

Jamil Khoury
Artistic Director

Malik Gillani
Executive Director



The World Premiere
of
Merchant on Venice
By Shishir Kurup

Directed by Stuart Carden

Featuring:

Anish Jethmalani*, Gerardo Cardenas, Kamal Hans, Vincent P. Mahler,
Andy Nagraj, Marvin Quihada, Sadieh Rifai, Amira Sabbagh,
Madrid St. Angelo, Pranidhi Varshney and Tariq Vasudeva

<i>Producers</i>	Malik Gillani and Jamil Khoury
<i>Production Manager</i>	Alexandra Herryman
<i>Scenic Designer</i>	Lee Keenan
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Rebecca A. Barrett
<i>Sound Designer & Original Music</i>	Robert Steel
<i>Costume Designer</i>	Carol J. Blanchard
<i>Props Designer</i>	Daniel Pellant
<i>Casting</i>	Adam Silver, Silver Casting Ltd.
<i>Publicity Consultant</i>	Cathy Taylor Public Relations
<i>Assistant Director</i>	Jamie Abelson
<i>Production Dramaturg</i>	Lavina Jadhvani
<i>Stage Manager</i>	Benjamin D. Herman
<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i>	Amber Mack
<i>Technical Director</i>	Charles Ziggy Olson
<i>Choreographer</i>	Alka Nayyar
<i>Dialect Coach</i>	Eva Breneman

Merchant on Venice was developed at the
Lark Play Development Center, New York City

"Sacrifice" Music & Lyrics by Shishir Kurup, musical arrangement by Robert Steel

www.srtp.org

This production generously supported by

TheJoyceFoundation

Silk Road Theatre Project is proud to be affiliated with



CAST - in order of appearance

Devendra	Kamal Hans
Yogananda/Murali/Butcher	Madrid St. Angelo
Shivanandra/Rasik/The Pujari	Vincent P. Mahler
Jitendra	Andy Nagraj
Armando	Gerardo Cardenas
Amithaba	Marvin Quihada
Pushpa	Pranidhi Varshney
Kavita	Amira Sabbagh
Sharuk	Anish Jethmalani*
Tooranpoi/S.A.B.U. Rep/Toufiq/Aravind	Tariq Vasudeva
Noorani	Sadieh Rifai

UNDERSTUDIES - in alphabetical order

Noorani	Dipika Cherala
Pushpa/Kavita	Minita Gandhi
Tooranpoi/S.A.B.U. Rep/Toufiq/Aravind	Collin Tongue
Shiva/Yoga/Devendra	Arvin Jalandoon
Sharuk	Vincent P. Mahler
Armando/Amithaba/Jitendra	Julian Martinez

* Denotes member of Actor's Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director	Stuart Carden
Producers	Malik Gillani and Jamil Khoury
Production Manager	Alexandra Herryman
Scenic Designer	Lee Keenan
Lighting Designer	Rebecca A. Barrett
Sound Designer & Original Music	Robert Steel
Costume Designer	Carol J. Blanchard
Props Designer	Daniel Pellant
Casting	Adam Silver, Silver Casting Ltd.
Publicity Consultant	Cathy Taylor Public Relations
Choreographer	Alka Nayyar
Assistant Production Manager	Isaac Sernoffsky
Production Dramaturg	Lavina Jadhvani
Stage Manager	Benjamin D. Herman
Assistant Stage Manager	Amber Mack
Poster Art Illustrator	Andrew Skwish
Video Production Services	The Stage Channel
Technical Director	Charles Ziggy Olson
Carpenter	Adam Cobb
Assistant to Costume Designer	Izumi Inaba
Wardrobe Supervisor	Cara M. Cusano
House Manager	Christine Nelson
Box Office Manager	Todd Lauterbach
The Saints Coordinator	Richard Goerne
Community Outreach Coordinators	Kant Desai, Faruk Menguc, Megha Ralapati
Dialect Coach	Eva Breneman
Production Intern	Daniel Katz
Management Intern	Laura Klauser

A Perfect Prelude to a Great Performance

CATCH thirty five

SEAFOOD & PREMIUM STEAKS

35 W.Wacker · Chicago · 312-346-3500

www.catch35.com

...
LLOYD'S
CHICAGO

I South Wacker (at Madison)

312-407-6900

LLOYDSCHICAGO.COM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Frank Buttitta	President	
Laura Meyer	Secretary	
Brent Allen	Karen Atwood	Ken Karlson
Mariam Alsikafi	Sheila J. Chapman	Jamil Khoury
Dhamitha Arsakularatna	Malik Gillani	Vijay Murugappan

COMPANY & STAFF

Founding Artistic Director	Jamil Khoury
Founding Executive Director	Malik Gillani
Operations & Production Manager	Alexandra Herryman
Associate Artistic Director	Stuart Carden
Artistic Ambassador	David Henry Hwang
Resident Playwright	Yussef El Guindi
Resident Set Designer	Lee Keenan
Resident Sound Designer	Robert Steel
Resident Props Designer	Daniel Pellant
Resident Artist	Kareem Bandea
Development Consultant	Melissa Vickery-Bareford
Education Coordinator	David Chrzanowski
Curriculum Designer "Myths to Drama"	Craig Joseph
Academic Advisor "Myths to Drama"	Ilya Yakubovich
Assistant Production Manager	Isaac Sernoffsky
Group Sales & Audience Development Coordinator	Amber Mack
Graphics Designer	Christina Milewski
Graphics Designer	Darrel Reese
Web Master	Kyle Gorden
Web Master	Lee Keenan
Global Diversity Initiative Intern	David Choi
Audience Development Intern	Maisun Salah

DEDICATION

This production of *Merchant on Venice* is dedicated to
Khatija Gillani (1938 – 2007),
mother of Silk Road Theatre Project's Founding Executive Director
Malik Gillani. May her memory live eternal!

Allahuma salli ala Muhammadin wa aale Muhammad.
(Oh Allah, bestow thy blessings on Muhammed and his progeny).

hungry...
thirsty...
we've got you covered.

A Contemporary
American Cafe

Atwood
CAFE

1 West Washington • Chicago, Illinois 60602 • Phone 312.368.1900 • Fax 312.357.2875

SPECIAL THANKS

To our gracious hosts at the First United Methodist Church at The Chicago Temple, who exhibit hospitality and generosity towards us on a daily basis, and provide us a space in which we can flourish and grow.

To Rishi Agrawal, Brent & Stephanie Allen, Lyle Allen, Kareem Bandealy, Adam Belcoure, Rev. Philip Blackwell and Sally Blackwell, Michelle Boone, Kenneth Williams-Buck, Julie Burros, Lori Bush, Emilya Cachapero, Rev. Cerna Castro-Rand, Suzanne Connor, Rich Dougan, Carol Emmons, Joyce Fong, Kim Furganson, Chandra Garcia, Claire Geall-Sutton, Al & Claudia Gillani, Dale Golden, Anjali Gulati, Joan Gunzberg, Kamal Hans and family, Melissa Hard, Deborah Harrington, David Henry Hwang, Jann Ingmire, Bobby Julka, Sharmila Kana, Jon Kaplan, Ikhtiar Kazi, Al and Sameena Khalfan, Rev. Claude King, Beverly Kirks, Ryan LaHurd, Roy Larson, Lima Lawrence, A. Baldwin Keenan, Rajeev K. Kinra, Lori Kleinerman, Emily Lansana, Rev. Cheryl Magrini, Brenda McKenzie, Karen Mensch, Joyce Nakamura, Anjali Nayyar, Sheryl Novak, Erik Nussbaum, Dipti Patel, Sejal Patel, Kristin Patton, Paula Pergament, Li Xiang Poncz, David Roche, Jacqui Russell, Vikram Sanghani, Henry Schlessinger, Roche Schulfer, Aparna Sen-Yeldandi, Janet Carl Smith, Rick Stoneham, Rehman Sufi, Ty Tabing, N. Charles Thomas, Roberta Uno, Tedd Vanadilok, and Patty White for their passion for our mission.

Playwright Shishir Kurup wishes to thank: Professor Jim Winker for encouraging the writing of blank verse back at UCSD; Cornerstone Theater Company and Audrey Skirball-Kenis Foundation for the original commission of Merchant on Venice; The California Arts Council, The Kennedy Center, TCG/MetLife and John Eisner & The Lark Play Development Center for the play's sustenance and growth; Tracy Young for her tender shepherding of this play, her keen insight and her artistry; Silk Road Theatre Project for demonstrating the courage to produce Merchant's world premiere; my wife Page, for her support and belief in the play, and my daughter Tala, who has patiently put up with my long absences during the rehearsal process.

Falkor Group Salutes Silk Road Theatre Project!



While Falkor Group boasts many of the same qualities that other IT firms tout, like industry experience, highly skilled technology professionals, rapid response, and a history of successful project execution, what sets us apart is our strategic focus and strong company values.

Come see for yourself why Falkor Group remains the most compelling choice for organizations operating in today's market.



FALKOR GROUP

312.602.6550 ■ www.falkorgroup.com

Hospitality

Has A New Name In Town



With a prime location, 66,000 sq. ft. workout facility, spa services, multiple food and beverage outlets, the country's finest concierge staff according to the *Wall Street Journal*, superior customer service and situated just steps from Mag Mile and Navy Pier, the
**Chicago City Centre
Hotel & Sports Club**
Right Where You Want To Be.

Visit Us Today at 300 East Ohio Street
Home of the Renowned Wedding Centre

www.chicc.com

312-787-6100

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following foundations and businesses have supported Silk Road Theatre Project and/or our production of *Merchant on Venice*. We thank them for their generosity and their commitment to our mission.

Presenting Sponsor

The Joyce Foundation

Foundations & Corporations

The Lester and Hope Abelson Fund at the
Chicago Community Trust
Alphawood Foundation
Arts Work Fund for Organizational
Development
American Institute of Pakistan Studies
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois
The Chicago Community Trust
Department of Cultural Affairs, CityArts
Program
Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation
Falkor Group
The Field Foundation of Illinois
Ford Foundation
Joyce Foundation
JPMorgan Chase Foundation
James S. Kemper Foundation
Literary Managers and Dramaturgs
of the Americas
Lloyd A. Fry Foundation
The Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation
The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust
Polk Brothers Foundation
The Sara Lee Foundation
The Starbucks Foundation
Woods Fund of Chicago

Businesses

Argo Tea
Atwood Café Restaurant
Business Office Systems, Inc.
Catch 35 Restaurant
Chicago City Centre Hotel & Sports Club
Chitrahhar Broadcasting
CompuSoft Plus
Gilara Inc.
Instant Printing
Lloyd's Restaurant
Mai Chef Cuisine
Mirza Baig & Company
Plymouth Restaurant
Ricola USA, Inc.
Salamone Travel Group
SHE (Sabrina Hans Entertainment)
System Parking
Trattoria No. 10 Restaurant
Zarda King Pvt Ltd.

Institutions & Organizations

Alexander Graham Bell Elementary School
Apna Ghar ("Our Home"), a domestic
violence shelter
Asian & Asian American Student Center,
Northwestern University
Chicago Loop Alliance
Chicago Public Schools
Childserv
City of Chicago Department of
Cultural Affairs
First United Methodist Church at the
Chicago Temple
The Goodman Theatre
Indo-American Center
Lark Play Development Center
League of Chicago Theatres
Literary Managers and Dramaturgs
of the Americas
Loyola University of Chicago Department
of Theatre
NeTip (Network of Indian Professionals of
North America)
Ruben Salazar Bilingual Education Center
Stone Scholastic Academy
William H. Ray Elementary School



where classic
meets contemporary



Lunch • Dinner • Private Parties

10 N. Dearborn, Chicago • 312.984.1718

www.trattoriaten.com

ABOUT SILK ROAD THEATRE PROJECT

Mission

Silk Road Theatre Project showcases playwrights of Asian, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean backgrounds, whose works address themes relevant to the peoples of the Silk Road and their Diaspora communities. Through the creation and presentation of outstanding theatre, we aim to promote discourse and dialogue among multi-cultural audiences in Chicago.

The Silk Road Stretched From Japan to Italy. So Does Our Theatre.

The term "Silk Road" refers to the great trade routes that originated in China and extended across Central and South Asia, the Middle East, and into Europe, from the 2nd century B.C. until about the 16th century A.D. The dominant land routes connected China to Syria, and adjoined to sea routes, creating an East-West corridor linking Japan to Italy. These transcontinental caravans resulted not only in trade, of which silk was an important commodity, but also in tremendous cross-cultural interaction among the peoples of the regions; interaction that fostered the exchange of ideas and the fusion of art and aesthetics.

The Silk Road is a legacy associated with rich traditions of oral narrative, epic poetry, and storytelling. Thus, the celebrated trade routes serve Silk Road Theatre Project both as a geographic guide as well as a metaphor for intercultural dialogue.

SUPPORT SILK ROAD THEATRE PROJECT

Make a donation...

The financial challenges of running an affordable, high quality, socially conscientious, multi-cultural theatre company are daunting! In order to continue producing such important works as *Merchant on Venice*, we rely on the support and generosity of people like you. Support Silk Road Theatre Project! Send a donation today to: Silk Road Theatre Project, 77 W. Washington St., Pierce Hall, Chicago, IL 60602.

Join our Board of Directors...

We are actively recruiting highly motivated individuals who believe in the mission and scope of Silk Road Theatre Project and can dedicate time and resources to raising money for the company. If you wish to discuss the possibility of joining our Board of Directors, please contact Malik Gillani at malik@srtp.org

Volunteer...

Your time and energy are extremely important to the success of our productions and operations. Volunteers are always needed. Contact us today at info@srtp.org to find out how you can help.

Sign up for our e-newsletters...

Want to be kept abreast of Silk Road's activities, productions and events? Sign up to receive our monthly e-newsletter. To sign up, send us an email at info@srtp.org No spam, no selling of lists, we promise!



- Weddings
- Intimate Dinners
- Corporate Events
- Receptions
- Cocktail Parties
- Theme Parties
- BBQ
- Hors d'Oeuvres
- Event Planning
- Customized Menus

and introducing....



A Private + Intimate Dinner
for 12 or less
By Reservation Only

312.938.2182

www.maichefcuisine.com

2419 W. 14th Street

Chicago, IL 60608



Anish Jethmalani* (Sharuk) makes his debut with Silk Road Theatre Project. Some of his stage credits include *Citizens of the World* with Steppenwolf Theatre; *Sita Ram* with

Lookingglass Theatre; *To the Greenfields Beyond* with Writers Theatre; *Omnium Gatherum* with Next Theatre; *Homeland Security* with Victory Gardens; *Mary Stuart*, *The Invention of Love*, and *Life's A Dream* with Court Theatre; *Romeo and Juliet* with Chicago Shakespeare Theatre; *Wit* and *A Christmas Carol* with The Goodman Theatre; and *Indian Ink* with Apple Tree Theatre. Anish is the current artistic director of Eclipse Theatre Company. He is a graduate of Loyola University and The Oxford School of Drama. Lushelly.



Gerardo Cardenas (Armando) is excited to be making his first appearance with Silk Road Theatre Project. He recently understudied Steppenwolf Theatre's *Sonia Flew* and was seen last

summer in Eclipse Theatre's production of *Spinning Into Butter*. Past credits include working with Teatro Vista on their staged reading series and understudying their production of *The Sins of Sor Juana*. He also worked with Chicago Scriptworks on their reading of *Comes Love* and has appeared in numerous independent films including *Boricua* and *Back to Reality*. Thank you to my family and friends for all their love and support! He dedicates his performance to his grandmother, Enriqueta.



Dipika Cherala (Noorani Understudy) is a third year student at Northwestern University, studying Vocal/Opera Performance and Musical Theatre. She has been seen in pro-

ductions with the Lookingglass Theatre, Rasaka Theatre, The Woman's Theatre Alliance, and now with Silk Road Theatre Project. Dipika frequents the Northwestern University opera stage, most recently seen in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* directed by Fabrizio Melano. Master Classes include Craig Carmelia, Sherrill Milnes, and Bradley Williams. Dipika is a student of Teresa

Brancaccio (voice) and Henry Godinez (acting). She looks forward to pursuing both opera and musical theatre in her future musical endeavors.



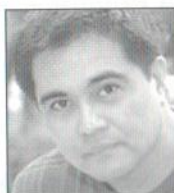
Minita Gandhi (Pushpa, Kavita Understudy) was born in Mumbai, India and is very proud to be involved in her first project with Silk Road Theatre Project. She spent last season on

stage with the Milwaukee Repertory Theater and is a graduate of the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts. Respective roles include Kate in *Taming of the Shrew*; Olivia in *Twelfth Night*; Amanda in *An Actor's Nightmare*; Shelly in *Moonchildren*; and Komachi in *Sotoba Komachi*. Minita would like to thank God, her family and friends for their unconditional love and support in all her endeavors.



Kamal Hans (Devendra) is excited to make his Silk Road Theatre Project main stage debut in *Merchant on Venice*. Favorite roles include Marius in *Fanny*; Caliban in

Shakespeare's *Tempest*; Felix in *The Normal Heart*; Salieri in *Amadeus*; and Anatoly in *Chess*. Creative experience includes acting and producing in TV, film, and theater in Chicago. He has studied at and graduated from the Goodman School of Drama, Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and Illinois Wesleyan University. Kamal serves on multiple boards working to heighten the community's awareness of the enormous pool of South Asian talent around them. Thank you to my loving wife Mandavi and my family for their support.



Arvin Jalandoon (Shiva, Yoga, Devendra Understudy) feels very privileged as the understudy for Devendra, Shivananda and Yogananda as it is his first involvement

with Silk Road Theatre Project. His previous forays into the theatre were in *Grey at EP Theatre*; *The Triumph of Love* at Towle Community; *The Crucible* and *The Madness of King Lear* at North Region; and *The Adventures of Nick Ramirez* and *The Play Within* at Victory Gardens. Having experi-



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE CHICAGO TEMPLE

Welcome!

Chicago's Oldest Church (b. 1831)
is alive with new ideas!

"Come and see..."

There are many key words that describe this congregation. Words like these:

URBAN. From Day One, we have been in the heart of Chicago.

DIVERSE. Our staff is diverse – white and black, female and male, Asian and Caucasian. Our congregation is diverse, like the city itself. Our official State of Welcome and Inclusion makes it clear that "we welcome and encourage all persons, including persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities, in every aspect of our Christian life together."

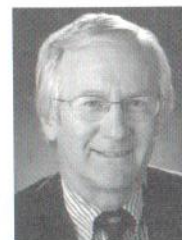
TRADITIONAL and CONTEMPORARY. Our roots are in the Methodism of John and Charles Wesley, but our traditional services are enriched by music from classical, modern, Gospel and jazz sources.

INTERFAITH and ECUMENICAL. Each year the Temple hosts an interfaith Thanksgiving service, bringing together the city's broad spectrum of faith communities.

GLOBAL. "The world is my parish," said John Wesley. In that spirit our laypeople and clergy have been involved personally in mission projects in such countries as China, Ghana, Haiti and the Philippines.

COSMOPOLITAN. Our church hosts the award winning Silk Road Theatre Project, the Chicago Humanities Festival, guest lecturers from National Public Radio, concerts and pre-election debates.

We invite you to come and see us at the Temple.
You are more than welcome.



Philip Blackwell
Senior Pastor

First United Methodist Church
at the Chicago Temple

enced on-camera work, he remains true to his first love- the theatre. He wishes to thank the crew and cast for their incredible support. Dedications to John Green, Grant Stokes and Jim Lothe.



Vincent P. Mahler (Shivananda, Rasik, the Pujari, and Sharuk Understudy) appeared in Silk Road Theatre Project's *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith* (After Dark Award:

Best New Play). Recent credits include *The Weir* for Signal Ensemble (Jeff Citation Ensemble nomination); and *The General from America* and *Guantanamo* with Timeline. He was Artistic Director for Frump Tucker Theatre, appearing in *How I Learned to Drive*, *Below the Belt*, and *An Empty Plate in the Cafe du Grand Boeuf*. For Pegasus Players, he performed in *The Lynching of Leo Frank* (Jeff Citation: Best New Play) and the Chicago premiere of *La Bête*. Other credits: Bailiwick, Buffalo Theatre Ensemble, Chicago Jewish Theatre, Circle, Interplay, Irish Repertory, New Tuners, and Seanachai.



Julian Martinez (Armando, Amithaba, Jitendra Understudy) was last seen on the Silk Road Theatre Project stage in Richard Vetere's *Caravaggio* as Stefano. As of recent

he was in EP Theater's *Avenue A* as Chickie and understudied Todd in Collaboration's *Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow*. He is a BFA graduate of Columbia College Chicago and in summer 2005 completed his training at the School at Steppenwolf. Having also understudied Second City's *Disposable Nation*, he is currently in the conservatory at the Second City. Megg, I wanna spread the news, that if it feels this good getting used, you just keep on using me, until you use me up!



Andy Nagraj (Jitendra) cannot convey how excited he is to be back in Chicago after spending the summer of 2006 studying with the School at Steppenwolf. His favorite credits include titular roles in *Othello* at Ohio Shakespeare Festival;

Disney's Beauty & the Beast at TheatreIV; *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* at Modlin Center for the Arts; as well as the Stranger in *Balm in Gilead* at the School at Steppenwolf. A Virginia native, Andy is an aspiring playwright and avid singer, having earned his BA in Music from the University of Richmond. Much love to the cast, crew, family, friends, teachers, and you for supporting the arts!



Marvin Eduardo Quihada (Amithaba) is honored to be working with a talented group of people. He was last seen in Silent Theatre's original piece *Noir*. He can be seen in Silent Theatre's

next piece *Chaplin Christmas* which he has co-written. He has worked with Teatro Vista, Journeymen, Chicago Dramatist, and Next. Thanks to my STC peeps.



Sadieh Rifai (Noorani) is thrilled to be a part of *Merchant on Venice*. She is a graduate of the School at Steppenwolf and has worked with Uma, Shantz and Steppenwolf theatre.

Sadieh was recently in the pilot *The Reynolds Influence* which premiered at the Music Box Theatre. Sadieh would like to thank Dan, Adal and her mother for all their love and support.

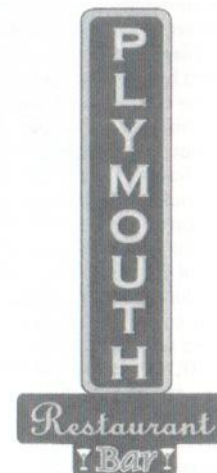
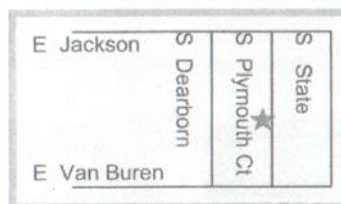


Amira Sabbagh (Kavita) is thrilled to be back with Silk Road Theatre Project, where she performed in one of the earliest versions of their very popular *Precious Stones* production as

Leila back in 2003. Since then, she has done a little improv, a few children's theatre shows, participated in a handful of readings, and shot several industrial videos and commercials. She also travels with SST Communications, a local company that does theatre-based training programs for organizations and institutions nationwide, lecturing on such issues as sexual harassment, workplace safety, and cultural diversity. In her spare time, she loves to read gossip magazines and sleep (in that order). Thanks to everyone involved with the show! Special thanks to Kathleen for the inspiration.

Breakfast Served ALL Day Daily Restaurant & Bar Specials Full Bar w/ Plasma TV's

\$3.99
Breakfast Specials
Mon - Fri 6am - 11am



BOOK YOUR NEXT EVENT
@ PLYMOUTH

Gift Cards Available

Mon - Fri: 6am - Late Night
Sat: 7am - Late Night
Sun: 7am - Evening

NOW OPEN!



Rooftop Bar & Grill

plymouthgrill.com

327 S. Plymouth Ct

312-362-1212



Madrid St. Angelo (Yogananda, Murali, Butcher) is a theatrical actor, director and activist. A graduate of New York's Neighborhood Playhouse, New School of Acting; he

studied under the auspices of Sandy Meisner and William Alderson. Recently St. Angelo played Basilio in Jose Rivera's *Sueno* produced by Greasy Joan & Co. He also portrayed the character of Asfour in Silk Road Theatre Project's production of *Back of the Throat*. Upcoming: St. Angelo will be directing the Midwest Premiere of Robert Patrick's *Hollywood at Sunset*; a featured production in Curious Theatre Branch's Annual Rhinoceros Festival; and a fall production of Edward Crosby Well's play, *Flowers Out of Season*. St. Angelo is active in the GLBT community; having worked and organized with such community groups as the NGLTF, HRC and ACT UP. Currently St. Angelo is the Artistic Director for The PEOPLE'S Theater of Chicago. He is grateful to SRTP and Stuart Carden for the opportunity of Yogananda; and to God for the opportunity that is LIFE.



Collin Tongue (Tooranpoi, S.A.B.U. Rep, Toufiq, Aravind Understudy) is a recently graduated actor from the BFA program of the UCSB. He just recently moved out to Chicago

and would like to give his thanks to both his mother and father, to whom he owes everything. It is their constant and unwavering support that has given Collin the opportunities he has had. Collin would also like to thank the Silk Road Theatre Project for giving him this fabulous opportunity.



Pranidhi Varshney (Pushpa) is a recent graduate of Northwestern University and is thrilled to be working with Silk Road Theatre Project. Chicago credits include the role of

Sita in Lookingglass Theatre's production of *Sita Ram*; the role of Eve in *Kama Sutra: The Musical*; *Half the Sky* in Stages 2006; Dock Street Singer at Navy Pier, and several productions at NU. She is continually working on her dream of becoming a neo-soul rock

star (myspace.com/pranidhi). Much gratitude goes out to her family, friends, and the whole *Merchant on Venice* team.



Tariq Vasudeva (Tooranpoi, S.A.B.U. Rep, Toufiq, Aravind) recently appeared in the lead role of R.P. McMurphy in the stage version of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* produced by the

St. Sebastian Players in Chicago. Tariq has also appeared in staged readings and a skit produced by Silk Road Theatre Project. He graduated in 2006 from Denison University (Ohio) where he played comic roles in productions of *American Notes*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Room Service* and *Hamlet*. Thank you to Jamil, Malik, Stuart and Shishir for your incredible inspiration. A big thank you to my cousin Nitin Oberoi for his support and my Mom and Dad for gifting me their passion for the arts.



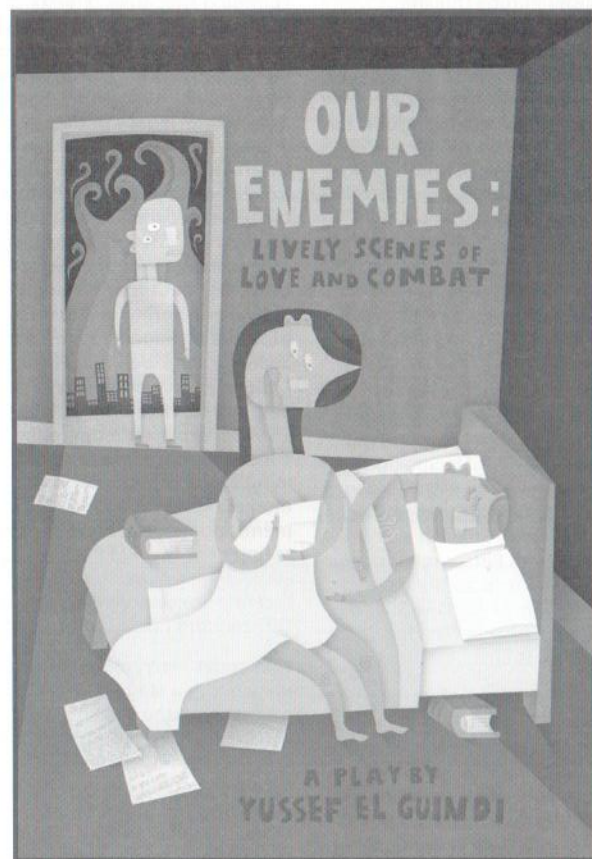
Shishir Kurup (Playwright) is an actor, writer, director, composer and ensemble member of the nationally renowned Cornerstone Theater Company. His modern verse play, *Merchant*

on Venice, received California Arts Council, Kennedy Center, and NEA/TCG Awards and was work-shopped at NY's Lark Theatre and L.A.'s East West Players and Mark Taper Forum. His plays *On Caring for the Beast* and *As Vishnu Dreams* played at the Currigan Theater in NY and East West Players respectively, the latter receiving critic's pick from the L.A. Times and Weekly. His one-man show, *Assimilation*, is published in the anthology *Bold Words: A Century of Asian American Writing*. Shishir is one of only six people nationwide to receive the TIME (Time for Inspiration, Motivation and Exploration) Grant from the Audrey Skirball Foundation in recognition of his body of work. He's also a Princess Grace fellow and Herb Alpert nominee for theater. Last year he co-composed songs for and directed Cornerstone's twentieth anniversary show, *Demeter in the City*, at Redcat in Disney Hall written by MacArthur Fellow Sarah Ruhl. This June he directed *Los Illegals* written by new Cornerstone Artistic Director Michael John Garces with stories culled from and cast with the Los Angeles undocumented community.

February 21 - March 30, 2008

From the Award Winning Playwright of *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith* and *Back of the Throat*!

A WORLD PREMIERE!



Directed by Stuart Carden

In this explosive new work, award winning playwright, Yusef El Guindi, gives us a darkly humorous, sensual and provocative look at identity, media-representation, love and lust in the Arab-American community. Struggling writer, Gamal, fueled by frustration over the limited Arab voices represented in the US media, engages in a prank campaign to shake up the system. His weapons? A chocolate mousse cake and a lipstick tube. His targets? A popular Arab-American writer and an influential Sheikh. But those in power have a way of turning the tables. When Gamal's lover, Noor, is convinced by a prominent publisher to alter her novel to satisfy Western hunger for "Orientalist" fare, Gamal lashes out at his own community. The results are staggering.

Silk Road Theatre Project at The Historic Chicago Temple Building
77 W. Washington St., Pierce Hall, Chicago

Tickets on sale now: www.srtp.org or call 888-SILKTIX (745-5849)

Shishir has an extensive TV and film list but was most recently on *Lost*, *Sleeper Cell* and played a recurring character on NBC's *Surface*. He currently recurs on *Heroes*.

Stuart Carden (Director) is pleased to join Silk Road Theatre Project for the World Premiere of Shishir Kurup's thrilling *Merchant on Venice*. As Associate Artistic Director of SRTP, Stuart serves as resident director, artistic advisor and co-producer of the Al Kasida Staged Reading Series. Recent credits for the company include: the Jeff Recommended, Midwest Premiere of David Henry Hwang's *Golden Child*; curator of SRTP's involvement with Suzan-Lori Parks' *365 Days/365 Plays*; and the After Dark Award winning productions of Resident Playwright Yussef El Guindi's *Back of the Throat* and *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith*. Other recent work: *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *The Pillowman*, *A Picasso*, *The False Servant*, *The Moonlight Room*, *Stones in his Pockets*, *The Game of Love and Chance*, *Life is a Dream*, *Ring Round the Moon*, *Private Eyes*, *Spring Awakening* and Charles Mee's *Big Love*. Upcoming with SRTP: his third collaboration with Resident Playwright, Yussef El Guindi, on the World Premiere of *Our Enemies*. Stuart is an Associate Director with Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre, an instructor in the Conservatory Program at Act One Studios and an alumnus of Carnegie Mellon University School of Drama.

Jamil Khoury (Artistic Director) is Founding Artistic Director of Silk Road Theatre Project, a position to which he brings extensive experience as a producer, playwright, and cross-cultural consultant. He is honored to be promoting the cultural production of Silk Road peoples and to be fostering the exchange of ideas within Chicago's theatre community. Khoury's vocation as a playwright lends a valuable currency to fulfilling our mission as a playwright driven theatre. His plays focus on Middle Eastern themes and questions of Diaspora. He is particularly interested in the intersections of culture, national identity, sexuality, and class. Khoury holds a M.A. degree in Religious Studies from The University of Chicago Divinity School and a B.S. degree in International Relations from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. He is an occasional instructor for The University of Chicago Graham School of General Studies, where he develops courses in Middle East Studies. Khoury's play *Precious Stones* won Gay Chicago Magazine's 2003 After Dark Award for Outstanding New Work and has been performed in ten cities across the U.S.

His play *Fitna* was performed at University Theatre of The University of Chicago and his play *Azizati* was performed at Café Voltaire. Khoury serves on the Board of Directors of The League of Chicago Theatres.

Malik Gillani (Executive Director) is Founding Executive Director of Silk Road Theatre Project, a position to which he brings extensive experience in producing, management, and business development. He is thrilled to be promoting both the rich cultural legacy of the Silk Road and greater visibility for Silk Road artists. Gillani nurtured Silk Road Theatre Project from its embryonic stage into a celebrated theatre company, integrating business acumen and fiscal responsibility within an artistic mission. He studied at The University of Chicago Graduate School of Business majoring in marketing and small business management and earned a Bachelor's in Liberal Arts from St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, with an emphasis on the Great Books. Gillani has 14 years experience operating technology consulting firms where at various points in his career he was responsible for sales, marketing, negotiations, contract management, and human resources. Gillani is the recipient of the IBM Business and Technology Leadership Award. He was recently honored by Changing Worlds for Outstanding Contribution to the Arts.

Alexandra Herryman (Production Manager) is a stage manager by trade, who worked with the Silk Road Theatre Project team on *Caravaggio*, *Back of the Throat*, and *Ten Acrobats in an Amazing Leap of Faith* before switching gears to become the company's full time Operations & Production Manager just in time for *Golden Child*. Locally, she stage managed *The Strange Dreams of Nobody in Particular* at Tantalus Theatre Group; two years of the Open Door Ensemble showcase at Northlight Theatre; and assistant stage managed *A New Brain*, *Falsettos* and *Closer than Ever* at Porchlight Music Theatre. She has a B.A. in English from St. Bonaventure University, and credits her theatre training to the Chautauqua Theatre Company, where she spent three summers as an ASM and wardrobe assistant.

Lee Keenan (Resident Scenic Designer) is an Instructor of Lighting Design at Loyola University Chicago & holds an MFA from Northwestern. Credits include: Scenic Designer for *Back of the Throat*, *Caravaggio*, and *Golden Child* at Silk Road Theatre Project; *The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow* at Collaboration; *I Dream in Blues* and *Still*

Life with Iris at Vittum Theatre. Member: Sandbox Theatre Project. Lighting Designer for *Caravaggio* at SRTP; *Short Shakespeare: Taming of the Shrew* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater; *Hope Springs Infernal*, *Hatfield & McCoy*, *Ellen Under Glass* at House Theatre; *The Misanthrope*, and *The God of Hell* at Next Theatre; *The Noir Project* at The Building Stage; *Time and the Conways* at Griffin Theatre; *Dorian* at Bailiwick Repertory; *Stone Cold Dead Serious* at Circle Theatre; and *A Polish Diva from Milwaukee* at Milwaukee Repertory.

Robert Steel (Resident Sound Designer and Original Music) Recent sound design and original music credits include *Robin Hood* at Oak Park Festival Theatre; *Mad Dancers* at Piven; *Golden Child* at Silk Road Theatre Project; *Chekov Stories* at Piven; *Jekyll and Hyde* at City Lit; *Caravaggio* at SRTP; *Lady Chaplin* and *Her Tramp* at Piven; *Holmes and Watson* at City Lit; *Back of the Throat* at SRTP; *Ten Acrobats* at SRTP; *Stones in His Pockets* at Apple Tree; *Seascape* at City Lit; *Great Expectations* at Piven; *Dead Man Walking* and *Arcadia* at Notre Dame; and *Camp Nimrod for Girls* at Live Bait. He is the Resident Sound Designer at Silk Road and City Lit. He also

composes for video and film and is on faculty at Depaul's Digital Cinema Department. He is a recipient of After Dark awards and awards from ASCAP and the Illinois Arts Council. Special thanks to Todd Lauterbach.

Dan Pellant (Resident Props Designer) is a graduate of the University Of Illinois Urbana. Dan is, as always, happy to be back with Silk Road Theatre Project for another great show as the Resident Props Designer. Currently involved in several projects, Dan's work can be seen around Chicagoland in *Twilight of the Gods* at Apple Tree Theatre; *Defiant Muse* at Victory Gardens Theatre; *A Steady Rain* at Chicago Dramatists; and *Aristocrats* at Strawdog Theatre. Dan is also involved in Id. Productions and Soul Theatre, and currently runs Dragonfly Theatrics, which specializes in locating and procuring props, antiques and other items for private companies and the general public.

Carol J. Blanchard (Resident Costume Designer) designed costumes for Silk Road Theater Project's productions of *Caravaggio* and *Golden Child*. She has designed costumes for companies such as

ARGO TEA IS PROUD TO SUPPORT THE SILK ROAD THEATRE PROJECT.

Come visit us at 16 West Randolph for:

- Healthy Signature Drinks
- Gourmet Pastries, Quiches, Sandwiches and Salads
- Premium Loose Teas
- Italian Iilly Coffee
- Free Wi-Fi



www.argotea.com

Cleveland Symphony's Blossom Opera (*Falstaff*); Shakespeare in the Park (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Measure for Measure*); First Stage Children's Theatre (*Seussical*); Karamu Theatre (*Hamlet Jones*, *The Great White Hope*); Fredonia Dance Ensemble (*Tintypes*, *Brothers*); and the Champlain Shakespeare Festival (*Much Ado About Nothing*, *Love's Labours Lost*). Her Chicago credits include Victory Gardens Theatre (*Hanging Fire*, *I Sailed With Magellan*); Drury Lane Oakbrook (*Barefoot in the Park*, *Of Thee I Sing*); The Artistic Home (*Street Scene*); Bailiwick Theatre (*First Lady Suite*); Porchlight Music Theatre (*Sweeney Todd*, *Assassins*, *The Teapot Scandals*); and PTAP (*RIGHT*, *Iphigenia in Kingman*, *Einstein's Dreams*). Carol was honored with a Jeff Citation for the costume design of Porchlight Music Theatre's *Amadeus*. She currently runs her own design studio (New York/Chicago) and is a Professor Emeritus of The State University of New York.

Rebecca A. Barrett (Lighting Designer) is excited to be a part of the fabulous production team for *Merchant on Venice*, marking her third production with Silk Road Theatre Project. Rebecca graduated from Ithaca College in upstate NY with a B.F.A. in Theatrical Production Arts. Currently, she spends most of her time at Northwestern University as the Assistant Lighting and Sound Supervisor. In her free time she enjoys designing shows and spending time in the great outdoors. Favorite lighting designs include *Golden Child* with SRTP; *Dorian* at the Bailiwick (co-design with Lee Keenan); *New Anatomies* and *Impossible Marriage* for Foreground Theatre Company; and *Chicago* at Pheasant Run Dinner Theatre.

Alka Nayyar (Choreographer) lead choreographer of the Chitrah Cultural Academy, is dedicated to promoting cultural awareness and diversity through the performing arts. By choreographing, teaching and performing South Asian folk, modern and classical dances, Alka aims to create an accurate understanding of South Asian culture and its global impact. Her theater work includes Jeff-Citation nominated choreography for Prop Thtr Co./Rasaka Theatre Co.'s *The Masrayana*; Lifeline Theatre's *The Piano Tuner*; and Silk Road Theatre Project's staged readings *Balacarita* and *Double Happiness*. After teaching/performing at SRTP during Chicago's Looptopia event and the *365 Days/365 Plays Festival* she is thrilled to be working with SRTP again on its production of *Merchant on Venice*.

Jamie Abelson (Assistant Director) is honored to be part of his second Silk Road Theatre Project production, having assistant directed *Golden Child* this past spring. Previous directing credits include assisting in *A Year with Frog and Toad* (Chicago Children's Theatre), *I Rise in Flame Cried the Phoenix* (Gallatin School, NYU), and *Fool for Love* (Francis W. Parker School). Recent acting credits include the title role in *Dorian* (Bailiwick directed by Tommy Rapley), Cates/understudy in *Inherit the Wind* (Northlight), King in *The Quiltmaker* (Moving Dock Theatre Co.), and Sleepy Kelpie in *Tooth of Crime* (Strawdog). Jamie holds a B.F.A. in Drama from the Tisch School at NYU.

Isaac Sernoffsky (Assistant Production Manager) is a graduate of the University of Dayton where he received a B.A. in Theatre and German. Having worked previously on *Caravaggio* and *Golden Child* he is excited to be joining Silk Road Theatre Project again for *Merchant on Venice*. He also performs improv with Chemically Imbalanced Comedy's *Bad Review*. He would like to thank Jamil, Malik, and Allie for constantly giving him opportunities to learn and lead. Finally he would like to thank Erin.

Benjamin D. Herman (Stage Manager) is thrilled about joining the Silk Road Theatre Project family! A recent graduate of Bradley University, he enjoys having ideas, exercising, starting new projects, fixing things, and organizing stuff. Lately he's enjoying getting to know the theatre community here in Chicago – a wonderfully talented, diverse crowd, and a constant source of enjoyment! As a stage manager his favorite credits include *Kissing at Bailiwick*; the staged reading of *Durango* at Silk Road Theatre Project; and *The Vagina Monologues* and the New Play Festival at Bradley University. As a set designer his favorite educational credits include *Box/Quotations from Mao Tse-Tung*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Afternoon of the Elves*. Rock on!

Amber Mack (Assistant Stage Manager) is presently a theatre directing major - management minor at Columbia College Chicago. This is her third full-scale show at Silk Road Theatre Project. In recent past she was an intern for *Caravaggio* and stage managed the staged reading of Shishir Kurup's *Merchant on Venice*, and was Assistant Stage Manager for *Golden Child*. Amber has thoroughly enjoyed working on *Merchant on Venice* and hopes that you enjoy the show!

Christine Nelson (House Manager) This will be Christine's first production with Silk Road Theatre Project. She is a recent graduate from the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, with an undergraduate degree in Arts Management and Communication. Christine is excited about being given this opportunity and extends many thanks to family and friends who have supported her on her journey.

Adam Cobb (Carpenter) is glad to be working with Silk Road Theatre Project for the first time on this production. His other projects in the city have included: *Richard III* at Chase Park Theater; *Poker Night at the Whitehouse* at Neo-futurists; *Sword in the Stone* at Quest Theatre Ensemble; and *Private Lives* at Pretty Blue Sky. Adam works at a non-profit organization called INTRSTCT that teaches arts, sports and technology to kids.

Lavina Jadhvani (Dramaturg) is thrilled to return to Silk Road Theatre Project, where she previously served as the production dramaturg for *Golden Child* and *Caravaggio*. Other dramaturgical credits include *The Piano Tuner* at Lifeline Theatre; *Miss Witherspoon* at Next Theatre; and *The Pillowman* at Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre. Lavina is a recipient of the 2007 LMDA Residency Award, which sponsored her work on this production. She also received LMDA/Kennedy Center ACTF Dramaturgy Awards for her work on *Arcadia* and *Urinetown* at Carnegie Mellon University. Upcoming projects include work with Apple Tree Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Halcyon Theatre and Point of Contention Theatre Company. Lavina holds a BFA in Drama and Masters of Arts Management from Carnegie Mellon University.



"Today, we all live
along the Silk Road"

– Playwright David Henry Hwang

LET US FIND YOU
THE PERFECT ADDRESS

Gilara 773.777.9100 gilara.com

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDERS

Welcome to Silk Road Theatre Project's world premiere production of Shishir Kurup's *Merchant on Venice*! Where the Bard Meets Bollywood. And at the risk of sounding immodest, you're in for one of the most unique and exciting theatre experiences to come along in years! *Merchant on Venice*, is, at once, a modern adaptation of Shakespeare's similarly titled classic (give or take a preposition) and an entirely new piece of dramatic literature. So while it stands on its own as a distinct new play, and a distinctly American play, it maintains a lively and intimate dialogue with its Elizabethan predecessor.

Shishir Kurup is a writer to be reckoned with. A fiercely original dramatist endowed with a sharp intellect and a theatrical prowess that both marvels and unsettles. His lucid command of language assumes a rhythmic pulse, unleashing a playful repartee with metaphor and double entendre. Shishir is, quite frankly, creating his own set of rules with delicious results. He is conscientious. He is subversive. He is not afraid to be confrontational. And he is wickedly funny.

Rarely does a play so evoke the mission and aesthetic of Silk Road Theatre Project as *Merchant on Venice* does. It satisfies both artistically and politically. For some time now we have been searching for a play that manages to explore the ever-sensitive terrain of Hindu-Muslim relations within a complex and compassionate storyline. As such pieces go the tendency seems to favor petty partisanship and tired stereotypes. That is not the case with *Merchant on Venice*. Kurup shares with us a recognition that the relationship between Hindus and Muslims in South Asia is way too "big" and multi-faceted and intersected and overlapped to explain away in sound bites. Nor can it be reduced to an "opposing teams" paradigm. It is a relationship that is affectionate and adversarial, intimate and estranged, unifying and divisive. Thus, we have found in this play a kindred spirit of sorts, an affirmation of our own journeys, both within the South Asian Diaspora, and within the always rich, sometimes conflicted arenas that bond Hindus and Muslims together.

This past July Silk Road hosted DESI DRAMA: The First National South Asian American Theatre Conference (July 19 – 22, 2007). The historic conference marked the first-ever organized gathering of South Asian American theatre artists and professionals from across the U.S. Among the issues explored was the imperative of developing a canon of South Asian American plays. How fitting for us then that the first play we're producing post-Desi Drama is the work of an Indian-American playwright. And how apropos that the momentum garnered at the conference is fueling a play we believe will become a centerpiece of that emerging canon.

Sincerely,



Jamil Khoury
Founding Artistic Director



Malik Gillani
Founding Executive Director

LETTER FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT



I wrote *Merchant on Venice* simply to satisfy a thirst to see and hear the faces and sounds of the South Asian Diaspora on an American Stage. I wanted to take a sliver of a culture, in all its diversity and varied idiosyncrasies, write to those specificities, perhaps excavate something more universal and hopefully burn away the merely exotic.

India is one of the few and possibly only places in the world where Elizabethan syntax is still used in everyday speech. I found it interesting that while the form had all but disappeared in its native country it was still alive and at home in one of its former colonies.

I was born and raised in three of these colonies: India, Kenya and the United States, so it made sense to use the meter to explore how my brain had been formed through the language grooves of my adopted tongue and hoped to find in the exploration a connection between these former colonies.

It's oddly moving to me (and annoyingly Gunga Din-y) that the colonized are asked to hold onto the discarded debris of the colonizer. Given to us for safekeeping I suppose. In time, these bits of culture and language that aren't our own float though the make-up of our identity and become a part of our DNA. Writing in this form has felt like a search for home. A voice. An identity.

It wasn't until Cornerstone Theater and the Audrey Skirball-Kenis Theater commissioned a project called LA Visions/LA Voices, co-created by my friend and colleague Bill Rauch, that *Merchant* got written. The initiative was to locate various plays in specific parts of Los Angeles and to write from that perspective. I set my piece on the corner of Clarington and Venice Blvd., a part of town with an incredibly complex racial mix where Thai restaurants are kitty corner to Brazilian, Mediterranean and Cuban restaurants and where Hindu temples are proximate to Halal meat shops. I used the bones of the very problematic and complicated *Merchant of Venice* to make *Merchant on Venice*. I wanted to confront the bigotry and ugliness as well as the grace and beauty that permeates Shakespeare's play. I replaced the bones that felt thin and brittle, maintained the complexity of the anti-hero without apologizing for his actions and moved it into the 21st century by exploring the cultural clash of religions in this post 9-11 world. Discarding its skin and flesh I rebuilt it within the rhythms, mindset and musicality of South Asia. I hope that in the remaking we've found both a South-Asian and an American experience.

My immense gratitude to Jamil Khoury, Malik Gillani and Stuart Carden for taking the initiative in producing this play and giving me a home here at the visionary Silk Road Theatre Project whose brilliant mission is at once fiercely specific, broadly inclusive and beautifully inspiring.

Sincerely,

Shishir Kurup
Playwright

Prepared by Shishir Kurup, Playwright, and Lavina Jadhvani, Dramaturg

Babri Masjid – mosque burned down in the violence that centered around the alleged burial site of the Hindu King Rama

bhai – brother

Bollywood – a slightly derogatory reference to the largest film industry in the world

Bora – Muslims from the Shia sect of Islam known for their keen business sense

Brahmin – the Hindu priestly class

chalo – “let’s go”

Chopra – refers to Deepak Chopra, allopathic and ayurvedic Doctor turned self-help guru

crore – 10 million rupees – equal to about \$250,000 nowadays

ende ammende nair – “my mother’s husband;” a wry expression of surprise (Malayalam)

Fateh Ali Khan – Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan; a famous Quawali singer

garam masala – a hot mix of spices

Guju – slang reference to a Gujarati; people from the north of India

habari gani my rafikis three? – “how are you my three friends?” (mix of Swahili and English)

Halal – a set of Islamic dietary laws which regulate the preparation of food

Holi – Hindu harvest festival of colors and celebration

kheer – north Indian Rice pudding

kurta – an oversized Indian shirt, usually made of cotton

lakhs – 100,000 Rupees (around \$2,000)

Malayalam – the language of Kerala (a state in south India)

Mapla – a South Indian, slightly dismissive, reference to a Muslim or a Christian; a non-Hindu

mera bhajia, tera bhajia, garam, garam, chalo chalo – “my fritter, your fritter, hot, hot, let’s go, let’s go”

Mulloo – slang for Malayalees (Malayalam speakers from the southern state of Kerala)

Musselman – a Muslim

muzuri sana – “very good” (Swahili)

Net IP – Network of Indian Professionals

NRI – Non-Resident Indian

panjanridhm – a dessert used as offering; considered nectar of the gods

Pujari – one who performs a puja; a priest or minister

Rama – the ideal Man; husband of Sita and king of ancient Ayodhya

Ramadan – a time of fasting, worship and contemplation lasting a month; Islamic holiday

SABU – South Asian Businessman’s Union and a character in 1950’s B-Films

Santana – famous Mexican-American guitar player

Sita – the ideal woman; wife of King Rama

South Asian – the peoples of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The South Asian Diaspora is the scattering of these peoples all over the globe.

tere baab ki gahnd meh ekh chandini hay – “in your father’s arse there is a moon”

tere baab ki ghar meh – “in your father’s house”

wog – derogatory term for an Indian.