

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

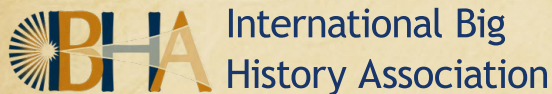
5th Global Conference of the International Big History Association & Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts

1-5 August, 2021



SSLA at Symbiosis International University, Viman Nagar New Campus

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



The International Big History Association's Fifth Global Conference, in collaboration with Symbiosis International University, will be held in the summer of 2021 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?



**SYMBIOSIS SCHOOL
FOR LIBERAL ARTS**

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 in the Western Ghats, 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

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 institute 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 university 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 Eurasian Center for Megahistory & System Forecasting and the India Association for Big History. We will also be hosting a digital component of the conference for those who cannot attend in person.

Accommodations

Symbiosis-approved guesthouses near the SSLA campus will be available at reasonable rates. Double-occupancy rooms will run about ₹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

People will arrive on the weekend of July 30th. 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 run from August 2nd through 5th. Throughout the conference, there will be interactive plenary panel presentations, lively conversation time, warm tea and good Indian meals. On Wednesday afternoon and evening, there will be a festival on the theme of the engaged creativity

of Asia. On Thursday morning, August 5th, we will have an IBHA /ABHA members assembly.

After the members meeting on Thursday morning, attendees can go their own way or join one of three post-conference activities. For those who do not want to travel too far, we will arrange a deeper tour of Pune, a bus tour to the Ajanta / Ellora caves (UNESCO World Heritage Sites), and to Mumbai. For the more adventurous, we are setting up a train trip to Kachchh with visits to earthquake, dinosaur and protohistoric field sites as well as to museums and village craft centres. In addition, we are arranging a natural history and cultural expedition to Nepal, which will be reached by air via Kathmandu.

Please see the last page with some details of these post-conference events. At each event we will have seminars and presentations, including on the bus and train trips! These tours will vary in length, depending on the tour, but will be about five days long.

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.



Kids in Kachchh village at wool trade market



Chitwan wildlife reserve, Nepal

The seminars are located near major cities, so participants can fly home from there, 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 will 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> 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 2021 Big History Conference in Maharashtra!

Warm wishes,

Barry, Richa, Oishika & Sulakshana

Organizers of the 2021 Conference

Barry Rodrigue, Ph.D.
SSLA Professor, Anthropology
IBHA International Coordinator
<rodrigue@archinets.org>

Richa Minocha, Ph.D.
SSLA Associate Professor
Gender Studies & Ecology
<richa.minocha@ssla.edu.in>

Oishika Neogi
Research Fellow, Delhi, India,
and The New School,
New York City, USA
<oishika.neogi@gmail.com>

Sulakshana Sen, Ph.D.
Nrityangan Academy of
Dance, Drama & Music
Kolkata, West Bengal, India
<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>

India Big History Events/Post-Conference

circa 6-11 August, 2021



A) Kachchh

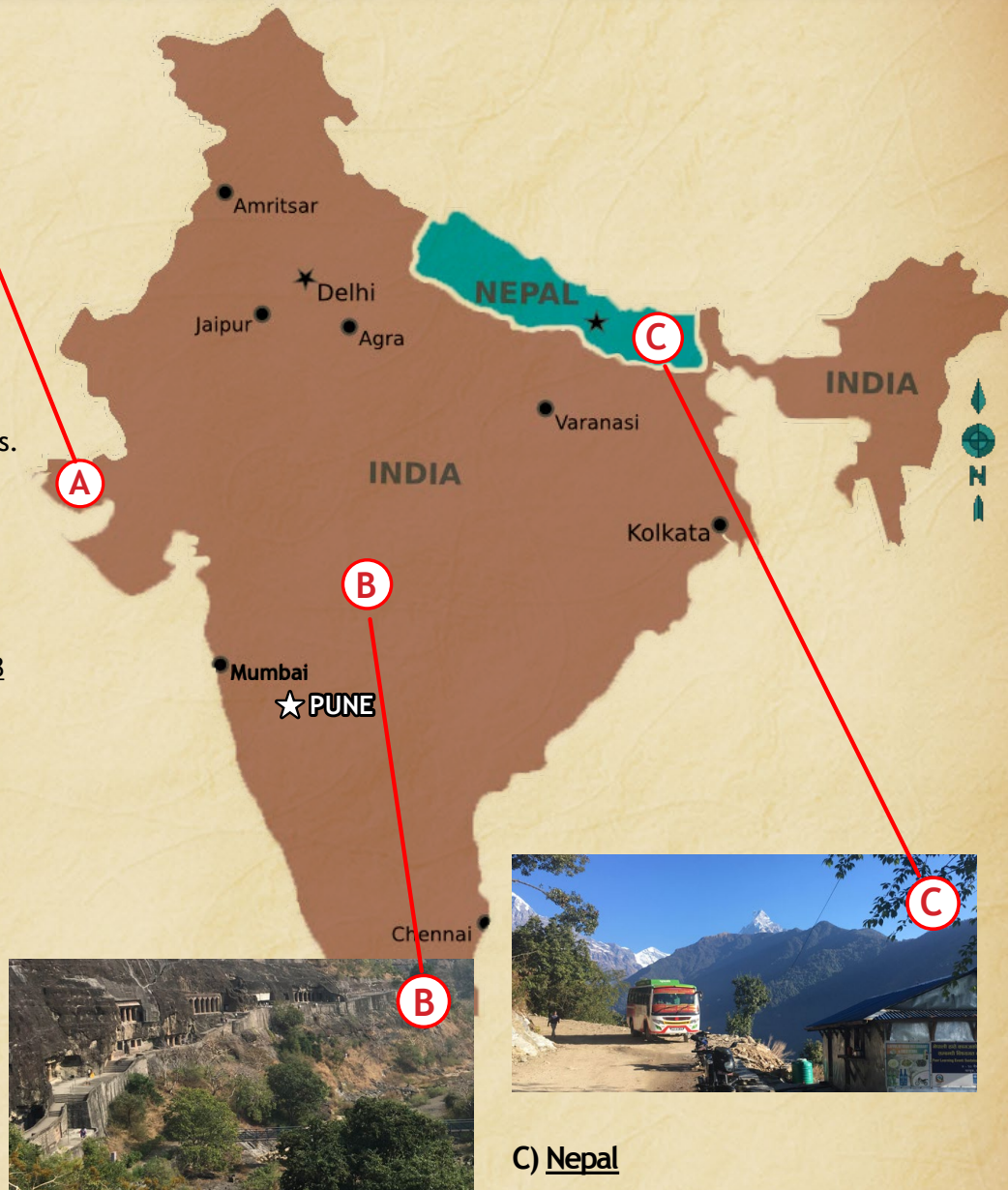
This trip will be by train to Kachchh with visits to natural history, dinosaur, and archaeological sites as well as visits to museums and village craft production sites.

- Dholavira, Indus Civilization: <https://www.livehistoryindia.com/amazing-india/2017/08/17/dholavira-the-story-of-a-civilization->
- SmritiVan Earthquake Memorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TlPp69By08>
- Indroda Dinosaur and Fossil Park: <https://gandhinagar.nic.in/tourist-place/indroda-dinosaur-and-fossil-park/>
- Kachchh Heritage Arts Music Information Resources (KHAMIR): www.khamir.org with a discussion on 'Landscape and Adapting Heritage'.
- Inayat Agate, Khambhat, Gujarat Harappan bead manufacture by the family of Anwar Husain Shaikh <https://inayatagate.business.site/> https://www.harappa.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Kenoyer1996_Antique%20Bead%20and%20Ornament%20Replicas%20from%20South%20As.pdf



B) Maharashtra

This event will provide a deeper visit in Pune, a bus tour to the Ajanta / Ellora caves - UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and a visit to the diversity of Mumbai.



- Mughal monument, Bibi Ka Maqbara: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0H-qxHe4BxrU>
- UNESCO Buddhist Heritage: Ajanta and Ellora Caves, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/242/> and <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/243/>
- History of Mumbai: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVt0EwZMwpA>
- Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education, Tata Institute for Fundamental Research www.hbcse.tifr.res.in with a discussion on 'Science and Changing Society'.



C) Nepal

We are arranging a natural history and cultural expedition to Nepal, which will be reached by air via Kathmandu. The expedition will be led by Dr. Hem Sagar Baral, one of Nepal's leading conservationists and a founder of the NGO, Himalayan Nature <https://www.himalayannature.org/>

- Chitwan National Park: <https://www.chitwannationalpark.gov.np/>
- Tharu traditional knowledge: <https://www.indigenousvoice.com/en/indigenous-peoples/21/tharu.html>
- UNESCO Buddhist heritage: Lumbini <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/666/>