

# Poetry reading provides lesson in history



CINDY HINES KURFMAN / Clackamas Print

**Agha Shahid Ali's presentation took many by surprise with his humorous ideas and remarks. His book of poetry, *The Half-Inch Himalayas*, is on sale in the bookstore for \$11.95.**

CINDY HINES KURFMAN  
Copy Editor

Poet Agha Shahid Ali, a native of Kashmir, India, who now makes his home in Massachusetts, entertained a crowd of more than 60 people in the Skylight Dining Room last Friday afternoon.

Ali was accompanied by bassist Glen Moore, who provided a "dialogue voice" to the poems, according to English Instructor Diane Averill's introductory remarks.

His poetry ranged from funny to heartbreaking. In "Has Anyone Heard from You Lately?" -- a takeoff from the Bell ads -- he says, "Someone's left the bones off the hooks." In "Dacca Gauzes," he says, "In history we learned: the hands/of weavers were amputated,/ the looms of Bengal silenced,/ and

the cotton shipped raw/ by the British to England."

The poem cites the loss of the ability to make Dacca gauzes because of British greed.

Between poems, Ali entertained the crowd with his humor.

"Foreigners can be as eccentric as they like and people think it's cultural," he said.

He continued to poke fun at American stereotypes of East Indians by informing the crowd that he is

a Shiite Muslim so, of course, he was going to "blow up the college." He also referred to himself as a "starving Indian" since he had eaten very little that day.

In a poem about angels, Ali used a "four-letter word" in order to show that some East Indians also say obscenities.

But then he pointed out that only he could say such things, be "politically incorrect," since he is not white.

"What a shame," he added.

Ali showed a strong ego by asking the photographer to photograph both sides of his face. The photographer obliged him, and the audience laughed.

Although many of his poems had themes of death, Ali's poetry was full of beautiful imagery and his personality kept the audience entertained.

“  
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Agha Shahid Ali  
Poet

## Smithsonian Institute lectures on "Archives of American Gardens"

JOEL SHEMPERT  
Staff Writer

An assemblage of Clackamas Horticulture students, Garden Club of America Members and interested students and community members were privileged to hear Nancy J. Bechtol, Chief of the Horticulture Services Division (HSD) of the Smithsonian Institution lecture in the Gregory Forum from 7 to 9 p.m. on Thursday, April 10.

Bechtol spoke on the Archives of American Gardens, which is housed in the HSD, as well as on the history of the Smithsonian and the value of the Garden Club of America (GCA) and Clackamas' horticulture program.

Bechtol's two-hour presentation began with an introduction in which she explained briefly the Archives and their mission. She

then moved on to an extensive slideshow showcasing many impressive and varied entries from the Archives. She lectured on the details of the archiving process in addition to speaking on the pictured gardens themselves.

Bechtol then, following a short break, launched into a "lightning tour" of the Smithsonian Institution itself, again with slides.

The Archives of American Gardens is a massive 60,000-photograph library that documents gardens in this country both historical and contemporary. It is available to anyone from historians to landscapers, or even garden enthusiasts, for use in design reference, comparison and contrast, various types of research and aesthetic enjoyment. It is an invaluable resource for anyone in a related field.

Bechtol is very driven toward completing and filling the gaps in the Archive, the highlight of which is a collection of about 3,000 hand-colored glass lantern slides and 30,000 35mm slides that were donated by the GCA in 1992.

Bechtol explained the deficiency that the HSD has been working to eliminate in the last two decades.

"In 1976 the Horticulture Services Division had begun to document the ground and interior 'scapes of the Smithsonian, as well as their plant collections, by taking 35mm slides. The very first Museum at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. was built in 1846. So what happened between 1846 and 1976?" asked Bechtol. "That's a long time to not have anything documented."

Since 1976, the HSD has filled a lot of the holes and obtained a relatively complete pictorial history of American gardens.



JOEL SHEMPERT / Clackamas Print

**Nancy J. Bechtol, chief of horticultural services division of the Smithsonian Institution, encourages local gardeners to submit slides to its archives in Washington, D.C.**

For instance, the aforementioned slide collection has glass slides dating from the 1920's and 35mm slides dating from colonial times. There are still weak areas, such as the 1950's.

Bechtol was careful to stress that slides of normal everyday lawns and gardens were needed, not just the large, lavish gardens of wealthy estates. For these reasons Bechtol was excited to be in Oregon researching the gardens here.

"It was really fresh and new to hear about a brand new garden in your area called the Oregon Garden and how they already have the foresight to think in terms of establishing an archive," said Bechtol.

Bechtol was also excited to be speaking here, to impress upon the next generation of horticulture research and practice the importance of acquiring additional slides to complete the Smithsonian's collection—in essence recruiting new blood for her growing program.

The slideshow itself was a truly gorgeous tour of gardens across American history. The extremely wide variety was impressive and there were many beautiful images. This brings out the usefulness of the Archive. Due to the diversity of the collection, a researcher can use a computer database to search for gardens by characteristics—for instance, all turn of the century gardens in the Italian style or all contemporary gardens with archways and clinging vines—and come up with many documented images to aid in his or her work.

There are as many other uses for the Archive as there are practical fields for horticulture.

"Certainly, one of the purposes is to document the actual history of gardening and certainly in some cases to document the renovation of a particular garden," explained Bechtol.

She said the very fragile and temporary state of gardens makes this very important.

The full auditorium was testimony to the fact that the Smithsonian's Horticulture Services Division is a vital and promising opportunity for those studying the field here at Clackamas. It is ample proof to the skeptic that horticulture goes far beyond mere weed pulling or hedge trimming.

### Smithsonian Institute Lecture

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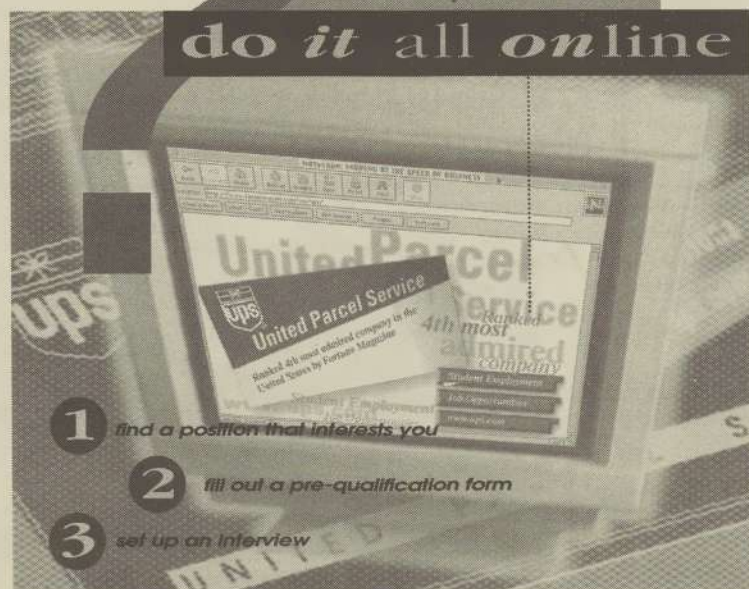
It is available to anyone from historians to landscapers, or even garden enthusiasts.

A computer database is used to group and find specific types of gardens.

The archives include everyday lawns and gardens, not just the large, lavish gardens of wealthy estates.

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