



## CISCA Newsletter

Dear reader, though we are a little late again, here is the first CISCA newsletter of 2015 with an update on our activities:

CISCA is happy to welcome **Vivek Kumar Shukla** as a permanent part of teaching staff at the Global Studies department at Aarhus University. Vivek is the new Hindi teacher for the South Asian Studies program.

He has a PhD in Hindi Translation, in which he worked on translations of Kabir, an early Modern Hindi Poet, while he wrote his M.Phil. Dissertation



on Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. He taught Hindi as second language at Jawaharlal Nehru University where he was also a grad student for 5 years – apart from working as Senior Hindi Teacher at the American Embassy, New Delhi and at Knowledge Must, an Intercultural Training Institute. Vivek also has worked with MIT JPAL projects in India as an Interpreter and Translator. He is academically interested in Early Modern Hindi Bhakti Poetry, Socio-Linguistics, Hindi as a language in Popular culture, Hindi Translation and Intercultural communication.

A further addition to CISCA and South Asian Studies is **Kiran Sharma**. Kiran is a Post-Doctoral Fellow at Aarhus University. She received her Ph.D and M.Phil degree from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and did her Graduation and Post-Graduation from

Banaras Hindu University, U.P. She has qualified for the UGC-National Eligibility Test (NET) for lecturership and worked at the Indian Social Institute and Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi. Her research interests include poverty, inequality, urbanisation and development, food security and tribal migration.



Vivek and Kiran are not the only additions the staff in the South Asian Studies program. **Jyoti Sharma**, the new trainee at CISCA, will be taking over teaching conversation at the department. Thus, she replaced our earlier trainee **Prastuti Priya**, who has been teaching Hindi to the students of the South Asian Studies program. We at CISCA thank Prastuti and wish her all the best in her future endeavours. Jyoti Sharma comes with a diverse experience in Hindi Literature and her creativity has been a motivating factor to expand the reach of the literary works of eminent writers to the general masses. As an expert on "Dr. Ram Vilas Sharma and his critics world", she delivered a lecture at the National Seminar 2014 organised by Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, while





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presenting a research paper on “Media: Pros and Cons” at the 2013 International Symposium on Language, Linguistics, Literature and Education in Okasa, Japan. She has authored more than a dozen research papers, including Dalit sahitya, Hindi ki Janta, Janta ki Hindi, Soor kavya, amongst others. Conferred with “the winning poet” at the Hasya Kavi Sammelan, she has been acknowledged several times in her academic life for her achievements. These achievements have earned her many invites to several National and International Conferences organised by UGC, India. She has published and translated around 47 books (English-Hindi & vice-versa as well as Hindi-Punjabi & vice-versa). Apart from her established academic life, she has also been responsible for organising many cultural events back home in India.

Apart from the additions to our team, CISCA also welcomed and would like to introduce **Sujata Banerjee**, who is a visiting PhD scholar through the IBIES program and based at the Centre for Science Studies. She has an MA and MPhil in Modern Indian History from Calcutta University. Her MPhil dissertation was on "Jatra (Open Theatre) in Bengal in the 19th Century".



She has worked as a research assistant for three years on a project which focused on "Technical Education in India". Currently she is pursuing her PhD and her research is based on the study of Engineering Education in 20th Century India.

Since the last newsletter there has not only been a change in staff at CISCA and the South Asian Studies program, but other activities have taken place, such as

the lecture by Prof. **Ülo Valk** from the University of Tartu on the 5<sup>th</sup> November. He made a presentation of the topic: **On Vernacular Hinduism in Contemporary Assam: Construction of the Supernatural and Contested Beliefs.**



Following this, CISCA collaborated with **Action Child Aid** in organizing a panel debate on the subject of

**The Polavaram Dam and the livelihoods of indigenous people**, where the speakers were Pagano Didla, Indian philanthropist and founder of SEEDS, Benjamin Sovacool, Professor, Aarhus University, expert on renewable energy, Uwe Skoda, Associate professor, South Asian Studies, Aarhus University and Jørgen Dige Pedersen Associate professor, Political Science, Aarhus University. The panel debate took place on November 10<sup>th</sup>. The following is a picture from the Panel debate itself (see next page).



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On the 3rd December **Aya Ikegame** presented a lecture on the subject of **The guru and the allocation of responsibility: village disputes at the informal arbitration court in rural south India**. In this lecture she argued that the guru-renouncer appears as an ideal type of Indian king: simultaneously transcendent from and embedded within social norms and relations, and serving as an alternative focus for a different form of democracy.

In other news, there has been an **InAsia** meeting in Aarhus with the title: **InAsia - Asian Secularisms?** InAsia's Asia Day addressed important questions such as: Is it possible to imagine India without religion and secularization? How does China deal with religion and secularization? Is there a secular Buddhist ethics, how is media used in creating Tibetan Buddhist identity? How does Buddhism and violence connect, and how do young Tamil Hindus in Denmark respond to secularity? What are the political and social implications of these issues? These questions were

tackled through presentations from and discussions with international and local scholars. The list of lecturers included **Prasenjit Duara**, who presented a lecture on "Is the Concept of Secularism Relevant to China?", and **Meera Nanda**, who presented a lecture on the topic of: "Is the idea of India relevant without Secularism?".

Since the last issue of the CISCA newsletter it has also been decided by **Aarhus University** and the **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)** to support an ICCR Chair at Aarhus University. Under this agreement visiting professors will join AU for a period of up to six months and will contribute to the academic activities at the university - particularly through teaching in the newly established Master in Asian Studies with the specialization India and South Asia.



Indian Council for Cultural Relations  
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The fourth annual meeting of the European Association of India Study Centres (EAISC) was hosted by the University of Milan, on September 22 and 23, 2014. Representatives of seven India Study Centres across Europe participated in the meeting meant primarily to discuss new possibilities for funding including a new application within and beyond the field of Erasmus Plus. Apart from that a new website was launched: <http://eaisc.iescp.net/>; a workshop on India-EU relations was discussed and Dublin City University (DCU) was unanimously welcomed as a new member. The Association is expected to grow further since several universities have expressed an interest in joining. University of Leiden was unanimously elected as the new President. It takes over the presidency of the

association from Hochschule Bremen for the duration of one year as of October 1, 2014 and the next European meeting will take place in Leiden in autumn 2015. However, the members will also meet during the upcoming IBIES meeting held on February 27 and 28, 2015 in Pondicherry. In the context of the EAISC meeting the idea for a new application within the ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting) framework emerged. The consortium led by Hochschule Bremen and including Aarhus University, Manipal University (India), University of Latvia and Dalian University of Technology (China) applied successfully for an initial grant to develop an ASEM Module and a first meeting of the consortium, now named Europe Asia Dynamics, was convened in Bremen in December 2014.





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The Asia-Europe Meeting is an informal dialogue forum between 38 European and Asian countries. When the ASEM Ministers for Education met in Kuala Lumpur in 2013 they decided to promote joint curricula in the ASEM area and announced a competition to develop an ASEM studies curriculum module at MA level.

Hochschule Bremen's proposal was selected and received the initial funding by German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD – incl. BMBF). The objective of the proposal includes the implementation of a Europe-Asia Day as a culmination of the Europe Asia Dynamics Module, student exchange and faculty exchange. The concept of the ASEM module will be presented in front of the ASEM Ministers for Education Summit in Riga, Latvia on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2015, when a decision about future funding for the module will be made and if successful the consortium plans to meet again in Riga from 28<sup>th</sup> of May to the 31<sup>st</sup> of May. Europe Asia Dynamics will focus on central themes such as 1) Sustainability as core challenge for Europe and Asia; 2) Social factors of trade agreements; 3) The effect of green barriers to EU-Asia trade and 4) Migration and Mobility.

While ASEM will hopefully lead to future activities, **Jadubhanj Murmu** is already here in Aarhus as an Indian exchange student in anthropology from Odisha, who has come to Denmark through the IBIES program. This is his experience from his stay so far: My whole experiences so far has been absolutely surprising and good. First, it was hard; however, it is also fun, interesting and exciting at the same time to be in Denmark. This program is

nothing like what I imagined it would be like. I have realized that being an exchange student in Denmark is mainly what you put into it. Being one year away from home, you are able to build relationship with your host friends. I have gained individual experience from this exchange so far and it assisted me in gaining a new kind of confidence in myself. At last I would like to tell to future exchange students: Do not be afraid of making mistake, it is all about learning!



Finally, there is currently a call for paper for a Workshop on Cultural Elites in Contemporary India: Constructions and Deconstructions. The workshop will take place from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> of May, 2015, and is organized by Contemporary India Study Centre Aarhus (CISCA) at Aarhus University, Denmark together with Jyotirmaya Tripathy, Sudarsan Padmanabhan (both IIT Madras) and Uwe Skoda (AU). The call for paper has the following deadlines: 1) 15<sup>th</sup> of April: Submission of abstract. More information can be found at CISCA's homepage: [cisca.au.dk](http://cisca.au.dk).

