



# NIAS Newsletter



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

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## 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.](#)





*"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**

## NIAS Doctoral Programme

### UPDATES & NEWS

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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 REPORT ON THE DEC 2015 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY NIAS CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES PROGRAMME

NITHIN NAGARAJ

niasconsciousnessprogramme@gmail.com

**A** soulful rendering of the mantras by PhD scholar Naresh Keerthi from the Taittiriya Upanishad, taken from the Bhṛgu Vallī which is a philosophical dialogue on nature of reality between Sage Bhṛgu and his father Vāruni, marked the philosophical and an auspicious beginning of the International Conference on **Consciousness, Cognition and Culture: Implications for the 21<sup>st</sup> 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

... [Read Complete Report](#)

- [Lecture Videos](#)
- [Conference Photographs](#)
- [Nature INDIA Report](#)
- [Nature INDIA Conference Booklet](#)

## 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 (Chikkalbetta) 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 Bhattaraka 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  
*Amaravathi and the New Andhra: Globalising the Provincial?* December 23, 2015

#### 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 Kristle Nathan

Assistant Professor, NIAS  
*Urban Energy Poverty in Different States of India: A Household Level Analysis*, October 7, 2015

## Public Lectures & Events

#### Prof Smriti Srinivas

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. Vishveshwara, and Bangalore Little Theatre, December 22, 2015

#### Prof N Nagaraj

Formerly Principal Economist at ICRISAT  
*Sustainable Management of Water and Energy for Livelihood Security of Farmers in the Wake of Climate Change*, December 16, 2015

#### 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

#### Dr Nitin Pai, Director, The Takshashila Institution

**Prof S Chandrashekar** JRD Tata Chair Professor, NIAS  
*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**  
*Carnatic 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 Sudaesan

## International Conference

**International Conference on Consciousness, Cognition and Culture: Implications for the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 Sreekantan

## 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

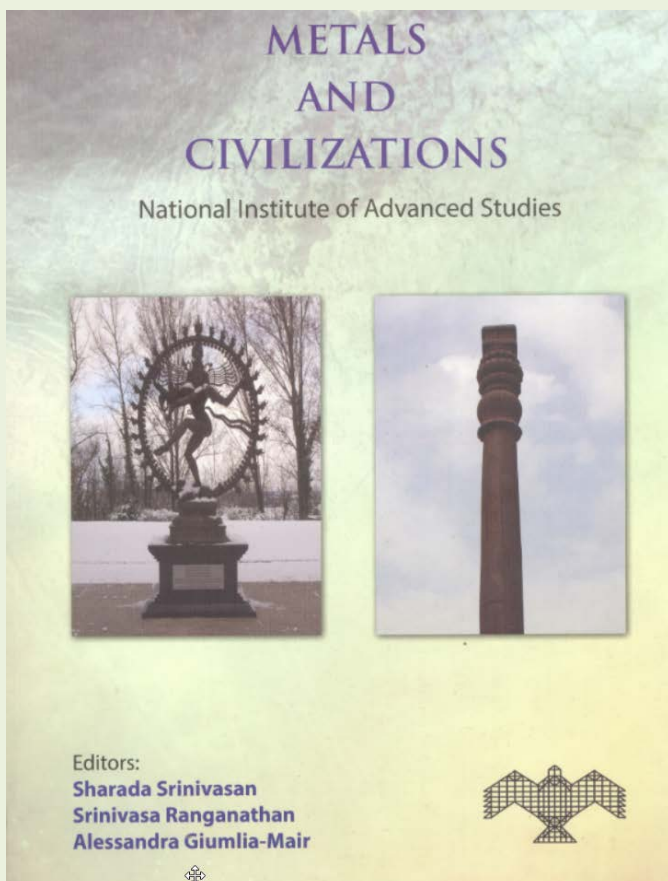
## Books from NIAS

A Tiwari, and Baldev Raj (2015). Reactions and Mechanisms in Thermal Analysis of Advanced Materials. Wiley.

Purnendu Ghosh and Baldev Raj eds. (2016). The Mind of an Engineer . New Delhi: Springer India.

Malavika Kapur (2016). Psychological perspective on childcare in Indian indigenous health systems. Springer India.

A Tiwari and Baldev.Raj (2015) Materials and Failures in MEMS and NEMS. Wiley



The book 'Metals and Civilizations', edited by Sharada Srinivasan, Srinivasa Ranganathan and Alessandra Giumlia 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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

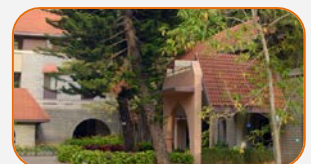
Origin: Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador

Common name: Pink trumpet, Basant rani, Pink Poui

*Photo Courtesy: Rajani MB*



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.





## Whirls of Words: The Writer's Space

EKTA GUPTA, NIAS

नदी

सोचती हूँ कि नदी की कैसी है ज़िंदगानी  
चलना उसकी फ़ितरत, रुकना कहाँ वो जानी।

सहमी सहमी ऊँची चोटियों से चलना वो सीखी,  
एक दूजे का हाथ थामे आगे बढ़ना वो सीखी,  
राह बड़ी थी, मुश्किलें खड़ी थी,  
चट्टानों से टकराई, ऊँची छलांगे भी लगाई,  
असंभव था बूंदों के लिए चट्टान को घिसपाना,  
उसने तो गहरी खाइयाँ भी बनाई।

नहीं पता की राह का दिल है पसीजा,  
या फिर उसने ही मस्त होके जीना सीखा,  
मानो सारी फ़िकरे कहीं छोड़ कर मद  
मस्त आगे बढ़ी है,  
अपनी ही मौज में, ठुमक-ठुमक के मैदानों में चली है।

राह मैली है कचैली है, नदी कितना कुछ झेली है,  
हौंसला काबिल-ए-तारीफ है, वो फिर भी न ठहरी है।  
चलना उसकी फ़ितरत, रुकना कहाँ वो जानी,

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.

नदी, तेरी कैसी ये ज़िंदगानी।

क्या उसको पता है उसकी राह कहाँ है

क्यों इतनी व्याकुल है, ना सोती है ना रास्ता खोत है।

मैंने देखा है, जितना वो मंज़िल के करीब है,

उतनी ही गहरी और गंभीर है।

शायद यही परिपक्वता की निशानी है।

चलना उसकी फ़ितरत, रुकना कहाँ वो जानी,

नदी तो धुनि है, अंततः सागर से है मिल जानी।

चलना उसकी फ़ितरत, रुकना कहाँ वो जानी,



Ganga: Photograph by Sangeetha Menon

Moments from  
NIAS

Photographs by  
Ekta Gupta



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## About NIAS



**Founder Chairman**  
JRD TATA

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



**Founder Director**  
RAJA RAMANNA

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



**Current Director**  
BALDEV RAJ

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