

## ***SIGNS OF CRISIS:***

### ***Religious Conflict, Human Rights & the New Documentary Film in Southern Asia***

NYU School of Law, D'Agostino Hall, 110 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street (corner of MacDougal Street)

Thursday, May 17, 2007 \_\_\_\_\_

**1:30 Opening Remarks: *Signs of Crisis***

**Patricia Spyer** (University of Leiden, Senior Fellow, Center for Religion & Media, NYU, 2006-07)

**Keynote: Philip Alston** (Co-Director, Center for Human Rights & Global Justice, NYU Law)

**2:00 – 3:45 Screening: Garin Nugroho, *The Poet (Unconcealed Poetry)*** (2001, 85 min.)

Set in 1965 in Aceh in a camp where members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) members and alleged communists are imprisoned. The central figure in the film is Abraham Kadir, an Acehnese poet who plays himself, who in the camp was assigned the task of blindfolding those who were led off to execution. The traditional Acehnese *didong* poetic form which blends music, dance, and song punctuates the film and the terror of these times. Produced in 2001, this small scale reconstruction of the events of 1965-66 was the first independent Indonesian film on the subject.

**Q & A: Garin Nugroho, Moderator: Patricia Spyer, Center for Religion and Media, NYU**

**3:45 – 4:00 BREAK**

**4:00 – 5:30 Screening: Anand Patwardhan, *In the Name Of God*** (1992, 75 min.)

This classic and controversial film focuses on the campaign waged by the militant Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) to destroy a 16th century mosque in Ayodhya said to have been built by Babar, the first Mughal Emperor of India. The VHP claim the mosque was built at the birthsite of the Hindu god Ram after Babar razed an existing Ram temple. This controversial issue led to religious riots which have cost thousands of lives, culminating in the mosque's destruction by Hindus in December of 1992. The resulting religious violence immediately spread throughout India leaving more than 5,000 dead and causing thousands of Indian Muslims to flee their homes. Filmed prior to the mosque's demolition, the film examines the motivations which would ultimately lead to the drastic actions of the Hindu militants, as well as the efforts of secular Indians - many of whom are Hindus - to combat the religious intolerance and hatred that has seized India in the name of God.

**Q & A: Anand Patwardhan, Moderator: Tejaswini Ganti, Anthropology, NYU**

**5:30 – 5:45 BREAK**

**5:45 – 6:45 Panel: *Documentary, Human Rights, and Questions of Evidence***

**Filmmakers:** Garin Nugroho, Anand Patwardhan in conversation with **Benedict Kingsbury** (Director, Institute for International Law and Justice NYU), **Vesuki Nesiah** (International Center for Transitional Justice), **Meg Satterthwaite** (Co-Director, Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, NYU), **Tinuk Yampolsky** (independent scholar and Indonesian cultural activist). **Moderator: Sally Merry** (Anthropology /Law and Society, NYU)

**6:45 – 7:30 RECEPTION**

Friday, May 18, 2007 \_\_\_\_\_

### **Secularism, Religious Violence and Retrospective Accountings**

**9:00 – 10:00 Breakfast**

**10:00 – 10:45 Screening: Lexy Junior Rambadeta *Mass Grave*** (2001, 26 min.)

The Suharto resignation in 1998 left the New Order's legacy of violence unresolved. In November 2000, some groups of human rights activists and families of those killed in the 1965-66 massacres exhumed a mass grave in Wonosobo, Central Java. The exhumation turned up remains of those killed and buried there by anti-communist groups in 1965. This documentary follows this first emotional attempt to investigate the 1965 massacre, seeking evidence that the killing of suspected communists indeed happened as reported by eyewitnesses and families of missing persons.

**Q & A: Lexy Junior Rambadeta, Moderator: Tinuk Yampolsky, independent scholar/cultural activist**

**10:45 – 11:00 BREAK**

**11:00 – 1:30 Screenings:**

**Rakesh Sharma** *Final Solution* (2004, 88 min.)

A study of the politics of hate. Set in Gujarat, India, the film graphically documents the changing face of right-wing politics in India through a study of the 2002 genocide of Muslims in Gujarat. The film examines the aftermath of the deadly violence that followed the burning of 58 Hindus on the Sabarmati Express train at Godhra on February 27 2002. In reaction to that incident, some 2,500 Muslims were brutally murdered, hundreds of women raped, and more than 200,000 families driven from their homes. Borrowing its reference from the history of Nazism, the title of the film exposes what the director calls 'Indian Fascism' and seeks to remind that "those who forget history are condemned to relive it."

**Q&A: Rakesh Sharma, Moderator: Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi, Center for Religion & Media, NYU**

**Amar Kanwar** *To Remember* (2003, 8 min.)

Portrait of Birla House, the site of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination on January 30, 1948. Located in Delhi, Birla House has become a gallery and shrine attracting hundreds of visitors daily. This short silent film is an homage to Gandhi as well as the visitors who embody the spirit of his pacifist teachings. Against the backdrop of a surge in militant Hindu nationalism, Kanwar's work is particularly telling. Clearly, the historical turn of events from nonviolence to nuclear armament suggests deep ambivalence about Mahatma Gandhi's legacy.

**Q&A: Amar Kanwar, Moderator: Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi, Center for Religion & Media, NYU**

**1:30 – 2:45 BREAK FOR LUNCH**

**2:45 – 3:45 Panel: *Secularism and Religious Violence and Retrospective Accountings***

**Filmmakers:** **Lexy Junior Rambadeta, Rakesh Sharma, Amar Kanwar**, in conversation with **Smita Narula** (Co-Director, Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, NYU), **Sam Gregory** (Program manager, WITNESS).

**Moderator:** **Sally Merry** (Anthropology/Law and Society, NYU)

**3:45 – 4:30 BREAK**

**Evening Screenings with Garin Nugroho and Anand Patwardhan**

*Patricia Spyer, Center for Religion and Media, NYU*

**4:30 – 7:30 *Resources of Hope: Activism and Recovery in the Aftermath of Trauma***

**Anand Patwardhan** *We Are Not Your Monkeys* (1998, 5 min.)

This music video reworks the epic Ramayana story to critique the caste and gender oppression implicit in it. Sung by Sambhaji Bhagat and composed by Sambhaji, Anand and the late Daya Pawar, the music video opposes the systematic oppression and negation of basic human rights in the name of religion and mythology.

**Anand Patwardhan** *War and Peace / Jung aur Aman* (2002, 93 min.)

Filmed over three tumultuous years in India, Pakistan, Japan and the U.S. following nuclear tests in the Indian sub-continent, *War and Peace* is a documentary journey of peace activism in the face of global militarism and war. Triggered by macabre scenes of jubilation that greeted nuclear testing in the sub-continent, the film is framed by the murder of Mahatma Gandhi. Fifty years later, memories of Gandhi seem like a mirage that never was, created by our thirst for peace and our very distance from it.

**Garin Nugroho, Tonny Trimarsanto, Viva Westi and Lianto Luseno**

***Serambi*** (2005, 75 min.)

On December 26, 2004, death came on the back of a killer tsunami, swallowing up nearly everything in its path including the lives of almost one hundred thousand people. Tens of thousands of people were left with nothing to hold onto except pain. In Aceh, even two months after the tsunami, the scope of the disaster remained evident. Ruins lay everywhere. Unburied corpses continued to be found. Millions of memories haunted the air. This documentary film follows the spiritual journey of the Acehnese people after the tsunami through the visualization of three separate tales. *Serambi* invites viewers to view the world differently; it takes us on a spiritual journey. Just as Aceh is known as Mecca's Verandah, the place where pilgrims begin their journey to the Holy Land, this film is also a verandah, from which viewers can undertake their own spiritual pilgrimage.

Saturday, May 19, 2007

Narrative, Testimony, Meaning

9:00 – 10:00 Breakfast

10:00 – 11:00 **Screening:** Aryo Danusiri *The Village Goat Takes the Beating* (2000, 45 min.)

Set in Aceh in late 1999, this film records allegations of human right abuses perpetrated by the Indonesian army in Aceh during the 1990s, particularly in the Tiro subdistrict of Pidie, through lengthy interviews with victims or with relatives of deceased victims, and through partial re-enactments. During the notorious DOM period under Suharto, Aceh was first made an area of military operations (Daerah Operasi Militer) with the aim of suppressing GAM (Aceh Freedom Movement). The full meaning of the film's title is contained within the Acehnese saying 'the mountain goat eats the corn, the village goat takes the beating', for it is claimed that the killings and torture by the army were frequently perpetrated on the villagers, rather than on GAM members.

**Q&A:** *Aryo Danusiri, Moderator: Mary Steedly, Anthropology, Harvard University*

11:00 – 12:30 **Screening:** Sonia Jabbar *Autumn's Final Country* (2003, 66 min.)

These testimonials, recorded for the South Asia Court of Women (Dhaka, Aug.2003), explore the lives of four women who have suffered displacement in the conflict-ridden state of Jammu and Kashmir. Each story reveals an intimate dimension of the Kashmir conflict, raising questions about patriarchal values and power, communal identities, nationalism and war.

**Q&A:** *Sonia Jabbar, Moderator: Tejaswini Ganti, Anthropology, NYU*

12:30 – 1:30 **Panel:** *Narrative, Testimony, Meaning*

**Filmmakers:** Aryo Danusiri, Sonia Jabbar, in conversation with Joseph Saunders (Asia director, Human Rights Watch), Jael Silliman, Ford Foundation. **Moderator:** Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi, Center for Religion & Media, NYU

1:30 – 2:30 BREAK FOR LUNCH

2:30 – 3:00 **Screening:** Dian Herdiany (Kampung Halaman video collective) *Video Diary* (2006, 15 min.)

Three five-minute video diaries from survivors of the tsunami in Aceh, many of them children.

**Q&A:** *Dian Herdiany, Moderator: Patricia Spyer, Center for Religion and Media, NYU*

3:00 – 4:00 **Screening:** Lexy Junior Rambadeta *Garuda's Deadly Upgrade* (2005, 44 min.)

This film asks the question: Does Garuda Airlines, Indonesia's national carrier, carry out political assassinations for the government? Following the bizarre poisoning of the country's leading human rights activist, Munir Said Thalib, on one of its flights, this appears more and more likely. Thalib's colleagues have uncovered a series of connections between Indonesian intelligence and the national airline. They are also investigating the deaths of other government critics, who all died mysteriously after flying Garuda. Munir Said Thalib was Indonesia's bravest and hardest working human rights campaigner. He repeatedly spoke out against Indonesia's generals, accusing them of "killing people and hiding behind those in power." His murder last September threw Indonesia's human rights movement into chaos. Munir died after boarding a Garuda flight to Holland. At the check in, he bumped into an old acquaintance, Garuda pilot Pollycarpus, who offered to upgrade him to business class. A few hours later, he was dead – poisoned by the airline food. Suspicion for Munir's murder immediately fell on the Indonesian intelligence, BIN, which had many reasons for wanting him dead. It also quickly became apparent that Garuda airlines helped organise, or at the very least covered up, the political assassination.

BREAK 4:00 – 4:15

4:15 – 5:45 **Screening:** Amar Kanwar *A Night of Prophecy* (2002, 77 min.)

Filmed in several regions of India (Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Nagaland, Kashmir) and featuring music and poetry of tragedy and protest performed by regional artists. The sources of anger and sorrow vary from inescapable, caste-bound poverty to the loss of loved ones as a result of tribal and religious fighting. The footage is a stunning glimpse of India's diverse ethnic groups and topography from the rural mountains to its crowded urban centers. It suggests that poetry can allow us to understand the histories and severity of conflict. Poetry provides the simple moment of prophecy.

**Q&A:** *Amar Kanwar, Moderator: Tejaswini Ganti, Anthropology, NYU*

5:45 – 6:45 **Closing Panel:** *Documentary, Human Rights, and Transitional Justice*

**Part 1: Narrative, Testimony, Meaning**

**Filmmakers:** Amar Kanwar, Lexy Junior Rambadeta, Dian Herdiany, in conversation with Joseph Saunders (Asia Director, Human Rights Watch) and Mary Steedly, Anthropology, Harvard University. **Moderator:** Patricia Spyer, Center for Religion and Media, NYU

6:45 – 7:00 BREAK

**7:00 Part 2: Open Discussion with Audience**

**Moderators / Rapporteurs:** Sally Merry, Anthropology /Law and Society, NYU, Faye Ginsburg, Anthropology / Center for Religion and Media, NYU

**Sunday, May 20 At the Asia Society**\_\_\_\_\_

725 Park Avenue (at 70th Street), New York, NY 10021  
Tel: (212) 288-6400

***Circulating Culture: New Works from Indonesia and India***

**3:00 – 5:30 Screening**

Amar Kanwar

*The Face, The Win Aung and Ma Win Maw O* (from his ongoing *Burma Series*)

Lexy Junior Rambadeta

*Faces of Everyday Corruption in Indonesia.*

A discussion with the filmmakers follows.

**7:00 Screening**

Garin Nugroho *Opera Jawa* (2007, 120 min.)

NYC FILM PREMIERE

Inspired by the *Ramayana*, the great classic of ancient Indian and South East-Asian literature, and commissioned by internationally acclaimed theater director Peter Sellars, *Opera Jawa* is a musical like no other in cinema. It tells of a passionate love triangle that leads inexorably to conflict, violence and death.

**\*\*\*To RSVP to attend events on Thursday, May 17 through Saturday, May 19, please send an email indicating which part of the conference you will be attending to Barbara Abrash at [ba2@nyu.edu](mailto:ba2@nyu.edu).\*\*\***