

**INDIAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION**



Indian Anthropological Association

**Book of Abstracts**

**Negotiating Fieldwork**  
Unfolding of Institutional Practices and  
Contemporary Challenges

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University of Delhi

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National Seminar

# Negotiating Fieldwork

Unfolding of Institutional Practices and Contemporary Challenges

## **BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**

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## **Indian Anthropological Association (IAA)**

Indian Anthropological Association (IAA) is the representative body of the professional anthropologists in India. The idea to form this association was conceived way back in 1964 at Dalhousie, Himachal Pradesh when the All Indian Summer School was organized by the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, Delhi. Late Professor P.C. Biswas was the founder chairman of the association. The participants of this Summer School included Irawati Karve from Pune, L.P. Vidyarthi and Sachhidanand from Ranchi, J.C. Sharma from Chandigarh, M.R. Chakarvarty from Calcutta, R.P. Srivastava from Lucknow and many other eminent scholars. All the members felt that although there were regional associations present in many universities, a national body like this could negotiate well with the government bodies.

The Association continued in an informal manner till 1969 when it was formally registered under the Societies Registration Act with the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, Delhi as its national headquarters. Since then the association has never looked back in its journey in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge regarding the diversified conditions of human existence. It has focused on the understanding of the variety that the Indian culture exhibits, without ignoring the important findings of the world anthropology. It has been sensitive and responsive to significant conceptual and methodological advances developing from time to time in British, American and French anthropological traditions. This has been achieved primarily through its journal – Indian Anthropologist, the inaugural issue of which came in 1971 on the occasion of the birth centenary celebrations of Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy – the father of Indian anthropology. The Founder Editor-in-Chief was Professor Shyama Charan Dube. Since then, the journal has successfully endeavored to reflect in its pages the range and diversity of contemporary research and writing on Anthropology of India.

One of the biggest achievements of the Association was to organize the Xth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) in 1978 and to publish an exhaustive directory of the Indian Anthropologists and their work during this occasion. Professor D.K. Bhattacharya edited it and L.P. Vidhyarthi, the then President of the Association played an important role in this event. More than 2000 delegates of professional anthropologists from all over the world carried this directory with them to their countries. When the association was trying its best during the initial years of its inception to carve out a place for itself, the scenario of Indian anthropology was not devoid of other professional bodies. The Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society founded by D.N. Majumdar at Lucknow and the Indian Anthropological Society founded by Surajit Sinha are two such important organizations, which are still devoted to bring out research works in their respective journals. Indian Anthropological Association has neither tried to enter into any competition with the already existing organizations nor did it duplicate their work. Over a period of time it has developed a personality of its own. The collective personality of the association is truly national in character where narrow regional considerations and parochial outlook find no place.

It was only the effort of the IAA and its prolonged and persuasive interaction with relevant government bodies that in early 1980s, anthropology could be re-introduced as an optional subject in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) examinations conducted by Union Public Services Commission, New Delhi. It also took up a stand against the Indian Science Congress' decision to drop anthropology from its sessions/sections in 2001. Indian Anthropological Association (IAA) provided the platform for such resistance in one of its annual general body meetings held during the Science Congress that was organized by the Pusa Institute, Delhi. Late Professor J.S. Bhandari chaired this meeting as President, IAA.

Globalization has posed new challenges for the practice of anthropology and its practitioners have to respond, critique and intervene in newer situations. India which is emerging as an important global actor needs to lead in terms of knowledge construction. The contemporary Indian anthropology is facing several challenges. A time has come when the distinction between anthropologists and the people they study are fast disappearing. Anthropologists in the field are constantly facing the dilemma in choosing out of the suggestive mould of scientific enquiry and sentimental activism. Post-modernism as an alternative to the scientific objectivism can no longer be out rightly discarded. Further the role of non-governmental



organizations (NGOs) in the field of social development with special reference to the empowerment of the people is gaining importance. The responsibility of socio-economic development no more rests only on the government's shoulder rather the role of civil society institutions in advocacy, networking and empowerment has created a new space for associational activities.

The need of time is to create new symbols of which the members of Indian Anthropological Association family can be proud of. Recognition to the younger professional anthropologists, and creating their new networks beyond the disciplinary boundaries, providing them global platforms could perhaps be few of the measures to harness the human potential available within Indian anthropology to its optimum. Promotion of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity remain one of the important goals. Lobbying with other anthropological associations locally, nationally and globally would enable anthropology to have a greater visibility in the global arena. IAA has withstood the test of time and will also face the challenges of future quite successfully.

**The aims and objectives of the Association are:**

- To promote study, research and publication in anthropology in India
- To coordinate the anthropological activities in different parts of India
- To explore way and means for application of Anthropology in the large interest of the Community
- To promote the professional interest of the Anthropologists in India

Indian Anthropological Association has recently joined World Council of Anthropological Association (WCAA) in 2010 marking its presence in the international arena. IAA organized an international conference on 'Anthropology of Global Issues' in 2012. This conference was the happy product of collaboration of WCAA, Association of Social Anthropologists of UK and Commonwealth (ASA), Indian Anthropological Society (IAS), Kolkata and Indian Anthropological Association to discuss common global issues of anthropological interest. In future too we hope to take this dialogue further.

## Concept Note

Fieldwork in Anthropology in contemporary times is witnessing significant change affecting its very nature, conceptualisation and associated practices. An important way in which the identity of the discipline of Anthropology has been maintained is through its rich tradition of fieldwork. Over the years different departments across India have developed their unique ways of approaching and conducting fieldwork with students of Anthropology at different levels. Much of the future of a scholar depends on the ways in which such trainings are imparted in the field work pedagogy.

Despite the long tradition, departmental fieldwork and its nuances is one of the lesser discussed topics in anthropological gatherings. Every department strives hard to maintain this tradition through various strategies to overcome the bottlenecks and difficulties in handling it. Organising a fieldtrip involves encountering academic and extra academic challenges which have been properly articulated in various institutional traditions in the last century. However, much opacity prevails as far as its actual practice is concerned. Very rarely, if ever, colleagues across departments talk to each other on such institutional practices.

The long fieldwork, what could be termed 'team ethnography', has been carried out much conveniently in an annual system of academic calendar given the flexibility of time. With the introduction of the semester system, constraints related to coursework completion and limits of time have curtailed the length of fieldwork. Further the fieldwork team faces new challenges like resource crunch, time constraint, dealing with the rhythm of academic calendar and the season and more specifically the changing nature of the anthropological field.

The terrain of ethnographic fieldwork carried out by individual anthropologists has necessitated several negotiations around the issues of gender, caste, class, ethnicity and language. The reflexive intersectionality has brought out interesting pathways to be pursued in future. Ethnographers as consultants and advisors to the funding agencies and the Nation States have raised significant questions on ethical planes. The ethical questions are also surfacing in the field of selection of the research topics and genres of writing. Against this backdrop, it would be pertinent to discuss the intricacies in present and the future of Anthropological fieldwork in India with special reference to its many conversations with other disciplines.

The present seminar invites papers on these critical and emerging issues involved in fieldwork having significant implications for anthropological pedagogy and practice primarily around, but not restricted to, the following sub-themes:

1. Institutional Practices
2. Negotiating the Field
3. Team ethnography
4. Gender and fieldwork
5. Ethical Issues
6. Reflexivity

Soumendra Mohan Patnaik  
President  
Indian Anthropological Association

## Schedule of the Seminar

<b>Day I - 16<sup>th</sup> September 2016</b>		
9:00am- 9: 45am	Registration of Delegates	
9:45-11:15am	<b>Inauguration</b>	
	Welcome: <b>Dr. Avitoli G Zhimo</b>	
	About the Seminar: <b>Prof. S. M Patnaik</b>	
	Special Remarks by the Head : <b>Prof. V K Srivastava</b>	
	Inaugural Address: <b>Prof. T N Madan</b>	
	Chairperson's Remarks : <b>Prof. Sarit K Chaudhuri</b>	
	Vote of Thanks: <b>Dr. Indrani Mukherjee</b>	
	Rapporteurs- Sonali Kamble, RuchikaTripathi	
<b>Tea (11:15am to 11:30am)</b>		
<b>Session I- Negotiating the Field</b>		
<b>Chair- Prof. T. N. Madan</b>		
<b>Discussant- Dr.Sucheta Sen Chaudhuri</b>		
Rapporteurs- Kanato Chophy		
11:30am -1:30 pm	Rukmini Sen	Experiencing Field(s), Experiences in Field: Re-constituting the boundaries of the field
	Abhik Ghosh	Fieldwork, Holism and Anthropology: A Note on Detail, Time and Relevance in Science
	Pratap Chandra Behera	Slum as a Field and Fieldwork as a Method: Perspectives on Everyday life in a Slum in Delhi
	Simashree Bora	Everyday Negotiation in the Field: An Account from Majuli River Islands
	JayashreeMazumder	Biological Field Work- A Vista of Eye
<b>Lunch (1:30 pm to 2:00 pm)</b>		
<b>Session II-Institutional Practices</b>		
<b>Chair- Prof. Vinay Srivastava</b>		
<b>Discussant- Dr. Abhik Ghosh</b>		
Rapporteurs- Harmeet Kaur		
2.00 pm - 3.45 pm	Sukant Chaudhary	Doing Team Ethnography For A Management School
	Shalina Mehta	Withering Fieldwork tradition in Department of Anthropology , Punjab University
	A. Chellaperumal	Two decades of Fieldwork tradition at Masters Level in Pondicherry University
	Sucheta Sen	Interdisciplinary Institutional Practices and New Scope of Research
	Sarit K Chaudhuri	Framing Fieldwork: Institutional Imperative and Disciplinary concerns
	Nilika Mehrotra	Improvising Fieldwork Pedagogy
	Prof. S. M. Patnaik	Team Ethnography as an Extension of Institutional Space: Exploring the Power Dynamics
<b>Tea (3.45 pm to 4.00 pm)</b>		
<b>Session III- Shades of Ethnography</b>		
<b>Chair- Prof. NilikaMehrotra</b>		
<b>Discussant- Dr. R. P. Mitra</b>		
Rapporteurs- Richa Joshi, Dharna Sahay		
4.00 pm - 5.45 pm	G. KanatoChophy	Reconsidering Auto-ethnographic Researches in North East India
	Indrani Mukherjee and Supriya Singh	Understanding Team Ethnography: Reflections from Field Research
	Arnav Das Sharma, PratichiMajumdar, RituparnaPatgiri et. al	A University Campus as a Gendered Field: Negotiating Fieldwork in a Familiar Space

	Snigdha Vishnoi	Fieldwork Experiences : Case Study of an Anthropological Quest on Organizational Culture
	Debottam Saha	Speaking Margin', 'Living through narrative', 'Literary-Ethnography'; Titash, Malo and Advaitya
	Thanzeel Nazer	Constructing the Anthropology as Analytical category': Reading Talal Asad and His Interlocutors
	Lakshmi P.R	Thinking 'Anthropologically' Through the Ruins of Firoz Shah Kotla : Materials in Conversation with Jinns, Ants and Insaan
<b>IAA Business Session</b> <b>Chair- Dr. Manoj Kumar Singh</b>		
5.45 pm - 6.45 pm	Supriya Singh	Anthropology without Borders
	Avitoli G Zhimo	Young Anthropologist Forum
	Indrani Mukherjee	Ethical Code of IAA
	Rajnikant Pandey	Regional Chapter and Membership
<b>Day II- 17<sup>th</sup> September 2016</b>		
<b>Session IV-Fieldwork: Contemporary Challenges I</b> <b>Chair- Prof. Sukant Chaudhary</b> <b>Discussant- Dr. Vinita Singh</b> <b>Rapporteurs- Sampriti Panda</b>		
9.00 am - 10.30 am	Ansar Alam	Contemporary Challenges of Fieldwork in Urban Area
	Dibyajyoti Das	Negotiating Fieldwork in the Course of Assam Elections 2016
	Drabita Dutta	An Ethnographic Work on Celebrating Puberty Rituals in Western Assam
	Himanshu Gautam	Establishing and Maintaining Rapport: Benefits and Challenges Encountered as a Female Researcher.
	Richa Joshi	Being Familiar Stranger among Tharus : Glimpses from Fieldwork on Traditional Agricultural Knowledge
	Kennedy Singh	Reflections on Fieldwork Experiences in Administrative Research Training Institutes
<b>Session V- Fieldwork: Contemporary Challenges II</b> <b>Chair- Prof. A.K.Kapoor</b> <b>Discussant- Prof. Gautam Kshatriya</b> <b>Rapporteurs- Rachna, Eche Konyak</b>		
10.30 am - 11.30am	Chitra Kadam	Denude Self in the Field: A Reflexive Account
	Prithibi Pratibha Gogoi	Reflexivity and the Field Experience: An Encounter with the Caste
	Priyanka Adhikary	Methodological Concerns in Studying Gender-based Violence against Women in Indian Context
	Sampriti Panda	Comforting the Discomfort while Negotiating Fieldwork: Experiences from Juang Tribe
	Shweta Rani Khatri	Living with mosquito: Exploring Multispecies Relationship in the Field
	Ankita Mehta	Negotiating Fieldwork in Unorganised Sector: An Anthropological Study of Migrant Construction Workers in Delhi
<b>Tea (11.30 am -11.45 am)</b>		
<b>Session VI-Situating Reflexivity</b> <b>Chair-Prof. Shalina Mehta</b> <b>Discussant- Dr. Avnish Kumar</b> <b>Rapporteurs- Supriya Singh, Sonika</b>		
11.45 am - 1.15 pm	Charu Sawhney	Displaced Kashmiri Persons: Reflexivity in the Experience of Displacement
	Deepshikha Agarwal	Reflexive Anthropology: Some Experiences from Bastar Fieldwork
	Upashana Khanikar	The Nuances of Power Relations: A Case Study of the Pnars

	Bhargabi Das	Authority of the Researcher? : A Non-dialectical Approach of Studying the Idea of Authority between the Researcher and Researched.
	Pushpanjali	Protests as Everyday Practices: An Exploration of Protests at Jantar Mantar
	Vinita Singh	Doing Fieldwork: Issues, Challenges and Constraints
<b>Lunch (1.15 pm - 1.45 pm)</b>		
<b>Session VII-Gender and Fieldwork</b> <b>Chair- Prof. Kirandeep Singh</b> <b>Discussant – Dr. Deepshikha Agarwal</b> <b>Rapporteur- Ankita Mehta</b>		
1.45 pm - 3.00 pm	Sumit Saurabh Srivastava	Male Feminist's Tales from the Field
	Aastha Dang	Exploring Gender in Everyday Life: Notes from Fieldwork on the Delhi Metro
	BhumikaChandola	The interplay of Fieldwork and Gender politics : Ethical, Social and Structural Challenges
	Dharna Sahay	Understanding the Discourses on Dalit women in Anthropology: Critical Reflections on Fieldwork
	Harmeet Kaur	Gendered body and Age in the Fieldwork: Embodied Experiences of Women
	SarikaNegi	Experiencing Street, Children on Street and Fieldwork Challenges
	KhyatiTripathi	‘Challenging Field’ or a ‘Field with Challenges’: A Personal Account
<b>Section VIII- Ethical Issues in Ethnographic Research</b> <b>Chair- Prof. A. Chellaperumal</b> <b>Discussant – Dr. Pushpanjali</b> <b>Rapporteurs- Sarika Negi</b>		
3.00 pm - 4.15pm	Supriya Singh and Indrani Mukherjee	Ethics and Fieldwork: Dilemmas and Negotiation.
	AasthaTyagi	Field, Ethics, and Self: Making a Case for Guilt in Research Methodology
	Chakravarti Mahajan	Money, Time and Fieldwork: Exploring the margins of Institutional Practices and Individual Freedom
	Anasuya Sreedhar	Reflexivity: Challenges and Negotiations in the Field of Media
	Rajanikant Pandey	Multi-sited Connections: Following Steel from Noamundi to New Delhi
<b>Tea (4.15 pm -4.30 pm)</b>		
Panel Discussion (4:30 -6:00 pm) <b>Future of Ethnography</b> <b>Chair-Prof. D. K. Bhattacharya</b> Panellist- Prof. Nilika Mehrotra, Prof. P. K. Nayak, Dr. Avnish Kumar Rapporteurs- Supriya, Rajnikant, Indrani		
<b>Vote of Thanks and Certificate Distribution ( 6:00-6:45 pm)</b>		



## *Abstracts*

### **Session I- Negotiating the Field**

#### **Experiencing Field(s), Experiences in Field: Re-constituting the boundaries of the field**

*Rukmini Sen, School of Liberal Studies, Ambedkar University Delhi*

The field site and the duration that is spent in the field has been undergoing transformation from the time and way conventional anthropology and ethnographic practices had conceived of its existence. From studying the 'other' community to using ethnographic tools among 'my' community, social anthropology is witnessing multiple and rapid modifications. The purpose of this paper, however, is to re-constitute the meaning of field itself. Is the field always out there, as a concrete entity, outside to/of the researcher to be seen, heard, studied, analyzed? Is the field also not the researcher herself? If sociology and social anthropology are distinct social science disciplines which interact with human beings while in the field, is the researcher's self not impacted and transformed also when in the field or while reflecting on the field? I want to argue through this paper, that self is as much a site of research as the other, apart from the self. And if through research one turns the gaze inwards, the experience of the field change. What happens when experience becomes a methodological tool by itself to push the boundaries of field and make a space even if at the margins of research?

#### **Fieldwork, Holism and Anthropology: A Note on Detail, Time and Relevance in Science**

*Abhik Ghosh, Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, Panjab University*

Fieldwork in Anthropology is extremely holistic and envelopes the individual at the moment of immersion. This is what gives the best quality data. Unfortunately science research has yet to take this kind of work into cognizance. It sees scientific work as laboratory-oriented with regular and frequent publications in high Impact Factor journals. For many reasons, this is unrealistic, difficult to achieve in reality and extremely stressful for any academic. Negotiations begin not only with the scientific community about the nature of the discipline but also about the nature of the work being carried out, the time taken, and the details required for a good research to be completed. Such negotiations thus must be extended through forming pressure groups that put forth these views at the level of the state.

#### **Slum as a Field and Fieldwork as a Method: Perspectives on Everyday life in a Slum in Delhi**

*Pratap Chandra Behera Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Delhi*

Slum represents a terrain of habitation, livelihoods, communities, and power relations. It is spatially bounded and socially excluded. Inhabitants in a slum show a form of struggle for survival and self-development and, in the process, exhibit an everyday form of negotiation and flexibility. Slum and the non-slum habitations are mutually interdependent, a complex process in the life and economy of a city or urban space. Therefore, life in a slum is a sum total of process within its spatial-temporal specificity and external influences upon it. In social

sciences, fieldwork is a systematic step to see the social world in time and space. In the process, it facilitates and develops our comprehension of the social world and adds knowledge to the respective fields. In social work discipline, fieldwork also involves being there and being with the people. Whatever the case may be, in the context of fieldwork, a usual question would be what constitutes 'field'. Understanding this concept from theoretical and operational perspectives helps a social worker to be effective in intervention. Though the concept was originally from physical sciences, over the time, it has entered into disciplines or subjects of behavioural sciences. There are deliberations on field as a concept in social work literature too. What is required is to have refinements in understanding the concept of field in fieldwork and contextualize its application in changing time and circumstances. Developing an understanding of slums is a requirement to be operational and effective as a social worker. The proposed paper is an effort to substantiate the fieldwork experiences in a slum in Delhi and reflect upon the concept and meaning of field. This would further deliberate upon methodological imperatives in doing fieldwork or developing fieldwork as a method.

### **Everyday Negotiations in the Field: An Account from Majuli River Island**

*Simashree Bora, Guest Faculty, South Asian University, New Delhi*

This paper aims to reflect at risk, vulnerability and uncertain nature of field and fieldwork. While doing so it draws from the experiences of conducting fieldwork in Majuli as a part of PhD research. Majuli, a river island in Assam is situated in the midst of the river Brahmaputra and is considered to be the largest inhabited river island in the world and the hub of the major Vaishnavite monasteries in Assam. The island offers many interesting insights into numerous uncertainties that a researcher confronts as part of his/her fieldwork. Majuli as a landscape is continuously shifting and changing because of yearly floods and erosion, and this challenges the very notion of a 'fixed field' and in turn brings many elements of doubts and anxiety. The field therefore, brings the complex interplay of such emotions and problems equally reflected in the everyday life of the inhabitants. The paper looks at the nuances of everyday negotiations thus reflecting on the varied and complex interface between the researcher and the researched. The paper includes some experiential accounts from the field to highlight aspects of geographical vulnerability, existence of the sacred monasteries and its impacts on conceptualising ideas of field and fieldwork.

### **Biological Field Work- A Vista of Eye**

*Jayashree Mazumder, M.Phil Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

Fieldwork is about getting out into the real world and interacting with people and nature. Fieldwork is a key method for design research and should be considered first above all others. The understanding that one can gain from being out in the real world is profoundly different from traditional surveys and focus groups. Biology being the study of life, field work is very relevant in such field as all one can learn in such course is my mere observation. Biological field work varies with subject, it can be the study of plants alone which is dealt by botanist or the study of animals as dealt by a zoologist. In an anthropological field work, the study is conducted on human being, their culture, their tradition, their food and even their life style and language. A botanist or a zoologist could conduct a field work on any species but in an anthropological field work problem arises as humans are cosmopolitan in nature and so the species is universal, it is only the culture that marks all the base of difference. While conducting an anthropological field work, the most important factor one should keep in mind is how the culture marks the difference and what could be the possible findings and results that could lead to variation within the species, and to obtain it, is a difficult task as humans have the right to refusal and a lot of legal

code is required while conducting studies on humans. Anthropological field work does not only deals with culture but it also deals with fossil finding and excavation the beginning of culture and how it could have emerged and lead to the wide array of diversity. Human beings are different from other organisms on earth because of the presence of culture. This is the uniqueness of this species which is the hallmark of the subject of anthropology. This article is an outcome of experience seen among the different fieldwork conducted by me in different fields of biology. Being an Anthropologist, I feel, the need for ethical issues was much tough than the field work conducted in zoology and botany as mentioned earlier, in Anthropological study, the informant itself has the full right to walk away at anytime. Besides that, the finding also varied with each subject but when it came to an animal or plant, the variation was only among the species and not among the individual. The method of studying Anthropology has also changed as in the form of method, sampling technique and also in sampling size. Methods of data collection have also taken up changes since past. The most interesting part during the field work in Anthropology is that language plays a very important role which seems to be absent for other biological field work. This is a very unique field of research as merely being a human, is not enough to be a good Anthropologist, it's more of culture, nature, gender and scientific orientation which all comes into play while conducting an anthropological field work.

#### **Session II-Institutional Practices**

##### **Doing Team Ethnography for a Management School**

*Sukant K Chaudhury, Professor of Sociology, Lucknow University*

Ethnographic method has been the backbone of anthropological research since inception, particularly through observation in general and participant observation in particular. The method emphasizes on exploring the nature of social phenomenon and collects mainly unstructured data, subsequently providing description through interpretation in terms of functional analysis of various human actions and interactions. We have come across through classical ethnography of Boas, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown era to postmodern ethnography of narrative and interpretative methods. Team ethnography enters into a group of students working in a field on various aspects of a society. This presentation attempts to find out the challenges of doing team ethnography among MBA (Rural Development and Management) students of five batches 2006-2012 at Lucknow University. The challenges of doing ethnography among management students through anthropological insights have been enormous in the sense they have been subjected to the self and the phenomenon. Every batch had two field works on two semesters: 3rd and 4th semester. Every batch worked in two villages, one each in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand to provide a comparative account of rural development and management in two states. In fact most of them are employed due to their grasp on grass root knowledge of knowing people's perspective.

##### **Withering Fieldwork Tradition in the Department of Anthropology, Punjab University**

*Shalina Mehta, Formerly Professor of Anthropology, Punjab University*

Epistemology of Anthropology is intertwined with the tradition of fieldwork, post the era of armchair anthropology. Ethnographic methodology based on empirical research has acquired iconic stature for generating accountability and authenticity through the narratives of people and material evidences collected from various sites. Department of Anthropology founded at Chandigarh, by Late Prof. S.R.K. Chopra in 1962 diligently nurtured the tradition taking regular

field visits to Sivalik Hills in search of human fossil remains. Department achieved commendable academic reputation for several fossil finds and published in reputed journals like *Nature*. Fieldwork was not only part of the research tradition to be pursued by several research scholars but was also integrated as mandatory course work for postgraduate students. Dissertations based on fieldwork in Kinnur, Leh and Mallana are part of the department repository beginning 1962. My colleagues and former students of the department informed me that in those days fieldwork was scheduled for a month and field teams carried tents, utensils for cooking and equipment for biological and paleontological research and they all carried sleeping bags and backpacks on their shoulders and walked for miles in search of fossil remains. There are few social and cultural anthropological studies from that period in the department library.

I joined the department as a member of the faculty in 1977. I was trained in the fieldwork tradition at my Alma matter at Delhi University. We were taken for our first field trip as students of B.Sc. final year and I have vivid memories of my first field trip in 1970-71 to Mount Abu in Rajasthan. But to my surprise Chandigarh department had few one or two day trips for students of undergraduate classes and three weeks field trip for masters in the final year of post-graduation. I firmly believed that fieldwork training must begin at the undergraduate level. One of my biggest regrets after serving the department in Chandigarh for more than 39 years was that I was not able to convince or prevail upon my colleagues in the department to introduce three weeks field trip for B.Sc. third year students. Arguments against the suggestion ranged from logistics to loss of classroom teaching to lack of funds.

Reason I title my presentation as *withering tradition of Fieldwork* is largely rooted in my experiences of last decade of my service in the department. I shall elaborate on the interim period in the detailed presentation but what I want to draw attention to is waning accountability and commitment to the rock stone of the discipline. Some of us have become dismissive of seriousness of training to be imparted to the students both individually and as collective responsibility. Many among us shirked responsibility of accompanying students for three to four weeklong field trip citing personal difficulties. Most of us were interested in bringing out international publications based on the data that students collected during this period but failed to ensure that the equipment they carried to the field was in order or the student was adequately trained in the techniques. Lots of these issues relate to ethics and morality of field based research and I shall dwell on it in detail in the course of my presentation.

Though I should be the last person lamenting on the reluctance of research scholars to take fieldwork in destinations that were far from their place of residence or the institution in which they were training. I admit that I did my first independent fieldwork in Sadar Bazar and Daryaganj in Delhi on Hindu-Muslim relations' way back in 1973; but did move to work in Mandla in Madhya Pradesh for my UGC career award project for nearly a decade after moving to Chandigarh. But over the years I found research scholars desisting the idea of doing fieldwork in locations that John Beattie in the spirit of the era defined as "Other Cultures". In few cases this has resulted in poor data as many of them presume that they know their field and refrain from exploring or seriously accounting for the perspective of the respondents.

My saddest take is on the question of financial difficulties that universities like Panjab are facing in which the first casualty is fieldwork grant. But what is still depressing is that a CAS department like ours literally sent back 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the grant for fieldwork as unspent- during three phases of SAP and then during the first phase of CAS. We all have to sit back and have to do some serious introspection and ponder why foundations of the discipline based on empirical field based research are crumbling in reputed institutions.

## **Two Decades of Post- Graduate Anthropology Students' Field Work Tradition in Pondicherry University**

*Dr. A. Chellaperumal, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Pondicherry University*

In the year 1999, the postgraduate department of Anthropology was started in Pondicherry University. Ethnographic field work has been an important component in the PG curriculum from its genesis. The paper will highlight the development, different modes of conducting and guiding the PG students for field work in particular and other institutional practices associated with field work in general for the past 17 years. In addition to the elaboration of the problems faced by the students and faculty this paper will attempt to provide some suggestions and for the effective conduct of field work in the future.

## **Interdisciplinary Institutional Practices and Scope of Research**

*Sucheta Sen Chaudhuri, Center for Indigenous Culture Studies, Central University of Jharkhand*

This paper aims at discussing scope of research from the understanding of interdisciplinary background, and specifically from disciplines that aims at reinterpretation. Post-modernist research methodology taught to incorporate various versions of a reality in to account. Gender Studies and Indigenous Culture Studies disciplines suggest new variables like women and Indigenous people to take into account to fulfill the requirements of reinterpretation. This is inevitable because these new variables have created scopes to relook at theories, concepts, and research objectives. I am currently working at Central University of Jharkhand, where, Center for Indigenous Culture Studies, Under the School for Culture offers a Five Years Integrated MA in Indigenous Culture Studies (ICS) and Doctoral Research under the School for the Study of Culture. The other Centers of the School are Center for Tribal and Customary Law, Center for Tribal Folklore Language and Literature, Center for Performing Art. ICS is an interdisciplinary course and it is based at the on the subjects like Anthropology, Archaeology, Linguistics, Gender Studies, Sociology, and Folklore, which have heavily relied upon fieldwork research/studies. In different universities, the above mentioned subjects are under different Schools, like, Human Science, Environmental Science, Social Science, Humanities, and Language. Central University of Jharkhand introduced several such interdisciplinary subjects, which have created scope to address alternative ideas of development, sustainable development, decolonizing methodologies. Against such important dynamics of theory and method this paper will discuss the institutional practice through which faculty members have to go through for imparting research training in emerging disciplines like Indigenous Culture Studies.

## **Framing Fieldwork: Institutional Imperatives and Emerging Disciplinary Concerns**

*Sarit Kumar Chaudhuri, Director, National Museum of Mankind (IGRMS), Bhopal, M.P*

Fieldwork constitutes the core of the discipline of anthropology. Its essence as well as craft of doing fieldwork is largely transcended to new generation of professionals through institutional mechanisms as evident in universities and other academic institutions. Naturally there is a need to relocate new challenges along with the changes in institutional policies and also to explore various possibilities while devising new frames so that practitioners of the discipline can learn the tradition as well as make them aware regarding emerging contestations in the methodological domain. Perhaps, such negotiation is essential for the enrichment of the discipline of anthropology in order to deal with the contemporary concerns of Indian societies by cutting across the ethnic divides and state boundaries.



## **Improvising Fieldwork Pedagogy**

*Nilika Mehrotra, Professor of Social System, Jawaharlal Nehru University*

Through this paper I try to recall improvising a strategy to conduct Fieldwork in a M.A. course titled “Techniques of Social Research” for a big class consisting of 60 students in early 2000 at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, JNU. There was a convention of taking students out of Delhi to conduct field expedition for 3-4 days as part of this course. Field sites would generally be villages or pilgrim centres. On return students would submit a report. When I was asked to teach this course, I had many concerns as a teacher trained in fieldwork tradition such as 1) What is the nature of pedagogy involved in such an exercise? 2) what are the assumptions inherent in the act of taking them out and Field exposure? 3) How ethical concerns find space in this exercise? 4) limitations of such an exercise in a teaching curriculum and 5) the learning outcomes? These led me to revise the structure and practice of this course. I dwell in this paper on the nature of negotiations I made not only with regard to the course content and course structure but with students and other faculty members.

## **Team Ethnography as an Extension of Institutional Space: Exploring the Power Dynamics**

*Soumendra M. Patnaik, Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

This paper argues that the site for the team fieldwork is not a neutral space as it appears to the stakeholders. On the other hand it is an extension of the existing power structure of the concerned institutions. The sole responsibility of conducting the team fieldwork lies mainly with the institutional head and often the members conforming to his ideas or vision of team ethnography and associated pedagogy are sent to the field. Site of team ethnography provides ample scope for contesting or reinforcing such power dynamics. Many a times the events in the field arouse powerful emotions due to deportation of the recalcitrant students, members refusing to take food or participate in collective cultural and academic rituals, to change of field site and field agenda even at times accident leading to ill health and death of the members. The field site acquires a liminal space where such power dynamics are either reinforced or challenged having implications for the academic output of the team.

### **Session III- Shades of Ethnography**

## **Reconsidering Auto-Ethnographic Researches in North East India**

*G Kanato Choppy, Indigenous Culture Studies, Central University of Jharkhand*

The rising trend of auto-ethnographic research tradition marks an important phase in Indian anthropology in the 21st century. Although in its nascent stage a good number of researchers from North East India are studying their own communities. As I see it this is an important development because North East as a region has fitted aptly as “other” culture in the anthropological imagination. In this context, the scope of auto-ethnographic research does not legitimate the advantage of a “native” researcher in understanding the community, but it can imbue critical introspection to the research enquiry and methodology, where ethnographic writing as a reflexive interpretation and mediation of social life can be effectively negotiated. The relevance of auto-ethnography need not only emphasise the poetics and politics of ethnographic writing, but it can open up considerable research questions for theoretical developments. As I would argue, the development of auto-ethnography in North East India does

not concern only the research orientation and methodology, but it is significantly enmeshed with the wider web of ethnic relations, socio-political and economic reality.

### **Understanding Team Ethnography: Reflections from field research**

*Indrani Mukherjee and Supriya Singh, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

The paper revolves around the differences in approach, methods, discourse and assessment, interpretation of data between conducting fieldwork as an independent researcher and as a part of a team. Both, individual fieldwork and 'fieldwork as a team' are context specific and have their uses. There are differences in the scope and scale of research. Team ethnography is a relatively lesser travelled path for anthropologists but one that can yield some surprising results in a lesser amount of time. Increasingly this method will have uses given the large scale social research that seems to have become the norm. At the same time it has to contend with different viewpoints, approaches and personalities of the team members. Different research minds could also mean a deeper analysis of the research with each member bringing in new insights and perspective into it. The problem of integration though might also be an issue. The authors rely on their experiences as individual researchers as well as part of teams that conducted large scale fieldwork. The paper looks at the issues that arise during team ethnography and their pros and cons thereof. There are problems in data interpretation due to differing perspectives of the team members. At the same time, multiple layers lead to differential understanding, different perspectives and thus a better understanding of the issue at hand. The dynamics of team ethnography from setting goals, to putting together a team, observing, sharing and working on a final product, make for a very rich playground.

### **A University Campus as a Gendered Field: Negotiating fieldwork in a Familiar Space**

*Arnav Das Sharma, (Avipsha Das, Maitrayee Patar, Pratichi Majumdar, Rituparna Patgiri)*

*Research Student Department of Sociology University of Delhi*

Fieldwork is a popular method of choice in anthropological research. However, considering fieldwork only a 'method' will be wrong. It is an experience that can in itself become the subject matter of a study. This paper tries to unravel the various complexities involved in conducting fieldwork in a familiar space to us as researchers – the *Chhatra Marg* in the North Campus of Delhi University. Through an original ethnographic study conducted by a team of five, over the course of a month, we looked at the masculine ordering of the university campus. The research presented to us an opportunity of not only analysing the gendered nature of the field, but to also explore issues of reflexivity and team ethnography by a mixed gender group. As previous students of the University of Delhi, we had walked down *Chhatra Marg* innumerable times so choosing it as our field put us in the dual position of the ethnographer and the people in the field; the students and the subject. This balance was not the easiest to maintain, and came with its share of benefits and burdens. While, on the one hand we had easier access to people and spaces, it also meant being extra careful about not missing out details in the familiarity of the given. The paper looks at the University campus as a 'space' instead of a 'place'. Since we were working in our everyday space, many people we approached for interviews were friends or acquaintances, or contacted through them. Most of them were people, whom we may not have personally known, but had been seen and co-existed with for a long time. In a way, it made our task both simpler and more difficult. Simple, because we could reach intimacy in the dialogue much more easily than we would have otherwise. Difficult, because it meant we had to be subtler in our approach, more careful with what to ask of whom, given that we would continue to meet these people long after the study was over. Further, we were looking at issues as sensitive as gender and masculinity in a campus in Delhi given the background of the immense media reportage and

student activism on women's rights and safety. Our team being a mixed-gender one again had its advantages and disadvantages. While it made it easier for us to approach a variety of groups, it also meant necessarily splitting up in a few places. It also meant debates and discussions on who should go where and why. The research, thus, is sprinkled with such concerns, in overcoming what we learnt not only about this particular field but about the practice of fieldwork in general. The interdependency and interaction between different groups of people and the spacial practices that seemed to nuance the same not only presented the Campus as a gendered space, but also presented to us a newer picture of our own experience as participating genders in the everyday of the Campus life. The present paper looks at such nuances through detailed ethnographic study, supplemented by sociological and anthropological works on reflexivity, gender and the 'place'/ 'space' distinction. It is therefore, an attempt of not only trying to answer the research question we had set for ourselves, but also, a reflexive statement on our daily lives.

**Fieldwork Experiences: Case Study of an Anthropological Quest on Organizational Culture**  
*Snigdha Vishnoi, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

The present case study describes the journey of a research endeavour on culture of an organization in India. The idea of an organization as "open" and "transparent", being amenable to research gets contrasted with the researcher's experiences trying to locate an organization for the same purpose. Repeated denials and reviews of the research proposal kept delaying the process of initiating research. The complex of insecurity, fear, and hesitation was observed inside certain organizations, thus preventing an anthropologist to study them. This experience is entirely different from the ones of the anthropologists employed by the organization to help build insights on their consumer or client relations, thus contribute to their economic gain. The ethnographic methodology was questioned for its invasiveness. This method was labeled as "soft", "incomplete" or "too simple" to be of any utility, particularly for predictive purposes. The issue of culture was dealt in a secretive, personal and judgmental manner. The experiences of the trials and tribulations of the permission process, repeated denials, skepticism on ethnographic methodology and the philosophy of "guarded inspection" reflect a lot about the existing gaps between the academia and the world of organizations. The judgments of the kind bore a lot of impact on the entire journey of data collection and rapport establishment in the upcoming field of anthropology of organization in India. The present case study recalls the story of challenging fieldwork experiences while reflecting on the anthropological quest of organizational culture. It raises questions on the openness of the organizations towards social sciences research and related practices.

**Speaking Margin', 'Living through narrative', 'Literary-Ethnography'; Titash, Malo and Advaitya**

*Debottam Saha, Research Scholar, Sociology Research Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, Giridih*

The premise from where, I develop my argument, can a 'literary piece of, for and by margin', deserve an account of ethnography? To go beyond this age old dilemma of 'fiction' and 'non-fiction', I argue for this idea of 'literary-ethnography'. This Bengali novel, 'Titash Ekti Nadir Naam' (Titash, a river's name), became and still a milestone in the history of Bengali Dalit literature. The novel epitomizes a vibrant account of 'surviving', 'speaking' margin unlike a 'margin' trapped within the labelling of 'victimhood'. Malo, a fisher community (in Bengali *Jele*) and their 'everyday' interaction with river Titash, crafted a 'profane cosmologic' imagination of their own conscious identity of 'being a surviving margin'. The article didn't deal

deeper with regard to different genres of literature. I am precisely looking at this particular 'literary piece of, for and by margin' and what are those possibilities that it entails as literary-ethnographic account of margin. While doing such exercise, in tuned to this larger theme of this workshop, I argue for the method of 'living through narrative', in the Ethnography of Marginalized and Margin, (there remains a slight ontological difference between them), Advaitya, as author-narrator, prepares a methodological premise, from where those conventional approaches like 'living with' and 'living within' come under scrutiny. 'Living through' does also put question against that existing power relation between 'inquired subjects' and 'subject inquiring' practiced in ethnographic tradition of marginalized. This practice had also produced a literature of 'non-agentic', 'victim' margin and reproduced another disciplinary marginalization of margin. Whereas 'living through narrative' under the stylistics of 'literary-ethnography' by analyzing this novel, I get an opportunity, to discuss about that methodology where Titash, Malo and Advaitya transverses three simultaneous narrative journeys and margin speaks for itself. Living through narrative becomes possible only when ethnographer achieves the 'language' of speaking margin.

### **'Constructing the anthropology as analytical category': Reading TalalAsad and His Interlocutors**

*Thanzeel Nazer Department of Sociology, University of Delhi*

Imaging and imagining the particularity of field is the central fault line of Anthropology. Anthropologist conceives anthropology as the discipline through the method of Ethnography. Scholarly articles do suggest that contemporary ethnographical practices are mere more than the 'writing culture' or translating others' culture. Which means, in past tense Ethnography have had its own root, some academicians edge the colonial root of ethnography/anthropology while some deny the impossibility of 'anthropology as handmaiden' of European encounter. Anyway, ethnography hold an 'irretrievable' position in framing the inquiry. Here, placing TalalAsad's critique on 'dominant tradition' in British social anthropology invites us to think about the practices involved in Anthropological method and claims. I would like to pursue this question through reading Asad's earlier works on Anthropology, colonialism and functionalism. So largely, this paper is an evaluation of Asad's contribution to the discipline of Anthropology. Finally, this paper attempts to particularize the Asad's claim of Field and Ethnography through re-reading Asad's and his commentators' works.

### **Thinking 'Anthropologically' Through the Ruins of Firoz Shah Kotla: Materials in Conversation with Jinns, Ants and Insaan**

*Lakshmi P.R, MPhil Research Scholar, Jawaharlal Nehru University*

Thinking through materialities, this paper attempts to 'narrates thesecularity of moralgeography' associated with practices of Jinn veneration in the ruins of an old Fort called Firoz Shah Kotla in Delhi. Firoz Shah Kotla also known as Kotla, is a Fort located at the banks of river Yamuna and was built by Sultan Firoz Shah Tughluq during fourteenth century (1354) and also housed the capital of Firozabad. Archives speaks that 'Kotla' was abandoned since 1490 AD with the defeat of Tughluq dynasty. At present, Kotla is categorized as the state protected monument under the Archaeological Survey of India. Based on field visits to Kotla, this paper revolves around the objects that are offered to Jinn, things that form the ruins of the fort as well as matter that constitute force in this space. Thus, the paper attempts to locate the cosmological and ecological with the ontological. It also aims to blur the boundaries of human and non- human in terms of

shared notions of material and affect, for example, as food and prayer shared among birds, animals, Jinns and *Insaan*. As a whole, the paper is an attempt to rethink relations, time and space as multiple, through materialities. As aforementioned, the first section of the paper would deal with the various *offerings to Jinn*. The lamps, incense sticks, roses and sweets placed on shrines may be considered as ‘actants’ (in Latour’s phrase) and the letters, bangles, locks and coins tied on walls could be considered as ‘mediants’ (as Appadurai puts forth) that would negotiate hopes and worries with Jinns. More than being symbols in a system of beliefs, these are associated with the body and senses and are based on non- verbal and intuition- based communication which would discard the subject- object dualisms. The second section would provide the narrations about the presence of Jinns and saints within this abandoned palace, its dark chambers, and rugged walls made of stones and prison gates that house the cry of bats and black ants that appear and disappear upon the carbon. In other words, these very *artefacts in ruins* is historical as well as contemporary and forges the vital link across past, present and future as well as among the living and the dead. This could be seen as an extension of the concept of ‘Material Vitalism’ (Deleuze and Guattari) towards thinking of the temporal and spatial. The last section of the paper would focus on *Matter and Force*: its ‘power to affect and to be affected’. For instance, the wind that blows over Kotla’s landscape is said to have healing qualities and is also an alternate form of the Jinn much like the flames of fire burning inside the chambers or the holes in the tall trees in the garden. It is this assemblage of Materialities with the Spiritual and Ecological that the paper wishes to highlight. In so doing, the paper gives way to the agency of objects in producing an Anthropology that is no more Anthropocentric.

#### **Session IV-Fieldwork: Contemporary Challenges I**

##### **Contemporary Challenges of fieldwork in Urban Area**

*Ansar Alam, Doctoral Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

Fieldwork is an integral part of anthropology. Through fieldwork anthropologists try to understand society holistically. If the field is urban society the methods and challenges involved may vary from the methods and challenges involved in studying a phenomena in a rural setting. The identity of the researcher as an outsider or insider belonging to the same religion or not, speaking the native language or not, plays a very important role in the research process. Anthropologists study the people in their natural habitat through ‘emic’ perspective to reduce the subjectivity involved during the research. However, the inhabitants, are not aware such methodological training so as to familiarize and de-familiarize themselves with the researcher. In this paper, I will discuss about the various types of ‘gatekeepers’ and challenges involved in rapport establishment in an urban field. I will also discuss about the process involved in ‘distantiating’ oneself as an insider and the same time familiarizing oneself with the people in the field as an outsider.

##### **Negotiating fieldwork; in the course of Assam Elections 2016**

*Dibyajyoti Das, Doctoral Student Department of Anthropology University of Delhi*

Elections after every five years in India are always celebrated with euphoria, enthusiasm and attention. It is turning out to be a much anticipated festival in a democratic country like India. Elections are no more a tradition of just casting votes; with the passage of time and peoples concern, fast moving electronic media and social media it has gone to a very high alarm and interest, elections are the only time when the democrats shows their authority, with hopes and aspirations in their heart and mind. The year 2016 was a historic year from the point of Assamese



voters as this was the first time ever in the history of Assam election that a national party that was unable to form a government in the entire North East region of the country since its formation came up with flying colours overcoming another national party that had a deep root in Assam and North East and for the first time a 'tribal' chief minister was elected breaking many decadal old traditions. This election was a matter of discussion for the national media for a long time and it also took the headlines in the leading newspapers for some time. I was indeed fortunate enough to conduct my doctoral fieldwork during this period. Therefore through this paper I shall be expressing my experiences about how I negotiated my fieldwork during this period being myself as a voter from Assam and the challenges that I encountered.

### **An Ethnographic Work on Celebrating Puberty Rituals in Western Assam**

*Drabita Dutta, MPhil Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

The paper attempts to explore the beliefs and cultural values of puberty ritual in present day Assamese society with the symbolic and psychological perception while following the same ritual celebration and to understand once attending the transitional phase of puberty what are the main social changes come with it. Ethnographic method has been used for collection of data followed with a qualitative narrative analysis. Collection of data for this research work is itself a challenging task while scrutinising the well-informed and free frank women in the society to get mingled with as well in the process of changing scenario of present, criticism mainly comes from the sections of educated middle and upper middle class of the society where there are still many strong supporters for the practice for different reasons. For some it is a traditional ritual based on some logical observations or inferences to be performed with due respects and regards, for the others it is just a ceremony to be celebrated in way. This work tries analysis with anthropologist work on theory rituals and symbol, transition period, and pollution.

### **Establishing and Maintaining Rapport: Challenges Encountered as a Female Researcher**

*Himanshu Gautam, MPhil Student, Department of Anthropology University of Delhi*

Qualitative research in anthropology stands strong on its data collecting tools and techniques like observation, participant observations, in-depth interviews, narratives, case study, focus group discussions, genealogy, questionnaire, etc. In the process of fieldwork, establishing rapport and maintaining it is a great deal but sometimes overlooked. The success or failure of fruitful data collection highly depends on the relationship a researcher shares with his/her respondents. A good research is not only a result of correct implementation of information fetching techniques; a strong researcher-respondent bond also plays a significant role. The gender of a researcher and type of field setting (male/female-dominated) are decisive agents as well in gaining access and rapport establishment. Some female researchers in a male-dominated field setting or vice-versa end up gaining only superficial acceptance by their respondents. This paper discusses the issues related to building and maintaining rapport during the fieldwork and the dilemmas faced as a female researcher.

### **Being Familiar Stranger among Tharus: Glimpses from Fieldwork on Traditional Agricultural Knowledge**

*Richa Joshi, M.Phil. Anthropology, University of Delhi*

The paper is an outcome of fieldwork experience and challenges conducted on traditional agricultural practices among the Tharus of east Uttarakhand. Tharus are popularly known for rice

plantation using traditional agricultural practices in the terai belt of Uttarakhand. The study tries to explore the complexities faced by a researcher conducting fieldwork in a familiar place. How a preconceived notion of a place becomes an alienated space when approached as a researcher and sets all together a different picturesque in the mind when approached through an anthropological lens. It also explores how being a partial insider and familiar stranger inhibits the free flow of information between informant and researcher. Negotiation in the field helps in understanding local farmers knowledge emerged from the culture by interacting with their environment. It can broaden the horizon beyond the individualistic view of human behavior which can guide in a better way how this knowledge can be used to study agricultural practices.

### **Reflections on fieldwork experiences in Administrative Research Training Institutes**

*M. Kennedy Singh, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

Anthropology and its implications in public administration has a very long history, way back from the colonial days. The nature of engagement, method of employing fieldwork in the administrative training programme reintroducing the importance of anthropological knowledge in public administration. Eventually, it serves as the melting point between the administrators and the ground realities of common people. The paper also tries to highlight the significance of anthropology in Practice in understandings the contemporary policy related research work.

## **Session V- Fieldwork: Contemporary Challenges II**

### **Denudate Self in the Field: A Reflexive Account**

*Chitra Kadam, Ph.D. Scholar, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

The practice of deliberating on a self-reflective and self-critical analysis with reference to one's position in the field has witnessed a surge in its relevance to ethnographic writings in the postmodernist era. Understood most commonly as researcher's self-consciousness, reflexivity focuses on self-exploration and self-discovery in an attempt to take a deeper dig into the self as an object of provocative inquiry. The present paper delves into reflexivity accentuating on the denudate self as it becomes an object of self-enquiry as well as a subject of others' curiosity in an ethnographic field. It presents an account of the author's position as a researcher in the field reflecting on how she evolved as a researcher while making adjustments in the field with respect to logistics and resources, gaining novelty of experiences during the process of immersing into the culture unfamiliar, maintaining the autonomy of the researcher in the field, dealing with incertitude and precarious situations, nurturing researcher-respondent relationship and facing dilemmas pertaining to subjectivity-objectivity debate.

### **Reflexivity and the Field Experience: An Encounter with the Caste**

*Prithibi Pratibha Gogoi, Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Tezpur University*

The classical approaches that dominated the initial period of the anthropological research focused on the role of an anthropologist as a silent observer, while emphasizing on the need for the scientific objective unbiased research. However, with the emergence of the post-modern thought in social sciences and humanities, a new research perspective and way of interaction with the field emerged. This particular idea talked of the necessity for self-reflection in anthropological enquiry. Thus, the voices of both the researcher and the informants became a crucial element of field research. In this paper, tracing the experience of fieldwork in Udaipur,

Rajasthan, the researcher tries to look into the nuances of one's identity in the field and the active ways in which the field engages with this identity. This paper also intends to look at how caste prominently shapes one's identity; at the same time how a researcher is perceived through the caste lens.

### **Methodological concerns in studying gender-based violence against women in Indian Context**

*Priyanka Adhikary, Ph.D student, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, Delhi*

As an area of academic discourse, doing research on gender-based violence against women is a challenging task to carry out because of its sensitive nature. The topic itself demands safety, confidentiality issues and skill of researcher in order to collect reliable data. This paper aims at different methodological issues and its constraints during the course of fieldwork particularly on violence that takes place in domestic sphere against women. Violence that happens within the four walls cannot be directly observed which brings a great deal of complexity of the nature of the phenomenon. Challenges that arise at the time of fieldwork such as handling respondents' emotion; guilt feeling, shame etc. are also explained. Ethical principles which is supposed to be considered as an effective tool when researching on violence against women are well documented in this piece of work. This paper provides amalgamation of practical strategies and layout that have been incorporated during gathering sensitive information from and about women.

### **Comforting the Discomfort while Negotiating Fieldwork: Experiences from Juang Tribe**

*Sampriti Panda, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

The pulse of anthropology lies in one of the most important part of the discipline, named fieldwork. Fieldwork can be easily defined to a layman as a type of social research where an investigator or researcher starts observing and collecting data from the real – life situations of the people who are his subjects, using various form of social inquiry. It is very easy and simple to make anyone understand what does fieldwork mean – explaining it as simply working in the field of your research and collecting data; but in real sense, fieldwork is the hardest and the toughest shell to be cracked in this discipline. Be it a quantitative or a qualitative research, fieldwork is the most crucial juncture of the research design. Fieldwork may be sometimes easy or difficult depending upon various factors like nature of fieldwork, rapport establishment, ethical dilemmas, institutional environment, theoretical and methodological practices applied in the field. In this paper we will be discussing one of the fieldwork experiences among a forest based Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group – Juangs of Odisha. The paper tries to focus on the aspects of fieldwork starting from early stage of preparation of objective, entering the field and till exploring it. The paper intends to reflect on all the problems, dilemmas, relations, equations faced by the researcher while conducting the fieldwork simultaneously trying to locate the place of the researcher itself in the field while negotiating fieldwork.

### **Living with mosquito: Exploring multispecies relationship in the field**

*Shweta Rani Khatri, M.Phil. Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi*

A new genre of writing/ mode of research; multispecies ethnography, has emerged in anthropology. With anthropologists increasingly paying attention to human and non-human entanglement, multispecies ethnographies have mostly focused on the species that are useful to humans, stranger to them, harmed by their activities or are being restored by humans. A mosquito carrying a deadly disease falls into none of these categories. It's neither endangered, nor a stranger. It is our intimate other, though an undesirable one. Humans live with many objects, feelings, memories or events we may or may not want to live with. Similarly, humans co-habit the planet with innumerable non-humans. There are species with which we want to live with while there are others which get entangled with our everyday lives spontaneously. This paper seeks to complicate the idea of 'living with' while asking a central question, 'how do we live with a species that we don't like?' The paper is based on the field work conducted during and after last dengue outbreak in Delhi (August- October, 2015) and deals with narratives about a specific mosquito species- *Aedes aegypti*, which transmits dengue among humans. Frequent dengue outbreaks are considered a result of large scale climatic changes coupled with local level weather variation. However, the modalities of 'living with' are rooted in everyday which are evident in the local metaphors and can be understood through micro narratives. This paper will also try to explore how anthropological tradition of fieldwork enables us to draw a link between a planetary event and our everyday lives.

### **Negotiating Fieldwork in Unorganised Sector: An Anthropological Study of Migrant Construction Workers in Delhi**

*Ankita Mehta, Doctoral Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

Anthropological fieldwork engages ethnographic methods to collect data and understand a particular phenomenon which is modified by the research according to the prevailing conditions in the site to negotiate with the problems that arise. The study looks into the various dimensions of labour migration by adopting strategies to encounter the challenges faced in a floating population and understanding the position of the researcher. The prime idea is to highlight the effect of these on their socio-cultural conditions with ethnographic backdrop, hurdles faced during the fieldwork and dealing with people; gender perspective is also observed. Selection of key informants in such a fluid population is too difficult; establishing rapport is skewed. Participant observation in a labour camp is not possible for a woman researcher hence as a researcher finding yourself in a position where proceeding forward for initial steps in itself is tricky. The study is based on fieldwork conducted in a labour colony and on a construction site where in depth interviews and life histories were taken of the workers.

### **Session VI-Situating Reflexivity**

#### **Displaced Kashmiri Persons: Reflexivity in the Experience of Displacement**

*Charu Sawhney, Research Associates, Department of Sociology, University of Delhi*

This is a comparative ethnographic study on the displaced persons mainly Kashmiri Pandits in camps in Jammu and apartments in Noida. The construction of the 'self' in ethnography of

displacement underscores that the historical, economic, political and economic contexts of the 'object' of study and the 'self' immersed in fieldwork is acknowledged. This reflexivity of the ethnographer may help to diminish the bias in the study and attain an understanding of the displaced persons. The 'pain' associated with displacement lead to the reformulation of the community relationship with the Muslims back in Kashmir. The task of the ethnographer is to reinterpret and reflect on the experience of displacement so as to pierce the stereotypes and aim at an objective understanding of the lives of displaced persons. When the ethnographer as a researcher is a member of the 'other' community the task of the researcher is to be reflexive of their own situation as well as those of the object of study, the displaced persons resettled in host community.

### **Reflexive Anthropology: Some experiences from Bastar fieldwork**

*Deepshikha Agarwal, Associate Professor, USLLS, GGS I P University*

Fieldwork as a method of data collection is indispensable for any anthropologist- this is a long established fact. However, after being introduced by anthropologists like Malinowski, fieldwork method has gone through many transitions. Talking about the reflexive turn of anthropology is important here, when it was realized that the knowledge gathered through fieldwork is a product of dialectic evolving between observation and reflection, as the field data cannot be separated from field experiences. This paper is an attempt of delving into the reflexive discourses in Bastar fieldwork, which gives me a chance of self- introspection as a field worker. An initiative is taken here to indulge in a critical analysis of my own field experiences of integration and interaction with the Muria community. By sharing my reflexive narratives, I also intend to highlight the challenges that I faced while trying to bring objectivity in my own interpretations. Removing the biases and epistemological influences is not possible altogether, but the use of reflexive approach helps me in re-examining the field findings and discovering things that I may have missed out at the first glance.

### **The Nuances of Power Relations: A Case Study of the Pnars**

*Upashana Khanikar, Doctoral Scholar, Tezpur Central University*

This paper is an outcome of empirical research experience in the Jaintia Hills District of Meghalaya which included rigorous employment of focused group discussions with a local ethnic community called Pnars, who are primarily a matrilineal society. Broadly speaking, the paper would try to analyze in depth the dynamics of power within the researcher team while on field and also, that which exists within those researched. The nature of power relations is such that ethnographic engagement gets reduced to being a reflection of ideas and values of those at the helm, wherein a kind of power relation pervades which somewhat eclipses any form of clear discernment from the field. In case of the ethnographers, the interpretation substantially mirrors the aims and objects of those at the top engendering thus a top down approach. On the other end, such a dynamic becomes evident even among the respondents wherein this power dynamic only gets further confounded. Interestingly, the Pnars in spite of being a matrilineal society, explicitly presented a case of androcentrism, in all the processes of participation, interpretation and negotiation a case wherein power differentials stemmed from gender differences, thus, generating a very complex situation which requires extensive academic scrutiny and deliberation and this is precisely what this paper aims to engage with.



## **Authority of the Researcher?: A Non-Dialectical Approach of Studying the Idea of Authority between the Researcher and Researched**

*Bhargabi Das MA (F) Sociology Delhi School of Economics University of Delhi*

This paper tries to look at the idea of authority of the researcher through the concept of non-dialectics. While it is of course true that the researcher has the ultimate power i.e. from deciding the topic, field, sample population, methodology and finally in terms of writing the data down, what I argue is that this authority is not absolute. This idea of the researched as always the object, the viewed, one having no control over the research while the researcher holds complete power, is criticized using the concept of non-dialectics. I argue that the idea of a binary in terms of absolute power (researcher) and absolute powerlessness (researched) cannot be applied. It is in the tension or negotiation located in moments when the researcher becomes an object (reversal of the gaze) say from physical appearance to socio-cultural-economic and political background of the researcher or the control of the researched about what to pass on as information and how to do it, that one can then question the idea if the ‘authority’ *only* lies with the researcher? What is also important is to recognize that non-dialectics break away from the binary of victim-empowered. Hence, having negotiated certain control over the researcher and the information, the researched cannot be categorized out-rightly as being ‘emancipated’ from the ‘gaze’ or ‘being an object’. The paper hence tries locating the idea of ‘authority’ in this flux where one cannot altogether categorize power without looking at the nuances of a research. Because at the end of the day, a research takes place in the domain of the ‘everyday’ and to declare authority of the researcher without considering the moments of negotiation is turning a blind eye to how concepts like these actually unfold in the everyday life.

## **Protests as Everyday Practices: An exploration of Protests at Jantar Mantar**

*Pushpanjali, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Delhi*

The paper explores the methodological dimensions of my doctoral research which was an attempt to understand the protest movements through a site of protest- *Jantar Mantar*. In the present times cities around the world are evincing several protests movements, which are complex and diverse. In all these instances we have witnessed sites are becoming central to the mobilizations and site specific milieus give rise to various kinds of protest. This ‘spatializing of the political’ is increasingly visible in wide manifestations of ‘urban resistances’ all around the world. The research attempts to look into the specific qualities of the sites of protests that make them, strategic spaces for incubating contentions and political struggles and aims to look into how the site of protest-*JantarMantar* has served as a generative space of claims, discourses, and political issues that helped frame political mobilizations in the Indian context. The study also explores the spatial dynamics which factors into contention, as opposed to only considering space as a background or canvas. It is argued that sites of protests are important in the way they contribute to and mediate the protest movements and strategic location of such sites helps in catalyzing and in the articulation of the protests. The research was focused on a single site, *JantarMantar* as the object of inquiry and aimed to undertake study of the ‘everyday practices’ which in this case was understood as diverse range of expressions of protest which took place at the site on a regular basis. The site unfolded a dynamic set of social practices as a wide cross-section of groups/people utilized the site to organize sit-ins, demonstrations, rallies in order to make claims on the State, government and other authorities. Such a study required a flexible and open ended approach as the site characterized an ongoing though not repetitive protest/contentious performances. The first implication of the nature of study meant that there has to be a concentration on the everyday processes and a reconstruction of the subjective views and meaning patterns of the social actors. Such an approach required an analysis of the protest

events based on observation of and recording the happenings unfolding at the site. Both protest events and related documents were seen as constituting the social reality under study. The approach was to understand and reconstruct the meanings, through different methods and to develop broader themes for describing and explaining the phenomena under study. The theoretical foundation of the present research draw upon the work of Henri Lefebvre, who was concerned with establishing an analytical approach to the city within the framework of his theory of social space, in which the city was a political space for claiming rights for social groups.

### **Doing Fieldwork: Issues, Challenges and Constraints**

*Vinita Singh, Department of Sociology Ranchi University*

As I researcher, fieldwork has remained to be an integral part of research practices .For any student of Social Science discipline, the earliest experiences of fieldwork and field exposure stems from the days post-graduation. No amount of “reading” how to do fieldwork can compensate “doing” fieldwork .The only way to “do “fieldwork is to “do” it. In this session, I propose to share my first hand experiences in fieldwork right from master`s dissertation to date.Fieldwork remains an important method for the training of sociologists and social anthropologists. Ordinary students, base their first piece of research on fieldwork, with obvious gains by way of a sharpened sociological imagination and a heightened sense of empathy with the subject of their study. The choice of the subject under study as well the choice of the field can allow the student to develop such innate skills. The most relevant issue is that the fieldworker should come out with a vivid description and an analysis which is reasonably objective and helpful in the advancement of knowledge. It is a well-known fact that though subjectivity cannot be eliminated altogether yet it can be minimized. Ultimately everything depends on the researcher`s own mental and emotional resources. I propose to discuss in intricate details every individual experience and then correlate it to analysing the impact of social forces on them. As of date there are innumerable factors influencing field studies making it a challenging task. Along with experience sharing, I propose to discuss the challenges and constraints in “doing” fieldwork.

### **Session VII-Gender and Fieldwork**

#### **Male Feminist's Tales from the Field**

*Sumit Saurabh Srivastava, Assistant Professor, Centre for Globalization and Development Studies, University of Allahabad*

The issue of men in/doing feminism can be problematised at two levels. These levels are first, at the level of epistemology wherein we encounter the issue of feminist epistemology & methodology. This point is often found in the feminist stand-point perspective and is again intricately positioned vis-à-vis feminist essentialism. The second issue is at the level of practice i.e. empirical field work and collecting the data keeping research issues in consideration. Here again the ‘access to field’ as well as to ‘informants’ and ‘co-discussants’ are deeply entrenched in the gender discourse. The paper discusses the above issues as and when ‘encountered’ in the ‘field’. It emerged from the ‘field’ that the issues related to the positionality of the researcher along with the ‘location’ of the subjects are central to the research process. These are generally anchored in the ‘awareness’ of the social identity of both the researcher and the researched. Such an ‘awareness’ can be located in the very nature of reflexivity of the researcher. Such and other related issues are discussed in the paper.

## **Exploring Gender in Everyday Life: Notes from fieldwork on the Delhi Metro**

*Aastha Dang, PhD scholar, Gender Studies, Ambedkar University, Delhi*

In this work, I examine the spatial practices and interactions within the Delhi Metro to understand how gender gets reconfigured in the everyday urban life. Ethnographic method was deployed in conducting the research. Informal semi-structured interviews, conversations as well as participant observation was made in the research process. The challenges of doing fieldwork for the first time, especially on the subject like the Delhi Metro which has been an integral aspect of my life since several years have been explored in this paper. As Becker (1971:10) posits that in a setting which is very familiar, it sometimes requires tremendous efforts of will and imagination to stop seeing things only those are convenient to be seen. Besides familiarity of field, some other challenges while negotiating the field included unwarranted gazes of people while trying to make conversations, apprehension on commuters' part to engage with an unknown stranger, and also the problem of time. It is argued that traditional methods like interviews can be useful in not only providing insights on their own experience, but an exercise of 'collective reflexivity' practiced by both the researcher and researched (Wickramasinghe, 2014:85). Thus this fieldwork was an enriching experience which provided insights into how traditional methods can be significant for continued productivity and not only for their epistemological primacy (Sreekumar, 2009:43). During the course of this study, billboard advertisements, signage, and privatisation of the 'public' space were some of the many aspects which were examined. This entire exercise was anchored within feminist tradition of conducting research that augments the approach to focus on one's viewpoint, feelings during research instead of denying it (Gorelick 1996: 46). Thus, I remained very much an integral part of this research, voicing my apprehensions, experiences as well as observations; and an honest attempt was made to incorporate the twin practices of "transparency and reflexivity" (Ristock and Pennell: 1996).

## **The Interplay of Fieldwork and Gender politics: Ethical, Social and Structural Challenges**

*Bhumika Chandola, Ph.D Scholar, Centre for Culture, Media and Governance, Jamia Millia Islamia*

There is always a dichotomy between being an involved fieldworker or an objective observer. This ethical dilemma is the conflict of the human value of empathy with the value of objectivity upheld by the positivist tradition of research. The latest insights within the social sciences lent through the prism of Feminist studies and subaltern discourse pushes for the need to acknowledge self (in capacity of a scientist, observer or field worker), in terms of gender, race and class etc. But the comprehension changes when one has to deal as a woman in the field, it changes more so in dealing with structural and social restrictions as a woman field worker. Another challenge comes up when the objective researcher is meant to deal with people from different categories across gender, race, class, age groups etc. Despite, having to deal with or communicate with the same gender, the researcher often finds herself at loss of words to put up a question, or to overcome the semantic barrier with women across different sections and age groups, or to level the apparent discomfort or lack of reliability due to class divide.

The paper seeks to bring forth the problematic of fieldwork in its relation to gender. This begins with the notion of what gender is, how is it theoretically conceptualised and problematised. The paper shall then dwell on the obstacles and challenges that a field worker faces as a woman while attending to the ethical issue of objectivity or empathy. Also, the field worker as a woman has most often issues of safety and structural and social challenges is what the paper seeks to examine in a context of India. The challenge of getting across and earning the trust of the

respondent or the subject of a specific gender has been discussed. This paper attempts to review the literature available, supplemented by the reflexive cases that were undertaken in the capacity of a field worker seeking to analyse, critiques and articulate the challenges that play up due to the interplay of the gender in the field.

### **Understanding the Discourses on Dalit women: Reflexivity and Negotiations in Field**

*Dharna Sahay, Doctoral Student, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

Discourses on Dalit women have been and continues to be a matter of serious concern in the social sciences research in India. Many studies have been done so far in sociology and other disciplines but this paper covers some critical reflections and perspectives on unequal section of Indian society in anthropology. After sixty nine years of independence, the “Dalit” and “Dalit among Dalits” is of very crucial importance being extremely volatile and sensitive issue in the contemporary Indian situation. Indeed this theme is relevant in current times, especially in the context of ‘Life-world’ concept. The paper also examines the field experiences in understanding the relevance of Ambedkar as an outstanding national figure in contemporary lived realities. Beside this, the study addresses issues of urban Dalit women of South-West Delhi in India with an exploration of field memories. The experience of negotiating with field on daily basis was many ways helpful in shaping of views different from textual understanding. This paper is reflexive exercise in locating researcher’s identity between layers of discussions available on Dalit Studies literature.

### **Gendered Body and Age in the Fieldwork: Embodied Experiences of Women**

*Harmeet Kaur, Research Scholar Department of Anthropology University of Delhi*

Fieldwork nowadays is about moving beyond the boundaries of conventional living to interact and observe others. Drawing mainly from fieldwork experiences of other women researchers and my dissertation stage fieldwork (in Himachal Pradesh and Delhi at educational institutions i.e. schools) , I explain how the social position as women had distinct advantages and disadvantages in the field thus molding research activity at various times. The paper is divided into two parts; first part mainly focuses on how the age, gender, physical appearance and marital status affect the fieldwork of a woman researcher; how women bodies do not always fit according to the field requirements; and what are the various hurdles faced by being a young researcher as the interviewees often do not expect researchers to be young. But anyways the fieldwork is about getting the answer to the formulated questions so the second part throws a light on how fieldwork was negotiated to seek answers.

### **Experiencing Street, Children on Street and Fieldwork Challenges**

*Sarika Negi, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

The fieldwork tradition in Anthropology is well known for bringing up the first hand information of the community, reported by many scholars not devoid of challenges and involved logistics. The major discussions in the paper revolves around this engagement and involved challenges where actors in this qualitative research were the children living on one the street of Old Delhi. This paper is a reflection of not only challenges faced during fieldwork in the urban margin, but also focuses on tools, strategies and key approaches to resolve the issues like ethics and reciprocity, representation of ‘selves’, researcher and stigma. The internal conflict of being a research and a person was witnessed while observed the conflicting interests of the participants in a socially active environment. It shows research beyond representation and perspectives of researched rather as engagement and negotiations between both the researcher and ‘the other’.

## **‘Challenging Field’ or a ‘Field with Challenges’: A Personal Account**

*Khyati Tripathi, Department of Psychology, Research Scholar, University of Delhi*

This paper tries to delve into the intricacies of fieldwork as it tries to find answers to questions if some fields are more challenging than others and if there are challenges to meet in every field. This dilemma is resolved by taking a personal account of two fields; a hospital and a village. The first research was interested in finding out death anxiety of cancer patients and the second one entailed an ethnographic work with death priests in a village. The former was a challenging field and the latter a field with challenges at the outset but as a researcher one realizes that any field is subjectively defined based on the skill of a researcher. Notes taking, rapport formation and informed consent are some challenges that are faced by every researcher but being a female researcher opens unveils a completely new territory of ‘things’ to deal with. The paper deals with a personal account of how the (female) researcher dealt with some and was not prepared for certain other gendered issues in the field.

### **Section VIII- Ethical Issues in Ethnographic Research**

#### **Ethics and Fieldwork: Dilemmas and Negotiation.**

*Supriya Singh and Indrani Mukherjee, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

One of the main predicaments that a researcher faces during fieldwork is the question of ethics. The very nature of the study with the task of getting into the other’s skin is intrusive in nature. In spite of actively keeping in mind ethical concerns a research cannot deny taking advantage of the use of social cues, consciously or subconsciously, that they are trained to recognize. The very advantage of being an anthropologist and societal knowhow might lead to an ethical misstep on the part of the researcher. While we often talk about informed consent, we cannot deny that informing might be a very unidirectional task. Do we really wait to access how much of our information the responded has assimilated before receiving consent? Or does the researcher bear in mind the fact that if the idea of an informed consent is over-emphasised the respondent might actually get suspicious of the research. The paper tries to explore these everyday dilemmas and negotiations through a reflection of ethnographic experiences. The main objective of the paper is to initiate a dialogue on how we need to orient ourselves towards ethical questions in field work.

#### **Field, Ethics, and Self: Making a Case for Guilt in Research Methodology**

*Aastha Tyagi, M.Phil. Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi*

Feminist research methodology has made a strong case for emotionality as a legitimate part of not only the research process but also, as a valid addition to the data gathered. Research in risky environments does not only present tangible threats in the form of physical and mental exhaustion and harm but also an avenue to explore emotions that go beyond the encounter with change. These emotions are extremely personal but contain within them the potential to threaten the researcher’s mental wellbeing (in the form of trauma or shock), ethics guiding the research or an abandonment of the research project altogether. This research concurs with Lal’s (1996) assertion that we need to go beyond reflexivity during the research process and use it for ‘political action’. Thus, this paper takes into account overwhelming emotions experienced on the field while conducting participant observation at a Hindu right-wing camp in India. This camp was conducted by the women’s group associated with the largest ethnic-nationalist organisation



in India and focussed on the young women who will go on to become part of the group. By using case examples from ethnographic data, this paper attempts to situate the emotion of guilt as an inseparable part of the research experience and makes a case for utilising it for not only a more ethically sound research but also, an honest and empowering research process.

### **Money, Time and Fieldwork: Exploring the margins of institutional practices and individual freedom**

*Chakraverti Mahajan, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

Apparently, innocuous provisions such as entitlements for comfortable boarding and lodging for the faculty members have serious implications for the quality of social capital an anthropologist longs for in the field. Some of the provisions in the sixth pay commission, in their commitment to provide quality accommodations and comfortable space, carry entitlements for decent hotels for the faculty members on official duty. When we couple these provisions with time constraints due to institutional practices, these come in direct conflict with ethos of anthropological fieldwork, which values living intimately with strangers in shared spaces and generation of social capital by spending quality time and exchanging labour. This paper discusses how limits set by institutional practices transform the ethnographer's relationship with the field by drawing upon my experiences as a researcher working on intercommunity relations in Jammu and Kashmir.

### **Reflexivity: Challenges and Negotiations in the Field of Media**

*Anasuya Sreedhar, Doctoral Researcher Women and Gender Studies Ambedkar University*

Relying on Hesse-Biber's idea of reflexivity as the process which enables researchers to understand how their social background, location and assumptions affect their research practice: dilemmas encountered by an employee of a broad cast industry who chose to take up research within the same terrain. The advent of satellite television in the 90s brought with it the concept of multiple channels, ranging from news, entertainment to infotainment. As the reach of satellite television expanded beyond metropolitan cities to smaller towns, it simultaneously expanded a career in media from print to broadcast. Over the years, programming for entertainment channels has undergone many trials bringing quite a few changes. Some have perished while many have survived and thrived albeit through a metamorphosis. The messages that are transacted through such shows when studied become documents of a changing culture, urban society and gender relations among many more. Such a research site poses hurdles for the researcher in more ways than one by virtue of the fact that she has occupied an "insider" position within an industry she is trying to investigate. Some of the problematic issues that would emerge in the course of the research revolves around professional and personal biases, insider-outsider considerations, distributions of power and access to knowledge. While the obstacles or the challenges seem daunting for a researcher, the same hurdles can be used to benefit her in terms of "insight." It is this "insight" which of course could lead to an imbalance of power but can also informs the researcher about the differences and pitfalls of the field, thereby, strengthening the navigational skills while conducting research. Ultimately, it is this "positionality" that would help the researcher designs the right research architecture. This paper, looks at the manifold challenges that a researcher, owing to her "insider" positional status has to face and overcome while investigating a known field to explore the unknown. At the same time, the researcher has to acknowledge her subject position of a Feminist Researcher who has to negotiate between the twin issues of knowledge and power, where reflexivity has to be dealt with in a way to strengthen the research process and not otherwise.

## **Multi-sited Connections: Following Steel from Noamundi to New Delhi**

*Rajanikant Pandey, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi*

Anthropological epistemology in present world system should be informed by multi-sited ethnography, was a novel idea to confront the “crisis of representation” post-*Writing Culture*. However, this new technology of ‘doing ethnography’ was questioned by anthropologists content with microcosmic anthropological locations. Marcus, himself moved towards ‘multi-sited research’ and ‘multi-sited imagination’. Moreover, the present era which social scientists are conceptualizing as “Anthropocene/Capitalocene”, when no space/species on earth is untouched by human activities, anthropologists believe that ‘multispecies ethnography’ is the possible way to deal with emerging ontological riddles. Borrowing insights from these two ethnographic approaches, I pursued my fieldwork for the study of corporate environmental management in mining areas of Singhbhum, Jharkhand. When as a researcher, I travelled from New Delhi to Noamundi on an ‘iron track’ then I realized the contribution of mining in connecting me with field. Reversing the case, however, the ore extracted from Noamundi traverses to reach New Delhi, by alienating people in supply chain and without constituting any viable connection with consumers of the various finished products of iron and steel. Most people as users, buyers, and distributors are hardly concerned about what happens socially when iron ore comes out of earth. The social connections which should inform the journey of steel over multiple sites affecting multiple species are rarely grasped. The miner, Tata Steel, embarks upon a social and environmental responsibility to resolve ethical dilemmas which exemplify neoliberal capitalism. Is corporate responsibility enough to address missing social connection across space/species? What are the theoretical insights to engage with such inconspicuous connections in ‘late-industrialism’? The present paper is a reflexive account of a multi-sited, multispecies fieldwork conducted to understand these questions.

## Young Anthropologists Forum

Young anthropologist forum (YAF) attempts to provide a platform to the upcoming anthropologists in India for exchange of ideas and sharing of ongoing research findings at the level of the M.Phil and Ph.D. This would be done through creation of a network spreading all over India including all university departments and research institutes where Anthropology is taught and practiced. The main purpose is to initiate an academic culture that will instill international competitiveness in dealing with task of publications, peer reviews, referral comments, seminars and discussion groups providing critical comments of contemporary relevance.

### Who is Eligible?

1. Post graduates students enrolled in Anthropology and allied disciplines.
2. Scholars registered for M.Phil. and Ph.D programmes.
3. Post-doctoral fellows and research scientists.
4. Ad-hoc /Temporary lecturers and guest faculties in Anthropology.
5. Assistant Professors at entry level.

### Membership fees:

The Nominal fees of Rs 500/- for two years shall be collected towards expenditure incurred on meetings, conferences, discussions, group and academic competitions, certificates, postage communications etc. Indian Anthropological Association shall provide some seed money for website hosting, publications of newsletters and honorariums for inviting speakers and visiting fellows.

### Activities:

- To connect the research scholars of different universities and research institutes of India by creating the network of scholars.
- To organize discussion groups, debates, seminars, talks, exhibitions, anthropological quizzes and other competitions among youths.
- To bring out newsletters carrying the details of the past and the future activities relevant to anthropology.
- To publish journals on research proceedings reflecting the cutting edge research carried out by the scholars before obtaining their research degrees.
- To pursue the disciplinarian goal in politically neutral, ethically sensitive and culturally relativistic manner.
- To carry out any such activities that would further the professional and academic interest of the young anthropologists.

### Organization:

A national team of volunteers comprising of 15 scholars will be organized to act as members of steering committee which shall elect one convener and two coordinators. Under the academic supervision of the President IAA and executive administrative control of council of IAA, the steering committee shall be responsible for the overall management of the forum and its day to day activities.

- The volunteers will be from all branches of (biological, social, prehistoric and linguistic) Anthropology and from all geographical zones of India (North, South, East, West, Central and North East).
- The term of the steering committee shall be initially for a period of two years which can be further extended by another term.
- Activities shall be carried out not only in Delhi but also in different parts of India from time to time.

## **Anthropology without Borders**

The idea of Anthropology without borders stemmed from the Questions: What is the acceptance of anthropological opinion in India and South Asia? What projects have anthropologists worked on? Where can Anthropologists fit/work in the society, beyond academia?

As a response to these questions, the Indian Anthropological Association, taking cue from the ASF, decided to set up ‘Anthropology without Borders’ – a network of professional Anthropologists as well as like-minded organisations from India and South Asia that seeks to establish a link between groups seeking anthropological specialists who can act as critical readers, analysts, and reviewers of reports and documents to which such groups may not have access to otherwise. Anthropology by virtue of being rooted in the field and with access to people’s knowledge, can help in critically examining policy documents, reports, as well as lending a voice to the people themselves in different spheres.

Some of the areas within which Anthropologists have already established themselves like studies linked to migration, resettlement and rehabilitation, resource use, etc. could be the basis of beginning a relationship with non-governmental organisations as well as civil society groups that might need help in nuancing their work.

The experts would offer their advice to communities without charge on projects; get involved in community projects –research and/or development for a feasible duration. The main idea is to work for the community, to give something back and inculcate a voluntary work spirit among students through hands on, practical experience of working on community projects. The vision is to serve multiple goals – bringing water, sanitation, education; reviewing papers/interventions, policy for people; share stories, best practices, lessons learned as well as to grow as a community. The idea is also to make anthropological knowledge accessible to people regardless of boundaries and foster a feeling of community.

### **Vision**

1. Cooperate for fair and sustainable development initiatives in active collaboration with disadvantaged people or communities aimed at promoting self-sufficiency among civil society actors and groups;
2. Foster the socially responsible role of anthropologists and professionals;
3. Identify, disseminate and work alongside public institutions, multilateral organisations and private sector’s policies and programmes fostering social equity and inclusion
4. Promote the facilitation of trans-national dialogues and long-term partnerships with and within the less affluent countries;
5. Support participatory, democratic, multicultural and interdisciplinary processes and approaches in strengthening community solidarity as a factor of rural and urban social development;

### **Activities in the future:**

- a. Developing a forum on the Internet that would allow for the collaboration of anthropologists in different parts of the world and/or subfields;
- b. Creating a system of information/informatics to promote participation opportunities for anthropologists (students, active scholars, retired anthropologists); and
- c. Creating a reference database of “experts” who can be mobilized and are available to offer help in legal matters.
- d. Form a platform for exchange of ideas, work, pictures, etc. through individual membership plus chapters in universities
- e. Incorporate member and groups into the fold
- f. Fix the Governing Laws for the Anthropologists without Borders

### **Executive committee**

President                      Prof.SoumendraPatnaik,  
Secretary General        Supriya Singh

Academic Council Prof. Anup Kapoor (Convener), Prof. Nilika Mehrotra, Prof. Sukant Chaudhary,  
Prof. Avinash Kumar, Dr. Manoj Singh, Dr. Avitoli Zhimo.

### **Sub-Committees**

1. Regional committees – north, south, central, east and west.
2. Policy analysis
3. Legal advisory
4. Outreach and Public Relations
5. Documentation
6. Finance
7. Logistics

Suggestions are invited from general public, policy makers, NGOs and civil society leaders to strengthen AWB, widen its activities, and establish new linkages and defining existing and new work spheres.

### **Regional Chapters and Membership**

Since its inception in 1964, the Indian Anthropological Association has been untiringly pursuing the goal of making Anthropology vibrant in academic public life. *Indian Anthropologist*, the official journal of the Association has reflected the anthropological insights on complex social processes with implications for development policy and practice.

In an association like IAA, where members are spread all over India and abroad, a central chapter functioning out of one place would not be able to do justice to the myriad voices from the subcontinent. Having regional chapters makes it easier to keep in touch as well as have a much wider reach among members. Chapters connect not only the members through a meaningful dialogue but also anthropologists from different associations. The chapters help spread the IAA's message of creating an 'anthropology for society' with deep commitment to quality and excellence without losing the human touch.

The IAA has five regional chapters to carry out its goal and highlight regional concerns across India. We want to create a platform to organise events on an annual basis in different regions across the country to keep the members connected. IAA may facilitate the process through availability of seed money from time to time for organising academic activities and invites suggestions and proposals from members and non-members for the same.

### **Membership**

The IAA seeks to inspire the new generation of anthropologists and practitioners associated with anthropology and its sister disciplines. At the moment Indian Anthropological Association has more than five hundred registered life members spread all over the world and list includes Anthropologists, social scientists, social workers, archaeologists etc. The association is constantly striving to have younger minds engaging with us and they are also welcome to be the part of family by joining life membership.

**We invite everyone to join us as life members and contribute to further enriching the association.**

The membership form is attached in booklet and is also available on the website [indiananthro.org](http://indiananthro.org)

**Contact Person:** Rajanikant Pandey  
Joint Secretary, IAA

## **Indian Anthropological Association Code of Ethics**

### **Preamble**

Anthropological inquiry in India, like anywhere in the world, envelops a kaleidoscope of moral obligations, choices and responsibilities that a researcher needs to meet owing to the diversity and plurality encountered in ethnographic tradition. An anthropologist may inevitably face a complex of situations characterized by conflicts, misgivings, misunderstandings, etc. that raise the need for ethical considerations in order to facilitate making appropriate choices. Taking cognizance of such need of ethical considerations, Indian Anthropological Association (IAA) and its members have arrived a common understanding of the Code of Ethics in anthropological research based on certain principles and guidelines that provide the researcher with an ethical framework in anthropological enquiry.

### **Principles and Guidelines**

- Respect for People's Rights, Dignity, and Diversity
- Responsibility towards the Research Participant - To protect against misuse of knowledge and strive to do no harm
- Maintaining Transparency in the research process to the greatest extent possible and covering all aspects - objectives, methods, outcomes and sponsorship of their work.
- Obtaining Informed Consent across mediums – field research, using media (photos, videos, etc.) in both private and public spaces of research.
- Confidentiality and Anonymity of Research Participants
- Scholarly Obligations towards the Discipline and Colleagues - Anthropologists should particularly ensure that they do not alter the state of a research field in any manner that may obstruct access by other researchers in future or jeopardize future research in that area.
- Abiding by the Laws and Relations with the Governments
- Observance of Ethics while Teaching Anthropology - one should ensure that teaching is not done in the discourse of the dominant culture and that teaching pedagogy chooses examples from the margins. Moreover, the linguistic ability or disability of the students should be respected.

### **Epilogue**

Anthropological research invariably confronts the researchers with several situations of conflicts and dilemmas where they need to make appropriate choices and decisions for which the ethical responsibility and accountability is held absolutely with the researchers. Anthropologists as researchers, teachers, mentors and as members of various institutions are always required to take into account the ethical considerations put forth by this code and beyond. This Code of Ethics presents a set of guidelines and principles and not an edict and thus does not prescribe conformation to these ethics. Rather it is a framework of ethical guidelines that, Indian Anthropological Association believes, can encourage ethically responsible actions and decisions.

Dr. Indrani Mukherjee  
Ethics Officer



Indian Anthropological Association

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Life Membership fee: Rs. 5000/-

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sponsored by (1) ..... (2) .....

Present position .....

Major publications

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Educational details

Institution	Degree	Year	Topic of thesis/dissertation

Relationship of your work to the general field of Anthropology.....

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Membership of any other professional organization .....

Date.....

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