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FACULTY CONNECT

Does growing government debt lead to a financial crisis?
A model-based solution for Fiji

THEMED ARTICLE

GenAI at FLAME

CENTRES AT FLAME UNIVERSITY

Centre for Case Development

In The Issue

02 Faculty Connect

- Does growing government debt lead to a financial crisis? A model-based solution for Fiji

06 Themed Articles

- A Cognitive and Socio-cultural Perspective on the Tendency to use Gmail's Smart Reply-like AI-based Texting Features
- GenAI at FLAME
- The Digital Artisans: Shaping the Future of Design Assessment in the AI Era

16 Research Focus

- Shell Shock: Exploring Cognitive Parallels between Snails and Humans in a Stressful World

22 Discover India Program

- Nawalgarh: A Case Study of Shekhawati Art and Architecture
- Losar and the Festivals that make the “MINI TIBET” in Mcleod Ganj, Himachal Pradesh

30 Centres at FLAME University

- Centre for Case Development
- Centre for South and Southeast Asia Studies for a Jambudvipa-Led Future

36 New Faculty at FLAME

- Eleven New Faculty Members Have Joined FLAME University. They Describe Their Experience and Areas of Interest



FACULTY CONNECT



FACULTY CONNECT

Does growing government debt lead to a financial crisis? A model-based solution for Fiji

PROF. DEVENDRA KUMAR JAIN
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Understanding the relative values of an economy's foreign assets and liabilities is necessary to evaluate the sustainability of that economy's government debt. An economy's foreign exchange exposure can be analyzed to help manage trade, money flow, and public debt.

Government debt should not be the primary determinant of an economy's financial stability. There are a few common arguments used to determine the sustainability of debt. An economy may manage a high debt level as long as the long-term interest rate on debt is less than the pace of economic growth. This viewpoint is linked to the fact that the rate of return on debt-financed investments outweighs the interest (opportunity) cost of debt. Second, when debt service is reasonable



(without the need for new borrowing), debt stress and the distance to default remain low. Managing debt service is an essential component of prudent fiscal planning.

In the wake of the COVID-19 recovery plan, Fiji's debt sustainability has been the subject of widespread criticism. It is anticipated that Fiji's debt (as a proportion of GDP) will surpass 80% (RBF 2022, Ministry of Economy 2022). While over thirty economies worldwide have a debt ratio of 80% or higher (OECD 2022), some economies have encountered financial difficulties, whereas others have maintained stability. Nevertheless, certain nations maintain stability in the face of exceptionally high debt ratios. Why does the debt-to-GDP ratio of some countries appear to have little impact, whereas it has caused severe economic issues in others?

To estimate the macro-financial risks that an economy faces, it is necessary to understand how much exposure each factor represents. It is critical to understand the

percentage of foreign assets, liabilities, and currency-wise exposure denominated in a foreign currency. Understanding the factors that influence this index could lead to better management of trade, money flows, and government debt. An economy's external balance sheet presents a variety of macrofinancial risks, including those associated with foreign currency exposure. Therefore, we must analyze each form of foreign asset (direct investment, portfolio, other investment, and reserve assets) and foreign liability separately.

In our most recent APPS article (see link below*), we used a range of methodological approaches to analyze Fiji's external liabilities as well as their origins and implications (Jain, Singh, Kumar, Kumar, & Patel, 2022). This article estimates the foreign currency exposure index in an innovative manner by analyzing the variables that influence it.

In order to enhance comprehensibility, we suggest an alternative methodology for assessing the sustainability of debt (Jain, Singh, Kumar, Kumar & Patel, 2022). We contend that it is impossible to assess the gravity of a debt crisis without knowledge of the relative value of foreign assets and liabilities (international investment positions) denominated in domestic currencies. The impact of exchange rate volatility on the valuation of international investment positions is not consistent nor readily controllable in smaller and more vulnerable economies, in contrast to larger developing or developed nations. Throughout history, currency exposure risk has been associated with international capital flows.

A positive or negative value for the foreign currency exposure index could potentially signify macrofinancial vulnerability. In their external liabilities, even nations with a positive or negative NIIP (Net International Investment Position) are susceptible to currency risks. The proportion of foreign currency-denominated items on either side of the balance sheet is critical. We developed a foreign currency exposure index for Fiji to

study its underlying dynamics. The index's favorable reading suggests that Fiji does not pose a significant risk. Our findings repeatedly show that foreign debt, trade openness, and exchange rates are the primary drivers of Fiji's currency risk. Furthermore, we demonstrated the significance of other variables (domestic inflation, financial market shocks, external debt, and current account deficits) in assessing currency risk at the macroeconomic level for a small and vulnerable economy. This study's findings are consistent with earlier studies and are compatible with the idea. The desirable foreign currency portfolio in portfolio management is determined by GDP, exchange rate, and volatility.

In retrospect, the IMF has also rated Fiji as having a moderate risk of debt distress (IMF 2021, Article IV Consultation Press Release: Fiji, Washington, DC), and the World Bank Group does not classify Fiji as a heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) (IMF: World Economic Outlook, 1998, updated annually). Other qualitative indicators used to assess an economy's financial health include export growth, private financial flow, and the gross domestic saving rate (Fiji Country Classification, ADB Policy Paper 2021).

Understanding the role of debt-to-GDP ratios in ensuring economic stability is critical. However, monitoring a country's foreign currency exposure is just as crucial for managing trade and government debt. As a result, this study proposes new approaches for measuring the debt sustainability of a small economy, such as Fiji.

[*Download the article \(DOI: 10.1002/app5.356\)](#)

Reference : Jain, Singh, Kumar, Kumar, & Patel, 2022

This summary is based on the research paper published in Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies of an article published 29.05.2022, Asia Pac Policy Stud. 2022;9:447–464.



THEMED ARTICLES



THEMED ARTICLES

A Cognitive and Socio-cultural Perspective on the Tendency to use Gmail’s Smart Reply-like AI-based Texting Features

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Computer-mediated communication is seeing an exponential growth thanks to the advancement of communication technology. A survey by the Radicati group suggests that emails exchanged daily are expected to increase from



approximately 320 billion in 2021 to 376 billion in 2025. The number of email users is expected to increase at an annual rate of 3%, putting the number of users in 2025 at almost 4.6 billion. In keeping with

this growth in online communication trac , several AI-based solutions also emerged to assist typing and online communication. For instance, introduced by Google in the year 2016, Gmail Smart Reply gives reply suggestions to users through deep neural networks, based on its ML model trained on a massive database collected earlier. By 2017, Smart Reply was already sending about 6.7 billion email replies on behalf of humans. While features like Smart Reply provide supportive ecosystems for non-native English speakers, its consequent domination over naturally produced language may have implications for computer-mediated communication and cognitive linguistic studies in the future.

Gmail Smart Reply Usage: A Simulation Study

We conducted a study to understand the tendency of email service users from India to use features like Gmail’s Smart Reply. The simulation section of the study posed six hypothetical emails to respondents. Students and

professionals received email contexts that were relevant to their experiences respectively. To account for the message’s nature, an equal number of formally and informally worded emails were used. The direction of communication was incorporated by making participants respond to emails from a subordinate, a peer/colleague, and a senior. Gmail Smart Reply-like short responses were provided and participants had the option of choosing these or typing their responses. The final data comprised 167 participants, including 92 students and 75 working professionals from India. Among the participants, 123 had used (or indicated that they currently were using) Smart Replies while the rest had never used the feature.

Results showed that irrespective of the participant category, context, nature of email, and direction of communication, a vast majority of the participants (over 80%) inadvertently chose the Smart Reply-like responses rather than typing their responses. While exploring the di erences between student participants and working professionals, it was found that students used Smart Reply-like options significantly more frequently compared to working professionals, when the communication was in an upward (social hierarchy) direction but informal. Moreover, among student participants, as years of Internet usage increased the usage of Smart Replies reduced across all communication scenarios. The reason for this could be that innovation appeals to young users initially, but as confidence increases with years of usage, they prefer to type their responses. Among working professionals, age was positively related to usage when replying to seniors in an informal setting. This could result from the comfort and trust that are usually higher in older cohorts and the changing dynamics with seniors with an increase in age.

Possible Factors Affecting Gmail Smart Reply-like AI-based Solutions

A study by Cheung (2017) argues that marginalized communities experience cognitive load when attending to instructions in a non-native language. Extending this to written communication, the process of coming up with a suitable response can lead to cognitive load and the simple prompts by the AI-based service would be a welcome assistance. The perceived accuracy of the AI-based suggestion over and above one’s linguistic skills would further motivate this reliance.

Functional brain mapping studies too now support the notion that when faced with challenging decision-making tasks, the human brain prefers the status quo. When faced with the demands of responding to numerous text messages, it is safe to assume that even for proficient

“Our increasing dependence on AI-based language solutions cannot be neglected and it has implications in the areas of computer-mediated communication and linguistics ...”

communicators, an easily available response choice would be preferred whenever possible over investing cognitive resources in producing fresh responses. This could also explain why the majority of the participants in our study chose the given responses rather than typing a fresh response. A recent study by Hohenstein and colleagues (Hohenstein et al., 2021) also demonstrated that commercially deployed AI solutions make communication e ective and have the potential to alter human interaction.

The phenomenon of routine formation in dialogues further may explain why an individual might continue using such features as Smart Reply. According to this phenomenon, frequent use of phrases and sentences soon leads to the creation of fixed expressions. There is a likelihood that frequently chosen AI-based suggestions soon become part of a user’s dialogue routine, further reducing the probability of voluntarily introducing variability.

Implications

Our increasing dependence on AI-based language solutions cannot be neglected and it has implications in the areas of teaching, learning, as well evaluation processes. Other areas of potential use include the following: creative human expression through writing; perception of trust across asynchronous interactions; and expression and communication of emotions in general. The study has potential socio-cultural implications in the context of democratizing AI-based language solutions and ensuring the sensitivity of the solutions to regional needs. While features like Smart Reply provide supportive ecosystems for non-native English speakers, its consequent domination over naturally produced language may have implications for computer-mediated communication and cognitive linguistic studies in the future.

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THEMED ARTICLES

GenAI at FLAME

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Generative AI at FLAME

The Centre for Mathematical Modelling organized an internal conference: “GenAI at FLAME” on 27 January 2024. The aim of the conference was to provide a platform for faculty at FLAME to share their experiences and foster meaningful discussions on the innovative applications of Generative AI in teaching and learning in various disciplines. We had a dynamic line up of talks by FLAME faculty who shared their experiences and perspectives on AI in the classroom. In this article, we summarize key points from some of the talks and point to future directions that we can take.

GenAI and the Future of University Education: Prof. Santosh Kudtarkar

Prof. Kudarkar has been tracking the growth of Generative AI for an extended period of time. In his presentation, he mentioned the different usages of generative AI, right from GPT 1’s ability in 2016 to mimic the writing skills of top sports journalists to the practical solutions that his friend’s company is solving in the legal sector. In his talk, he introduced the university-centered chatbot, Chanakya. This chatbot aims to assist students and faculty with queries about courses, faculty, and university policies. He explained that each user prompt is first transformed into code, which is then

processed by a specialized agent within the system. Further improvements are being made to the chatbot in order to provide more personalized responses. He concluded by saying that students cannot be prevented from using AI tools, and hence the key challenge is to ensure that students are learning effectively even with the ubiquitous presence of artificial intelligence.

Applications of GenAI for Academicians: Prof. Shivakumar Jolad

Prof. Jolad talked about the history of educational technologies and shed light on a few aspects through which GenAI is transforming education by providing personalized assignments, efficient code generation, and better content writing. From automating chapter descriptions of books to refining email communications, the effect of GenAI on productivity and learning is widespread.

However, Prof. Jolad's address raised several ethical considerations of this development, pointing to equitable AI access, respect for the privacy of data, and the preservation of human interaction in this age of digital learning. These pose important questions for the future.

Using AI-Generated Art to Facilitate Engagement in Classroom Activities and Learning: Prof. Sairaj Patki

Prof. Patki presented a use case of AI-generated art in the course of Experimental Psychology taught in the third-year undergraduate class as a core course for students majoring in Psychology. An activity using the Bing Image Creator from Microsoft Designer was introduced in class. The activity required students to come up with any prompts that came to their minds to create images that would be used as the display picture for the formal class WhatsApp group. The activity saw the spontaneous participation of students who were otherwise less engaged in class. Moreover, the



introduction of this free platform to students also encouraged some to explore it further for their end-of-semester submission, which required some groups to create their own visual stimuli for experimental studies and for student club marketing activities (e.g., creating flyers and e-banners).

Thinking a Step Ahead of AI: Prof. Suniti Vadalkar

Prof. Vadalkra's session began with a practical activity where she engaged participants in a hands-on exercise using square paper cutouts. Each participant arranged these squares into various shapes of their own design.



The shapes ranged from a simple tree design to more complex structures like an Archimedes spiral with a branch. Through this activity, she explained how no two students created the same shape. In her design class, she uses a "push" and a "pull" strategy. Through a "push," she encouraged students to go on the internet and use GenAI tools to explore different designs. However, after this, she expected the students to "pull" back and apply their creativity to make something original. She concluded her talk by saying that, with respect to design and creativity, humans will always be miles ahead of any GenAI tool.

What's at Stake for Students Learning Academic Writing?: Prof. Nidhi Kalra, Prof. Rajitha Venugopal



Prof. Kalra and Prof. Venugopal shared their experiences as instructors of Academic Writing courses with the onset of generative AI technologies. The primary objective of the course is to foster active reading and critical thinking in students and to help them succinctly form and present their ideas in the form of academic papers. Recent trends in their classrooms have proven that AI is robbing most students of the basic rationale of this learning experience. The session highlighted the ethical quandaries in academic writing due to AI tools.



They raised concerns about plagiarism, authenticity, and the potential for AI to produce biased work. The long-term implications on students' ability to generate original ideas and challenge existing knowledge were emphasized, noting that overreliance on AI undermines critical thinking and active learning. The talk concluded with a reflection on the dangers of students becoming passive learners due to overdependence on AI in academia.

"Pyndora's bot": An Experimental GPT-3.5 based Chatbot Piloted in the CSIT101 Course: Nandini Gandhi and Prof. Kaushik Gopalan



Prof. Gopalan introduced Pyndora's Bot, a chatbot developed for the 'Introduction to Programming' course. The objective of the chatbot is to supplement traditional teaching methodologies by providing immediate, interactive, and personalized support to students delving into Python programming. Grasping programming concepts can be daunting for beginners, and the varied learning paces among students call for a teaching assistant that can adapt to these differences. Traditional teaching and assistance methods may not sufficiently



cater to the individual queries and diverse learning styles of students. After the chatbot was created, it was used by the students in the class. Student engagement was mainly of three types: course logistics, programming concepts, and generating practice problems. This was a preliminary attempt to explore the transformative potential of AI in education. Prof. Gopalan concluded by highlighting that further improvements in the capabilities and interface of the chatbot, as well as amendments to the instructional design, are required before we can get close to achieving its potential.

Natural Usage Patterns of ChatGPT by CS students: Melwina Albuquerque, Madhav Gupta, and Prof. Aamod Sane



Melwina, a third-year computer science undergraduate student, talked about a small study Prof. Sane and his students conducted to understand the regular usage of ChatGPT from the point of view of students. They explored patterns in coursework, term projects, and internship projects for second- and third-year students. Students used ChatGPT in coursework to solve small as well as complex problems, although it provided incorrect solutions which students could not detect. In course projects, students used it to generate comments for their own code. However, students also entered into long conversations with ChatGPT that



ended up leading to dead ends since the problem at hand was not as precise as coursework problems. Overall, students found that ChatGPT responses fall into three classes: they are immediately helpful, they need user help, or they lead to unhelpful frustration. These conclusions highlight the limitations of these tools and that over-reliance on the tool leads to more time being spent on prompting the bot than actually spent on the task at hand.

Closing Thoughts

We believe that this summary will serve as a starting point for future discussions, collaborations, and deliberations among members of the FLAME community on both the potential and challenges of teaching and learning in the Generative AI era.



THEMED ARTICLES

The Digital Artisans: Shaping the Future of Design Assessment in the AI Era

PROF. MRITUNJAY KUMAR
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Taking on the dynamic currents of design discipline with the advent of generative AI has been like setting sail into unexplored waters. As I reflect upon the incorporation of this novel tool into the foundational elements and principles of the design course that I teach at FLAME University, I recognize we are on the cusp of a revolutionary intersection where technology meets pedagogy. It is an unfolding narrative that oscillates between thrills and complexities.

In the traditional design classroom setup, the materials are tangible: paper, pencils, and the palpable buzz of creativity. Enter generative AI, and the scene transforms. Students are no longer mere recipients of knowledge; they are now co-creators with a digital collaborator that requires them to articulate their design intents with precision. In doing so, they are engaging in a profound dialogue with



the machine. This synergy not only reinforces their grasp of design fundamentals but also propels them to a level of engagement that textbook theory alone could never achieve. The act of generating prompts for AI has become a critical exercise, compelling the students to hone their ability to conceptualize and communicate their ideas with clarity.

As we delved deeper into the educational experiment, I introduced a novel assignment structure. Students were tasked with creating design pieces twice: once with their inherent human creativity and again with AI as their creative partner. It was this duality of creation that served as a catalyst for a rich and insightful dialogue between participants. It allowed the students to examine the distinctive characteristics of human creativity by contrasting them against the efficiency and alien perspective of AI. However, this comparison did more than just illuminate differences; it cast a revealing light on our pre-existing methods of assessment. Could it be that our established frameworks for evaluation are becoming obsolete in the face of AI's growing role in design? The presence of generative AI in the creative

process has undoubtedly raised probing ethical considerations: questions of authorship, originality, and the authenticity of AI-assisted creations emerged as significant talking points. These discussions are not mere

“As the journey continues, the integration of generative AI into design education remains a narrative of harmonization and adaptation, blending the tried and tested with the transformative potential of the new.”

academic exercises. They are vital for preparing students for the real-world implications of design in the digital age. Moreover, the unpredictability of AI-generated results has occasionally thrown us into a loop, underscoring the need for a balanced approach that honors the integrity of human creativity while leveraging technological advances.

In the vein of this evolving educational tapestry, we must now turn our gaze towards the horizon and ask ourselves a pivotal question: What should the new framework for assessing design in the AI era look like? It is a question that beckons the collective intellect of educators. We are

stewards of a future where design thinking and artificial intelligence converge, and our assessment strategies must reflect this confluence. Should our new frameworks prioritize the originality of the concept, the efficiency of execution, or the innovative use of AI as a tool? How do we balance the weight given to human intuition against the precision of AI? These are the riddles that we must unravel together. We must consider the qualitative aspects of design, like emotional resonance and conceptual depth, alongside the quantitative capabilities of AI, such as speed and volume. The assessment criteria of the future must be agile, able to adapt to the evolving capacities of AI, and sensitive to the enduring value of human creativity

As the journey continues, the integration of generative AI into design education remains a narrative of harmonization and adaptation, blending the tried and tested with the transformative potential of the new. It enriches the landscape of design education while simultaneously infusing it with complexity. We stand on the threshold of an era that calls for educators to rethink, reimagine, and reconstruct our educational practices to not only coexist with AI but to thrive alongside it.

Thus, as I charter this course on design, I extend an invitation to my fellow educators: let us join in contemplation and conversation. How can we shape our assessment methodologies to fairly and effectively measure the fruits of human and artificial design collaboration? How do we ensure that the essence of design, which resides at the intersection of beauty and functionality, is preserved and celebrated if we welcome a digital artisan into our studio? The dialogue is open, and the canvas is wide—let us paint the future of design education with broad, inclusive, and innovative strokes.

A person is sitting at a desk, writing in a notebook with a green pen. Their left hand is on a laptop keyboard. A cup of black coffee sits on a saucer to the right. The notebook has Arabic text written in it. A yellow banner with the text "RESEARCH FOCUS" is overlaid on the bottom left.

RESEARCH FOCUS



RESEARCH FOCUS

Shell Shock: Exploring Cognitive Parallels between Snails and Humans in a Stressful World

PROF. ANURADHA BATAYAL
Assistant Professor, Environmental Sciences

In the vast tapestry of the natural world, the humble snail may seem an unlikely protagonist in the saga of cognition. However, recent research delving into the intricacies of snail behavior, physiology, and cognition has unearthed fascinating parallels with mammalian cognition. From the effects of dietary flavonoids on memory to the impacts of heat shock, predation stress, and social isolation on cognition, snails navigate a complex web of environmental pressures that shape their memory and cognitive abilities. Surprisingly, these findings echo our own experiences as humans, underscoring the interconnectedness of all living beings. As we delve deeper into the mysteries of cognition, from the micro to the macro scale, we uncover not only the shared evolutionary roots of neuroendocrine pathways but also the



Surprisingly, these findings echo our own experiences as humans, underscoring the interconnectedness of all living beings

profound influence of our environment on the workings of the mind.

Starting at the beginning of 2020 (the infamous COVID-19 year), I dived into the world of this tiny invertebrate organism: the great pond snail *Lymnaea stagnalis*. It was already a well-known system for neuroscience research. However, we started new avenues of investigation into the effects of different environmental stressors on *Lymnaea's* learning and

memory. The first eye-opener was the rediscovery of the Garcia effect, or the Sauce Béarnaise effect. Named after John Garcia, who identified it in the 1960s, this conditioned taste aversion is a rapid but long-term aversion to novel food or taste if it makes an individual sick, playing a crucial role in behavioral evolution. We all must have faced a similar kind of food aversion at some point in our lives when we went to a new restaurant and tried something for the first time and then fell sick, vowing never to go back to the restaurant again or try that food. While initially observed in rodents, its application to humans, particularly in medical contexts like chemotherapy side effects (i.e., patients avoiding specific foods after chemotherapy), has been significant since the 1970s. Surprisingly, recent research has extended this phenomenon beyond mammals, as evidenced by our discovery of a similar aversion response in the pond snail, challenging previous assumptions.

Bridging the gap between preclinical and clinical studies on bioactive compounds could lead to complementary use alongside traditional drugs, promoting a healthier future

Diet is an important lifestyle factor that impacts brain function and overall health. Flavonoids, abundant in fruits, vegetables, and beverages, offer a promising avenue for research into brain function enhancement. Some examples of flavonoids include compounds found in green tea, such as epicatechin, which have been found to improve attention and cognitive function. However, despite evidence on the role of flavonoids in cognition, anti-inflammation, and as an antioxidant, most bioactive compounds lack strong clinical research support. We found that flavonoids play a role in enhancing memory by upregulating the gene expression of memory-related pathways in the pond snail. In the future, we plan to understand genetic, social, and cultural factors that influence the use and effects of bioactive compounds globally. Bridging the gap between preclinical and clinical studies on bioactive compounds could lead to their complementary use alongside traditional drugs, promoting a healthier future.

Along with food choice, escaping predators and responding to fear are important components of survival. Fear is linked to various cognitive disorders like anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, which significantly impact personal and societal well-being. Understanding fear's evolutionary roots in vertebrate brains aids in comprehending its role in mental health and treatment. We have started to utilize invertebrate models like *Lymnaea* to help explore fear-induced changes in cognitive processes and molecular pathways like serotonin and dopamine regulation. By studying neuromodulators' effects on behavior and neuroplasticity, especially considering their conservation across species, invertebrates offer valuable insights into fear and anxiety research for future studies.

Recently, we have also uncovered how social isolation can inhibit memory formation in the pond snail, demonstrating the important effect that isolation can have on cognition for higher-order associative learning. This comes as no surprise when we review mammalian studies suggesting that prolonged social isolation can lead to increased levels of the stress hormone cortisol, serotonin turnover, and dopamine receptor sensitivity, which have been linked to impaired cognitive function, including difficulties with memory, attention, and decision-making. These findings are significant for understanding the impact of social isolation stress on humans, as similar neurotransmitter system alterations are linked to addictive, psychotic, and mood disorders. Social exclusion due to discrimination, quarantine measures during infectious disease outbreaks (as we observed during COVID-19), and sociodemographic changes particularly affect individuals of all age classes. This underscores the need for innovative research strategies in the future for social inclusion and outreach.

My current and future research interests lie in drawing parallels between animal behavior and physiology and human responses to dietary modifications, social isolation, stress, sleep, meditation practices, and lifestyle changes, offering a rich tapestry for exploration. By understanding how these factors influence cognition and learning, we can pave the way for innovative interventions to promote mental well-being and cognitive resilience in a diverse population. Collaborative efforts across disciplines, from biology to psychology to public health, will be essential in unraveling the intricate mechanisms underlying these phenomena. Through rigorous investigation and thoughtful integration of findings, we can strive towards a future where our understanding of stress and cognition not only enriches scientific knowledge but also fosters meaningful improvements in human health and quality of life.

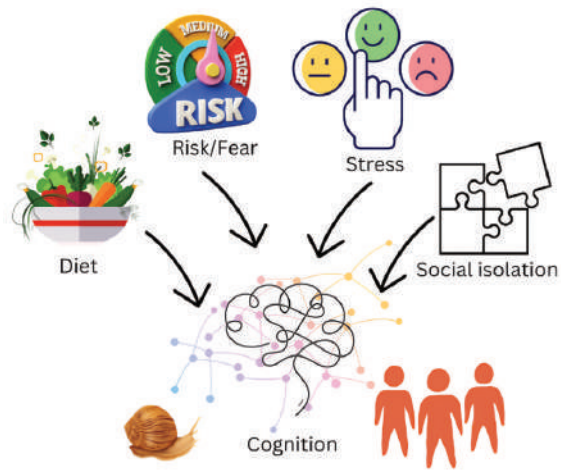


Figure: My research area encompasses the interrelationship of lifestyle factors and stress affecting cognition across animal and human models.

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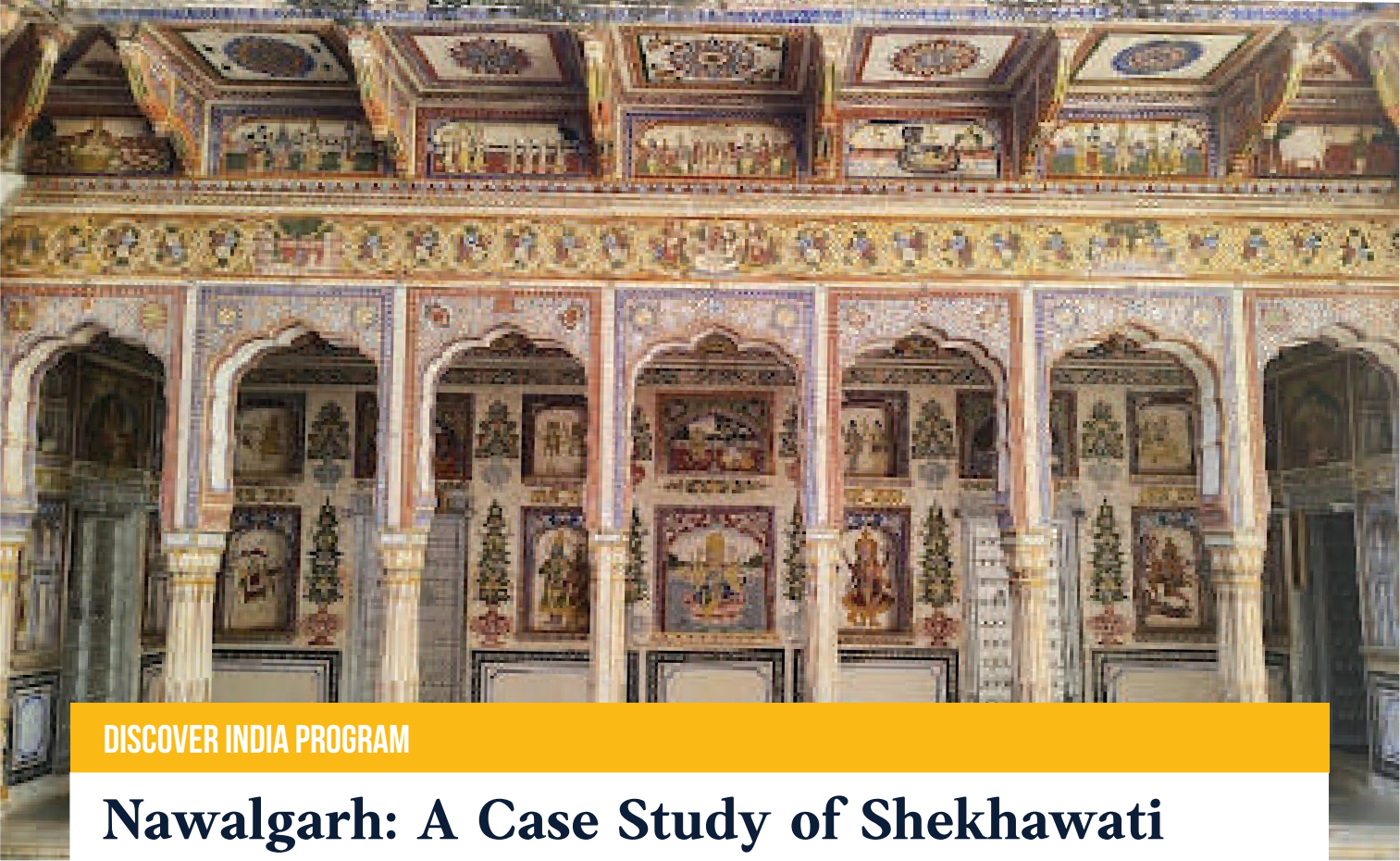
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DISCOVER INDIA PROGRAM



DISCOVER INDIA PROGRAM

Nawalgarh: A Case Study of Shekhawati Art and Architecture

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“Nawalgarh: A Case Study of Shekhawati Art and Architecture” was a student-led project as part of the flagship experiential program, the Discover India Program (DIP), at



FLAME University in 2023.

Nawalgarh, a relatively small settlement in the Shekhawati region of

Rajasthan, India, is well-known for its exquisite havelis and frescoes and their associated cultural heritage, such as art, music, dance, cuisine, architecture, and festivals. This DIP project foundationally examined how the cultural heritage of Nawalgarh has evolved over time and how it remains relevant in contemporary times. Exploring the links between the architectural and



cultural heritage of Nawalgarh, both historically and in contemporary times, was a core question that this DIP project focused on.

Havelis, forts, and frescoes epitomize this Shekhawati region of Rajasthan. Conventionally, they have been traditional styles of expression that are pervasive and show us how the style of art is an unmistakable expression of Mughal and European influences, which in turn influenced the look, feel, and design of this Shekhawati town. The economic structure of the region influenced the fact that havelis in Nawalgarh were inhabited by the thakurs, the elites, who were often invited to the Royal Court of Jaipur. Not surprisingly,



therefore, Nawalgarh offers various architectural cues of the Pink City integrated into their art and architecture, symbolizing how the latter could become cultural conduits of power and prestige in a larger society.

The project further brings in larger questions around spatial histories and cultural heritage. It also highlights that heritage is a multifaceted concept offering a plethora of meanings. An analysis offers insights into the past, contextualizes myths and folklore, and provides a rational base for various rituals. Historically, haveli owners lived together in shared complexes, leading to the differentiation of architectural styles and the adoption of fresco art. Shekhawat’s haveli architecture, while prevalent in most of the state of Rajasthan, stands out with its unique decoration and Mughal-inspired influences. The team visited several havelis in Nawalgarh, including Poddar Haveli, Morarka Haveli, Chauchariya Haveli, Bhakton ki Choti Haveli, Dangayach Haveli, Parasrampuria Haveli, Uttara Haveli, and Jalan Haveli. They also visited other architectural spaces, such as the Aath Haveli Complex, Sheesh Mahal, the Jaipuria Dharamsala, and nearby Kua wells, in their exploration of the Shekhawati architecture and art in Nawalgarh.

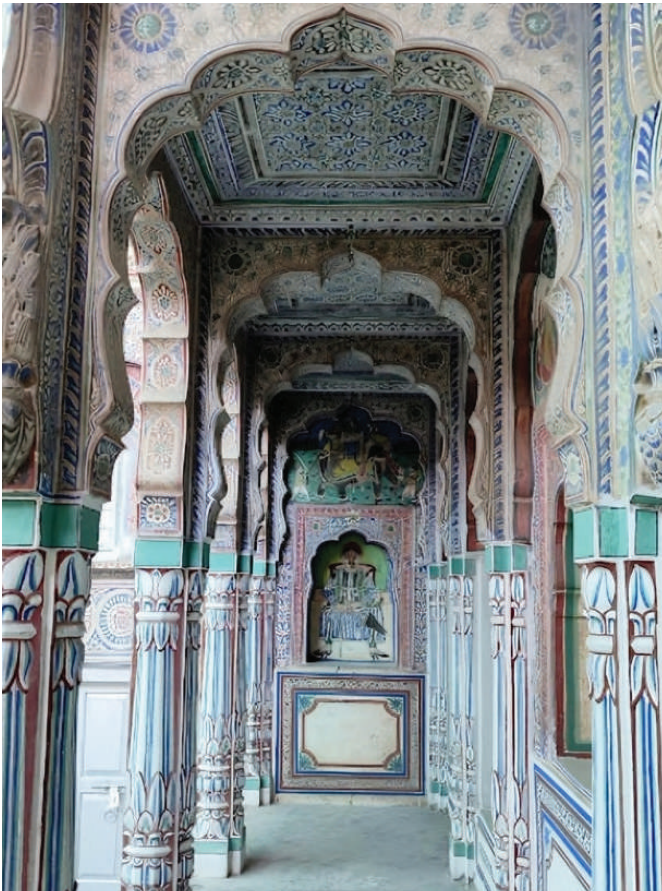
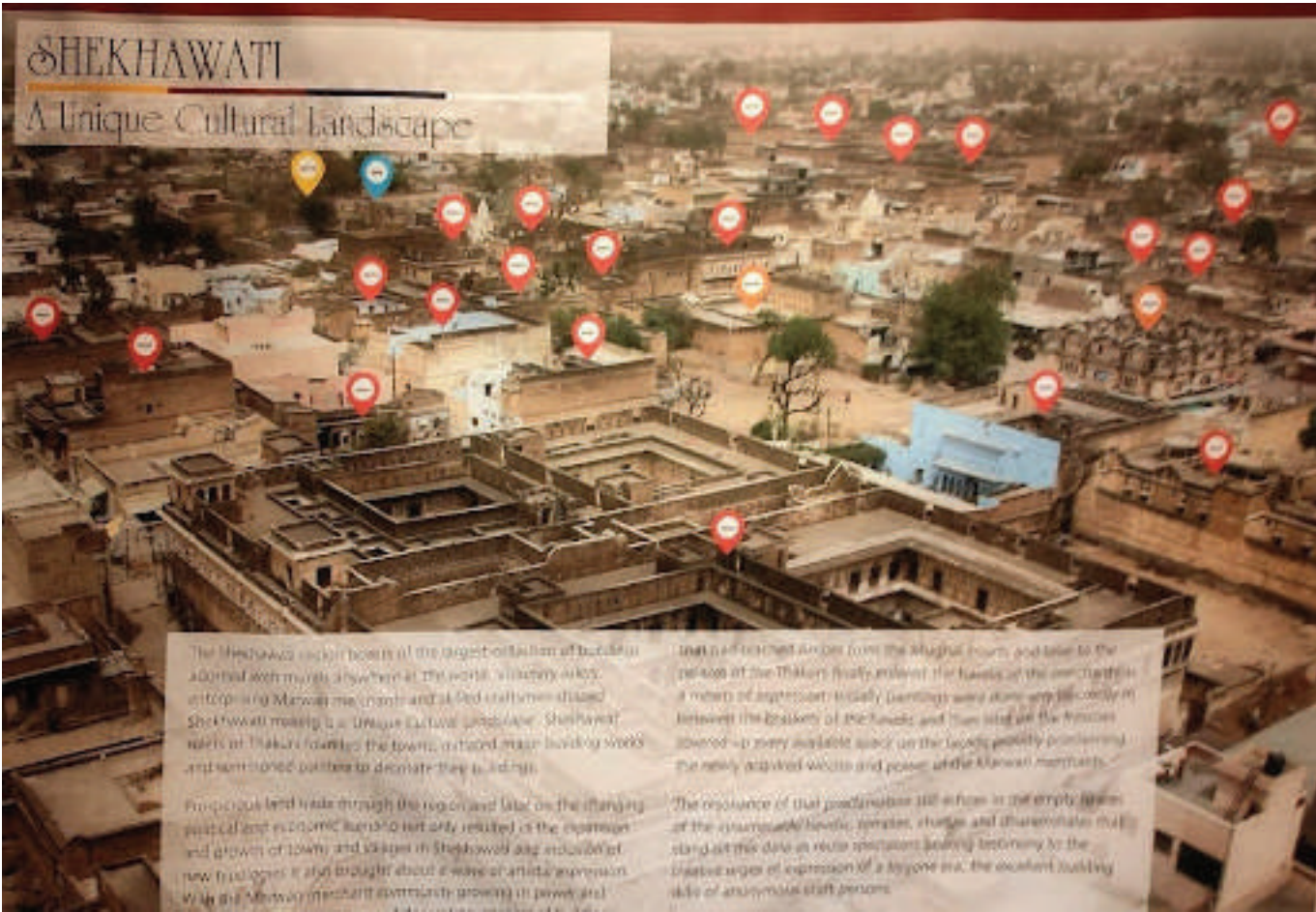
The term “haveli” is believed to have originated from the Persian language, to express an enclosed space. Over time, the expression has made its way into the Indian vernacular to mean a large townhouse or mansion inhabited by merchants, although it still stays true to its origins in terms of consisting of a large, enclosed space. Havelis in Nawalgarh share a common layout and patterns with essential components such as a mukhya dwar (or a large wooden door), a toran dwar (or the smaller inlaid door), the chabutra (or the seating area), two chowks (or courtyards), and the polis (or transitional spaces). The team also explored various architectural forms within the havelis, such as elaborately carved and painted pillars, corbelled roofs, and jaali screens.



Another hallmark of Nawalgarh that the DIP team examined are the frescoes: watercolor paintings on wet plaster typically done on a wall or ceiling, with the concept and style having their roots in Roman history. The frescoes in Nawalgarh range from purely decorative paintings that depict flowers, birds, and curlicues to more storytelling-like frescoes that depict everyday life, festivities, and religious practices integrating the Hindu pantheon (along with some suggestions of possible depictions of Christianity).

As is evident from the project, the identity of this Shekhawati region is enmeshed with its painted havelis and abundance of frescoes. This distinct feature has earned the region the title of ‘the world’s largest open art gallery’, due to the large number of frescoes gracing the area’s structures. In fact, and in spite of the epithet, art and architecture in Nawalgarh raise significant questions around heritage preservation, conservation, and restoration, and importantly, how heritage is valued by the citizens of Nawalgarh. These questions were examined by the DIP team to create a holistic picture that enables one to understand the myriad perspectives people have on heritage and how contemporary times

have changed these views, often advancing commercial profit ahead of heritage conservation. As the DIP fieldwork revealed, there is general ambivalence towards the restoration of the art and architecture in this region and, in general, the frescoes. Thus, Nawalgarh, with its bounty of cultural heritage in the form of art and architecture, rich frescoes, and an even richer history, is now at the crossroads, posing the most obvious question: what does the future hold with respect to the negotiation of active conservation and preservation projects? Will the history of the region be prioritized, or will its preservation be limited so much by profit-based decisions that this cultural legacy fades into oblivion?





DISCOVER INDIA PROGRAM

Losar and the Festivals that make the “MINI TIBET” in Mcleodgangj, Himachal Pradesh

SWATHI SURESH
Third-year undergraduate student

Our two-day train journey to McLeod Ganj was the prologue to our Losar adventure. We arrived eager to celebrate the Tibetan New Year and delve deeper into our research. Traveling to McLeod Ganj during Losar proved to be a rewarding and eye-opening experience. It was more than just a straightforward New Year's celebration; instead, it developed into a nuanced investigation of tradition, community, and cultural identity.

Here we were, in the midst of pre-Losar activities; the streets were bustling with activity as families reunited, homes were adorned with vibrant flags, and the air was heavy with the pleasant aroma of incense. In the best manner possible, it was a sensory overload. Each aspect of the celebration provided insights into Tibetan culture, from the colorful celebrations to the subtle changes in everyday



life. Through observing the ceremonies, interacting with the Tibetan community members, and documenting our findings, we were able to learn more about the symbolic significance of Losar.

Differences in participation between the generations were one of the most notable findings. The younger generation appeared less involved in the celebration and frequently participated out of familial responsibility rather than out of true curiosity or awareness, in contrast to the older generation, who showed a deep connection to the festival. The difficulty of maintaining cultural traditions in the face of changing social dynamics was brought to light by this generational divide.

Losar was a whirlwind all by itself. We maneuvered between crowds of people, their vibrant clothes a visual delight. As we explored, the meditative sound of the monks' repetitive chanting served as a constant reminder of the Losar's spiritual significance. Our hearts were warmed by the laughter and sharing of greetings with families who were exchanging "Khapse," a sweet rice

delicacy. The monasteries set up exhibits of butter sculptures and light butter lights as a way to offer blessings. It was not just an event but a physical embodiment of a tight-knit community.

Furthermore, our research uncovered the different Losar celebrations. Each community contributed its own traditions and customs to the festival, from the solemn ceremonies at the monastery to the vibrant local Tibetan festivals. However, we also observed a lack of understanding of the importance of Losar among tourists as well as the residents of Dharamshala, suggesting a gap between the celebration and its larger cultural background.

Our journey wasn't without its setbacks. Sometimes it was difficult to communicate due to the language barrier, especially with the elderly Tibetan monks. Our shared grins and gestures served as a bridge, an important reminder of cultural sensitivity and the beauty of connection in spite of obstacles. We were pushed to collaborate like never before by navigating a new culture, scheduling interviews on the spot, and attempting to gather Losar in a brief amount of time. These collaborative efforts helped our group develop a true sense of togetherness, in addition to refining our research abilities. We developed an appreciation for each other's individual skills, learned how to tackle problems creatively, and learned to rely on one another. Ultimately, the difficulties we encountered contributed significantly to the overall satisfaction of the trip.

But among the celebrations, we witnessed a grim reminder of the dislocation of the Tibetan population living in exile. Although Losar is a celebration of cultural identity, it also serves as an eye-opener to the challenges that the Tibetan people continue to face in obtaining recognition and freedom.

Our trip to McLeod Ganj to learn about Losar was more than just an academic endeavor—it was an unforgettable experience. This Tibetan New Year was enhanced by the unexpected findings, cultural differences, and challenges we faced as a team. Past the colorful celebrations, we saw a community that was deeply committed to maintaining its traditions. Losar inspired a desire in us for cultural respect and understanding by merging spiritual practices, artistic expression, and communal joy. Along with an extensive number of research discoveries, we also came away from McLeod Ganj with a renewed understanding of the importance of cooperation, the virtue of adaptability, and the eternal spirit of cultural history.

This article is based on the DIP group project mentored by Prof. Michael Hatcher, Assistant Professor - Philosophy and Critical Thinking, whose guidance and encouragement were invaluable throughout this journey. The students involved in this group were: Kaavya Mehta, Khushi Kapur, Lavishka Tulsian, Mahita Shah, Pragya Joshi, Rishika Mukherjee, Shaaivya Setia, Shreeya Mehra, Shreya Taluja, Shria Pathak, and Sunandini Dhody. Together, we navigated unfamiliar terrain and discovered the cultural tapestry of India.



Khumbars offering butter lamps to lord Buddha on the day of Losar



DIP group members (left to right)
Shria Pathak, Rishika Mukherjee, Khushi Kapur, Sunandini Dhody, Prof. Michael Hatcher, Kaavya Mehta, Swathi Suresh, Shreya Taluja, Mahita Shah, Pragya Joshi, Shreeya Mehra, Lavishka Tulsian and Shaaivya Setia.



Monk beating the drum and chanting traditional prayers on the second day of Losar



CENTRES AT FLAME UNIVERSITY



CENTRES AT FLAME UNIVERSITY

Centre for Case Development

ADITI JOSHI
Assistant Professor, Operations

HOSHIAR MAL
Assistant Professor, Operations

Cases are powerful tools that give glimpses into the real-life challenges that professionals and organizations face daily. Academics use cases extensively in their curriculum as they provide platforms to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Furthermore, they



enhance critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making. Cases often provide perspectives from various aspects of business, such as marketing, finance, operations, strategy, ethics, etc., and provide a learning environment where students can work in teams, analyze an issue, and

discuss appropriate solutions.

The Centre for Case Development at FLAME University aims to help students and professionals develop and showcase their skills in case development, case teaching, and case writing through various events on campus. One of the main events organized by the center is the Case Conference. Last year, in July 2023, the case conference was organized in association with ET Cases (an Economic Times venture), the International Journal of Global Business and Competitiveness (an ABDC-ranked journal), and Emerald Emerging Market Cases (an Emerald Group company, Scopus Indexed). Dr. Dinesh Shenoy, Dean, Faculty of Business, and Dr. Virender Sharma, Registrar, FLAME University, inaugurated the Case Conference. In his inaugural address, Dr. Shenoy emphasized the role of cases within management pedagogy and how they bring real-life complexities to the classroom, and he stressed FLAME's support for more case writing, thinking, and planning. The conference also included sessions conducted by Professor Kiran Momaya, SJMSOM, IIT Bombay, and Editor-in-Chief, International Journal of Global Business Competitiveness, where he

showed how individual areas of management could be integrated into the competitive domain and the manner in which faculty research can be published in IJGBC. Dr. Nagendra Chowdary, Head-Academic Content, TimesPro, BCCL Group Company, presented the manner



in which cases could be integrated with other pedagogical methods to enhance student learning.

Thirty cases contributed by fifty-nine authors affiliated with different institutions, universities, and firms across India were presented during the one-day case conference. The FLAME Case Writer Award (first) was given to Dr. Sanjay Kumar Mishra (School of Business, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Katra) for his case “Decoding the Source of Value for VNL, an R&D-focused Functional Beverage Company” with a cash prize of Rs. 10,000. The FLAME Case Writer Award (runner-up) was awarded to Dr. Varsha Shriram Nerlekar (School of Business, Dr. Vishwanath Karad MIT World Peace University, Pune), Dr. Meenal Kaustubh Pendse (Dr. Vishwanath Karad MIT World Peace University, Pune), and Ms. Gauri Kadam (Founder & CEO Kanher Spices, Aurangabad) for their case “The Dilemma of Kanher Spices: Product Diversification or Market Expansion?” with a cash prize of Rs. 7,000.

This year, the case centre has more events planned, such as a one-day workshop on case writing and case teaching, as well as a case-related competition for students. The Centre encourages students to participate in these events, which will help them apply their classroom knowledge to real-life problems and give a boost to their careers.



CENTRES AT FLAME UNIVERSITY

Centre for South and Southeast Asia Studies for a Jambudvipa-Led Future

CHAITANYA GIRI
Associate Professor - Environmental Sciences

The 21st century belongs to Jambudvipa, which the West recognizes as Asia. For a long time, we have identified ourselves by what others call us, depriving ourselves of a sense of our own identity and being apologetic about developing the same sense. When Europeans began exploring our part of the world, politically, economically, and for its natural formations and resources, they named us based on their gods. 'Asia', or as the Greeks name it, 'σῖα', is one of the 3000 daughters of the Titan Oceanus and his sister, Tethys. The planetary scientist in me quickly recognizes Tethys as the name of the ocean that once existed between the Indian tectonic plate and the Eurasian tectonic plate that collided 65 million years ago. The Western nomenclature for our oceans, our regions, our mountains, and our nation must change as Bharat moves further away from colonial shackles.



The FLAME Centre for

South and Southeast Asia Studies exists to carry out meticulous analysis of the developments in the region across disciplines, be it political, economic, scientific, or diplomatic analyses. There is no reason for Eurocentric names to continue, especially in the region we live in. It must be viewed as Greater Bharat, especially now that the world's 'center of gravity' has shifted to Jambudvipa, bringing opportunities and challenges that must be studied in depth and through the Bharatiya worldview.

Jambudvipa – which is known to us as Asia – is an enormous landmass, diverse in all aspects of attribution, and no initiative can study it in its absolute totality. From Bharat's strategic vantage within Jambudvipa, the region of immediate interest to us is Southern and South-eastern Asia. From Iran in the west to Papua in the east, the geographical extremities of these regions are contiguous with the Asian Heartland and the Indo-Pacific constructs. From the highest point – Sagarmatha – to the lowest point – Mariana Trench – in the world, these two regions are naturally mega-diverse, containing the planet's third pole, the hottest deserts, the densest tropical forests, and active volcanoes. On the anthropogenic front, the regions

will be home to the world's next centre of population, a crucial origin of manufactured goods, a passage for vital lanes of communication and trade, an enormous scientific innovation and invention hub, and a food basket and energy for the world.

The natural enormity of Jambudvipa and its massive and complex anthropogenic imprint on the world calls for a comprehensive research effort to bring out their strengths and address their challenges. Furthermore, the research needs to be anchored to a vital land bridge between the extremities of these two regions. Bharat is that political, economic, civilisational, and scientific land bridge, undoubtedly.

The current FLAME Centre for South and Southeast Asia Studies will evolve into a one-of-a-kind transdisciplinary hub of research and analysis on the myriad aspects of Jambudvipa. The Centre, true to the liberal ethos of FLAME University, would conjoin topics usually pigeonholed into disciplines. The Centre will be devoted to greater economic, scientific, and environmental research cooperation and partnership between the countries in Jambudvipa and, in this pursuit, will always offer research and analyses that are solution-driven. The FLAME Centre will ensure that its studies will be devoid of patronizing Orientalism.

A close-up photograph of two individuals in dark business suits shaking hands. Their hands are clasped in a firm grip over a silver laptop. The laptop is open on a light-colored wooden desk. In the background, a small potted plant with green leaves is visible, and the scene is softly lit, suggesting an office environment. A yellow rectangular box is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

NEW FACULTY AT FLAME



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