

UW-MADISON  
DIVERSITY FORUM 2022

# Building Caste Equity in the U.S. Academia

Darshana Mini

# Wisconsin South Asians for Justice (WISAJ)

- Student-faculty collective formed in 2020
- Support advocacy efforts and organize events on campus to bring anti-caste activism as a part of the broader DEI efforts
- Passed a legislation by Associated Students of Madison, the official student governance body of UW-Madison to make caste a protected category in 2020



UW CINEMATHEQUE FILM SERIES SPRING 2022  
CO-SPONSORED BY CENTER FOR SOUTH ASIA

## NEW INDIAN CINEMA

**VILAS 4070**

<https://cinema.wisc.edu/series/2022/spring/new-japan-and-india>



SAT, 2/12, 7 p.m.

### WRITING WITH FIRE

2021 | 94 min. | Hindi with English subtitles

Director: Rintu Thomas, Sushmit Ghosh



## Maadathy, An Unfairytale

Screening followed by Q&A with  
Director Leena Manimekalai

**June 28, 2022 | 2 p.m.**

**Vilas 4070**

More information: <https://fb.me/e/83BletYu4>

Co-sponsored by Center for South Asia, SASLI, and WISAJ.

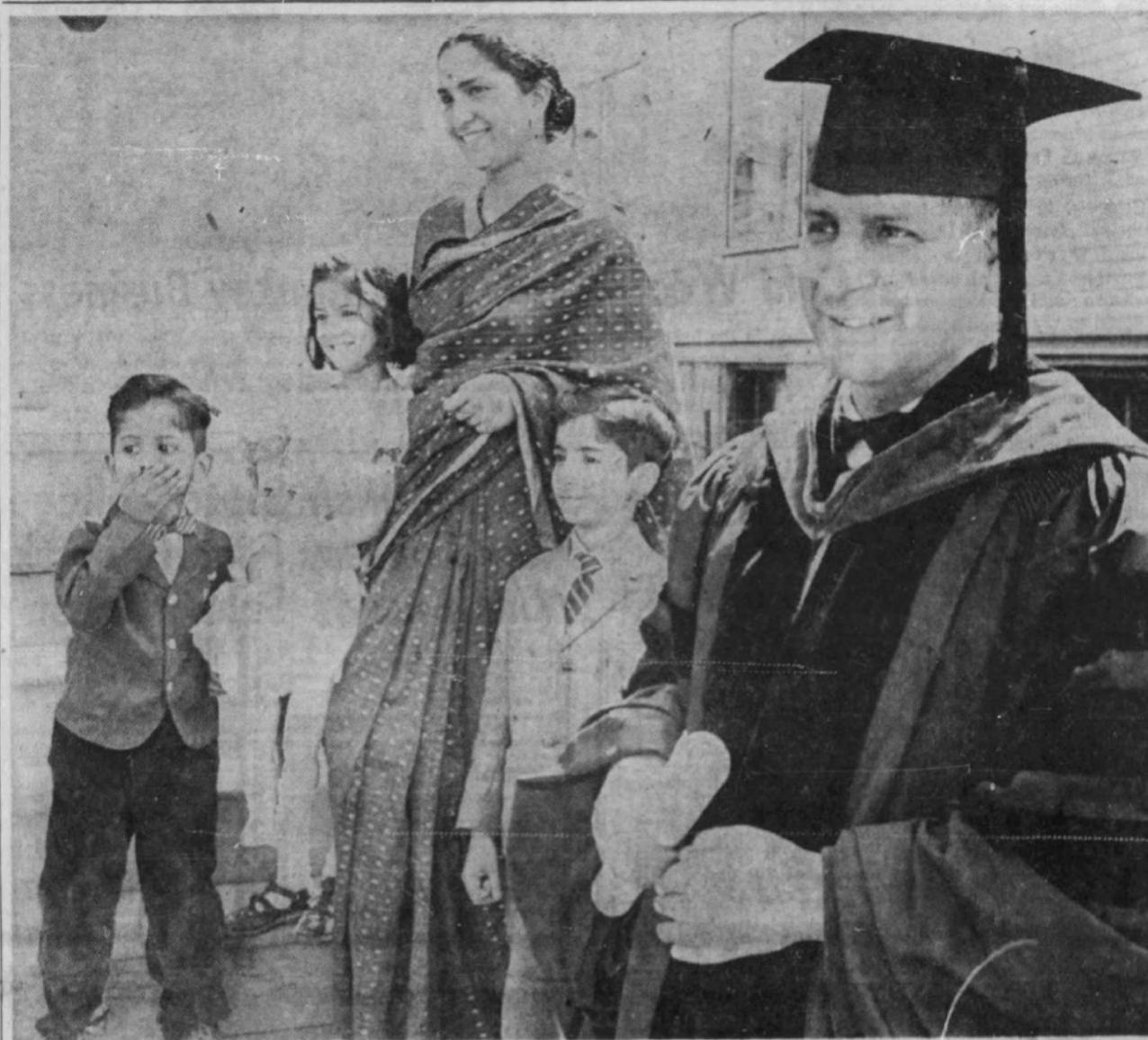
DIVERSITY FORUM 2022

Thursday, October 20, 2022

**Caste in the US: Voices from the Front Lines (WISAJ Roundtable)**  
Wisconsin Ballroom, Floor 2

Organizer - Rini Tarafder (University of Wisconsin-Madison)  
Discussant/Chair - Trisha Chanda (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Anjali Arondekar (University of California Santa Clara)  
Sonja Thomas (Colby College)  
Pallavi Rao (University of Virginia)  
Chinnaiah Jangam (Carleton University)  
Darshana Sreedhar Mini (University of Wisconsin-Madison)  
Ankita Nikalje (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)



**HE HAS EARNED IT**—N. M. Nimgade has a reason to be proud as he poses in the cap and gown he wore recently when he received his Ph.D degree at the University of Wisconsin.

Sharing his pleasure are his wife, Hila, and children, from the left, Ashok, who will be 4 years old in June; Rekha, 5, and Bhimraco, 7.

—State Journal Photo by Richard Vesey

### **'Untouchable' Gains Ph.D.**

# Indian's Struggle Worth Effort

By **MARCIA CROWLEY**  
(State Journal Staff Writer)

The young Indian boy was given permission to attend school on one condition — he was not to enter the school building.

For N. M. Nimgade of New Delhi was one of India's untouchables, the lowest level in the country's caste system.

So Nimgade, desperately hungry for education, stood outside the school and received his elemen-

tary school training by listening to the teachers as they taught the children of the upper classes.

With his black hair now streaked with grey, Nimgade reached his goal Mar. 30 when he received his Ph.D. degree in soils from the University of Wisconsin.

He returns to India today with his handsome wife and three children. He returns to a promising and challenging career with the Indian government.

His story is one of almost unbelievable determination and hardship. So it is small wonder that a stranger should feel the glow of pride as Nimgade mentions his doctor's degree.

As a member of a poverty-stricken untouchable family, he was not allowed to touch anyone from the upper classes, and he was unable to attain an education.

Nimgade isn't sure when he was

born, the month, date, or year, since that was never recorded. He thinks he was born about 1921.

## First Work

He began to work in the fields when he was about 8 so that there would be another wage earner in the family. When he was 10, he was given a monthly job at which he worked every day. He was paid a monthly wage of 6 cents worth of sorghum grain.

Wanting their son to be able to at least write his name, Nimgade's parents obtained permission for him to 'attend school' by standing outside the building, in a neighboring village 3 miles away, to which he walked each day.

"I consider myself lucky to be given permission to do that," he said, explaining that few untouchables did even that.

## He Went On

After four years of the school, Nimgade's parents thought he had enough and it was time to return to the fields. But he wanted to go on — and he did.

From there he went to a county school in which he was allowed to sit with other students, for the school was run by missionaries. During this period he lived with his younger brother and sister, cared for them, and did the household chores. He also worked part time bringing grass to the market

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## Russians Can't Tell Twist Head From Tail

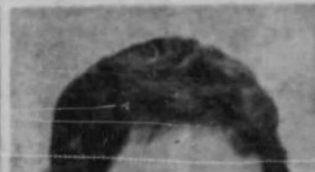
LONDON (AP) — Moscow Radio said Saturday night the United States dance known as the twist has spread around the world "like an epidemic of flu" — and America is welcome to it.

A commentator said American propagandists apparently intended the twist and twist music to be "a monument to U.S. cul-

ture." "To speak honestly, we do not envy them," he added.

He played a recording of what he described as twist music, followed by a highly raucous orchestral performance which he said was the same record played backward — "this, of course, making no difference at all."

## on Newsmen's a 'She'; Starts on Paper June 4



ism originally because of "a distinct dislike of writing," she said. Encouraged to try out for the West High-Times to overcome her reluctance to write, she started out with 2-inch stories and eventually became managing editor.

## Verona Youth, 17, Dies After Crash

VERONA — James A. Krattiger, 17, Rt. 1, Verona, was fatally injured early Saturday when he fell out of his car as it rounded a curve on Nine Mound road, about 2 miles northwest of Verona.

Krattiger, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Kattiger, Monroe, died in a Madison hospital about three hours after the accident.

Dane county traffic police said the door of his car flew open and he toppled out and was run over by the car.

He was alone in the car and was not wearing a seat belt, police said.

Born in Monroe, the youth had been working on a farm near Belleville since Feb. 1. He was a member of the Belleville United Church of Christ.

# Indian 'Untouchable' Gains Life Goal With UW Degree

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where it was sold for cattle food. With all his outside work and responsibilities, the 18-year-old youth still was the top student in his class.

He achieved what few untouchables do in 1945 when he was graduated from high school. Then he wanted to go to the college of agriculture.

## 16-Mile Walk

"My parents were against it again, saying how very costly it would be and how could I go? I received a scholarship, but the amount was not enough," Nimgade said.

"I wanted to live in a dormitory with other students. But I was not allowed. I had to live in a hostel with other untouchables," he added. "From the hostel, I walked 16 miles a day to get my college education."

To get more money, he tutored other students in his home.

## Social 'Crime'

Nimgade was arrested during this time for stepping inside a temple. He had committed no crime, but his social status made his action unlawful.

As punishment for his "crime," he had to report to court frequently for four years and prove he had not gotten into trouble again. It meant cutting many classes, but he continued his education.

"I felt wonderful, just wonderful, when I received my B.S. degree in 1949. My parents thought I had enough but I wanted to go on."

Nimgade attended the Indian Agricultural Research Institute after that where kind professors helped him out with material items such as clothing. He obtained his master's degree in 1951, and the next year got a job as a research assistant at the institute to earn money to come to the United States and work for a doctor's degree.

## Measure of Fame

When he was about 32 years old, his anxious parents selected a wife for him—whom he met for the first time at his wedding!

His determination for an education and his fight to get it were described in an Indian magazine, and word spread throughout the country. His wedding was attended by 10,000 well-wishers, professors and untouchables alike.

For about nine years, he tried to get into the United States; but he had no money and received no scholarship. A Rockefeller Foundation interviewer heard of him and went to see him in India.

\$400. The foundation, impressed, offered him \$350 a month and passage for his wife.

## American Aid

"I couldn't believe my ears when he told me, I thought he was kidding. I only wanted \$400."

Nimgade was accepted at the University of Wisconsin soils department which he wanted to attend because of his respect for Dr. Emil Truog whom he calls "the greatest living soil scientist in the United States."

The foundation scholarship was for one year and was extended for another on the recommendation of the university professors. But Nimgade wanted to attend another two years and receive his doctor's degree.

## He Saved

So, he spent about \$200 a month on his family and saved the other \$150 for his education.

Since he started his learning so late in life, Nimgade wants his children to start while they are very young. And the quest for education seems to run in the whole family.

His eldest son, Bhimraco, 7, was anxious to learn how to read when he was 4. His father taught him, in part, by pointing out words in *The Wisconsin State Journal*. By the time he was 4½, Bhimraco could read the paper's masthead and countless other words.

## Gifted Child

Bhimraco was pronounced a gifted child after testing at the university and was placed in a gifted child's class at Washington school. The school's officials have told the Nimgades the boy's intelligence is equal to a fourth grader's.

Where Bhimraco is a serious boy who stands straight and proud; pretty Rekaha, 5, is a bouncy little girl who is anxious to take her blonde birthday doll with her to India. Ashok, who will be 4 in June, is a handsome fellow with brown eyes so huge they seem to swallow you.

American life already has an influence on the youngsters. As the reporter prepared to leave, Bhimraco, in a clear, proud voice, recited the entire Gettysburg address.

## UP IN SMOKE

LONDON (UPI) — "The Ox in Flames," which opened south of London two years ago as Britain's first American-style drive-in restaurant, has closed and is on for sale, the Daily Express