

**REPORT FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA WATER INSTITUTE
2007 PROGRAM INITIATION FUND**

**WATER, GENDER AND EQUITY IN INDIA
August 2007-May 2008**

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Whitney Sanford, Religion Department

Co-PIs:

Dr. Anita Anantharam, Women's Studies Department

Dr. Vasudha Narayanan, Religion Department and Director, CHiTra (Center for the Study of Hindu Traditions)

Narrative

During the academic year 2007-8, we coordinated a symposium and lecture series to address the critical problem of Gender, Water and Equity in India. This program brought eminent scholars to the University of Florida to participate in symposia and discussions on the general topic of water and society and, more specifically, to discuss these issues emerge on the Indian sub-continent. In doing so, this series built on intellectually-stimulating interdisciplinary partnerships among faculty from diverse backgrounds. This series had two primary goals, both of which it achieved: first, it educated scholars in the about the role of gender, religion and social hierarchy in water disputes, and second, it led to innovative interdisciplinary collaborations by building on existing partnerships within the International Working Water Group.

Speaker Reports

FALL SEMESTER 2007

Dr. Kelley Alley

Anthropology, Auburn University

October 8-10, 2007

Seminar/speaker series: Water, Gender and Equity in India

In this lecture, Dr. Alley outlined the Hindu reverence for key river Goddesses in India and connect faith, ritual, social organization and political movements to illustrate the centrality of sacred water to everyday life. Kelly D. Alley is Alumni Professor of Anthropology and the Director of the Anthropology Program at Auburn University. She is currently President of the Anthropology and Environment Section of the American Anthropological Association.

During Dr. Alley's visit, she interacted with a range of faculty, students and staff.

These activities included the following:

10/9 Visit to REL 3492: Religion, Nature and Ethics (W. Sanford's class)

10/9 Seminar/discussion with graduate students

10/9 Public lecture "River Goddesses, River Linking: From Sacred to Transferable Waters"

This lecture was attended by approximately 150 people, including faculty, students, staff and community members.

10/10 Meeting with Water Institute and IWWG members

SPRING SEMESTER 2008

Dr. Aaron Wolf

Geo-science, Oregon State University

January 23-5, 2008

Seminar/speaker series: Water, Gender and Equity in India

Dr. Wolf's presentation examined the process of environmental conflict resolution, particularly as related to shared water resources. While the press focuses on coming "water wars," what has been more encouraging is that, throughout the world, water also induces cooperation, even in particularly hostile basins, and even as disputes rage over other issues. Prevailing theories fail utterly to explain this phenomenon: Why do countries resolve water disputes, even when "rationality" dictates that they should not? Dr. Wolf's research centered on the process of transformation in negotiations – the specific moment in time at which parties move from thinking of themselves as representing countries to perceiving more broadly the needs of all stakeholders within a basin. While not explained by prevailing theories, this negotiation transformation may have a corollary in spiritual transformation.

During Dr. Wolf's visit, he interacted with a range of faculty, students and staff. These activities included the following:

- 1/24 Two seminar/discussions with graduate students in Religion and Geography/TCD
- 1/24 Meetings/discussions with interested faculty, such as Jon Dain, TCD
- 1/25 Meeting with Water Institute and IWWG members
- 1/25 Public lecture "Spiritual Transformation and Lessons for Environmental Negotiations, or Conflict, Cooperation and Kabbalah"
This lecture was attended by approximately 70 people, including faculty, students, staff and community members. Attendees came from a range of departments, including the Law School, Agronomy and Political Science, and there was considerable discussion following the official end of the talk. Several people who had not been able to attend emailed about obtaining a copy of the video recording of the lecture.

Dr. Sarah Ahmed

Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET-USA)

February 7-8, 2008

Seminar/speaker series: Water, Gender and Equity in India

Dr. Ahmed focused on women's participation in water user committees with research partners in Maharashtra and Gujarat as part of a larger program on decentralization and gender rights in South Asia, Africa and Latin America. Drawing on insights from an ongoing action-research project on decentralized water governance in two states in Western India, this presentation looked at the extent to which participation has, if at all, been an empowering process for womenmembers of new water management institutions. Is decentralization transforming citizens into active subjects and establishing institutional arrangements that theoretically are meant to facilitate good governance, accountability and transparency in water management?

During Dr. Ahmed's visit, she interacted with a range of faculty, students and staff. These activities included the following:

- 1/7 Met with interested faculty, including Nancy Johnson, CGIAR/ICRISAT

- 1/7 Visited Sandra Russo's Class WST 6935
- 1/8 Meeting with faculty and student group to discuss field research related to water in India
- 1/8 Meeting with Water Institute and IWWG members
- 1/8 Discussion with graduate students
- 1/8 Public seminar: "The Gendered Terrain of Water Governance in India: Challenges in Facilitating Rural Women's Participation and 'Voice' in New Community Institutions"
This seminar was attended by approximately 25 people, including faculty, students, and community members. Attendees came from a range of departments, including the Women's Studies, Religion, and Agronomy, and there was animated discussion following the end of Dr. Ahmed's presentation.

Dr. Amita Baviskar

Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, India

March 4-5, 2008

Seminar/speaker series: Water, Gender and Equity in India

Dr. Baviskar focuses on environmental politics, with a focus on social inequality and natural resources conflicts, environmental and indigenous social movements, and urban environmental politics in South Asia.

During Dr. Baviskar's visit, she interacted with a range of faculty, students and staff. These activities included the following:

- 3/4 Met with faculty, including Dr. Marianne Schmink
- 3/4 Met with graduate students in Religion and Soil and Water Sciences
- 3/4 Met with PhD candidates including Jonathan Jones (Political Science) and Namita Manohar (Sociology)
- 3/5 Participated in classes, including Dr. Leann Brown's class INR 4035 (Political Science) and Dr. Milagros Pena's class (Sociology)
- 3/5 Meeting with IWWG members, and other interested faculty and students in Religion and Women's Studies
- 3/5 Public lecture: "Waterscapes: Seeking Nature and Justice along Indian Rivers"
This lecture was attended by approximately 70 people, including faculty, students, staff and community members. Attendees came from a range of departments, including Religion, Women's Studies, and Political Science, and there was considerable discussion following the official end of the talk. Several people who had not been able to attend emailed about obtaining a copy of the video recording of the lecture.

Dr. Hermann Kreutzmann

Geography, Free University, Berlin

Scheduled visit: April 20-23, 2008

Dr. Kreutzmann has written on relationships between the distribution of water and religion, languages, politics, globalization, and development issues in the high mountain environments of Pakistan. In his lecture he focused on the linkages between culture and water management practices in the Karakoram region between Pakistan, India and China. He suggests that investigating water management practices can serve as a key to understanding society's conflict and cooperation processes. Hydraulic resources are intimately linked to survival strategies in the region.

4/21 Public lecture: "Water in the Karakoram"

This lecture was attended by approximately 20 people (it occurred during finals week), including faculty, undergraduates and graduate students. There was lively discussion following the talk relating to his research.

4/21 Met with faculty, including Dr. Roman Loimeier and Dr. Jason Neelis

4/21 Participated in IWWG/WI meeting

4/22 Met with graduate students in Religion and IFAS

Funding

This speaker series is leading (or has led) to additional funding initiatives regarding water and equity. The Interdisciplinary Water Working Group has met with all the speakers, and these interactions have helped our group rethink and refocus our objectives. We have not yet determined the most appropriate source for this project, but NSF is a likely target.

Collaborative grants:

PI: Anita Anantharam; Co-PI: Whitney Sanford

Eating Cultures: Gender, Globalization, and the Politics of Consumption in South Asia (2K)

Funding Agency: Center for the Humanities in the Public Sphere, University of Florida, 2007-2008

PI: Vasudha Narayanan; Co-PI: Anita Anantharam and Philip Williams

Global Religion in Practice (5K)

Funding Agency: Transnational Studies Center, University of Florida, 2008-2009. This grant will enable us to apply for larger funding from the Ford Foundation.

Individual grants:

PI, Whitney Sanford, Title: "Gandhi's Environmental Legacy: Food Democracy and Social Movements" (9k); Funding Agency: Humanities Scholarship Enhancement, University of Florida, 2007-8. This grant seed grant will prepare me to apply for external grants such as NEH, Guggenheim and AHS.

PI, Anita Anantharam, Title: "Bodies that Remember: Women's Indigenous Knowledge and Cosmopolitanism in South Asia" (10K); Funding Agency: Humanities Scholarship Enhancement Fund, University of Florida, 2008-2009

Publications

Bron Taylor, (editor, Journal of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture) has expressed interest in publishing a special volume of articles from speaker in the series. We have contacted presenters and are collecting papers for this volume.