

# SASNET - Swedish South Asian Studies Network

Lund University

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## Read Lars Eklund's reports from October–November 2012 South Asia tour

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During the period 20 October till 30 November 2012, SASNET deputy director Lars Eklund was away from the SASNET office at Lund University. Lars set up a small SASNET office at his Sardar Sankar Rd residence in Kolkata, and interacted with SASNET networking partners at the prime universities in Kolkata – Calcutta University, Jadavpur University, and Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Calcutta.



He also made a contact journey to Varanasi, Kanpur and Delhi, visiting the Swedish/Nordic study centres in Varanasi, the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), IIT Kanpur, the South Asian University in Delhi, and other networking partners. In Delhi, he also participated in the sixth Nobel Memorial Week, organised by the Swedish Embassy, and had meetings with the Ambassador Harald Sandberg, and the Growth Analysis representative Andreas Muranyi. In mid-November, Lars also visited Kathmandu for five days, and meetings were organised at Tribhuvan University, and meetings with Nepalese networking partners. [Go for Lars' travel reports with information about all academic meetings.](#)

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## Lars Eklund travel reports from October–November 2012 South Asia tour

Last updated: 19 December 2012

### Kolkata reports

#### Delhi reports

### Varanasi reports

#### Kathmandu reports

### Kanpur reports

During the period 20 October till 30 November 2012, SASNET deputy director Lars Eklund was away from the SASNET office at Lund University. Besides enjoying some free time with his family in Kolkata, interspersed with festivals, musical performances and other cultural activities including a wedding, he also interacted with SASNET networking partners at the prime universities in Kolkata – Calcutta University, Jadavpur University, and Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Calcutta. Lars set up a small SASNET office at his Sardar Sankar Rd residence in Kolkata.

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### Lars' report from his academic meetings in

#### Varanasi, 28–30 October 2012

- Gandhian Institute of Studies
- New ICCR Professor to Gothenburg
- Nordic Hindi Study Centre
- Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Social Sciences researchers
- Malaviya Institute of Peace Studies
- Karlstad University Indian Study Centre

### SASNET Visit to IIT Kanpur,

#### 30 October–1 November 2012

### Previous contact journeys

Earlier, Lars and his SASNET colleagues (first Staffan Lindberg and from 2007 Anna Lindberg) have made extensive and well documented contact journeys to a large number of universities, research institutions and networking partners in all the eight South Asian nations. Go for the travel reports from these contact journeys:

#### 2002 SASNET tour to Maldives, Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh

#### 2003 SASNET tour to Pakistan, and

#### Afghanistan

#### 2005 SASNET tour to India/Northeast, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh

#### 2007 SASNET tour to India/North, West, and Southwest

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- IIT Kanpur History
- Meeting Dean Research and Development
- Department of Biological Sciences and Bioengineering
- Meeting Advisor International Relations
- Meeting Erasmus Mundus coordinator
- Department of Humanities and Social Science
- Scandinavian contacts /Design
- Meeting Dean Research and Planning

#### **Lars' report on SASNET experiences in Delhi 1–5 November 2012**

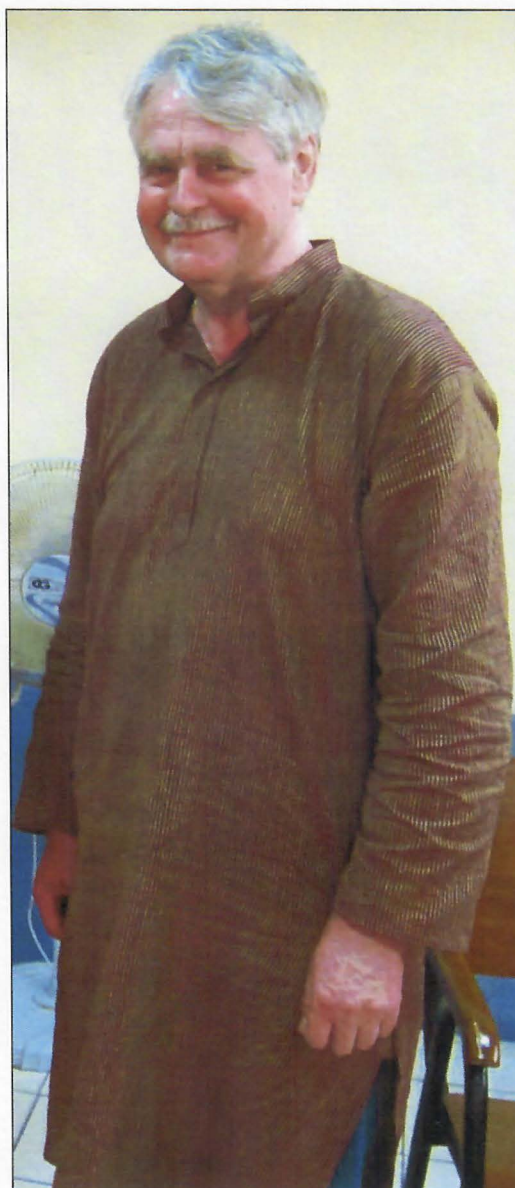
- Nordic Centre in India
- Nobel Memorial Week
- Meeting Andreas Muranyi, Growth Policy
- Meeting Swedish Ambassador
- South Asian University
- Embassy of Afghanistan
- STI Platform in India

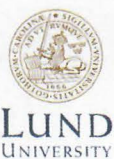
#### **Lars' report from SASNET meetings in Kathmandu, 12–16 November 2012**

- Meeting Tek Nath Dhakal, Tribhuvan University & Sunil Kumar Joshi, Kathmandu Medical College
- Meeting Manish Thapa, Tribhuvan University
- Tribhuvan University/Meetings with International Coordinator & Rector
- Networking meeting at CNAS, Tribhuvan University

#### **Lars' report from SASNET meetings in Kolkata, 21 October–29 November 2012**

- Meetings at University of Calcutta
- Indian Institute of Management Calcutta
- Meetings at Jadavpur University
- Indo-Swedish conference on Religion and Society
- Other meetings with SASNET networking partners





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## SASNET Varanasi meetings, 28 – 30 October 2012

Last updated: 13 December 2012

Gandhian Institute of Studies Malaviya Institute/BHU	New ICCR Professor for Gothenburg Hindi Study Centre	BHU/Social Sciences Karlstad University Study Centre
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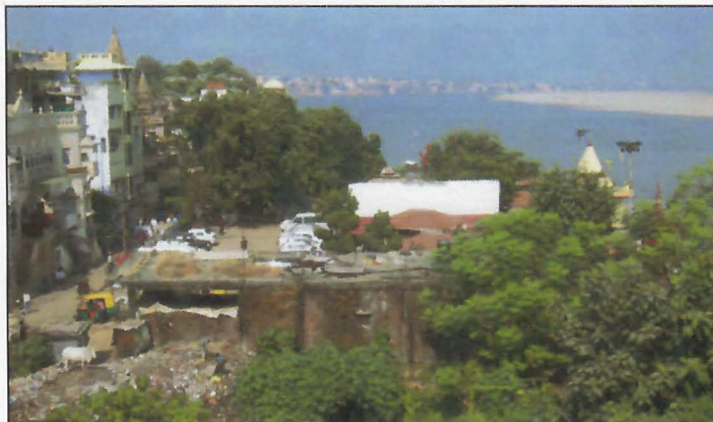
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#### By Lars Eklund

On Sunday 28 October 2012 I left my SASNET Kolkata office for a nine days contact journey to Varanasi, Kanpur and Delhi. First stop was Varanasi, where I reached in late afternoon by a comfortable Jet Airways flight.

From the airport, it was a long ride by taxi into Varanasi city.

The traffic is totally anarchic and chaotic without any traffic lights and few policemen on duty. Cars, motorcycles, scooters, horsedrawn wagons, cycle rikshas, cyclists, cows and a large number of pedestrians inbetween fight their way forward in a completely suicidal manner. However, after settling at Hotel Temple on Ganges near the river front at Assi Ghat, peace was restored, I was warmly welcomed by Professor Dipak Malik from the Gandhian Institute of Studies, who had arranged for my Varanasi programme. Professor Malik has a close connection to SASNET, being a member of its South Asian Reference Group.



#### Gandhian Institute of Studies



In the evening, a visit was made to the premises of the Gandhian Institute, situated in a 200 years old house in the cluster of narrow lanes of an old part of the city, not very far from Assi Ghat. The institute was formed in 1960 as an autonomous research Institute, by late Jayaprakash Narayan in 1960 as an "attempt to link Gandhian movement with Social Science." Its focus lies on village studies, civil society, social movements of transformation and conflict resolution.

Since a few years, a judicial dispute is going on concerning the management of the Gandhian Institute, since during the BJP regime 1998-2004 the government tried to grab control of the institute. This has led to the fact that a competing institution with



the same name exists in Varanasi, and continuous court sessions being held in Allahabad courts. Read more about the crisis, <http://gandhianinstitute.org/History.html> In order to restore normality, Professor Malik and his colleagues therefore decided to

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establish the Gandhian Institute of Studies Trust (GIST) in 2007, as a Trust with objectives to carry on both fundamental and applied study and research basing on Gandhian World view, inferences from the praxis of Gandhian movement of social transformation. GIST is working in collaboration with Swedish academics and universities.

Dr. Mirja Juntunen, former Director for the [Nordic Centre in India](#), now working at Aarhus University, Denmark, is an Honorary Senior Fellow at GIST, and negotiations are under way with University of Gothenburg on collaboration regarding village studies. The village study programme is also located at a GIST Campus in Jamui, Bihar.

### New ICCR Professor at University of Gothenburg

In the evening, a dinner meeting was organised with [Ashok Kumar Kaul](#), Professor of Sociology at Banaras Hindu University (BHU). Prof. Kaul has been selected to become the first Visiting Indian ICCR Professor at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. He will join the position in January 2013, and stay for six months. His contact person in Gothenburg is Professor Åke Sander at the [Department of Literature, History of Ideas, and Religion](#).



Ashok Kaul to the left along with Lars Eklund and Dipak Malik.

Prof. Kaul has a doctorate from BHU, and thirty years of lecturing and research experience at a number of universities in India and internationally. Originally coming from Kashmir, Prof. Kaul has written a book entitled "*Kashmir: Fractured Nativity (Closed Options, Open Possibilities)*". It was published by German publisher VDM in 2009, and an edited version "*Kashmir: Contested Identity*" was published by Rawat Publications in India in 2011. [More information about the book](#).

### City with three names

Waking up on Monday morning, 29 October 2012, at Temple Hotel in Varanasi and looking out at the river Ganges, sacred for all Hindus, on a clear and bright day in the end of October is really a spectacular experience. The sacredness of the place does however not mean that everything is



great. The view from the hotel consists not only of pilgrims in colourful dresses but also a garbage dump right next to Assi ghat, something that even the local newspapers have highlighted. The streets are not maintained at all, and sometimes I wonder how it could be that so many westerners get attracted to this dirty and nondecrepit city in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

The city actually has three names, besides the official Varanasi it is also known as either Kashi or Benares. It has since long time back been a favourite destination for westerners interested in classical Indian music, and Indian religious traditions and philosophy. The Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has also drawn many foreign students to Varanasi over the years. And lately the city has also become a prime destination for western students coming for language studies.



My programme in Varanasi included meetings with researchers at BHU but also visits to the two Swedish/Nordic study centres existing in the city.

### Hindi Studies Centre

In 2011, former Nordic Centre in India (NCI) coordinator Dr. Mirja Juntunen introduced a Hindi Study Programme in Varanasi, mainly for Hindi/Indology students from her then home university Stockholm, but also for students from other NCI member universities such as Oslo and Aarhus. The programme was initially run by NCI in collaboration with the Gandhian Institute of Studies.



During the spring semester 2011 it attracted a handful students from Stockholm University, and for the fall semester there came 16 people from Oslo and Aarhus, Hindi students on an advanced level.



From 2012, the organisational structure has been changed. The programme is now run by the Centre for the Study of Indian Languages and Society, a public trust set up to organise Hindi studies in an organised way in modern and well-equipped premises in a new building. Dr. Juntunen, now working at Aarhus University, is the Academic Director for the Centre, whereas Mr. John Moldén (*photo to the right*) works as Programme Manager during 2012, handling the day-to-day affairs and planning for the courses in collaboration with Mr. Binit Kumar Mishra (*photo to the left*), Hindi teacher employed on a



permanent basis. Mr. Mishra and five other teachers that work on contract basis, have all received pedagogic training in how to teach European students by Dr. Juntunen.

John Moldén has a background from Uppsala University, where he studied Sanskrit, Comparative Indo-European Languages, and Hindi from 2006, and Stockholm University, where he pursued with a masters programme in South Asian Studies from 2010. He was then one of the first participants in the Varanasi Hindi studies programme in 2011, and during the fall 2011 he did an internship as coordinator for the Varanasi programme as part of his MA. Now being the programme manager, John has spent most of the year in Varanasi. (In 2013, he will be succeeded by a Norwegian programme manager).



Conversation class for Peter Aggarwal, with Hindi teacher Punam Mishra.

During the fall 2012, a group of 12 students from Aarhus University spends 14 weeks from September till early December at the Centre. Unfortunately, they were all away on fieldwork on the day when I came to visit. I was however warmly welcomed by John Moldén and his visiting girl friend Elin Bergman, and met the teachers Punam Mishra and Binit Kumar Mishra. Present were, to my great luck, also two Hindi students from Stockholm, Peter Aggarwal and Rainer Haag, who after studying the popular distance education



Hindi course at Stockholm University now had come on private basis to Varanasi and the Centre for two weeks of intense Hindi conversation training. They were full of praise for the language training they are offered and the concept of the centre. Peter, whose father hails from India, is working as export manager for the company Interspiro, producing breathing equipment.

The cost for participating in the Varanasi programme is very moderate, 10 000 Indian rupees per week. Cheap accommodation is also offered. The course structure at the Centre for students coming for a semester course is made out of conversation training lessons in the morning, each time focusing on a specific area such as transport, in order that the students later the same day goes out to interview let say a riksha-wallah.

In the afternoons, class room grammar lessons follow, and finally the Centre organises evening seminars with invited speakers, often selected to fit in with the fieldwork themes the students have chosen, be it Kashmir, gender issues or whatever else.

The Centre currently receives students from Aarhus, Oslo, Uppsala and Stockholm. With the changed organisational structure, as a trust independent of the Nordic Centre in India university consortium, the Centre may even approach universities and students from non-Nordic countries.

It should be added that besides courses designed by the Centre, it also offers tailor-made courses planned according to demands from the universities sending students. Advanced Hindi students from different South Asia studies programmes are also invited to stay as trainees at the Centre in order to get experience from course administration plus improve their knowledge of Hindi.



#### Meeting with Social Sciences faculty at BHU

From the Hindi Centre, located in an ordinary housing colony in central Varanasi, I travelled south to the magnificent campus of Banaras Hindu University (BHU), one of the most historic universities of India. Exactly 10 years ago, in 2002, I visited BHU for the first time – see the SASNET report.



This time I was first invited to meet the faculty and a few students of Social Sciences, in the Lecture Theatre Complex building. The meeting was organised by Professor Ashok Kaul and my host in Varanasi, Professor Dipak Malik, who also has had a long career at BHU. Nearly 20 people turned up to listen to my presentation of SASNET.

The response was high, and many questions arose on possibilities to establish contacts with researchers in Sweden.

List of senior faculty:

- Professor Ashok Kaul, Department of Sociology
- Prof. B N Juyal, Gandhian Institute of Studies
- Prof. A K Jain, Department of Economics
- Dr. C D Adhikary, Department of Sociology





- Dr. Ghan Shyam, Department of History
- Raksh Raman, Department of Economics
- Ranjeena Sheel, Department of History. Interested in gender studies.
- Dr. Muniza R Khan, Gandhian Institute of Studies
- Dr. Manoj Mishra, Malaviya Centre for Peace Research
- Raj Kamal Yadav, Gandhian Institute of Studies



On the way from the faculty meeting, I saw an exhibition in the hallway on Bhojpuri Culture. Professor [Sadanand Shahi](#) (*photo*) who is Coordinator for the [Bhojpuri Adhyayan Kendra](#) ([Bhojpuri Study Centre](#)) also participated in the faculty meeting, now he showed me around the interesting artefacts exhibited on this rather ignored language and people of

Bhojpuri culture, in northeastern Uttar Pradesh. The Bhojpuri Study Centre was created at BHU in 2009 as an extension to its Hindi Department.

### Meeting at Malaviya Centre for Peace Research



After lunch I returned to Banaras Hindu University, this

time to the [Malaviya Centre for Peace Research \(MCPR\)](#). It was established in 1997 as an interdisciplinary centre of the Faculty of Social Sciences connecting faculty and researchers from diverse disciplines of the Social Sciences, particularly Political Science and International Relations, working to analyse and contribute to the peaceful resolution of intra- and inter-state conflict.

I was invited by Professor [Priyanka Upadhyaya](#), MCPR coordinator, with several Scandinavian connections, especially with the universities of Oslo, Karlstad, Uppsala and Gothenburg. Two Swedish researchers have spent time at MCPR as Visiting Faculty, Prof. [Peter Wallensteen](#) from the [Dept. of Peace and Conflict Studies](#), Uppsala University; and Dr. [Marc Katz](#), [Department of Religious Studies](#), Karlstad University. In 2012, a Linnaeus Palme exchange programme has been established between MCPR and the [Department of History and Political Science](#), also at Karlstad University ([more information](#)).

Prof. Upadhyaya has also visited Lund University in 2009 and held a SASNET lecture ([more information](#)).



In the summer of 2012, two of the researchers, [Ajay Kumar Yadav](#) and [Siddharth Singh](#), participated in a summer school in Norway organised by the Peace Research Institute Oslo ([PRIO](#)), part of University of Oslo. More information.

The meeting started as a usual presentation of SASNET and of the researchers present, but soon turned into a discussion on technical



details regarding SASNET's web site and my experiences of creating a web portal on South Asian studies in Sweden. There was a great interest to make use of these experiences for Malaviya Centre and its web site.

Researchers present:

- Associate Professor [Siddharth Singh](#), Dept. of Pali and Buddhist Studies
- Assistant Professor [Manoj Mishra](#), MCPR
- Visiting faculty [Vandana Singh](#), MCPR



- Research scholar [Gaurav Shah](#), MCPR. Research interest: Media and Inter-Religious Peace Building in India.
- Research scholar [Reena Baral](#), MCPR. Research interest: Conflict and Grievance Handling in Industries: Case Study of Manesar Industrial Belt.
- Research Fellow [Ajay Kumar Yadav](#), MCPR. Research interest: Culture of Governance and Conflict Resolution; Underdevelopment and Democracy.
- Research scholar [Chandra Kishar Mani Pandey](#), MCPR. Research interest: India Peaceful Nuclear Energy and International Perspective.
- Research scholar [Krishna Rai](#), MCPR. Research interest: India's Look East Policy: Historical Analytical View in the special Reference of ASEAN.
- Research scholar [Bhola Nath Gupta](#), MCPR. Research interest: Nonviolent Movements: Gandhian Thought and Current Problem.

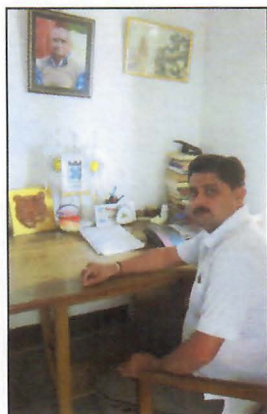
### Karlstad University Study Centre (Ganga Mahal)

Next morning, on Tuesday 30 October, before proceeding for a 360 km taxi ride from Varanasi to Kanpur along Asian Highway No. 1, I visited the impressive palatial Ganga Mahal building right on the banks of Ganges at Assi Ghat, housing Karlstad University's Study Centre.



It was exactly 10 years since I last visited this centre, rented by Karlstad University from the former Maharaja of Varanasi. [See my report from the 1982 visit.](#)

The main change since last time is the demise of the long time centre director, Om Prakash Sharma, who passed away in 2011. He has now been succeeded by his son, Mr. [Rajeev \(Raju\) Sharma](#) (*photo below*), whom I met in his office at the centre.



In recent years, the centre has mostly catered to Karlstad students in teachers training and from History of Religion and Cultural Geography. It is administered through the India Programme, now coordinated by Dr. Per-Olof Fjällsby from the [Department of History and Political Science](#).

During the fall semester 2012, Ganga Mahal is far from crowded. The main reason is that no students in History of Religion are coming, (but in next fall semester 2013 they

will) which means only a handful students stay at the centre have come to do field work in Varanasi. They are privileged in having the most spectacular view over the River Ganga you could ever imagine in Varanasi from their balcony and roof terrace.

At my visit, I met two teachers training students, both of them in the field of social science who spends the fall semester here. [Victoria Lundin](#), a fourth year student had come to Ganga Mahal for the second time – she had also been here as a student of History of Religion five years ago. Victoria was studying multiculturalism in a project entitled "Communal Harmony: Lessons from Benares".





Juval Pruitt is a third year student, and his Varanasi field work project focuses on how Indian teachers Democracy teaching in the school. (Victoria and Juval on photo at the balcony)



Besides the Director, the centre also has a couple of other staff assisting the visiting students with all practical issues. 10 students can be housed in Ganga Mahal, if more are coming the rest will be housed in another house named Amar Bhavan. Since students from Karlstad University do not always fill the centre, it is also open for other Swedish or Nordic universities and institutions to make use of Ganga Mahal if there are free places. Mr. Sharma informed me as an example that in

February 2013 a group from Luleå will come and stay at the centre. The cost for placing a student at Ganga Mahal is about SEK 800 per week.

Aarhus University has also expressed its interest to let their Indology students join Karlstad University's India Programme, that includes studies in Hindi.

### Lars Eklund



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## SASNET Visit to IIT Kanpur, 30 October–1 November 2012

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Last updated: 19 December 2012

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Department of Biological Sciences and Bioengineering	Meeting Advisor International Relations
Meeting Erasmus Mundus coordinator	Department of Humanities and Social Science
Scandinavian contacts /Design	Meeting Dean Research and Planning

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By Lars Eklund

IIT Kanpur web page: <http://www.iitk.ac.in>

#### IIT Kanpur History

Established in 1959 as one of the first Indian Institutes of Technology, IIT Kanpur was created with the assistance of a consortium of nine leading US research universities (namely M.I.T, University of California, Berkeley, California Institute



of Technology, Princeton University, Carnegie Institute of Technology, University of Michigan, Ohio State University, Case Institute of Technology and Purdue University) as part of the Kanpur Indo-American Programme (KIAP). Since its inception, IIT Kanpur has earned considerable repute all over the world for its innovative academic programmes and for carrying out original research of significance and technology development at the cutting edge. The institute has around 5,400 students with 3,400 undergraduate students and 2000 postgraduate students.

In 1972 the KIAP program however ended, in part because of tensions due to the U.S. support of Pakistan. Government funding was also reduced as a reaction to the sentiment that the IIT's were contributing to the brain drain. Since then IIT Kanpur has increased collaboration with industry and has achieved a reasonable level of stability. One of the pride projects at IIT Kanpur is the SIDBI Innovation & Incubation Centre (SIIC), run in



collaboration with Small Industries development Bank of India (SIDBI). Its mission is to foster innovation, research, and entrepreneurial activities in technology-based areas. SIIC provides a platform to Start-ups prospective entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs to convert their innovative ideas into commercially viable products. [More information](#). Like the other Indian Institutes of Technology, IIT Kanpur focuses not only on

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Technology, but research is carried out within a wide spectrum of subjects, including Humanities and Social Science.



IIT Kanpur is located on the Asian Highway No 1 (the old Grand Trunk Road), 15 kilometres west of Kanpur City. I arrived there in the evening of 30 October, after a seven hours journey by taxi from Varanasi, and was accommodated in the comfortable IIT Kanpur guest house. My host during an intense two days visit was Professor Ashok Kumar (*photo*), leading researcher at the Department of Biological Sciences and Bioengineering, and he came to welcome me.

Ashok Kumar has a very strong connection to Sweden, having lived many years in Lund, affiliated to the [Department of Biotechnology](#) and other departments at Lund University. He regularly goes to visit his family still residing in Lund, and he is involved in a number of collaborative research projects with Swedish colleagues. [More information about Dr. Kumar and his research in Sweden.](#)

#### Meeting with Dr. Ajit K Chaturvedi, Dean Research and Development.

The first meeting was held early in the morning on 31<sup>st</sup> October with Dr. [Ajit Chaturvedi](#), who has been Dean for Research and Development for two years, and with one more year to go. He is otherwise working as Professor of Wireless Communication. As Dean R&D, Dr. Chaturvedi is in charge of all foreign collaboration projects and external funding from abroad. IIT Kanpur is involved in two kinds of external collaboration projects, one is industry specific – for example projects together with big international companies such as Chevron, Samsung and Boeing, and the second is university specific, for example the Erasmus Mundus collaboration with Lund University and many others.



Dr. Ajit Chaturvedi and PhD Candidate Kidhima Singh.

Currently IITK has a large number of MoUs signed with foreign universities, and we discussed the merits in these. Dr. Chaturvedi remarked that in order to make any MoU worthwhile there needs to be a relationship established in beforehand between partners willing to work for joint projects. Only after that the universities should sign a MoU.

#### Visit to Department of Biological Sciences and Bioengineering (BSBE)

Web page: <http://www.iitk.ac.in/bsbe/>

This is the department where Dr. Ashok Kumar is working himself. It is a well-equipped, modern institution with high standard laboratories, established in 2001, and since 2003 located in its present premises. It is one of the flagships of IIT Kanpur.



BSBE could be realised because of generous funding

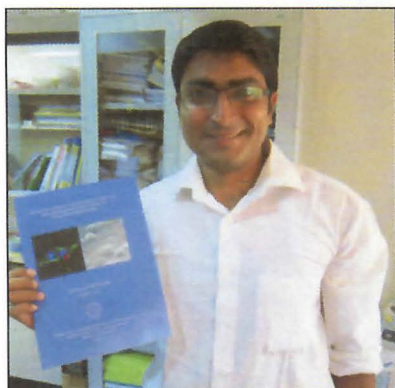


PhD candidates Deepak Raina, Apeksha Damania and Ankanshu Shukla in the lab.

from Mr. Arun Shourie, long time back known as India's leading investigative journalist working for Indian Express, but later becoming a politician working for the Hindu nationalist party BJP, and being Minister of Disinvestment, Communication and Information Technology in the Vajpayee government 1998-2004. Being a Member of Parliament (MP) representing Kanpur, he has had a possibility to decide upon spending INR 2 m a year for projects within his constituency according to the "Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme", introduced by the Ministry of Rural Development in 1993. For one six year period in parliament, Shourie decided to fund the



new BSBE, and when he was re-elected for a new period he decided to give his funds to another new impressive department at IITK, namely the Center for Environmental Sciences and Engineering (CESE).



Haider Sami who defended his PhD thesis on "Design and Synthesis of Multifunctional Polymeric Materials for Potential Bioimaging and Drug Delivery Application" in April 2012.

Ashok Kumar successfully works with a research programme on Bioprocess Engineering and Biomaterials, focusing on design and development of new smart polymeric biomaterials and supermacroporous matrices for applications in biology and biotechnology. He modestly displays a copy of the peer reviewed Nature Protocols journal from 2010, publishing his and his colleagues research results.

This is a field with a large potential to make new useful devices in Medicine, and Ashok has established contacts with several researchers at Lund University, Sweden, for example Dr. Harald Kirsebom at the Dept. of Biotechnology, Dr. Linda Elowsson at the Unit of Muscle Biology, Dept. of

Experimental Medical Science, and Professor Lars Lidgren, Department of Orthopaedics.

One post-doc researcher from IIT Kanpur, Dr. Ruchi Mishra, will go to Lund in January 2013 as part of this new collaboration.

Of course Ashok also keeps contact with his former colleagues at Lund University's Department of Biotechnology. Professors Bo Mattiasson and Rajni Hatti Kaul have both visited IIT Kanpur in recent years, as has also Dr. Igor Galaev and Dr. Martin Hedström. Linda Önnby, now PhD candidate at the department in Lund spent three months on a Minor Field Studies (MFS) scholarship at IIT Kanpur when she was working on her MSc thesis a few years ago. [More information about Linda's research.](#)

Before leaving the department, where PhD candidates were busy working in the labs, a meeting was organised with Dr. [R. Sankararamakrishnan](#) (short form Dr. Sankar), Head of the department, in his office room decorated with a portrait of Arun Shourie on the wall. A Tamilian by birth, hailing from a village near Kodaikanal, he informed about the strong research environment that BSBE is. With only a limited number of faculty members, 11 people all in all, they supervise no less than 70 PhD candidates. Besides, the department has 150 BTech students and 30 MTech students.



Dr. Sankar and Prof. Kumar.

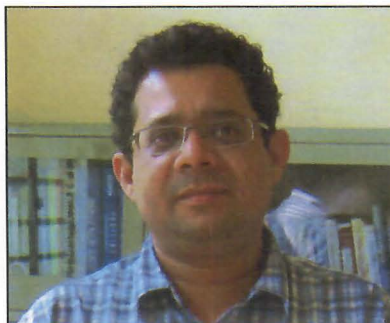
### Visit to Center for Environmental Sciences and Engineering (CESE)

Web page: <http://www.iitk.ac.in/cese/>

After completing the visit to BSBE, Dr. Kumar took me to a beautifully designed building on campus that houses the Centre for Environmental Science & Engineering (CESE), the second flagship institution of IIT Kanpur, and another initiative that has been generously funded from the MPLAD scheme pledged by Mr. Arun Shourie, Member of the Rajya Sabha. Dr. Kumar has one more laboratory on Health Biosystems in this facility. The Centre, inaugurated in 2006, has been conceptualized, designed and constructed as a "building in the garden", sustainable and environment friendly and conceived with the specific objective of creating an interdisciplinary research facility integrating the fields of engineering, science and medicine to address environmental issues.

### Meeting with Prof. Sandeep Verma, Advisor International Relations

Next stop was the office of Professor [Sandeep Verma](#) (photo) at the International Relations division. He is in charge of all international activities at IIT Kanpur, and a very energetic person strongly advocating more formalised collaboration between IIT Kanpur and Swedish universities. IIT today already has well functioning collaboration agreements with several universities in Germany, Switzerland and France, and he urged Dr. Ashok Kumar to work on similar





collaboration to be realised with Sweden.

Apparently, Prof. Verma had no clue about a workshop on introducing the Bologna academic process that representatives of Lund University organised at IIT Kanpur sometimes in 2011. No wonder, since no report has been published from this workshop afterwards.



Instead, Prof. Verma enthusiastically talked about a meeting he had had with Ms. Saloni Zaveri from the Swedish Embassy in Delhi recently. Saloni had informed him about a possibility to apply for funding from the Swedish government through the embassy specifically for Indo-Swedish joint research within the field of public health. Since this is an area of research in which Ashok Kumar is so much involved, it may be possible to get hold of such funding. Verma also mentioned that he is going to suggest the Swedish embassy to launch Sweden Days at IIT Kanpur, along the lines of the Nobel Week, from 2013.

#### Lunch meeting with Prof. P. M. Prasad, Erasmus Mundus programme coordinator



Over lunch I met with P Murali Prasad, Professor of Economics at the Department of Humanities and Social Science (HSS), and at the same time local coordinator for the European Commission funded Erasmus Mundus Action 2 mobility programme EMEA, an Asia Regional lot coordinated by Lund University. [More information about EMEA.](#)

Professor Prasad has been to Lund to attend EMEA meetings and is very positive towards collaborating with Lund University. IIT Kanpur was also a member of the Lund University coordinated consortium that ran the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 India lots launched in 2008 and 2009 (the latter still partly functioning till 2013), which contradicts

Professor Verma's statement that formal collaboration agreements with Sweden are lacking.

Prasad informed that 12 students, researchers and academic staff from IIT Kanpur were selected for the mobility programme currently running to different European universities.

#### Meeting with faculty, Department of Humanities and Social Science (HSS)

Web page: <http://www.iitk.ac.in/hss/>

After lunch, we proceeded to Professor Murali Prasad's home department, HSS. As previously mentioned, the idea to integrate humanities and social sciences at a technical university is a unique feature for Indian IITs, which is not there at European technical universities. (It should be mentioned that the same interdisciplinary effort characterizes the Indian Institutes of Management, the IIMs).



The HSS department covers the entire top floor of the main IIT building, and includes the following subjects: Economics, English, Fine Arts, Philosophy, Psychology, and Sociology. The staff has impressive CVs, most of the professors have PhD degrees from leading Indian universities such as JNU, Hyderabad and Vishwabharati (Shantiniketan), or from top universities in UK and USA. The faculty consists of 34 persons.

With short notice, Prof. Prasad had invited his colleagues for a meeting, and the following were able to participate:

– Dr. G  
Neelakantan,  
professor in  
English, focusing  
on Communicative  
Language  
Teaching, and  
World Fiction in  
English.





– Dr.

[Munmun Jha](#), professor in Sociology, focusing on Human Rights and Social Movements.



– Dr. [Binay K Pattnaik](#), professor in Sociology, focusing on Sociology of Science and Technology, Environmental Sociology, and Sociology of Development. Dr. Pattnaik attended the [17th World Sociology Conference](#) held in Gothenburg in 2010.

– Dr. [A K Sharma](#), professor in Sociology, focusing on Social Demography, Rural Development, and Health and Environment.

– Dr. [Murali Prasad](#), professor in Economics, focusing on Microeconomics, Environmental Economics, and Development Banking.

Our meeting was introduced by Murali Prasad, who immediately came out with an interesting proposition to Swedish researchers working within the field of humanities and social sciences. Anyone interested to come to IIT Kanpur for one to two years is welcome to apply for this. The precondition is that the researcher candidate must also take part in the teaching activities. The salary would be approximately 1 lakh (= 100,000) rupees per month, plus other benefits.

After this announcement and my presentation of SASNET and Swedish South Asia related research, the participants at the meeting presented their respective research interests. Dr. Prasad himself mentioned that he is interested to find collaborative partners to do research on Health Economics, and I promised to explore this since Lund University has carried out research of high international standard in this specific field since the 1970s from premises adjacent to SASNET's office.

#### Scandinavian contacts with Fine Arts Division

HSS already has Nordic connections in the field of Design. Dr. [Satyaki Roy](#), working in the Fine Arts division has established collaboration with Alvar Aalto University in Espoo, Finland, and the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm, Sweden.

Unfortunately, Dr. Roy was not in Kanpur on this day of my visit, but he later responded on e-mail giving details what this collaboration is all about. His Nordic partners in interaction are Professor Kalevi Ekman, heading the Aalto Design Factory at the Aalto University's [Department of Engineering Design and Production](#); and Professor Carl Michael Johansson at the [Division of System and Component Design \(SKD\)](#) at KTH. A number of KTH students have worked for Dr. Satyaki in Kanpur for their internships and other projects.

Dr. Roy is also strongly involved in organising Gurukul Workshops, as they are called, within the framework of the USID (Universal Sustainable Innovative Design) India Foundation, a non-profit forum initiated in 2006 to bring together Design and Technology community including professionals, students, and academician to engage, and spread the knowledge, research, and practice in these domains to help making the technology usable and accessible by the end user irrespective of their abilities, education, socio-economic conditions. USID regularly organises Gurukul workshops at different locations in India, and in December 2012 the HSS department and the Design Programme at IIT Kanpur will organise the USID Gurukul 2012. [More information.](#)

The experience of previous workshops has been very good for the students and mentors so far. In January 2011, the USID Gurukul 2011 conference was also held in Kanpur. Three students each from Aalto University and KTH participated along with two from China Tongji University and several students from different universities in India. All the participants were divided in teams and every team had two gurus (=teachers). Matti Hämäläinen from Aalto University was one of the visiting gurus. The participants spent a week in India working in teams with challenging projects. [Read a report written by two of the Finnish students, Jouni and Charlotta.](#)

Dr. Satyaki Roy warmly welcomes more students from Sweden to take part in the Gurukul workshops. The travel to and from Sweden has to be supported by the home university or individually, but accommodation, food and local hospitality are offered free.

#### Meeting with Prof. Manindra Agrawal, Dean of Resource and Planning

The final meeting of this extremely hectic day was held with Mahindra Agrawal, Professor of Computer Science and Engineering, besides being





Dean, Resource and Planning at IIT. It was a good chance to summarize the day with a person with a broad overview of what is happening at the university. Prof. Agrawal kindly informed about the different MoUs that IIT Kanpur has signed, and that currently 15 foreign students are based at the university through different exchange programmes. I informed him about the possibility for individual departments to get in touch with Swedish departments and apply for Linnaeus Palme exchange programme grants, for a period up to 8 years. [More information.](#)



### Kanpur round trip



My official IIT Kanpur tour was over, but the following day Dr Ashok Kumar arranged for a private round trip in Kanpur, with one of his PhD candidates, Mr. Ankur Gupta (*photo*) as guide. It was an interesting tour to travel around in this predominantly industrial city – neighbouring the much more historically interesting city of Lucknow.



We passed the Kakadeo neighbourhood, a part of Kanpur totally dominated by tutorial classes. Everywhere signboards advertising educational private companies in the tuition business are displayed. This is an extremely profitable business since every family in Kanpur, and elsewhere in India, likes their children to get good results in the final 12 year school exams in order to join the best universities.

We also went to the modern Jugilal Kumlupet Singhania temple (*photo*), built in 1998 by the widow of industrial magnate J K Singhania, and the Sudanshuji Maharaj Ashram in Bithaor – a place otherwise most known for connections with Rani Lakshmi Bai, the famous Rani of Jhansi fighting in the 1857 War of Liberation against the British.

In the afternoon, I took the flight from Kanpur's tiny airport to Delhi, an hour away, for more SASNET obligations there.

### Lars Eklund



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# SASNET - Swedish South Asian Studies Network

Lund University

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## SASNET experiences in Delhi 1-5 November 2012

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By **Lars Eklund**

#### Nordic Centre in India (NCI)

Arriving Delhi by a small propeller plane from Kanpur in the early evening of Thursday 1 November, a waiting car took me straight away to the [Nordic Centre in India \(NCI\)](#) flat at Nizamuddin East. This oasis for Nordic researchers and academic staff would be my home away from home for five days.



The NCI is managed locally by Mr. P N Malik (*photo*), who has done a tremendous job through the years assisting Nordic researchers with practical problems in India. The new NCI Director, Dr. Kristina Myrvold from Lund University, has also put her mark on the Centre by freshening the premises up with new linen and textiles. Since my previous stay at NCI in 2007, the most remarkable improvement was however the well-functioning wifi connection that makes work easy.

A nice thing with NCI is also that you happen to meet other visiting Nordic academics, and so was the case even this time. All through my stay, I shared my time with [Aase Hjelde](#), Norwegian Social Anthropologist from the University of Bergen ([more information](#)), and her husband Martin Kvanneid (*together on the photo*). Aase was going to start with a new research project, a village study entitled "*Gender, Environment and Change*", to be carried out in the Sivalik Hills, north of Chandigarh.



The purpose of my visit to Delhi was varied. The Swedish Embassy organised for the sixth consecutive year a Nobel Memorial Week in India, and this was completed with a number of events during this weekend. I was going to attend some of these, and in addition meet Mr. Harald Sandberg, new Swedish Ambassador to India, and Dr. Andreas Muranyi Scheutz, Counsellor of Science and Technology, and Head of office for the Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis, based at the Embassy.

I was also going to visit the recently established South Asian University (SAU); meet the Educational and Cultural Counsellor at the Embassy of Afghanistan; visit the Institute of Social Studies Trust at India Habitat Centre; and attend a formative meeting to establish

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a European Science/Technology/Innovation (STI) Platform in India, under the auspices of New INDIGO, a consortium of European and Indian STI ministries, funding agencies and research organisations promotion research cooperation between Europe and India.

### Nobel Memorial Week in India 2012

Web page:

<http://sinmw.com>

The Swedish Embassy, together with a number of partner companies including SAAB, Sandvik, Volvo and Ericsson, organised the sixth Nobel Memorial Week with a programme including lectures, seminars and round tables, student quizzes and photo



competitions, exhibitions and cultural performances at different places in India, besides Delhi also Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad.

The theme for the 2012 Memorial Week was "Co-creating the Future", and focused largely on Creativity and Talent, Education and Clean Technology. The Swedish Trade Council and the Swedish Energy Agency organised events in their Innovation House, adjacent to the Embassy, visited by Annie Lööf, Swedish Minister for Enterprise (*on photo*).

At a reception organised by the Swedish Trade Council, I met four Swedish students doing internships at the Swedish embassy. Rasmus Jönsson, and Kajsa Olofsson, from Industrial Economy, Linköping University, both doing their final exam paper (examensjobb) studying Swedish companies in India; Frida Forsman, also from Linköping, but a student of Psychology; and Malin Petersson, studying International Economics at Uppsala University.

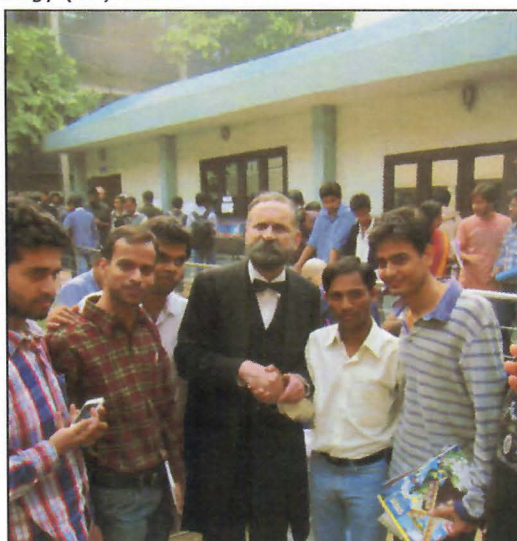


Swedish students Kajsa Olofsson, Rasmus Jönsson and Malin Petersson.

One of the highlights of the Nobel Memorial Week is the Nobel Quizz competitions among IIT students in the six cities involved in the programme. After local qualification games, the Grande Finale was held on Saturday 3 November at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi.

The winning teams from the six IITs now competed on their knowledge not only on the Nobel Prize history, but on their general

knowledge about Sweden. I was there along with a large number of hopeful students, embassy staff and representatives of Swedish companies, most notably SAAB promoting its military airplanes. And then sticking out from the rest, a man completely looking like Alfred





Nobel himself dressed in clothes of his time, walked around talking to the students and being photographed with them. The man was of course an actor, Peter Sundh. (*On photo along with competing IIT students*)

[Read about his Indian experiences.](#)



I was completely stunned by the impressive knowledge displayed by the Indian students. The questions were namely so advanced and sophisticated that even a native Swede like me would not be able to answer half of them correct. And here IIT students from Delhi and Hyderabad easily comes out with right answers to questions about Swedish history, geography, sports, film production. The winning three-person team came from a Bangalore college (*on photo*), and their prize will be a tour to Sweden, visiting universities and companies.

It could be recalled that in 2009, SASNET on a request from the Swedish Embassy organised a programme in Lund and at Lund University for the winning quiz team – from IIT Mumbai – of that year's Nobel Memorial Week. [More information.](#)

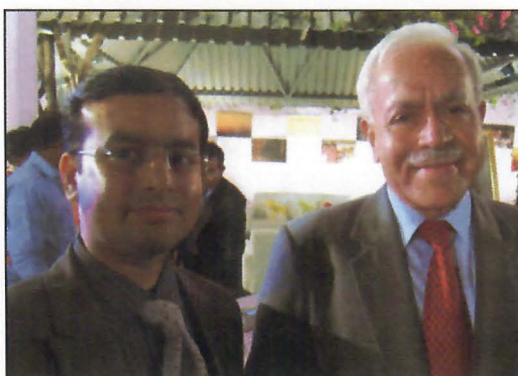
The Grand Finale of the whole Nobel Memorial Week was a Reception in the garden of the Swedish Ambassador on Saturday night. It became a party with several hundred guests, music by Swedish singer Amanda Mair, and the band Jump4Joy, both specially invited to India for this



performance, excellent food and liquor stalls sponsored by Swedish companies.

It was also an evening to meet people, and it did not take long before I met former Indian Ambassador to Sweden, Mr. Ashok Sajjanhar, with whom SASNET has had a close interaction. Mr. Sajjanhar is now retired but is keeping his Swedish contacts.

I also met Dr. Jagganath Panda from the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) in New Delhi. He was a guest researcher at the Institute for Security and Development Policy (ISDP) in Stockholm in 2010, and also visited Lund University holding a SASNET lecture on *"The Pattern of Sino-Indian Relations: Evaluating the Strategic Discourse"*. IDSA is a premier think-tank under the Government of India, and along with Dr. Panda was also his senior colleague Dr. R N Das.



Jagannath Panda, IDSA, and Ashok Sajjanhar, former Indian Ambassador to Sweden.



Among a few other academics at the reception, I met Dr. Fawad Hussain (*photo*), from the [Dept. of Mass Communication at Aligarh Muslim University \(AMU\)](#). By chance a coincidence, since a young researcher at the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies (CME), Lund University, recently had asked me for finding contact persons at AMU. Finally, I met Birgitta Sacrédeus, Councillor representing the Christian



Democrats in Landstinget Dalarna, currently on India tour along with other Swedish councillors, and had a long rewarding discussion with her.

### Meeting with Andreas Muranyi, Head of office for Growth Policy

Web page:

<http://www.tillvaxtanalys.se/en>

On Friday 2 November, I met Dr. **Andreas Muranyi Scheutz**, Counsellor of Science and Technology, and Head of office for the Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis (in short Growth Analysis – Tillväxtanalys), at his office inside the Swedish Embassy in Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. Andreas has held this position since October 2010, when he succeeded Stefan Jonsson – with whom SASNET interacted frequently at the time of our contact journey in India in 2007 ([more information](#)).

Growth Analysis is a cross-border organisation with head office in the city of Östersund in Sweden, but activities are also conducted in Stockholm, Brasilia, New Delhi, Beijing, Tokyo, and Washington D.C. Its mission is to shed light on the areas most significant to growth. The Agency's overriding objective is to strengthen Swedish competitiveness and create the conditions for more jobs in more and growing companies throughout the country.

In India, Andreas Muranyi keeps a close watch on Indian higher education. In a recent Growth Analysis report, possibilities are discussed on how Swedish universities could develop further their processes of internationalisation and attract more Indian students to study in Sweden after the introduction of fees for studying at higher education institutions. In April 2012, Andreas led seminars on this issue in both Stockholm and Gothenburg. [More information, with link to the report](#).

In 2005 Sweden and India signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Science & Technology for which the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems, VINNOVA, was assigned the operational responsibility on the Swedish side. SEK 40 m has been invested in three programmes (in total 12 3-year projects) with three different Indian counterparts – The Department of Science and Technology, DST; the Department of Biotechnology, DBT, and the Department of Information Technology, DIT). VINNOVA later asked the Swedish Energy Agency (Energimyndigheten) to engage in supporting Swedish-Indian research collaboration under this agreement. At the same time, the Swedish Energy Agency is responsible for bilateral collaborations within the area of energy, including research collaborations, with India according to an MoU on Renewable Energy from 2010 – that refers to the 2005 S&T MoU.

In order to prepare for this engagement the Swedish Energy Agency commissioned Growth Analysis to map out areas where India has a strong position in energy research. The mapping should cover subject areas, geographical areas and universities/institutes as well as other relevant players. This report, published in 2011, was prepared and written by Rajeev Palakshappa under the auspices of Andreas Muranyi Scheutz. [Go for the report](#) (as a pdf-file).

The main area of bilateral Indo-Swedish cooperation is environment and climate change but also health has developed into a strong focus area. Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) have been signed in these areas between the Swedish and Indian Governments.

- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of Environment was signed 5 November 2009.
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of Health Care and Public Health was signed on 24 February 2009.

I our meeting, Andreas informed about the outcome under the MoU in Science &





Technology. Also under the MoU in Health research collaboration is encouraged, although no specific source for funding of research under the Health MoU has been established on the Swedish side. The person in charge of the Health MoU at the Embassy is Ms. Yasmin Zaveri Roy.

### Meeting with Swedish Ambassador Harald Sandberg

On Monday 5 November I was given time for a meeting with the Ambassador, Mr. [Harald Sandberg](#), in his spacious office room. The Ambassador listened with great interest to my presentation about SASNET and our networking experiences. When learning about my close connection to Kolkata and my personal efforts behind organising Rabindranath Tagore 150th birth anniversary events at Lund,



From left to right: Daniel Wolvén, Lars Eklund and Harald Sandberg.

Stockholm and Uppsala in 2011, Mr. Sandberg informed that the embassy has plans to celebrate the centenary of the Tagore's Nobel Prize in Literature 1913, with an event to be held in Kolkata sometime during the later part of 2013.

The Ambassador immediately called for the Deputy Head of Mission & Minister, Mr. [Daniel Wolvén](#), who will be the person directly in charge for the planned event. I promised to provide the embassy with input on possible programmes to include in such an event, and this idea was eagerly accepted by the two.

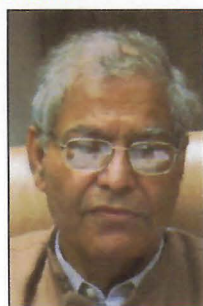
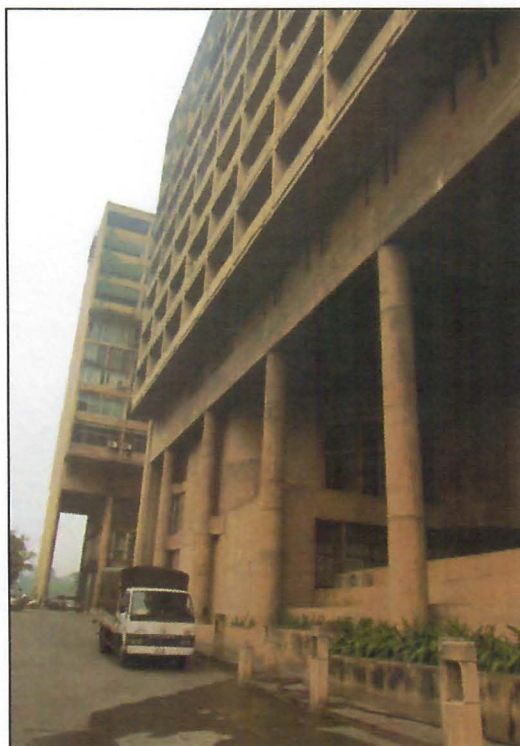
### Visit to the South Asian University (SAU)

Web site:

<http://www.southasianuniversity.org>

The South Asian University (SAU) is an international university sponsored by the eight member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. SAU started admitting students in 2010, at a temporary campus at Akbar Bhawan, in premises belonging to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of India.

SAU is still housed in this extremely ugly high rise building close to the embassy region of Chanakyapuri, and that is where I headed late in the afternoon on Friday 2 November to meet the President, Professor [G K Chadha](#).



After some waiting I was ready to get a brief interview as

per appointment with this dynamic person, an academician of fame, having been an economic advisor to the prime minister of India during the period 2004-09, and before that the Vice Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). Due to selection committee meetings he was obliged to attend all through the day, Prof. Chadha





had only promised me maximum 10 minutes time and that at the end of day.

However, once we met, he gave me half an hour of engaged talk about the development of this first ever South Asian regional university initiative of great interest to SASNET. It was first launched as an idea at the thirteenth SAARC Summit held in Dhaka in 2005, when Indian Prime Minister proposed that a South Asian University should be established to provide world-class facilities and professional faculty to students and researchers from SAARC member countries. A formal agreement was signed in 2007, and the university was officially inaugurated on 7th March 2011.

Hopefully, SAU will open up its permanent campus, located at Maidan Garhi in South Delhi, next to Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), in 2013 or maybe 2014. It will be hosting nearly 7,000 students and an international faculty, representing all SAARC countries. The university will also have linked campuses in other South Asian countries. India, being the largest country, would get a 50 per cent reservation of students, Bangladesh and Pakistan would get ten per cent each. Another 10 per cent has been reserved for students coming from countries other than SAARC nations.

At present, SAU offers post-graduate academic programs in Biotechnology, Computer Science, Computer Applications, Development Economics, Law, Sociology, International Relations and Applied Mathematics. Research programs are expected to begin from the 2013 academic session.

Plans are also that SAU establishes an Institute of South Asian Studies that will be an autonomous centre, managed by experts selected after an international screening procedure.

Professor Chadha himself has a background as a researcher working on comparative India/China projects with an impressive number of published articles. In the mid-1990s he was involved in a collaboration project with [Stockholm School of Economics](#), and this resulted in a research paper in 2001.



### Meeting with Educational and Cultural Counsellor, Embassy of Afghanistan

Sunday 4  
November 2012.

Once again travelling from the comfortable Nordic Centre in India flat at Nizamuddin East, along the wide boulevards of New Delhi, towards the diplomatic enclave of Chanakyapuri. However, this time not to visit the Swedish Embassy, but instead



heading for the Embassy of Afghanistan on Shantibagh, inbetween the embassies of Russia, USA and the Netherlands.

My purpose was to meet Professor A K Rashid, who has worked as Cultural Counsellor since 2008, and with added responsibility for Educational issues from 2011. Prof. Rashid is a dynamic and learned academic with a PhD in Literature from the School of Languages at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi in 2003. His doctoral thesis was entitled "*Contributions of Allama Iqbal to Afghan studies*", highlighting the strong role the poet Iqbal played not only being a nation builder for Pakistan, but also to the literary development of Afghanistan.

After getting through the security apparatus around the Afghan embassy's compound, I



am invited to have tea and typical Afghan snacks in the form of nuts and raisins. Prof. Rashid informs about the large presence of students from Afghanistan currently studying at Indian universities, more than 6,000. Out of these, 300 are funded by ICCR, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations; 250 by the Afghanistan government; and the rest are self financed. The students are spread out all over India, with large groups studying at the universities in Pune, Hyderabad, Delhi, Aligarh and Chandigarh. No other foreign destination is so attractive for Afghan students as India, and they have a predecessor in current Afghanistan President Karzai, who many years ago studied for a Masters degree at the University of Simla.

Few other international scholarships are available for Afghan students, even though some have been made possible through Erasmus Mundus Action 2 mobility programmes offered by the European Union, and also through Fulbright scholarships offered by the US government, but these are far from enough.



Prof. Rashid himself, originally hailing from the historic city of Ghazni, completed his bachelors and masters degrees at Kabul University. In 2003, he was offered a position as visiting professor at JNU in Delhi, and moved there with his family. He worked on his PhD thesis simultaneously with his teaching assignments. His main supervisor for the Iqbal thesis was Amir Hossia Abdi, Baba-e-Parsi Hind Professor at University of Delhi, now retired.

The Counsellor work is intense, to take care of and assist the 6,000 Afghan students in India, each one with individual problems, and therefore he has three assistants to deal with the educational issues at the Embassy, and another two to assist with cultural affairs. But

Prof. Rashid is still strongly involved in research work and participates regularly in international conferences on Persian and Pashto Literature. At the end of November 2012, a conference on the *Mawlānā Abul-Ma'āni Mirzā Abdul-Qādir Bēdil*, also known as Bedil Dehlavi (1642–1720), famous Persian poet and sufi born near Kabul, is held at the University of Balkh in northern Afghanistan. Bedil is considered as one of the prominent poets of Indian School of Poetry in Persian literature, and owns his unique Style in it. Both Mirza Ghalib and Iqbal-e Lahori were influenced by him.

And just a few days after our meeting, in early November, Prof. Rashid was supposed to take part in a conference on the Silk Road in Delhi, being organised by the Centre of Russian Studies at the School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, JNU. The conference, being held 5–7 November, is entitled *"Revisiting the Silk Road. India and the Silk Road Regions Cultural Connections, Current Challenges"*. [More information on this conference.](#)

Since SASNET is planning to put more focus on Afghanistan in its future work, my visit to Prof. Rashid at the Afghanistan Embassy in Delhi was part of this strategy. It may well result in SASNET organising a conference at Lund University with Prof. Rashid's assistance sometime during 2013.

#### Meeting on formation of European STI Platform in India

New INDIGO website: <http://www.newindigo.eu>

After coming to Delhi, Mr. Malik at the Nordic Centre in India (NCI), informed me that NCI and its Director, Kristina Myrvold, had received an invitation to attend a meeting on Monday 5th November with an objective to form a European Science/Technology /Innovation (STI) Platform in India. A project to be worked out within the framework of New INDIGO, a consortium of European and Indian STI ministries, funding agencies and research organisations promotion research cooperation between Europe and India.

Since Kristina was in Sweden and thereby unable to attend, Mr. Malik suggested that I should accompany him to the meeting held at the luxurious Hotel Le Meridien at Windsor Place/Janpath. I readily agreed since this could be of some interest also to SASNET.



The meeting had 14 participants, most prominent

Suboor Bakht, Heidelberg University South Asia Centre, and P N Malik, Nordic Centre in India.







Philippe de Taxis du Poët, Science Counselor, European Union Delegation in India; Dominique Aymer (*photo to the left*), Director for the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) Office in India; and Purnima Rupal, Head, Indian Council of Scientific & Industrial Research's (CSIR) International Relations Department. Other participants, besides Mr. Malik (representing NCI) and myself, included representatives for the French Embassy; the German Research Foundation (DFG); Heidelberg University South Asia Centre; and the Research Councils UK, based at the British High Commission in Delhi.

The meeting was aimed to identify the needs of a joint STI Platform supporting the daily work of European public and private organisations liaison and representation offices in India. This should be accomplished through regular information sharing and strengthen the visibility of the organisations. Besides networking and information sessions on issues related to research and innovation in India, the platform should also organise working groups serving as pools of expertise, and arrange an annual networking event. The discussions at the meeting, that was organised by the French National Centre for Scientific Research, focused on who should be members, which activities to carry out, and how often networking meetings ought to be held. A decision was made that an enquiry will be sent out to all interested organisations working in India, and hopefully make the platform a reality during 2013.

### Lars Eklund



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Basic page *SASNET Kolkata meetings, October–November 2012* has been updated.

## SASNET Kolkata meetings, October–November 2012

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By Lars Eklund



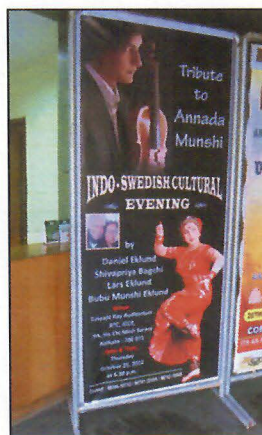
The six week period 21 October – 30 November 2012, I spent in Kolkata, India, along with my family in our flat at 23 A, Sardar Sankar Rd in the southern part of this great city, renowned for its eminence in culture and research. Excluding an eight day tour to Varanasi, Kanpur and Delhi on SASNET's behalf, and a five day stay at Kathmandu (being partly an official SASNET visit), the rest of the time I was on spot in Kolkata. An improvised SASNET local office was therefore established, and contacts with several academics from the Kolkata universities.



However, a major portion of the stay was solely for relaxation along with my wife Bubun Munshi (*with me on photo*) and our children Daniel and Marie, enjoying the

festival season of Kolkata – first of all the fantastic Durga puja celebrations that this year coincided with our arrival in town – and meeting friends and relatives.

We also took part in Kolkata International Film Festival, watching Girish Kasaravalli's prize winning new film *Kurmavantara* (The Tortoise), listened to Dhrupal and Baul



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concerts, performing ourselves singing Swedish and Bengali songs during an Indo-Swedish cultural evening at ICCR Tagore Bhavan on Ho Chi Minh Sarani, and enjoyed participating in a traditional wedding over several days when Bubu's niece, Bharata Natyam dancer Shivapriya Bagchi (Munjini) got married.

The number of official SASNET meetings were relatively few, but are still of great importance, especially the meetings with the new Vice Chancellor of Jadavpur University, and a half day visit to Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Calcutta, India's second highest ranked business school, and meeting Danish architect Flemming Aalund, engaged in the Serampore Project.

### University of Calcutta

On 9<sup>th</sup> November I visited the Institute of Foreign Policy Studies at University of Calcutta (located at its Alipore Social Sciences Campus, next to the National Library and the Kolkata Zoo). In 2005, Staffan Lindberg and myself also visited the same place, see our reports,

<http://www.sasnet.lu.se>

[/sasnet/contact-journey-](http://www.sasnet.lu.se/sasnet/contact-journey-2005calcutta-university)

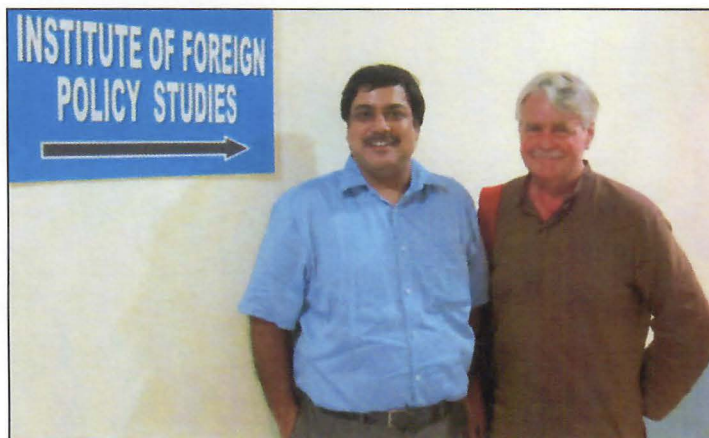
[2005calcutta-university](http://www.sasnet.lu.se/sasnet/south-and-southeast-asian-studies-calcutta-university), and [http://www.sasnet.lu.se/sasnet/south-and-southeast-](http://www.sasnet.lu.se/sasnet/south-and-southeast-asian-studies-calcutta-university)



That time, in 2005, we concentrated on visiting the Department of History, because of its strong collaboration with Uppsala University, and the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies where SASNET had developed personal bonds. Professor Swapna Bhattacharya, the then Head of department, was our kind host to the university, introducing us to the Vice Chancellor.

Since then, Prof. Bhattacharya has retired, and another Professor from the same department, Lipi Ghosh, has been Visiting Indian ICCR guest professor at Lund University (2010–2011). Regarding the Dept. of History, it has continued to collaborate with Uppsala, strengthened by a formal Linnaeus Palme exchange programme collaboration, and not the least because of concerted efforts by Professor Gunnel Cederlöf and her colleagues at the [Dept. of History](#) and other departments at Uppsala who are frequent visitors to Kolkata.

My objective in visiting Calcutta University this time was more limited. I wanted to meet Dr. [Shantanu Chakrabarti](#) (on photo with Lars Eklund), Associate Professor at the Dept. of History, but also Convenor, Academic Committee,



[Institute of Foreign Policy Studies](#), one of a number of highly specialised research centres set up at the university in recent years, being funded by the University Grants Commission (UGC). It is a centre focusing on research and training programmes in foreign policy issues, with particular focus on the South Asian, East Asian, Southeast Asian and the West Asian regions. It also has a special emphasis on the international border zones of India. The programme, inaugurated in February 2010 consists of policy oriented and region specific research projects along with a general M.Phil. course and short-term certificate/ diploma course for fresh and mid-career level personnel in the Ministry of External Affairs as well as other government services.





After getting through the security apparatus at the entrance to the university, being equipped with an entry slip that Dr. Chakrabarti had to sign before me leaving the campus, I went to his office at 4<sup>th</sup> floor.

The reason for contacting Dr. Chakrabarti was that Lund University and SASNET have joined a university consortium led by Aarhus University, Denmark, in recently applying for a new European Commission funded Erasmus Mundus programme on "Support to Indo-European Interactions on Higher Education". The coordinator is Dr. Uwe Skoda at Aarhus. The programme aims to support institutional linkages

between institutions, organize mobility of students, support research collaboration and organization of joint workshops and international conferences. It very much appears to be a follow-up programme to the EU-India Study Centres programme that ran from 2008 till 2011. [More information.](#)

University of Calcutta is another member of this consortium, and Dr. Chakrabarti the local coordinator, and that is why I wanted to discuss the prospects if the application was going to be accepted. (Unfortunately the Aarhus application was not being selected – decisions came on December 18th.)

But I also had a chance to learn about the new research centres, one of the others being a China Studies Centre, and how they work. Dr. Chakrabarti informed that they are also involved in collaboration with Warsaw University, Poland, something that has resulted in three joint conferences on International Relations.



Rajsekhar Basu and Sanjukta Dasgupta.

His colleagues at the Dept. of History seems to be extremely attractive for recruitment to ICCR professorships. Two of them, Professors Raj Sekhar Basu and Sanjukta Dasgupta, are currently Visiting Indian ICCR Professors in Vilnius,

Lithuania, and Rome, Italy respectively. Prof. Basu has also recently asked SASNET to organise seminars for him at Lund and Copenhagen universities early in 2013.



While talking about ICCR professors, it was natural that I also should meet Prof. Lipi Ghosh (*photo to the right*), who was the first ICCR Professor in Sweden, at Lund University during 2010-11. She is now back at Calcutta University, being Head of the Dept. of South and Southeast Asian Studies. Dr. Chakrabarti made a phone call, and Prof. Ghosh arrived after a short while. She enthusiastically informed about her recent successful tour to Myanmar, and of the major international conference that she organises in December 2012. It is the Sixth Biennial International Conference of the Indian Association for Asian and Pacific Studies (IAAPS) held in Kolkata, 17–19 December. [More information about the conference.](#)

### Visit to Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Calcutta

Web page: <http://iimcal.ac.in>

Another former Visiting Indian ICCR Professor to Scandinavia, Professor Sushil Khanna invited me to visit his premier university, IIM, established in 1974 and since about 10 years back located at its present Joka Campus on the southwestern outskirts of Kolkata. Prof. Khanna served as ICCR professor one year at Copenhagen Business School in 2010-11, and we became good friends. He participated as a main speaker in the SASNET one-day seminar on "*Managing Diversity. The Indian Experience*" held in Lund on 14th April 2011, giving a lecture on "*Regional and Social Diversity: The New Bourgeoisie in India*". [More information.](#)

Now we met a couple of times in Kolkata on a friendship basis, and I was introduced to his IIM colleague Mritunjoy Mohanty, Professor of Economics, as well. Jointly they persuaded me that I should include an official visit to IIM Calcutta to my itinerary, and



such a visit was organised on 21st November for me to primarily meet the Dean of New Initiatives and External Relations, Professor Ashok Banerjee, the Head of External Relations, Mr. Roddur Sen, but also other IIM faculty to learn about the university's international



Mritunjoy Mohanty and Sushil Khanna.

contacts. It is a prestigious institution, training people to become business executives, and with many exchange students and much co-operation with Western universities.



This was not my first visit to Indian Institute of



Management Calcutta, ranked as the second best business

school in India – with the toughest entrance admissions among all Indian IIMs. I also visited IIM on the very first SASNET contact journey in 2002. However, on that visit together with my SASNET colleague Prof. Staffan Lindberg, our visit was limited to a specific research centre within IIM, namely the Management Centre for Human Values (MCHV) – *photo to the left*.

This unique centre with an aim to give ethical consideration to Indian business was established in 1992 by Professor S K Chakraborty, a man who was frequently invited to countries round the Globe, including Sweden. MCHV is funded by private and public companies, and teaches modern Indian philosophy based on the teachings of Vivekananda, Gandhi, Tagore, and Sri Aurobindo. [More about our 2002 visit.](#)



This time I spent half a day walking around the charming, peaceful and well-organised campus with its rural surroundings, and impressive buildings. A bridge designed by Pune-based American architect Christopher Charles Benninger, billed as the most innovative steel structure in India in 2010, connects the existing IIM campus to its new residential campus. It has two hostel buildings, each accommodating 175 students, with a large recreation area on the top floor. Coming up right next to the hostels is an executive centre with 200 suites. The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development is providing Rs.42 crore for the ongoing Rs.200-crore campus development project; the balance will be spent from the Rs.170-crore corpus that IIM Calcutta has built through its alumni network.

[Read more in a 2011 India Today article.](#)

The most important meeting was however the appointment with Prof. Ashok Banerjee and Mr. Roddur Sen, who could give accurate information on number of students, and the high degree of international contacts. IIM Calcutta presently has about 1,000 students, out of which 900 are on Master of Business Administration (MBA) level, and 100 are PhD students. The faculty consists of 95 professors.

IIM Calcutta has MoUs on student exchange programmes with 50 foreign universities, two in Denmark (Copenhagen Business School, and Aarhus School of Business), one in Norway – Norwegian Business School in Sandvika, and one in Sweden, that is [Jönköping](#)



International Business School (JIBS) at Jönköping University.

The agreement with Jönköping involves an exchange of two students every year. Other Swedish universities/business schools are welcome to negotiate on similar agreements.

I returned the long way back to central Kolkata along a road encroached by construction work. A new skytrain facility is namely right now being constructed from Joka, that will end up at Writer's Building/BBD Bag in the heart of the city. Something that will mean faster transports to reach IIM Calcutta.



From left to right: Roddur Sen and Ashok Banerjee.

### Meetings at Jadavpur University

Web page: <http://www.jadavpur.edu>



As usual when being in Kolkata, I made several visits to the prestigious Jadavpur University, equally important university in Kolkata as University of Calcutta. Jadavpur University has been involved in the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 Asia Regional mobility programme EMEA that is being coordinated by Lund University (but unfortunately excluded in the 2013 round, [see EMEA web page](#)). The contact person at Jadavpur is Professor Mridul Bose, Department of Physics. He has become a close friend of mine, and through his kind assistance all doors are opened at the university, and two very good meetings were organised on 21st and 26th November with the new dynamic Vice Chancellor Souvik Bhattacharyya (*photo to the left*), and

several Heads of departments.

SASNET first visited Jadavpur University during the 2005 contact journey by Lars Eklund and Staffan Lindberg. [Read their report](#).

This time, focus was laid on meeting the VC, and discuss continued and extended research collaboration between Jadavpur and Lund University in fields that both universities are strong. Professor Bhattacharyya who is a Professor in Mechanical Engineering and came from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur only six months before, was keen that things should be organised quickly, and after our first meeting on Wednesday 21 November when we identified areas



of special competence, he quickly called for a new meeting at his office the coming Monday, to which Heads of departments were invited.

The disciplines discussed were **Water Resources Engineering; Chemistry; Architecture; Electrical Engineering; Environmental Engineering; Mechanical Engineering; and Civil Engineering.**

A most fruitful and efficient meeting followed on Monday noon, for an hour. The participants quickly presented their respective departments' strenghts and their current foreign collaboration. The Department of Chemistry turns out to be already in close contact with Lund University through Professor Björn Lindman, [Division of Physical Chemistry](#). He is involved in research collaboartion with colleagues in Kolkata. Several researchers in the chemical field have also gone to Lund as post-docs over the past 20 years or so. I know some of them very well, for example Asim and Sarbari Roy who came to Lund in the 1990s and are still working in Sweden. Also the Department of Architecture at Jadavpur have had contacts with their counterpart researchers at Lund



University.

After the meeting at the Vice Chancellor's office, the attending professors got a week to compile information about the strength of their respective departments, and deliver to the VC. Lars Eklund would then bring the collected information back to Sweden, and present to the faculty of corresponding departments at the Faculty of Engineering, Lund University. A new way of trying to connect researchers, not being tried before. Let us see whether anything useful collaboration may come out of these efforts. [See the proposals by Jadavpur University.](#)

### Indo-Swedish conference on Religion & Globalization at Jadavpur University

On the last day before my return flight back to Sweden, I attended the opening ceremony and keynote speeches of the three day International Conference on "Religion & Globalization: A



*Changing Perspective*" being held at Jadavpur University 29 November – 1 December 2012. It was being organised by the [Centre for the Study of Religion and Society](#) (CSRS), a unique endeavor of the Dept. of Sociology at Jadavpur University established in 2011 (in collaboration with Swedish researchers at the universities of Gothenburg and Uppsala), the Department of Literature, History of Ideas and Religion, University of Gothenburg; and the Forum for South Asian Studies, Uppsala University. The conference convenor was Dr. [Ruby Sain](#), CSRS chairperson.



Åke Sander and Clemens Cavallin.



The keynote addresses were delivered by Prof. Åke Sander, University of Gothenburg, who talked about "*Religion and Society: A Global Perspective*"; and by Dr. Clemens Cavallin, also from Gothenburg, who talked about "*The Concept of Religion and the Foundation of Religious Studies*".



Conference convenor Ruby Sain with Chittaranjan Adhikary, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), and Federico d'Agostino, University of Rome.

The conference took its point of departure from the coming 150 years anniversary celebration of Swami Vivekananda's speech at the World Parliament of Religion in Chicago in 1893. The Chicago speech became a landmark in the relations between Indic religions and the West. Vivekananda succeeded in creating a platform for interaction between India and the West that opened up the way for others to follow. His venture was based on particular philosophical, intellectual and social audience. The conference invited papers and critical reflections about this and similar processes of religious globalization within a colonial, postcolonial and postmodern context. [See the full programme for the conference.](#)

### Serampore Project

By a coincidence, I met Danish conservation architect Flemming Aalund – since 2008 engaged with the Serampore Initiative – just a few months before my 2012 South Asia tour. We met at my brother Gösta's country house in Maglehem, Flemming being an old friend of Gösta, having met first time in Greenland 30 years ago. Flemming





told me about the Serampore initiative, initiated by the National Museum of Denmark, that aims at ensuring the preservation of the physical remains of yet another Indian city that once was controlled by Denmark as a trading port – Serampore (Srirampur) located 25 km north of Kolkata along the Hoogly River. He also told me that he was supposed to come to Kolkata in the end of November along with his



colleagues in the project that is going to last for the coming two to three years. So he did, and we met on a nice and sunny Sunday afternoon in the end of November, sitting on the roof terrace at my Sardar Sankar Rd flat.

By another coincidence, another personal friend had also come to meet me and my family on the same day, namely Professor Subrata Chattopadhyay, Head of Dept. of Architecture, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur. Subrata who has close connections to the Dept. of Architecture at Lund University since the early 1990s, and being a guest professor at the [Division of Housing Development and Management](#) (HDM) there for a full year in 2000–2001, has a senior professor vast knowledge about conservation issues. This resulted in a fruitful discussion on the challenges and possibilities that surrounds the Serampore project. (*Photo of the two*)

Three weeks later I was informed by Flemming that his recent visit to Serampore along with his research partner, historian Simon Rastén, had been successful. An agreement had been signed with the district administration and the West Bengal Heritage Commission (WBHC) to start restoration work on St. Olav Church, and parts of South Gate. Times of India published an article on the issue, entitled "*Danish Team on Heritage Trail. Join Heritage Panel to look for Frederiksnagore among Hooghly Ruins*". [Read the article.](#)

Since several years, the National Museum of Denmark has coordinated the Tranquebar Initiative, a major project to document and restore the colonial heritage of Denmark in Tranquebar (and also develop Tranquebar of today), on the Tamil Nadu coast in southern India. Tranquebar was under Danish control between 1620 and 1845. A large number of research projects have been produced, and some are still underway, on various aspects of Tranquebar ([more information on the Tranquebar Initiative](#)).

The Serampore Initiative was established in 2008 with the similar aim of identifying and describing the physical remains of the Indo-Danish history in Serampore, and by partaking in preservation



collaborations, the Initiative also wishes to explore and promote knowledge of the joint cultural heritage related to Serampore.

In 1755 the Danish Asiatic Company was granted the right to establish a trading post at Serampore (the official Danish name being Frederiksnagore). The place remained on Danish hands until 1845, when the territory was ceded to the British, together with the other Danish trading post in India, Tranquebar. Apart from its role as a commercial settlement, Serampore became an important centre of education. The Baptist mission produced and disseminated printed translations of the Bible in many Asian languages. Subsequently Serampore College, which was built under the protection of the Danish King Frederik 6, ranges among the oldest institutions in Asia with the right to confer academic degrees. Serampore College still operates today, with some of its faculties being affiliated to the University of Calcutta.

In 2010, Flemming Aalund and historian Simon Rastén (the two researchers who along with the ethnographer Bente Wolff make up the team behind the Serampore Initiative) published a report on Serampore's heritage, entitled '*Indo-Danish Heritage Buildings of Serampore*'. [More information, including link to the detailed Serampore report.](#)



**Lars Eklund**



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