewing retired coal sector professionals. With SAI's help, I also spent three weeks in the coal belt between Kolkata, Asansol, Ranchi and Dhanbad.

These three weeks were a combination of archival hunting and field interviews. In Kolkata I visited the Geological Survey of India Library, which contains almost a hundred years of proceedings and technical documents from India's public sector geological research organisation. In Dhanbad I spent time at the Indian School of Mines library, beginning the digitization one of my primary sources, a weekly coal journal published out of the region. In Ranchi, I spent time at the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute, the main public sector coal research body, finding useful documents among their collections. I also conducted interviews in Kolkata, Asansol, Dhanbad and Ranchi with both current and retired employees of both public and private coal companies. The goal of these interviews was to elicit their personal career trajectories, as well as their narratives regarding larger trends in the Indian coal sector.

India's coal sector has been in serious flux recently; between scandals in the allocation of coal blocks, opening the sector to commercial mining, shortages of coal at power plants, and the IPO of Coal India (India's public sector coal company), the last five years have brought the sector into almost daily headlines. As a sector dominated by government companies, but with increasing private involvement over the last twenty years, it is one of the latecomers to the larger liberalization moves that began in the early 1990s. India's coal tends to be concentrated in the eastern part of the country, and it is debatable whether the states containing the natural resources have benefited from their endowments. After the sector was nationalized in the early 1970s, the Central government has retained ownership of all coal bearing lands, which has led to many federal disputes about the resources and where its advantages tend to aggregate.

Perhaps the most interesting part of my interviews was talking to older coal employees who had worked in the sector both prior to and after nationalization. Labour policies, technology procurement, local politics and patterns of industrialization were all affected by this decision. These stories were perhaps the most rewarding part of my time in India.

OF BIRDS AND BONES-- CROSS CULTURAL EXCHANGE OF ARTISTIC MOTIFS AND THE RISE OF EARLY MEDIEVAL BUDDHIST PRAXIS

Fletcher Coleman | History of Art and Architecture, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences | PhD Candidate 2018
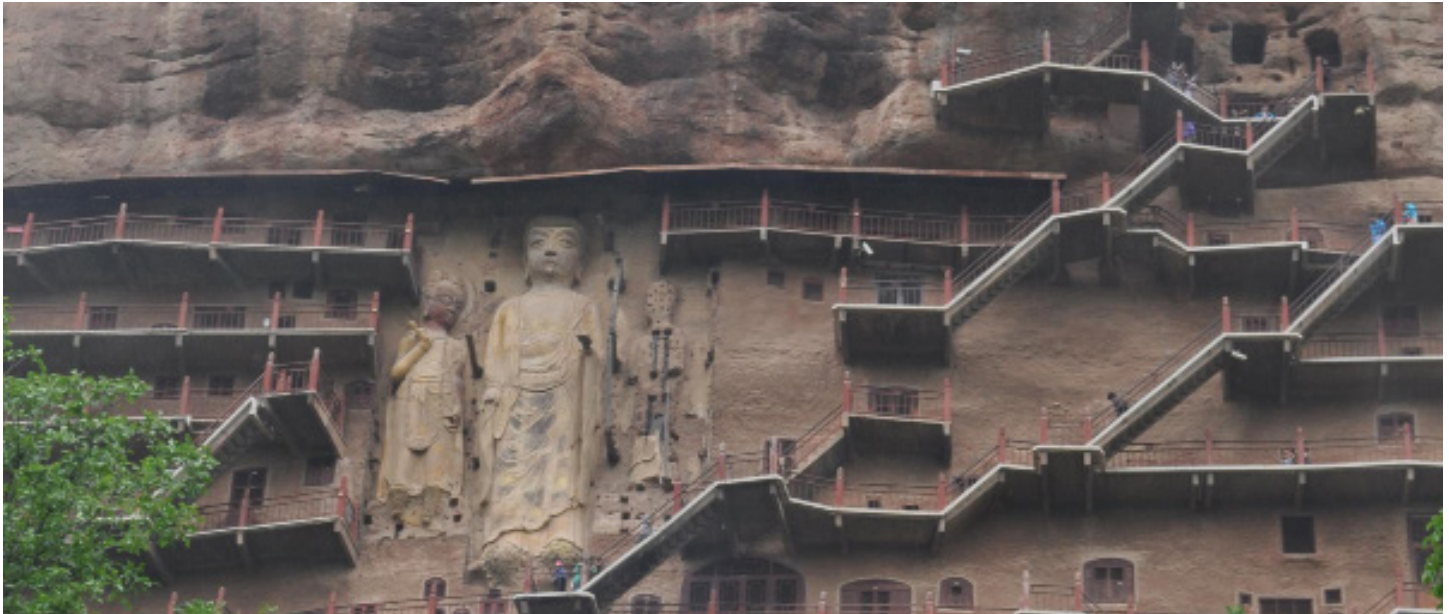
The Caves at Maijishan

With the support of the South Asia Institute, I was able to chart an exciting and enriching journey during the months of June and July from the borders of western China all way the back to Beijing. Entering into the third year of my doctoral program in art history, my research focuses on the religious and artistic exchange occurring between Northern India, the Gandhara region of Central Asia, and Western China that led to the blossoming of complex Buddhist visual programs during the early medieval period (ca. 4th-6th c. C.E.). My summer excursion was designed to conduct preliminary fieldwork at the major cave-temple sites associated with this period that stretch across China. Site by site, I slowly made my way back from the western border to the capital, also pausing to visit major provincial museums housing cultural relics associated with my project.

My summer project was set in motion with a flight from Beijing to Urumqi, the major city of northwest China. Although not home to any of my target cave sites, research at the major museums in the Urumqi, in particular the Uighur Autonomous Region Museum, provided the framework for my subsequent excursions in western China. My days in Urumqi were also punctuated with some unexpected pleasures of fieldwork that included interacting with the Uighur community and spending several days participating in Ramadan activities with a local family.

Following my time in Urumqi, I made my way via carrier plane to Kucha—the local access hub to my first field site, Kizil. The area surrounding Kucha is home to many important cave-temple sites—most famously Kizil, a cluster of several hundred Buddhist caves developed progressively beginning in the 4th century C.E. During my time in the area, I explored the site layout and main caves of Kizil, searching for evidence amongst cave murals of particular motifs that I have traced back to Central Asia and India. The evolution of these motifs not only sheds light on the cultural interactions occurring in China's western regions, but also on the development of early Buddhist penitential and meditative practices.

The next leg of my research took me via plane, train, and boat to the cave temples at Binglingsi and Maijishan in China's Gansu province. Stationing myself in the cities of Lanzhou and Tianshui, I similarly made my way to these two sites and their associated research academies to visit the major caves related to my work. My time at Maijishan proved particularly fruitful, as I was able to enter one of the most famous caves within the mountain and examine a Buddhist stele in-situ that has been the subject of much scholarly debate. Once again, I had an unexpected and enlightening encounter at Binglingsi. After entering the main caves, I learned of a secondary cave site and "Potala Temple" situated

The Caves at Binglingsi

about a mile into a ravine. There, I met a Tibetan Buddhist monk who had been on-site for many decades and introduced me to a number of less explored late-imperial caves.

The last major segment of my excursion took me back through central China via train, with stops at Xi'an, Taiyuan, and finally Datong. In Xi'an and Taiyuan, I was able to further my research on several important sarcophagi and steles at the provincial museums of Shaanxi and Shanxi, along with the Forest of Steles Museum. My in-person encounters with these objects led to several new discoveries furthering my current project. Lastly, I traveled to the caves at Yungang, just outside of the city of Datong, to visit three caves that formed the core of my most recent research project. Here, I examined the role of the Brahmin ascetic figure as a motif in visual programs of the early medieval period—the primary focus of my current work. After completing the final leg of my fieldwork, I returned exhausted and satisfied to Beijing before departing for the States.

The fourth and fifth centuries truly ushered in a great tide of cultural change across China. As political upheaval and military turmoil intermittently gave way to a periods of tense peace between regional powers, religious, political, and artistic practice flowered amongst the influx of new systems and styles pouring in from Central Asia. The support I received from the South Asia Institute for on-site research was crucial to advancing my research on the intricacies of this time period and further revealing the links between penitential practice and the function of early Buddhist visual programs.

TRANSMISSION HISTORY OF COURT POET BHARATCHANDRA'S CORPUS

Sutopa Dasgupta | Committee on the Study of Religion, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences | PhD Candidate 2016

> **This reception history enabled me to catch a small glimpse of the cultural consciousness of the poet, and also his projected audiences.**

This summer SAI funded my travel to conduct archival research in the transmission history of court poet Bharatchandra's corpus, dating from the early eighteenth century in Bengal. I studied several manuscript editions of the epic poem Annadamangal, (the topic of my research), as well as editions of the excerpted Vidya Sundar, which has been the most popular and more widely circulated of his work. Circulation history revealed that the first illustrations produced in the printing presses newly installed in Kolkata were of scenes from the Vidya Sundar.

Moreover, archives in Dhaka revealed editions of the poem that were set to different music than what I'd found in Kolkata, suggesting that there were interpolations during the transmission of the text. The musical influences of local folk songs of the time (mostly Baul inspired) were much more prominent than the padavali inflected melodies of the original score directed by Bharatchandra. This may suggest that there were audiences for the work in both court assemblies and more public, everyday arenas such as the marketplaces of Bengal.

I was also able to do more translation work in collaboration with a few scholars, and traced the extent to which Bharatchandra's work is indebted to not only Sanskrit sources, but Persian as well. This reception history enabled me to catch a small glimpse of the cultural consciousness of the poet, and also his projected audiences.

Additionally, despite colonial era transitions, despite the turmoil of changing governments, and 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 be familiar with its music and its lyrics, orally transmitted in temples and at public events. Publishing houses kept up the supply of this text to meet a popular demand. Questions that arise from this window into the transmission history suggest the deeper impact of this work on the popular imagination. Bharatchandra's writing, to scholars today, seem overly ornate, extremely literary and over-the-top aestheticized. This, in turn, scholars speculate, suggests an elite, courtly audience, a narrower strata of society, one removed from everyday concerns. However, the circulation record and the ways in which the text was interpolated and, in some cases, musically amended attest to a much wider audience. Perhaps what scholars think of as elite and courtly, in fact, was not. Certainly this changes how one would categorize the Annadamangal—not only as courtly literature, but also as popular literature, that brings with it all the intersectional influences across social tiers that one would normally not expect a court poem to have.

This provides a substantial shift in my perspective as I study the Annadamangal. It's popular audiences were targeted by the poet deliberately (though it was first commissioned for a courtly elite) and shapes my understanding of what the poet's intentions were and how the text is variously coded, reaching an audience that as diverse as its historical moment.

Translation Choices Shaped by Hindu-Christian Debates

Rakesh Dass | Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences | ThD Candidate

In my application to the South Asia Institute, I proposed to examine the works of Baptist missionaries stored at the Angus Library with the following questions in mind: To what extent did Hindu-Christian debates shape translation choices? Why were neologisms in Hindi introduced in Biblical translations? The missionaries' need to educate members of society – and many pupils came from upper class and caste families that valued education – and the need to convert occasionally conflicted. How were these conflicts resolved in translations and sermons? What do accounts of conversions, recorded in the letters, reports, and journals of the missionaries, tell us about the social impact of translation choices?

I am happy to report that I have made valuable progress in finding some answers to these questions.

After some visa delays in the summer of 2015, I

Outside Regent Park College

found myself on a flight to London on September 12, 2015. After arriving, I made my way to Oxford and settled into accommodations at Rewley Abbey Court. Oxford is a great city for academics and, as I have variously described it to others, being an academic at Oxford is like being a kid in a candy store: there is so much to do and see and explore and enjoy. I did explore the city and university, but, of course, I was in Oxford for another purpose. So, after settling-in a bit, I made my way to the Angus Library with an introductory letter in hand and a research plan in mind. I quickly registered as a researcher with the Library at Regent's Park College and started my work soon thereafter.

Angus's collection is divided into three major types of literature: personal journals, letters (among missionaries and between the missionaries and their sending societies), and official and non-official reports of activities sent to the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS).

I began the research by collating these materials by relevance to my project. This step involved identifying those journals, letters, and reports that are most attentive to translation work and related issues. The Baptist missionaries kept a lot of records, including travel journals, financial arrangements, statements of day-to-day matters, accounts of housing conditions and staff management, reflections on challenges they faced, and official reports to BMS.

Sorting through these materials, I identified a few key sources. Chief among them were the first journal of William Carey (written from June 13, 1793 to June 14, 1795), Carey's letters to his associates at Serampore and the BMS, and reports from the Bible Translation Society (BTS, a Baptist society).

For my studies, I focused particularly on entries and correspondences that dealt with translations or translation-related issues, with special attention to translation work into Hindi. The research has led to some interesting findings, some of which are mentioned below. These findings are preliminary in nature but nevertheless constitute valuable signposts to understand the translation work of the Baptist missionaries.

One of the first facts I have discovered is Carey's belief that opposition to translating and producing Christian materials into vernaculars, and Hindi in particular, was political rather that religious in nature. The nature of "political" and "religious" in Carey's assessment of opposition to translations is a bit unclear, but his writings suggest two issues. There was government opposition to the distribution of religious tracts on grounds that they complicated government efforts

The Angus Library and Archive

at non-sectarian primary and secondary education. Further, local leaders were suspicious of translations because they could undermine the status quo. As an instance, Carey writes of a desire to translate the Vedas so that he could use the local vernacular to show the authority of the Bible over that of the Vedas. Second, translations played an important part in missionary activities because early local Christian communities were made up of converts from lower classes and castes. Vernaculars helped the missionaries connect with non-Sanskritic forms of worship, preach to different religious communities, and tap into local religious currents. Debates on salvation and Christ with Hindu and Muslim leaders, and the constant struggle faced by the missionaries against deeply-embedded customs and festivals, shaped not only vernacular tracts but was a crucial reason why these missionaries invested so much of their limited resources toward translations.

Third, translations helped missionaries bridge the gap between their Christian message and other 'hospitable' faiths. One of the earliest Christian communities that Carey established, for instance, was made up mostly of Muslim converts who were approached on grounds that they shared a common heritage with Christians and recognized Christians as people of the book. In oneincident noted in Carey's first journal, Carey is debating a Muslim audience. One Muslim leader questions the position of Christ vis-à-vis Mohammed by describing Christ as the spirit of God compared to Mohammed who is called the friend of God. In response, Carey's assistant asks the Muslims whether it is not the case that your spirit or soul is higher than your friend. Such debates happened in vernaculars (in Bengali, in this case). Further, the early congregation of Muslim converts to which Carey ministered used Bengali and needed vernacular tracts. Hence, Carey started translating the Bible soon after settling in India.

Finally, my research also revealed the important role that local partners and assistants played in the translation work of these Baptist missionaries. Throughout Carey's first journal, for instance, we find references to his dependence on his local munshi (or, clerk) to learn Bengali, improve his translations, and do evangelistic work. For most of his early months in India, Carey could not speak proper Bengali and was unable to preach. His munshi translated and spoke for him. It is evident that the work in Serampore depended much on local clerks and assistants. Yet, the relation between missionaries and their clerks was asymmetrical. In Carey's correspondences, for instance, he refers simply to "Moonshee," a man – and the assistant was most likely a man – about whom further details are sparse. Munshis were local collaborators and, sometimes, managers, but a munshi and his boss were not equals. [For a rich telling of the role of munshis and their relationship with their sahibs, see Sisir Kumar Das, Sahibs and Munshis: An Account of the College of Fort William (New Delhi: Orion Publications, 1978)].

MENSTRUAL PRACTICES AND SANITARY PAD ADOPTION IN GUJARAT

Ishani Desai | Harvard Kennedy School | MPA/ID

While traveling to Varanasi, I was excited to see "ladies toilets". It may not be ideal, but it's a start.

While I was working in India, I quickly realized the difficulties women face in the public space. It's tough to find public washrooms for women—especially clean ones. Even in the workplace, properly equipped washrooms are a rare find. I remember countless discussions (complaints, rather) with my female colleagues on the poor hygiene in public washrooms and the lack of dustbins. This led me to wonder, "What do Indian women do during menstruation?"

After some initial research, I learned that women's menstrual hygiene needs are a central and neglected problem in developing countries. In India, the majority of women use reusable cloth to absorb menstrual blood, while many still use rags, newspapers, leaves, dirt, or nothing at all. A study on menstrual management in India found that 88% used unsanitary cloth during menstruation. Traditional practices, such as the use of rags and cloth, also impair physical mobility and reduce productivity since it takes time to wash cloth. Previous work has shown that many women in developing countries struggle to find appropriate space to clean cloth during menses, which impact their work and school participation negatively, and contributes to further health problems. Furthermore, in India, menstruation is not openly discussed, creating further ignorance about sensitive issues that significantly impact a large segment of the population in both rural and urban areas. In my mind, the solution was to educate women and provide them information on alternatives, such as the sanitary pad. However, there were many concerns with promoting pads: infrastructure limitations, such as access to dustbins and waste facilities, cost considerations, and availability/access to shops that sold these products.

I was curious to delve deeper into these issues and thanks to funding from the South Asia Institute, I was able to go to Ahmedabad, Gujarat in January 2015 to conduct focus group discussions and do exploratory research to better understand menstrual practices in India. With the help of a local NGO called SAATH, I was able to hold focus group discussions with Hindu and Muslim women in Juhapura, a large urban slum in Ahmedabad.

Having worked on randomized controlled trials in agriculture and finance before, I had led focus group discussions and felt confident about my survey instrument. During my first session, however, I realized this was not going to be as easy as asking about crops and savings accounts. Most of the women had never spoken about these very personal issues so why would they speak to me? I tried to make the mood lighter and talked to the women about why I was doing this work. I even personally answered each question before asking them to answer. We shared stories on the first time we learned about menstruation, how we dealt with our first periods, and how we react when we see pad commercials on

This was a after my second focus group discussion in Juhapura. This time, I was able to speak with younger college-aged girls.

the television. The seemingly formal discussion turned into an engaging and moving conversation – we shared laughs and empathized with one another; thankfully, I recorded everything to go back to fill in the gaps in my notes.

By the end of each focus group, I could feel the positive energy and excitement in the room—the women wanted to continue the dialogue and start a conversation outside of the group. I went in with preconceived notions and came out of each discussion learning something new. The biggest takeaway for me was the complexity of the issue at hand— there is so much more work to be done. While I thought infrastructure was a large barrier, I learned that it is not the main barrier. Most of the women I spoke with used sanitary pads and even had access to proper washrooms in their schools—yet they still felt a sense of discomfort and shame and chose to miss school. The cultural barriers were even more apparent when we discussed pad advertisements on television and purchasing female products from male shopkeepers.

I gained so many insights from these discussions, and learned much more than I would have from reading an academic paper. The SAI Grant has helped me start an important dialogue….And I know this is just the beginning.

Summer Research in Lucknow, India

URDU POETRY AND LITERATURE ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

Hardeep Dhillon | History, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences | PhD Candidate

This summer, a grant from the South Asia Institute generously supported my archival research in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh. Lucknow, a city now marked by the presence of two vast parks built by the former Chief Minister Mayawati Prabhu Das, the tales and history of nawabi culture, Urdu poetry and literature, and proclaimed as the home of India's best kabobs, remains a pivotal site for both the historical and contemporary examination of Muslim politics and history in north India.

Nawabi patronage of Urdu poetry and literature, the growth of Islamic institutions such as Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama, and the contemporary rise of Muslim organizations such as the All India Muslim Women Personal Law Board distinguish Lucknow as a landscape and nexus of many Muslim cultural, religious and nationalist movements. While many social, political, and cultural

> **The friendship of numerous individuals provided support not only through the rigors of study but also the hours required to stay alert in conversations had under the beating sun and in rooms without fans in small markets and libraries across Lucknow.**

histories have been written in relation to modern Muslim movements in north India, the question of Muslim women's contribution and involvement in such movements remains largely peripheral in contemporary scholarship (with the exception of a handful of women scholars). Moreover, contemporary political movements directed by some orthodox Muslims around the protection of Muslim personal law, have obscured questions of historical significance related to the development of citizenship, secularism, minority issues and rights, etc. in the context of South Asia. Mainstream opinions and arguments continue to rely on teleological readings of Muslim difference in India. In such readings, difference is pinned to religion (particularly Hinduism and Islam) and religion is then utilized as a common-sense rationale for the need and development of differential rights for Indian citizens. These interpretations obscure the myriad possibilities that existed (and continue to exist) in relation to the rights and place of minorities, including Muslims, in South Asia, and how such minority status itself remains a category constructed through historic sociopolitical processes.

Moving away from such teleological readings, my archival research this summer focused on exploring the various spaces within and across Muslim communities related to questions of religion, politics, gender, secularism, etc. My journey took me through the archives of Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama, small bookstores in the markets of Chowk and Aminabad, and state archives. Moreover, the pursuit of personal archives in order to bring to life the contributions and participation of Muslim women opened me to the modest non-governmental sector of Lucknow. With the assistance of various organizations, I located a series of women who had been influential actors in the sociopolitical landscape of north India. Conversations with Muslim women who have formerly served in political office following the Partition and independence of India and Pakistan, and on various NGO committees, highlighted the potential loss of many histories and the exclusions that characterize formal archives.

Initial guidance from Sugata Bose and Seema Alavi, and the friendship of numerous individuals provided support not only through the rigors of study but also the hours required to stay alert in conversations had under the beating sun and in rooms without fans in small markets and libraries across Lucknow. Most importantly, this archival work allowed me to further explore the parameters of future dissertation work. I am thankful to the South Asia Institute for providing the support necessary to conduct this research.

HISTORY OF INDIAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT 1970s - 1980s

Hardeep Dhillon | History, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences | PhD Candidate

Hardeep Dhillon

In the 1970s and 1980s, Indian women emerged on the national and global stage to give voice to issues directly impacting them. The base of the women's movement in India expanded beyond the middle-class. Rape, sexual harassment, equality in the workforce, prostitution, and the concept of women's rights as human rights emerged on the political forefront and lead to critical revisions in existing law. This time period also saw the development of India's first antirape campaign following the Supreme Court of India's judgment in Tukaram v. the State of Maharashtra (1979) leading to the revision of rapes laws in 1983-4. Unfortunately, current histories on India have failed to account for the women who served as agents of change in these social and political struggles.

This past winter, the South Asia Institute's winter grant generously supported my research project which

aimed to provide a window into the history of the Indian women's movement in the 1970s-80s through the eyes of women activists. Traveling through Chennai, Mumbai, and Delhi over four weeks, I conducted oral histories with Madhu Kishwar, Sonal Shukla, Vibuti Patel, Nandita Gandhi, and Yasmin Khan (amongst others). While some of these women have established their legacies through their intellectual and academic works, women's journals, and editorials, their contribution to the women's movement as activists, their personal experiences, reflections and insights on women's activism in the 1970s and onwards has yet to be well-documented. This project has allowed the stories of some of these women to be told, recorded, and documented in history. Moreover, through my collaboration with the Sound and Picture Archives for Research on Women (SPARROW), an archive on women's history in Mumbai, each oral history will also be made publicly available by the end of the year. While conducting these oral histories, I inquired about a range of issues – both general and particular.

Questions I investigated include the biographies of women activists, their initial turn towards gender issues, the gender issues they saw and currently see at stake in India, and their own lived experiences as activists and intellectuals. The oral histories I completed over the span of four weeks explored the complex and intricate connections between the women's movement and leftist politics, the institutional development of women's groups in India, domestic and international collaboration amongst women, and the development of women's activism beyond the middle class and upper caste segments of society. As a historian in training, I envision these oral histories as one avenue in which the past, present, and future of the women's movement could be bridged in order to develop new insights on gender issues in India. While this project is limited in scope to women's activism across two decades, it has provided new insights on my larger doctoral project which investigates the question of Muslim women's citizenship in India. For it is also within these two decades that legal cases such as Shah Bano v. Ahmed Khan (1985) and the Rameeza Bee rape case in Hyderabad brought national attention to the political and legal status of Indian Muslim women. Moreover, this oral history project inserts the voice of Indian women into the history of two decades that saw the rise of social movements across the globe. I intend to continue my collection of oral histories so that our contemporary understanding of gender in India remains informed by the histories that shape its current form.

THE EAST INDIA COMPANY AND THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE

Joshua Ehrlich | History, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences | PhD Candidate 2017

Lodi Gardens, Delhi

A winter session grant from the South Asia Institute enabled me to conduct a month of archival research in India towards my dissertation on "The East India Company and the Politics of Knowledge." My efforts on this occasion were focused particularly on papers generated in the decades around 1800 for and by the East India Company's Calcutta (Kolkata) administration, now residing at the National Archives of India in New Delhi. I had scoped out the archives a year earlier, noting promising references in the indexes and hand lists, and carrying out some initial inquiries. But this winter presented a chance to compass the repository's main collections, particularly the Home Public and Home Miscellaneous series. These series, I wagered, would be a key site where the interactions of different strata of Company administration could be observed, and where their ideological deployments of knowledge were likely to emerge most clearly. Moreover, because these series were less visited and less catalogued than the collections of the British Library, the largest and best-known source base for historians of the Company, they were more likely to yield new evidence and new insights. On each of these scores, I am happy to report, the NAI did not disappoint.

Arriving in Delhi the day before New Year's Eve, I took the evening to settle into my rented digs in Jangpura, a pleasant residential colony in South Delhi. My first stop the next day was the American Embassy in Chanakyapuri, where I got the necessary letter of introduction, before proceeding by auto rickshaw to the archive's grounds on Janpath Road. Every visit to an archive is shaped by the encounter with its distinctive procedures, physical arrangements, and human (and animal!) personalities. The initial unfamiliarity of these, maddening and stimulating in equal measure, gives way within days or a week to comforting but stultifying routine. And then the challenge becomes keeping one's mind alert for the duration of the work day. After filling out another round of request slips, or trudging through a particularly dispiriting index, I took to rewarding myself with a volume of the Proceedings of the College of Fort William: mostly administrivia, but with enough buried treasures to keep the hunt exciting. And when that no longer kept my attention, it might be necessary to escape the reading room for a cup of instant coffee upstairs—or better yet, some chai at the dhaba outside, in the company of macaques and government bureaucrats. During these restorative breaks one develops a natural rapport with other researchers. Invariably, they have mutual friends or professional acquaintances, and opinions about where to get lunch, how to deal with the Delhi winter, which of the archivists is most congenial.

On Sundays, when the archives were closed, I made a point of venturing into the city, exploring another neighborhood, or architectural relic of Tughlaq, Lodi, or Mughal rule. Delhi is often derided by visitors: the "city of villages" can feel disconnected and provincial (it certainly lacks the "masala" of Mumbai); and its crisis-level air pollution lodges uncomfortably in the throat. But it is an incredibly captivating place for a historian, bursting with tombs, bastions, mosques, and palaces, which rise up unexpectedly in the middle of urban developments and even traffic roundabouts. Delhi is adorned by its long, traumatic, but also glorious history. And for all its inconveniences, the modern city is not without real charms: rambling gardens where families picnic and play badminton; Lutyens' famous buildings and boulevards, a dying empire's bid for permanence. Inhabiting such a place, however briefly, cannot fail to inspire one with a sense of the grandeur, the folly, the remarkable impetuousness of history.

VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

Michael Haggerty | Harvard Graduate School of Design | Master in Architecture 2017

Forty years from independence, Bangladesh's third generation of architects is on the cusp of entering the field to practice in Dhaka and beyond. These designers face unprecedented urbanization in Dhaka, which makes massive demands on housing and environmental quality in the city. With 15 million residents, Dhaka is the fastest growing city in the world – adding half a million residents per year, more than one thousand per day, according to UN-Habitat. Dhaka also has the third-highest levels of air contamination among Asian mega-cities – measured in terms of airborne particulate matter by WHO. The work of architecture – through the language of form, materials, and construction – poses questions about Dhaka's relationships to the global processes creating these social and environmental conditions.

My research project aimed to investigate how architects in Dhaka are developing their work with respect to the discourses of "vernacular architecture" and "regionalism." Vernacular architecture offers intelligence and methods for designing and constructing buildings that are climate-sensitive and low-energy, and for sustaining forms of social cohesion – both public and private – with roots in local culture. Architectural historians since the 1980s have also used the term "critical regionalism" to characterize architecture – mostly in developing-world countries – that instills a sense of place in cities and resists the so-called homogenizing effects of globalization.

I wanted to know what is motivating architects to tap into vernacular knowledge for building in Dhaka, and why is it important, especially today? And when architects do so in the design of urban housing, what does that have to say about life in South Asia's mega-cities?

Dhaka is an important case study for these questions because of the country's unique relationship with modernist architecture. Since the 1980s, Dhaka's architects have developed a language that balances modernist aesthetics with what might be called "vernacular" forms, creating an architecture that expresses local identity. Yet what actually constitutes a vernacular or regional architecture, and who can make a claim that a building is vernacular or an architecture one of resistance, are questions that are also up for debate.

With all this in mind, I headed to Dhaka this January with the generous support of the South Asia Institute. There, I interviewed architects, visited both single-family residences and apartment buildings, and participated in several cultural events happening in the city. Following the visit, my next step will be to develop my findings along with research I

conducted in Vietnam on this same topic in 2014, either through an independent study course at the Graduate School of Design in the autumn term or through thesis preparation.

As it turns out, these very questions are on the minds of architects in Dhaka too. I found that through new publications, on-going symposia, and the Bengal Foundation's organization of the city's first major international design conference – "Engage Dhaka," which I attended –, the design community is today working to consolidate and articulate its history and architectural language. One way this is happening is through renewed recognition and publication of the works of Muzharul Islam, who introduced modernist architecture to Bangladesh. His accolytes formed a student group known as Chetana, and their work and manifestoes from the 1980s to today explored the interaction of modernity with vernacular practices of living with water and landscape in the Bengal delta.

The newer generation of architects who entered practice in the 1990s, and on whom I initially focused my research, have digested the lessons of Islam and Chetana to develop a new architecture for the context of urbanization, globalization, and climate change. A critical challenge for these architects now is how to make the dominant construction type – the multi-story apartment building – more sustainable in terms of energy and more contextual with respect to the character of urban neighborhoods across Dhaka that are literally bursting at the seams with new density and development.

The debates about vernacular architecture and regionalism are alive in Dhaka, and I had the opportunity to speak first-hand with architects whose careers and thinking have been shaped by these discourses. Through this research, I was exposed to perspectives and interpretations of vernacular architecture and regionalism that one generally does not encounter in the academic literature. Many of the architects I spoke to made a point of challenging these categories: they asked whether these terms entrench an attitude that architecture in South Asia may only be evaluated (by graduate student researchers like me) in comparison to European or American modernism; they questioned whether vernacular and regionalist architecture even holds as a category of its own as climate change mandates all design be climate-sensitive and responsive to local conditions. As the architect Salauddin Ahmed said to me, "What should be the 'tree of architecture'? Why does architecture in Bangladesh have to be called vernacular if you're not a part of the tree?"

With the support of the South Asia Institute, I interviewed 10 architects in Dhaka, including members of the Chetana

Group as well as faculty at Bangladesh University for Engineering and Technology and BRAC University. I made site visits to three private residences and four multi-family apartment buildings – two of these were under construction, which provided insights into materials and assembly of large buildings in Dhaka. I also visited heritage sites in Old Dhaka and Sonargaon. (On a walk of Old Dhaka led by the Urban Study Group, I was surprised to meet a group of dual-degree students from Harvard Kennedy School and Harvard Business School, who were "trekking" through Bangladesh and Myanmar.) Lastly, I attended a three-day international design conference, "Engage Dhaka," organized by the Bengal Foundation, which was an opportunity to hear presentations from scholars and architects throughout South Asia and interact with the wider community.

> **The debates about vernacular architecture and regionalism are alive in Dhaka, and I had the opportunity to speak first-hand with architects whose careers and thinking have been shaped by these discourses.**

One instance of good fortune on this trip was attending the conference, which I was not aware of when I booked my flights because it had not yet been announced. On the other hand, I was unable to fulfill some of my ambitions for the visit as a result of ongoing conflict between Bangladesh's ruling party, the Awami League, and the opposition, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP).

Throughout my trip, the BNP enforced a nation-wide blockade of long-distance rail and bus transport into Dhaka. So I was not able to make a planned visit to BRAC's disaster-resilient village in Shymnagar, mainly because there was a risk transport back to Dhaka would not be available. I also missed a meeting with Rafiq Azam – whose work was the initial inspiration for the study – because it was scheduled on the morning the BNP ordered a "hartal," which is a sort of strike when opposition supporters disrupt mobility in the city. Given the risks of violence on city streets that morning, Mr. Azam canceled the meeting. Yet despite the blockade and these political tensions – as well as the general intensity of traffic and gridlock in Dhaka –, I was able to accomplish quite a lot of activities during just 10 days. In any case, these experiences are lessons in the politics and governance of Bangladesh.

The support of the South Asia Institute has been valuable to me personally and academically. When else than as a graduate student researcher do you have the opportunity to sit down one-on-one with architects whose work you admire, hear them reflect on their practice, and tap into their life-long perspectives about your own academic interests? Moreover, there is no substitute for seeing and experiencing first-hand buildings and architecture that you wish to know and understand. So while this grant allowed me to compile research material and develop my engagement with discourses of vernacular architecture and regionalism, I also come away from these experiences with much to contemplate in terms of what I want my architectural practice to be in the long-term.

I also found that the story of architecture in Dhaka – while rich and today thriving – is significantly under-researched. Architects in Dhaka admit there has been a lack of publication and critical works, which the Bengal Foundation is correcting with new monographs. Back home, our own Loeb Library at the Graduate School of Design has just two or three books on contemporary Bangladeshi architecture. I hope that as I continue to develop this research, the grant from the South Asia Institute will contribute to increasing the visibility of this important work within the architectural community globally.

INDIAN POLITICAL AND LEGAL THOUGHT COMPARATIVE CONSTITUIONALISM IN SOUTH ASIA

Madhav Khosla | Department of Government, Harvard University | PhD Candidate

> " **This was the first opportunity for me to delve into the materials in a systematic way.** "

I spent the summer of 2015 in New Delhi. This summer involved me moving into the fifth year of my PhD program at Harvard. I had defended my prospectus in the Spring Term that had just been completed, and was looking forward to spending the summer in moving ahead with archival research and with writing the dissertation. The South Asia Institute Grant enabled me to spend three full months in Delhi where I was able to conduct important archival research pertaining to my project, as well as begin writing the thesis.

My dissertation focuses on Indian political and legal thought in the late nineteenth century and early to mid-twentieth century. As a project within political theory and the history of political thought, it rests primarily on interpretive techniques, addressing important conceptual and theoretical concepts, but inevitably relies on some degree of archival material. Most of the archives for this are in New Delhi, especially at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, and other published materials such as the collected works of major Indian thinkers at the time are also available in the city. In past summers, I have conducted some degree of archival research and examined these materials. However, this was the first opportunity for me to delve into the materials in a systematic way, given that my prospectus had been defended and I had a much clearer sense of my overall project, both in terms of the structure and in terms of the argument. It is in large measure because of the Harvard grant that I have been able to begin writing the dissertation during the summer.

During the summer, I also finalized a project funded by the South Asia Institute on comparative constitutionalism in South Asia. This project has just appeared as a book co-edited by Mark Tushnet and myself: Unstable Constitutionalism: Law and Politics in South Asia (Cambridge University Press, 2015). A small event around the book will be organized in New Delhi in January 2016, and I am currently involved in helping organize the event. I also spent some of my time working on the Oxford Handbook of the Indian Constitution, which I am co-editing with Sujit Choudhry and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, and which will be published by Oxford University Press in 2016.

In New Delhi, I was based at the Centre for Policy Research. This think-tank, which boasts of a diverse range of faculty and scholars, provided a rich and warm intellectual environment for my research, and helped me feel part of a community. I divided my time between the Centre and the Nehru Memorial Library and Museum, in what proved to be a very fruitful and enjoyable academic summer. I am grateful to the South Asia Institute for having made this possible.

VOTER PREFERENCES AND INTERACTIONS

Asad Liaqat | Department of Government, Harvard University | PhD Candidate

Standing water in inner city street after less than an hour of rain

In the wake of local government elections in Punjab province in Pakistan, I conducted research on voter preferences and interactions between voters and candidates prior to elections in Lahore district. What makes these elections interesting is that this will be the first round of local government elections in Pakistan since 2005, and the first ever in Pakistan's history held under a democratically elected government. Theories of fiscal federalism tend to predict that local elections imply at least some degree of decentralization, which leads to more direct linkages between citizen needs and politician responsiveness. A second prediction, which stems from the degree of influence exercised by provincial governments on local governments, is that candidates from the provincial incumbent party will tend to have a significant advantage because of the higher likelihood of them being able to work the state machinery at the provincial level. In this case, the provincial government is heavily dominated by Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N). I set out to explore the ways in which politicians were trying to appeal to voters and what voters' needs and expectations were in terms of both public and clientelistic service delivery.

In conversations with voters in low-income areas in Lahore, I noticed an interesting diversion between their views on their needs and the government's performance. When asked about what their priorities were in terms of service delivery, they tended to refer to municipal services at the local level, such as sanitation, drainage, water supply, street lighting and local roads. On average, there was dissatisfaction with these services, although these was also significant heterogeneity, with voters in some areas reporting high levels of both delivery and satisfaction.

When asked about the performance of government, however, they tended to point to large infrastructure projects such as new central roads, transportation (a 'metro' bus which services populations along a major artery that runs across the city, but which many of these people were unaffected by) and even a railroad project that had not even been inaugurated yet. One preliminary conclusion about this could be that voters do tend to base their preferences and decisions on large visible infrastructure projects, which justifies the PML-N strategy (and indeed, that of many economically-right-wing parties in the developing world) of focusing on such projects at the expense of intangible improvements in health and education.

In terms of interactions with politicians before elections, it was evident that politicians were trying to appeal to voters by providing targeted clientelistic delivery in a very strategic manner. This involved fixing roads, installing or repairing pipes for drainage and sewerage, and street lighting. The strategic nature of this delivery was revealed when I probed the exact

New street light in front of core PML-N supporter's house; Old broken street light in the same street - the cost of not being a core government supporter

locations of these goods. Roads were repaired in streets or parts of streets where a party's core voters resided. In one case, I saw brand new street lights peppered very inconsistently in a street, and upon probing found that these street lights were placed right in front of the houses of party brokers. The brokers were supposed to see these as incentives to go out and garner more support, while other voters were meant to see these as promises of more future delivery targeted at them if they became the core supporters of the party.

As predicted, candidates belonging to the provincial incumbent party (PML-N) had a clear advantage in providing such clientelistic delivery since they were able to access government resources. Opposition candidates were limited to private resources, and their promises of future delivery were also rendered less credible. This was also confirmed with discussions with some opposition party candidates. One response, in particular, stands out. When asked how much money it would cost to run a Union Council chairperson campaign, the opposition candidate responded by saying that depended entirely on how much the government candidate spent, and that he would simply follow his cues on how costly this election was going to be, until the point he could not afford to spend anymore.

Vote buying through personal gifts did not seem to be a common practice at all, and carried a fairly negative connotation. When probed, people did say that it does happen in rare cases but is not common by any means. Some conceded that a candidate usually gives some kind of a gift to marginalized voters (mostly females) before an election in an effort to induce them to vote but that it is not directly framed as such.

One concern that is usually posed with respect to elections where there is a lot of clientelism is whether the votes are actually secret or perceived as secret. According to the vast majority of voters I spoke to, they believed their vote to be secret and said that it was up to the discretion of voter to reveal their vote at the time of voting to a party polling agent. Interestingly, election officials do not stop this revelation from happening. According to them, it was fairly common in the 2013 general election for voters to either go with a polling agent / party worker inside the polling booth or showing them their ballot from afar. These discussions with voters in the wake of local elections have informed my thinking on issues of clientelism, voter preferences and candidate behavior, and will be immensely helpful in my dissertation research.

IDENTIFYING IDEOLOGUES

Muhammad Zia Mehmood | Harvard Kennedy School | Masters in Public Policy 2016

Accurately measuring political attitudes has always been of great interest for economists, sociologists and governments alike. However, the problem with most existing methods of eliciting people's ideological inclinations is that they mostly revolve around the stated preference approach- i.e. if we want to know whether or not people agree with an ideological position, we just ask them about it and trust them to be truthful. This approach has many issues- respondents have no incentive to be truthful as there is no cost attached to lying. Moreover, responses would be heavily influenced by experimenter demand effects- as the questions are posed directly, respondents might feel the need to respond in a way that they imagine the enumerator wants them to, or they might respond in a way that they think would be socially acceptable instead of responding truthfully. These concerns are even more important when the ideology being studies is a sensitive one. In July 2013, I worked with Professor Michael Callen, who is based at the Harvard Kennedy School, on a study aimed at measuring political attitudes in Pakistan in an innovative way that allowed us to address all the concerns mentioned above.

This summer, I worked with Professor Callen and his co-authors again to pilot multiple variations of this study to explore this field further. While we are still in the process of collecting and analyzing the data and tweaking the primary experiment, the team already has a working paper based on the data collected in the 2013 roll-out . Fittingly titled 'Identifying Ideologues', the project relied on a revealed preference approach towards measuring Anti-Americanism in Pakistan. Twenty five subjects at a time were recruited to participate in an experiment whereby they were asked to fill out a personality survey in a lab setting. After they completed the survey, they were offered a bonus payment for participating in the study if they chose to sign a letter thanking the funding agency for providing the funds for the activity. We randomized the components of this letter along three dimensions; (1) the funding agency- US government VS LUMS (a university based in Pakistan), (2) the payment offered- Rs. 100 VS Rs. 500 (the average daily wage rate in the area), and (3) the perceived visibility of the decision- private VS public (No decisions were actually made public, but subjects were led to believe that they would be). The results were fascinating- we found that while a significant minority of respondents refused the money when the funding agency was the US government, the rejection rate fell when the amount being offered was higher- suggesting that expression of political attitudes is price sensitive. Furthermore, rejection rates were also lower when subjects were informed that their decisions would be made public, which suggests that people moderated their views to comply with their perceived social environment. Hopefully, the data from the experiments I fielded this summer will reveal even more fascinating insights into this very interesting field.

EDUCATION IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES OF CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS, BANGLADESH

Maung Nyeu | Harvard Graduate School of Education| EdD Candidate

A 1st grade girl is writing her name

During the summer of 2015 with the help of Harvard South Asia Institute's generous summer fellowship enabled me to conduct my research on Oral Story Project in the schools among the Indigenous communities of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh. In the following sections, I will describe the context of education in marginalized Indigenous communities of CHT and share how SAI grant benefited in my two research studies, a) Multilingual education Project and b) Oral Story Project during the summer 2015.

The CHT, also known as Hill Tracts, lies in the remote mountainous region of southeastern Bangladesh, bordering the Tripura and Mizoram states of India and the Arakan state of Myanmar. An estimated 650,000 people from thirteen indigenous groups, each with its own history, culture, language, and customs, call this place home. The children of the Indigenous communities of CHT are among the most illiterate in the country and at the highest risk of dropping out from schools. More than half of all households lack formal schooling, and of those who start school, fewer than eight percent complete elementary education and fewer than three percent complete secondary education (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2011).

Multilingual Education
In an effort to increase literacy, I worked with the communities and stated several multilingual schools in the CHT. These are handful few schools in entire CHT where students have the opportunities to learn in the languages they speak at home. To put it in perspective, this is the first time in over 60 years, since the end of British era in Indian subcontinent, students of CHT are learning in the mother tongue in schools. During my visit, I made multiple day trip to three of these schools. In one of the schools in Lama Upazilla, Bandarban Hill Tracts, I walked in and delighted to see that students are learning through rhymes and songs of festivals in the communities. I visited a first grade class, students were sitting around facing each other in an oval shaped circle in classroom instead of sitting in rows in traditional schools. Then I asked a girl her name and asked if she could write her name. I was overjoyed to see the girl goes up to board and writes her name (picture 1). Then she asked my name and wrote my name in our Marma language. Then I asked a boy to write the numbers in Marma, He started writing 0, 1, 2…and kept writing up to 23, when I told him it was enough and he could stop. How significant is this? My parents, my brothers and sisters, and none of our villagers can write their names in our language. Government's single language policy over 60 years only had Bangla as the only language of instruction. Now these children are the first group of students learning in mother tongue (and in Bangla) and many students expressed desire to become teachers, and it is a critical step for the revival of Indigenous languages of CHT from the brink of extinction.

During my visit to CHT, I asked villagers, students, parents, and elders what learning in mother tongue means to them. One Indigenous elders said, "For us, language is not only a tool for communication; it is a voice through which our ancestors speak with us."

Oral Story Collection Project
The CHT Oral History Project is an initiative to preserve the local languages and cultures of CHT while creating a classroom curriculum where students learn by sharing their "funds of knowledge" in their own languages and stories

about their own culture. I asked the students to interview their parents, grandparents and village elders. Then the students come to classroom and shared the stories in front of his/her classmates. During this summer visit to CHT, I recorded over thirty stories told by students. After each storytelling, the teacher asked few questions, such as, "What do we learn from this?" "What would you do if you are the frog? Or "If you were the lion, what were you thinking?" I was surprised to see how students were engaged during the discussion and debrief of perspective taking and reflection on moral and ethical lessons embedded in these stories.

Story Telling to Students and Distribution of Children's Book
One of my most joyful moments came when we distributed story books to school children. During my visit,

1st grade student is writing numbers in Marma language

I hosted few story telling sessions with Kindergarten and 1st graders. The children were very curious, came to front and asked many questions about the characters in the stories. They had many "why's". Their laughter and smile still fresh in my mind and will remain for years to come.

So where these story books come from? The stories we have collected in previous visits of story collection, and then we selected few of them and published children's story books. A global team of translators, children's book authors, and education experts adapt these stories into beautiful, teachable, and pedagogically relevant children's picture books in multiple languages, and work with local staff to develop a curriculum incorporating the books and arts education. Based on the characters in these stories, which were passed down through many generations, children learn by acting and playing roles in the classroom. In this effort, the CHT children not only engaged community elders for preservation of endangered language and culture, but also have become co-constructors of knowledge for culturally relevant education. Picture 4: Story telling sessions to a group of students

Conclusion:

There is no magic formula that can cure educational inequities in Indigenous and marginalized communities. There is a dearth of research and publications on the deplorable dropout rates in the schools among the indigenous communities of the CHT. I believe that rigorous and scholarly research has the potential to shed light in the huge dropout rates and adverse impact plaguing CHT children. I hope that this research will contribute to better understanding of the issues impacting education of children in the Hill Tracts. I'm looking forward to exploring my research interests and learning more about qualitative research and applying them in my doctoral research. I am grateful to Harvard South Asia Initiative for their generosity.

The findings of this research may have real world implications that extend beyond the classrooms of three specific schools in CHT. The research can inform stakeholders some of the factors that influence student engagement in marginalized communities, and by doing so, it can serve as a model in other schools in the area and other remote regions beyond Chittagong Hill Tracts, and indeed beyond South Asia.

WHO IMPLEMENTS PROGRAMMATIC EDUCATION POLICIES?

Jonathan Phillips | Department of Government, Harvard University | PhD Candidate

> **Preparatory discussions and field exploration in Karnataka and Maharastra allowed me to understand the dynamics of the healthcare and education sectors and the plethora of new policy innitiatives that have been introduced at both the state and federal level in the past few years.**

The objective of this fieldwork was to assess when programmatic politics arises in state governments in India – building on similar research I have conducted in other states in Brazil and Nigeria. This entailed meeting with politicians, bureaucrats and researchers in key locations to understand how subnational politics has evolved over the past decade.

Preparatory discussions and field exploration in Karnataka and Maharastra allowed me to understand the dynamics of the healthcare and education sectors and the plethora of new policy innitiatives that have been introduced at both the state and federal level in the past few years. Of particular value were discussions with the Center for Global Health Research, Dr. Shreelata Shishadvi of Azim Premji University, and consultants in the Karnataka State Government on the Right to Education initiative in Bangalore. I also met with a number of academics and policy researchers in Delhi, particularly from the Public Health Foundation of India and spoke with researchers working on the District Information System for Education.

The primary focus of my fieldwork was in Bihar and Jharkhand. These cases are likely to form a central comparison in my dissertation, comparing the rapid programmatic reforms that have taken place in Bihar over the past decade with the ongoing corruption, clientelism and political instability in Jharkhand. Key interviews in Patna included Dr. Shaibal Gupta and Mr. Gamshyam Tiwary of the Asian Development Research Institute, members of the International Growth Centre, and Dr. Rakesh Tiwary of the Institute for Human Development. Through these experts I learned about new policies, existing research and available data sources. Government officials were also interviewed in the process of understanding the working conditions and procedures in the education and healthcare sectors. These included Mr. Sridarh and Mr. Ravi of the Bihar Education Project Council and Dr. Narrotam Pradhan of CARE India. I was also lucky to meet with a spokesperson for the ruling JD(U) party, Mr. Nilish Kumar who provided important insights on political strategy. Academic connections were also made with Patna University through Prof. Khalid Mirza, although the institution is suffering a number of challenges and is unlikely to make an effective research partner.

In Ranchi, among a number of meetings and visits, the most valuable were with Prof. Harishwar Dayal at the Institute for Human Development, and Dr. Suranjeen Pallipamula and Dr. Dinesh Singh of Jhpiego. These provided in-depth information on public healthcare developments in the past decade in the two states, and may offer potential opportunities for research collaboration. I also met with current and former civil servants who described how decision-making takes place within the ministries, including Dr. Avinav Kumar, the State Coordinator for Quality and Inclusive Education, and Dr. A K Singh, the former Chief Secretary of the state. These meetings reinforced the radical differences between Bihar and Jharkhand over the past decade, despite the seemingly more conducive circumstances in Jharkhand.

The insights I gained from these discussions and experiences were invaluable in giving me a better understanding of the political terrain and where these subnational cases fit in my dissertation. In particular a number of potential research methodologies became apparent, including the conduct of household surveys in locations just either side of the Bihar-Jharkhand border to assess differences in political attitudes created by a decade of differences in reform efforts, and the evaluation of both governments' initiatives to encourage girls to transition to junior secondary school by providing them with a bicycle.

CAN SOCIAL PROTECTION HELP MITIGATE ANTI-STATE VIOLENCE?

Maria Qazi | Harvard Kennedy School | Masters in Public Administration / International Development 2015

"We feel that it is important to look beyond conventional wisdom in combating violence, towards alternative ways of curbing this very real threat to the nation."

December 16, 2014 witnessed the massacre of 141 school children by the Taliban at an army-run school in Peshawar, Pakistan. This marked an event which surpassed all others in Pakistan's long blood-spattered history of violence in its scope of human loss, and shattered even the thin veneer of security which existed. It galvanized the nation into uproar, and has seen the military and political leadership of the country hasten to take severe action against militants. At such a time, we feel that it is important to look beyond conventional wisdom in combating violence, towards alternative ways of curbing this very real threat to the nation.

As part of our Second Year Policy Analysis exercise, my research partner and I, both Pakistani MPA/ID students, were interested in exploring the links between social protection and anti-state violence in the context of Pakistan. With Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) being the largest of its kind in Pakistan, we decided to focus on this program and the potential governance dividends that it entails for the state.

I travelled to Pakistan in December 2015, visiting Islamabad, Lahore and Quetta, where we interviewed a range of experts. These included meetings with the Federal Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, BISP senior management officials in Islamabad, Director General of BISP district office in Quetta, Director General and Operations Director of BISP provincial office in Lahore, representatives of international donors including the World Bank and DFID, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan workers in Lahore, and an academic researcher on political economy at Lahore University of Management Sciences. This was very illuminating and informative, and helped us further our understanding of the challenges that are faced in implementing the program, and in learning about the political undercurrents surrounding the program.

For example, we learnt about the contention around the branding of the program as the flagship program of one particular political party, so much so that in some areas cash transfers are thought to be coming from Benazir Bhutto's personal endowments which she left behind after her assassination in 2008. Similarly, it was informative to learn about the nature of the implementation gaps which exist, and to learn about the current priorities at the central headquarters of the program regarding the future trajectory of the program. These insights are valuable and the kind that can only be gleaned through personal discussions and interactions with the people involved. I am confident that they will be important in informing our analysis in a more holistic manner going forward.

THE TATA BUSINESS EMPIRE AND THE ETHICS OF CAPITAL IN MODERN INDIA, CA. 1870-1960

Mircea Raianu | History, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences | PhD Candidate
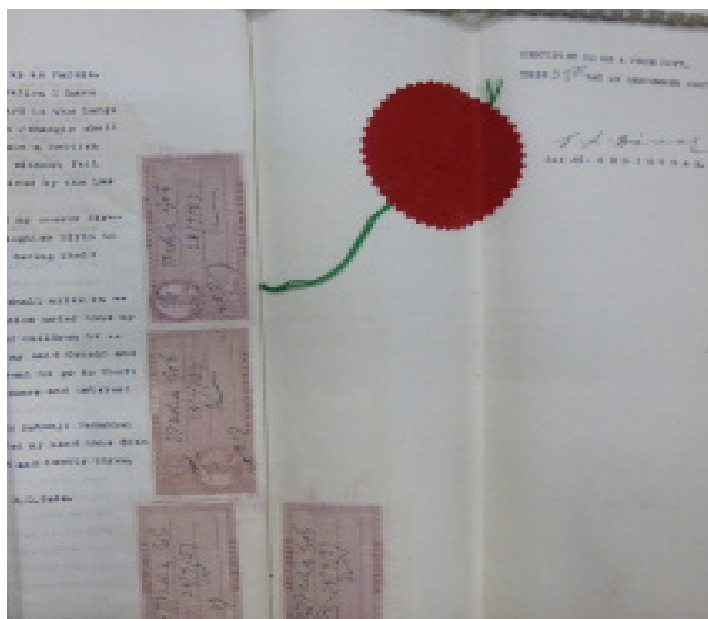
Last page of R.D. Tata's will (1927), courtesy The National Archives.

My doctoral dissertation explores the history of the Tata Group, from cosmopolitan Parsi merchants in the port of Bombay in the mid-nineteenth century to pioneering industrial entrepreneurs in textiles, steel, hydroelectricity, chemicals, and aviation by the time of independence in 1947. How did founder Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata and his successors leave their mark on the economic, political, and social transformation of India? The Tata story has been told many times, but to fully uncover its rich and often surprising dimensions, my work began and ended in the archives. With the generous support of the South Asia Institute, I went to London for two weeks in July to conduct the final stage of dissertation research at the Asian and African Studies collections at the British Library (formerly known as the India Office Records) and at The National Archives, Kew.

In 2013-14, I spent ten months in India working in various archives and conducting interviews. My travels took me from Pune and Mumbai in the west to Kolkata and Jamshedpur in the east. Tata is the first business house in India to have opened their archives to researchers and the public. The Tata Central Archives in Pune and the Tata Steel Archives in Jamshedpur provide a wealth of documentation from the earliest times to the present, including annual reports, board minutes, private correspondence, photographs, advertisements, and much more. They hold thousands of documents, many of them previously untouched by historians. I nevertheless returned conscious of the need to follow up on a few key areas, tracing materials that could only be found in London.

One of my most rewarding finds at the National Archives was the will of Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata, cousin of the founder J.N. Tata and father of the legendary chairman J.R.D. Tata. Beneath the heavy wax seal, the settlement of R.D.'s estate held the key to the withdrawal of the Tata family from the trading world of China and Japan and their concentration of industrial activities within India at the outset of the Great Depression. It likewise shed light on attitudes toward education, religion, and the ethics of doing business in a turbulent time. The importance of documents like these only became apparent after I had extensively mined the Tata family papers in Pune.

During my time in London, I made sure to venture outside the archives as well. The Tata Group is currently one of the largest private sector employers in the country. Long synonymous with the Indian nation and the modernizing swadeshi spirit that sought to break free of the shackles of colonialism, Tata has pursued a bold strategy of global expansion since 2000. Their first three high-profile foreign acquisitions were all venerable British companies (Tetley, Corus Steel, and Jaguar Land Rover), heralding the return of Indian business to the global stage. But the Tatas' presence in the U.K. goes back far longer than we might assume. Not too far from Kew, I visited York House, an imposing building once home to Sir Ratan Tata, Jamsetji's younger son, and his wife Navajbai. In the carefully landscaped gardens overlooking the River Thames, Sir Ratan installed a striking complex of statues carved out of Italian marble. As a marker of the Tata family's interest in art, this quiet spot on the outskirts of London reminded me of the newly renovated CSMVS (formerly Prince of Wales Museum) in Kala Ghoda, Mumbai, endowed by the Tata brothers with their ample collection of Western and Eastern art. Guided by local members of the Parsi community, I also traveled to Brookwood Cemetery in Surrey, where Jamsetji Tata and his two sons are buried in a row of stately mausoleums. My trip has brought to life the global dimensions of the Tatas' business and philanthropic activities, both past and present. It has enabled me to become a better researcher, writer, and thinker – for this I am deeply grateful to SAI.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND VOTER INFORMATION IN INDIA

Sarika Gupta Ringwala | Harvard Kennedy School and Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences | PhD Candidate in Public Policy

This winter, with generous support from the South Asia Institute at Harvard, I was able to make progress on two research ideas I have been pursuing. Both research topics are related to governance and welfare challenges facing India.

Several states in India, including Delhi, have recently passed legislation under the banner of Right to Public Services (RTPS) which guarantees citizens that certain services will be delivered within a stipulated time frame. Given the plethora of research highlighting the challenges of accessing basic public services in India, I was interested in studying whether this legislation is having a true impact on the ground. While in Delhi, the specific service system I focused on was the old age pension scheme, which is an important social safety net for poor and disadvantaged senior citizens. After meeting with several bureaucrats at all levels of the Delhi government who administer this scheme, I realized that before focusing on the impact of RTPS on pensions, I should first pursue research aimed at understanding the welfare impact of social pensions themselves. Therefore, I obtained an authorization letter to gather pension data (which is eventually made publically available) from district social welfare offices and visited almost every district in Delhi to collect data and get a sense of the challenges facing citizens and bureaucrats on the ground in delivering pensions to deserving recipients.

This portion of my research trip proved to be incredibly productive, and I am now working to design a rigorous impact evaluation of the old age pension program, which I hope to carry out this summer. Having met with senior level bureaucrats, district officers, and researchers at the World Bank in Delhi who work on pensions, I am in a much better position to design my research in a way that will be tangibly useful for future policy design. Primarily through survey research, I plan to measure the welfare effects of getting pensions along several dimensions as well as look at inclusion and exclusion errors in who actually benefits from the scheme. This type of focused, micro-level research can help establish guidelines for future modifications to the pension scheme and ensure that it fulfills its purpose.

The other research idea I went to purse while in Delhi is related to democratic governance and ensuring that citizens are empowered to make informed decisions while voting. Specifically, two other graduate students and I are working to partner with the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) in India to do a text-message information campaign before the Bihar state elections this fall. Our idea is motivated by evidence that in several states of India, including Bihar, criminals are often voted into public office, and perhaps if voters had better information about the background of political candidates, they would shift their electoral support accordingly.

The three of us met with ADR's head of research in Delhi to start developing our project and discussed the types of messages we want to send voters, the timing of the messages, the budget for the project, and the sample size. This was an essential step in moving forward with this project, and we are all still in touch and actively working to make this project a reality. We envision running an RCT in which we can simply compare the vote share of criminal candidates in treatment and control groups to test the effectiveness of our information campaign. We hope to use cross-cutting treatments in which we vary the type of information and sequence of information given in different treatment groups to evaluate which format is most salient for voters.

PUBLIC HEALTH FOUNDATION OF INDIA

Jigyasa Sharma | Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health | ScD in Global Health

> " **This was a great chance for me to get to know my teammates outside of work, which facilitated and enriched our shared learning experiences.** "

Despite India's remarkable progress in the last fifteen years towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 of improving child and maternal health status, too many women and children die due to preventable causes. Despite various national and international efforts to strengthen health system and increase utilization of available services, the quality of care remains substandard. As a result, maternal and infant mortality continue to be unacceptably high in India. To aid national efforts to reduce maternal and child mortality, the World Health Organization (WHO) developed the Safe Childbirth Checklist (SCC) to support the delivery of essential maternal and perinatal care practices. Between June and August 2015, I worked a team of dedicated public health researchers and practitioners in India evaluating the effectiveness of this checklist in improving maternal and perinatal outcomes.

The SCC contains 29 items addressing the major causes of maternal death (hemorrhage, infection, obstructed labor and hypertensive disorders), intrapartum-related stillbirths (inadequate intrapartum care), and neonatal deaths (birth asphyxia, infection and complications related to prematurity) in low-income countries. The checklist is meant to serve as a reminder tool and a job-aid for frontline healthcare providers to provide complete care. This checklist is being evaluated in various healthcare facilities across the world. The Public Health Foundation of India (PFHI) is conducting a cluster-randomized evaluation of SCC in reducing maternal and perinatal mortality in Rajasthan, India. The primary objectives of this project are to: (1) measure the reduction in perinatal mortality attributable to the use of the checklist; and (2) estimate the cost effectiveness of this intervention in terms of costs per case of perinatal death averted. Quantitative and qualitative data has been collected over a period of two years between 2012 and 2014 as a part of this trial.

Through the auspices of SAI Summer Research Grant, I was able to join PHFI team in Bangalore and Hyderabad to contribute to data analysis and preparation of manuscripts for publication. It was a great learning experience for me to work with people with a variety of skill sets and training backgrounds. Though I did some work on qualitative data analysis, I spent majority of my time helping with raw data management and quantitative analysis. This was an excellent opportunity to apply some of the skills I have developed through my academic training, and to learn from my teammates who have a lot more hands-on experience working with raw data. What was most valuable, however, was that I got an opportunity to closely observe and understand the context in which the data was collected. The findings of the study will be available as journal articles and these will be instrumental in policy and program design and implementation in India and beyond.

In addition to my primary activities around data analysis, I was also able to conduct a small workshop on scientific writing and literature reviews. Outside of work, I had an opportunity to join the team retreat in Hogenakkal Falls, a waterfall on Kaveri River in South India. This was a great chance for me to get to know my teammates outside of work, which facilitated and enriched our shared learning experiences. Overall, it was a great summer, and I am continuing my work with PHFI- SCC evaluation team this academic year as well!

Summer Research in Lahore, Pakistan

FEMALE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT, MEDICAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT AND LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF FEMALE DOCTORS IN PAKISTAN

Niharika Singh | Department of Public Policy, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences | PhD Candidate

> " **Anecdotal reports say that while females enroll in large numbers in Pakistani medical schools due to their higher merit in high school and entrance exams, many female graduates do not enter the profession after graduation.** "

Through generous funding from the South Asia Institute (SAI), I was able to travel to Pakistan this summer to explore the trajectories of female medical students from enrollment to labor force participation. Anecdotal reports say that while females enroll in large numbers in Pakistani medical schools due to their higher merit in high school and entrance exams, many female graduates do not enter the profession after graduation. This is a hot-button policy issue in Pakistan with recent requests from stakeholders to re-adopt a quota system restricting female enrollment to 50 percent of seats in public medical colleges. Despite the importance of this issue, little systematic evidence exists on the rates and reasons of attrition from the field upon graduation for males or females, and how these rates compare to graduates from other professional and general colleges.

This summer, I worked alongside Prof. Tahir Andrabi from Pomona College to approach relevant stakeholders, such as Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC), the Punjab Commission on the Status for Women (PCSW), the provincial Higher Education Department and medical college administrators in an effort to acquire and build historical datasets of medical student enrollment and graduation, and doctor registration from existing administrative sources. This would allow us to understand the descriptive changes in the supply of female doctors over time. I inquired about the existence of these data in a digitized format and requirements to obtain these data. I also searched library archives for reports from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and the Finance Department going back to mid-1970s to see whether they would contain relevant information. While the archives provided some useful information, disaggregated data at the individual level is only available from the authorities mentioned earlier and conversations with them are currently ongoing. We are hopeful that we will gain permissions to get this data in the upcoming months.

In addition to tracking down these data sources, I had group discussions with current medical students on this topic at Allama Iqbal Medical College, a public institution, in Lahore. We met with second and final year medical students in an informal setting to discuss the past educational histories and family backgrounds of medical students, and their career and family aspirations upon completing medical college. These conversations provided much insight into possible constraints faced by female medical graduates in entering the medical profession. These constraints include, but are not limited to, inflexible training and work hours, limited options for post-graduation, or family pressures for marriage and childrearing.

Over the next year, I will continue working on this project with Prof. Tahir Andrabi and hope to turn this preliminary research work into a research collaboration with stakeholders in Pakistan. I heartily thank the SAI for making this trip to Pakistan possible.

Wintersession Research in Chhattisgarh, India

PUBLIC HEALTH FOUNDATION OF INDIA

Divya S. Sooryakumar | Harvard Graduate School of Education | Masters in International Education Policy

As part of the ApnaTXT team, I am working to create an SMS-based solution to the information gap on early childhood education that mothers in South Asia have about developing their children cognitively, physically and emotionally through the first 3 years of their lives. Through the generous support of the South Asia Institute, I spent the month of January conducting research with UNICEF India and the Government of Chhattisgarh to understand and analyze their best practices for teaching responsive parenting skills throughout the state of Chhattisgarh.

My time in the field was split between three key areas. The first focus of my research was to understand a small scale parenting pilot project, Sajag. The Sajag Program, a joint initiative of UNICEF India, Chhattisgarh State Literacy Mission Authority (SLMA), and the Centre for Learning Resources (CLR), ran from 2012-2014 in Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh to spread awareness about early childhood development and parenting practices. By working with women in local communities, the representatives of the program were trained on the psychosocial development of children to teach parents three key lessons: touch, talk, and play. Here, parents had learned how to better engage their babies and to provide better nutritional care for pregnant and nursing mothers. Through extensive conversations with mothers and their families, I was able to best derive an understanding of what parents were looking for, what they had time for, and what they currently understood of their children. This proved to be invaluable and the missing key to the research and work that ApnaTXT had completed during the previous semester in Cambridge.

Additionally, this program clearly had a much larger impact than anticipated. Not only had mothers and their young children been changed, but other individuals in these communities including, spouses, in-laws, and older children had also seen benefits from the skills taught in the Sajag Program. Therefore leading us as a team to question what additional stakeholders we could include in our own venture as we continue to build the project.

The second focus of my time in Chhattisgarh was researching the process of scaling-up the Sajag Program. The Sajag Program is being spread through the lady health worker program in Chhattisgarh, the Mitanin program. The Mitanin workers are well respected in their communities and have been proven to be effective solutions to many local problems. Due to their overwhelming success as messengers of important public health messages, the program has recently expanded to also include messages on psychosocial development of young children from 0-3 years old with a special focus on the nutrition and health of pregnant women (the messages of the Sajag Program). Currently, there are few government initiatives that focus on both the cognitive and physical development of a child at this critical time. The major

> ❝ **I was able to understand the constraints and power of scaling interventions that require the delivery of a quality interaction between two individuals.** ❞

early childhood initiative of the Government of India, the Anganwadi program, is primarily for children ages 3-6 years old. However, such interventions are often too late, as they have missed three vital years of the child's development. Therefore, in researching the delivery of parenting messages through the Mitanin workers, I was able to understand the constraints and power of scaling interventions that require the delivery of a quality interaction between two individuals. Specifically, as we work to understand how to best implement ApnaTXT, understanding the problems of scale was critical.

The last focus of my time in Chhattisgarh was the early childhood intervention implemented by the state government, the Fulwari Program. Fulwaris are crèches run by the community on a voluntary basis. The government supports these centers by providing a small stipend to buy nutritionally rich foods such as grains, fresh green vegetables, and eggs that most households cannot afford on a daily basis. Women (pregnant, nursing, and mothers) come to the crèche to eat and assist in the functioning of the center. The mothers volunteer their time once a week to cook and watch the children. This allows the mother to have the rest of the week free to attend to her other household responsibilities, while knowing her child is well cared for at the Fulwari center. The program has been a relatively low-cost intervention with high returns on investment. The children in the Fulwari program are healthier due to a regular and nutritionally sound diet.

During my time in the field, I visited numerous Fulwari programs. Based on my initial observations and through interviews with the women of the centers, it appears that these programs are the nexus of multiple layers of change in the communities, including emotional, social, and physical benefits for those who are a part of the centers. However, critical problems in the implementation of this program have slowed down the larger potential impact that this intervention could have in Chhattisgarh. Understanding the work of the Fulwaris was an important exercise to outline the existing community systems that could work in favor of supporting delivering our parenting messages.

Overall, my time in Chhattisgarh proved to be invaluable as the insights I gained on the ground would not have facilitated the understanding of the nuances and depth of the best practices on the ground. Without the opportunity to engage with other key actors in the field of early childhood education, certain aspects of our project would have worked to simply reinvent the wheel.