



## JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY SYLFF ASSOCIATION

### From our Mentors

The JU-SYLFF Fellows are pushing the frontiers of knowledge, breaking barriers between the different disciplines and complementing tradition with modernity. Abhishek is dealing with public culture; Ritajyoti has moved from his Master's level project on women's participation in Forest Management to the study of the Kolkata street vendors. Duke is working on SME finance in India and is working hard to meet the strict deadlines without compromising with the quality of his doctoral work. Madhuchanda has nearly completed her thesis, but she is gradually becoming aware of the new problems and questions that her research work is generating. The dynamism in thought and action is the hallmark of the SYLFF Fellows at JU. I envision that the works of the SYLFF Association will set new standards for carrying out quality future research.

**Prof. A.N. Basu**

Former Vice Chancellor & Former Chairman, JU-SYLFF Steering Committee

I am happy that Jadavpur University has completed three years as a SYLFF institute. In this time the university has successfully showcased several young SYLFF talents. The JU fellows have excelled both at the national and international arenas and have won several awards. Ms. Madhuchanda Ghosh visited Waseda University under the SYLFF-FMP Programme. Ms. Payoshni Mitra is currently visiting the Women's Sports Federation, USA to further her research on gender issues in sports. Mr. Duke Ghosh visited Peking University, Beijing to attend the retreat seminar: "Building a Better Asia: Future Leaders' Dialogue" organized by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the Nippon Foundation and was awarded the World Bank Support Grant to attend the ABCDE, 2006 at Tokyo. Ms. Sulagna Maitra is currently visiting Momoyama Gakuin University, Osaka, Japan under the International Exchange Programme. In November 2007 the university will be hosting the SYLFF Asia/Pacific Regional Forum.

I get confidence to see how JU SYLFF fellows are getting inspired by Mr. Yohei Sasakawa's life and have started working among the leprosy patients. Such action is welcome as it will bring out the true leadership potential in them and help them transcend the academic perimeters.

**Prof. S.K. Sanyal**

Vice Chancellor & Chairman, JU-SYLFF Steering Committee

Creative Minds, Vibrant Spirits and Will to Perform are keeping JU-SYLFF programme active and visible locally, nationally and globally. Small group but commitment to hard work and intensity of extensive efforts give us confidence on success of the meaningful journey that fellows have taken on. To make views on those living in the margins of the society heard in the mainstream, fellows have chosen a number of media: organization of consultative workshop, publishing of newsletter, bringing out SYLFF-JU working papers, publications in professional journals, audio-visual documentation, presentations in seminars and conferences and active participation in global dialogue.

I am hopeful this endeavor will be successful in projecting alternative pathways for development.

**Prof. Joyashree Roy**

JU-SYLFF Project Director

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**Remnant of the Past?**

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## In the Margins of the Streets of Kolkata : Remnant of the Past?

Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay

The margins of the streets of Kolkata are its footpaths. Today, these are taken over by hawkers, vending a wide variety of commodities and foodstuff and being an eyesore for any traveler in the city. This city centric occupation might be a deterrence to urban development but it provides livelihood to a large section of the population, who would be otherwise unemployed. Their existence, therefore, is a complex dilemma for the development of Kolkata

We typically think of street vending as a part of the pre-modern, traditional economic order that survives only on the fringes of the modern society. How could something that we think of as pre-modern be associated with the post-modern age? The nagging presence of this practice violating the existing notions of property and civic laws, despite being under constant attack, has prompted me to search for the historical routes of it in the development process and also its spatial and temporal embeddedness with the realities of Kolkata, a prominent city in India. If the existence of street vending define the modernist dreams of a planned city, or the recent turn on the model of a post industrial city, then, can we perceive it as an index of a certain vernacularisation of the notions of modernity (our modernity) and democracy (that gives the marginalised social groups a decisive space in the act of competitive electoral mobilization)? How do the groups like the street vendors, in our case, mobilize themselves to influence the policy? If such mobilization takes place horizontally by forming governmentalized community of moral solidarity to perpetuate para-legality. Then does such activism not challenge the master narrative of the formal sector labour activism based on

a particular class/group mobilization? If this is true, then, how can one come out of the existing labour histories with a somewhat legitimate formal sector labour activism? These are some of the questions that needs research. In order to historicise the informal sector in Kolkata, I feel it is important to connect the specific contingent events such as migration, agrarian stagnation and closure of conventional industries in the hinterlands of the city with the current changes in the global economy that have been associated by many scholars with post modernity.

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JU-SYLFF Association screens a film at the Leprosy Mission, Kolkata

## Smallness Disease in the Indian SMEs

Duke Ghosh

There is an increasing stress on the development of Small & Medium Enterprises (SME) in India. The SME sector has the potential to help the economy achieve targets in respect of income generation, reduction in poverty, mitigation of regional inequalities and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Most banks and financial institutions have been advised to become aggressive in terms of lending to the SMEs. Export promotion councils are helping these enterprises to find markets outside India. The governments, both at the national and state levels, are continuously announcing bouquets of benefits to help the growth of SMEs.

Although, as a consequence of such a supportive environment, new SME enterprises are coming up, the SME space in India is characterized by a high rate of morbidity. As per the statistics published by the Reserve Bank of India, during the 1990s, on an average, the percentage of sick Small Scale Industries was close to 10% annually. This calls for an analysis of the factors leading to such sickness.

For the SMEs, it has been found out that limited access to market and finance, and absence of innovation to support customers' expectations about product-price space are dominant factors for failure. However, on a deeper scrutiny, it appears that the "smallness" in the SMEs is a serious problem

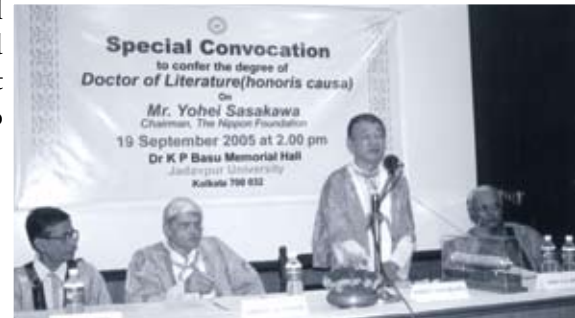
that, perhaps, is the root cause of other problems. It is the smallness that inhibits SMEs to look around for acquiring best practices for gaining competitive advantage. It is again the smallness that compels these enterprises to depend heavily on the promoter and block the flow of professionalism into the organization. The smallness also affects, to a great extent, the economies of scale that is crucial for survival and success. It is this smallness that characterizes an attitude of reluctance, complacency and myopia. The smallness also affects the risk profile of the business which puts a pressure on the ability of these firms to gain access to the organized financial markets.

Thus, any effective SME Development policy has to address the issue of curing this “smallness” disease. Infrastructure development agenda, in a developing economy like India, must be directed to promote clusters and networks of the SMEs – with inherent advantages of linkages that can make the enterprises harvest the benefits of positive externalities. The clusters have a potential to behave as one big enterprise – with collective learning overcoming the shortcomings of smallness of the individual firms. Many ASEAN nations have followed this policy and have benefited immensely. This is about building up the hard infrastructure. Parallel to this effort, a considerable effort has to go in the direction of building up the soft infrastructure – one that fosters professional knowledge in these small firms. And this knowledge must be dynamic, embedded with the continuous changes that the world business scenario witnesses. This is a must for curing the “smallness” disease in the Indian SMEs. The SMEs in India need to dream big!

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## Politics and Performance : Election Campaign in India

Abhishek Basu



Mr. Sasakawa with Hon'ble Governor of West Bengal & Chancellor of JU, Mr. Gopal Krishna Gandhi, Prof. A. N. Basu and Prof. S. K. Sanyal

The idea of democracy presupposes some sort of a relationship of a state or a collective with an individual. Though the basic tenet of democracy is the autonomy of individual opinion, to be effective that opinion has to be collectively legitimized. Political parties want to collectivize this ‘autonomous opinion’; their campaign seeks to influence the ‘private’ choice in a ‘public’ space. My research examines the modes of representation in electoral politics in order to analyze the patterns of relations among the government, political organizations and populations in Indian Democracy.

The elaborate and complicated election procedure in India from Panchayat to Parliament involves different methods of campaigning which depend, in addition to ‘issues’, upon the locale, the population and the electoral strategy of the party and the particular candidate. Urban and non-urban campaigns, campaigns of the national and regional parties employ different strategies. A poll campaign might employ/ operate from within a popular cultural practice. It is separated from the mundane and is marked by performative qualities. Sometimes, election becomes another festivity performed and enjoyed by the collective.

Dr. Partha Chatterjee wrote in an article that the bureaucracy, the judiciary, businessmen and professionals in the upper echelon and the English media are increasingly trying to sanitize the public political arena and to exclude “all the noise, smell and gaudiness of a publicly mobilized plebeian culture” from the space of citizenship so that the voting exercise will become a private act of a private citizen. According to Chatterjee, Indian democracy is quite different from its Western counterparts because the typical Indian voter is not a wealthy, educated, bourgeois individual as perceived by the Western democracies.

The differences in class, caste, religion, ethnicity etc., coupled with a colonial history, make the functioning of democracy that is conceptually based on the notion of equality, very problematic. The less-privileged multitude is not a part of civil society and hence they are not empowered to effectively intervene in the electoral politics. However, by definition democracy has to include everyone. But the nature and degree of engagement entirely depends upon the location of an individual. Nonetheless,

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certain amount of negotiation is permitted within this space. Electoral politics is an attempt to stabilize civil society ensuring the participation of the individual subjects. But various agencies try to control and regulate the power of choice that the individual and the collective enjoy due to this. Therefore, for the political parties, it becomes a question of influencing the population. Political theatre also depends on audience response and participation for its survival and a major part of this communication is performed in the arena of popular culture. This study of the electoral campaigns will focus on these issues through a contextual and aesthetic examination of the campaigning discourse.

## Water Politics In India: The Need For Statesmanship And Campaign

Sulagna Maitra

As we, the members of the present generation, prepare to shoulder the responsibility of carrying India into the future, it is crucial that we stop and introspect as a group, the kind of leadership the nation requires. As a Masters level research student under the SYLFF-JU Programme, I had the opportunity to analyze the dimensions of inter-state river water dispute resolution. The experience was rewarding in various ways as the endeavour resulted in a first hand experience of the mechanisms for federal dispute resolution in the country, especially regarding precious, finite natural resources.

Fresh water is a finite resource. The Indian subcontinent is home to nearly 20 per cent of the world's population but has only four percent of the world's fresh water flowing through several river basins. Availability of water is highly uneven in both space and time as it is dependent on seasons of rainfall and capacity of storage. A look at the fresh water resources of our country, reveals that only 28% of total precipitation is used of which 17.25% is surface water and that constitutes 61.5% of water put to beneficial use. The average annual river flows (1997) is 1869 BCM. On the other hand, domestic, agricultural and industrial uses of water are multiplying by the day. The present water requirement of 634BCM is expected to go up to 1450 BCM by 2050 for a population of 1.6 billion. Consequently the per capita availability of water, which stands at 2,200, Cu.M at present would reduce to 1500 Cu.M by 2050; a drop of 33%. Thus water is a critical basic natural resource that has to be efficiently managed in order to avoid scarcity. Water is also an emotive issue in India. In fact it is considered to be one of the three most emotive issues along with religion and language.

Eighty five percent of the Indian land mass lies within its major and medium inter-state rivers. As the political boundaries of the states do not necessarily coincide with the geographical parameters, nine out of the twelve major rivers are inter-state rivers in the country. This implies that fresh water resources have to be shared between states. Eventually, this fresh water resource sharing mechanism has led to contested entitlements and conflicts, especially in the southern part of the country. As the mismatch between demand and supply increases these conflicts will become progressively acute leading to greater wastage, violence and hardships for the common man.

India's experience with river water dispute resolution has been mixed. The success rate has been greater in the case of technical disputes than the non-technical ones which have often become a victim of over-politicization. The ultimate breakthrough in such case depends on political will. This political will can come, as per the admission of the politicians themselves, only through political "statesmanship" (and not just leadership) and continuous campaigning at the level of the civil society. It is at this stage that we as responsible members of the civil society can contribute positively to the process of sustainable development in the country.

JU-SYLFF members with Ms. Ellen Mashiko and Ms. Mami Ino at JU



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Fellows

## Experiencing the Rural India

Smita Biswas

As a Master's level SYLFF researcher, I tried to understand how traditional knowledge system can help in conservational practices. For field survey I went to six villages in the districts of Bankura and Midnapur in West Bengal.

I hail from an urban background. This was the first time I witnessed the village life closely. Viewed from a distance, an Indian village may appear deceptively simple. A cluster of mud-plastered walls shaded by a few trees, set among a stretch of green or dun-coloured fields, with few people silently working, ox-carts creaking, cattle lowing, and birds singing--all present an image of harmonious simplicity.

In actuality, Indian village life is far from simple. Each village is connected through a variety of crucial horizontal linkages with other villages and with urban areas both near and far. Most villages are characterized by a multiplicity of economic, caste, kinship, occupational and even religious groups linked vertically within each settlement.

To my urban mind it was interesting to witness the slow pace of social change and less emphasis on caste discrimination among the communities.

In many parts of India, girls now receive the same schooling as boys. But that doesn't mean society considers the two sexes equal. In the village of Mohulbani, I met Sabita, an eight year-old who was grazing the family buffalo when she should be in school. In traditional villages like Mohulbani, many parents consider education for girls to be a waste of time. They want them to graze the cattle or help gather wood and water. Few families are ready to accept the beneficial implications of education, but are torn between the forces of tradition and their consciences, which tell them that girls should be made to go to school. They also cannot make up their minds whether to marry their girls off before puberty, as tradition demands, or to let them choose when they can become adults. If they choose the latter, then they run the risk of becoming societal outcasts. Although the pace of change is accelerating, it is a long walk for the villages to enter the domain of rationality and modernity.

I will cherish the memories of visiting these villages for the first time, and I will always carry those memories along with me.

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JU-SYLFF members at the Scholarship Division, Tokyo

## Trip to Waseda University : Some Reflections

Madhuchhanda Ghosh

This was my first research experience at a University in Japan. Waseda is one of the top two private universities of Japan located in Tokyo. I visited Waseda University under the SYLFF Fellows Mobility Programme (FMP) from Jadavpur University to conduct doctoral field research. The title of my doctoral dissertation is India-Japan: Prospects for a Strategic Convergence. The primary reason for selecting Waseda University was its strong emphasis on research on strategic issues.

On arrival at Waseda University, very soon I found myself pleasantly settled and working on my study. It was all so smooth and organized impeccably. On the arrival day I discovered that the International Office and Facility Management Office had planned meticulously and had arranged everything I could possibly need from a library card to internet facility at home. It is interesting to note that the students work part time at the reception of the University Guesthouse where I lived, attending to the visiting researchers with great care.

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research. It enabled me to gather a body of very useful data. The field study employed the deductive approach.

Throughout the field research I received very kind cooperation from the host faculty Professor Yamamoto Takehiko of the Graduate School of Political Science who gave me the opportunity to make two presentations on my research theme.

Besides providing his expert supervision, Professor Yamamoto also introduced me to various people for the purpose of conducting research interviews. Perhaps the best part of the field research experience was the inspirational people I met. A memorable incident in this regard was that when I was given the responsibility to interact with the Nobel Laureate for Peace, Ms. Jody Williams.

Another memorable experience : I was given the opportunity to conduct research interviews with such top political dignitaries of Japan as the former Prime Minister of Japan Mr. Yoshiro Mori, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Japan, Mr. Yabunaka Mitoji, the Head of the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and many others. Their views are going to be very useful for the research.



After a day of hard work, it's pizza time for the JU-SYLFF Family

With regard to the campus life an interesting observation was that during mid-April there were those moments tinged with nostalgia for the graduating students and those moments of joy and trepidation for the freshers who are about to test the waters at Waseda. Drums reverberated and music pervaded the air as the student community geared up for the grand finale of freshers' welcome and farewell. Another interesting experience was meeting the Waseda SYLFF fellows Mr. Higuchi and Mr. Noguchi. During my stay in Japan, our Project Director at JU, Dr. Roy and another SYLFF Fellow, Mr. Duke Ghosh had come to Tokyo to attend a conference. It was really pleasant for all of us to get together and meet the TKFD team at their office.

In sum, the JU-SYLFF Fellows Mobility Programme provided me the opportunity to broaden my exposure and deepen my field of knowledge. The research trip to Waseda University was an extremely rewarding experience.

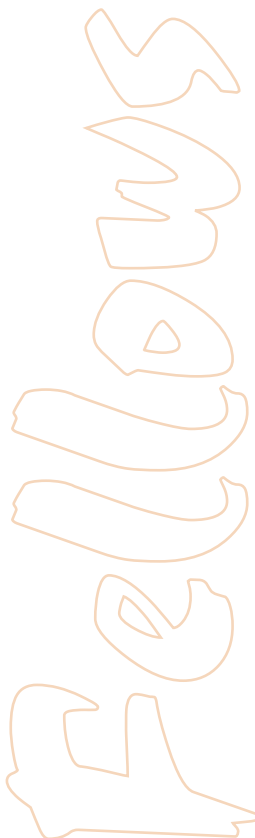
## The First Day at Momoyama

Manikarnika Kanjilal

Being nominated as one of the first two international exchange students from Jadavpur University to Momoyama Gakuin University, Osaka was a great honour for me. At the same time it had put an immense responsibility on us – Shreejata, a student from the Economics Department at JU and myself. We felt that we were not only representing our university but also our country! We started from Kolkata with the then Vice-Chancellor Prof. A. N. Basu's message engraved in our heart that we need to understand a foreign culture comprehensively, absorb the lessons from the international exposure and integrate it with our own culture meaningfully.

The travel was our first stage of what was going to be a lifelong memorable experience. As we moved to the far-east through Singapore and Bangkok, we could see how the people and their creation around us were changing. After 31 hours of total travel time, it took us only an hour to complete all the formalities at the Kansai International Airport. With every official and staff meticulously and silently dedicated to his or her assigned responsibilities, language was not a hindrance. This first impression of Japanese culture deepened greatly in every possible way throughout our stay.

It was a cold morning at Osaka and we got set to wait for Prof. Takaaki David Ito, Dean of Students and the Residential Assistants (RA) who had kindly volunteered to receive us from the Airport. We really felt ourselves fortunate and privileged that Prof. Ito himself would come. When we saw his smiling face welcoming us to Osaka, our home-to-be for the next 4 months, it was a wonderful experience. After a few minutes our RAs also came up. Koji Miyata San and Akiko Shimoura San started helping us from the day one to get settled in a new culture and system. They



were by our side till the last day of our stay always with a smile.

As we moved into our new apartments and got introduced to the system and our next schedules, we could understand how vital a role the International Center of Momoyama Gakuin University plays for the comfortable living and studying arrangements of the international students. The international center with its 11 officials is devoted to spread the vision of the University-“Fostering Citizens of the World”. As we went to the university and the center for the first time, all the officials greeted us with a great applause and expressed their happiness to see us in Momoyama. They took care of every detail to ensure that our life in Japan and our studies in Momoyama were enjoyable. Their administration and the coordination with different university offices as well as student organisations seemed to me impeccable. At the same time, even in their busy schedule, they always took some time out to interact personally with the foreign students and help them in all possible manners.

On the first day we also met our fellow students from nine different countries and our activities together developed a strong fellow-feeling which proved essential for the four months of self-sufficiency, hard work and cultural lessons and surprises. From the first day we understood the importance of independence in thought and action as we started our life together in Japan. Although we were strangers to a country and a culture, in the end all of us developed a spontaneous appreciation and respect for the Japanese culture.

**Manikarnika Kanjilal,**  
the erstwhile SYLFF Project  
Assistant, visited Momoyama  
Gakuin University as an  
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## A Learning Experience

Payoshni Mitra

In India, even after women have attained sporting success in different sports, it is believed that sports are created for men. Even today, girls are not encouraged, and often, discouraged to use their bodies even before they begin school. They begin to believe that their bodies are to be squeezed into clothes and are to be looked at. Naturally by adolescence, these girls grow weak and lack aerobic powers. They are often also not comfortable with their bodies. By the time these girls turn twenty, they lose bone density due to lack of physical activity and turn themselves into prime candidates for osteoporosis.

Things are changing slowly with women achieving breakthroughs in sports. In the United States of America, this gradual movement towards a more women-friendly sports environment had started decades back with the enforcement of the law Title IX. It is an anti-discriminatory law that helped impose gender equality in all programs (mainly athletic) in federally-funded institutions.

So when I began to study the sports culture in this part of the world, it was a sudden leap into a more advanced sporting nexus. Here, men do not have monopoly over sports anymore though many of them still boast about their physical strength compared to women. When I first stepped into the Women’s Sports Foundation, I was asked “What is your sport?” I was glad, I had an answer. But I knew most Indian women would not have one. As an intern at the Foundation, we would often play team games after work. It did not matter how well one played, one was always welcome to participate. This all inclusive attitude reminded me of one instance in Jadavpur University when I wanted to play soccer with my male friends at the university ground. I was laughed at. I was a girl with some sporting background, and I still did not get a chance, while boys who have never played any competitive sports could make the teams.

My experience in the Women’s Sports Foundation is beyond the books, resources and the library. It is a liberating experience where I had the opportunity to feel the thrill of sports once again - to be able to attempt and finish a quarter marathon, to be able to compete, to be able to learn a new exciting game like softball and to be able to dream of an India with a new generation of girls and women questioning the ‘frailty myth’ and finally destroying it.

I dream of a change today - a change that is inevitable. Thank you SYLFF and thank you Jadavpur University!



A JU-SYLFF Meeting in progress at the historic Committee Room number:1 of JU.

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## JU-SYLFF Experience

Elton Levingstone

*Elton Levingstone, a graduate level student of Political Science at the Howard University, visited Jadavpur University under the JU-Howard Student Exchange Programme- a spinoff of the Programme Development Award from the Tokyo Foundation. mystykyph@yahoo.com*

### **SYLFF Vision:**

“The world is one family and all mankind are brothers and sisters” (Ryoichi Sasakawa). All have the right to fulfill their basic needs for food, health care and education.

### **SYLFF Mission:**

To support the education of outstanding students pursuing graduate level study in the social sciences and humanities with high potential for leadership and commitment to exercising leadership in local, national, regional and international affairs, in public as well as in private endeavors. To nurture future leaders who will transcend geopolitical, religious, ethnic, cultural and other boundaries and will contribute to peace and well-being of humankind.

### **SYLFF Fellows Network:**

The purpose of the SYLFF network is to promote and facilitate interaction of SYLFF fellows and programs, locally and internationally, consistent with the SYLFF vision and mission.

I was asked to write a short recount of my experiences on the SYLFF Program at Jadavpur University in Kolkata, India. To do that in 300 words or less is a bit difficult because this has been an amazing experience in my life. India marks the 27th country I have traveled to and the fifth country in which I have lived. The Indian experience is like no other imaginable. The people, the food, the scenes, the culture - each day in India presents opportunities for innumerable new experiences.

Jadavpur University is one of India’s top five universities. The SYLFF program at JU, administered by the JU-SYLFF Project Director, Dr. Joyashree Roy, has given me the unique opportunity to look into the day-to-day lives of the graduate students and the rigors they must go through to complete their studies. I was most impressed by the cooperative method in which SYLFF Fellows regularly present and peer critique one another’s work in a semi-formal setting. It was my first experience to see students presenting their research to other students for criticism and assistance - the one practice that I hope to assist in reproducing at Howard University’s Political Science Department.

Outside of academic life I have had quite a few adventures. Seeing the Taj Mahal was spectacular, but perhaps the experience of visiting a rural village, Kalanabagram, in West Bengal countryside has left an indelible image of India on my mind’s eye. 60 percent of Indians live in the country-side. Seeing their lives, up close and personal, has left me with a completely different image of India. I owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr. Samantak Das and his wife for inviting me to join their family on holiday.

My time in India has come to a close. I am back in the familiar surroundings of my small rented room in College Park, Maryland, USA comforted by the memories of the friends I have made here and trying to share with anyone who will listen about the beauty that I found here. For this I must thank Dr. Anita Nahal for making this program available to Howard University students and Dr. Orlando Taylor for his support I also thank Prof. Ipsita Chanda of the Comparative Literature Department of JU for her valuable inputs concerning my research. Last, but most certainly not least, I must thank the Sasakawa Foundation and the Nippon Foundation for their financial support and vision to not only recognize the importance of international cooperation but also to step forth and take positive actions to bring our world closer together. Thank you all.

# EDITORIAL

The inaugural issue of Fellows was greatly appreciated by our readers. This was encouraging for all of us at the JU-SYLFF Association.

The content of contributions to this issue showcases the diversity of research interests among the SYLFF fellows of Jadavpur University. The second year of the Association was an eventful year with various activities. We have included a photo feature of some of the events in the current issue.

We acknowledge the support of the Scholarship Division of the Tokyo Foundation in publishing the second issue of Fellows. The JU-SYLFF Steering Committee has continuously encouraged us with insightful comments on contents and layout for this issue. The comments from the readers of the previous issue have enriched us. We thank each one of them.

We invite suggestions and comments from the readers of this issue. This will help us to improve further.



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