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# REMEMBERING APARNA RAO 1950-2005

In June of 2006 Aparna Rao was to have taken up a new post, as Directeur de Recherche at the École des Hautes Études, in Paris. It would have meant a return to France, where she studied on scholarship as an undergraduate from Delhi, completed her M.A. from Strasbourg University, and finished her PhD in sociology/anthropology at the University of Paris, Sorbonne (in 1979). But in June of 2005 she died of cancer at the age of 55.

Aparna Rao's work is well known among those who study nomadic ("peripatetic") peoples, pastoralists, or peace and conflict in Kashmir. With husband Michael Casimir she co-edited *Nomadic Peoples* (the journal of the Commission on Nomadic Peoples of the International Union of Ethnological and Anthropological Sciences). They collaborated as well in research and writing about the Bakkarwal of Jammu and Kashmir, the Kashmir conflict's devastating effect on lives and environment, and many other subjects. But her interests stretched far beyond the western Himalaya; she spent years engaged in field work among Sinti gypsies in France, peripatetic communities in Afghanistan, and most recently in India's Thar desert, where she investigated human-environment interactions among farmers and agro-pastoralists. A field researcher, editor, and often-published scholar (see some of her work, below), Aparna Rao was an educator as well, holding teaching positions in the department of sociology/anthropology at the University of Cologne and in the department of

ethnology at the South Asia Institute at the University of Heidelberg in Germany.

If you will look back at the inside front cover of this journal, you will see that in addition to her many other works, Aparna Rao served as Contributing Editor to *Himalaya*. I don't remember how or when this came about, only that when I asked her to add the weight of her expertise to our masthead, for the enrichment of this



journal, she readily agreed. She cheerfully agreed to everything I asked from her, in fact: an article on the Kashmir conflict, which appeared in *Himalayan Research Bulletin* volume 19 number 1; a chapter—two, in fact, one on Kashmiris, the other on South Asia's peripatetic peoples—in our edited volume *Disappearing Peoples? Indigenous groups and ethnic minorities in South and Central Asia* now in press. In editing a paper of mine, for her volume (co-edited with Michael Casimir) *Nomadism in South Asia*, she agreed to let me keep my empirical geographer's voice in a volume steeped in social theory.

That is not why I came to feel so warmly about this woman I never met, however. Ours was a cyberspace acquaintance, our only interactions through e-mail or penciled notes on manuscripts. Yet I found in her such warmth, such a generous and compassionate spirit. I thought of her as a friend, and I'm sure to those who really knew her, she was dear and deeply valued.

And she is deeply missed, even here where we never actually met her. The special issue of *Himalaya* we talked about putting together, on pastoralism in High Asia, won't happen now. A generation of French students will miss out. We all



lose the chance to know what else this remarkable woman might have done with a life lived longer. But in her scholarly work and the memories of those lucky enough to fall within her circle—and, for this issue, anyway, on our masthead—Aparna Rao remains part of the Himalayan world.

## PUBLICATIONS

### Books

1974 *Les Sinté du pays rhénan. Essai d'une monographie d'un sous-groupe tsigane*. Mémoire de Maîtrise. Institut d'Ethnologie, Université de Strasbourg.

1982 *Les Gorbat d'Afghanistan. Aspects économiques d'un groupe itinérant 'jat'*. Paris: Eds. ADPF. Institut français d'Iranologie de Téhéran.

1987 (ed.) *The Other Nomads. Peripatetic Minorities in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Cologne: Böhlau Verlag (Kölner Ethnologische Mitteilungen Bd. 8).

1988 *Entstehung und Entwicklung ethnischer Identität bei einer islamischen Minderheit in Südasien. Bemerkungen zur Geschichte der Bakkarwal im westlichen Himalaya*. Berlin: Das arabische Buch (Occasional Papers 18).

1992 (M.J. Casimir, A. Rao) (eds.) *Mobility and Territoriality: Social and Spatial Boundaries among Foragers, Fishers, Pastoralists and Peripatetics*. Oxford: Berg Publs.

1995-1999 (M.J. Casimir, W. Lancaster, A. Rao) (eds.) *Nomadic Peoples. Journal of the Commission on Nomadic Peoples*, (International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences), Berghahn Books, Oxford, New York.

1996 (E. Orywal, A. Rao, M. Bollig) (eds.) *Krieg und Kampf: Die Gewalt in unseren Köpfen*. Berlin: Reimer Verlag.

1998 *Autonomy: Life Cycle, Gender, and Status among Himalayan Pastoralists*. Oxford/New York: Berghahn Books. [Chosen for the 'Outstanding Academic Book' Award for 1999 by CHOICE (Current Reviews for Academic Libraries) of the American Association of College and Research Libraries, USA.]

2000 (M. Böck, A. Rao) (eds.) *Culture, Creation, and Procreation: Concepts of Kinship in South Asian Practice*. Oxford/New York: Berghahn Books.

2000-2003 (A. Rao, M.J. Casimir, W. Lancaster) (eds.) *Nomadic Peoples. Journal of the Commission on Nomadic Peoples*, (International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences), Berghahn Books, Oxford, New York.

2003 (A. Rao and M.J. Casimir eds.) *Nomadism in South Asia. Oxford in India Readings in Sociology and Social Anthropology*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

2004 (J. Berland, A. Rao) (eds.) *Customary Strangers and Persistent*

*Others: Peripatetics and their Contexts in Africa, Asia, and Europe*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

### Books in Press

A. Rao, M. Böck, M. Bollig (eds.) *The Practice of War: The Production, Reproduction and Consumption of Armed Violence*. Oxford/new York: Berghahn Books.

A. Rao (ed.) *The Valley of Kashmir: The Making and Unmaking of a Composite Culture?* New Delhi: Manohar.

### In Press:

2007 Peripatetic Peoples and Lifestyles in South Asia. In B. Brower and B. Johnston (eds.) *Disappearing Peoples? Indigenous groups and ethnic minorities in South and Central Asia*. LeftCoast Press.

A. Rao and M.J. Casimir, *Peoples and Cultures of the Kashmir Himalayas* In B. Brower and B. Johnston (eds.) *op.cit.*

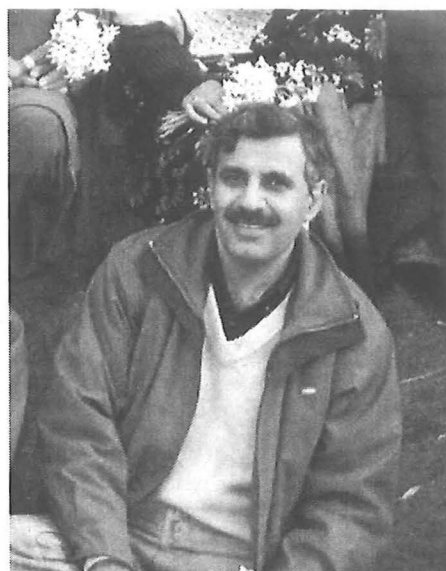
A. Rao *The Acquisition of Manners, Morals and Knowledge: Growing Into and Out of Bakkarwal Society*. In, C. Dyer (ed.) *The Education of Nomadic Peoples: Problems and Prospects*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

A. Rao, M. Böck *The Kashmir Conflict and the Internet: Preliminary Observations*. *ISIM (Newsletter of the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, Leiden)*. Issue No. 12 (2003).

M.J. Casimir and, A. Rao. *The Dog's Gaze: Some Insights into the Mortuary Rites and Conceptual Transformations among the Gujar and Bakkarwal of the Kashmir Valley*. In, A. Rao (ed.) *The Valley of Kashmir: The Making and Unmaking of a Composite Culture?* New Delhi: Manohar.



Aparna Rao:  
Kashmiri  
Family (above)  
and (facing)  
Kashmiri  
girl with  
basket (from  
Disappearing  
Peoples? cited  
above)



PROFESSOR SYED HAMIDULLAH,  
DIRECTOR, CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN GEOLOGY,  
UNIVERSITY OF PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN.

It was with tremendous shock and grief that we learned the news that a good friend of global peace and international understanding, Syed Hamidullah ("Hamid"), passed away in the line of professional duty. He was killed in an army helicopter crash on October 15 trying to bring relief supplies to villagers whose homes and lives were destroyed by the magnitude 7.6 earthquake in Pakistan on 8 October 2005. He died as he had lived, a man of peace in a difficult region, who was trying to make his world a little bit better for his having lived in it. Hamid was also an advisor for the Himalayan region for the GLIMS project and HIGHICE.

We quickly learned first hand that Hamid was "the real deal" in the South Asian peace movement. Hamid lived amidst dangerous and often violent circumstances in a troubled region of Pakistan. He never flinched from vigorous advocacy of women's rights and peaceful reconciliation of India and Pakistan. His dream was establishment of an international University of Peace in Peshawar, Pakistan, for which to begin he had recently been granted millions of dollars by his government. He leaves behind students who will be in need of scientific mentoring and personal support in the spirit of peace that Hamid instilled. The Karakoram Science Project Workshop that was held in Islamabad, Pakistan, and Dhera Dun, India in May-June 2006 was an opportunity to foster that. Hamid was instrumental in beginning this ongoing project to enable cross-border scientific collaboration

between Indians and Pakistanis with other world scientists. Hamid would have been proud of this and collaborating in his memory would be a good thing to honor his commitments to this project.

Syed Hamidullah was born in a rustic village in the Charsada District of the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan, last son in the large family of a religious man who helped Mohatma Ghandi gain the independence of Pakistan and India from the British. Educated at the University of Peshawar in geography, chemistry, and geology Hamid received a first class, first position in the geology department with a B.Sc. in 1975, a similar high position with an M.Sc. from Peshawar in 1977, and a Ph.D. in geochemistry/mineralogy-petrology from Glasgow University, UK, in 1983. Recipient of numerous awards and honors in his all-too-short life, including Scientist of the Year in the Earth Sciences in Pakistan in 1993, he also marked as special his several Fulbright awards to Princeton University and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Dr. Hamidullah is survived by his wife Gazalla, and their three sons, Dr. Fahad, M.D., Saad, and Sabaoun.

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*With Jeff Kargel*