



Sylff

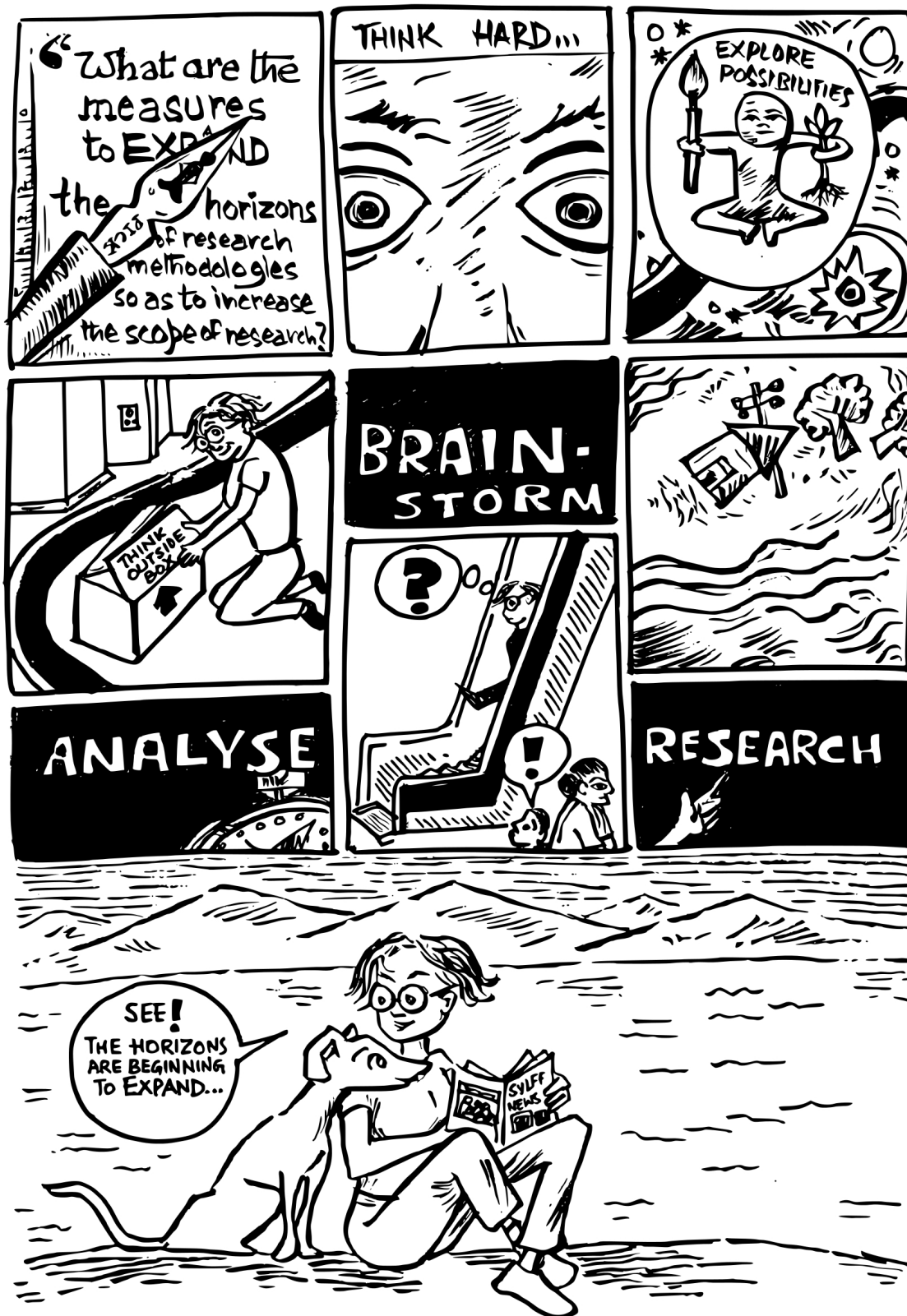


যাদবপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY

FELLOWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY SYLFF ASSOCIATION

ISSUE #10 MAY 2016



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 JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY-SYLFF
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Cover: Deeptanil Ray,
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From the Editors

Greetings! JU-SYLFF association is very happy to publish the 10th issue of 'Fellows'. JU-SYLFF fellows come together from various humanities and social science departments. This diversity is the secret behind this successful programme. In this issue, we have tried to explore our own experiences as JU-SYLFF fellows as we navigate through diverse sources of information and methodologies we are pursuing while answering our research questions. The aim is also to try and engage with the difficulties faced by humanities and social science scholars from a country which is hard to homogenise and where, the methods in the existing literature also fall short in expressing the complex reality. Thus the challenge is to identify and bridge the gaps.

This issue of 'Fellows' aspires to find the possible route through which research methodologies can be expanded to a new horizon of knowledge by observing the ground realities. For more than a decade now, JU -SYLFF as an institutional entity has been encouraging researchers to break barriers. With each passing phase, it becomes urgent to redress the lacunae and to reach sustainable solutions while celebrating diversities. We, the SYLFF fellows are working hard to provide such solutions. This is our uniqueness. We look for different sources, voices, methodologies to address complex realities of contemporary India. The methodologies try to build up a dialogic space between past and present and dream of a more democratic, more inclusive future. Homogenisation is not natural. Science is the practice to understand nature which is diverse. Our motto is to a bridge the gap between outsiders' gaze and insiders' realisation of this beautiful diversity of India.



JU-SYLFF Continues to Excel

Professor Suranjan Das

Vice-Chancellor, Jadavpur University

Chairman, JU-SYLFF Steering Committee

A note of encouragement from Professor Suranjan Das, Vice-Chancellor, Jadavpur University

JU-SYLFF is an excellent programme that has been carried out very successfully in Jadavpur University. Jadavpur University has been engaged with this particular exercise and it is being implemented in a very fruitful manner. I particularly compliment the initiative taken by Professor Joyashree Roy.

The programme demands appreciation as it caters to the needs of young scholars. I believe that no academic exercise in any university can be successful without the students' involvement. In any teaching-learning activity students must be given proper facility to get greater exposure to the outside world, to have adequate knowledge of his or her sister disciplines and to have adequate opportunity to speak out in the way s/he likes. I am a great believer of freedom of expression and I think SYLFF is providing this excellent opportunity to young scholars.

Obviously, the theme that the JU-SYLFF newsletter has chosen is certainly important, particularly in the context that new interdisciplinary methodologies are becoming important in research works and I welcome them.

In one way the traditional boundaries of history, political science, economics, sociology—they are all being broken. It is not only that the conventional boundaries between humanities and social sciences are being broken. As a result one particular topic / problem/ issue is being viewed from various angles. Let us take the issue of partition for example. One could look at the problem from the perspective of history and try to find out what was the context behind partition. S/he would try to see what had really happened, whether the partition was inevitable. Then there can be another set of scholars who would be studying the sociology of partition which would involve the social aspects, the social effect of the partition. Moreover, within the group of sociology, experts in women's studies may introduce the angle of gender in it.

The growing interdisciplinary approach and collaborative research ventures that are coming up in social sciences is new to social sciences and is welcome. However one cannot ignore the rigour of each discipline which should not be compromised.

I congratulate the JU-SYLFF association for choosing this important theme, as always.



Diversity for Sustainability

Professor Joyashree Roy

Project Director, JU-SYLFF Programme

JU-SYLFF Project Director Joyashree Roy believes diversity is the key to a long successful journey

JU-SYLFF programme has completed a decade and I continue to enjoy being a part of it. Even after this long time-committing journey, I eagerly wait for Monday meetings,

quarterly progress report workshops and SYLFF lectures organized by the SYLFF fellows. I see them as over and above my regular responsibilities.

If I am to choose only one reason to explain what has kept my enthusiasm high through these years, I would definitely say, the 'diversity' in disciplines from which SYLFF fellows come. They explain a topic by using tools of their own disciplines but one common thing is that they all have a broader vision and heart to see and feel the societal issue of their choice. They toil on these issues by sacrificing fun time. This helps them to successfully complete their research with the understanding that they have only touched a minuscule of the issue which they deeply wished to solve for societal advancement. That realisation keeps their enthusiasm high to continue in future with larger zeal. In this process I gain holistic insights through their lenses of observing societal issues from a multi-disciplinary perspective which I believe is necessary for a social scientist.

What I like the most is when the fellows make innovative efforts to document new information from rare books / pamphlets / periodicals, archives, private library collections, life stories, oral history, folklores, media content, traditional art forms and peoples' lives around that to understand social change in Indian context. When fellows share their weekly experience with excitement with the rest of the group every Monday, we collectively realise that Indian society still has not lost the necessary condition of sustainability. Diversity is still thriving. Documenting this living diversity using new methods, new research design provides enormous scope for advancing the research methodology in social science and enriches peer-reviewed literature! Exploration and documentation of the real-time real-life diversity by the SYLFF fellows is creating a treasure trove of knowledge for future researchers.

At this point, I recall a debate when we were planning to start the JU-SYLFF programme. The debate we got engaged in was whether we should make it a single discipline programme. I think collectively we took a right decision when we opened it for all social science and humanities disciplines. This decision gave our university various proud moments and a long running endowment because diversity and collective wisdom is at the core of the JU-SYLFF programme which helps to sustain it.



Expand your Horizons with SRA

Mari Suzuki

Director for Leadership Development, Tokyo Foundation

Mari Suzuki talks about how the SRA programme opens new possibilities for SYLFF fellows

One mission of Sylff is to support the education of outstanding students pursuing graduate-level study. To fulfil this mission, the Tokyo Foundation administers a support program called Sylff Research Abroad (SRA). All Sylff fellowship recipients who are currently enrolled in a doctoral program are eligible. SRA awards of up to US\$5,000 are provided by the Foundation to support research related to fellows' doctoral dissertation in a foreign country.

Since 2009, nine JU-Sylff fellows have taken advantage of

this program to broaden their horizons at foreign institutes of higher learning:

Sreerupa Sengupta (2009) examined the issues of gender, sexuality, and human rights in HIV-prevention programmes and HIV/AIDS media campaigns at Howard University (United States) and the American University in Cairo (Egypt)

Shubhasree Bhattacharyya (2010) conducted research at Howard University on labour songs in the contemporary urban space

Rimple Mehta (2011) studied—at Central European University (Hungary)—the mechanisms on which migrant women in the Netherlands and Hungary rely for their survival in detention centres

Sreya Mitra (2012) gained first-hand experience and insights into armed state-response to internal ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka while conducting research at the University of Colombo (Sri Lanka)

Anindita Roy (2012) analysed the field data gathered over a year on children in red-light districts of south Kolkata, India, at the University of Bath (Britain)

Shyamasree Dasgupta (2013) visited the University of Maryland (United States), where she gained a broadened perspective on the response of Indian industries to global environmental sustainability

Neha Chatterji (2013) was able to access valuable materials related to her research on piety and politics in late colonial Bengal

Aritra Chakraborti (2014) took advantage of the vast archives of London's British Library to examine Bengali chapbooks of the nineteenth-century and developed insights through interviews with scholars and researchers at King's College

Nikhilesh Bhattacharya (2014) benefitted tremendously from his visit to the Hockey Museum (Britain) while pursuing his research on nation building, hockey, and the Anglo-Indian community of Calcutta

The applications from Jadavpur have consistently been outstanding. They have featured clearly elucidated objectives and persuasive explanations about research methodology, and no application has been rejected thus far. I hope JU-Sylff's remarkable record of success will continue for many more years to come!



Scope of Aesthetics in the Social Sciences

Professor Kavita Panjabi

Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University

JU-SYLFF Mentor Professor Kavita Panjabi shows one of the ways to expand methodology

Sensitive, meaningful engagement with perspectives of marginalized communities and women calls for relevant modes of interdisciplinarity to be forged for comprehending their everyday lives and the forces that catalyse their agencies of resistance and transformation. One of these modes involves crossing the boundaries of humanities and the social sciences, and trying to understand the role of aesthetics and subjectivity in the making of histories that have been elided in elite

knowledge systems.

Aesthetics is pervasively central to everyday living, so why is it limited to the arts? Historical events, political upheavals and human actions impact individuals and societies with affective force, we respond with joy, exhilaration, determination, anxiety or fear. Such impact does not remain limited merely to our affective responses - it inspires resistance or transformative action, motivates competition or revenge, results in mass dislocations, or causes withdrawal or resigned submission.

In short, aesthetic impact is a significant mobilizing force of history. Such dimensions and dynamics of lived experience are not, however, normally accessed by mainstream historiography; for they can be gleaned largely from attentive listening to and sensitive questioning of subjects of history, in lived interactions "on the field", and through close textual, and often literary, analyses of subjective accounts. Central to the work of such oral history then is a focus on close textual analyses of subjectivities - that structure and in-form oral narratives - that yield the insights to which the purportedly "objective" historiography, sourced from official accounts and archival records has no access.

History, philosophy, anthropology, and such social sciences have for long enriched studies in the humanities; it's time to take the lenses of aesthetics and subjectivity to the study of history. The separation of "art" and living is so entrenched that it is almost as if there was nothing artistic, affective or subjective about our everyday actions or lived relationships and negotiations. In order to redress the losses incurred in our comprehension of historical transformations, one would need to step across not just disciplinary boundaries, but also the borders we have drawn between our notions of "art" and "life".



Use of Digital Tools in Social Science Research: New Vistas, New Challenges

Sulagna feels use of technology adds a new dimension to research methodology

The last two decades have witnessed a rapid expansion in application of digital tools for social science research. This includes use of digital platforms and softwares for all aspects of research—research design, data collection, storage, analysis, retrieval, presentation and archiving. The numbers of research articles reporting use of qualitative data analysis softwares (QDAS) like NVivo, ATLAS.ti etc are increasing every year. This shift towards use of digital tools for social science research has been made possible due to advancements in information communication technology (ICT), advent of QDAS, availability of cloud computing and an explosion in internet and social media content. Use of digital platforms and tools in research has not only revolutionised operationalisation of research methodologies but it has expanded researchability of issues and to a certain extent eliminated geographical and disciplinary barriers in scientific collaborations. However it is

imperative to be mindful of the key challenges and issues as outlined by several experts in this area.

First, commensurate ethical standards and codes of conduct need to be developed to tackle issues of informed consent, identity protection etc. Secondly, efforts need to be made to bridge the “digital divide” within the scientific research community both in the Global North and the South. There is need for adequate infrastructure, training and support to researchers within social science departments in the universities and schools. Access and availability of data are emerging as major issues. Even though a large amount of data is being produced digitally, not all of it is (or can be made) available to researchers due to regulations on protection of user-generated data, lack of infrastructure and capacity.

Tablets, smartphones and smartpens synced with cloud storage facilities have transformed how data is stored, archived and retrieved. With regard to data analysis, research shows that use of QDAS is by and large limited to data management and analysis which is an under-utilisation of currently available softwares. Advancements in ICT have no doubt expanded the horizon for social science research design. This however has generated the need for innovation in order to responsibly and equitably exploit their full potential for research.



Methods: My Understanding of Navigation

Shyamasree thinks good research questions help to decide upon the methodology

A research, in its unfolding, requires an array of methods for treating the logic and information. What kind of method should that be? Theoretical or empirical? Qualitative or quantitative? A bird's-eye view or a worm's-eye view? All these questions perhaps bothered me most when I was writing my PhD proposal only having a vague knowledge about the problem I am going to address. In the process, however, I understood that formulation of a pertinent research question precedes pondering over the methods and digging through the information. Once I had a more concrete idea about my research question, then it was the time to decide over methods. My interest, aptitude, capacity and the nature of the research question guided my choice in favour of empirical methods. Meanwhile, as I went through a large volume of literature, what struck me most was the fact that often the ‘logic’ of the theory and the ‘observation’ of empirics have to have a dialogue to deliver the message in a meaningful way. The issue of information comes next. Is the kind of information you are looking for available in the public domain? If not, then you have to decide how to gather it through a primary survey. There is always a trade-off between the kind of information a method would require and the modifications needed in the existing method to be able to use available information. Finally a few lines on being quantitative or qualitative! To me, while there is an obvious demarcation between these two ways of processing information, it is more like a membrane than a solid stone-wall. While our disciplinary training persuades us to stay on one side

of the membrane, it is important that ideas should flow to the other side as and when it is required in order to give justice to the research question. So, to expand the horizon of research, my experiences taught me the importance of a collaborative set up where research minds can speak and being in a research environment where interaction is possible beyond one's own disciplinary training.



Spatialising Methodology

Rimple realises space is a very important part of methodology to understand race, gender, religion, caste and class

Methodology often occupies a small section in the introductory chapter of a thesis or is mentioned in passing in different chapters. Amongst the social sciences, sociology and anthropology seem to lay the maximum emphasis on methodology. The other disciplines steer clear of the same, briefly mentioning the sampling technique, sample characteristics and applied, tools. In the approaches where adequate importance is not given to methodology, the research process is often obscured. Thereby the workings of class, caste, race, gender, religion and its impact on the research findings are overlooked. While critical disciplines like women's studies, even cultural studies have paid attention to the issue of ‘intersectionality’ in methodology, the issue of spatiality has still not received the attention it deserves.

Space plays a crucial role in shaping the direction that research takes, but is often left out of discussions on the relationship between a researcher and research participants in the field. In my doctoral work with Bangladeshi women in two correctional homes in Kolkata space played an important role in shaping the narratives as well as the relationship between me and the research participants. Space becomes even more crucial to consider in a closed institution where negotiations over space is an important part of everyday survival of the inmates. There was a shift in the narratives of the research participants from that of ‘violence’ to ‘love’ once we moved our interviews from the dark damp school room to the mango tree. The Bangladeshi women were much more comfortable to speak with me under the mango tree despite the heat. Their everyday associations with the tree, the possibility of a mango falling, the changing contours of the tree provided them with hope and a sense of movement. The unpredictability of a mango falling provided them with an excitement in their otherwise mundane prison routine.

There are discussions of techniques, representation and power relations in the context of ethnographic works of various scholars, but there is little dialogue about the role space plays in formulating these. It is important to see research relationships in the context of the space in which they are constituted. This is because research relationships are an inevitable part of the research process. To my understanding, this connection between space, research relationship and research findings is as important to draw upon as the issues of race, gender, religion, caste and class.



Unlocking New Information

Nikhilesh is always looking for new sources of information

Researchers crave information. That is why they visit libraries and archives, pore over books, manuscripts and documents, and do keyword searches on the Internet. All this may not be enough, though. As I found out during my researches on the history of Indian hockey and physical cultures in early twentieth century Bengal, your primary source might be locked in a briefcase kept in the loft or tucked away in the folds of saris in an almirah.

Indian freedom fighter Pulin Behari Das (1877-1949) spent the last three decades of his life compiling exhaustive manuals in Bengali on indigenous martial arts which he practised and taught others. Much of his work was never published. The manuscripts, mostly written in his own hand, were preserved by Kaushik Majumdar, who trained under Pulin Behari's son and kept the original notes as ready reference. When former SYLFF fellow Deeptnil Ray and I met Majumdar in his north Kolkata home in 2013, he rummaged through an almirah to bring out the manuscripts, intact more than sixty—and in some cases eighty—years after Pulin Behari wrote them. These, along with Pulin Behari's published works on weapons-training and unarmed self-defence, formed the basis of an edited volume brought out by Jadavpur University Press in August 2015.

A similar surprise had awaited me in the suburban east London home of Neville Galibardy, whose father Joe Galibardy played in the Indian team that won the men's hockey gold in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Neville Galibardy had a briefcase full of documents, photographs and clippings relating to his father, including Joe Galibardy's transfer certificate from school, service certificate from the Bengal Nagpur Railway and his passports. For a researcher starved of information on early Indian hockey heroes, it was a feast.

The experiences taught me that the best methodology is one that allows the researcher to cover different sources of information, including those from outside academia. This is especially true in India where institutional sources are few, sometimes difficult to access and in most cases hold scant information on certain subjects (sport, for example). Look through them, but be prepared to look beyond.



Debacles in Research Theories and Methodology: Tackling the Unforeseen, Personal, and Impersonal

Reep is inclined towards the different knowledge systems to enrich research methods

As academic endeavors become interdisciplinary, the challenges faced by research scholars are multilayered and entails channeled cognitive outlook. There is a curious contradiction within the idea of research; it seeks to break barriers while demanding conformity. These situations have

many forms; some demand technical expertise in certain fields and others may require a presence of mind. However, these conditions have one constant factor that proves beneficial for the researcher and that is a degree of 'preparedness'.

Having laid down the basic premise of expectations from a researcher, there are always situations, which catches one off-guard. I believe it is the nature of any research to open avenues which require a novel approach as previously applied methods, although informative, will no longer be relevant according to the contemporary trends that are being endorsed. More importantly, as in the case of my research—where I am working on the oral tradition and narratives of my indigenous community—the tools which have been inherited, are rendered useless when reflexive introspection becomes the foundation and the tools given have always been used to dissect the 'other'. The age old subjective versus objective debate becomes outmoded, as one is learning to trust and reach deep into the philosophical beliefs of the community to reach a middle-ground in terms of understanding and application. At such junctures works like Smith's Decolonizing Methodologies and Simpson's Dancing on our turtle's back guides one towards acceptance and existence of different knowledge systems, each potent in itself.

Research proves a learning process. A foreknowledge of the folk-life and beliefs in my position proved beneficial even before fieldwork was conducted. It enabled me to concentrate more on the lacunae that needed to be addressed. One realizes guidelines laid down are never absolute, as it becomes mandatory to create a space where a healthy dialogue in terms of theory and methodology develop and this necessitates fine-tuning to improve the research activity at hand. When it is an interview-based research, there is always room for a sensitive approach to situations. Many researchers adopt a sympathetic stance, especially while engaging with marginalized communities, furthering the power structure which becomes a barrier and hampers cognition; the real call, therefore, is to engage with an empathetic frame of mind to evolve conditions for meaningful research.



In Between 'Adopt' and 'Adapt': Research Methodology to Explore the Dynamics of Indian

Society

Sudeshna works hard to overcome the gaps in methodology to acknowledge the diversities of India

In one of the SYLFF Monday-meetings we were discussing about the methodologies we are adopting for our research. Before I could think of anything else, the word 'adopt' immediately put me in an uncomfortable position. Am I adopting or adapting research methodologies for my research work?

A good part of my research needs to document the testimonios of Indian adivasi women. I tried to adopt exploratory model of research while conducting the field work. But my chosen model, encountered with the realities of communication gap between

myself, who is a middle class, upper caste, female researcher from an urban university and an activist adivasi woman who has been confronting all possible adversities in life.

Her reluctance to speak about her past was another impediment in my way. So, I decided to go along with her from early morning to late evening. I attended her meetings, walked beside her in a rally. Also, I accompanied her to the remote villages of Jharkhand. I have spent long hours at her tea shop to observe and document her ways of daily life.

Gradually, I have discovered that her past is embedded in her present and her moment of present is in the process of becoming her past. This method has helped me a lot to explore multiple dimensions of personal experience. And I became aware of the fact that aesthetics of everyday of an Adivasi woman is intrinsically related to her aesthetics of social resistance.

My current effort is to adopt (without delimiting the possibilities of adapt) methodologies of oral history to understand the nuances of subjective representation of experiences, documented in the Testimonios of the dalit and the adivasi women. During my fieldwork I have realised that my methods of research should be compatible with the diversity and dynamism of Indian society. I feel, to analyse the diversity in the dynamics of Indian society the researcher needs to rethink the methods and go beyond documented secondary sources and adapt the multiple realities which in turn may help to develop an inclusive knowledge system through innovative approaches.



Finding New Methodology to Overcome Challenges

Purbasha supports conservation of old documents

In 1818, the first Bengali periodical Digidarshan was published. After almost 197 years later when a researcher tries to look into the history of Bengali periodicals, s/he realises physical copies of almost 3/4th of the number of periodicals published during the period 1818-1867 are no longer extant. They were lost due to the humid Indian climate and the lack of effort at preservation. Moreover, the physical condition of the surviving periodicals is not so good either! Sometimes, libraries and archives do not allow access to these rare periodicals.

This research falls under a relatively new interdisciplinary field called the 'history of the book'. This discipline encourages collecting and analysing physical evidences of printed material to understand phases of book production. Thus, examination of primary material is one of the first tasks.

In India, challenges begin with this very first condition of embarking on research related to history of the book. The paucity of primary material starts discouraging the researchers to some extent as depending only on the secondary sources is not good enough to produce a successful research output.

In such a dismal situation, an important duty of a researcher is to chalk out a flexible methodology in a step-by-step manner. Say, the desired primary material is not available; it does not mean research will freeze there. The researcher should try to find out other evidences that would also work as primary material. For example, s/he can read some reports on the missing primary

material and construct the history of the extinct material.

In the context of research in history of the book, the foremost duty of a researcher is to train her or himself in handling rare fragile documents and show responsibility towards them. Secondly, s/he should advocate preservation and digitisation of available material. Also, an updated location register should be prepared after doing shelf-check. These may not be directly related to the writing of the thesis but the aforesaid methods could stabilise the situation for future researchers and set a sort of a prelude for the current researcher.

Thus, these are some methods of finding new ways, preparing a base for future research and carrying on with one's own research in the midst of adversity.



Nachni Community: Exploring the Unexplored

Kheya engages herself in conversations with members of the community

I grew up and was educated in a city. The folk culture of West Bengal was known to me only theoretically. Ever since my graduation-days I have repeatedly visited Bankura and Purulia to explore and document the cultural practices, specifically the folk performances of that region. A whole new world unraveled before my eyes. I happened to identify the gaps in theoretical knowledge. During this period I met eight Nachnis in a village of Bankura. Nachnis are a community of performing artists of this region. I took a chance to explore their cultural heritage and in the process, I got a chance to overcome my limitations of theoretical knowledge.

Existing scholarship focuses on their performances and critical appreciation of Jhumur songs. But works concerning socio-cultural and economic problems of this particular performing community of Nachnis have largely remained neglected.

This is a very old tradition started from the zamindari period, since those days when the zamindars used to sing and play various instruments. Because these rural zamindars of the medieval period were the connoisseurs of various art forms including folk. But there was hardly any documentation in that period and my first concern was to overcome this chronological gap. However, in the duration of my visits I understood that the Nachni community has been living under the shadows of social stigma, fighting a lifelong battle for a proper socio-economic and cultural representation by seeking support from the government.

My research aims to find out why this folk tradition of Nachni community is on the verge of extinction and how this tradition is incorporating changes according to the choice of the audience as a survival strategy. To explore this unexplored part, I have realised that my research methods should follow a comparative study of oral tradition and textual forms of jhumur songs, along with interviews of Nachnis. I have also included the interviews of several audience members to understand the existing and evolving social dynamics of the community.



Research Methodology: As I See It

Mayuri, in her search for comprehending the stereotyping of rape victims, comes to know right methodology is the key to a good research

In my research proposal, I had formulated a research methodology that I wished to follow. It was only after I began my research in earnest, did I realise the futility or the irrelevance of the method I had undertaken for my research. I mistakenly thought research and methodology are the same activities. I had perceived research to be a method designed to reach the desired answer. Therefore, when I began my research it dawned upon me that a considerable portion of the research was contained in re-searching the problem. Re-searching the problem turned out to be an important exercise, because the research proposal was just a scratch on the surface, I had to dig deeper. The problem I am researching on is the stereotyping of a rape survivor. At a glance this might seem heightened feminist paranoia eager to label everything oppressional and patriarchal. The term 'victim' is also not as innocent as it seems and the patriarchal politics can be played out through it, which might inhibit a survivor's possibilities of justice. I therefore, devoted myself to the understanding of the politics of victimhood. To understand the politics of victimhood, I started reading on Indian feminist literature on rape; articles by sociologists and legal experts, psychologists, to understand the different ways by which rape can be perceived and the multiple contradictory arguments surrounding it. I had no methodology in mind and kept on reading to get a better understanding of the problem I was dealing with. I was open to possibilities, and therefore, at the end of the initial reading a whole new perspective opened up, and I could clearly see that understanding of victimhood would differ according to the understanding of rape. This kept my research going and I broke away from the necessity of reaching a desired outcome. This research has taught me that equating should not be the objective of the whole enterprise and that methodology has to be founded upon requirement, therefore it needs to be carefully adjusted as per the direction that one's research interests take.



My Methodological Journey in Potters' Locality

Soumya formulates a questionnaire to know how apart or close are cultural value and the exchange value of an artifact

Bankura District is one of the main hubs of terracotta artwork in West Bengal. However, the artisans face some key problems such as the inadequate capital, sluggish marketing and falling demand that are causing these marginalized artisans to abandon their vocation. My study here deals with the potential of this traditional art form to develop itself into a sustainable marketable form, through a study on the aspects of a cultural commodity that people value.

During my exchange programme in Japan, a Chinese friend spoke about how terracotta was originated in China and slowly

the craft propagated throughout the world, initially becoming necessary goods which then began to be treated as an art form with high value for its scarcity of production in the present scenario. This was the point which compelled me to think about this art form because I was unaware about the origin or present scenario of terracotta. I was under the impression that terracotta was intrinsic to Bengal.

Although conceiving this idea for research was important, but the heart of the research lies in the methodology we arrive at. The introduction to the research and the uniqueness of the splendid Radha Krishna Temples in Bankura are sourced in from various books from the Ramakrishna Mission Library in Golpark and also local publications in Bishnupur. My exploratory visit to Bankura has really helped me in conceptualizing my research and I have been constantly visiting Bankura since the inception of my fellowship. A major chunk of the work is derived from transcribing the interviews of target respondents in the Panchmura Village and Bishnupur.

Journal articles and books were accessed on the internet to get an idea about the value based analytical framework. To conceptualize the different values one attaches to a cultural commodity, feedback will be taken from urban consumers through a structured questionnaire method.

Given the timeframe, I will be putting up an earnest effort in contributing to the existing literature in this field for more substantial research in the near future.



From the SYLFF Assistant's Desk

Debanjali Saha, Undergraduate student, 3rd year
Department of International Relations

A successful academic programme needs good administration as well. The SYLFF programme opened a new world of learning as soon as I joined as the SYLFF assistant. The warmth and acceptance that I received upon joining the programme has made me feel like a true member of the SYLFF family. I have been thoroughly guided and trained by the JU-SYLFF Project Director, Professor Joyashree Roy. I can see noticeable differences in my organisational and networking skills. The journey that I have embarked upon has taught me the significance of teamwork and sharing responsibilities in order to work methodically. The professionalism that I have learnt through this rigorous, yet nurturing, process, has imparted expertise and enhanced efficiency on my part. The level of dedication and preparedness of the JU-SYLFF fellows towards their research has made me draw inspiration from them for my career. The past three months of being a SYLFF assistant has made me undergo a transformation from being a student to a professional person who strives towards merit in every performance. Being a part of such a prestigious programme, it has strengthened my belief that hard work, determination, perseverance and passion are the key words in achieving excellence.

Activities of JU-SYLFF Association (2015-16)

Monday-meetings

Monday-meeting is a regular activity of the SYLFF association. Along with the current fellows, graduated fellows also can join the meeting. SYLFF Project Director Prof. Joyashree Roy also makes time for the fellows amidst her very busy schedule. In these meetings we discuss our research progress and discuss various problems that we face while doing our research. It is a good weekly exercise. Mayuri took the responsibility to organise the Monday meetings for the academic year 2015-16 and record minutes of each meeting.

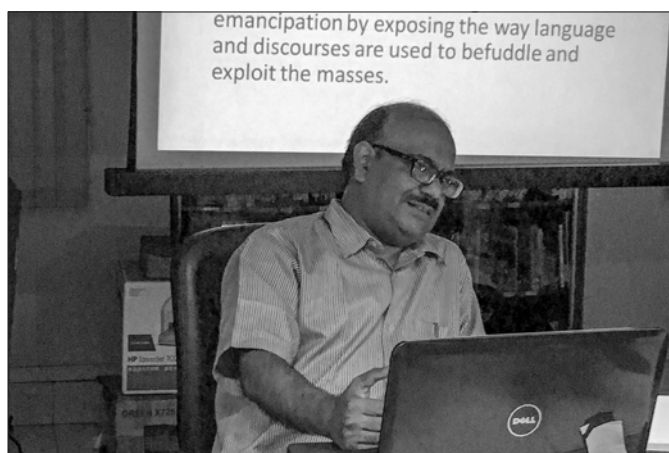
SYLFF Lecture Series

JU-SYLFF association tries to organise one lecture in every month. These lectures are very enriching for all of us and open to all. Soumya is in charge of organising the lectures. Please visit this link to find out more

http://jusylffprogram.org.in/jusylff/index.php/page/view_page/34-JU-SYLFF-Lecture-Series and follow SYLFF announcements.



The Rev Prof. T. David Ito, speaking on Suicide Prevention in the East



Prof. Partha Pratim Basu, speaking on Discourse Analysis



Engaging discussion during a SYLFF lecture

Social Action Programme

A Day with the Patients and Staff-Members of Premananada Memorial Leprosy Mission, Kolkata

2³rd February, Tuesday, we visited Premananada Memorial Leprosy Mission. SYLFF fellows have been visiting this hospital for years. Kheya was co-ordinating this year's Social Action Programme of JU-SYLFF Association. We had several rounds of discussions on how to make the day memorable for patients and for us as well. We thought, this year we must include the staff-members of the hospital as we must acknowledge the efforts of the doctors, nurses, other staff-members and the managerial committee.

An email was sent to all the SYLFF fellows, graduated and present to raise funds. We planned to take cotton rolls, bottles of antiseptic solution as gifts as we found out these are the daily requirements of the hospital. Also, we organised a lunch for the patients and the staff-members. The lunch was cooked at the kitchen of the hospital as food from outside might not be suitable for patients. We served the lunch to the patients. They were so happy and they wanted to finish their food and go back to the movie screening which was being held from the morning. It was a super hit Bollywood movie named 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan' (Brother Bajrangi). The patients were enjoying the movie thoroughly. Nurses and other members also came to watch the movie for sometime



Film screening begins...

as they had other responsibilities at the hospital.

When the patients were watching the movie, we took that chance to surprise them. We went to the ward and decorated the walls with floral stickers. When they came for lunch they were joyful to find out the decorations. We also gave hand-painted cards to every patient with her or his name written on it. All of us interacted with every patient personally and spoke to them. There were some teenage patients. We encouraged them and wished for them that they would soon go back to school. After the lunch some patients went for physiotherapy. Meanwhile staff-members and SYLFF fellows had their lunch together. After that the movie resumed again. We placed indoor games like Ludo and chess in every ward for the patients. It was really a great day for us.

Ms. Mari Suzuki (Director for Leadership Development, Tokyo Foundation) wrote an email, "I am so glad to learn that not only the current fellows but seniors contributed to this mission. Also, I deeply appreciate Dr. Roy's guidance and moral support as always."



With the staff-members: a promise to meet again



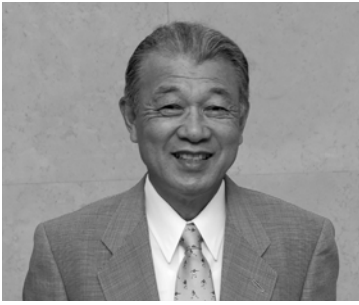
Hand-painted cards for patients



JU-SYLFF Fellows are serving lunch to the patients



Staff members enjoying lunch despite busy schedule



When Mr. Yohei Sasakawa (Chairman, Nippon Foundation) came to know about our visit, he wrote a letter to us and sent a newsletter on leprosy published by the Nippon Foundation. His letter really inspired us.

“I was delighted to learn of the generous gift of friendship that six JU fellows extended in making a goodwill visit to the Premananda Memorial Leprosy Hospital in Kolkata. I would like to congratulate all of you for displaying the kind of leadership required to bridge the walls that still separate people in different circumstances.

My deepest gratitude goes to Reep Pandi Lepcha, Sudeshna Dutta, Purbasha Auddy, Kheya Samaddar, Soumyo Bhowmick, and Mayuri Banerjee for this act of kindness. As you know, the patients at this hospital have been separated from their families and have long lived in isolation from society. I’m sure that they were overjoyed that young people like you took the time to listen and speak to them. The visit and the display of understanding for this disease was no doubt a source of great encouragement for the hospital staff as well.

I would also like to thank Payal Sen, Nikhilesh Bhattacharya, and Shyamasree Dasgupta—three senior Sylff fellows who helped make this visit possible. And of course I wish to express my great admiration for Professor Dr. Joyashree Roy for her tireless and selfless guidance of outstanding young students at Jadavpur.

Leprosy is a now curable disease, but discrimination and prejudice against patients is deep rooted. It is my sincerest hope that initiatives like yours will help to break down these lingering social barriers and lead to a better society for all.

I applaud your activities warmly, and I hope that you will continue to serve as leaders and role models for society embodying the Sylff ideals of academic excellence and social engagement.”



With the patients: bridging the gap