

# Changing the World: Community, Science and Engagement with Big History

5<sup>th</sup> Global Conference of the International Big History Association & Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts

3-6 August, 2020



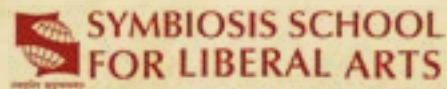
SSLA at Symbiosis International University, Viman Nagar New Campus, Autumn 2019

Big History seeks to understand the integrated history of the cosmos, Earth, life and humanity, using the best available empirical evidence and scholarly methods.



International Big History Association

The International Big History Association's Fifth Global Conference, in collaboration with Symbiosis International University, will be held in the summer of 2020 in India. Its theme focuses on *Changing the World: Community, Science and Engagement with Big History*. The IBHA has held conferences on meaning, teaching and research, and so now will address issues of community and change around our planet. In other words: How can big history help us in its application to world issues?



India is a powerhouse of innovative development, with cultural and intellectual traditions reaching back thousands of years. Symbiosis is an embodiment of this heritage and enterprise, a truly modern synthesis. Situated along the Mula-Mutha River, its six campuses in the city of Pune lie on the Deccan Plateau, 600 meters above the Arabian Sea.

Founded in 1971, Symbiosis was begun with the intent of providing a 'home away from home' for African and Asian students studying in India.



First Big History class at SSLA, Spring 2018

Its students come from more than 85 countries, so, appropriately, its Sanskrit motto is वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् - Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - 'The World is One Family'. A not-for-profit university, Symbiosis serves almost 30,000 students.

Our conference will be co-sponsored with the Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts (SSLA), one of the university's most innovative programmes.

Launched in 2011, SSLA was the first liberal arts school in an Indian university and remains the only four-year degree and honours programme. SSLA is home to the India Association for Big History, which formed in 2016. Two years later, the first course in Big History in South Asia began at SSLA, growing out of its Anthropology Department.

Today, the course is co-taught as 'Humanity and Big History: Our Challenge for Survival' by an historian and a physicist, and is required for all third-year students. In March 2018, SSLA sponsored the First Annual Conference of Interdisciplinarity and Big History in co-operation with the Asian Big History Association, J.F. Oberlin University (Tokyo), and the IBHA.

Other sponsors of the conference include the Asian Big History Association, the Indian Association for Big History, the Eurasian Centre for Megahistory & System Forecasting, and the seminar organizations.

## Acommodations

Symbiosis-approved guesthouses near the SSLA campus will be available at reasonable rates. Double-occupancy rooms will run at ₹2000 (~\$30) a night, with three meals a day available at the Symbiosis dining hall for an additional ₹2000 per

day. Rickshaws as well as cabs are available, and Symbiosis will provide a bus at the start and end of each day.

## Schedule

Attendees are invited to arrive during the weekend of August 1st and 2nd. The Pune International Airport is less than a kilometer from the campus. You can check into your room, then relax and socialize with friends and colleagues. On Sunday mid-day, we have arranged for a tour of the city for ₹1800 (~\$26), followed by tea and a presentation orienting you to India.

The conference panels will begin Monday morning and run to Wednesday afternoon, August 3rd through 5th. On Monday and Tuesday evenings, there will be interactive plenary panel presentations and dinner. On Wednesday afternoon and evening, there will be a festival on the theme of the engaged creativity of Asia. On Thursday morning, August 6th, we will have an IBHA members assembly.

After the members meeting on Thursday morning, we will break into groups that will fly to different parts of India for theme-based interactions. The three-day seminars that we have arranged thus far with host organizations are:

- **Mumbai, Maharashtra:** 'Science and Changing Society'. Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education, Tata Institute for Fundamental Research <[www.hbcse.tifr.res.in](http://www.hbcse.tifr.res.in)>
- **Bhuj, Kutch, Gujarat:** 'Landscape and Adapting Heritage'. Kachchh Heritage Arts Music Information Resources | Khamir <[www.khamir.org](http://www.khamir.org)>



Discussion at the Fireflies Intercultural Centre, Dinnepalya, Karnataka, June 2018



Indian big historians and community activists, Spring 2018

- **Patna, Bihar:** 'Agrarian Life and Renewal.' Tarumitra: Friends of Trees <[www.tarumitra.org](http://www.tarumitra.org)>
- **Guwahati, Assam:** 'Indigenous-Tribal Heritage and Innovation'. All-India Indigenous-Tribal Federation <<https://tinyurl.com/AITF-org>>
- **Bengaluru, Karnataka:** 'Eco-Spirituality and New Global Needs,' Fireflies Intercultural Centre <[www.pipaltree.org.in](http://www.pipaltree.org.in)>
- **Shimla, Himachal Pradesh:** 'Gender, Environment and Social Transformation'. Jan Abhiyan Sanstha (JAS) [Society for People's Initiatives] <[www.jasindia.org](http://www.jasindia.org)>

The seminars will take place August 7th-9th. Each location can accommodate up to about 30 participants. Attendees will stay at a local organization that is active in local change-making and will learn about their activities, including visits to their field stations. There will also be visits to heritage sites and trekking in ecological areas, in addition to panel presentations by conference and community members.

The seminars are located near major cities, so participants can fly home from there on August 10th, or proceed to other destinations. Travel into and out of India as well as between Indian cities is reasonably priced, especially if reservations are made well in advance. We will provide links to experienced travel agents.

Our Ecology Committee will make an energy audit and design projects to mitigate conference impacts. These activities might include plantation of indigenous flora and waterway enhancement; they will continue as community-service projects. There also will be child care at the conference, with activities related to big history and community. In addition, we will provide a guidebook about India, with information on visas, inoculations and other essential knowledge.

We must begin reserving rooms and meals, arranging transportation, and allocating slots for the excursions. So, please go to <[bighistory.org](http://bighistory.org)> and fill out the form to let us know if you would like 1) SSLA arranged housing or meals, 2) the tour of Pune, and 3) which seminar you might like to attend. If you plan to submit a paper, let us know your paper's title and provide a draft abstract, as the conference manual is in development. You do not have to pay for these items until you arrive in India, but by filling the forms now, it will help us plan for your visit with us!

We look forward to seeing you at the 2020 Big History Conference in Maharashtra!

Warm wishes,

*Barry, Richa, Oishika & Sulakshana*  
Organizers of the 2020 Conference

Barry Rodrigue, Ph.D.  
SSLA Professor, Anthropology  
IBHA International Coordinator  
<[rodrigue@archinets.org](mailto:rodrigue@archinets.org)>

Richa Minocha, Ph.D.  
SSLA Associate Professor  
Gender Studies & Ecology  
<[richa.minocha@ssla.edu.in](mailto:richa.minocha@ssla.edu.in)>

Oishika Neogi  
SSLA Research Assistant  
International Relations/Law  
<[oishika.neogi@gmail.com](mailto:oishika.neogi@gmail.com)>

Sulakshana Sen, Ph.D. (ABD)  
Nriyangan Academy of  
Dance, Drama & Music  
Kolkata, West Bengal, India  
<[sulakshanasen@yahoo.co.in](mailto:sulakshanasen@yahoo.co.in)>

Conveners: Anita Patankar, Ph.D., Director | Shweta Sinha Deshpande, Ph.D., Deputy Director

Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts, Symbiosis International [Deemed University] | Pune, Maharashtra, India | <[www.ssla.edu.in](http://www.ssla.edu.in)>

# Optional Post-Conference Seminars



**JAS - Shimla, Himachal Pradesh**  
*Gender, Environment and Social Transformation*  
<[www.jasindia.org](http://www.jasindia.org)>



**AITF - Guwahati, Assam**  
*Indigenous-Tribal Heritage and Innovation*  
<<https://tinyurl.com/AITF-org>>



**Tarumitra - Patna, Bihar**  
*Agrarian Life and Renewal*  
<[www.tarumitra.org](http://www.tarumitra.org)>



**Khamir - Bhuja, Kutch, Gujarat**  
*Landscape and Adapting Heritage*  
<[www.khamir.org](http://www.khamir.org)>



**Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education / TIFR - Mumbai, Maharashtra**  
*Science & Changing Society*  
<[www.hbcse.tifr.res.in](http://www.hbcse.tifr.res.in)>



**Fireflies-Bengaluru, Karnataka**  
*Eco-Spirituality and New Global Needs*  
<[www.pipaltree.org.in](http://www.pipaltree.org.in)>