

Guriqbal S. Sahota
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Education

Ph.D. University of Chicago, South Asian Languages and Civilizations. 2006
M.A. University of Chicago, South Asian Languages and Civilizations. 2000.
B.A. University of California at Santa Cruz, History (Highest Honors), Minor in Literature 1997

Publications

“‘Colony’ as Hermeneutic Limit,” *Domains: Journal of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies*, 4, forthcoming, 2009. (Ref.)

“The Paradoxes of Dalit Cultural Politics” in Anne Feldhaus and Manu Bhagavan (eds.), *Claiming Power from Below: Dalits and the Subaltern Question* (A *Festschrift* in Honor of Eleanor Zelliot), Oxford University Press, 2008. (Ref.)

“Patterns in the World of Literature” (A Review of Pascale Casanova’s *The World Republic of Letters*), *Bryn Mawr Review of Comparative Literature*, 6.2 (Fall 2007): on-line. (Invited)

Translations from the Urdu of respective works by Balvant Singh, Pitras Bukhari, and Nida Fazli in Mehr Farooqi (ed.), *Anthology of Modern Urdu Literature*, Oxford University Press, December 2007. (Ref.)

Review of *Gandhi in His Times and Ours* by David Hardiman, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 26.2 (2006): 333-337. (Ref.)

“British Imperial Collapse in Asia” (A Review of Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper’s *Forgotten Armies: The Fall of British Asia, 1941-45*), *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter* 41 (Summer 2006): 21-22. (Invited)

“A Bundle of Contradictions: Notes on Identity and Authority in Readings of Iqbal”, *Biblio: A Review of Books*, vol. 11, March-April 2006, pp. 30-32. (Invited)

“The Antinomian Prophecy” (A Review of Abid Surti’s *The Black Book*), *Biblio: A Review of Books*, vol. 10, nos. 7-8, July-August 2005, pp. 7-8. (Invited)

“Deciphering the Promise of Tradition” (A Review of Zamiruddin Ahmad’s *The East Wind and Other Short Stories*), *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, vol. 20, 2005, pp. 264-273. (Ref.)

Review of *The Indian Princes and their States* by Barbara N. Ramusack, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 39, no. 36 September 4-10, 2004. Reedited and reprinted in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25.3 (2005) 689-690. (Ref.)

Review of *Kamasutra* by Vatsyayana Mallanaga, trans. Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar, *Sagar: South Asia Graduate Research Journal*, vol. 12, n. 1 Spring 2004. (Invited)

Review of *Brahma in the West: Blake and the Oriental Renaissance* by David Weir, *Chicago South Asia Outreach Newsletter*, vol. 28, n. 2 Spring/Summer 2004. (Invited)

"Place and Shadow: Photographs from a Personal Location," *Chicago South Asia Outreach Newsletter*, vol. 24, n. 1 Winter 2000. (Invited)

"From 'Indiaspora'" (Photographs), *The Red Wheelbarrow*, Spring 1997. (Invited)

Public Presentations

Discussion on "selfhood" (with Ajay Skaria) for the "Historizing the Self Seminar" at the University of Minnesota (Twin Cities), November 20, 2008.

"Sublimity and Periodization" on the panel "Early/Late Colonial: Conceptualizing Periodization in Indian Historiography" at the University of Wisconsin (Madison) 37th Annual South Asia Conference, October 17, 2008.

"Romanticism Redux: Asian Expressions in the Early Twentieth Century" at Columbia University MEALAC Brown Bag Series, March 5, 2008.

"The New Romantic Sensibility in Late Colonial India: Periodization and the Hermeneutics of Modernity" at University of Minnesota Theorizing Early Modern Societies Workshop, February 8, 2007.

"Liberalism After Empire: Rereading Eric Stokes" (with Professor Ajay Skaria) at the University of Minnesota South Asia Seminar, November 16, 2006.

"The State of the Camp, or Urdu in World Literary Space" on "The Ongoing Mehfil" panel at The 35th Annual Conference on South Asia of the Center for South Asia (University of Wisconsin-Madison), October 21, 2006

"Nirala's Pasts and a Romantic Sense of the Colonial Present" at the "Global States" conference of the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine, May 5, 2006.

"The Sublime and the Ideology of the Epic in Modern India" at the University of Minnesota South Asia Seminar, March 22, 2006.

"Aesthetics, Politics and History" and "Romanticism's Horizons" at the University of Chicago Social Theory Workshop, January 9, 2006.

"Notes on Identity and Authority in Readings of Iqbal", on the "Criticism" panel of the University of Chicago conference "Re-Orientations: The Study of the non-West after the Saidian Critique", February 26, 2005

"*Javid Nama*, or The Rebirth of the Sublime in Late Colonial India" at the Department of Asian Languages and Literatures, University of Minnesota, December 9, 2004

“A Discussion of Indian Epics” at Fulbright Hays Seminar Abroad Orientation, Center for South Asia Studies at UC Berkeley, June 23, 2004

“The New Romantic Sensibility in Late Colonial India” at the University of Chicago South Asia Workshop, June 3 2004

“The Modernity Beyond Colonialism in India: An Essay in Historiography” at the University of Chicago Social Theory Workshop, May 10, 2004

“Towards Rumanviyat: Altaf Husain ‘Hali’ and Urdu Romanticism” at Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, on the panel, “Global Theory, Local Critique: Critical Vocabularies in Hindi, Bangla and Urdu”, March 6, 2004

“Political Abjection: The Epic Idiom in Hali’s Musaddas and Gupt’s Bharat-Bharati” at the University of California, Berkeley 19th Annual South Asia Conference, on the panel, “Sites of Memory: Practices and Representations of the Muslim Past”, February 13, 2004

“V.D. Savarkar’s *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?*” at the University of Chicago South Asia Outreach Teachers Workshop, June 30, 2003

“Literature and Untouchability, or Dalit Poetic Practice” at the University of Chicago Theory and Practice in South Asia Workshop, February 22, 2001

Academic Honors, Awards and Fellowships

McKnight Summer Research Fellowship, University of Minnesota (2007)

Doolittle-Harrison Fellowship, University of Chicago (2006)

Norman Wait Harris Award of the Center for International Studies, University of Chicago (2004)

Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Fellowship (2004)

Committee on Southern Asian Studies Dissertation Research Grant (2003)

American Institute of Indian Studies Language Study Fellowship (2001)

Foreign Language and Area Studies Summer Language Fellowship (2000)

University of Chicago Century Fellowship (1998)

UCSC Chancellor’s Award for B.A. Essay on Indian Nationalism (1997)

Phi Beta Kappa (1997)

Languages

Speaking/Reading/Writing: Urdu/Hindi, Punjabi, French

Reading: Sanskrit, Spanish, Punjabi, German

Currently studying Persian

Research

Dissertation Thesis in SALC: “A Literature of the Sublime in Late Colonial India”

Challenging the conventional approaches to modernity, this work argues that sublimity, rather than diminishing, became a persistent feature of modern life. This work engages with the sublime by investigating late colonial Hindi and Urdu reinventions of the classical epic form.

Emerging under the auspices of a newly wrought romantic sensibility, epically stylized works became vehicles of sublime visions. I argue that the sublime became the primary aesthetical and ideological means for giving expression to and providing resolutions for wide-ranging conflicts and contradictions of late modern society. Most crucial among these was squaring existing tradition with the norms of modernity. To this end, constructing a conduit through which traditional Hindu and Islamic inheritances – especially religious categories, metaphysics and rituals – could overcome the demands of modernity was crucial for late colonial romantics. In providing what seemed like a framework for making this possible, the sublime ultimately, I argue, gave expression to critical dissatisfactions with modernity and worked to undo its normative ideological and political tendencies.

After demarcating the theoretical categories (especially those concerning the “epic” and “Romanticism”) and delimiting the relevant historical period (that of “the late colonial”), I interpret a variety of intellectual currents, literary movements and neo-epic works in Hindi and Urdu contexts. My readings of figures such as Altaf Husain ‘Hali’, Michael Madhusudan Datta, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, Jayashankar Prasad, Suryakant Tripathi ‘Nirala’ and Muhammad Iqbal seek to establish how a counter-normative logic of modernity emerges within their works and the milieu of late colonial Romanticism in general. Ultimately, I suggest, India appears less to have produced an exception to (or a qualified version of) the dominant tendencies of modernity than to have manifested its most persistent aspects: dissatisfaction with liberal subjectivity, secularity, scientism and instrumental reason in general and the promulgation of a new religiosity and the turn to (neo-) traditional structures of social and political existence. To grasp that this was the case means to overcome the hierarchical codes of modernity – especially the inheritance of imperial geography for theorization – and to see modernity as the mediation of the unresolved contradictions and divides of a singular system.

Seminar Paper in History: “The Geography of Punjab and the Spatiality of Sikhism”

Historical analysis of the emergence of Punjab as specific socio-cultural zone and its intersection with the material spatial practices of Sikhism during a period of colonial crisis (1919-1924), with examination of the importance of allegory in everyday life and critical events

Masters Paper in SALC: “Dalit Poetic Practice”

Aesthetic, ethical and political analysis of Dalit writing, focusing on the postcolonial period in the context of the long durée of casteism in India, with especial attention on relations of textual production to popular culture and ways of interpreting modern Indian literature in general

Professional Work Experience

Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota (Twin Cities), Asian Languages and Literatures, Fall 2006

Predoctoral Research Associate, University of Minnesota (Twin Cities), Asian Languages and Literatures, Fall-Spring, 2005-06.

Lecturer, University of Chicago, Fall-Winter, 2003-04, “Readings in World Literature” in the University of Chicago Humanities Undergraduate Core Curriculum. This course introduces

undergraduates to the study of humanistic disciplines through the study of different kinds of texts in World Literature.

Lecturer, University of Chicago Graham School of General Studies, Winter 2003, “Ramayana and the Epic Imagination”, a course covering the Valmiki Ramayana in translation alongside selections from later Ramayana tradition, with special focus on theories of the epic form

Lecturer, University of Chicago, Summer 2003, “Introductory Hindi-Urdu”, a course designed to establish mastery of the grammar system of the two languages as well as the devanagari and nastaliq scripts.

Lecturer, University of Chicago Graham School of General Studies, Spring 2003, “Classical Indian Literature and Aesthetics”, a course designed to introduce students to the masterpieces of Indian, especially Sanskrit, literature and aesthetics.

Course Assistant, University of Chicago, Fall 2002, “Introduction to the Civilizations of South Asia” with Professor Sheldon I. Pollock, a course on Classical Indian Literature and Philosophy. Led group discussions with students and graded their work.

Research Assistant, University of Chicago, 2001-02, under Professor Sheldon I. Pollock for the editing of selections for an anthology of Indian literature as part of a multi-volume project on world literature (David Damrosch (ed.), *Longman Reader in World Literature*).

Teaching Assistant, University of California, Santa Cruz, Fall 1997, “Traditional Histories of India” with Professor Dilip Basu, an introductory course on the literary, cultural and religious texts and practices that have become most central to the notion of tradition in the modern discourse on India. Led group discussions with students and graded their work.

Service and Institutional Activities

Director of the Institute for Global Studies Intellectual Collective on Dialectics and Society, University of Minnesota, 2007-08

Committee member for the Religious Studies Major and participant in the AAR/Teagle Foundation program examining the Role of Religious Studies in the Liberal Arts, 2007.

Co-Director of the South Asia Seminar, University of Minnesota, Fall 2007

Member of the Arts and Humanities Research Committee, University of Minnesota, Fall 2007

Chair of Urdu lecturer search, Department of Asian Languages and Literatures, University of Minnesota, 2006-07

Occasional member of the Advisory Committee for the Consortium for the Study of the Asias, University of Minnesota, 2006-07

References

Sheldon Pollock, The William B. Ransford Professor of Sanskrit and South Asian Studies, Department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University

Muzaffar Alam, Professor, Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations and Department of History, The University of Chicago
Tim Brennan, Professor, Departments of Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature, and English, University of Minnesota (Twin Cities)
Gopal Balakrishnan, Associate Professor, History of Consciousness Board, University of California – Santa Cruz and editor, *New Left Review*