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The Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund

The JU-SYLFF Association invites you to

JU-SYLFF Lecture series

Lecture No. 2017 - 3

Speaker:

Shekhar Bhowmick

Associate Professor, Department of History, Vidyasagar College, Kolkata

Topic:

Pilgrimage and the *Panda's Register*: History of a Different Sort

Date:

April 6, 2017 (Thursday)

Time:

4:00 pm-5:15 pm (Including Q & A Session)

Venue:

Global Change Programme,

1st floor, Biren Roy Research Laboratory,

Jadavpur University

Note on the Lecture:

B. N. Goswamy, the art historian, spoke of a possibility long ago, and many years have passed since. The professional historians have remained silent on this subject. And yet, the register of the pilgrims kept with the *pandas* of different centers of pilgrimage may constitute an interesting archive of history.

The possibilities can be manifold, family history or migration history being one of them. Such records often contain things like how many times a family's address changed during the last hundred years and such things can be fascinating objects of historical research. To and there are other possibilities as well. According to the colonial administration, the people belonging to the 'lower castes,' used to derive upward mobility from their pilgrimages. Thus it immediately indicates a story of social mobility. Now how far is this factually correct? A detailed survey following the surnames of the pilgrims in the *panda's* register may open up newer kind of possibilities.

And if one speaks of gender history or feminist history, it might be considered how pilgrimage opened up a possibility of emancipation for the women in the past. We have been told about the window's abode in Kashi since almost time immemorial. *Gobinda Samanta* by Lalbehari Dey has mentioned how *Alanga* grew excited on the day before journey to *Puridham* ensued. And these women used to go for pilgrimage running the risk of 'exploitation' by the *Pandas*. And they used to sign their names with trembling fingers that is why their signatures often seem to be obscure. Then should we conclude that the subalterns are the liberators of other subalterns?

And the instances of the continuity of our pre-colonial geographical identities even during the colonial era are not rare in such registers. And nor are rare the prevalence of Persian or Urdu script in the register even after the inauguration of colonial regime. Such instances may constitute some different observations. And, most importantly, We can consider these registers an alternative system of record management.

Note on the Speaker:

Shekhar Bhowmick is Associate Professor at the History Department of Vidyasagar College, Kolkata. Formerly he had been in the same department at Mahishadal Raj College, Purba Medinipur as a faculty. He completed his Ph.D. from the Department of History, Jadavpur University on the *Growth of a Bengal District Town (Bankura) in the Colonial period*. Subsequently he has carried out research on the Minor towns of Colonial South West Bengal under the aegis of UGC (MRP). For the last eleven years he has been constantly working on the *Possibilities of Hindu pilgrimages Register in constructing Social History*. He was awarded a Research Project Grant from ICHR for this project on *Dicursive Sources of Indian History*. He has published articles/ edited books primarily on the social history of urbanization in Bengal. His area of publications include social history of Bengal/ regional history as a whole.