



Fellows

JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY SYLFF ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



From The Editors

Over the past five years, young leaders from countries all over Asia have been holding dialogues on contemporary social problems through Building a Better Asia (BABA) retreats. These retreats focused on issues of human security, sustainable development, poverty alleviation, capacity building, and efficient governance, with each retreat releasing a Communiqué. The ultimate objective of the programme was to nurture future leaders for Asia. It brought together young researchers, activists and those working in the development sector for an eight day retreat where they got an opportunity to interact with different people, develop and share skills of leadership and discuss critical issues concerning Asia and the world. A few of the JU-SYLFF fellows participated in the same. Since this is the last year of the BABA retreat we deemed it fit to have, "SYLFF Fellows: Leaders in Action" as an apt theme for this issue of *Fellows*.

The focus, this time, is on how JU-SYLFF fellows have matured as leaders, the activities they engaged with apart from doing research in their specific areas, and how, while doing research, they have continued to connect with people at the grass-roots level through various interactive experiences.

The editors remain grateful to the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Pradip Narayan Ghosh, JU-SYLFF Project Director, Prof. Joyashree Roy, mentors and well-wishers for their continuing support and encouragement. The editors are also thankful to all the JU-SYLFF fellows for their ever-enthusiastic participation and support.

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the SYLFF Programme at JU, visit:
<http://www.jusylffprogram.org.in/>*

Address by the President, The Tokyo Foundation

Hideki Kato

The twentieth century was a time when scientific and technological breakthroughs helped people around the world lead more prosperous lives. And the countries at the forefront of technological research were the ones that emerged as global industrial leaders.

The same technologies that once engendered greater affluence, though, are beginning to be seen as part of the problem, rather than the solution, as symbolized by growing threats to human survival like climate change and the lethal power of modern weaponry. We cannot continue on this path if we wish to avert grave consequences.

The first decade of the present century has witnessed the emergence of new global powers, including India. In the light of the challenges facing humankind, these countries will need to adopt new approaches to development, drawing on traditional wisdom to balance the pursuit of economic growth with cultural, historical, ethnic, and religious perspectives.

With its rich history and tradition, India can play an important role in shaping the world of the twenty-first century. And Jadavpur University—with its emphasis on both the natural sciences and the humanities and its interdisciplinary approach—is in a unique position to produce future leaders capable of spearheading such efforts.

We at the Tokyo Foundation will continue to offer our full support for the very important contributions that Jadavpur University is making to the Sylff community, to India, and to the world.

Turning the Catastrophe into Hope

Isamu Maruyama

Program Officer for Leadership Development, The Tokyo Foundation

I never dreamed that I would be writing this passage after experiencing the unprecedented disaster of the earthquake and tsunami. I felt powerless and at a loss over the enormous damage, the fatalities, and the many who are still missing. Those who have survived, hundreds of thousands of them, are also facing difficult lives at evacuation centers and temporary houses.

The scenes of the municipalities that have been swept away by the tsunami reminded me of the carpet-bombed Tokyo and atomic-bombed Hiroshima towards the end of World War II. Then I gradually realized that this must be a big test on the resilience of the Japanese people, and on how we can and should respond to such a traumatic situation. This is such a severe test, but as we rose from the ashes six decades ago, I am confident that we will be able to overcome this hardship and build a new Japan.

In this process, giving hope, I believe, is one of the most important contributions that leaders can make. I fondly remember my visits to Jadavpur University to see Sylff fellows who are positive-minded and full of hope.

I sincerely wish that they become leaders who can give hope to people who are disadvantaged and suffering.

From the Chairman, JU-SYLFF Steering Committee

Professor Pradip Narayan Ghosh

Vice-Chancellor, Jadavpur University

JU - SYLFF Programme provides fellowship to potential 'leaders' to deepen their knowledge on contemporary society. The fellows are not merely research scholars but multi-tasking leaders. They annually visit the Leprosy Mission Hospital at Kolkata and perform myriad activities with great zeal and rare excellence. Participation in various social activities enriches their research and broaden their horizon. Just to mention a few, Sreerupa Sengupta got a rare opportunity to be at the SYLFF Administrators' Meeting at Beppu, Japan where she brilliantly articulated her research on HIV & AIDS in a three country context: India, Egypt and USA. Payoshni Mitra was invited to 9th Building a Better Asia (BABA) Retreat to provide insights to the Asian Dialogue. Nilanjan Das has been awarded the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship 2011 for B. Phil. at Oxford University. Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay is continuing to add a new dimension to the history of development through his internationally acclaimed publications. In the spirit of true leadership the fellows are daring to tread off-beaten paths and they are opening up new avenues inspiring the future generations to follow suit. Duke Ghosh has been providing research support to many national and international agencies including UNIDO, SIDA, Louis-Berger Inc. Abhishek Basu is leading his own theatre group 'Noutanki' and building creative inroads into the cultural scenario of Bengal. Deeptanil Ray, a researcher and a talented cartoonist, got his first book published that has revitalized the genre of science fiction in Bengali literature. Shailza Rai through her thorough research on Madhubani artwork of Bihar is trying to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. Rimple Mehta is working on the agency and experiences of the Bangladeshi women prisoners in Kolkata to bring to light their subjectivities in the context of the socio-political problems of the third world. I wish to see more such young leaders working for a better world with their innovative ideas and noble vision.

From the Project Director, JU-SYLFF

Professor Joyashree Roy

Department of Economics, Jadavpur University

In the global SYLFF network Jadavpur University is the 67th SYLFF institution. The visionary campus initiative back in 2001 that culminated in 2003 through the award declaration opened up the door for independent and innovative future leaders. Today the JU-SYLFF fellows can be spotted in all global events of the network. In November 2010, at the SYLFF network administrators' meeting, I was asked to share the JU-SYLFF model for the selection of future leaders. I write here some of the thoughts that I expressed there.

As the JU-SYLFF Director I feel it's important to identify leaders but it is equally important to build a community within the institution to set visionary goals for implementation, so that the right kind of leaders are selected. We believe that leaders need a deeper understanding of social realities and problems. We follow a well-planned strategy to identify enthusiastic young minds so that they can pursue innovative research on the JU-SYLFF theme and emerge as empowered future leaders. When we received the SYLFF endowment, we thought this would give us an opportunity to work in a niche within the university system. But now I see it has gone beyond our limited vision. JU-SYLFF fellows have proved they can provide leadership in global discussion forums, knowledge pools and action research programmes. All credits go to our SYLFF experts who each year sincerely and enthusiastically try to select the right students with leadership potential. We have three independent reviewers to check for the academic quality of the proposal, leadership quality of the applicant, and compatibility with the SYLFF goal. The shortlisted applicants defend their proposal in an open forum in front of experts, other applicants, steering committee members, and graduated and current SYLFF fellows. Leaders need to be trained continuously, so we consider SYLFF to be a unique training platform for researchers with leadership potential. After we advertise, within a month we ask them to assemble on a particular day and try to get them to switch to a research mode. We show them how to write a good research proposal and conduct "progress report" workshop every quarter. The JU SYLFF Program provides mentoring support to fellows to think and act out of the box, which is really important for a leader.

We all miss the sincere passion and love that Dr. Anjan Ghosh had for the JU-SYLFF programme. His premature demise is a great loss for the JU-SYLFF community.

FROM IDEAS TO ACTION

Think, Learn, Share, Act

Sreerupa Sengupta

Doctoral Fellow (2008 - 11)

School of Women's Studies

BABA or Building a Better Asia: Future Leaders' Dialogue is a unique joint project of the Nippon Foundation and Asian Dialogue Society. It is a week-long retreat programme which seeks to nurture the leadership potentials of young researchers and professionals, encourages young scholars to articulate their ideas, provides an opportunity to interact with global leaders and most importantly helps them to appreciate and celebrate the richness and diversity of Asia.

I participated in the 7th BABA retreat programme held in Bangkok, 2010 aimed at 'building the common good in Asia'. The discussions focused on four key issues - shared prosperity, common security, ecological balance and human security. Each session was informative and thought provoking and helped many participants to come with new project ideas. The retreat included exercises on conflict management, communication, team building which helped me mature as a researcher. The field trips were equally inspiring, teaching us how to network at the grass root level and motivate people into action.

BABA aims at holistic development of the young minds, inculcating in them a shared value system for a better life and the 7th Retreat lived up to its fame.



Sreerupa during a field visit, BABA 7



Becoming a Global Citizen

Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay

Postdoctoral Research Associate,
National Institute of Advanced
Studies, IISC, Bangalore.

As a Doctoral SYLFF fellow, I had the opportunity to visit El Colegio de Mexico, Mexico for five months under the SYLFF-FMP programme. This gave my PhD research, on informal street vending in Kolkata, a comparative framework. I came in touch with several leading Latin American Urban Studies Specialists who shaped my career trajectories in meaningful ways through joint publications and collaborations both in English and in Spanish. My visit to Mexico City enabled a group of social researchers to speculate on South Asian and Latin American Urbanisms in the first decade of the "urban century".

In 2008 I received a Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral grant to conduct my study in University of California, Berkeley (UCB). This enabled me to use the library and archival resources of the UCB and gave me an opportunity to work with a group of promising urban sociologists clustered in the Berkeley campus. My visit to Berkeley, for the second time, altered my career trajectories. I've been part of a larger transnational urban studies project that seeks to produce urban theory from the global South. Berkeley being a SYLFF institute provided a platform to network with other SYLFF fellows doing path-breaking research in Haas

Business School. My SYLFF experience always provided the background of the ways in which I have come to see the world. My Fulbright experience was a second step to becoming a global citizen.

I Graduated as a SYLFF Fellow in 2006...

Sulagna Maitra

MA Level Fellow 2005-06

Since graduating as a SYLFF Fellow in 2006, I have had the privilege to retain links with the wider SYLFF Community through the JU-SYLFF Association. It is really heartening to know that while welcoming new members to its family each year, the Association is equally proactive in retaining contacts with its graduated Fellows.

SYLFF has been a watershed in my life and career. It provided a unique platform within Jadavpur University to carry out multi and inter-disciplinary research on contemporary issues in Social Sciences. The Association gave us the opportunity to come together as a group and contribute to society through various social action projects. SYLFF provided a dynamic and stimulating environment that mentored us to take responsibilities, be socially aware and adhere to international standards of professionalism. It was one of the greatest learning experiences that have proved to be invaluable in every walk of life.

Currently, I am a doctoral researcher and coordinator for the International Humanitarian Action Programme

(NOHA) at University College Dublin (UCD), Ireland. My role in the programme is to act as a facilitator between the students and the faculty as well as between the partner institutions. Through NOHA I have come in contact with students, practitioners and researchers from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds dedicated to the field of humanitarian action. Interacting with them has enabled me to appreciate the ground-level complexities and stark realities of contemporary humanitarian crises.

In many ways, my role within NOHA is a progression of the work I started within SYLFF-JU. I am really grateful that this continuity could be maintained.

SHARING IDEAS BUILDING NETWORKS

SYLFF Research Abroad (SRA)

Shubhasree Bhattacharyya

Doctoral Fellow (2009 - 12)

Department of Comparative Literature



With SYLFF Project Director, Howard University, Dr. Nahal and roommate Lunalva

For my SRA trip I went to Howard University, USA, and York University, Canada. In USA I planned to look primarily at the archival materials on work song traditions. In Canada my focus was more on soundscapes. My

journey began in September 2010. I stayed in Washington DC for two months and then moved to Toronto for a month.

As it happens in such cases, immense time was spent in preparing for the trip and there was little time left to imagine what it would be. My research at the Library of Congress, DC was extremely enriching. The same applies for the Smithsonian Archives. The materials, specialised departments, and supportive archivists and librarians made it great to work there. It was great to walk through the city, also see its beautiful museums, most of which one can visit for free. While at Howard I got to see their homecoming parade. This helped me connect with several performance traditions from the Black American context.

The vicinity of York was way quieter. I interacted with many professors. I also got a chance to work at the music library of University of Toronto. The Sound and Moving Images Archive at York was very beneficial for my work. The materials at the Libraries and Archives, Ottawa also proved fruitful. I experienced the first snowfall of my life at York. I hopped on a bus one day and reached Montreal. Strolling down the streets of old Montreal on my own is an unforgettable memory.

The best part about the SYLFF Research Abroad Program was the experiences I had in a different cultural environment and the connections I made with new friends. The Programme helped me perceive my research in a much wider frame.

Researching Global Shyamasree Dasgupta

M.Phil Level Fellow (2009-10)

Department of Economics

Utrecht University School of Economics (USE), the SYLFF institute in Netherlands was my destination for SRA in August 2010. The entire process of ap-

plication- corresponding with the host universities, getting their acceptance and finally being selected by TKFD for the award was a true learning experience. It proved to be a process of confidence building and realization of leadership potential.

My research aimed at developing a comparative framework of analysis of Green House Gas mitigation policies and their mechanism designs in India and in the European Union countries like Netherlands. Accessing the library and consulting the Faculty of Economics Law and Governance added significant dimensions to my final M.Phil dissertation. I got important insights from regular internal seminars given by the PhD Fellows and the external seminars. It was in fact a lifetime opportunity to hear Professor William Nordhaus delivering the Tjalling C. Koopsmans Centennial lecture on Climate Change.

I enjoyed working with my French, Dutch, Finish and Rumanian colleagues. The beauty of the Dutch landscape was mesmerizing. The everyday cycling from home to USE, the enthusiastic academic interactions with my mentor and colleagues, the lunchtime walk around the old city of Utrecht and studying over cups of coffees thereafter are some of the memories I will cherish forever.

NURTURING YOUNG MINDS

Agency and the Experiences of 'Illegal' Bangladeshi Women Migrants in Kolkata Correctional Homes

Rimple Mehta

Doctoral Fellow (2010 - 13)

School of Women's Studies

The porous nature of the 4,096 km long Indo-Bangladesh border allows for an exodus of Bangladeshi men and women to India. The motives include a push and pull factor centered around

poverty in Bangladesh, the promise of a better livelihood in India and the growing demand for labour in the unorganised sector. Estimates suggest that every day over 5,000 Bangladeshi women and children are becoming the victims of trafficking-in-human beings with false promises of jobs, marriage and other forms of security. India has become the recipient of trafficked women from neighbouring countries and also a transit point for trafficking overseas to various other countries. Apart from being trafficked, there is a large population of women coming to India in search of a better standard of living. A woman in Bangladesh, like women in many societies, is seen as a bearer of culture. When this woman decides to cross the borders of one's own country then how is this decision perceived to be related to the honour/*izzat* of the family and the community?

The present study intends to explore the agency and experiences of 'illegal' immigrant women from Bangladesh who are now under trial or convicted under section 14 of the Foreigners' Act and are lodged in prisons in Kolkata. It adopts a feminist perspective to understand the dynamics of the migration process, the issues women face once they have crossed the border and the intricacies of the Indian criminal justice system (particularly in the absence of a refugee law) and the way they are sent back to Bangladesh. Through the present thesis I intend to develop a theoretical understanding of the issue at hand and suggest action oriented recommendations for the same. I became interested in this issue during my field work days in a prison in Mumbai. It finally got an opportunity to bloom under the aegis of the JU-SYLFF programme.

Wall Art beyond Mithila: Interrogating the Emergence of Bhojpuri Art

Shailza Rai

MA Level Fellow (2010 - 11)

Department of Comparative Literature

The history of 'folk' art in Bihar has a trajectory of development, promotion and marketing which can be closely



associated with political populist thrust in Bihar. But while this is the state of affair; it is interesting to see how Bihar is evolving as a cultural expression of difference in similarity.

The similarity lies in the generic characteristic of 'folk' art itself. I have attempted to observe and contextualize the casual to particular interaction of mediums, the use of motifs and slow but intrepid weaving in of contemporary life into traditionally popular patterns of expression. My research is based on field studies conducted in villages in Bhojpuri speaking areas. The efforts in this region have yet not concretized ritual expressions into 'art' nonetheless it is moving towards it.

I have also followed works and efforts of city based painters who have tried to popularize the ritual art of this region on a larger scale.

Tradition and historical acculturation in Bihar are two important areas of my research. Tradition is not a constant but keeps on changing and transforming. Amongst the million ways of looking at tradition, I chose to look at it from perspective of production, transmission and growing populism of Bhojpuri folk art and culture.

'Justice' as a Moral Concept

Nilanjan Das

MA Level Fellow (2010 - 11)

Department of Philosophy

The question that I seek to address through my research as a SYLFF fellow is: Does 'justice' as a moral concept form any part of the definition of law? If we mean by 'law' legal norms that

govern various forms of legislative and judicial practice, we cannot be dealing with a uniform conception of legal norms acceptable to all sections of society, primarily because the legal system, as a system, imposes a certain limit on the accessibility of the normative thinking that circulates within it. It is from this diversity of normative conceptions that legal positivism arises. A legal positivist may argue that, if one were to argue against a legal order from the premise of injustice, that will be an external argument, alien to the patterns of normative thought intrinsic to that order. So, internally speaking, justice forms no part of the definition of law. In my work, I wish to examine the arguments in favour of and against various versions of positivism, offered by legal theorists such as Hans Kelsen, H.L.A. Hart and Joseph Raz. However, at a deeper level, I would like to urge that the legal positivists themselves attempt to import a negative moral value—and therefore less pronounced than the traditional ideal of justice—into their conceptions of legal system: for example, in Kelsen's writings on international law it is the ideal of peace and in Raz's later work the principle of freedom. As I scrutinize their efforts to replace justice with these moral values, I plan to delve into the conceptual relationship between justice and these other moral values and to ask whether, in the context of legal governance, the normative domain is irreconcilably divided between these moral values and the positive ideal of justice as conceived by traditional natural law theorists.

From SYLFF Exchange Student



Teresa Saunders
MA Level Fellow
Howard University

Upon meeting Deeptanil at the airport, little did I know that he would be the first of many other SYLFF fellows I would meet over the next several days, all doing their part to help with logistics. The proverb that “it takes a village to raise a child” should be amended to add, “or to help a foreigner around.” The concept is truly practiced here. Otherwise, I’m sure I would be drifting through the city with little understanding of customs and beliefs.

I seem to have timed my visit perfectly with the seminar season here on campus. I attended some of the seminars on South Asian politics and India’s relations with its neighbors.

Professor Sanjukta Bhattacharya, Department of International Relations as my mentor helped me to find the most efficient way to work within a dynamic academic environment. She put me in touch with others who provided relevant information on my research on US-India relations.

As a result my paper will now have more opinions than I originally had hoped to include.



Fellows at the Premananda Leprosy Mission Hospital, 2010

From the SYLFF Assistant



Sayanti Mitra

I joined SYLFF as an Assistant in August 2009. After eighteen months, I find the then hesitant beginner transformed into a more confident individual with enhanced communication and networking skills.

In addition to providing the Project Director with administrative and academic support, I co-ordinate with the Fellows. Sitting through the Progress Report Workshops has made me aware of different research topics, aided me to question the conventional belief systems, reshaped my way of thinking, given a tremendous boost to my analytical ability, built a knowledge-base, and has encouraged me to practically implement these analytical skills.

I thank JU-SYLFF Programme for giving me this excellent opportunity.

JU-SYLFF Diary...

What the graduate Fellows are currently doing...

Madhuchanda Ghosh currently the Head, Department of Political Science, Panchur College, CU, will leave for Japan for her Post-Doctoral research.

Duke Ghosh is providing research support to many national and international agencies including UNIDO, SIDA, Louis-Berger Inc.

Payoshni Mitra participated in the 9th BABA Retreat Programme held in Nara City, Japan.

Nilanjan Pande is pursuing his second Bachelors from the Department of Education, Jadavpur University.

Shreya Maitra is a Doctoral Fellow, in the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University.

Payal Sen is pursuing her second Masters from TISS, Mumbai.

Sebanti Chatterjee is pursuing M.Phil in Social Sciences from the CSSSC, Kolkata.

Neha Chatterjee is pursuing M.Phil from Centre for Historical Studies, JNU.

Premananda Leprosy Mission Hospital Visit, 2010

JU-SYLFF fellows visited the leprosy mission in December 2010. The fellows interacted with the patients, distributed sweets and savouries. The counselor of the hospital took us to the different wards. The facial expressions of the patients revealed their deep sense of loneliness. Each face had a different story to tell us. Their remarkable ability to endure pain has a lesson for each one of us. A Hindi film was screened for the outpatients. We also donated some DVDs of Hindi and Bengali films, to the hospital. This was a small step towards making a sustainable contribution for the patients.

Duke Ghosh at the BABA Retreat 1, 2006 held in Beijing, China



“The world is one family and all mankind are brothers and sisters.”

- Ryoichi Sasakawa



Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay at the BABA Retreat 2, 2007 held in Beijing, China

Source: www.buildingabetterasia.com