

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

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

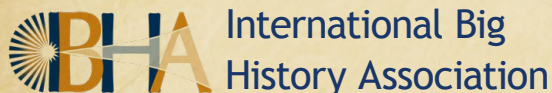
1-5 August, 2021



SSLA at Symbiosis International University, Viman Nagar New Campus

Photograph by Barry Rodrigue

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?



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



Ajanta Caves, Aurangabad district, Maharashtra

Photograph by Barry Rodrigue

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.

Digital Conference

Given the global Covid pandemic, we have organized this conference as a digital event on the innovative Airmeeet event platform, managed by our award-winning IT event coordinator, Shawn Kimball.



Kids in Kachchh village at wool trade market

Photograph by Barry Rodrigue



Chitwan wildlife reserve, Nepal

Photograph by Barry Rodrigue

Schedule

The conference and its presentations will run from August 1st to 5th. Throughout the conference, there will be interactive panels with question & answer and discussion times, along with lively conversations during break-out sessions. On Wednesday afternoon there will be a festival on the theme of engaged creativity.

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.

Please go to <bighistory.org> and register for the conference and submit an abstract, if you plan to present a paper.

We look forward to seeing you at the 2021 Big History Conference in Maharashtra!

Warm wishes,

Barry, Richa, Vedanti, Oishika & Sulakshana

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