



# **SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2023**





**EXHIBITIONS  
MUSIC  
TALKS  
LITERARY  
PERFORMANCE**

Dear Friends and Patrons,

This year we completed four years of existence as the only private South Asian American Cultural Institute in the USA. The last four years have been challenging to say the very least. Challenging, for a lot of reasons. The life span of any new enterprise is daunting for the fact that there are issues of governance and finances in the earlier years and there is no roadmap to follow. Later sustaining the vitality and vigor of the enterprise presents its own challenges. To that, you add the stress of a full fledged worldwide Covid pandemic with its attendant multidimensional ravaging consequences and you have the possibility of a catastrophic outcome.

For Non Profits like South Asia Institute there are very few options of maintaining the financial health of the organization during initial lean periods. Grants are few and far apart. Not having a track record does not help. The major burden falls on the shoulders of the Founders and some private funders who feel the affinity and value of such an Institute that tells the stories and the narratives from South Asian Americans' perspectives. Besides there is a general myth that South Asians are rich to begin with and they do not need any financial help. This could not be further from the truth. We are just like everybody else. Our perceived exceptionalism is a hindrance in garnering these grants and financial support.

Now that restrictions of Covid are behind us and our lives are normalizing, we are seeing a steep uptick in our programming, exhibits and other cultural events. More people are also interacting with these events. During 2023 we were able to put up three exhibits on our own and one in collaboration with South Asian Students of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Our independently curated exhibit "Indigo: The Blue Gold" - by artist Shelly Jyoti created a lot of buzz in the academic circles. The story of Indigo also spawned all building musical and presentation extravaganza on four different Saturdays. We also hosted numerous musical events, multiple dance recitals, 1947 Partition Archive Seminars, screened various specialty films, quality storytelling seminars, poetry jams and queer events. Promotion of major Performances by Zakir Hussain and Anoushka Shankar at Chicago Symphony Center were a huge success. In consideration for all this, our Founders were recognised during the AAPI Month in May 2023 for their contribution to Art in the City of Chicago.

We saw a steady increase in receipt of exhibit and presentation grants from the City of Chicago and other major funders like Terra Foundation of American Art. We also saw an increase in support from individuals as well. Both of these indicators speak well for our continued upward trajectory. We are very appreciative of their support and their confidence in our work.

It means the world to us.

Sincerely,  
South Asia Institute Team





## TESTIMONIES ON PAPER ART AND POETRY OF SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN JANUARY - JUNE, 2023

The exhibition Testimonies on Paper: Art and Poetry of South Asian Women brought together an array of works on paper by South Asian women artists from the Hundal Collection along with South Asian women poets to create a space for alternative narratives of femininity and identity as the poets respond to the works exhibited. The works in the exhibition incorporated various motifs such as spirituality, gender, displacement, and longing that reflect the artists' desire to make sense of their lives in the world around them. Exploring the many ways in which women artists have engaged with their cultures and societies through their work and how they have incorporated their experiences as South Asian women in their artworks by interrogating the impact of culture.

The physical and emotional attachment and detachment that is involuntary for those who leave but also for those who stay behind, no matter what the motivation is for doing it; involves confronting new situations and challenges throughout the process of separation, migration, relocation and adaptation to a new circumstance.. The works in the exhibition served as a testament to the resilience and agency of navigating within, around, and against the constraints of their societies and cultures both in South Asia and outside of it.

List of Artists: Zarina, Ayesha Sultana, Laila Rahman, Shahzia Sikander, Bani Abidi, Nasreen Mohamedi, Naiza Khan, Salima Hashmi, Meher Afroz, Rana Begum. List of Poets: Mary Anne Mohanraj, Nina Sudhakar, Bhaswati Ghosh, Kashiana Singh, Dipika Mukherjee, Ami Kaye, Shikha Malaviya.



## SHELLY JYOTI - INDIGO: THE BLUE GOLD JULY - DECEMBER, 2023

Known as the "King of Dyes," "Devil's Dye," and "Blue Gold," indigo (*Indigofera tinctoria*) in the South Asian subcontinent can be traced back to the 2nd millennium BCE. Shelly Jyoti's exhibition, titled "Indigo: The Blue Gold" was a mid-career retrospective of Jyoti's investigation into the subcontinent's 18-19th century colonial trade of natural indigo dye. The exhibition focused specifically on indigo's long history from several perspectives, including global trade, forced labor, slavery, and indentured labor, migration, and colonization in terms of India's colonial history.

Since 2009, Jyoti, has been creating contemporary hand spun woven khadi textile works utilizing traditional indigo dye and ajrakh (Arabic: blue) reverse block printing techniques that trace back to ancient Indus Valley Civilization (3,300–1,300 BCE). The exhibition featured over forty new artworks along with a selection of Jyoti's installations, poetry, drawing, fashion, and textiles from the past decade including her signature "Indigo Narratives" series and recurring iconographic symbols including Gandhi's spinning wheel, fish, and ships to tell the story of indigo. Jyoti's original textile artworks were produced in the studios of master craftsmen Juned Ismail Mohamed Khatri, son of the legendary Dr. Ismail Mohamed Khatri, in Ajrakhpur, Bhuj, Gujarat.



## **OPEN WATERS: PERMEATING TERRITORIES**

### **SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO**

**MARCH - MAY, 2023**

The members of the South Asian Students Association at SAIC took the opportunity to explore the South Asian migration to the United States in this exhibition held by SAI. Their stories are not just constricted to the sub-continent but expand to other cultural experiences. They explored that diversity within their artists who brought an intensely divergent range of mediums, addressing "Open Waters: Permeating Territories" with their unique styles, while also paying homage to their upbringing and the paths that defined them over time.

Water, is the basis of existence, and its free-flowing essence is present within us. Like water, people take shape and adapt to the places they are displaced into. Their undaunting spirit adapts and changes to their surroundings. Oceans and seas are fed by the mountains where the water remains frozen. Once unleashed, it liquefies and spreads, taking over more space, seeing new places, and changing its qualities to adapt to a new vessel. The exhibition addressed the constant acculturation across continents. Like water, we are constantly traveling to new destinations, learning new information, and gaining knowledge that seeps through and becomes a part of our identity.

The exhibition featured 22 artists from all over South Asia, with a wide range of artworks that showed the effects of this interflow, the power, and the weakness it holds. This exhibition was a celebration of interdisciplinary art making; and showcased painters, ceramicists, printmakers, fiber artists, performance artists, and mixed media artists.

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## **MATERIALS, METAPHORS, AND MINIATURES**

### **SELECTED WORKS FROM THE HUNDAL COLLECTION**

**ONGOING FROM SEPTEMBER, 2023**

Traditional miniature painting was a prominent art form during the Mughal rule, but it is an art form that has been deeply ingrained in the cultural heritage of South Asia for centuries. Its existence was endangered during the 19th century due to the waning imperial support and the impact of British colonialism. Despite these challenges, the movement has been revived and transformed in the modern era. Notably, the National College of Art in Lahore, Pakistan, has played a pivotal role in this revival, later echoed by artists in the UK and the USA. The exhibition Materials, Metaphors, and Miniatures looks at the revival of traditional miniature painting through the works of contemporary South Asian artists, who have innovated by moving beyond the traditional format and exploring contemporary themes.

This exhibition featuring works from the Hundal Collection, presented significant artists who are at the forefront of this international movement of contemporary miniature painting. Contemporary South Asian Miniature or Neo-Miniature art is distinctive in that rather than rejecting convention, the artists innovate through acquiring a mastery of traditional skills and then move beyond its boundaries. Early in their training, miniaturists are taught traditional technical skills, which they are required to practice by reproducing historical works. The intimacy of those early encounters is frequently reflected in many contemporary miniature works, which often bear a strong resemblance to the earlier paintings. While the artists started their training with traditional technical skills, they now innovate by exploring other forms of expression and even other mediums such as photography, textile, ceramics, and sculpture.





APRIL

**ZAKIR HUSSAIN AND THE MASTERS OF PERCUSSION**

South Asia Institute partnered with the Chicago Symphony Center to present Ustad Zakir Hussain and the Masters of Percussion.

Hussain is the "indisputable tabla maestro" (Gramophone), who takes his instrument to the frontiers of South Asian classical music while vastly expanding its presence on the world stage. For his long-running Masters of Percussion program, Hussain was joined by drumming virtuosos representing multiple cultures, genres, ages, and instruments.

**RENAISSANCE: চর্যাপদে পুনর্জাগরণ / CARYĀPADĒRA PUNARJĀGARĀṆA**

This performance featured traditional Baul Songs and the Revival of Charyapada Ancient Bengali Buddhist Mystical Songs, by Shadhika Srijoni Tania, a next generation Baul practitioner specializing in the performance and composition of Baul music and song. Tania is a Baul practitioner and renowned performer of various song traditions of South Asia and owes her early involvement with Baul spirituality and song to her family's influence. Saymon Zakaria is a writer and researcher. He is Deputy Director of the Bangla Academy, Dhaka, Bangladesh and Chairperson of the Bhābanagara Foundation. He is internationally recognized for his ethnographic fieldwork regarding Intangible Cultural Heritage.



MAY

**PT. TEJENDRA MAJUMDAR AND PT. TANMOY BOSE**

South Asia Institute and South Asian Classical Music Society presented Pt. Tejendra Majumdar and Pt. Tanmoy Bose in concert. Majumdar is one of the most brilliant and popular classical artists from South Asia. A dedicated musician who is also interested in composing, arranging and experimenting in other areas of music, from composing the background score of meaningful films to musical ballets - Tejendra plays the fretless sarod and represents the Maihar gharana (school) having learned the instrument for many years from Bahadur Khan before his passing and later from his cousin Ali Akbar Khan. Tanmoy Bose is a percussionist and tabla player, musical producer, film actor and composer. Born and raised in Kolkata, the cultural capital of India, Bose grew up in downtown Kolkata at a time when Indian Music was getting serious attention in the West due to the efforts of the legendary maestros.





## JUNE

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### CULTURAL CONNECTIONS: SARASWATHI RANGANATHAN AND JUAN DÍES

South Asia Institute's Cultural Connections Program is a series of events that celebrates the intersection of South Asian and International cultures through the performing and literary arts. Each event aims to highlight the shared similarities and learn about the differences between South Asian and International cultures.

This edition was hosted in partnership with the National Mexican Museum of Art, and celebrated the meeting and mingling of Mexican and Indian cultures through music, specifically, stringed instruments namely the Veena (originating from South Asia) and the Guitar played by maestros in their fields - Saraswathi Ranganathan and Juan Díes.



## JULY

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### SURABHI ENSEMBLE: FREE FAMILY SATURDAYS

Surabhi Ensemble's mission is to demonstrate the connections between cultures and to teach a positive message of togetherness in creating, performing, and demonstrating new works of music and dance. Founded by Veena artist Saraswathi Ranganathan, the ensemble features an outstanding line-up from Chicago's music and theater scene and have performed for 10+ years, presenting rustic soundscapes of flamenco music and Afro rhythms woven into the sounds of South Asian Classical ragas, Turkish Maqams, embellished with blues and folk melodies.

Surabhi Ensemble performs in schools, hospitals, theaters, concert halls, festivals, refugee organizations, neighborhood parks, and cultural centers to bring this positive message of cultural unity and outreach. For their South Asia Institute debut program, they offered an informative hands on demonstration of their instruments and dance lessons prior to the music and dance program to help children understand the music and cultures being showcased.



## AUGUST

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### SHADES OF BLUE: AN ALL BUILDING OPEN HOUSE vol.1

The Shades of Blue was a series of building-wide open house programs curated in conjunction with South Asia Institute's "Indigo: The Blue Gold" textile art exhibition. In this free four-part series South Asia Institute sought to highlight, educate, and celebrate the roots and journeys of Chicago blues and jazz music, and South Asian performing arts and share the parallel stories of the Indigo blue dye's journey, from being harvested and cultivated in India and Africa to its cultivation in the early American South.

In the series of events that took place throughout the three-level building at staggered times, audiences engaged with poets, dancers, film-makers and actors, and members of noted local and international touring jazz, blues, classical, and South Asian ensembles. The performers included Chicago's Kabir Dalawari Trio and recent Chicago transplant from Argentina, blues guitarist Ivan Singh and his band and Kathak dancer, Shiwali Tenner. 'Blue Alchemy: Stories of Indigo' a documentary that explores the history of indigo across continents, was screened.





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**KARSH KALE: A SPECIAL SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE FUNDRAISER EVENT**

South Asia Institute was honored to have the iconic musician, DJ, composer, record producer, songwriter, film-maker, and DJ, Karsh Kale lead the charge for South Asia Institute's very first Fundraiser event. The evening opened with a rare movie screening of the documentary film "Rock, Disco, Tabla: The Karsh Kale Effect" (Directed by Shakti Hasija, 2019.) The screening featured concert and studio footage from around the world and video diaries of his close collaborators over the years and was followed by a conversation with Karsh. He closed out the event with a special DJ set performance.

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**FUNKADESI: FREE FAMILY SATURDAY**

In an afternoon of music and stories, Chicago's celebrated musical supergroup, Funkadesi shared numbers from their 25-year repertoire. The band has represented Chicago throughout the United States and Canada, at music festivals, performing art centers, venues, clubs, and special events.

Deeply rooted in tradition, their music ranged from South Asian classical, folk and film melodies, to West African, Caribbean, Latin, Brazilian, and Reggae blended with American Funk and Soul. They also shared the stories of their music and instruments in an informative hands on demonstration for children prior to the beginning of the music and dance program to help them understand the music and cultures being showcased.

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**SHADES OF BLUE: AN ALL BUILDING OPEN HOUSE vol.2**

This was the second edition of the four-part series of Shades of Blue, the all building open house programs featured in conjunction with the South Asia Institute's "Indigo: The Blue Gold" art exhibition by Shelly Jyoti, which is focused on and is themed around the history associated with the blue dye derived from the indigo plant that has touched many communities across the world. The performers at this event included dancer Shalaka Kulkarni, poet Billy Tuggle, and musicians Aqil Brothers. The docu-series "Lakha Khan: Searching for the Blues" was screened and featured a conversation with the producer, Ankur Malholtra.





## RAGAMALA: A CELEBRATION OF SOUTH ASIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC

South Asia Institute collaborated with the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, People of Rhythm Productions and South Asian Classical Music Society to present the 11th annual, all-night concert as part of the city's annual World Music Festival. Eight ensembles and numerous artists performed under the world's largest Tiffany Dome at the Chicago Cultural Center's Preston Bradley Hall.

Ragamala consistently highlights the work and artistry of well known established South Asian classical artists, alongside younger, exceptionally gifted musicians who are carrying on the long historied musical tradition. Over 100 Indian classical musicians and dancers have performed at Ragamala since its inception and many made their Chicago and Midwest debut performances or created special jugalbandi (duets) projects that premiered at Ragamala.



## SHANTA NURULLAH'S SONGS AND STORIES: FREE FAMILY SATURDAY

The final SAI Free Family Saturdays event of the season featured Shanta Nurullah and her band Sitarsys. Shanta Nurullah makes music primarily on sitar, bass, and mbira, and is also a storyteller and teaching artist. She has performed professionally as a musician since 1972 and as a storyteller since 1978. She co-founded two all-women's groups, Sojourner and Samana, and currently leads the ensemble, Sitarsys.

Shanta first discovered her love for the sitar in India in 1969 and has been playing it ever since. She and her band performed songs and stories that celebrated and highlighted African and African American melodies and honored the folk and jazz music traditions.



## OCTOBER

## SHADES OF BLUE: AN ALL BUILDING OPEN HOUSE vol.3

This was the third edition of the four-part series of Shades of Blue, the all building open house programs featured in conjunction with the South Asia Institute's "Indigo: The Blue Gold" art exhibition by Shelly Jyoti, which is focused on and is themed around the history associated with the blue dye derived from the indigo plant that has touched many communities across the world. Performers at the event included dancers from Ishti Collective, music by Kavita Shah's Cape Verde Blues Project, The Arab Blues with special guest Arun Visvanath on mridangam and Billy Branch & Saraswathi Ranganathan Duo.







**CSO PRESENTS ANOUSHKA SHANKAR IN CONCERT**

South Asia Institute was proud to be a promotional partner for the Chicago concert by sitar virtuoso Anoushka Shankar — the first Indian woman and youngest-ever Grammy nominee in the world music category — accompanied by her new quintet to the Chicago Symphony Center. As the daughter and student of the legendary Ravi Shankar, she is deeply rooted in Indian classical music and has blazed a singular path that encompasses inventive arrangements, sensitive virtuosity and a neoclassical approach.

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**NOVEMBER**



**SHADES OF BLUE: AN ALL BUILDING OPEN HOUSE vol.4**

This was the fourth and last edition of the four-part series of Shades of Blue, the all building open house programs featured in conjunction with the South Asia Institute's "Indigo: The Blue Gold" art exhibition by Shelly Jyoti, which is focused on and is themed around the history associated with the blue dye derived from the indigo plant that has touched many communities across the world. Performers at the event included dancer Tim 'Soloman' Bowser, poet Vareesha Khan, music by Sonny Singh Band (Punjabi Folk Pop, Jazz Fusion) and Falsa (Sufi Chamber) and the film screening From Here.

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**DECEMBER**



**CORKY SIEGAL AND KALYAN PATHAK: CHAMBER BLUE DUO**

Programmed in conjunction with the South Asia Institute's current "Indigo: The Blue Gold" art exhibition by Shelly Jyoti which focused on and was themed around the history associated with the blue dye derived from the indigo plant that has touched many communities across the world. Through this free performance, South Asia Institute (SAI) sought to help highlight, educate, and celebrate the roots and journeys of Chicago blues music and jazz music, world music and South Asian performing arts and share the parallel stories of the music and the color blue dye and Indigo plant's own journey. Corky Siegel is known internationally as one of the worlds great blues harmonica players, blues pianist, singer-songwriter, creator of CHAMBER BLUES and the sole pioneer/composer of award-winning revolutionary works that weave blues and classical forms together. Kalyan Pathak is one of the busiest virtuoso tabla and multi-ethnic percussionists in the USA.





APRIL

### ARTIST TALK: SHAHIDUL ALAM ON VOCABULARIES OF RESISTANCE (WRIGHTWOOD 659 X SAI)

Lecture, book signing and reception with Shahidul Alam, a humanitarian activist, institution builder, and prominent South Asian photographer, was hosted by Wrightwood 659.

Following the War of Independence in his home country of Bangladesh, Alam witnessed the effects of political upheaval, from the rise of an autocratic general to the displacement of indigenous groups and the burgeoning Rohingya refugee crises. Alam makes visible the resilience of those living in the world's densest regions while empowering people to use photography to reveal their own stories.

JUNE

### SILVER SPLENDOR: AMNA SHARIFF ON REVIVING TRADITIONAL JEWELRY DESIGN

The event Silver Splendor featured a talk by Amna Shariff and showcased her silver creations. Shariff's jewelry is inspired by the rich tradition of jewelry design in Pakistan and is suffused with spiritual, social, and mythological connotations.

Her workshop, established in 2001, is a one-of-a-kind facility in Pakistan, where manufacturing begins with raw material and ends with a ready-for-market, finished product. She has exhibited her jewelry, throughout Pakistan and around the world — at the prestigious International Folk Art Market in Santa Fe, as well as at art galleries and shops in London, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Nairobi, Istanbul, New Delhi, Bukhara, and more.

JULY

### INDIGO AS ART AND COMMODITY: A PANEL DISCUSSION

Panel discussion was centered around the profound impact of Indigo on India's artistic heritage and its ongoing influence on contemporary craft and fine art practices worldwide. Set against the background of the current exhibition, Indigo: The Blue Gold, this insightful conversation shed light on the historical significance and enduring inspiration that Indigo holds. The event with Shelly Jyoti was moderated by Professor Shaurya Kumar.





## AUGUST

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### INDIGO AS A TEXTILE ART: SHELLY JYOTI IN CONVERSATION WITH LISA TRIVEDI

In this discussion program, Shelly Jyoti and Lisa Trivedi talked about the significance of indigo in textile arts. Jyoti and Trivedi are long-time collaborators. Both have known each for years and have conducted extensive research on textile arts and indigo.

Jyoti is an acclaimed textile artist from India, whose works have been exhibited all over the world. Her works were on display at South Asia Institute at the time. Trivedi is a cultural and social historian of modern South Asia, who received her doctorate from the University of California at Davis. Currently, she's a professor of history at Hamilton College.



### A BOOK LAUNCH WITH DR. GUNEETA SINGH BHALLA AND PROFESSOR ERIN RIGGS

10,000 Memories: A Lived History of Partition is the fruition of the largest pan-South Asian oral history survey ever conducted. Through individual experiences, it documents stories of Partition, World War II, and Independence in the mid-20th century Indian subcontinent. The narratives from Bombay include stories of soldiers involved in the Navy Mutiny, the settlement of Sindhis post-partition, and numerous Muslim families who chose to stay in Bombay and continued to call it their home among others.

On August 26, the editors and the creators of the book, Guneeta Singh Bhalla and Professor Erin Riggs talked about this book and its significance. The talk was followed by a Q&A session along with a panel who shared their experiences during the partition.



### ORAL HISTORY WORKSHOP WITH DR GUNEETA SINGH BHALLA AND PROFESSOR ERIN RIGGS

Creators and editors of "10,000 Memories: a lived history of Partition" Dr Guneeta Singh Bhalla and Prof. Erin Riggs gave an oral history workshop, to help the participants to develop the necessary set of skills required for archiving oral history of people.

Dr Guneeta Singh Bhalla and Professor Erin Riggs are the curators and the editors of "10,000 Memories: a lived history of Partition."

Based on the first and the largest pan-South Asian oral history survey ever conducted, 10,000 Memories tells the story of Partition, World War II and Independence in the mid-20th century Indian subcontinent through hundreds of individual experiences





APRIL

### TAKING ROOT: POETRY EVENT WITH THE GUILD LITERARY COMPLEX

In honor of AAPI Month, the South Asia Institute and the Guild Literary Complex bring you TAKING ROOT. This arts event featured an exhibition tour, poetry, music and book signing.

Poetry reading was moderated by Faisal Mohyuddin, and included poets George Abraham, Czaerra Galicinao Ucol, Samina Hadi-Tabassum, and Saba Keramati. Music was by Maninder Singh.

MAY

### SPOKEN DIALOGUES: POETRY READINGS FROM TESTIMONIES ON PAPER

The exhibition Testimonies on Paper: Art and Poetry of South Asian Women brought together an array of works on paper by South Asian women artists from the Hundal Collection along with South Asian women poets, creating a space for alternative narratives of femininity and identity as the poets respond to the works exhibited. For this event the poets recited the poems featured in the exhibition. The poets may be diasporic but are strongly rooted in the same South Asian ethos. They reshape geographic distance and reconfigure personal histories as they speak of anomie and freedom. They included Mary Anne Mohanraj, Nina Sudhakar, Bhaswati Ghosh, Kashiana Singh, Dipika Mukherjee, Ami Kaye, Shikha Malaviya.

OCTOBER

### SOUTH ASIAN LITERARY SHOWCASE AND LAUNCH PARTY

South Asia Institute was proud to bring a group of writers, who shared their works of different genres. The reading was followed by the launch of Mary Anne Mohanraj's newly released book, 'Tornado: A Breast Cancer Memoir'.

Featured reader: Dipika Mukherjee

Singers: Tina Bhaga and Alex Yu

Rapid-fire readers: Ami Kaye, Gulnaz Saiyed, Zara Imran

Kathak Dance: Aanya Sood

Rapid-fire readers: Arnav Sibal, Samina Hadi-Tabassum, Angeli Primlani

Singer: Tara Swaminathan

Featured reader: Mary Anne Mohanraj.





APRIL

**DANCED DIALOGUES: POETRY AND DANCE PERFORMANCE**

Poet Dipika Mukherjee recited as dancers Sigma Satabdhi Pradhan and Harini Nilakantan metamorphosed poetry from an auditory to a visual experience with their Odissi and Bharatanatyam inspired dance compositions. Sigma Satabdhi Pradhan has been practicing and performing Odissi under the guidance of Guru Smt. Madhulita Mohapatra, the Artistic Director and teacher at Nriyantar Academy of Performing Arts, Bangalore, India. Harini Nilakantan has been practicing and studying Bharatanatyam since the age of four and is the current student of Guru Smt. Dipika Mukherjee's newest poetry collection, *Dialect of Distant Harbors*, was published by CavanKerry Press in October 2022. She is also the author of *The Palimpsest of Exile* (2009), and *The Third Glass of Wine* (2015).

MAY

**SUITCASE STORIES: AN IMMIGRANT'S JOURNEY OF LOSING ONE HOME AND FINDING TWO**

Foraging the depths of a peanut butter jar one day, Jitesh realized with shock that he is now an Indian-American! Can home change? Can identity? Does love? He shared his journey as he left India for America in the pursuit of love and goes back to find that the hometown he missed, was missing. Would he be able to recreate what home is? In this hilarious and introspective story, Jitesh Jaggi shared his unwelcoming American immigration process only to make everyone in the audience feel welcome!

Jitesh Jaggi is an immigrant dancer, poet, and storyteller from India, currently living in Chicago. A three-time The Moth StorySlam winner, he also produces shows for the science storytelling organization, The Story Collider.

JUNE

**SATARANGI: A DESI QUEER OPEN MIC AND STORYTELLING EVENT**

To celebrate queer artists and queer people, the South Asia Institute organized "Satarangi: A Desi Queer Open Mic" as SAI's first queer event. Organized during the pride month of 2023, eight South Asian queer artists participated in this open mic, where they recited poems, performed storytelling, and drag as well.





**JULY**

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**STORY CIRCLE WITH JITESH**

The event, "Story Circle with Jitesh Jaggi" storyteller Jitesh Jaggi came back at South Asia Institute for a safe, fun, and vulnerable space that helped coax people's hidden memories and emotions. Story Circle is a step in our collective healing with SAI providing a judgment-free zone where communities can bond. People of all shades are welcome, and everyone in attendance has a chance to listen and share. The audience listened to a story by our resident storyteller, identified the theme from that story, and then shared an experience of their own that fit.



**OCTOBER**

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**OPEN HOUSE CHICAGO AT SAI**

For the Chicago Open House event with the Architecture Center a special Program: Dancing Colors: Exploration of Color was organized featuring traditional South Asian dance by the founder and members of Illinois Center for Kathak.





IN 2023, WE  
EXHIBITED  
ARTWORKS  
OF **55+** VISUAL  
ARTISTS.  
WE ALSO  
WORKED WITH  
**65+** MUSICIANS &  
BANDS,  
**22** DANCERS,  
**20** POETS AND  
AUTHORS, AND  
**1** STORYTELLER.

ADDITIONALLY,  
WE ESTABLISHED  
COLLABORATIONS  
WITH SEVERAL  
INSTITUTES  
LIKE **CHICAGO**  
**CULTURAL AFFAIRS**  
**DEPARTMENT,**  
**SAIC,** **CHICAGO**  
**SYMPHONY CENTER,**  
**THE NATIONAL**  
**MUSEUM OF**  
**MEXICAN ARTS,** AND  
MORE.



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Omer Ahmed  
Tom Bridges  
Fred Eychaner

### sustaining members

Sabra Darugar

### family members

Sairah Alvi  
Murad Bhaidani  
Tariq Butt  
Mala Hajat  
Aliya Husain  
Asra Khan  
Vinay Kumar  
Bushra Munif  
Raja Nadimpalli  
James Nye  
Nirmal and Sharath Raja  
Shyam Rajadhyaksha  
Armeen Siddiqui-Mirza  
Rekha Tobaccowala  
Pankaj Vedant  
Padma Venkatesan  
Rajni Venkateswar

### individual members

Megha Ralapati  
Maureen Sanderson  
Woodman Taylor  
Sylvia Vatuk  
Urvashi Verma

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## ABOUT SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE

South Asia Institute aims to cultivate the art and culture of South Asia and its diaspora through local and global collaborations, curated exhibitions, innovative programs, and educational initiatives that aim to engage diverse communities. At the Institute, the common heritage and identity of South Asian Americans are showcased while celebrating the common connections and values that are shared with the universal community at large. Art and cultural expression bring together diverse peoples in a shared experience, resulting in a better understanding and greater tolerance for ethnic differences.

It was the passion for South Asian Art that inspired the founders, Shireen and Afzal Ahmad - first generation immigrants from South Asia and longtime residents of Chicago, to assemble the Hundal Collection, over a period of 50+ years. One of the most significant collections of South Asian art in the United States, the collection includes works ranging from early Mughal Miniatures to Modern and Contemporary masterpieces by artists from the region and the diaspora. Having enjoyed living with the works, it has always been their mission to share the collection on a much larger scale and promote South Asian Art and cultural heritage in the United States.

### co-founder and president

Afzal Ahmad

### co-founder and director

Shireen Ahmad

### executive director

Brian Keigher

### exhibitions manager / design and layout

Andrea Moratinos

### communications coordinator

Ankit Khadgi

### audience development associate

Nia Oke-Famakinde

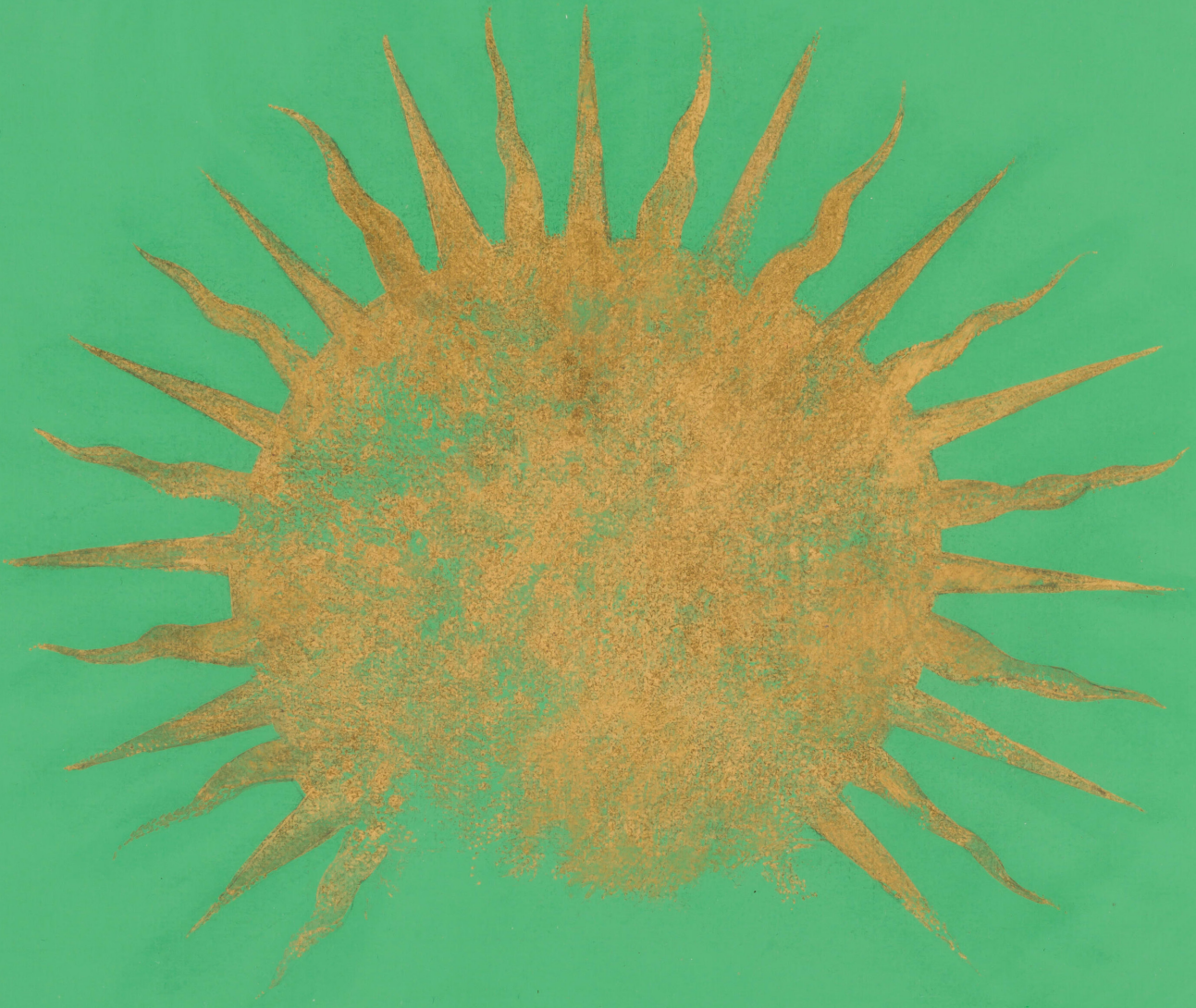
### intern

Muskaan Dhingra

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