NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES . BENGALURU . INDIA 560012
e-mail <newsletter.nias@gmail.com>

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Hearty Greetings for the New Year, from the
Director, Faculty, Students, Administration and Staff of NIAS

Featured Research Programme

CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES PROGRAMME

The NIAS Consciousness Studies Programme is an interdisciplinary programme of the National Institute of Advanced Studies. The Programme brings in philosophy, cognitive sciences, animal studies, psychology, mathematics, physics and the neurosciences in its research mandate. The activities of the Programme began in the early nineties with BV Sreekantan joining the Institute, and subsequently other members - Sangeetha Menon, Anindya Sinha, V V Binoy, Nithin Nagaraj, Sisir Roy, Gagan Deep Kaur and Venkat Rayudu – becoming part of the team. Currently, Sangeetha Menon heads the Programme. The doctoral scholars of the Programme include Lakshmi K (degree awarded in 2015), Namitha Kumar, Shankar Rajaraman and Siddharth S. The Programme has long-term and short-term NIAS Mani Bhaumik Research Fellows. The Programme also collaborates with its distinguished panel of Adjunct faculty and professors from India and around the world. While adopting a larger framework, the Programme is disciplinarily grounded in humanities, neurosciences, neuropsychology and neurophilosophy. We believe that there is a need to look at human experiences and consciousness as a whole, and in the interdisciplinary context. Our latest publication is the Edited Volume on “Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Consciousness and the Self” (Springer 2015, Editors: Sangeetha Menon, Anindya Sinha, BV Sreekantan), and the Book “Brain, Self and Consciousness: Explaining the conspiracy of experience” by Sangeetha Menon (Springer 2015).

Members of the CSP Programme

Faculty:
Sangeetha Menon (Programme Head)
Nithin Nagaraj
Binoy V V
Anindya Sinha
Sisir Roy
BV Sreekantan

Post-doctoral Associate:
Gagan Deep Kaur

Doctoral Students:
Shankar Rajaraman
Siddharth S
Namitha Kumar

Click here to read a Booklet on the NIAS Consciousness Studies Programme, its research, and outcomes.
NIAS Doctoral Programme

UPDATE & NEWS

The NIAS PhD Programme is a unique training programme in the country that fosters interdisciplinary research and teaching skills. In keeping with the vision of the institute’s founder JRD Tata and national skills development for building a better future, the NIAS PhD Programme encourages students to actively adopt a multidisciplinary approach to problem solving.

NIAS PhD students conduct their research and study in an environment free from the disciplinary constraints and get a broad exposure to ideas and research methods in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and engineering. This helps students to leave the institute as well-rounded individuals capable of working in a variety of professional and intellectual settings.

TS GOPI RETHINARAJ
Academic Head
NIAS PhD Programme

All four students of the 2014 batch successfully completed coursework, qualifying examination, and thesis proposal presentation to the NIAS community. Savitha Suresh Babu, a research scholar in the School of Social Sciences presented her proposal on 6 November on ‘A room of her own': Understanding Educational Experiences through narratives of women living in student welfare hostels’. Anupama Mahajan, also a student in the School of Social Sciences, presented her proposal on 12 November on ‘Contours of Lived Experiences of Gifted Children in India’. Krupa Rajangam, a student in the School of Humanities, presented her proposal on 17 November on ‘Practicing Heritage in Hampi World Heritage Site: at the interface of Communities of – Place, Practice, and Interest’.

The Institute organised the Annual Student Colloquium on December 2 and 3, 2015 where all students except the first and second year students presented their work in progress before NIAS faculty members and students. The colloquium is a part of the review and feedback process as well as opportunity for the doctoral scholars to know each other’s work. The colloquium was attended by invited external experts and supervisors and Student Advisory Committee (SAC) members of the doctoral candidates.

Three NIAS students were awarded PhD degree by Manipal University during this period. Asmita Sengupta, doctoral candidate from the School of Natural and Engineering Sciences, defended her thesis on Seed dispersal by rhesus macaques (Macaca mulatta) (Supervisor: Sindhu Radhakrishna) and was awarded the degree on 2 November 2015. Maithreyi R, doctoral candidate from the School of Social Sciences, defended her thesis on Reconceptualising Life Skills Education: A Critical Analysis of Ideas around Childhood, ‘Risks’, and ‘Success’ (Supervisor: Anitha BK) and was awarded the degree on 16 December 2015. Asha K G, doctoral candidate from the School of Social Sciences, defended her thesis on Dynamics of labour relations across different circuits of globalisation: evidence from garment making and cashew nut processing circuits in Kerala (Supervisor: Narendar Pani) and was awarded the degree on 18 November 2015.
Recent News
First NIAS Distinguished Fellow Lecture by H H The Dalai Lama

The First NIAS Distinguished Fellow Lecture was delivered by H H the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso on 6 December 2015. During the occasion, the Dalai Lama planted a sapling that will stay as a memorial to his visit. NIAS Director Baldev Raj welcomed him, and, Sangeetha Menon made the vote of thanks. Director conferred upon His Holiness the Dalai Lama with the Title – “NIAS Distinguished Fellow”. Through the Distinguished Fellow Lecture series NIAS hopes to honour the distinguished minds of the world who with their leadership, commitment for greater achievements, and vision for creating a better world, contribute to human wellbeing. During the occasion Baldev Raj introduced His Holiness to the audience and offered him a traditional shawl before requesting him to deliver the first NIAS Distinguished Fellow Lecture. He began by saying that it was a great honour to have been invited to speak. “I often ask myself what is the purpose of our lives and conclude that life’s purpose is to be happy. We have no guarantee what will happen in the future, but we live in hope. That’s what keeps us going. Contrary to popular belief, the ultimate source of happiness is not a wealth of material goods but a mental feeling of joy. There is sometimes insufficient understanding of the difference between sensory consciousness and mental consciousness. Material things provide some satisfaction, but it is generally short-lived. Such satisfaction does little to allay anxiety and fear. On the other hand, mental joy sustains itself.”

Click here to watch the Video
Click here to read more on his speech and the visit
International Conference on Consciousness
- a report by Nithin Nagaraj

A soulful rendering of the mantras by PhD scholar Naresh Keerthi from the Taittiriya Upanishad, taken from the Bhrgu Valli which is a philosophical dialogue on nature of reality between Sage Bhrgu and his father Våruni, marked the philosophical and auspicious beginning of the International Conference on Consciousness, Cognition and Culture: Implications for the 21st Century organised by the NIAS Consciousness Studies Programme at NIAS (9-11 December 2015).

The conference hosted 250 participants, 24 expert speakers from across the globe, 100 young scholars, 15 corporate participants, with 7 sponsors (Tata Education Trust; Cognitive Science Research Initiative, DST; Science & Engineering Research Board; Defence Research & Development Organisation; Tata Steel; Tata Consultancy Services; & Indo-US Science and Technology Forum) and Nature INDIA as Media Partner, over 35 participating Indian Institutions and over 18 participating institutions from other countries.

Understanding “Consciousness” by a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach bringing together philosophers, neuroscientists, computer and electrical engineers, mathematicians, psychiatrists, clinicians and psychologists was the aim of the conference. The spectrum of themes covered abstract and theoretical concepts on one side, while physical, biological, cultural, psychological and philosophical perspectives on the other.

Day 1 of the conference started off with the session “Cognition and Consciousness across species” highlighting the evolutionary nature of mind and consciousness. Some fishes can be Machiavellian (Binov...
Drone Flight in Sravanabelgola
– a report by Rajani MB

The Heritage Studies Programme at NIAS in collaboration with National Aerospace Laboratory (NAL) and support of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) flew drones to take aerial pictures of monuments in Sravanabelgola on September 11th and 12th, 2015. This site is comprised of the small town of Sravanabelgola situated between two rocky hills: Chandragiri (Chikkalbeta) and Vindhyagiri (Doddabetta). We made an early morning start and drove roughly 120 km west of Bangalore on NH 48, arriving in time for a delicious breakfast at the Jain mattha. This sustained us for a long, exhausting but thrilling day. The NAL comprised of six members: two senior scientists (Dr. G. Ramesh and PVS Murthy), two drone pilots (Shoaib and Shoeb), and two supporters (Saddamhushen and Pulikeshi, who had to constantly keep vigil on wind speed, battery and RC/Wi-Fi connectivity). The NIAS team included Prof. Settar (who spearheaded this venture), Dr. M.B. Rajani and Ekta Gupta. We were accompanied by a representative from ASI Hassan office, who helped us in accessing parts of monument that are not usually accessible to the public. Drones have the advantage of being able to fly low, allowing the on-board camera to take images from a unique perspective that neither ground-based nor aerial/space-based platforms can give. With their robust aerodynamics, and in the capable hands of our trained pilots, we were able to fly our drones safely and in good proximity to the monuments, which enabled us to take breath-taking views of them in the context of their serene surroundings. On the first day we covered Vindhyagiri, flying and imaging the colossal and magnificent 57 ft. tall monolithic statue of Gommateshwara (also known as Bahubali), temples or basadis, mantapas, ponds, gateways, fortresses, pillars, arches and inscriptions. On the second day, we covered the fort and all basadis and inscriptions in Chandragiri. We also found time to cover the basadis in the foothills, and within the town itself. The whole town, including Swastishri Charukirthi Bhattacharaka Swamiji (the chief pontiff of the mattha), have such a high regard for Prof. Settar that all of us were looked after extremely well. Swamiji graciously met us and discussed our planned drone flights, and his staff served us sumptuous meals even when we arrived 2-3 hours later than planned – they understood how immersed we were in flying drones!
Recent Meetings @ NIAS
NIAS Wednesday Discussion Meetings

**Prof Carol Upadhya**
Professor, NIAS

**Prof Narendar Pani**
Professor, NIAS
The Adaptation of Caste to Globalization: Empirical Results from Bengaluru, December 16, 2015

**Prof TR Gopalakrishnan Nair**
Adjunct Faculty, NIAS
Cognitive Avionic, November 25, 2015

**Prof VS Ramamurthy**
Emeritus Professor, NIAS
The Indo-US Nuclear Deal – A Decade After November 18, 2015

**Dr Arun Vishwanathan**
Assistant Professor, NIAS
Understanding the Nuclear Agreement with Iran November 4, 2015

**Ms Evelien de Hoop**
PhD Scholar, Eindhoven Technical University, The Netherlands
Pongamia Pinnata in Hassan Bio-Fuel Park: A Qualitative Study from the Perspective of Trees, October 21, 2015

**Dr Chidambaran Iyer**
Assistant Professor, NIAS
Use of Technology in Providing Quality Engineering Education: Exploring the Indian Experience October 14, 2015

**Dr Hippu Salk Kridde Nathan**
Assistant Professor, NIAS

Public Lectures & Events

**Prof Smiti Srivats**
Professor of Anthropology, University of California, Davis
A Place for Utopia: Urban Designs from South Asia, December 29, 2015

**A Panel Discussion on Einstein-Tagore Dialogue**
Participants: Madhurima Chatterji, Roddam Narasimha, D. P. Sengupta, C. V. Vishveshvara, and Bangalore Little Theatre, December 22, 2015

**Prof N Nagaraj**
Formerly Principal Economist at ICRISET

**An Outstanding American Theatre Production**
Celebrating 100 Years of Einstein’s General Theory of Relativity!
(Tom Schuch in Einstein – A Stage Portrait) Directed by Willard Simms, December 12, 2015, (in Association with Bangalore Little Theatre and Azim Premji University)

**Dr Marek Lyczka**
Faculty of Philosophy, Jagiellonian University, Krakow (Poland), Is Cognitive Science of Indian Philosophy Possible? The Case of Indian Neurophilosophy, organized by NIAS Consciousness Studies Programme, December 7, 2015

**Prof Bharat Karnad**
Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi
Book Discussion – Why India is not a Great Power (Yet) authored by Bharat Karnad, October 9, 2015

**Dr Mahzarin Rustum Banaji**
Richard Clarke Cabot Professor of Social Ethics, Department of Psychology, Harvard University
Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People (NIAS Consciousness Studies Programme in collaboration with Centre for Contemporary Studies, IISc and Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy), October 6, 2015

Associates Programme

**Vidwan D Balakrishna** and **Vidwan Mysore V Vamshidhar**
Camicat Veena-Venu Duet Concert
November 19, 2015

Training Programmes

**Course under the ISHAN VIKAS-UDHAN Programme for School Children** (December 15 to 25, 2015) Coordinator: Prof Anitha Kurup

**NIAS-DST Training Programme on Policy for Science and Science for Policies** (November 16 to 20, 2015) Coordinator: Prof Lalitha Sudaresan

International Conference

**International Conference on Consciousness, Cognition and Culture: Implications for the 21st Century** (December 9 to 11, 2015), organised by NIAS Consciousness Studies Programme Coordinator: Prof Sangeetha Menon

Half Day Symposium on **Reality in Modern Physics and Classical Traditions** organised by NIAS Consciousness Studies Programme, December 12, 2015 Coordinators: Profs. Sisir Roy and BV Seekantan

Literary Arts & Heritage Forum

**Mr Vijay Kumar**
Freelance Art Historian
Pandya Caves and Monoliths December 23, 2015

**Ms Lathashree Kolla**
Freelance Historian
City-As-Text: Bengaluru as a Living Testimony of Its Past November 24, 2015
Books from NIAS


The book ‘Metals and Civilizations’, edited by Sharada Srinivasan, Srinivasa Ranganathan and Alessandra Giulma Mair, was released in 2015 as part of the NIAS Foundation Day on June 20th 2015, in the presence of the first two editors from NIAS, Baldev Raj, Director, NIAS, Ramadorai, TCS and Suresh Prabhu, Minister for Railways. The volume represented the proceedings of BUMA VII, held at NIAS, Bangalore in 2009 as part of the renowned international conference series on the ‘Beginnings of the Use of Metals and Alloys’.

With twenty-eight peer-reviewed papers covering interdisciplinary research, it widens our knowledge of the use of metals in antiquity and several aspects of the archaeology, archaeometallurgy, historical metallurgy, crafts practices and metallurgical heritage of many Asian and some non-Asian countries. With a foreword by the distinguished materials scientist and archaeometallurgist from MIT, Robert Maddin, and articles by well known international experts from UK, US, China and Japan including Prof Thilo Rehren, UCL, Dr Paul Craddock of British Museum and Dr Jianjun Mei, Director, Needham Research Institute, the volume is a collector's item for libraries.
Birds and Blooms - *Tabebuia rosea*

RAJANI M B, Asst. Professor, NIAS

Even amidst the hustle and bustle of commuting in the ever thickening traffic of Bangalore, last month one couldn’t have missed the striking sight of pink blossoms on leafless trees. The splendid Pink Tabebuia dotted around Bangalore, including several parts of IISc campus, blooms around Nov-Jan. This is one of four Tabebuia species that were brought from Central/South America into the city by the British in the 20th century. Popularly known as “Pink Trumpet”, this is a tall, fast-growing deciduous tree. Its leaves are divided into five unequal leaflets. The fruits are elongated pods, which split open to release winged seeds. The bark can vary from gray to brown. The tree gets its name from its large, trumpet-shaped flowers, which range in colour from pink to white. A decoction of the flowers, leaves and roots has been used to reduce fevers and pain. This tree is known for its impressive flowering display. We at NIAS are lucky to have a brilliant specimen of this tree in the car park.

Botanical name: *Tabebuia rosea*
Family: Bignoniaceae
Origin: Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador
Common name: Pink trumpet, Basant rani, Pink Poui

While Rajani MB narrates the story of birds and blooms in NIAS, and the beauty of NIAS environs, Ekta Gupta shares a poetry on the river (Nadi), and also a set of photographs she shot at NIAS.
The vibrant and strong character of river always inspires me. Even if you look at the geomorphological aspects of river’s journey, you will see its journey is not so different from ours. This poetry is about the arduous journey of a river. It tells how a river with her high zeal and motivation passes through the difficult times at its different stages valiantly and cheerfully. It keeps flowing against all the odds and finally meets its destination.

राह मैंली है कपली है, नदी फिरना कुछ होती है,
हाँत्ता काविल,ए.तमीरक है, यो फिर भी न घरी है।
चलना उसकी फिरत, रक्तना कहौं वो जानी,

नदी, तेरी बीसी ये जिम्मेगानी।

क्या उसको पता है उसकी राह कहौं है
क्यों इतनी व्याख्यात है, ना सोती है ना रास्ता खोट है।
मैंने देखा है, जितना वो मज़़िल के करीब है,
उत्तमी ही गहरी और गम्भीर है।

शायद यही परिपक्वता की निम्नानी है।

चलना उसकी फिरत, रक्तना कहौं वो जानी,
नदी तो धूम है, अंततः सागर से है मिल जानी।

चलना उसकी फिरत, रक्तना कहौं वो जानी.
About NIAS

The National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) was conceived and established by the vision and initiative of the late Mr. J. R. D. Tata. Dr. Raja Ramanna, as the Founder Director, immensely contributed to the growth and development of the Institute. In subsequent years, Prof Roddam Narasimha, Dr. K. Kasturirangan and Dr. V.S. Ramamurthy became the Directors of NIAS. Presently Prof. Baldev Raj is the Director. NIAS celebrates its Foundation Day on 20 June.

NIAS in the Evening
Photo courtesy: Ekta Gupta