

# Americans Studying in India

By A. VENKATA NARAYANA and  
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The Study in India programs' customized courses on culture, religion, sociology and sciences draw students from the United States and other countries.

For the past 10 years there has been growth in the number of American and other western students coming to India, mostly for summer courses, or full semesters that give them credit at their home universities. An estimated 3,500 foreign students came to India this past academic year.

One was Lindsey Grossman, 21, who has just completed a five-month term at the University of Hyderabad, taking courses in Hindi, religion, politics and women's movements, earning academic credits toward her political science degree at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, one of the top 10 U.S. universities.

"I'm also a photography student, so I've been working on an independent documentary, recording the lives of women, comparing roles of urban women and women in villages," says Grossman, who hopes to become a U.S. diplomat. "I've been traveling on weekends doing fieldwork, meeting with women, talking to farmers," says Grossman. She spoke to SPAN by cell phone while traveling with fellow students to pick mangoes at a farm owned by her "Indian uncle," a friend of one of her American professors who helped connect her with volunteer groups for her documentary. "I've met with Indian police-women, service people, women in the city in competitive jobs. It's been interesting to see the spectrum of women in India," says Grossman, who had studied Hindi at Washington University and during a 2004 summer study course in Rajasthan. She intends to keep studying Hindi in the United States this summer.

Her choice of courses and the flexibility that allows her to travel, meet Indian people and observe different lifestyles is no accident. "The unique selling point of our program is the custom-made courses we offer to students on India's heritage and tradition," says Probal Dasgupta, director of the University of Hyderabad's Study India Program and head of the department of linguistics.

The Study India Program faculty do not expect the foreign students—15 of them at Hyderabad this past semester—to spend their entire time in the classroom or at the on-campus guesthouse

they share, but encourage them to go out and learn first-hand. The program specializes in arts and humanities courses such as dance, musical instruments, grassroots democracy, gender studies, women's empowerment, the role of religion and caste in society and rural education.

"The objective of this course is to provide some basic ethnographic skills to students and give them an opportunity to apply those skills to study different aspects of Indian society. The course helps students observe and understand the new cultural milieu," says Aparna Rayaprol, a reader in the department of sociology who coordinates the university's Study India Program.

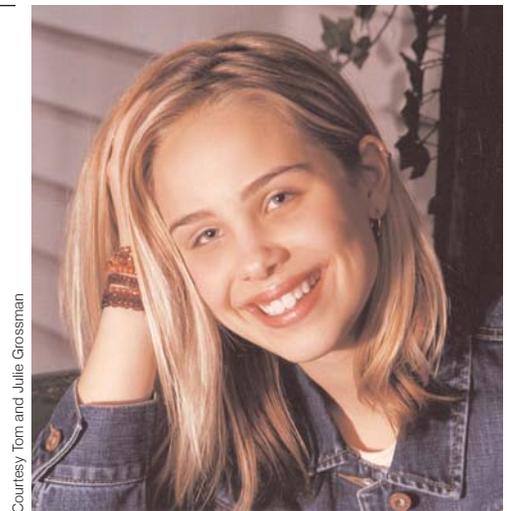
"We are not taking any help from the government in inviting students from abroad. We have been administering the program after reaching an agreement with individual universities or institutions and signing memorandums of understanding with them," says Prakash Sarangi, a political science professor who is joint director of the program. He says the program began in 1998 with nine students from the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, and 200 American students have participated since then.

The University of Hyderabad was one of six universities that established Study in India programs when the University Grants Commission, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, began encouraging them in the late 1990s to try to attract students from western countries. There are 65 Indian universities that now have such programs listed on the Web site ([www.ugc.ac.in/studyindia](http://www.ugc.ac.in/studyindia)).

American students find out about the programs in different

*Right: Lindsey Grossman of Washington University completed a five-month term at Hyderabad in May.*

*Far right: Jeremy Jones (left) of Southern Connecticut University in New Haven, a Hindi student rehearses music with Rajan Dharni, from the University of California, Los Angeles.*



Courtesy Tom and Julie Grossman



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ways. Grossman wanted to return to India to study, but needed a reliable program that would allow her to earn course credit at her home university. “In many study programs in South Asia, students live in households and shift all over the place. However, I wanted a real university setting this time,” said Grossman, who had studied history during the summer of 2004 in a village outside Chittorgarh in Rajasthan.

She knew about the Council on International Educational Exchange, which since 1947 has been facilitating international study programs for students, teachers and college administrators. “They have programs all over the world and they have a link-up with the University of Hyderabad,” says Grossman. In fact, anyone

*Julia Heiter (left) from the University of California, Los Angeles, and Amy Motichek from Loyola University in New Orleans learned kathak in the University of Hyderabad’s Study India Program.*

who goes to the Web site ([www.ciee.org](http://www.ciee.org)) and types in “study” and “India” will get only one option: the University of Hyderabad.

One alumni of the Hyderabad program, Rajan Dharni, a political science student from the University of California, Los Angeles, had a vague idea about India, which he had heard from his parents. “Although I studied much about India prior to my trip, this whole experience has turned out to be different from what I expected,” said Dharni, who was born in the United States to first generation Indian American medical doctors. During his term at Hyderabad last fall, he focused on the role of India in world affairs, and hopes for a career in an international organization or a corporation. He also resumed his study of the *tabla*, which he had wanted to learn since childhood.

Amy Motichek of Loyola University in New Orleans studied *kathak* under the guidance of Anuradha Jonnalagadda, dean of Hyderabad University’s Sarojini Naidu School of Performing Arts, Fine Arts and Communications. Motichek was able to perform at solo concerts on campus last September. “Indian classical dance has helped me in a million different ways because it is not just about body movement but about a combination of song, music, eye, feet and hand coordination that play an important role,” she says.

Grossman most enjoyed two courses taught by the same professor, Manjari Katju, describing her as “a strong feminist, a very secular, accepting person, very well spoken.”

One course was Women’s Movements in Modern India and



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Post-Colonial India. "I'm writing my senior thesis on political rights of women, so that class helps me, and the class on religion and politics was really good," says Grossman. She made friends with Indian students as well as her fellow foreigners. "Our work level wasn't so intense so we went out a whole lot in Hyderabad, made a lot of friends, went to pubs, restaurants, cafés, movies. We were very social, and we traveled a lot as well in South India," she says. "A lot of people make fun of me if they hear me speaking Hindi. They are surprised it comes out of a six-foot tall blonde."

At home, she says, more of her weekends were spent writing papers and doing other homework. "The competitive nature at Hyderabad is less in my opinion, than at Washington University. Overall, I found that the grading was a lot easier. But the sciences at the university are really strong. I have a friend who took a computer science class and it was really difficult. But that reflects India; the sciences are more stressed, the humanities are seen as not valuable."

Jeremy Jones, a biology and global studies major at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, studied sitar and Hindi at the University of Hyderabad last year. "We don't have Asian or Indian studies at our university, so I took this summer program," he says. "As I want to work abroad, having experience and knowledge of another country and its culture will help my career."

"Initially, it was hard to make him understand Hindi, but within three months he has begun speaking and writing a few sentences," said Mamta Saini, his teacher. Jones stayed on for a second semester.

After turning in her course papers, 10 pages for her religion in politics class and four pages in Hindi, Grossman traveled to Rajasthan and did more research in New Delhi before heading home. "My experience was very well rounded and complete," she says. "I worked with an NGO, spent weekends in villages, also spent time with the upper class in restaurants and million-dollar mansions. I really got a feeling for India's full economic range and I think it reflects a lot about India right now. That's what I wanted, to gain a better understanding of India as a country, and I did that." □

# World Press Freedom Remembering the Costs

By MADHURI SEHGAL

**Indian filmmaker Ramesh Sharma's documentary on the life and death of Mumbai-based reporter Daniel Pearl reminds viewers why journalists go in harm's way—to find and tell the truth.**



Courtesy Daniel Pearl Foundation

Unfortunately, it's no longer an unusual image: a photograph or video showing a journalist with a gun to his or her head, the gunman unseen or masked. The Committee to Protect Journalists, an independent, nonprofit organization that promotes press freedom worldwide, reports that 13 journalists—including Prahlad Goala of the *Asomiya Khabar* in Assam—had been killed in 2006 as of May 3, World Press Freedom Day. They either died in the line of duty or were deliberately targeted for assassination because of their reporting or their affiliation with a news organization.

Among their number in 2002 was Daniel Pearl, the Mumbai bureau chief for *The Wall Street Journal*. While searching for the truth about connections and monetary support between the 9/11 hijackers; Richard Reid, who tried to set off a shoe-bomb on a Paris-Miami flight; and South Asian terrorists, Pearl was kidnapped in Karachi, Pakistan, murdered and beheaded. Omar Sheikh, a British citizen, was among several men arrested, tried and sentenced for the crimes.

*The Journalist and the Jihadi: The Murder of Daniel Pearl*, Ramesh Sharma's 90-minute documentary that tracks the parallel lives of Pearl and Sheikh, premiered at a special screening during New York's Tribeca Film Festival that ended May 7 and was also scheduled for viewing at the Cannes Film Festival this May.

India's Moving Picture Company, promoted by Sharma, teamed up with U.S.-based HBO Documentary Films, London-based Ahmed Jamal's First Take and Anant Singh's company, Distant Horizon, to make the documentary, narrated by CNN journalist Christiane Amanpour, a board member of the Daniel Pearl Foundation. HBO will air the documentary in the United States near October 10, Pearl's birth anniversary, but there are no firm plans for an Indian showing.

"The film is not a piece of cinema. Rather it is a story of a great journalist of our times that needed to be told," says Sharma, who co-directed with Jamal. "Two years back, while researching on another film, I came across the fascinating story of Pearl

and Sheikh. Meanwhile, in London, I met Ahmed Jamal, who wanted to make a film on Sheikh. So we decided to put these stories together.

"Pearl's and Sheikh's lives were very similar in many ways," he says. "They were highly educated individuals from privileged backgrounds. The two men saw the world differently, but with similar passion and commitment. Pearl was a humanist, who spent most of his career reporting from Islamic countries to promote cross-cultural understanding. Sheikh...was a militant who ultimately chose a deeply violent path to express his views. After 9/11, their paths crossed in Pakistan, with tragic consequences," Sharma explains.

Mourning Pearl's death in 2002, the Committee to Protect Journalists said: "He believed firmly in the truth, and he died searching for it." □