



# Fellows

Issue IV December 2008

JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY SYLFF ASSOCIATION



## Editorial Note

You have in your hands the fourth issue of *Fellows*. Apart from a slight change in design, this time all the contributing SYLFF fellows at JU were asked to reflect on a particular theme: *Mainstream(s) and Margins*.

Are there mainstream(s) of social or cultural spaces? How do ideas, artefacts, practices and people, get assigned to one "location" or to another? And once so assigned, do they remain there? What constitutes the margins? Where does the center end and the periphery begin, and how rigid is the division between them?

We have referred to "mainstream(s)" in the semi-plural to highlight the notion that what is dominant is neither necessarily monolithic nor static, and hence, the contours of the "margins" need not be fixed. But how do mainstream(s) and margins determine, direct, and define each other? In an increasingly interconnected world, what are the implications of maintaining, breaking, or merging boundaries?

This newsletter explores a preliminary agenda to address these questions. The idea is to apprehend the reconfiguring of social enquiry in the way old and new JU-SYLFF Fellows experience the dynamics of social relationships in their respective areas of research. We are also proud to publish in this issue an address by Akiko Matsunobu, the new Executive Director of the Scholarship Division, Tokyo Foundation. We are thankful to Professor Pradip Narayan Ghosh, Vice Chancellor, and Chairman, JU-SYLFF Steering Committee, and to Professor Joyashree Roy, JU-SYLFF Project Director, for their ever-cheerful support and guidance. And we remain grateful to Duke Ghosh and Payoshni Mitra, senior SYLFF Fellows, and earlier editors of *Fellows*, for their constant encouragement in bringing out this newsletter.

*Do help us improve with your comments, suggestions, and criticism.*

The Editors

## Contents

**Indian People's Theatre Association:  
How to Create a People?**  
Abhishek Basu

**History of the Unorganised Labour:  
Mainstreaming the Margin?**  
Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay

**Are Government Schools imparting  
Mass Education becoming Marginalised  
in Qualitative Terms?**  
Bipasa Mukherjee

**From Marginality to Mainstream:  
Women in Coffee-Houses**  
Payal Sen

**HIV&AIDS Campaigns and Funding in India:  
Exploring Relationships and Challenges**  
Sreerupa Sengupta

**"We, the People": Mainstreaming "News"  
and the English-language Press in India**  
Deeptanil Ray

**Estranged: The Mainstreaming of Erosion-  
afflicted Populations in Malda**  
Nilanjan Pande

**Development-induced Displacement:  
Reiterating Demographic Margins**  
Sreya Maitra

**From the SYLFF Assistant**  
Chetana Chaudhuri

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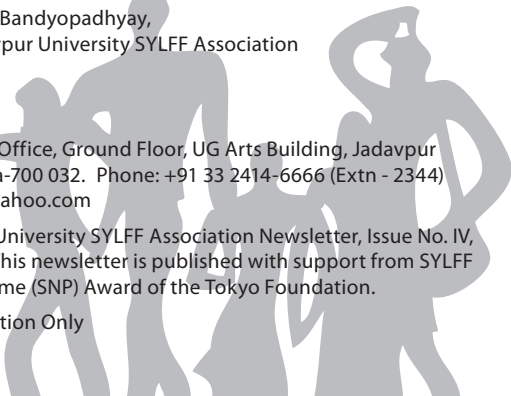
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## From the Vice Chancellor and Chairman, JU-SYLFF Steering Committee

Professor Pradip Narayan Ghosh

*The last year has been very eventful for the JU-SYLFF Programme. Jadavpur University hosted Asia Pacific Regional Forum in November 2007. When the global community is striving to achieve a solution for conflict resolution for upholding the basic rights of the humankind, the SYLFF Asia Pacific Regional Forum 2007 provided a platform for dialogue among the younger generation of fifteen countries on the theme: Human Rights and Creative Leadership. The goal of the SYLFF Programme is to encourage the young generation to become future global leaders. Dr Eglá Martínez Salazar as the key note speaker could go beyond the boundaries of academic analysis as she narrated her personal experience from least developed countries and questioned the existing analytical framework to understand the social dynamics. It is encouraging to see future leaders of tomorrow are putting their heads together to work out a path of development that ensures social justice.*

*We continue to be proud of our JU- SYLFF Fellows and I congratulate all the mentors who are behind their successful journey. The journey of our SYLFF Fellows through the global SYLFF-network is broadening their vision and expanding their exposure to varying development experiences and cultural realities. This is inducing them to think out of the box and we look forward to their valuable contribution in bridging the gap between countries, societies and human well-being in a creative way. Ritajyoti and Abhishek have shared their intellectual discourses with the El Colegio de Mexico and York University in Canada under the Fellow's Mobility Programme and Bipasa is currently visiting Howard University in Washington DC. Duke has been invited to Utrecht University to participate in a spin-off programme, Madhuchanda has been invited to 'Build Better Asia Dialogue' in Beijing. The Fulbright-Nehru Committee has chosen Ritajyoti as a principal candidate for the Fulbright-Nehru-Doctoral and Professional Research Fellowship for the year 2009-10. The JU-SYLFF Programme is strengthening the internationalisation of the higher education through the creation of globally exposed young minds. I wish a very successful journey to the SYLFF Programme and close support to the JU-SYLFF Association.*





SYLFF Asia-Pacific Regional Forum, 2007

## **Address by the Executive Director, Scholarship Division, The Tokyo Foundation**

**Akiko Matsunobu**

*As a new addition to the SYLFF community, it is a great honor for me to address the members of JUSA, one of the leading and most proactive SYLFF associations. Your theme, Mainstream(s) and Margins, poses a critical and challenging proposition, especially when we are witnessing dramatic and dynamic events all over the world. To me, history is the process of “margins” transforming into “mainstreams,” and these*

*transitions seem to be accelerated by “globalization.” At the same time, globalization is challenged by many problems that need to be approached in a harmonized manner: These include global warming, health, poverty and so on. So what is the implication for us? In the era when social innovation accelerates and social dynamics evolves further, we should steer these societal tools and surroundings for the benefit of our society.*

## **From the Project Director, JU-SYLFF Programme**

**Professor Joyashree Roy**

*This is the fourth newsletter of JU-SYLFF Fellows. The editors deserve to be congratulated for their commitment to quality and creativity. But as always, it is the team work which makes everything happen in the JU-SYLFF family which consists of three components: Fellows, the Steering Committee, and above all, the Tokyo Foundation. Any modern performance evaluation tool will record one hundred percent success rating for JU-SYLFF- Fellows. They publish quality research papers in peer-reviewed journals, engage in academic dialogue, social action programmes, and sustain team efforts.*

*The very evolution of the JU-SYLFF Programme demonstrates the overarching research question of the programme: “How to develop a holistic approach to understand the connectivity of Tradition, Social Change and Sustainable Development” in India’s contemporary social context. It is not only in India but also in the global context that we need leaders with broader vision who connect “Self” with “Society”. The very design of the JU-SYLFF Programme*

*allows fellows from multiple disciplines to come together to dedicate their time in weekly meetings, quarterly progress report workshops, and annual workshops to listen and peer monitor the fellow researcher’s progress with research questions, contest the analytical frames of the social processes, critically question the apparently benign development and human welfare goals. The lesson learnt in the course of these years is that left to automaticity, the process has chances of decay. Conscious efforts are needed to sustain dynamism and progress.*

*The SYLFF Programme provides us with a scope to convert brain drain to brain gain within the campus. The present challenge is how to engage and encourage these well trained, well informed, and highly motivated minds to lead the academic activities within the campus, once they have completed their research. I urge the JU-SYLFF Fellows’ Association to find creative and unique solutions on this.*

## Indian People's Theatre Association: How to Create a People?

Abhishek Basu

Doctoral Fellow  
Department of Comparative Literature

Communist workers and sympathisers founded The Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) in the 1940s as a part of the anti-fascist popular front. Its first bulletin recognised the need to revitalise “all that is best in our folk art and in the spirit of our people” and attempted to make the “folk”-arts at once the expression and organiser of the “people's struggle”.

Folk was considered primitive, pre-industrial, but the oeuvre could also be used for “progressive” celebrations of labour and of a “secular” ideal. While the “folk” needed to be transformed into the “people”, the oeuvre became a tool to reach the masses. It was a category of description, a mode of communication, and a genre of performance in the left's incipient self-imaginings, in its various public-domain cultural practices in Bengal, and for the populations it tried to mobilise through a supposedly-close and popular inclusive idiom.

The effort of inclusion, which accepted the foreignness of the language in which it addressed a non-folk audience, suggests a marginalisation, inherent in the process. Given the largely urban, middle-class character of the cultural workers, the subsequent tokenisation of folk, the efforts to lend voice to the marginalised did not work out— the rural population did not accept the idiom at all. In the performance of left wing people's politics, then, what is the mainstream? Who constitutes its margins?

## History of the Unorganised Labour: Mainstreaming the Margin?

Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay

Doctoral Fellow  
Department of History

Habermas conceived of the public sphere as a category of bourgeois society, not necessarily found in real life but rather approximated by several institutions. Not every modern nation mints the replica of the Habermasian European bourgeoisie, but, none have escaped the spectres of this category.

The ghost of the public sphere haunts us and one form in which it does so is the study of History. This discipline has the principles of public sphere inscribed upon it: documents must be verified, open, public, and accessible.

Thus the study of History carries the telos of the Public Sphere (or civil society) within it, a deep collusion of the discourse of history and the modernising narratives of citizenship, the public and the nation-state. This axis constitutes the “mainstream” in history. Naturally, the written history of Indian labour is imbricated in the narrative(s) of transition that privileges the organised/formal and perceives the rest as transitory waiting for their final subsumptions in the formal, i.e. civil society. It is a never ending process.

Is it, then, possible to think of non-civil social elements as subjects of history?

I argue, the way to play with the dilemma is to look at the process of formalisation and of institutionalised labour agitations as a transitory phase (i.e. from 1930s to 1970s), and to ask how this phase formed the

core of labour historiography. This exercise will enable us to see how mainstream(s) and margin constitute each other.

## Are Government Schools imparting Mass Education becoming Marginalised in Qualitative Terms?

Bipasa Mukherjee

Doctoral Fellow  
Department of Philosophy

Government and corporation schools, backed by informal schooling programmes in local clubs, are inclusive in mainstreaming the marginalised people of backward class (and castes). Many of them are “first generation learners”. But does that mean they are studying with those who have already started the tradition of learning?

Actually, a sharp distinction in the *choice of school* between students from middle-class and upper middle-class (for “English-medium private school” with better standard of curriculum and co-curriculum offers) and students of underprivileged class for government and corporation schools (with facilities like free mid-day meal, free books, free uniforms and many more) can be clearly noticed.

While private investment in school educational service offers high standards in curriculum, teaching strategies and overall child development, the government schools guided by governmental programmes and schemes spreading school education with “life-supporting aids”. Studying in English-medium schools is like joining an exclusive elite club with its distinctive symbols like music, hobbies, jokes and style of pronunciation.



SYLFF Asia-Pacific Regional Forum, 2007

The processes are different from those in the government schools for the general masses where there are inadequate funds, unimpressive teachers, lack of motivation in study, and with less hope in the overall system.

## From Marginality to Mainstream: Women in Coffee-Houses

Payal Sen

MA Level Fellow  
Department of Sociology

What we know as “third spaces”—shops selling not just coffee but also spaces and ambience — are qualitatively distinguishable from what they have gradually emerged from and have been transformed into.

Markman Ellis’s account digs up gender issues in these “third spaces” staged by the contemporary English

and French coffee-houses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — issues undetected by the Habermasian model of the “bourgeois public sphere”. Ellis stresses that those coffee-houses were establishments only for men. Those that did allow women permitted them as serving-staff or widowed owners. On August 1709, *The Female Tatler* commented thus: “...women – at least acceptable women – should not be patronizing coffee-houses...”

Today’s “third spaces” are *third* not just for men, but also equally, if not more, for women. Whether seen in terms of a capitalist enterprise that ropes in women to its profit-greedy consumerist folds, or in the terms of the ability of women to have successfully reconstructed the male-defined criteria for entry into these social spaces; they have broken the bunds limiting their entry into the male-dominated, previously tabooed public sphere. This only reveals how the

margins defining the mainstream shift down the ages as the power to define “mainstream” and “margin” changes hands.

This is women’s trek through the rugged topography of history — from being marginal, “unaccepted”, and debarred, in the 17th and 18th century “bourgeois public sphere”, to being an active, indispensable mainstream consumer located at any table in the coffee shops around. And this sets us on the question — is the fate of women as mainstream or marginal left in the hands of power-equation that is in a constant state of flux?



# HIV&AIDS Campaigns and Funding in India: Exploring Relationships and Challenges

Sreerupa Sengupta

Doctoral Fellow  
Department of Women's Studies

HIV&AIDS has emerged as an epidemic affecting millions of people worldwide. The crucial aspect about HIV&AIDS is that it is just not a disease that affects the body but is a fundamental issue underlying the sustainability of human development. This has compelled the policy makers to rethink their response to the epidemic from moving beyond a narrow bio-medical approach to a more holistic one. In this context, communication has evolved as an important intervention strategy, both in the developed and developing countries, to disseminate information about the virus and create an enabling environment for People Living With HIV&AIDS (PLWHAs) and their families to tackle the disease better.

In India, the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) was set up in 1992 to coordinate the entire AIDS campaign in the country. Besides NACO, various other government and international agencies have also played significant roles in developing effective campaigns. The concerted effort of these organisations have undoubtedly created a dialogue in the society about the disease but it has not yet led to a destigmatised response to HIV&AIDS from the civil society. This is primarily because the core concerns in these campaigns are dissemination of basic information about the disease and prevention of HIV. The issues of treatment, care and support, stigma and discrimi-

nation and human rights violations – remain peripheral or marginal in most of these communication programmes. Thus the media campaigns end up being eye-catching, non-empowering, top-down initiatives that foreground issues that are part of the global policy priorities.

Beginning research under the JUSLYFF Programme, my work will seek to explore the evolution and transformation of HIV&AIDS media campaigns in India over the years and the related issues of contextualisation and funding of these communication programmes by international agencies, and also by NACO, which significantly shape the approach and agenda of these campaigns.

## “We, the People”: Mainstreaming “News” and the English-language Press in India

Deeptanil Ray

Doctoral Fellow  
Department of English

Passing through varying degrees of enchantment, fancy and facetious entertainment, most newspaper-readers assume to arrive at “news” consisting of objective reports on events happening “out there”.

At a certain level this is true—the “spirit” of a cricket-match is “troubled” by faulty stadium conditions, somewhere a confused tiger does “stroll” into someone else’s kitchen. But as news-events are identified according to a complex set of criteria of newsworthiness (“news values”), tacit in news-house practice, events only become “news” when *selected* for inclusion.

These inclusions are privileged: they are sourced from *established* author-

ity, shaped by social status, by commercial success, and *organised*, with institutional apparatuses regularly scheduling spokespersons, statements and utterances (Fowler, 1991). Further, they are assigned selective importance, given the nature of the day’s advertisements, and arranged within rigidly defined print-spaces.

The status of “people” as sources is always accidental rather than marginal. The division between “inclusions” and “exclusions” effects an imbalance in representation. And that within a pragmatic model nurturing an *imagined* preoccupation with cultural spaces and individuals perceived to be like oneself, the consensual “we” pronouns assertively put across in editorials (Anderson, 1983).

Commencing on doctoral research from July 2008, thanks to the JUSLYFF Programme, my intention as a researcher is to understand the English-language newspaper in India as a culturally-complex artefact, and to identify conditions of its materiality in an era immediately preceding the formal introduction of liberalisation in India— the play of institutional forces, and of technologies of power and production, influencing its trajectory in the social construction of reality.

## Estranged: The Mainstreaming of Erosion-afflicted Populations in Malda

Nilanjan Pande

MA Level Fellow  
Department of History

Once the *morol* (village-head), and a proud owner of 300 *bigha* of land, Kulesh Chandra Mondal, of Kha-  
tiakhana village in Malda, has only



Release of *Fellows, Issue III* by Prof. S. K. Sanyal, Former Vice-Chancellor

a few “official” papers bearing testimony to what he once possessed, and what he has entirely lost now, to the forces of erosion. Being a villager, in the opinion of the “mainstream” city-dwelling civilians, Mondal belongs to the “marginal sections” of the populace. As he moves out with his people after the evictions and erosions, and settles on the resurfaced *char* lands of the river, his marginalisation increases. For these lands are unrecognised by the government, and its dwellers are further deprived of their rights, governmental identities and other civilian benefits.

The 74 years-old *morol*, like many other *char*-dwellers who have ample number of things to lament about now, has a yet more pressing problem bothering him. He is unable to marry off his son, Shankar Mondal. For few brides’ parents, even those living on the mainland, and themselves erosion-victims, want their daughters to have “identity-less” men for hus-

bands. Besides, the majority of *char*-dwellers being Muslims, adds to the problems of Hindu grooms. Thus, the “marginal” people living on *char* lands in Malda district, West Bengal, are being pushed further against the margin; effecting yet another level of distancing from the people who consider themselves “mainstream”.

## Development-induced Displacement: Reiterating Demographic Margins

Sreya Maitra

MA Level Fellow  
Department of International Relations

The thematic binary of “mainstream” and “margin” or core and periphery has proved to be a useful model for analysing the socio-cultural, economic and political dualities and

their inter-relationships in a country. The political system of India operates within the realities of a developing economy and the second largest population in the world. The phase of economic liberalisation and globalisation has led to the increased articulation of developmental projects like dams, irrigation projects, mines and industries by the government. This has been complemented by similar initiatives by non-government enterprises. But this process has largely been uneven and non-participatory.

Concerning the issues of development-induced displacement, the legal system in the country has largely been modified in favour of the “mainstream” through a prolonged series of judicial amendments and pronouncements. The legal sanctity of claiming a monetary return for the acquisition of land has been severely diluted by ascribing the power of authoritative determination to the political and administrative bodies, thereby compli-



**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 the well-being of humankind.

**Mission Statement of the 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.

cating the procedure for seeking any judicial redressal by the people who have been displaced and/or affected by developmental projects.

Consequently, the development process has victimised the already marginalised classes of the society, reducing them to powerless beneficiaries while the economically and politically powerful but demographically small "mainstream" has been entrenched. Islands of affluence have been increasingly surrounded by seas of poverty and disempowerment, rendering the process of development unsustainable.

**From the SYLFF Assistant**

Chetana Chaudhuri

My journey with the JU-SYLFF Programme and the ever-expanding SYLFF community has been a long

and memorable one. Ever since I came in touch with SYLFF, I found this a remarkable multi-disciplinary interactive space.

I have seen down-to-earth, sensitive and serious research fellows, and it has always been a pleasure to see them brainstorm and share their findings. My most cherishable experience of the last year is my active and whole-hearted participation in the Regional-Forum, 2007, where we, the JU-SYLFF community, acted as proud organisers. There were loads of rich and precious experiences.

Apart from my responsibilities as the SYLFF Assistant, my M.Phil. in Economics is now nearing completion, and I truly feel, the active and disciplined environment at JU-SYLFF has helped me a lot in becoming professional in my work, and has taught me to think and explore the areas and spaces beyond the boundaries of my own discipline and responsibilities.