

# Fellows

Issue 5 November- December 2009

JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY SYLFF ASSOCIATION



JU-SYLFF Fellows and Project Director Professor Joyashree Roy with Akiko Matsunobu, Executive Director, Scholarship Division, TKFD.

## From The Editors

You have in your hands the fifth issue of *Fellows*. The last year saw many activities both inside and outside the campus. Early in the year, Akiko Matsunobu from TKFD made us proud by her visit to JU and sharing the visionary plans concerning the new SYLFF Plus Programme. With an increased reading space at the newly-constructed Subarna Jayanti Bhavan, and numerous activities ranging from the regular and rigorous sessions at the Progress Report Workshops, the regular brainstorming sessions at the weekly meetings of the Association, and social-action visits to the Leprosy Mission, the SYLFF presence at JU grows stronger.

The theme for this year's newsletter is "Framing the Question". Under this, fellows talk of their research perspectives, the horizons of their planning, and the questions they intend to ask, or have asked. With climate change becoming an issue of concern as never before, we have Nilanjan reporting on The International Study Camp 2009 on Human Development and Climate Change in Japan. Bipasha tells us of her experiences gathered through the erstwhile Fellowship Mobility Programme. Sreerupa, and Chizoba from Howard University, tell of their experiences as part of the new SYLFF Research Abroad Programme introduced this year. And as the JU-SYLFF community continues to grow, this newsletter sees the introduction of a new column called 'Whereabouts' where we brief you of the present involvements of earlier Fellows.

As always, we remain thankful to Professor Pradip Narayan Ghosh, Vice Chancellor, and Chairman, JU-SYLFF Steering Committee, and to Professor Joyashree Roy, JU-SYLFF Project Director, for their ever-cheerful support and guidance.

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

**The Editors**

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

**Akiko Matsunobu**

It was such a delight for me to visit the Jadavpur University in winter 2009, to see many of you, the Sylff fellows, all very much engaged in your studies, positive and confident about your future. I felt the power in you and in India as a rising nation. Today, we live in the world of uncertainty where diverse values, cultures, and thoughts coexist, not always in harmony, however. Globalization that benefits us in many ways sometimes conflicts with localism. As Sylff fellows you are expected to be the leaders of the future who can think, act, and guide others even under uncertain circumstances, and work not only for your community but for the world as well. It is one of the most important traits of an effective leader to have the ability to form questions essential to bringing more certainty and to indicate a path toward answers universally acceptable in bringing peace to the world. I am sure that the Jadavpur University Sylff fellows are creative individuals who can do this.

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

**Professor Pradip Narayan Ghosh**

The JU-SYLFF Programme continues to be a prestigious programme for Jadavpur University. The uniqueness of this programme allows full autonomy to the university to manage it within the proposed academic goal. It is satisfying to see how over first five years, students, teachers and the administration have worked innovatively to create work discipline among researchers to raise the quality of their output. Fellows get their research published in the peer-reviewed journals and have received recognition and appreciation from various quarters. Keeping with the goal of creating leadership JU-SYLFF fellows dedicate their time to larger social causes and inspire socially marginalized groups in Kolkata through various activities.

Each of the SYLFF fellow is exposed globally. Using the SYLFF Fellows' Mobility Programme and SYLFF Research Abroad Programme, researchers are getting opportunities to compare social changes and realities across continents. This exposure is allowing them to understand what makes the same problem have different manifestations across countries, to study how national and very local issues need to be viewed in a larger global perspective, and how barriers and opportunities for solution are losing disciplinary and geographical boundaries.

Ritajyoti is working on history of development is currently in University of California, Berkeley, Sreerupa with her sociological enquiry on HIV/AIDS has just returned after her field visit at Howard University in US and American University in Cairo. She has also been selected for 'Build Better Asia Dialogue for 2010' by Tokyo Foundation. The JU-SYLFF Programme provides enough opportunities for internationalization of the institution as well. Jadavpur University is now using the links among SYLFF institutes globally to extend the cooperation beyond Sylff perimeter and benefits are flowing to wider academic community within the university. Visit by Ms. Akiko Mastunobu, Executive Director of Scholarship Division in Tokyo Foundation this year was an encouragement for us as she has launched new platforms for interaction among 69 Sylff institutes across 44 countries. I am hopeful that Jadavpur University community is ready to use the full potential and also enrich the overall sylff programme in turn. It is now time for graduated SYLFF fellows to take forward the JU-SYLFF Programme in coordination with SYLFF mentors and the university administration.



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

**Professor Joyashree Roy**

The SYLFF Programme at Jadavpur University has its unique character. Young minds are given enough freedom to think, search and argue. SYLFF Fellows demonstrate that independent thinking, if mentored and guided with wisdom and discipline, can produce academic excellence and social leaders with vision. Graduated fellows are thinking out of the box and taking up social change issues more closely coming out of the comfort zones of life!!! I think Fellows are truly taking up the JU-SYLFF goals seriously in theory and practice. When the theme was conceived by JU-SYLFF mentors five years back such a vision was in mind. I wish the vision and implementation gets strengthened in coming years when JU-SYLFF Fellows start enriching the vision by taking forward the programme more actively with changed roles.

The strong point of the programme which we all feel is that the Fellows work with passion on their chosen topics. They are independently and enthusiastically trying to revisit the initial research questions and the scope of their study with continuous repositioning through discussions with mentors, and at quarterly progress report meetings with the experts and peer reviewers. They are trying to answer many confusions over critical social issues in contemporary Indian society that have relevance for larger policy making, directional guideline for managing developmental path by decision makers. Through the SYLFF Plus Programme, Fellows are making their voice heard in different forums. But now with five years of output from JU-SYLFF Fellows, their consolidated voice needs compilation and dissemination so that it can be mainstreamed in the process of continuous change that shapes the future society. With wider exposure and thirst for in-depth knowledge, I wish fellows can locate the unique purpose in life, and with their special talents they can express that to solve unique needs of the society. I wish to see the SYLFF Fellows engage more with the social change discourse, not at the theoretical level alone but as practicing social scientists, and emerge as universal individuals.

## Aspects of peasant-politics in post-colonial India

Neha Chatterjee

MA-Level SYLFF Fellow (2009-10)  
Department of History

Peasant populations, Marx observed in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, are incapable of articulating their class 'interests', being ridden in 'traditional' communitarian social sensibilities. Such a conception of the 'pre-modern', 'pre-political' peasant seems to be basic within a theory of historical change in which graduation to the 'modern' would require the conversion of identities based on the 'primacy of communities' to those based on the 'primacy of individuals'. The modernist historical plan, in post-colonial India, based itself on the expectation that the economically-driven process of social individuation would be reinforced by processes of representative government. But the 'insularity' of the internally cohesive 'peasant society' or 'village community' continued to be a dominant paradigm in sociological studies for a long time..

Much of recent research reject that the cognitive make-up of these subaltern groups is essentially 'pre-political' or 'pre-modern' and bring out that agrarian people tend to revive 'traditional' loyalties in times of crisis as a specific modality of political action. The mobilised peasant, in post-colonial times, articulates through and appeals to community-identities, often alongside his articulations in the language of 'development' which cannot be, therefore, denied 'modern rationality'.

Indeed, the state and its institutions have become internal aspects of the 'peasant community' (Chatterjee: 2008). The peasants usually cry for more state intervention, rather than less (Lieten: 2005). Should this be creating a stark relation between the peasant-individual and the state (its anti-poverty programmes, for instance), breaking down all intermediate affiliations of loyalty? Do peasants perceive anything like a 'community' (be it constituted in terms of religion, or caste, or kin, or the 'village settlement') which is to be more than a sum-total of individual-selves but a collectivity from which they are to draw socio-cultural and economic sustenance through reciprocal ties of dependence? Or do 'individuated interests', stripped of any significant form of community-reciprocity, require the projection of community-identities as the political format of appeal.

My project of attempting at a glimpse of the 'perceptions' of peasants (in so far as they are embodied in their political practices, articulations) is simply to explore these issues in the local context of two villages in the South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. In fact, I intend to bring out the possibly tangible differences in peasants' political responses (and terms of political articulations) to a changing socio-cultural, economic and political environment.

## Coffee House to Barista: A Study of Cultural Change

Payal Sen

MA Level SYLFF Fellow (2008-09)  
Department of Sociology

I have found in the course of my recently completed study as a MA Level SYLFF Fellow that there has been a general shift from "serving" the clients to "selling" products and services to the clients – the shift in focus being from people orientation of the first coffee houses to profit orientation by the chain retail coffee shops. The nature of space inside coffee selling places has also changed significantly. The question I was working with was whether there had been any significant change from the older coffee houses to the new coffee consuming spaces in terms of orientation, or whether the newer ones were simply continuing an older tradition.

The management and the shop floor workers are not too keen on entertaining the same set of people for a very long time. As a result spending a whole day with a cup of coffee and some nominal amount of snacks at a chain coffee retail outlet is like a wild imagination, whereas a reality at the Indian Coffee House. Female participation in the coffee shop space has increased than what it had been, previously, in the Coffee Houses.

The findings of this investigation disclose a clear shift in lifestyle of people residing in Kolkata. The decision of liberalising, privatising and globalising the Indian markets had launched this change. This change has led to a gap in the outlook and attitudes, sentimental values and consumerist tendencies and increased purchasing power of those who are in their fifties and above and those who are in their early forties. With people getting more opportunities to interact with the west, it also affects the cultural embodiment of those people as well as people who surround them due to social exchanges inside the local community. This way there is a ripple effect in the entire society's choices.

However, if we see the essence of it, it boils down to being just another form of cultural domination. The current economic situation of the country has cleverly captured the upwardly mobile young population that has just started earning and would not hesitate to make lavish buys on perishable goods and services. The retailers and companies are also on the pry with various media, to sneak into the minds of the target consumers and force them into buying their services and products, something that was absent in the heydays of the coffee houses.

The Indian Coffee House still doesn't have advertisements and marketing tactics to target a greater audience. Their propensity towards Bengali tradition and history, they feel, makes them exquisite and ethnic, untouched by the sensation of consumer nirvana of 'international' tastes and lifestyle marketing like all branded retail shops and chain outlets.

## Professional identity & the Western Classical Musicians of Kolkata

Sebanti Chatterjee

MA-level Fellow (2009-10)  
Department of Sociology

It is a remarkable phenomenon that an occidental musical tradition is surviving alongside an indigenous musical tradition, that too in the cultural capital of India, our very own Kolkata.

However, the position of the (Western) European Classical Musicians in the city is not very conducive in terms of the economic and socio-cultural forces. A fundamental problem which is on the rise seems to be the dilemma preoccupying the musicians compelling them to be stagnated solely as music teachers. Most are reluctant to undertake a 'risky' career and thus tread along comfortable lines. Being western classical music teachers enables them to stay connected with their passion and at the same time disseminate their invaluable knowledge to a new generation of aspiring musicians.

The audience, too, is not always receptive to this genre of music and the listeners' circle is miniscule. Western classical music is seen at best a 'colonial hangover', which is rather a fancy than a necessity. Most find it difficult to apply their knowledge in the 'pure' form because the scope is quite limited. Also, technological intrusions aren't far away from the traditional music as well. Apparently there isn't any gender bias, the number of girls learning, teaching or practicing western classical music is less because the awareness about this musical style is limited. However, this might just be an elusive illustration camouflaging the socially constructed gender gap.

This study is an attempt to redress the inevitable disapproval that these musicians confront whenever they want to secure their rightful position. The basic research question of my study is to understand how the sustainability of 'Western classical music' and 'musicians' is possible in contemporary Kolkata? There is a parallel question to it focusing on the gender dimension which addresses the problem whether the 'choice' of patronizing a particular 'instrument' is sociologically determined.

## Goal Carbon Neutral: Can We Achieve?

Shyamasree Dasgupta

M.Phil. Fellow (2009-10)  
Dept. Of Economics

The concentration of Carbon Dioxide in the atmosphere has touched the alarming figure of 380 parts per million (ppm) in recent times as compared to the figure of 280 ppm during the pre industrial revolution era.

There is enough scientific evidence that increased concentration of these gases will in-



crease the amount of infrared radiation trapped by the atmosphere leading to an alarming increase in global mean temperature beyond what is needed for the life to flourish. Among the contributors of such green house gases, the energy supply sector remained to be the largest one followed by the change in land use pattern mainly resulting from the act of deforestation and then the industry.

While the world is looking forward for a sustainable solution to reduce such carbon concentration in the atmosphere, the possibility of emergence of a fully functional carbon market consisting of many players is getting clearer. Industries could become potential buyers and forests too can emerge as a supplier of carbon sink.

But what is the potential of such carbon capturing capacity of forest lands to be a part of such carbon market and what is the expected increase in emission by the industries are to be explored. Can a domestic market emerge for such trade practice in carbon between the industries and forestry sector even if a country like India does not conform to any binding commitment under international negotiations?

My research would give me a scope to seek answers of all these questions. In fact a competitive price generated through a fully functional carbon market accruing to the forest in that case might also be high enough to act as an incentive towards forest conservation as well.

### **The International Study Camp 2009 on Human Development and Climate Change: A spectacular exposition**

**Nilanjan Pande**  
*MA-Level Fellow (2007- 2008)*  
*Department of History*

Of the many spectacular expositions which Momoyama University offers, The International Study Camp 2009 on Human Development and Climate Change was one. Here 22 international students from different countries, like myself, met and talked about environmental problems of our own countries as well as other countries. Students' interactions aroused awareness, curiosity about the visible world and the invisible forces at play. The novel exchange of ideas realizations of the domino rule of existence provided a perfect learning experience. There is a nurturing of awareness and responsibility that as an individual, a citizen of today cannot simply neglect the environmental crisis threatening the world at large.

Appreciatively, the tone of the participants, (as was evident through the discussions and blog posts) was not one of sympathy, but, of empathic and action. We seemed to be unanimous on bringing about a difference and setting up an example for others to follow. The ideas and experiences have widened the horizon of con-

sciousness, attitude, outlook and opinion. The touch of reality so omnipresent has made this program memorable, with interesting exchanges and expositions of ideas and opinions.

But what deserves most applause was the simple yet strong forging of the unity for the cause, and the determination and commitment that emerged for rethinking the question of environment and fostering the co-operation among the youth worldwide. The 13 days-long camp ended with our 'statement for environment' which we read in front of Dr. Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury and he promised to take the students' statement to the Copenhagen Earth Summit 2009.

### **Song with/in work: 'Singing at work' amidst the changing soundscape of the city**

**Shubhasree Bhattacharyya**  
*SYLFF Doctoral fellow (2009-12)*  
*Department of Comparative Literature*

Linked with the act of listening is a sense of territoriality. Our appropriations of spaces are also a matter of sound. (Barthes, 1986) But it is also sound which has the characteristic of spilling over spaces. And this very impossibility of assigning fixed 'locations' for sounds makes it a threat too. No wonder 'listening' becomes a contested domain. Side by side with grave con-

cerns regarding noise pollution, what can be listened to and what cannot also become key questions.

The intimate connection between musical rhythms and the rhythms of work has already been noted and it is a widely accepted idea. In many forms of work, singing along with was a common practice. Much of the 'people's movement' in Bengal in the 1940s and 50s in its enthusiasm to include 'folk' art showed great interest in such forms, more so, because they could readily be seen as celebrations of 'labour', an idea of central concern for the movement.

A study of the practice of singing along with work becomes a much complicated affair as one sees it as a contemporary practice in the urban space. Such an attempt not only opens up a different space for engaging with groups of migrant labourers but also helps situate 'work' in relation with concepts of pleasure, entertainment, performance, agency, and excess.

Is the change in such acts of 'public singing' only a result of mechanization of labour? Can they be seen as negotiations of the workers with their changing workplaces? How does the practice feature in the economy of music, noise and patterns of listening? What larger changes do they hint at? Addressing these questions, under the JU-SYLFF Programme, this research aims to rethink relations between work and song within the matrix of shifting power relations in the changing urban economy.

## **Over the Frozen River: Newspaper-research, Questions, and a Mediated World**

**Deeptanil Ray**

*SYLFF Doctoral fellow (2008-11)  
Department of English*

The questions that I ask in my research are whether the changes— in media behaviourism in the projective (imaginative) and the real dimensions of the English-language print media's change in the decades immediately prior to the introduction of liberalisation to India, the structures of expectations underpinning the constant reiteration of their assumptive role as the "national media", and consequently, their legitimisation of certain authority and their privileging of certain events over others— bear close congruence to the complex processes of legitimisations and accommodations, and institutional transformations witnessed in the global information systems. Are these changes traceable to some tectonics integral to the medium, evident but untraced before the onset of liberalisation except in generalising terms? Are there some conditions intrinsic to Indian conditions?

In my year's work as a SYLFF Fellow, I've learnt that questioning the contingencies of transformative social change necessarily involves an understanding of other questions. For every question is mediated and has its history and

ancestors, and in knowing the questions others have asked before us leads us to constantly pass over a frozen river into the thought-worlds of the other questions. We question them in the dark, and they question us in the flux of appearances, in the constant flood of shifting impressions, printed words and audio-visual stimuli, but also in their situatedness and movement outside mediated realms of givenness, constants, constructs, and truth-claims.

The constant dialogue between questions and counter-questions further ignites dialogues of the mind with itself (what some ancients called "thought"); our question has to think in more precise terms what the other questions before us wanted to ask and what they left much unsaid. Rather than legitimising its own investigations as independent analyses of the mediated social and historical world, this series of continuing dialogues helps the question, which tries to understand the incompleteness of its own questionings, to find a contextual space.

## **Whereabouts**

*Once a SYLFF Fellow, Always a SYLFF Fellow, as the saying goes!*

*And as the JU-SYLFF community continues to grow bigger, things have become more exciting. Here's a brief glimpse of what our past Fellows are doing right now.*

**Madhuchhanda Ghosh, SYLFF Doctoral Fellow (2004- 2007)**

*Having completed her Doctorate in 2007, Madhuchhanda has served as a Faculty Associate at the Icfai University Press from April 2008 to May 2009. She is currently a UGC-Fellow at the Centre of Advanced Studies Programme and associated with the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata.*

**Duke Ghosh, SYLFF Doctoral Fellow (2005- 2008)**

*Having completed his Doctoral thesis under the SYLFF programme, Duke is currently the Director, Research & Consulting, Bitscrape Solutions Pvt. Ltd, Kolkata.*

**Payosni Mitra, SYLFF Doctoral Fellow (2005- 2008)**

*After completing her Ph.D. on Gender and Sports in India, Payosni is currently working on a research project on Benefits of Sports at the Women's Sports and Fitness Foundation, London, United Kingdom. Apart from this, in an effort to bridge the gap between research and grass root work, Payosni is volunteering for sport and physical activity programmes dedicated to Muslim women in London.*

**Sulagna Maitra, MA-Level SYLFF Fellow (2006-2007)**

*Sulagna is currently a Doctoral Student at the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University. She is also working as a Research Associate at the Global Change Programme, Jadavpur University. From 2007-2008, Sulagna completed a specialised Masters in Networking in Humanitarian Action (NOHA) under the European Union's Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Programme.*

**Ritajyoti Bandopadhyay, MA-Level and SYLFF Doctoral Fellow (2004-2005, 2006-2009)**

*Ritajyoti is currently a Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley.*

**Nilanjan Pandey, MA-Level SYLFF Fellow (2007- 2008)**

*Nilanjan is currently a Jadavpur University Exchange Student at the Momoyama Gakuin University (St. Andrews University), Osaka, Japan. He is also pursuing his M.Phil at the School of Women Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata.*

**Sreya Maitra, MA-Level SYLFF Fellow (2007- 2008)**

*Sreya is currently a Doctoral Student at the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University. She is also working as a Research Fellow at Global India Foundation, Kolkata.*

## **SYLFF Research Abroad: A cultural and an academic journey**

**Sreerupa Sengupta**

*SYLFF Doctoral fellow (2008-11)  
Department of Women's Studies*

In the beginning of 2009 I had no inkling of the surprises that the year had in store for me. I began the application process for the SYLFF Research Abroad Programme in March.

After much discussions, sleepless nights and never ending cups of coffee I zeroed in on two places – Howard University, USA and The American University in Cairo, Egypt. I was immediately drawn into a flurry of activities from getting the papers ready for application, collecting recommendations and writing my research proposal. Finally, I was awarded the grant to work for three months under the SYLFF Research Abroad in June. This was a turning point. It was



decided that I will spend two months (September – October) in Howard University, USA and one month (November) in The American University in Cairo.

My USA diary actually begins from New York! Visiting New York was an unforgettable experience. Besides the regular tourist attractions what fascinated me most was the unique architectural designs. The free spirit of the city was also alluring. After a marathon tour of this enigmatic city in three days, I was back to Washington D.C. which was to be my destination for the next two months.

My discovery of the city began with my visit to the Library of Congress. I was almost speechless. This is a huge library with the finest collections of books, journals and other materials which I never ceased to explore. To put it succinctly, it is a researcher's paradise. Another good way of knowing the city has been by visiting its many neighbourhoods. Each of these neighbourhoods possesses a distinct cultural history which is worth exploring.

The SYLFF Research Abroad Programme has given me a brilliant opportunity to widen my vista of knowledge – both cultural and academic. And my journey has only begun...

### **3 Months Trip to Washington DC: Exploring commonalities in Indian and US primary education system**

**Bipasa Mukherjee**  
*SYLFF Doctoral fellow (2007-10)*  
*Department of Philosophy*

The short trip to Washington DC for three months to conduct a research under the Fellow Mobility Program (FMP) was a wonderful experience for me. As a visiting SYLFF fellow to Howard University, another SYLFF institute, I felt privileged as a Doctoral Fellow of the JU-SYLFF community. All the details of travelling,

residence and academic requirements were taken care by the FMP.

The study included both research on theory of quality of primary education with special reference to NCLB Act and the short fieldwork comprising Focus Group Discussion (FGD), intensive interviews and classroom participant observation (CPO) under the guidance of my academic supervisor and other faculties of School of Education, Howard University. The first month was spent in designing the fieldwork and the study on the scholarly from the resources of the Central Library, Howard University and the Library of Congress. The research that I was proposed with specific research question on quality of primary education with special reference to No Child Left Behind Act (2001) was redesigned and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Howard University. The second and the third month were devoted on the collection of pri-

*Bipasa Mukherjee during her field research on US primary schools.*



mary data from four schools – public, private charter, private bilingual and private special education school.

The study revisited several common issues/problems in US primary education system like private school system dominates public system in terms of quality, alarming rate of dropouts among black students, under achievements in English and Mathematics at various grades of schooling despite of the Universal Enrolment in school education at the dawn of the Twentieth Century. It clearly showed the deeper intricacy of challenges that US Federal Government has to address in education policy making and is expected to be a successful chapter in my forthcoming PhD thesis.

### **Learning beyond Identities: My Experiences from the SYLFF Research Abroad Program**



**Chizoba Udeorji**  
*Dept. of Communication & Culture*  
*SYLFF Fellow, Howard University*

Aside from gaining the ability to use knowledge acquired through graduate education to sound really cool and pretentious at dinner parties with your friends, I believe theory, particularly social theory, is a powerful pedagogical tool. It helps us learn to better engage in intercultural interactions, and ideally, to learn empathy and human interconnectedness across cultures.

Through the advocacy of Dr. Joyashree Roy from Jadavpur and Dr. Anita Nahal from Howard University, I was afforded the opportunity to spend a month in Kolkata, India in order to implement



the early stages of an ongoing research project on sex workers and identity management. I met with Dr. Paromita Chakravarti, the joint director of School of Women's Studies. She provided a wealth of resources, shared experiences, and helped me interview a total of sixteen women over a period of three weeks. In their shared living and working spaces, the women craftily forge and balance multiple lines (identities) by which they survive and maintain their humanity. They also challenge hetero-normative views of family life and sexuality. Their stories were amusing, surprising, heart breaking and triumphant.

Coming from such a vastly different environment and knowledge base, interpretation has been an ongoing challenge. As a woman, and as an African American, I shared with my research participants the need to negotiate my identity with power structures. However, as a person of the western world, and as a woman in an institution of higher learning, I also identified with a relative amount of privilege often clouding my understanding of their environment. Fleshing through these identities, learning who I am in relation to what I saw/heard/experienced during my time in India has been an additional benefit of the US/India Research Initiative.

In some ways I am still experiencing India through my research and data. The SYLFF program provided me with a rare opportunity that will continue to impact my experiences for years to come.

### From the SYLFF-Assistant's Desk

Sayanti Mitra

I have been a part of JU-SYLFF Programme for the last few months. Contrary to my earlier notions that few months would hardly be enough to build up a sense of association, surprisingly I found my experience to be truly enriching.

At the beginning, I was a little apprehensive about the work environment as I've had little exposure. But after joining the SYLFF office, I readily felt secure and confident, thanks to the careful mentoring by the SYLFF fellows as well as the Project Director. My first moment of wonder came when I attended the Pre - Application Orientation Programme. It made me realize how interesting and challenging research-work can be. It was not only motivating and insightful but also a clarion call to everyone present to open up their minds and bring together their knowledge and creativity to push the boundaries of their own experiences.

Attending a Progress Report Workshop, I got a rare chance to see the vibrant young minds speculate clearly and present their viewpoints quite convincingly yet being open to the myriad new ideas that were coming up from the Experts' desks. It helped me learn some effective ways of communication where everyone is eager to learn and grow without any reservation.

I thank JU - SYLFF for bringing a positive change in me and re- shaping my identity.

#### **SYLFF Vision:**

*"The world is one family and all mankind are brothers and sisters"*  
- Ryoichi Sasakawa

*All have the right to fulfill their basic needs for food, health care and education.*

#### **SYLFF Mission:**

*To support the education of outstanding students pursuing graduate level study in the social sciences and humanities with high potential for leadership and commitment to exercising leadership in local, national, regional and international affairs, in public as well as in private endeavors.*

*To nurture future leaders who will transcend geopolitical, religious, ethnic, cultural and other boundaries and will contribute to peace and well-being of humankind.*

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