

**Anthropological Generations: A Post-Independence Ethnography of Academic
Anthropology and Sociology in India**

by

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ABSTRACT

This ethnography of three North Indian academic departments from India's independence in 1947 until 2015 draws on anthropological studies of kinship to examine scholars' generational relations as a lens on social, institutional, political, and economic processes involved in ethnographic knowledge-making. It finds that these intellectual genealogies should be understood not only as intellectual influence or teacher-student relationships, but also at once as socially produced (and sometimes competing) ideas affecting how scholars conceive of their academic worlds, relate to each other, and navigate or help build their fields and institutions. It then illustrates the significance of this *intellectual kinship* to how academic cultures are created, how an academic elite is formed, the shaping of disciplinary boundaries, and the workings of world academic hierarchies.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

“Ethnography,” I sometimes only half-jokingly tell my friends, “has, of all scientific approaches, the biggest bang for your buck! It’s the greatest and possibly most underrated value for investment. Just think, for the price of a single piece of biomedical laboratory equipment, you could fund multiple ethnographic research projects. Ethnographers don’t generally require very costly equipment—their greatest expenses are often just transportation, food and shelter. So, for the paltry price of subsistence, you can get an anthropologist to investigate some aspect of human life in depth for years. A committed one—and many are—may willingly risk life and limb, endure all manner of danger and suffering in service to this cause. What’s more, the likelihood of success is comparatively quite high in that you’re almost guaranteed a well-prepared ethnographer will return with invaluable insights about infinitely complex phenomena. Granted, these may not be the insights you were hoping to hear; if they do their job right, it will probably involve telling you that you had been thinking about your questions all wrong. But if you prefer knowledge to sycophantic yes-men, look no further than the ethnographers.” By now my friends have grown accustomed to such unsolicited commentaries about social science or academia, and thankfully tolerate them.

Now, if somehow, against all odds, you know little to nothing about ethnography or anthropology but still randomly picked this up, you might be thinking that ethnographers sound impressive, adventurous, and wise. I'd like you to remember that feeling, because what follows will involve sometimes intense and unexpected turns of events that will introduce you to internal tensions and conflicts that anthropologists and ethnographers struggle to grapple with. That doesn't mean they are not impressive, adventurous, or wise. It means they're human beings, most of whom take being human quite seriously.

On the other hand, perhaps you yourself are an anthropologist or ethnographer. Perhaps you have already begun to deconstruct my narrative. It romanticizes anthropology in a simplistic way and ignores its historical involvement with colonial and imperialist oppression. What, am I trying to give new life to Indiana Jones associations? Why am I pitching anthropology in terms of financial investment value anyway? Who says ethnography is a science? Who do I think I am defining the terms of value for ethnography? These are all excellent questions and you've probably outdone me with more. I'd like you to remember that critical instinct and the challenges of tempering it with a compassionate reading, because before long you may feel that I am not giving anthropologists and ethnographers the credit they're due, perhaps dwelling too much on stories that seem unsavory. It's true, those instincts to analyze and question, to confront challenging issues head on, can go too far and even make us start to lose sight of the value our work does hold—and still, they are some of our greatest strengths.

I'll try to briefly address that last question about who I think I am. Along with its opposite, it's a sentiment I've encountered in a variety of forms as I have researched and written about colleagues. A senior colleague I met at the 2011 annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), where I was conducting fieldwork for a long-term side project, once asked me what made me think I am any better able to figure out what was going on there than the thousands of other anthropologists in attendance. I was momentarily taken aback, but thought about it and replied that, I don't—I just spend more time and energy paying attention and trying to understand it.

The experiences that most directly gave shape to my varied anthropological interests and moved them towards the ethnography and history of anthropology took place during my undergraduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley. The anthropology department centennial events combined with an unusual prior exposure to older texts in a high school anthropology class drew me to conversations about the history of anthropology. After September 11th, the urgency of debates about the militarization of anthropology increasingly turned my attention to the politics and economics of that history and how anthropologists struggle with questions about it into the present. That, in turn, led me to works broadly related to the “corporatization” of universities. At the same time, I was surrounded by scholars studying scientific and medical institutions and practitioners from an anthropological perspective. A work-study job in the department reminded me daily of the humanness of classmates, staff, and professors. My coursework began to expose me to the existence of Eurocentric, progressive/unilineal evolutionist narratives of the history of anthropology at the same time as it introduced me to examples contradicting those narratives.

Puzzled, I began to contemplate how anthropologists would end up perpetuating the very ethnocentric models they criticize.

Although I took years to accept that this was something I wanted to pursue seriously, I slowly began to see fieldwork with anthropologists as a logical next step: Anthropologists are people, with all the complexities that go along with living and working in particular times and places. Any effort to make sense of them or their work needs to take that into account. Luckily, there are thousands of people who specialize in making sense of just those kinds of complexities; many of them identify as anthropologists. Some of them had already begun to use their skills to study scientists and scholars. Surely it made sense to bring together knowledge of histories of anthropology with the insights ethnographers of science were well-equipped to glean, the connections made by critical studies of higher education (later on, the more specifically ethnographic approaches to this), the vision of those who were thinking and writing about social scientific inquiry without presumptions that Europe and the US are its primary locations. Surely this was an obvious direction to take in attempting to gain some much needed perspective on the processes involved in how we live and do anthropology, processes basic to questions that continue to plague many anthropologists about their discipline, not to mention many scholars about their fields and workplaces. My fieldwork at AAA meetings gave me an in-person view of how huge many of these areas of study are, how they have (with some overlap and intersections) their own social circles, and how my interests didn't fit nicely into any one of them, even though they have all provided valuable bases for my work. It wasn't until years later, in a graduate seminar on kinship at Michigan, that I began really thinking through ideas of kinship between intellectuals. Even then, it was in relation to historical material about *guru-shishya* (master-

disciple) relationships and lineages that seemed far removed from my academic field sites so, still unaware of how common internal hiring had been to the departments I planned to focus on, I didn't expect such questions would end up being especially relevant to my dissertation.

By the time I headed to India for my dissertation fieldwork, the aim of my research was to understand how ethnographic theory is produced and shared across generations, specifically looking at the role of social relationships, political/economic and institutional contexts, and geography in the kind of knowledge ethnographers produce. I wanted to look at these questions through the lens of people associated with three North Indian departments of anthropology and sociology, starting from India's independence in 1947 (or when they were founded, if later) until the present (or, more accurately, when I left India in 2015). These three departments are the Department of Anthropology at the University of Delhi (DU), the Department of Sociology at the Delhi School of Economics (DSE or "D School," part of DU), and the Department of Anthropology at Lucknow University. I used the term "ethnographic" to avoid focusing strictly on the academic disciplines called "anthropology" or "sociology" (or to presume their boundaries/relationship in the Indian context from the start), as well as to indicate that I did not intend to make fields like physical/biological anthropology primary foci of my research (although I saw biological anthropologists' work as relevant to that extent that it involved ethnography, and in its relation to the work of colleagues doing ethnography).

My fieldwork was conducted in English and Hindi (and very briefly in Farsi with a few Iranian international students). Almost all of the academics and most university personnel/administrators I interacted with speak English well and I almost always spoke to them in English. In group

interactions or at events, they would often code-switch (usually between English and Hindi, but occasionally other languages like Bangla, Punjabi, Assamese, and Koshur that I couldn't understand), so my most frequent use of Hindi in fieldwork was for comprehension. I depended more heavily on Hindi in my fieldwork in Lucknow, especially when speaking with students and department staff or attending classes/events, as instruction at Lucknow University is now largely "Hindi medium." I also used Hindi for day-to-day interactions and getting around, as well as speaking with some people, like students in Lucknow and some departmental staff/lower-level university personnel in both Lucknow and Delhi, who did not know much English. Even though my confidence in Hindi had its limits, the fact that I had invested years in learning a local language that is generally devalued relative to English usually helped in building rapport (albeit perceived much less impressively so than the Hindi of many of my lighter-skinned American colleagues).

My research combined ethnographic fieldwork in the three departments with life histories and interviews; archival research; research on policies and institutional structures in which ethnographers work and which they've helped build; fieldwork at conferences (departmental, local, and national), book stores/fairs, (to a very small extent) field sites, and other gatherings or events ethnographers were involved with. I spent the bulk of my time in the two departments in Delhi. I spent a total of about 3 months in Lucknow over 9 trips; an ankle injury interfered with plans to spend more time there. In addition to work in the three departments the project focused on, during my fieldwork as well as previous preliminary work, I was able to briefly visit several other departments and universities in different parts of India.

At the DSE Sociology Department, I spent the most time with students in the PhD and MPhil degree programs, particularly those involved in the Research Scholars' Group (RSG). I began early on by participating in and observing their workshops, eventually making a presentation to them myself (“‘It Gets More Confusing Before it Starts Making Any Sense’: On the Proliferation of Questions in Initial Fieldwork”). Over time, I also sometimes joined in on informal conversations at the tea stall, canteen, lawns, and in/around the Ratan Tata Library, as well as participating in some of their social gatherings and excursions outside the university. Through some RSG members, I also became acquainted with another student group, the Association of Students for Equitable Access to Knowledge (ASEAK), which was formed in response to (and recognized by the court as a party to the case of) the copyright infringement lawsuit filed by Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, and Taylor & Francis against Rameshwari Photocopy Service (the small copy shop at DSE) and the University of Delhi. I attended a number of ASEAK-related events, including a protest at a major book fair and events in defense of free speech and academic freedoms, as well as sitting in on court hearings for the case.

Although I began getting to know people at DSE earlier than in the DU anthropology department, I had a (comparatively) easier time gaining access and building rapport in the latter. This was probably due to a combination of factors, including: my official affiliation to the department (so the institution had some responsibility to me, and some people understood me as a student of my assigned supervisor which gave me a place in the web of social relations there), a mutual friend/colleague from Michigan I shared with one of the junior faculty members who was hired after I arrived, the intensive shared bonding experience of the annual departmental group field trip I was able to participate in, the fact that the department is not as elite as the DSE

sociology department, perhaps the position of social anthropology as a smaller subfield/group of people within the department, and the extent to which my experience at DSE had by then lowered my expectations of the kinds of access I might hope to get. I also presented a paper (“The First Decade of Anthropology at the University of Delhi—As Told Through the Annual Reports”) at the department’s *Celebrating the Spirit of Anthropology* seminar about the department’s history and in honor of its retired faculty. In this department, the people I interacted with most were some faculty (present and past) and some of the master’s (MPhil and MSc) students.

In both of the DU departments, I also attended countless events, lectures, seminars, conferences, workshops, department day gatherings, thesis pre-submissions and defenses, and I sat in on a few sessions of classes. A variety of other fieldwork locations included a book launch honoring Veena Das and a visit to a market selling plagiarized dissertations. I also interviewed people who have been associated with the departments at different times throughout their histories. Although I talked with many students (and a few faculty) informally, my formal interviews were mainly with past/present faculty and alumni. Overall, across field sites and not counting my many informal conversations/interviews, I conducted formal or semi-formal interviews with 78 people. Out of those, I audio-recorded 87 interviews with 61 people (I interviewed some people multiple times), for a total of about 140 hours of recordings.

I also gathered a great deal of information about the Delhi departments from archival sources. This includes over 400 pages of typed notes from the annual reports of the University of Delhi from the 1930s until 2014. These are housed in the university archive, which did not allow any

duplication of its documents. The information included in the annual reports varied from year to year. Another major source of archival information was dissertations and theses. I was able to obtain (near complete) lists of all PhD and MPhil dissertations in anthropology and sociology in DU. I was not able to go through the anthropology theses. I did go through all of the sociology PhD theses up to just after the point when their abstracts began to be included in online library records. Towards the end of my fieldwork, the sociology department re-opened its Resource Centre, which houses its MPhil theses and other archival documents. Although I did not have time to go through each of the MPhil theses, I was able to photograph all of the old official sociology syllabi beginning in the early 1980s, and a few old departmental annual reports (which are more detailed than the university-wide ones) before I ran out of time. The DU anthropology department's archival records of its own history are sparser by far. I was unable to find copies of any but the most recent official anthropology syllabi. However, just before I left India, as the anthropology department was cleaning out some old files and bookshelves, a random assortment of documents began to appear. My supervisor there showed me one, for example, that was probably the anthropology department's first letter register, listing letters sent from the department for about a decade.

My fieldwork in Lucknow, a much smaller department, was shaped largely by my interactions with Professor Nadeem Hasnain, who was head of the anthropology department there when I was starting fieldwork (his term eventually ended, and not long after that, he retired). I actually also shared a flat with his son and daughter-in-law for a month when they were in Delhi for fieldwork—both of them were then PhD candidates at US universities—and came to consider them friends. In addition to interviews and time spent with Professor Hasnain, I attended a few

sessions of classes as well as a few events/conferences associated with the department and the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society (EFCS) there. I was able to obtain copies of the current anthropology syllabus and a few old ones from Professor Hasnain. I spent a significant amount of time in the Tagore Library (when I was not interrupted by the frequent employee strikes) going through the incomplete collection of old anthropology PhD dissertations available there. I also went through some more recent PhD theses available in the anthropology department's DN Majumdar Library.

Over the course of my fieldwork, people shared a lot of stories of their experiences that weighed heavily on me, as they were intended to do. At the time, I thought of them as “horror stories,” by which I mean retellings of events that are perceived or framed by someone as great injustices, as major violations of ethics or basic human decency. These included problems ranging from things like the more banal incidences of plagiarism, serious problems with funding institutions/bureaucracies, and exploitation of students, to sexual harassment, financial fraud, bribery, fieldwork ethical violations physically harming subjects, and virtually every kind of discrimination (e.g., gender, religion, caste, region, race). These stories frame academic social worlds, bringing certain relations and structures to the fore as the ones that matter. Telling the stories seemed to be an urgent way of helping me understand what was “really” going on around me. Those realities sometimes conflict with each other. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to provide as full a picture of every person as I would have liked, so I hope readers will keep in mind that, with the exception of the Nazis we will encounter, examples of an individual's conduct in particular situations aren't defining of their broader character and, in any event, evaluating scholars morally is neither my purpose nor something I am really capable of.

I eventually came to think of horror stories as “moral stories” (Beidelman 1986), narratives that help people explore tensions and the “moral ambiguities of social life” (ibid: 183). I’ve endeavored not to share them gratuitously, but the fact that I discuss some of them (sometimes even with real names) may seem unexpected, all the more so because, to academics, it will sound familiar, maybe like departmental gossip. But it is not just gossip; it is something people told me knowing I was going to write about it. Also, departmental gossip is very important. It holds people together. In fact, ethnographies are commonly based on this kind of information. My project did have human subjects approval from the University of Michigan’s institutional review board. When I use names of people I spoke with, I have their permission (as stipulated in my informed consent documents) to do so. It would be difficult to write about people in connection with, for example, their published works and public statements otherwise. Many of the individuals I do not name actually gave me permission to use their names, even if I did not as a precaution. The usefulness of this work to historians of anthropology slowly begins to diminish with increased anonymity, as does the ability of the people in it to respond to how they or their institutions are portrayed. I am particularly aware of the potential for offense that comes with the use of reported speech. People may or may not agree with my portrayals or arguments.

The most overarching argument I make in this ethnography draws on anthropological studies of kinship to examine scholars’ generational relations as a lens on social, institutional, political, and economic processes involved in ethnographic knowledge-making. It finds that intellectual genealogies should be understood not only as patterns of intellectual influence or teacher-student relationships, but also as socially produced (and sometimes competing) ideas affecting how

scholars conceive of their academic worlds, relate to each other, and navigate or help build their fields and institutions. Using genealogical frameworks, I then illustrate the significance of intellectual kinship to how academic cultures are created, how an academic elite is formed, the shaping of disciplinary boundaries, and the workings of world academic hierarchies.

Each body chapter (chapters two through six) addresses three common themes: generational relations and genealogies, moral stories (Beidelman 1986) scholars use to frame their academic social universes, and a discussion of the knowledge that academics have made.

Chapter Two introduces the notion of *intellectual kinship*; i.e., how many intellectuals sometimes describe, understand, or act upon their relationships with other scholars in terms of kinship. I analyze the ways these relations played out ethnographically at two multi-generational public events in 2015, highlighting the importance of generational relations to scholars' understandings of what it means to be an academic, as well as to the moral, political, and economic circumstances of scholars' lives.

Chapter Three explores disciplinary and sub-disciplinary boundaries that emerged in the University of Delhi (DU) anthropology department. The department founder, PC Biswas, a PhD advisee of the Nazi eugenicist Eugen Fischer in Berlin, opposed "racial mixture" (Biswas 1936: 283) and advocated mass sterilization of "bad stock" (ibid: 282) in India. The chapter moves from a discussion of Biswas's work to stories of successive generations of DU anthropologists, arguing that ideas (often gendered) about intellectual genealogies have been important to the creation, blurring, and navigation of disciplinary boundaries.

Chapter Four deploys the life of a prominent Indo-Muslim anthropologist at Lucknow University as a lens through which to scrutinize how the political history of post-independence India has shaped ethnographic knowledge and academic institutions. It connects work on Indian Muslims with intellectual genealogy and social positions within Lucknow (an important Indo-Muslim city whose Muslim minority were profoundly affected by the Partition of India). Thus, it considers ways to theorize how intellectual kinship is part of the workings of kinship more broadly.

Chapter Five considers what it means to have intellectual kinship created within and through a bureaucratic institution like Delhi University. It uses the concepts of total institutions (Goffman 1961) and house societies (Levi-Strauss 1982) to connect the spatial layout and structures of universities with administrative strategies for managing the student population, and to think through how an institutional setting can help foster and undermine intellectual kinship.

This discussion brings together stories of an important anthropologist-administrator, student activism from the Emergency to the present, hostel life, academic conferences, national higher education policy, and a notable visit from Margaret Mead.

Finally, Chapter Six examines debates around an EU-sponsored program that enabled DU sociology students and faculty to conduct fieldwork in Europe. These debates centered on long-standing conundrums, including: why Indian ethnographers almost exclusively study their own country, the vexed politics of global academic connections, and whether foreign funding threatens the independence of Indian scholars. I demonstrate how ideas of intellectual kinship

can provide a useful perspective for understanding these issues as they have evolved in India and as they relate to ongoing debates about non-hegemonic/world anthropologies.¹

One of the challenges of writing an ethnography about anthropologists is that this is a topic most, if not all, anthropologists have at some time jokingly fantasized about studying, but usually with an understanding that it must remain in the realm of jokes and fantasies. As a result, I find that some of my fellow anthropologists have rather strong, preexisting opinions about what such an ethnography should look like and be about—if they thought it was even possible. It is not possible for one ethnographic account to live up to all of these different expectations and so I'm afraid some readers may be disappointed. Indeed, the work that has emerged here has changed over time from what I myself might have imagined. It is not focusing primarily on ethnographic theoretical knowledge produced, whether from a history of ideas perspective, focus on the methods of knowledge production, or other social scientific analysis or contextualization of the content of scholars' works.² It is also not intended to provide a history of the development and growth of anthropology and/or sociology in India, to somehow define and place an "Indian anthropology," or to familiarize readers with the contributions of the most well-known figures in the history of anthropology and sociology in India.³ I address these questions and other themes

¹ E.g., Boškovic 2008; Fahim 1982; Gerholm and Hannerz 1982; Ribeiro and Escobar 2006; Saillant et al 2011.

² Histories and social studies of science and social science are, of course, massive fields of study. For some examples of this literature, see Camic et al 2011; Furner 1975; Rabinow 1999; Shapin 1994; Steinmetz 2005; Wagner et al 1991.

³ For more on the history of anthropology and sociology in India, see, for example, Uberoi et al 2007; Bêteille and Madan 1975; Lardinois 2013; Saksena et al 2010; Vidyarthi 1978; Madan 2011; Patel 2011; or the longstanding debates on "For a Sociology of India" beginning with Dumont and Pocock 1957 in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*.

that are frequent topics of discussion and analysis in studies of universities (e.g., corporatization and audit cultures) and of India (e.g., caste, religion, political parties) to varying degrees, but I don't focus on any of them so much as give glimpses of them at work, and use anthropological theories of kinship to show how they are related.

Although ethnographers commonly explain the significance of their main arguments in introductions, it would be difficult to do so without first explaining and illustrating what intellectual kinship is, which is the task of the next chapter. However, the conclusion will help explain much of the significance that this introduction doesn't, so reading them both together will give a better sense of why the approach this ethnography takes matters.

This ethnography starts with the recognition that intellectual life is not just what we write, or the working out of identities brought to universities, but it involves a kind of kinship made in them which facilitates participation, locates us, makes us a member, and protects us in that academic world. That intellectual kinship allows us to transmit knowledge and credentials, and to reproduce in that world legitimately. In this context, it has its own idioms, expectations, and traditions. These overlap with but are not the same as the traditions of caste; in fact, they can sometimes be oblivious to or even opposed to caste-based thinking. Intellectual kinship is also not to be confused with doctoral uniformity or the content of intellectual approaches, though it is often of direct relevance to those phenomena. Rather, it is something distinctive to academic institutions and life (insofar as academic life is distinctive) that does not happen without them. My very strong suspicion is that intellectual kinship is found everywhere. It is part of the university as a social and historical form. It has its particularities in India; I am not so much

engaged with them as “Indian” per se, though I am engaged with those particularities throughout this work as it is about Indian scholars and institutions. In exploring intellectual kinship, I try to understand how these intellectual communities are made; the ways it is used to make academic spaces, camps, disciplines, and international scholarly networks; and locate its limits.

CHAPTER II

“Scenes of Inheritance”

It was a fascinating juxtaposition of events. I had only seen Veena Das speak in person once before (at the American Anthropological Association annual meetings and never in India), despite all the time I had been spending in her former department, where she was trained, where she taught for decades before she moved to teach in the US, where her presence still looms large despite the fact that she’s almost never there. Both events centered on Das herself and they took place just two days apart; many of the same people attended both, yet there was a remarkable contrast in the way those people related to each other at each event.

The first event was the 2015 DS Kothari Memorial Lecture in Vivekananda Hall, at the Delhi School of Economics (DSE, or “D School”), at 3pm on July 29th. The lecture was co-hosted by DSE and the DS Kothari Centre for Science, Ethics and Education. The topic: “What Does Ordinary Ethics Look Like? Reimagining Everyday Life.” A couple weeks earlier, rumors were spreading that Veena Das was coming to give a lecture—as one student put it as we traveled on the Delhi metro, it would be “the event of the year.”

On the morning of the lecture, I was headed to the Ratan Tata Library (RTL) to finish some archival research. I ran into JPS Uberoi, who was sitting by the tree outside. He now walked with a cane and, although still as sharp and critical as ever, his demeanor was slightly softer since his stroke. I asked him if he would be attending Veena Das' lecture that afternoon, wondering if he might make an exception to his mornings-only RTL routine on the occasion of a talk by a former student. Uberoi expressed some frustration with the physical limitations he was experiencing and explained that he wouldn't be able to make it because he had physical therapy that afternoon, but others in attendance would tell him about it. As he stood up and we walked the few yards into RTL together, I said that I was reviewing the old PhD theses. Uberoi told me that his signature was on Veena Das' thesis. I replied that I knew, that I had seen it there. As we entered RTL, I felt suddenly like I was walking next to some sort of dignitary or celebrity; the library employees who didn't know I existed and who were barely even willing to allow me into this space, all immediately turned, shifted their attention from whatever they were doing, smiled and greeted Uberoi.

This was my last chance to review theses in RTL. My hard-won extended membership was set to expire the next day. I rushed through as many as I could and, after reaching a reasonable stopping point, headed out to meet a student who had sent me a text message and was waiting for me outside with a going-away gift. The rest of the hour or so remaining before the lecture was spent chatting with her and other students, most of whom planned to attend the talk. A few more senior visitors were visible around the D School campus as well. It wasn't clear who they all were, though they were generally well dressed and distinguished by their graying hair. It was

clear they had some relation to this academic community; a few of them were speaking with recognizable senior figures like Patricia Uberoi.

But the person who stood out the most was an older man wearing a folded-up dhoti, and *only* the folded-up dhoti. Students were whispering to each other, wondering who this half-naked man was. Perhaps some sort of sadhu? If so, what was he doing *here*? I was also excited to run into him, because by now I did know who he was. I'd seen him at D School once before, at a lecture JPS Uberoi gave in the sociology department. At that time, I knew his name but didn't recognize him in person, though his distinctive dress was noticeable then as well. It wasn't until much later, chatting with Deepak Mehta and some of his students at the JP Tea Stall, that I learned this man was Khalid Tyabji. Tyabji is an alumnus of the D School sociology department, one who is not well known to the current students, probably because he never completed his PhD and left academia, pursuing an acting career instead. In fact, that evening at the tea stall, the story Mehta made up to explain Tyabji's unusual outfit was that it was a sort of method acting, that he was living in character in preparation for some role.

Although Tyabji didn't continue with sociology professionally, his name comes up often in stories told by more established scholar-alums, probably because he's an interesting character and also because he's one of the few D School alums to have conducted extensive fieldwork in "the West," i.e., in Europe and the US. A fellow D School alum who now teaches at Jamia Millia Islamia ("Jamia") university had insisted I speak with Tyabji. When I called the Jamia professor to request an interview, they was somewhat appalled by the several names I listed in response to their question about whom else I'd spoken with. Apparently, most of the names belonged to

students of AM Shah and perhaps a couple were students of André Béteille and Veena Das. The professor suggested in no uncertain terms that my research would be incomplete, if not meaningless, were I not to speak with JPS Uberoi's students as well; the people I had been speaking to belonged to completely "different families," different "species," they said. One of this Jamia professor's interview recommendations was Tyabji. It was for this reason that I was eager to talk with him, but unsure how to contact or approach him appropriately. I was beginning to accept that it might not be possible to interview him before my departure. But now he had appeared right in front of me at D School, sitting on a cement block outside the canteen, by himself, eating a dosa. I approached him with the confidence and devil-may-care attitude I was finally acquiring after three years of fieldwork. I was glad to find him quite friendly, though when I eventually said as much, he cautioned that I didn't know him very well. At the talk, I was slightly surprised to see that he was the first of only a few members of the audience to ask Das a direct question, but perhaps I shouldn't have been. He was closer to contemporary than student and, not being an academic, didn't really have anyone to impress.

The reverence shown for Das and her academic achievements didn't seem out of the ordinary, especially at an honorary lecture by an internationally recognized scholar. In her welcoming comments, the Director of DSE remarked to some audience laughter that "Fifteen years ago [Das] decided to move on to greener pastures and today I welcome her back to the Delhi School of Economics, even though it's temporary." Anuradha Sharma, the comparatively junior scholar who introduced Das described her as "one of the greatest contemporary scholars of our times." Das herself responded accordingly, informing the audience that "this is a very moving moment for me." She reminisced about past times in the Vivekananda Hall (which is now generally

reserved for special occasions; this was my own first time inside it). She remarked on how nice it was to see so many students in the audience and “to be able to see what the next generation of sociologists and economists will look like.” What *was* unusual was the deference with which some of the DSE Sociology professors behaved in front of Veena Das, an attitude that became clearly visible when it was time for questions.

At the end of Das’ lecture, Anuradha Sharma stepped to the podium and declared, “I had thought I would say a few words after the lecture but it would seem so—stupid to do that.” When she asked for questions, there were about 30 uncomfortable seconds of silence before Khalid Tyabji finally raised a hand. Meenakshi Thapan, an organizer and D School sociology professor, quickly rose from her seat on stage and pointed towards him to announce, “There is a question.” Not long after Das dismissed his question about cosmologies, saying that she doesn’t buy any notion of “cosmology,” Roma Chatterji rose and attempted to ask a question. I say “attempted” because, interspersed throughout her speech was a profuse apology for her sudden inability to form an intelligible question. She made statements like, “I still don’t have a question, I’m sorry,” and “these were just things that came to my mind.” A second sociology professor, Rita Brara, was able to form a question, but it was dismissed with a lengthy discussion of how Das was arguing “against explanation,” and “for description.” Finally, in her closing comments, after asking D School Director Dua to present various mementos to Das and thanking everyone who made the event possible, Thapan asked the final question, which she opened by saying that this was the “most original view of the ethical we’ve heard” and that she “ha[s] an incoherent question.”

Over three years of attending countless lectures, seminars, workshops, and other events in the DSE sociology department, I had never witnessed such a thing. There cannot be many people alive who are as familiar with Veena Das's work as Roma Chatterji, who had recently finished editing a book in Das's honor. Chatterji is known for her directness, and certainly *never* for mincing her words or a reluctance to question others. Furthermore, both she and Thapan are strong personalities in the department, forces to be reckoned with; their own students quake with respect before them. Yet here they were, mumbling and stumbling over their own words, publicly apologizing for their incoherence.

Seeing these well-established academics act so out of character reminded me of something PC Joshi, a professor in the Delhi University (DU) Anthropology Department, told me. He said he only remembered seeing PC Biswas, the anthropology department founder and his professors' professor, visit the department a couple times while he was an undergraduate student. But he said those visits were memorable because he and his classmates got to see their "teachers act like students" in Biswas's presence. Yet these public exchanges seemed all the more striking a few days later at the book release event for *Wording the World: Veena Das and Scenes of Inheritance* (Chatterji 2015).

This second event was sponsored by Orient BlackSwan, the Indian publisher of the book (published in the US by Fordham University Press), and held at 6:30pm on July 31st, 2015 in seminar halls II and III of the Kamaladevi Block of the India International Centre (IIC) in the Lodhi Estate area of New Delhi. The panel of speakers commenting on the book included:

Vasudha Dalmia (chair), Roma Chatterji, Veena Das, Usha Ramanathan, Bhriqupati Singh, Kavita Singh, and Sanjay Srivastava.

I almost skipped the book launch. I already had two interviews scheduled that day, on opposite ends of Delhi. The IIC is in a very elite area in the middle of Delhi, near Lutyens' Delhi, where many important central government buildings and official bungalows and residences are located. It's not quite in easy walking distance of the metro, so I would have to hire an auto rickshaw from the nearest station, Khan Market, which is known for its brand names, foreign goods, and highly inflated prices, and which is a favorite of Delhi's wealthy expats. That was fine, but getting an auto back, especially alone, after dark was always a challenge; the exclusive membership of organizations like IIC (which was founded in the 1960s and supported in large part by funding from the Rockefeller Foundation) pride themselves on having cars and drivers, and even the comparatively less elite crowd of non-members with an interest in their culturally and intellectually oriented events can usually afford to travel by taxi. The area thus attracts fewer autos. Like many things in the area, it was central but, if accessible, not conveniently so. Plus, I thought, I was already attending one of the Veena Das events that week, the one at D School. But then Roma Chatterji e-mailed specifically to invite me. "I hope to see you there Hoda," she said, and I couldn't turn her down. It also worked out that Yasmeen Arif, a contributor to the book being released whom I was interviewing that same afternoon at D School, would be able to give me a ride to Khan Market, where she was meeting someone before the event.

We finished up her interview in her car while she drove. One of the topics I wanted to follow up with her about was the earlier version of the Research Scholars' Group (RSG) of post-graduate

research scholars (i.e., MPhil and PhD students) she had been involved with in her student days, as I had spent a considerable amount of time with its current incarnation. The conversation briefly turned to a comparison of the prospects of students on the academic job market in the US and India:

“It’s such a small community that it is becoming more and more incestuous, and I think Veena Das says this very clearly in that—in this book that we are going for. She says it at the very end, that there was a time when—and we know the stories, why and what, but she hasn’t elaborated so neither shall I, but it’s—people take out their interpersonal whatnots with students... which is so difficult to deal with because, you know, I—I am always afraid that’ll happen to my students,” she said.

“Really?” I asked.

“Yeah,” Arif continued, “It’s a particular way we have had to deal with things. We have had these arguments in the past where, one particular RSW, I was accused of being elitist and working out research agendas—or... [told] the concept note for it was ‘only attractive to the super intelligent.’” The implied insult to the intelligence of the student population escaped neither Arif nor me.

The concept note in question was a fairly general call for papers about method. Although these biannual Research Scholars’ Workshops (RSW), organized formally by faculty and students in the sociology department, are primarily intended to give students the opportunity to present their

work and get feedback from faculty discussants, she said this one was also opened to students of other institutions in the city as well. It was a well-attended event, yet Arif said she was told she needed to make it more “democratic,” though she was unsure as to how.

She clarified, “I’m not saying this as a personal story. I really think this is something which has been happening over the years and... maybe these divides happen in other departments as well, where very foolishly people think that some people doing—or some sorts of work are more fashionable, or some people are more successful and therefore they’re more attractive. I’m sure those factors work, but I’m not very sure if those are the only reasons.”

I proceeded to ask her, as with everyone I interviewed, what she would think it important to pay attention to, if she were doing an ethnography of her department. Arif suggested “doing a serious historiography of the department” and named two approaches to that: “One is to follow the people and their research interests. And the other is to follow the syllabi and how the syllabi gives you a sense of what have been the ways in which the discipline has been imagined here... [and] sort out if at all there is a narrative that can be said of the department... we know personalities, yes, we know MN Srinivas and you know—”

I interjected that I didn’t want to do a personalities book, to present a narrative of the “great men of Indian sociology.”

Arif agreed, joking, “I’m not too sure how great I think most of those men have been. I certainly have my reservations but that’s entirely me, and entirely—I mean, the people I’d root for, I don’t think will make the mark.”

“In the department or in general?” I asked.

“In the department.” She paused. “I would think JPS Uberoi is not recognized as much as he should have. I think he has made some very genuine contributions, from a positioning which is very tough as far as the whole politics is concerned of the location of knowledge production, areas, the science studies, I mean who the hell has done any science studies... His takes on religion, his very, very intense involvement with structuralism. I don’t think people necessarily know—as much, you know, as they would know about André Béteille, or—I’m not sure how much André Béteille is read outside in the US, in the UK there’s some connection.”

We soon neared Khan Market and I headed to IIC. A small crowd was already milling around in the hallway/reception area outside the seminar halls. I was relieved, amidst the many well-dressed strangers—almost all appearing to me, the outsider, to be carrying themselves with some importance, but only some of whom (like Ashis Nandy) I could recognize—to find the friendly faces of some of the D School research scholars. Most were standing and talking to each other in small groups and a few went to speak with their professors, especially Deepak Mehta, once he arrived. The D School faculty in attendance were primarily students of Veena Das, or of her students. This was somewhat predictable given the book we were here to discuss and celebrate is a collection of chapters written by Das’ students, students’ students, and colleagues in her honor.

Though this event had attracted an audience from a wider range of institutions than the earlier one at D School (including D School alumni), many of the same D School professors, like Rita Brara, were in attendance. She was speaking with a couple of students and encouraged them to help themselves to the refreshments.

I had only recently learned that my email asking Brara for a meeting had been lost somewhere in the interwebs and that she was, in fact, interested in being interviewed. When the opportunity finally came a few days later, I began with my usual intellectual life history questions, asking about how she got into social anthropology/sociology, but she quickly steered the conversation to an issue she wished to address:

“Actually it’s very wonderful to be teaching in your alma mater,” she said. “I know it doesn’t happen very often in the West and you’re encouraged to move to other places, but sometimes where you studied might be the most congenial place... So I’ve been through the complete career ladder at the department, from research associate to lecturer to associate professor and professor... There are others who studied here and are now teaching here, and sometimes it’s thought of as incestuous,⁴ because it’s a kind of inbreeding, but I think in my experience the

⁴ This reaction to D School is not a new one. MN Srinivas, the D School sociology department founder, reported that his department’s rapid growth and success also attracted criticism from colleagues. He wrote:

A favorite accusation was that the department was incestuous, in the sense that it appointed only those trained within it. While this was not true, I did feel that my own students were better trained in sociology than were most other applicants. With the growing reputation of my department, several scholars, including those trained abroad, wanted places in my department, but not all of them could be accommodated. This did not increase my popularity. (Srinivas 2002: 634)

A number of retirements, departures, and new hires, since my fieldwork have also significantly lowered the relative proportion of D School alumni teaching in the sociology department. Even during my fieldwork, the number of institutions that had granted postgraduate degrees to the faculty in this department was considerably greater than the number in the other departments I studied.

value of a group that has studied here and is working here is tremendous for the institution, where the idea of an intellectual genealogy or affiliation... or where the idea of an intellectual pedigree is not very strong. A cohort doing the same kind of work, belonging to the same institution gives it a certain sense of continuity.”

“What do you mean ‘an idea of pedigree?’” I followed up.

“I mean, *pedigree* may be the wrong word, maybe I should stay with *genealogy*, but I want to suggest something stronger than the idea of *genealogy* in the sense that—okay, I know the word I’m looking for, the intellectual *tradition* of a place can be carried forward if there are a few people who continue to represent that tradition in its change and continuity over the years. I think that’s—in my experience has been extremely healthy for the department. And when I look at the faculty over the years, it’s always had a few who’ve belonged to the department, and there’ve been outsiders, and I think outsiders have also contributed, but there’s a different contribution made by people who’ve been here, and that’s what I can speak more easily about. And I think it’s been very productive. And so I wouldn’t ever be wary of a combination of people who studied here and some people from outside. So I think that’s my first strong impression of how I view D School.”

“And what are the ways you think it’s been, you said it’s been productive? Do you have any examples of that?”

“Sure. You know, there’s a sense in which you cut your teeth on the ideas of your teachers, and

sometimes, when you're writing something, you come to see things and events in the way that you've learnt over the years. You hear the echoes. You hear the reverberations. You hear the resistances as well. But you get the resonances and the resistances. So when I say it's productive, I would say that, in a sense, that intellectual tradition is carried forward in these ways. So the thought of your teachers—you get some things from books, but you also get other things from lectures, you also get things from, you know, a way of looking at a syllabus, a way of dividing a course, a way of deciding which books are the seminal books and you read them together. And very often, even now when I'm teaching a course that I've studied in the department, there are resonances of what I learnt and what I impart. And, well, is it for me to say it's productive? I, in my own evaluation, I would say I hear about these things from other students as well, and it's not the continuity that they see, but they certainly see a difference between, say, the way somebody who's been attuned to the method of teaching here teaches and somebody from outside; it's a different method. I'm not putting a value on one against the other, but it makes for a continuity which is I think productive for the department, because there's a sense in which, if you look at the syllabus, it's been anchored around Marx/Durkheim/Weber for a long time. That way of reading Marx/Durkheim/Weber is also a very particular way... It's not as though there are no differences between teachers, and it's not as though you don't outgrow the way you've taught, but I can also see, like I said, resonances. And, so that what I see being articulated in a sense, then, is something that's not called that, but becomes that, it's almost a Delhi School of Sociology. It is a distinctive school."

However, one unusual characteristic of this particular event at the IIC, back before my interview with Brara, was that some of Veena Das's students present there, celebrating their teacher's

work, including contributors to *Wording the World*, were not trained at D School. Rather, they were students Das taught in the US. A couple of them were particularly visible and marked as foreign and others were recognizable by whispered comments and overheard introductions. One of the panelists, Bhrigupati Singh, was among the Johns Hopkins PhDs. He was the youngest and the first to speak—after the ritual unwrapping of the “first” copy of the book and initial introductions, that is. He emphasized this fact himself, mentioning without any further explanation that “Usha, Roma, and Veena herself” had seen him since he was six years old.

Singh continued to make this generational theme central to his comments. He compared training in anthropology with a “child coming into language,” an anthropological language. He suggested that intellectual culture is formed as a “transaction between generations.” And described himself as belonging to the youngest generation of Das’s students to have joined anthropology as a full-time profession, though some of the other contributors to the book are from his or near his PhD cohort. Perhaps since he was now speaking about himself, he quoted Stanley Cavell saying that something personal, viewed deeply enough, is a window into the impersonal. He said that reading Veena Das was what made him an anthropologist since, even though he had already done a master’s in anthropology at SOAS, her work blew him away. One reason for this was that her engagement with philosophy was greater than “theory” and made him feel closer to “life” and concreteness than ever before. He asked, as an “opening question,” “What is a teacher?” He began to answer, that an initial spark is not enough. He again quoted Cavell, saying that, “it is easier to love eternally than diurnally.” Cavell was writing in the context of marriage, Singh explained, but this statement was truer of a PhD supervisor on whom life depends for a time; i.e., will she write a letter? Will I get a job? He stressed that a teacher is not a one-off moment of

inspiration, but that the student subjects the teacher to “sustained intimacy.” He compared this intimacy to an affair, where “if love recedes,” something is lost.

Singh then transitioned to discussing the chapter he contributed about Veena Das’s intellectual trajectories. He talks in the chapter about how best to “narrate her scholarly life.” He’s now at Brown and was tasked with teaching a course on the history of anthropology. In creating his own syllabus, he thought a lot about how to teach the history of anthropology in a non-teleological way, a topic he was pursuing further in an edited volume called *A Joyful History of Anthropology*.⁵ One approach he takes to this question is what he calls the “conceptual vita,” which his chapter provides for Veena Das. The idea is to trace a scholar’s thought over decades. In this case, Singh followed Das’s thinking about the ideas of “structure” and “event” through her writings in *Structure and Cognition* (1977), *Critical Events* (1995), and *Life and Words* (2007). For Singh, teleological and non-teleological approaches to the history of anthropology had everything to do with the relations between generations. He didn’t want to depict the relation between these books as simply the product of a past time, and he suggested that “different generations of thought may compete within even one intellectual self.” His goal in his conceptual vita was to describe the relations between these generations (within the self of Veena Das) in a non-“patricidal” and “anti-Oedipal” way. He wanted to show the continued significance of Das’s contributions and thinking, and how her ideas related to each other without one “negating” another.

⁵ Singh has since co-authored an introduction (Singh and Guyer 2016) to a special section of *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* by that title.

After a brief overview of some of his discussions of Das's contributions, Singh also mentioned that his chapter ended with a consideration of Das's ideas about "the political." As he put it, that section was directed at certain unnamed people who approach him, "As a student of Veena's ...to explain why Veena has 'no politics'" (Singh 2015:100). He now said about that section, that "Veena had asked me to cut it, but I didn't cut it."

Singh concluded his comments by going back to his opening question and to the idea of a transaction between generations. He described "the question any student faces, after they've found a good teacher, which is some version of finding your own voice." He again suggested that this process of finding your own voice need not be an oedipal one in relation to a "parent thinker." He referred to another work (Singh 2014), where he discussed the "fidelity" scholars can have to a "philosophical genealogy," for example, like the fidelity Das has to Wittgenstein and he has to Deleuze. This stance, for Singh, was like "being trained in a *charana* or style of singing," where "what looks like a repetition" of what was taught is over time about finding your "own pitch and tone." Singh compared this to how he learned of Cavell from Das, but is more interested in different parts of his work than those Das "inhabits." Such seemingly small differences, he suggested, could reflect very different thinking. He joked to some laughter that Das would never have edited a book called, *A Joyful History of Anthropology*. Finally, Singh discussed how Das's more recent work, *Affliction* (2015) "provides a kind of continuing education for me, of what research might look like post-PhD... I wonder to myself what stamina it takes to sustain collaborations and an institutional framework such as this." He referred to something Das wrote in the book about a child making teachers "look at their own worlds anew" and how he has seen some of his thinking influence Das's work. Still, he said the opposite

“transaction” happens as well, in “a teacher who makes one feel like a child again, even as a grown up.” Singh mentioned that some can take that seniority too far, alluding to his own problems with authority. “But,” he ended, “to find one to whom one is willing to submit is a rare gift; it is, as Heidegger says, To think is to thank.”

Throughout these comments, Singh spoke with a confidence that struck me in two ways. First, it was in great contrast to the way I’d seen Veena Das’s other students, the much more senior ones who are now themselves faculty at D School, speak in her presence just days earlier. In fact, hearing Bhrigupati Singh repeatedly, comfortably, and casually refer to Das as “Veena” felt odd. Over the previous three years, I’d become accustomed to academic contexts where students most commonly refer to professors as “Sir” and “Ma’am,” avoiding their names altogether. Granted, D School exhibited many levels of formality, but in most other settings, I had often been perceived as overly informal (or, at the very least, markedly foreign) when I referred to professors as “Professor” followed by their last name. Even in D School, hearing someone’s student refer to them by their first name to their face was rare. Hearing Singh call Das “Veena,” was reminiscent of the academic cultures of the departments I came from. It seemed to reflect his American training. I found myself wondering how Roma Chatterji would react. It was hard to imagine her calling Das by her first name in front of her and a full audience. Yet it would also seem strange if she, as one of Das’s more senior students, as a full professor, as someone who apparently (along with Das) had known young Bhrigupati Singh since age six, were to refer to her teacher as “Professor” while the junior Singh did not. I would get my answer in short order when Chatterji, as the editor of the book, had her turn as the final speaker on the panel. In her comments, Chatterji let slip one marked “Professor Das” before alternating between the more subtly

respectful “Veena Das” and “you”/“your work” (turning to address Das directly instead of the audience), but never just saying “Veena.”

Singh’s confidence was also striking in another respect; namely, the self-assuredness with which he positioned and referred to himself as Das’s student. This might not seem out of the ordinary, as Das was his PhD advisor/supervisor. And in the most technical sense, he was certainly taught by her. In India as well as elsewhere, people often take for granted that if academics are anyone’s student, then, naturally, they are students of their doctoral supervisors. But it doesn’t take much digging to discover that some students have closer affinities to, form closer relationships with, are more (or additionally) intellectually influenced by scholars other than their PhD supervisors. Deepak Mehta, for example, was at this event to honor his teacher, Veena Das, but in point of fact, his PhD supervisor was JPS Uberoi. By this time, I’d also interviewed at least one academic who spoke affectionately of Veena Das as her supervisor but who, in part due to the kind of work she did, said that she didn’t feel that she was ever Das’s student in the same way some of her colleagues were. What does it mean socially, politically, morally to make a claim to being someone’s student or teacher? For Singh, certainly intellectual influence, intimacy, and submission were part of it, though he emphasized that this influence was not total and could be about helping students find their “own voice.” He also emphasized both in his spoken remarks and in his written chapter how he is sometimes approached by other people (presumably not Das’s students) in his role as her student, and asked to defend the nature or existence of her politics—to the point where he felt a need to publish a rebuttal to their implied criticisms of his teacher, even if against her own wishes. His comment suggests, like Yasmeen Arif’s remark about hiring politics and her fears that some people might judge her own students in certain

(sometimes negative) ways, that being someone's student or teacher in this sense has implications beyond a relationship between two people; it also shapes their relationships to others.

Some D School PhDs who have gone on to become professors themselves and who were in the department during the time when André Béteille (there 1959-99⁶), AM Shah (1961-96), JPS Uberoi (1968-99), and Veena Das (1968-2000) were all on the faculty, told me similar stories of the social and physical landscape of the sociology department at that time. One story expands on the comment that the Jamia professor made to me about the need to understand the DSE Sociology Department as a set of different families. The story was first and most elaborately told to me by an advisee of Béteille, who was at D School in the late 1970s and early 1980s. She told me that there were three main groups at D School, each of them centered around particular professors and their students—actually, one of them not really constituting its own group. It was primarily AM Shah and his students, on the one hand, and JPS Uberoi and Veena Das with their students on the other. Béteille had a particular routine, the sort one might be able to set a watch to, and would generally be sitting in his room (office) working when he didn't have other obligations (like teaching). He would also meet with students there. In contrast, Uberoi and Das would reportedly sit in the canteen or outside for hours on end, perhaps sometimes all day, having discussions with students and, at least in Das's case, these conversations might continue in her home, evidencing much closer engagement and relationships with her students. Uberoi is said to have grabbed students out of the library reading room to talk with them. Even during my fieldwork, well into his retirement, I have seen him ask (or, perhaps, "demand" might be a more

⁶ These dates are based on years of annual reports of the University of Delhi recording appointments/retirements.

accurate term) students for written work to read, which he would usually then proceed to tear apart—provocation and criticism are two modes of engagement he relies upon heavily. Based on student stories as well as a bit of personal experience, two of his common criticisms are that a work is “journalistic” or that the student did not learn a new field language. During my fieldwork, (until his retirement) Rabindra Ray and (less so after he left to head the sociology department at the new, private Shiv Nadar University) Deepak Mehta—incidentally, a student of Uberoi and Das—were the main faculty members I would see engaged in long, sociological conversations with students outside or in the canteen. In fact, one of my interviews with Mehta was “scheduled” in just such an impromptu manner. I was sitting in the RTL library reading room doing archival research on old PhD theses when he walked in, looked around, saw me, caught my attention, and motioned for me to follow him out, something I did unquestioningly and immediately. Whenever I saw him, he seemed to have a circle of students gathered around him usually discussing scholarly works or films, and getting reading recommendations.

A noticeable aspect of this narrative of D School was the issue of hiring. As Rita Brara suggested, most of the academic staff (i.e., research associates, temporary and permanent faculty) hired at the DSE sociology department were its own graduates. If there were different groups or “families” within the department, what was “different” about them was not limited to academic debates, but also intertwined with political and economic contests, something that came out in the following conversation with André Béteille, on June 29th, 2015, in which he described how he, in effect, attempted to position himself outside of such engagements:

André Béteille [AB]: “[MN] Srinivas provided very good leadership, I must say... we put in a lot of work to build up the sociology department and we remained cohesive and coherent. Srinivas did a lot. I spent a lot of time in my teaching, building up students, particularly in the MA program. And some of them have become outstanding sociologists. But I still feel that I was right in putting more emphasis on the MA program than on the PhD program.”

Hoda [HBA]: “Okay. Why do you think you were right about that?”

AB: “Because I think you build up the base. And, PhDs—you know, I can’t teach you how to do research. Really. I can only d—see... when you are doing the PhD, my policy has always been: I will not tell you what you should do; I will only tell you what you should not do. If you’re going in the wrong direction, I say, ‘Look, this is not going to get you anywhere.’ But I will not say, ‘Therefore, you go in that direction.’ You find your own way, you find your own way... because research is something which cannot be—you can’t be spoon-fed by your supervisor; it’s different from undergraduate teaching.”

HBA: “I’m curious if you might have any reactions to this. I don’t know if this person wants to be named, but somebody I talked to described, contrasted your style of advising with Professor Shah, and Uberoi, and Veena Das, and they—this person suggested that those other—”

[interruption by his daughter and her friends from work]

AB: “No, go ahead, go ahead, go ahead.”

HBA: “Um, so they said that you were much more ‘hands off’ as a PhD supervisor—”

AB: “Yes, that’s true.”

HBA: “And that the other ones—”

AB: “Did backseat driving. Yes.”

HBA: “Or they would be much more hands on in telling you what to do and—”

AB: “Yes, but I read everything my students wrote. I read their drafts, I gave them my comments, I did all of that.”

HBA: “Okay.”

AB: “But I did not tell them, as I keep repeating, I told them what they should not do. If they were going in the wrong direction, I said, don’t, don’t do that. I would warn them. But I did not tell them what they should do. I don’t think that a research supervisor, at least in the human sciences, should tell his students what they should do. You know, research is now organized as a kind of—on an industrial basis, in the sciences. In the sciences, you go and attach yourself to some great scientist’s lab and you’re a cog in the wheel. I don’t think that research in the human sciences should be organized in that way.”

HBA: “Um, and they also said that the other professors, when someone was their student, they would—like, I guess, like with Veena Das they said the person would practically ‘join her household.’”

AB: “Yes. I hated that. I hated that. Well, I, that’s, perhaps—but Veena was very possessive about her—I don’t think that you should be possessive about young men and women who have passed the age of 22, 24. You shouldn’t be. Let them go.”

HBA: “And so, I guess, it might have—so they also said that Veena Das would very strongly ‘go to bat’ for her students, like try and push—”

AB: “Back them. Yeeesss—”

HBA: “Like push them into different opportunities and positions and that kind of thing—”

AB: “Yes. And I didn’t do that. I didn’t do much of that. And I state it as a fact, and not as a, whether it’s good or not.”

[Interruption by someone asking if we would like water.]

AB: “So I did not. I don’t know whether—no, Veena was very possessive about her students. And I—Veena was my student to begin with, and I don’t think that Veena would have become a sociologist but for her meeting with me, when she was shopping around.”

HBA: “That’s right, you said you told her to read a few books.”

AB: “Yes. I told her—she came, she—somebody told her that she should, she should meet—‘he is a professor, why don’t you go and ask him.’ So she walked into my room and wanted to know whether, whether she should study. I said, ‘You go and read some books. Do you have friends?’ She said yes. ‘Can you borrow books from the library?’ She said yes. I said, ‘You go and read these books.’ She read those books. She was impressed by one of them, I remember, *Suicide*, Durkheim’s *Suicide* [1951(1897)], which is a great book for someone who wants to be a sociologist. And *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*, by Malinowski [1926]... *Opium of the Intellectuals* [2011(1955)], which is an attack on Marxism, she didn’t, she found it boring. But, anyway, she joined sociology. I was her tutor, in the first semester. So in that sense, she was very close to me, to begin with. But I, I, I did not like the way in which she mothered her students and promoted them. And I had a moral position on this. My moral position was: they’re *all* my students; everyone who joins the department is my student and I will not favor someone because I’m his supervisor over somebody else whose work I think is better.”

HBA: “Yeah, I’ve noticed even now when we’ve been talking, when you talk about alumni of the department, you call all of them ‘our student’ or ‘my student,’ regardless of who their supervisor was.”

AB: “Yeah, sure, sure. Yes, I think that the production of knowledge is, and should be, a collective venture, not an individual venture. Individuals have their place, but it should be a collective venture.”

Regardless of how Bêteille positioned himself, a quick look at the names and PhD supervisors of past D School instructors and professors makes it quite apparent that, to whatever extent professors favoring their own students played a role in the hiring process, it could not possibly have been limited to Das. For example, a number of AM Shah’s advisees (e.g., Aneeta Minocha, Veena Dua, Rajni Palriwala, and Tulsi Patel) went on to join the ranks of D School sociology professors. And, in many tellings and recollections, Minocha, Dua and their group were also associated with a particular space within the D School campus; they were remembered for the conversations they would have over (sometimes shared) lunches while sitting on the lawns in front of the sociology department.

Whether one sees Bêteille as having been negligent in his responsibilities to the students he supervised (as framed in one perspective on the story) or, alternatively, as one of the academics maintaining intellectual integrity in a world where personal loyalties may often outweigh some objectivist ideal of merit—in fact, whether or not one believes these stories to be in any way accurate representations of history—they serve as moral stories (Beidelman 1986) of a sort. They framed the academic universe and the actors within it in particular terms and invited me, as the listener, to understand it in certain ways. As Bêteille put it himself, his was a “moral position,” not simply his own style of relating to students but a stance going back to his most fundamental

and defining ideas about the nature and reasons for the pursuit of social scientific knowledge about humanity.

Similarly, the other perspectives on generational relations that we have encountered thus far also make claims about the social, moral, and political universe in which academics of different generations relate to each other. For example, for the Jamia professor and some others, these relations constitute “families” or groups that are defining of the institution. For Arif, perceptions of some scholars as more elitist than others and the ensuing political and economic difficulties such perceptions could create, particularly within the context of hiring a new generation of faculty, was closely tied to genealogy, even if that was not framed as a positive thing. For Brara, the relation between generations could be seen in traditions, in shared resonances or understandings that are manifest even in approaches to reading classic texts that are taught around the world, but may nonetheless be difficult or impossible to communicate to “outsiders.” For Bhrigupati Singh, alongside the dependency and vulnerability of students in relation to teachers and the characterization of generational relations as a sort of “transaction,” there was an emphasis on the role of teachers in helping students slowly find their own voices, their own intellectual selves. Here he referenced *charanas*, the lineages of teachers and students involved in the instruction and learning of, in his example, classical singing. Thus, in this narrative of generational relations, relationships between teachers and students are generative of a new intellectual (or artistic or musical, as it may be) self.

Although what the idea of kinship is or is not as an anthropological term and topic of study has long been and continues to be much debated, many anthropologists have distanced themselves

from strictly “biological” ideas of kinship (and from taking for granted ideas of the biological). For example, some anthropologists have argued that kinship is created through one or more shared substances, the identity of which may vary cross-culturally. In different contexts, such substances might include “blood” (e.g., Carsten 2013) (as variously conceptualized in different times and places), semen (e.g., Kelly 1993), milk (e.g., Parkes 2005), cattle, money, guns (Hutchinson 2003), food or the heat of a hearth (Carsten 1995). Additionally, Robert McKinley has suggested that we think of kinship as a moral philosophy, “about how a person can feel categorically obligated to a series of other persons...and how th[e] completeness [of a person] comes about through a responsible sense of attachment and obligation to others... the reciprocal rights and duties shared among kin and affines often have such strong obligatory force that to deny them is to deny or negate oneself” (2001:143). Do the moral philosophies entailed in the above stories qualify as kinship based on such a definition? There may not be a clear answer, particularly in situations where there is stigma associated with mixing the professional with the familial, where emphasizing kinship is seen as traditional (i.e., not modern) or even nepotistic (e.g., Shryock and Howell 2001), and the establishment of universities of the sort widely found today is associated with transformations (Deshpande 2001) distancing the scholarly and intellectual from just the kinds of *guru-shishya* training and knowledge-making characteristic of the *charanas* to which Bhrigupati Singh referred. Certainly, all of the perspectives above make strong, albeit differing, claims about the moral responsibilities of teachers to students. With the possible exception of B eteille (but actually, perhaps including him, just not as much at the PhD level), to varying degrees they all certainly presume relationships between teacher and student to be central to the creation of intellectual selves.

If we were to take Singh's comparison to *guru-shishya* relationships seriously, we might easily then take this a step further to relate it to arguments that kinship is sometimes created and maintained through growing persons, for example, in Fox's (1971) discussion of Rotinese kinship terminology and relationships as based on growing people like plants. In that case, knowledge—whether as a substance, a form of exchange or mutual orientation (e.g., Ingold 2000), and/or a source of growth—might be seen as important to the creation of kinship relationships. Frederik Barth has argued that in “Indian concepts of personhood... Both body and social identity are maintained by the same flow of substances, and... Knowledge is valued highest, as the essence of *generative* substance” (1993:648; emphasis added). He sees the recitation of lineages of teachers as one part of “tight institutional regulation by a system controlling authorization” (1993:645-6) to maintain the authority of *gurus* who might run out of knowledge to transmit.

However, many of the people mentioned above (along with academics elsewhere who talk of or act in relation to intellectual genealogies), if pressed, could well say they did not intend to be taken so literally. And undoubtedly they can all tell the difference between the family who raised them from birth and their professors and colleagues. Even Marshall Sahlins—the author of one of the more constructivist definitions of kinship as “mutuality of being” (2013: ix)—wrote, dismissively and in passing, as if it were a self-evident statement that is unnecessary to explain or defend, of “a certain confusion between personhood and kinship relations, with its corollary conflation of partibility and participation. Persons may have various relational attributes and thus be linked to diverse others—the way I am related to my students as a teacher and to the Chicago Cubs as a fan—without being united in being with them” (ibid: 25). Sahlins never expands on

this statement to show what it is about his or anyone else's relationships with their students that so clearly distinguishes it as a mere "link" rather than unity of being.

Anthropologists commonly try to understand or define kinship by thinking through certain "examples," certain social phenomena or relations that are taken for granted as instantiations or non-instantiations of kinship, only deviating from that when we don't find a clear parallel set of relations to those we call "kinship" in our own societies. The trouble with this approach is that it sets us up to reach certain conclusions—or, more accurately, to dwell on certain debates (e.g., about "nature" and "culture")—from the outset. Some anthropologists may find theoretical approaches that seem to allow for kinship to be created anywhere and everywhere to be objectionable due to some need to ensure that our theories also recognize kin relations to be special or somehow set apart from other social ties. Indeed, there are limits to kinship and those of intellectual kinship will be explored in a later chapter. However, assuming we already know what examples or categories of social relations are or are not kinship, and creating a theories to fit our assumptions engages in a kind of circular logic that is unlikely to advance understandings of what kinship is, how it is made or broken.

To whatever extent the ideas and practices around intellectual genealogy are metaphorical, that in itself does not make them less real. As McKinley has pointed out, referring to Hallowell's (1992) work on Ojibwa grandfathers and kinship with non-human persons:

The supernatural kin are no more metaphoric than the human ones... All kinship involves metaphor right from the start or it could not have any moral or ethical content at all. Mothers and fathers would just be, as our common fixed expressions would have it, 'machines for making babies' and 'sperm donors.' So the philosophy of kinship requires that all kinship terms be metaphors to some degree (2001: 132-3).

And the fact that one form of kinship, one set of people recognized as kin, or one system of relatedness already exists does not preclude the existence of additional forms of kinship. As, for example, Birchok (2016) has demonstrated in his work on female saints in Sufi lineages in Indonesia, multiple, sometimes even competing systems of reckoning descent can be, and often are, present among the same people at the same time.

Whether or not one considers these relationships as “really” forms of kinship, even if there is variability in the closeness or level and type of personal investment in particular cases of them, and regardless of exactly how scholars establish or reckon them, the genealogies constituted through them are extremely consequential, they matter in people’s lives and careers. This may not always be easy to see or may seem commonplace and insignificant, in part because, at least in some respects, it is so pervasive among academics in a variety of contexts, certainly beyond India. It might be helpful to think through what happens when one does not have or, at least, does not have the right kind of intellectual “kin.” That in itself is difficult to do because, in fact, in order to have or obtain any legitimacy as an academic, the very institutionalized nature of our knowledge-making and intertwined credentialing processes at all stages rely heavily on being associated, evaluated, reviewed, or supervised by other academics. Even as institutional structures and policy makers (the same ones that often come up in discussions of the neoliberal or corporatized university and its audit cultures [Strathern 2000]) may often work to make these processes appear as impersonal and automated (and, thus, by implication, often more ostensibly “fair,” “objective,” “efficient,” and/or “accessible”) as possible, they are nothing if they do not take place socially, between persons in particular cultural, political, and economic contexts. But perhaps it would be helpful to return to the concept of “outsiders” that came up in the

conversation with Rita Brara earlier. Although she did not provide a clearly demarcated definition of the term, her comments suggested that, at the very least, these outsiders did not have the same ways of thinking about social scientific texts, did not exhibit the same “resonances,” and were not part of the same “tradition” because they were not trained by the same people, in the same place. But what it means to qualify, to belong to that tradition or place, can be somewhat complex, even if taken as natural by those who do.

Throughout my fieldwork, there was very little overlap between the people I would see around the DU anthropology department and the people I would see around the sociology department. I very infrequently saw people from the DU anthropology department at DSE and never saw anyone from DSE anywhere near the anthropology department. When I did see them in the same place, the people from anthropology often seemed to have difficulty getting anyone from D School to give them the time of day. If they spoke to each other it was usually awkward, matter-of-fact, and brief, before people returned to their own conversations or activities. In fact, it reminded me of the way people acted around me when I first arrived. Perhaps meeting new people always comes with some awkwardness. This is to be expected; of course, someone from another department would be considered an outsider, especially on campuses that have, over time, become fenced in with brick, barbed wire, and security guards clearly separating different academic units, and where the relative affluence of any given unit is clearly visible in the way it separates itself and its resources, the way it maintains its grounds, gardens, and buildings.

Yet, as Brara’s narrative suggested, outsiders (albeit not of the same sort) can exist within a single department. This was a new concept to me, that professors in a department could be

considered as outsiders to it. She did not actually name who the outsiders were, but this was a term that I heard often, though not always applied the same way. In fact, the strictest definition I heard was limited to people who had spent their entire post-graduate (i.e., from MA to MPhil and on to PhD) lives in the same department. One D School student I interviewed told me how she was made to feel like an outsider since she had gotten her earlier degrees in other institutions before entering the PhD program at D School. She hadn't had classes there and didn't know many people, so she would mostly come to campus on specific business until the Research Scholars' Group (RSG) became more active and that helped alleviate the situation a bit. I would sometimes hear students attribute supposedly aberrant or undesirable behavior of the faculty to the increase in outsiders—for example, suggesting blaming outsiders for diminished attendance at colloquia—though these narratives were contradicted by others I spoke with and usually did not stand up to much scrutiny when an individual was pressed on the specifics. Outsider-ness is probably a relative term. It may diminish somewhat over time. But even professors who have spent decades, and most of their adult lives, in one department might still feel like relative outsiders if their only D School degree is their PhD. For example, when I interviewed one senior professor there, I prefaced a question by commenting that since she's been connected with D School for a "long time," she must know the department well. She hesitated, briefly but long enough for it to be noticeable, before accepting this tentatively; she had received her PhD there well over 30 years earlier and, by this time, she had been a professor at D School for 17 years in addition to having served a term as the head of the department.

I should emphasize that none of this was specific to the DSE sociology department. These ideas were at least as manifest in the other two departments I studied. They came up, for example, at

the end of an interview with Vinay Kumar Srivastava, then the head of the DU anthropology department, who is an alumnus of both the DU anthropology and DSE sociology departments, and who earned his PhD from the University of Cambridge. What he explained to me—in much the same way the Jamia professor and others from D School explained that I needed to understand these basic facts about groups in their department—he prefaced by suggesting I might understand since I also come from a “traditional” culture, which I assumed to be a reference to my family’s Iranian heritage and/or the scarf covering my hair. He proceeded to tell me that, in order to understand the department, I would need to pay attention to the “migratory patterns” of people in the department. For example, he pointed out how the two professors who studied at Panjab University, Chandigarh, tend to stick together, that the more senior one helped the other find housing near his own home. Surprised, I asked about the fact that these professors’ advisors in Chandigarh had both been students of the DU anthropology department. Srivastava clarified that this did not make a difference. On a piece of paper, he drew me a table listing three types of faculty, the “indigenous” (who got all their degrees in the department), those (like himself) who got some or all their degrees in the department but had some sort of experience teaching or studying outside before returning, and the very few complete “outsiders” who had not been students of the department in which they teach. He explained that these outsiders almost never fully “integrate” into the department. Expanding on this point, he said these outsiders think they or their previous institutions are better, as one now-deceased professor who had come from Lucknow had, or they don’t “belong” or show proper respect to the retired teachers of this department. Later that day, I mentioned some of this to a junior anthropology professor who was, in fact, one of the professors from Chandigarh. He shared some interesting insights about outsider-hood. Yes, the other professor from Chandigarh had been kind to him, but perhaps this

was at least as much out of sympathy for the difficulty of entering a new department as an outsider and finding a home in Delhi to share with his wife, than any regional solidarity. He also suggested that “migratory patterns” was a poor conceptualization; he proposed, instead, the importance of paying attention to “umbilical cords” and began naming all the professors in the department with their students who are now also junior faculty, of which there are several.

It is important to note that these genealogies and the ways scholars understand generations and their relations to each other are not static, but are constantly in the making. There is some amount of “genealogical imagination” (Shryock 1997) that goes into creating, maintaining, and navigating these pedigrees. This will be discussed to a greater extent in the next chapter.

However, as an example of the extent to which they can be imagined, we might think back again to Bhrigupati Singh’s conceptual *vita*, where he emphasizes a philosophical genealogical relationship between Veena Das and Ludwig Wittgenstein, who died in 1951, and compares that to his relationship with Gilles Deleuze, who at least lived more recently (d. 1995). This is a kind of intellectual genealogy that does not require shared experience, shared instruction, or being in the same physical place, and for that reason, may not be considered to be quite the same kind of genealogy, but it is shared with other scholars for whom these works are important in to-some-extent shared ways. Boyer (2003), for example, suggested that the widespread citation of Foucault in American anthropology might be seen as a “medium” for communication among scholars in and across increasingly specialized fields. Like all of the ideas of generational relations we have thus far encountered, this one too has very real practical, political, and economic consequences. It matters in very real ways to the lives of academics; in this case, perhaps most crucially so for scholars who leave their home departments and countries, who

leave the places where their other intellectual genealogies are known or recognized, and need to be able to relate to scholars belonging to different traditions.

CHAPTER III

Biswas and Boundaries

At present, the Delhi University sociology department significantly overshadows the anthropology department. In some ways, this is representative of a broader trend in the relative success of the disciplines of anthropology and sociology in establishing themselves institutionally in India. While sociology is taught at most universities in India, meaning at least hundreds of sociology departments, based on the counts I have found, there are less than 40 anthropology departments, of whose existence most Indians are unaware.

In other ways, however, many of the differences that structure the relative positions of the D School sociology department and the DU anthropology department are more specific. Although the DU anthropology department is the largest and one of the most highly reputed in the country, it cannot match the prestige accorded to the sociology department. As part of the Delhi School of Economics, DSE sociology has access to some special resources, like the Ratan Tata Library and less heavy teaching loads. It has long been recognized (and funded) by India's University Grants Commission (UGC) as a "Centre for Advanced Study." DSE sociology faculty and alumni also have connections to many elite international academic networks. It is not a coincidence that many well-known foreign scholars (often in North India for fieldwork or conferences) pass

through D School, or that this was one of the first places I was directed to and visited as I began to develop my research plans. Many foreign social/cultural anthropologists today feel a stronger affinity to the work being done in the D School sociology department. Likewise, most (not all) D School faculty and students use the terms “anthropology” and “sociology” interchangeably or also refer to themselves as “anthropologists” in conversation.

These sociologists largely ignore the anthropology department. When my fieldwork there came up in conversation, sociology students would mostly address it as an exotic curiosity, a distant mythical land, even if just a short walk away on DU’s north campus. “Is it true they still measure skulls there?” they wanted to know. One told me, filled with a sort of wonder of an encounter with the strange, how she had recently passed by the anthropology department on a walk through the gardens and stepped inside to take a look at the anthropology museum. She said it reminded her of Malinowski and the anthropology of long ago. A well-known retired sociology professor dismissively told me that the anthropologists have lost sight of the value of anthropology. He said he’d seen a news article in which a DU anthropology professor reportedly defended the value of anthropology through its relevance to ergonomic design; this, he lamented, was what they had reduced anthropology to.

So the fact that the DU anthropology department is dominated by physical anthropology makes it easier to fit it into two narratives that commonly explain the relative growth and role of sociology as opposed to anthropology: the first is that there is a stigma from anthropology’s association with colonial race science, and the second is the association of sociology with the development agenda of the newly independent state. These two factors are certainly important,

but I would argue that ethnographically there is more to the story and to understanding the meaning of disciplinary boundaries.

Unlike the other two departments I studied, which figure prominently in the existing literature on the history of social sciences in India, the DU anthropology department does not often come up in such discussions. The DSE sociology department's increasing importance (along with the increased importance of Delhi as an academic center in India) after its founding in 1959, along with the international reputations of some of its professors like MN Srinivas, Andre Béteille, and Veena Das, make it a significant site for discussions of post-independence sociology and anthropology. The Lucknow anthropology department, despite having become increasingly marginal since the 1960s, grew (or, more accurately, separated) out of a Department of Economics and Sociology, whose "Lucknow School" still holds an important place in debates about the history of social science in India, largely due to the critiques some of its faculty made of Western development and "progress"(see Madan 1978, 2011, 2013; Joshi 1986; Visvanathan 2006).

In contrast, while it's common for most departments to be known for and associated with an ancestral founder, until late in my fieldwork, after a seminar had been held on departmental history, I did not meet any DU anthropology students who so much as knew the name of the first professor in their department. But the likely reasons for this may turn out to be historically significant in themselves.

That not-well-remembered first anthropology professor was Profulla Chandra Biswas (1903-1984), known as PC Biswas. He was actually hired as a “reader” and departmental head when the department was founded in 1947, just before India’s independence. The son of a Bengali pandit, he began his anthropological studies in the anthropology department at the University of Calcutta where he earned his master’s degree. According to one scholar who was associated with the Calcutta anthropology department after Biswas had left, Biswas was not held in high regard or well respected as a scholar there, which seems to be a theme in recollections of his later career as well, including by some of his former students, even if usually mitigated by mentions of specific kindnesses. One story has it that on a visit to the anthropology departmental museum, to which he was a major contributor, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had to correct Biswas as to the origins of an artifact. Stories like this only beg the question of how Biswas was able to obtain a Humboldt fellowship to go to Germany for doctoral studies. Nevertheless, he left Calcutta for the University of Berlin, where he studied with the then-prominent Nazi eugenicist Eugen Fischer.

Biswas’ PhD dissertation *Über Hand- und Fingerleisten von Indern* (1936a), a study of the hand and fingerprints of some Indians, reflects his interest in his biggest area of research, dermatoglyphics. Dermatoglyphics has remained a major area of study for physical anthropologists at DU, only increasing in importance in recent years with the establishment of the Certificate Programme in Forensic Science. In fact, anyone who learned I had never heard of the subject reacted with surprise. At DU, dermatoglyphic studies have involved studying any patterns in skin (e.g., hand-prints, fingerprints, lip-prints, “whorl” patterns in hair) for purposes

such as: identifying individuals, identifying any association of patterns with certain populations, to see if any patterns were heritable or associated with particular illnesses.

Biswas was not the only Indian anthropologist of his time to work with Fischer in Berlin. Others, like SS Sarkar (Schmuhl 2008: 166) and Irawati Karve (Sundar 2007: 379), were also students of Fischer. Fischer's Nazi ideas did not necessarily have a strong influence on the work of his Indian students. For example, Sundar has argued that "Fortunately, although [Irawati] Karve imbibed some eugenicist inclinations from Fischer, she escaped any stronger racist influence. Perhaps one safety net was provided by her location as a colonized Indian" (2007: 380).⁷ However, Fischer's ideas and politics do appear to have resonated with Biswas. According to a senior member of the DU anthropology department, there was a special jacket that Biswas would sometimes wear around the department. Tugging at the lapel, he would say, "This jacket," and then putting out his right hand as if for a handshake, he would tell people, "Hitler." In other words, Biswas would brag that he had been wearing this particular jacket when he shook Hitler's hand. In terms of Biswas' work, Fischer's influence is most evident in Biswas' published works on eugenics.

⁷ Sundar explains this idea of a safety net as follows:

Written years later, a footnote in a chapter on caste-like formations in other societies reads: 'The author remembers vividly how Germans and Englishmen refused to see any comparison between the institutions of the primitive people and their own institutions. Every time the author, then a student or a much younger teacher suggested such a comparison it was brushed aside. After this experience one learnt to keep one's thought to oneself'" (2007: 380).

Despite that possible mitigating perspective, Sundar herself emphasizes that, "as late as 1968 [Karve] retained a belief in the importance of mapping social groups like subcastes on the basis of anthropometric and what was then called 'genetic' data (blood group, colour vision, hand-clasping, and hypertrichosis)" (ibid).

Specifically, Biswas advocated for mass sterilization of large parts of India's population. In determining which people he believed deserving of the right to reproduce, Biswas drew from Clarence Gordon Campbell's classifications:

Campbell has divided the human family into three groups... In the best stock are numbered those individuals with superior qualities who are recognized as leaders in society... The good stock consists of the element in the population who are law-abiding and normal citizens... The bad stock comprises the so-called dysgenic group, those with defective qualities that make for the degeneration of society. Herein are included the feeble-minded, the insane, the paupers, the confirmed criminals, and the grave sex offenders. This group, in general, is a tremendous burden on society. Genetic evidence has been accumulating to reveal that most of these defects are due to heredity. (Biswas 1936b: 282)

That article was published around the same time Biswas earned his PhD and just a year after the 1935 International Congress for Population Sciences was held in Berlin, which "marked the apex of international support for Nazi race policies" (Kühl 1998: 139). Given that Biswas was then still a student at the University of Berlin and given that his supervisor, Eugen Fischer, was the president of the conference, it seems likely he would have been in attendance. Additionally, American eugenicists Harry Laughlin (who was unable to attend) and Clarence G. Campbell served as vice presidents of the conference (ibid). At the conference (and back in the US), Campbell, following a perspective predominant among American eugenicists, "underscored the importance of Nazi race policies for other nations" and even made a toast to Hitler (ibid).

Having accepted this hierarchical division of humans into a ranking of stocks, Biswas also drew on an idea of reproductive crisis common to eugenics movements. He referred to Francis Galton describing that "while man has been studying the evolution of lower organisms, he was completely ignoring himself, so much so that human defectives were increasing at an alarming

rate, and, unless some efficient methods were devised for keeping them in check, they would endanger the welfare of the human race” (1936b: 276). Or, as he put it in a later piece, published while he was Head of the DU anthropology department, *“Is it not horrible to contemplate the fact that the birth rate among these pitiful degenerates is twice as high as that of the above-average, talented persons with sound heredity?”* (Biswas 1949: 10)

The first solution he proposed to this supposed problem? “Sterilization, in cases prescribed by science, should be regarded as a humane duty. It is in the highest sense inhumane to tolerate quietly the creation of human life to which fate has meted out suffering which cannot be prevented,” Biswas wrote (1937: 550). As if to establish his supposed humaneness, he made a point of emphasizing that the sterilized could go on living normal lives and even be sexually active, arguing that this change in reproductive status would not adversely affect them (ibid).

Historian Sarah Hodges has described that, from the 20s and 30s, discussions of eugenics became increasingly popular in India and an important part of nationalist and anti-colonial frameworks which saw eugenics as a source of “modernization” and “regeneration” (2006:115) for the nation. While it is possible that Biswas may have felt affinities between his work and these movements, I have found no evidence that he had direct links to them.

In addition to advocating for mass sterilization policies, Biswas also advocated restrictions on marriage and reproduction between people belonging to different “stocks.” In doing so, he praised the eugenics policies of the Nazi German state and suggested that India follow them:

The German Government, realizing the importance of race hygiene for the welfare and prosperity of the entire nation, have enforced laws for the prevention of hereditary defective progeny and improvement of the habitual criminal and of the social criminal... All of these measures are for bringing the German nation to the endeavours of hereditary health purity. In order to reach this goal, health centres have been established... for the guidance of those people who have decided to marry and to advise married people and families... The aim of these is (i) to keep the physically and mentally unfit from marrying and as far as possible from procreation, so that undesirable progeny may be prevented, (ii) to make marriage between hereditary healthy and hereditary defectives impossible, but to permit marriage among the sterilized, (iii) to arouse the feeling of responsibility in regard to the coming generation, and thus to influence the selection of a mate in a hereditary healthy aspect. (1937: 550)

Biswas also presented these eugenic and “racial hygiene” policies as having origins in the wisdom of ancient societies, like ancient Greece where, he wrote, “marriages were encouraged only between individuals of splendid family attainments, with the result that the offsprings inherited those sterling qualities” (1936b: 276). But this supposed ancient wisdom was not limited to Europe; Biswas also traced eugenics policies to the marriage prescriptions and proscriptions of ancient Indian texts, claiming that: “Manu’s marriage laws show that in those days the knowledge of eugenics was not unknown in India” (1937: 547). According to Hodges (2006), this sort of argument and justification based on a supposed ancient history of Indian eugenics was common within Indian eugenics movements at the time.

Shiv Visvanathan has described India as “one of the world’s great clearing houses and compost heaps for ideas. It keeps alive some defeated ideas without consigning them to the museum and reinvents others through translation” (1998: 42). Specifically regarding anthropology, he argues that “Not all British officials saw in India a site to be surveyed and ruled. For many it was a theater for alternative knowledges, experiments that had failed in the West” (2006: 241), for which he provides positively inflected examples, such as the work of Patrick Geddes, and the

“anthropological confidence of the nationalist movement” (ibid), which Visvanathan says “projected the possibilities of a world anthropology with its ideas of pluralism, diversity, and dissent” (ibid: 242). The intellectual trajectory of an academic like Biswas, however, brings to the fore the fact that the “defeated ideas” in the “compost heap” of India did not arrive or circulate in a power vacuum, and that some of them had the potential to be as harmful as others may have been innovative and creative.

One might wonder how much of Biswas’s thinking on the subjects of the policies of the Nazi German state and eugenics was a product of his time and social circles. After all, most of his writings explicitly advocating for eugenics policies came out in the 1930s. However, Biswas’s involvement with the journal *Mankind Quarterly* suggests otherwise. Sociologist Stefan Kühl has noted that the journal was revived by members of the International Association for the Advancement of Ethnology and Eugenics (IAAEE), like North American eugenicists Robert Gayre and Ruggles Gates, in an attempt to counteract their “growing scientific isolation” after World War II, something they blamed on “anti-racist hysteria [fanned by] liberals and Jews” (2013: 166). The journal was made possible in large part by support from Wickliffe Draper, a major advocate of segregation in the US, and his Pioneer Fund (ibid: 167). The prominent race scientists behind *Mankind Quarterly* were, not surprisingly, white men, so in order “to nip in the bud beforehand any criticism about a racist orientation of the editorial board, one non-European, the Indian P. C. Biswas, was also taken onto the board” (ibid: 168). Biswas’s continued association with leading race scientists and eugenicists, and his involvement with *Mankind Quarterly* in the early 1960s, suggests that his perspective on the subject may not have changed much with the times. Rather, his belief in eugenics persisted late into his life.

Although his research focused primarily on physical anthropology, Biswas, like many anthropologists of his time, did not limit his work to a particular subfield. His forays into ethnography were generally related to government or development work. For example, his *Socio-Economic Survey of Budhpur—A Delhi Village* (1961) was part of a Census of India 1961 series of monographs on a large number of villages. The forward, preface, and a note on the page before the list of illustrations suggest that V Bhalla and RS Mann (students of Biswas) assisted him with the fieldwork and writing of the draft.

In 1956, Biswas published his monograph, *Santals of Santal Parganas*, which was reviewed by anthropologist NS Reddy for the journal *The Eastern Anthropologist*. Reddy found some passages of Biswas' work to be identical—without attribution—to descriptions of Santals published previously in District Gazetteers (Reddy 1956: 78-9). His review concluded:

The author should not have published this book. It exposes him as one who does not seem to have the background knowledge and the conceptual frame of reference required for social research. The book is a definite disservice for the young and growing science of anthropology. It is unfortunate that after the series of admirable monographs we have had on the tribes of Chota Nagpur in the past, particularly those of the late S. C. Roy, a publication like this should have come out with such scanty material so incompetently interpreted. The Adimjati Sevak Sangh which has published this book, has not done any service either to Indian anthropology whose standards it lowers or to the Santal tribe whose present-day life and culture it fails to portray in any intelligible terms (ibid: 81-2).

These documented instances of plagiarism do not appear to have had any effect on Biswas's career; he was appointed to the position of full professor about two years⁸ after Reddy's review was published. That timeline is especially striking given a story I heard multiple times, from

⁸ This date is based on the year of the Delhi University annual report in which his appointment was recorded.

multiple people about Biswas. Although there were some variations across tellings, the outlines remained largely the same.

Apparently, when the Delhi University anthropology department was about to be founded (in 1947, just before India's independence) and applicants were being interviewed to be the first department head, both PC Biswas and DN Majumdar (who would later found the Lucknow University anthropology department) were vying for the job. One of the members of the hiring committee who interviewed the applicants was Biraja Sankar (BS) Guha, the well-known physical anthropologist who had earned his PhD under Ernest Hooton at Harvard and who by then had become the founder and first director of the Anthropological Survey of India.

(According to one version of the story, Guha played a central role in persuading Maurice Gwyer, then Vice Chancellor of Delhi University, to establish an anthropology department at his institution. Guha, the story goes, wanted the department to emphasize physical anthropology and wished to hire someone weak whom he could replace once he reached the mandatory retirement age at the Anthropological Survey of India [Joshi 2015:36].) Thus, Guha tried to make Majumdar stumble in his interview in order to tip the process in Biswas's favor. I'll include the rest as described to me by the renowned anthropologist, alumnus and former member of the faculty at Lucknow, TN Madan:

TN Madan [TNM]: "My version of it is from what Majumdar has told me. That Majumdar was *far* more articulate and Maurice Gwyer, an Englishman, was Vice Chancellor; he would have had a partiality towards a product of Cambridge [i.e., towards Majumdar]... Biswas was a PhD from Germany. Guha was expert [on the hiring committee] and Guha had acquired some very recent instrument in the area of anthropometry."

Hoda Bandeh-Ahmadi [HBA]: "Oh, what kind of instrument?"

TNM: “Some measuring instrument, calipers, or something like that. The newest tool in—the newest toy or tool in anthropometry, craniometry. And so, Majumdar said, at the end of the interview, Guha [asked], ‘What is this?’ He said ‘Na’ [sound suggesting Majumdar didn’t know]. There must have been more to it, but in Majumdar, summing up, a foul trick was played upon him by showing him something very recent, which he didn’t know about. But otherwise, his work in physical anthropology was far more important than Biswas. And Biswas knew it [the answer]; Guha must have shown it [the instrument] to him. That is Majumdar’s version; true or false, I don’t know. So, Majumdar was not selected, and Biswas was selected. And then he led the department, and all these people, Indera Pal Singh and JD Mehra and other—[and that whole] history and so Biswas did a lot of work. He used to come to Lucknow as examiner and so on.”

Indera Pal Singh (IP Singh, 1928-2016), was one of Biswas’ first students at DU; he went to Germany for additional training on what he described as a conqueror’s visa (Germany was then still occupied by the allied powers), and returned to Delhi to work for the Ford Foundation for a time before joining the DU anthropology department as a faculty member. He eventually became Biswas’s successor in running the department in addition to serving as an important university administrator both at DU, where he was the university proctor for decades, and beyond, for example, as a member of the University Grants Commission, which oversees higher education across India.

IP Singh was appointed as a lecturer in the DU anthropology department in 1953 (he earned one of the first doctoral degrees in anthropology from the same department in 1959). According to a story I heard from one DU anthropologist, MN Srinivas (1916-1999), still one of the biggest names in the history of sociology and social anthropology in India, was at that time also an applicant for the position. Srinivas, with his doctoral training under AR Radcliffe-Brown and EE Evans-Pritchard at Oxford, would surely have been a serious competitor for the position. The story continued that Biswas opposed hiring Srinivas for that very reason, because Biswas felt

threatened by the up-and-coming Srinivas. Biswas had been hired as a reader and head of the anthropology department, but a new position was going to be announced for a full professor of anthropology. Merit promotions are a relatively recent phenomenon in Indian universities. At that time, the only way to become a full professor was to wait for an opening, apply and compete for it along with anyone else who applied. Applicants could include scholars from other institutions, but this story implies that Srinivas would have been less of a threat to Biswas's chances at a promotion if he were not a member of the department. While I can't independently verify this story, it is generally consistent with the timeline of events in the history of the department. In 1959, Biswas, notwithstanding allegations of plagiarism, was appointed as the first full professor of anthropology at DU. The same year, MN Srinivas was appointed the first professor and head of the new Sociology Department at the Delhi School of Economics, a position created largely for and around him by the powerful economist and institution builder, then-DU Vice Chancellor, VKRV Rao.

These stories depict an academic world where important decisions, which must necessarily have influenced the directions departments would take in their intellectual and social development over generations, were made based more on personal interests than on "purely" intellectual ones (whatever those might have been). Thus, who was in a position to decide or influence, and what that person's interests, obligations, and agendas were, are depicted as having been almost paramount. In the first story, it is BS Guha attempting to maneuver his way into a faculty position; in the second, it is PC Biswas trying to ward off any competition for a promotion. In both these stories, as with many other narratives belonging to the "hiring" genre, the personal

interests and agendas at play are closely connected to disciplinary and subdisciplinary boundaries.

Recollecting these stories in the present raises several “what if” questions, and the possibility of possible pasts leading to alternative presents, a thought experiment that emphasizes the significance of certain present-day structures, positions, and boundaries. Having an intellectual powerhouse of social anthropology such as Srinivas in the DU anthropology department, if he had come and stayed (which some of his later writings on the relationship between anthropology and sociology in India call into question), would have dramatically altered the position of social anthropology in the department, even more so if, as a result, the sociology department had never been founded. Vinay Kumar Srivastava described his view of this effect to me by suggesting that the founding of the sociology department led the anthropology department to further specialize in physical anthropology, as that was the part of anthropology on which it had a monopoly.

Srivastava’s point is supported by the fact that social anthropology was arguably, at least in numbers of faculty, less marginal in the anthropology department in its earliest days, when two women, Hilda Raj and Freda Kretschmar Mookerjee,⁹ briefly taught there as lecturers. However, despite their greater relative number, they would have held a significantly less influential status

⁹ Freda Kretschmar Mookerjee was an interesting character in her short time at the DU anthropology department and her peculiar background must have made for an interesting dynamic between her and Biswas. Unfortunately, no one I spoke with was able to remember much about Kretschmar. She was a German who spent a lot of time around the Indian nationalist Subhas Chandra Bose, whom she was asked to spy on (Bose 2004: 206) by the German Foreign Office. This company led to Kretschmar crossing paths with Girija Mookerjee, “an anti-Nazi Indian nationalist” who had previously lived in England and Prague, reported for the *Hindustan Times* from Paris, where he had been jailed by the Nazis, and was recruited by Bose to work at the Free India Centre, where he met Freda Kretschmar (ibid: 212). Apparently, “They became lovers and when the European war ended IPI... reported that he was joining her in Baden Baden to move back to France” (ibid). They eventually moved to Delhi, and Mookerjee joined the Indian Foreign Service (Isabel Huacuja Alonso, personal communication, November 27, 2014). Freda Kretschmar Mookerjee seems to have played a role in connecting Delhi anthropologists to German institutions. IP Singh, for example, said she helped him when he was getting settled for his training there.

compared to Biswas in determining directions for the department, and neither stayed very long, apparently (at least in Raj's case) following their husbands' careers elsewhere.

Another way that the DSE sociology department seems to have influenced the relative growth of subfields in the anthropology department was by attracting some of its social anthropologists, presumably with its more social-anthropology-friendly intellectual atmosphere, and economic and institutional resources. The most significant case visible in the DU annual reports of academic hires is that of Ram Dutt (RD) Sanwal (1929-1970), who was appointed as a lecturer in the anthropology department during the 1959-60 academic year. He was granted a two-year study leave starting September 1963, which would coincide with his time studying at the London School of Economics, where he was awarded his PhD in 1966 (Baviskar 1970: 159), the same year he was recruited by MN Srinivas (personal communication, IP Singh) and appointed as a reader in the sociology department. Unfortunately, Sanwal suddenly fell ill in early 1970 and passed away several months later. Had he lived and remained in the anthropology department, the number of doctorate-holding social anthropology professors would have doubled.

For a long time, however, JD Mehra (d. 2016) was the only social anthropology professor with a PhD in the anthropology department; even Mehra did not earn his PhD until several years after he began teaching in the department. Sanwal taught in the department prior to earning his PhD. JS Bhandari (1937-2001), an MA student of DN Majumdar in Lucknow, didn't earn his PhD until fairly late in his career, when he completed it under another Majumdar student, LP Vidyarthi, at Ranchi. IS Marwah never completed his PhD. Based on the records available in the annual reports, it was not until 1977, when Vardesh Chander (VC) Channa was appointed as a

lecturer, that the department gained another social anthropology professor with a PhD. This situation is particularly significant given that only professors holding a doctoral degree were allowed to supervise PhD students and there is a limit on the number of students each professor could take. Thus, the number of possible social anthropology doctoral students has been (and remains to this day) severely limited, a constraint that, by extension, has limited the growth of the subfield. The fact that many of the early social anthropology faculty published very little was emphasized to me by physical anthropologists like IP Singh to suggest that the social anthropologists themselves were largely at fault for the relative strength of their subdiscipline, rather than any preference for physical anthropology on the part of their colleagues or those (such as himself) who held positions of administrative power over the development of the department. More likely it was a combination of the two, but only relatively recently in its history has the anthropology department had more prolific social anthropology professors such as Vinay Kumar Srivastava, Subhadra Channa, and PC Joshi.

Some of the anthropology professors (especially social anthropologists) have had significant connections with the sociologists. Perhaps most significantly, VK Srivastava, moved from anthropology to sociology (as a student), then back to anthropology (as a professor). Migration from anthropology into sociology, as in the case of RD Sanwal, is a longstanding trend, though it seems to have decreased a bit over time. I heard many stories of friendships and collegial relationships between individual social anthropology and sociology faculty members in the departments, especially in their earlier days. For example, André Béteille talked of his friendship with JD Mehra. Inderjit Singh (IS) Marwah told me how he would visit D School to access the Ratan Tata Library's large collections of books and journals relevant to social anthropology, to

keep up on new scholarship and design syllabi and reading lists. In fact, I ran into him there a few times during my fieldwork, even in his retirement. He was also friends with D School professors like Aneeta Ahluwalia Minocha (1943-2007) and Veena Dua (d. 1992), and would sometimes join them for lunch on campus before they passed away. IP Singh also mentioned that he would sometimes attend MN Srinivas' seminars at D School (modeled somewhat on Malinowski's famous seminar at the London School of Economics), but that someone he wouldn't name in the anthropology department (presumably Biswas) changed his teaching schedule to conflict with the seminar so that he would be unable to attend. Although it was not one of his principle areas of specialization, IP Singh liked to emphasize to me that he had also done social anthropological research, for example, assisting Oscar Lewis.

Particularly in the early days of the establishment of sociology departments in India, a great number of their students and faculty had been trained in anthropology. My fieldwork in Lucknow made this pattern apparent to me. Although a separate anthropology department was not founded there for some time after independence, starting in 1928, Radhakamal Mukerjee's (1889-1968) famous interdisciplinary Department of Economics and Sociology at the University of Lucknow provided an institutional home for DN Majumdar (1903-1960; a Cambridge-trained anthropologist) and for the teaching of anthropology. Majumdar's students spread to anthropology and sociology departments all over India and abroad, both as students and as faculty.¹⁰ Just a few examples in Delhi include JS Bhandari (who taught in the DU anthropology department); DSE sociology alumni Hira Singh (who went on to teach sociology at York University in Toronto) and Imtiaz Ahmad (who went on to teach at Jawaharlal Nehru

¹⁰ In the US, these include RS Khare at the University of Virginia, TN Pandey at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and Khwaja Hasan at Indiana State University.

University); and early sociology professors at Jawaharlal Nehru University (Yogendra Singh and RK Jain).

This movement between anthropology and sociology has been almost entirely unidirectional, with examples of movement from sociology into anthropology being unusual in India.¹¹ The expansion of higher education, the great increase in sociology departments, and the growth of the development sector after independence are certainly important factors in that trend. As in much of the world, neither anthropology nor sociology is commonly considered a very desirable or lucrative course of study. But relative to anthropology, there are certainly more academic jobs available in sociology, and the fact that many specialists in physical anthropology find employment in public health or development suggests that student with a background in sociology and social anthropology might have more employment options, despite the applied value of training in genetics or forensic anthropology. These (and other) economic and career considerations have undeniably influenced the relative positions of anthropology and sociology. They were repeatedly and often explicitly raised by students and faculty alike in conversations and life history interviews. All of this is consistent with common explanations for the growth of sociology after independence. However, such accounts make little sense of how disciplinary boundaries have sometimes been malleable and blurry and at other times more rigid and strictly enforced. To understand an important piece of that puzzle, one must look at what these boundaries have meant in practice.

¹¹ This does not include the many examples of Indian students of sociology traveling abroad to study in anthropology programs.

Indeed, Majumdar's (and Lucknow's) importance in helping train anthropologists and sociologists in the decades before and just after independence is not to be understated, yet this phenomenon was not limited to him and his students. There is a great deal of overlap in the intellectual ancestry of anthropologists and sociologists in India, and few of these pedigrees extend very deep into the past. Thus, it is not at all surprising that a collection such as Uberoi et al.'s (2007) *Anthropology in the East: Founders of Indian Sociology and Anthropology* should find it necessary to discuss founding figures of the two disciplines together.

This shared history has elaborate ramifications for how disciplinary and sub-disciplinary boundaries are created, navigated, and maintained. To explore this process, I will give special attention to the stories of three scholars who have taught in the DU anthropology department: Vinay Kumar Srivastava (whom I've already mentioned), an anonymous junior archaeology faculty member, and a very senior, but also anonymous, archaeologist. Each of these three scholars provides an example of disciplinary and/or sub-disciplinary boundary crossing, though some are more successful than others.¹²

Vinay Kumar Srivastava is probably the most accomplished crosser of both disciplinary and sub-disciplinary boundaries his department has ever seen. Like many DU anthropologists, he was an undergraduate student at Hans Raj College, one of the many colleges of Delhi University, where undergraduate studies generally take place within specific colleges that students are admitted to, whereas academic "departments" themselves focus on post-graduate teaching. However, since Hans Raj is the only DU college to offer anthropology, the BSc-level teaching is also conducted

¹² I must stress again here that these stories have many interpretations and should not be taken as reflections on the broader character of any of the individuals discussed.

within the anthropology department itself. As an undergraduate student of anthropology, Srivastava was instructed by professors in the anthropology department. After graduating in 1972, he entered the two-year MSc program in anthropology, choosing to focus on physical anthropology. Instead of staying in anthropology, however, he moved to D School to study sociology for his MA, which he earned in 1976. That fall, he began teaching sociology at DU's Hindu College, then right next to (and now, behind a brick wall with barbed wire separating it from) D School. He wanted to continue in the sociology MPhil program but, at the time, the program required him to be a full-time student, which was not possible with his teaching responsibilities. Since the DU department of Chinese and Japanese studies allowed part-time study, he enrolled in their MPhil program and wrote a thesis related to Chinese sociology. In 1985, two years after he had completed his MPhil degree, Srivastava was hired as a lecturer to teach social anthropology in the DU anthropology department and was promoted to reader one year later. He planned to work on a PhD at D School under André Béteille when, in 1988, he was awarded a commonwealth fellowship that allowed him to go to Cambridge, where he earned his doctoral degree in social anthropology under the supervision of Caroline Humphrey in 1994. A few years later, in 1997, he was promoted to full professor. He briefly served as the principal of Hindu College from 2010 to 2011. At one point, he was offered but turned down a position as a professor in the D School sociology department.

During my fieldwork, Srivastava became the head of the anthropology department. Alongside his many administrative, bureaucratic and teaching duties, he also encouraged efforts to hold a number of seminars in the department, one of which was of great interest to me because it dealt with the history of the department. Originally planned for September 5th (Teacher's Day), the

“Celebrating the Spirit of Anthropology” seminar was instead held on November 7, 2014 so that IP Singh could attend. The event brought together alumni and faculty members from the first batch (cohort) of students to the present; most of the speakers were retired or current professors and, toward the end of the day, a few novices like myself.

After some brief introductory comments by his student, RP Mitra, Srivastava welcomed everyone by framing what he saw as the meaning and purpose of the event. I have excerpted his words here:

Now, of course, as Dr. Mitra pointed out, that we would go back into the past, build up the history of the department, but I would like to submit here, that... the idea underlying this seminar, basically can be divided into three things... I have always been concerned about, about our teachers.

It was many years ago, and I would like to share this story with you—it was many years ago, that some distinguished sociologists of Delhi University, they planned a seminar, it was held in Institute of Economic Growth, a seminar on different scholars, different anthropologists and sociologists who have made contributions to the subject. Well, they were looking for all big names and, of course, they asked me to come and speak. I didn't want to speak on any particular person. I spoke on anthropology in India and, later on, my article was published in *Seminar* [Srivastava 2000]. That's a different story. Then we were talking about it, and in my talk I said, I said that there are umpteen number of people available to speak on MN Srinivas, to speak on Professor André Béteille, to speak on LP Ananthakrishna Aiyer, to speak on NK Bose, but there's no one to give a lecture on Professor SD Badgaiyan—he was my teacher in sociology, a very, very good teacher, and it was in classes that he inspired. He might not have written much. Anthropologists have always been interested in what is called the subaltern reality, the reality at, at local level, reality below. There are teachers who create history in the classes. When I wrote a short piece on Professor JD Mehra, who retired in 1988, I said Professor Mehra's texts were his students. He might not have written much, but look at the students he produced who are internationally known, and I'm very proud to say that they have done exceptional work and are known all over. And these kinds of celebrations, celebrations of teachers'-students' relationship, and especially of, of those, those scholars who were very active in class, who taught very well and who did remarkable work, they might not have written, you know, what was expected of them—it doesn't mean that we ignore them. We must look at the department from below, and not just from above.

The second thing which came to my mind was, was that we rarely speak of—we rarely speak of the department, we rarely speak of the histories of the, of the department, we speak of the individuals rather than the department. Department has a very important role to play. Now, department is a social fact. If you are a Durkheim, the department is a social fact. And if you are a Clifford Geertz, then department is a text to be read. In case you happen to be Victor Turner, department is a constellation of symbols. And if you happen to be a Marx, then department is a dialectical process, a dialectical reality. We rarely pay attention to the role of the department in the lives of the individual. We talk about individual, we talk about syllabi, we talk about examination system, we talk about the politics in the department, and so on and so forth, appointments, et cetera. But department as a social institution. Once, while I interacted with Professor André Béteille on university as an institution—and André Béteille has written a *lot* on university as an institution—I shared my thought with him and said that when you speak of university as an institution, it does not necessarily include department as an institution. Not many people talk about the department, not many people talk about the underlying currents in the department, how the departments have been shaping us... Here, of course, our job is not to indulge in any kind of what will be called ‘chest-thumping rhetoric,’ that we are the best, we have done the best, that’s not the point, but to look back at the department as a social institution, to look at department as a reality, department as an ongoing reality. As you know, the department was founded in 1947, and so the department has made remarkable contribution, and I am very proud to be a member of this department, I’m very proud of my colleagues, I’m very proud of my teachers, and I am very proud of the building in which we are. Now go around and see how beautiful the building is, and how clean also, and it has always been clean.

So, keeping these ideas in mind, department as a live reality, we are holding this with the two explicit, you know, submissions: number one, to talk about our teachers who are likely to be forgotten; number two, to look at the department as a social institution; and, obviously, the third thing would follow from this, the solidarity among the members of the department, which in fact is a latent function (what will happen: we are all meeting). Incidentally, this is the occasion in which five academic lineages are in this room, five academic lineages. You have Professor SC Tiwari. You have Professor Tiwari’s disciple, Professor AK Kalla. You have Professor Kalla’s disciple, Dr. Saraswati.

[Someone interrupts: Sachdeva ...]

I’m talking about the academic lineage more in terms of PhD—

[Someone else: Whose student is it.]

VKS: PhD. Yeah, yeah. So you have Tiwari Sahib, you have Kalla Sahib, you have Saraswati, and then you have Kiranmala, who is Saraswati’s student, and then, of course, you have Kiranmala’s students. So five generations of people are in this room, academic generations. And this is the time when we have to look at what we have done.

Not long later, near the end of his comments, Srivastava added a statement of reassurance to his teachers in the room: “since last year, you know, we have been very active in holding the seminars... The department is academically very active, it’s doing very well. So I want to assure all the retired teachers of the department that the department is in safe hands.”

In his comments, Srivastava discussed the importance of developing an anthropological analysis of the department “as a social institution.” As he explained what this meant, he made it clear that to his mind it was not just about individual scholars or personalities, not just about politics or academic/bureaucratic requirements, but about how people and their thinking related to and through each other. He advocates for recognizing the “underlying currents in the department, how the departments have been shaping us” in a way that is inseparable from an understanding of teacher-student relationships and “academic lineages.” Thus, “Celebrating the Spirit of Anthropology” meant looking at the past and celebrating teachers of anthropology, always with the comparison to sociology looming in the distance.

One example he gave to illustrate his point was JD Mehra, who was not a “subaltern” and would not be construed as such by anyone in virtually any other context. I was never able to meet Mehra due to his poor health, but apart from his teaching and oratorical skills, the most common things I heard about him from his former students and colleagues related to his family’s wealth. Specifically, he owned a car that he would drive to campus at a time when very few people could afford one, and he lived in a family home at Connaught Place, a commercial center and the site of some of the city’s most expensive real estate. Between his family’s affluence, his immense social capital evidenced by a command of literary English that intimidated many students who

had graduated from Hindi-medium secondary schools, and his position as a professor at the University of Delhi, Mehra was by all accounts a member of the Delhi elite. Srivastava's use of the term "subaltern" clearly did not carry the same meaning as the term used by the Subaltern Studies Group. Rather, he characterized Mehra as someone who made an impact on anthropology through his students, but was not recognized in narratives of important disciplinary ancestors because he did not publish much. It was not that Mehra's voice would not be heard, not even that he didn't produce "texts" of a sort (in the form of his students), but that the significance of what he produced was inadequately appreciated. Thus, Mehra was framed as "subaltern" because his "texts" were not recognized as such by the hegemonic discourses of his academic institution and environment. Remembering Mehra was important, not only to understand his impact or the impact of different kinds of "texts" on the discipline, but also to recover the importance of the history of anthropology as experienced by members of the DU anthropology department. This history of anthropology was framed against (or, at least, in addition to) that remembered in the event and publications organized by the "distinguished sociologists of Delhi University," despite the fact that Srivastava had also been one of those sociologists.

Srivastava navigated these relations between anthropology and sociology with care and with a deftness that gives the impression of ease. He did this by drawing on and referring to his own intellectual genealogical relations to "academic lineages" in both departments. He positioned himself as a student of André Béteille (and, through him, MN Srinivas), SD Badgaiyan, and JD Mehra, after having been introduced by his own student, RP Mitra. Lest anyone fail to understand what he was doing, he explicitly went on to describe academic lineages as central to understanding the department as a social institution. His membership in these different lineages

gave him a meaningful place in the social worlds of both departments and disciplines; it also allowed him to draw on the prestige of the sociology department and meant that he had the intellectual standing one would need to elevate anthropology to a similar level.

Yes, Srivastava was name-dropping, but he was not dropping just any names, or names alone. These relationships meant something to him; i.e., they are important to how he is positioned and positions himself as a scholar who can travel across disciplinary boundaries, but they are not simply instrumental. His statement that the department was in “safe hands” and continued to be active was made to reassure the retired professors on hand, who had worked to build the department, but it also reminded current faculty and students that they have a shared responsibility to their intellectual ancestors. If they fulfilled this responsibility, Srivastava suggested, it would make them a more cohesive group and foster “solidarity” among them.

One could argue that these statements were a product of the sentimentality associated with an event of remembrance and in honor of teachers, except that Srivastava draws on this understanding of academic life fairly consistently when he speaks. His use of this motif has met with significant success, and (despite variations in understandings) he is not alone in this. It was not a coincidence that he insisted I understand the department in terms of “migratory patterns” relating to the “indigenous” and the “outsiders” (see Chapter 1). He refers to his academic genealogies to position himself among sociologists as well as anthropologists.

Srivastava spoke as part of a panel in a plenary session at the 2012 national conference of the Indian Sociological Society in Udaipur, Rajasthan. In his comments, Srivastava discussed how,

despite social change and processes of globalization, aspects of Indian life like kinship remain important to understanding social phenomena. For example, even if people are living in a high-rise apartment building, one often finds that neighboring apartments belong to members of the same extended family. During the question and answer period, an audience member who had clearly taken offense at Srivastava's comments questioned the appropriateness of his discussion of kinship in the disciplinary context of sociology, saying "kinship anthropologizes sociology," and suggesting that other ways of talking about phenomena, like connectedness, might be more valuable. Srivastava replied that the term "anthropologization" has always worried him, explaining that he did his master's in anthropology and then an MA in sociology, that he used Weber in his MPhil in Chinese sociology, and then did a PhD in social anthropology on a nomadic group in Rajasthan; he received a scholarship to Cambridge, so he gravitated toward anthropology. He said in his own career he has never been able to make a distinction, that we should take from all disciplines that enable understanding. He concluded by saying the questioner was right; we should study connectedness and relatedness, as many anthropologists today are deconstructing kinship, and it will come down to connectedness in the end.

Srivastava's main defense was to refer to his degree in sociology as well as in anthropology, and allude to his relation to important anthropologists and sociologists. In other words, his response justified his right to speak (and speak on kinship) in sociology not only on intellectual grounds, but also on his training in multiple disciplines, which placed him in prominent sociological intellectual genealogies known to Indian sociologists, in addition to his association with a prestigious foreign department of anthropology.

However, not everyone is as versed, or as lucky, as Srivastava in navigating disciplinary boundaries. A junior archaeologist was unusual in her willingness to discuss her marginalization with me, a marginalization that surprised me given her friendliness (she always had a smile on her face) when I saw her around the department. For convenience and to obscure her true identity, I will call her Dr. B.

Dr. B is the only child of a civil servant and spent much of her childhood at a boarding school on a hill station in North India. She had been interested in art in college at Allahabad University, but wanting something a bit more practical, she ended up studying archaeology instead. After failing, as so many do, to obtain the requisite government exam score to join the Indian Administrative Service, she decided to pursue a postgraduate degree. She finished her PhD at Allahabad University quickly and prepared to move back to her parents' home. Before she left, she said goodbye to a friend and classmate who was disappointed to hear she was going. He asked for her mailing address, which she wrote on a discarded scrap of paper they found in the trash. Later, he showed up at her door and met with her parents to ask their permission to marry her. Before he finished his studies at Allahabad University, he was awarded a Commonwealth fellowship to study in the UK. She put her own career on hold to follow her husband to the UK, where she focused on managing their household and raising their son, but ultimately gained visiting academic affiliations of her own. Upon returning to India, her husband secured a position at their alma mater.

When her son grew older, he and her husband encouraged her (she joked that they teamed up to throw her out) not to waste her education and to look for work of her own. This process was a

difficult and disappointing one. Many places were looking to hire an internal candidate, some wanted people with interests in different historical time periods (as opposed to her often older work on stone tools). One museum that had an internal candidate in mind who could not compete with her extensive (including prestigious foreign) qualifications went so far as to pretend she had not applied, posting a guard at the building door when interviews were taking place to prevent her from entering.

She did not entertain much hope of being hired when she applied for an archaeology job in the DU anthropology department. Dozens of archaeologists (she described it as a reunion of sorts) were there to be interviewed, each interview lasting not more than a few minutes. In her frustration with the situation, she managed a few clever answers to the brief questions before she left. When a letter came from DU, she assumed it was a travel reimbursement and ignored it, until her husband opened it and shared its contents. As her husband was teaching in Allahabad and his family was also based there, in order to take the job in Delhi, she had to commute between two residences. She was in Delhi on work days, and in Allahabad when she was not working. She was fortunate to have the support of her family, but despite making this sacrifice to join the DU anthropology department, she found herself less than welcome.

What follows is some of Dr. B's account of how she was socially ostracized and had what should have been a fairly automatic merit promotion delayed by several years. I will rely heavily on her own words—although they are excerpted for the sake of space and clarity—as the significance of the story is not only in the content or series of events, but also in her perspective.

Dr. B began by telling me, “You will *never* find any of my colleagues sitting here in my room. Ever. Why? Because, after—how many years now? ’97, January, till today—I am an outsider. And I love being an outsider, because I’ve got all the time. Only you can see students coming and going, or, that too, now because I’m taking people for fieldwork. Only my research scholars and some students. [inaudible] I do not socialize. I’m a *persona non grata*.”

So Dr. B saw herself as an outsider to the department and attributed her relative social isolation to this fact, but her family encouraged her to put a positive spin on it. Her husband, who had become Head of his department in Allahabad University and was constantly busy with administrative work, was, she said, “jealous, [saying,] ‘Well, you have all the time to read it.’ I said, ‘Thank God!’ You know: you lose something, you gain something. I have lost on my career and I don’t mind, except for a few bugs. *Chalta hai*, okay. You know, but I have got my freedom, academic freedom, I’ve got freedom to do whatever I want to do. I teach and my next big place is the library next door. Yup. So I keep telling my students that, if you are in trouble in this library, the password is, ‘[Dr. B] Ma’am’s student.’ You’ll see the whole library will be mobilized and will find the book or journal, whatever you are looking for. But, do not misuse it... So, that way, I’m alone, but not lonely. Having a good time in fact...”

Dr. B’s son called her twice during the interview and she spoke about him for some time before returning to the topic of her career: “I have known animosity ... I have known how people can be Janus-faced, two-faced. You know, three types of behavior from one person, I’ll tell you about... Without naming, of course. Suppose, one-to-one, when I’m meeting you, say, “Oh, so, hello, how are you? Are you alright?” You answer. If the person is with some students, the

conversation would be, “*Aare*, you don’t even know this! Go and find out!” I mean, out of the blue. “Go and find out this information from the—”

“In front of the students?” I asked.

“Yesss. Yes. Yes. ‘*Aare*, Madam, you should know this! So many years you have spent here! Go and find out from the guard, from the office, from so-and-so and all.’ And third type of behavior is, when that person is walking or around with certain colleagues, and if we are front-to-front, so my spontaneous reaction is, “Oh, hello, good morning, *namashkar*.” They’ll just see through you, as if you do not exist, and go on talking. Or, not even talking, just go past, through you. So, but still, I am not adept at judging the situation, where I should say hello, and why I shouldn’t. So I just placed a very inane kind of a smile on my face and mmm. That’s me. Here, for the first time, I realized that I can be invisible. Or, you know, my colleague, my senior colleague, used to be here. And in this room [points to nearby classroom], this, we used to have two-and-a-half-hours practicum... Okay? Every Tuesday, with BSc, and Thursday with MSc, year-long. And this wonderful gentleman, my senior colleague, what he used to do, there used to be only one chair, one teacher’s chair. Okay? So he used to ask—I don’t know whom—to hide that chair. Yes. So when I entered the class, what I would found—I used to find is that my senior colleague was sitting with the students there, helping them to draw the tools and other things. No chair there. So what would you do? You stand there. That was the way to humiliate me. So, after it happened once, twice, thrice, so before the class, I used to call one of the *chaprasis* and say, please see to it that there are two chairs. Okay. So, they were very nice, obliging. They used to keep two chairs. I used to go and realize that I am invisible, so I used to sit there and all. The

whole two-and-a-half hours, sitting there. I also realize that if someone, a student is drawing something, suppose this is a tool, and the usual way of drawing is that this is the working end, and this is the butt end... So if I am sitting there, and they are doing it for the first time, and if they are doing it like this [incorrectly]... and if I tell them that, "Excuse me, it's not correct," I realize, just because a person is listening to me, there would be some kind of animosity towards him directed by my senior colleague. That bad."

"That's horrible." I empathized.

"Vindictive. I can't tell you, I mean to what lengths they have been to. And, and—"

"Why?!" I wanted to know. Though Dr. B had not identified anyone, based on my knowledge of the history of the department, I already had a good guess as to who this senior archaeologist must be. Yet, every other time I had heard people (mainly his students) talk about him, it was accompanied by glowing praise and expressions of affection. But could that affection and the support that came with it have also made him all the more frightening of a senior colleague to have angered by one's appointment?

"Because they were insecure. They *are* insecure. I'm sorry, I'm using it in present tense. People are insecure. I don't know for what. I don't know for what," Dr. B continued, "I have become Fellow, Royal Asiatic Society, London, and... one of my colleagues said that, 'Well, Madam, now you can write after your name that, "FRAS,"' Fellow, Royal Asiatic Society. So I said, 'Sir, it will create too much of a heartburn to put that. No, I'll never dare to do it. I would

not, I know my limits, I know my boundaries, and I love, I'm a peace-loving person.' So you know, you may call it petty."

"Yes, I would call it petty," I said, pondering the idea that listing one's academic qualifications could be considered an act of aggression against one's colleagues.

"Don't, no... I'll call it unfortunate. I'll say how insecured they are, how complex people are."

"That's sad though," I replied.

"Part of life. We have to accept certain things," said Dr. B, explaining her philosophy on such matters. "You accept it and [snaps fingers] you're very happy. I just, I'm telling you, I come here, I go to my class, I am here and [they're] standing around, and at the first opportunity, I just run out of this place and go next door. I've got lots and lots of friends there. You know, happy people, with whom I can share a cup of tea or, or trivial things like movies and everything. Because anything you—it is a terrible feeling, always being under a microscope, or maybe a binocular."

Then, she moved on to another alienating experience in the department: "I don't know whether this will interest you or not, there was, in 2013, March 2013, there was a merit promotion interview. Okay, so, how it goes is that after you finish eight years of your career in the university, you are eligible for a merit promotion. Right? From Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, to Reader or Associate Professor. Okay? We went for the interview. Okay? And then, of course, I

wouldn't go to the details, after the interview, I got a letter saying that, 'You have been'—I should have got my promotion after eight years, that is 97, 98, 99, 2000, 1, 2, 3, 4—from 2005 I should have become—Reader, Reader. Or Associate Professor. But in that letter, it was written that from 2012 January you have, you are becoming Reader-slash-Assistant Professor. Thank you very much. ...okay, and then, I didn't know what to say because, why 2012? Why not 2013? ...So, the very kind gentleman who was the head of the department and he knows me [since] 1997, the moment I joined this department, he said that, 'Well, Madam, actually 2012 you have become this Fellow, Royal Asiatic Society of London and Ireland.' I said, 'Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. In 2006, I became Fellow, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, India. Do you mean to say that this is any less prestigious institute to become a fellow in?' What? Null and void. Your argument is wrong. Then he said, 'Well, now 'til when you retire, you wouldn't be able to become a professor.'"

I didn't understand her meaning at first, but this was getting at the crux of the matter. What did this have to do with whether she could ever be promoted to full professor? Dr. B explained that, "No, there is no time... So there would not be time enough, because I'm going to retire in 2019, so they have saw to it that, they have made it absolutely clear that let this person suffer, and take this six, seven years from her career, she is not doing anything, though her paper is that—she has published a paper, read paper in international conferences and all, and I don't know how they argued, because I was not there, and let her remain this, and my same colleague, [name of colleague of lower caste background], they have given two years seniority to him. So, he only had seven days seniority when we joined, but now, he's two years ahead of me. Suits me fine; suits me fine. And do you know what—"

“Is that even legal? Like, aren’t there policies about—”

“No, it is not legal. If I go to the court, it will take another 20 years... and, you know, the illustrious head of the department, who’s still here, asked me, ‘Now what are you going to do, madam?’ ...Listen, what was my answer? Guess.”

“Teach. I don’t know.”

“You’re partially right. I just looked at him, I said, ‘What am I going to do? I have sent my case to the highest court [i.e., to God].’ ‘What do you mean?’ I said, ‘I have given *supari*’—do you understand *supari*? It is a contract murder. When you give money for doing a crime... So I said, I have given that contract to the top man there. I’m not bothered. Oh, this time he stood from his chair, head of the department, and said, ‘*Are* madam, now on, whatever bad happens to me.’ I said, ‘Yes, thank you very much...’ No, but this is just a gimmick. I don’t want anybody, anything bad to happen to anybody.”

“No, but still, that’s totally wrong,” I remarked.

She told me that her colleague (the one belonging to a lower caste) who “lost four years, but ahead of [her] by two years” asked her to join him in suing the department, saying they had a very strong case. She declined, given how long and expensive a court case would be, and how it could lead the university to stop her pension. “And, the person who told me, he said—actually he

made my day, I was very happy, I'm not at all despondent about this, because what he told me was that we were saying, one of them, one of the people, cronies of our department, colleagues and all, he was saying this is a fit case for not giving *any* promotion. ...and then what happened was, three expert [external evaluators], they just put their foot down and said, 'No, no, no, no, no, no, no, we have to give her promotion.' So then they decided, okay, let's reduce these years and... that's why I got the—"

"That's why they gave you a promotion at all."

"...My father is a government servant. So, when I told him—first I thought I should not say anything to him because he's old—"

"Awww, he'll get upset."

"He's 90-plus and he'll get upset. But then, I've never sort of—I've always confided in my parents, and my mother had left... so I told him about this. So my father thought for a second and said, 'No, you should not go for the court case, but that doesn't mean that you should sit idle. Write to the chancellor,' who is the [vice] president [of India]. I said, '*Haan* [yes], chancellor is going to do it.' ...And, in his death bed... he just made a gesture, last February, 12th he passed away, so he was in ICU, he—I was standing there—"

"Literally a day ago—a year ago today." I said, having been previously unaware of the significance of this day.

“Yes. Literally,” she confirmed.

“Oh, I’m sorry.”

“No, no, it’s perfectly alright. He made this gesture [asking if she had written the chancellor/vice president of India]... So I, I, I, I told him a lie. I said yes, I have written. And you know what I did?”

“What did you do?”

“I came back, I wrote that letter, to the [vice] president, and his answer came, the whole file was sent to the vice chancellor [of the university], and he wrote, everything is alright. I said, ‘Thank you *baba* [dad], I have done what you asked me to do, fin-ished.’ I’ll show you that letter also.” Dr. B was tearing up, and I reached for her hand. “...But I’m a happy person... I have got all the time for me to study, do whatever I want to do.”

“But— ”

“I mean it. It’s not I’m fibbing or anything. ...Yes, I’m very happy. You know what happens, *que sera, sera*. What happens is good for me.”

“Sometimes if you’re in the middle of other people’s drama then you get tugged into their—”

“Yes, yes—”

“—but if you’re an outsider, they don’t bother you with some of that stuff,” I added.

“Yes, yes. And now, I have all the right to just write them off, all of them... See, see, they have made me so powerful, I’m the most powerful woman in this department.”

“Yeah, ‘cause they can’t control you,” I said, beginning to grasp the argument behind her positive twist on the situation: How much responsibility can a person have to a community that excludes them? Being ostracized has many drawbacks in its withdrawal of a social support system, but it also constrains that social group’s ability to place further demands on or threaten further consequences against the ostracized individual.

“Can’t control me, and I read, I teach, and I am not at the mercy of anybody, anything. Because they do not owe me anything. I’m my own person—”

“You don’t owe them anything; they owe you something, you don’t owe them anything,” I suggested.

Dr. B expanded on her point: “But you know, what astonishes me is, whenever—like, ‘Madam, you are so capable, why don’t you do this?’ Then I have to say, ‘No, no, no, no, no, no, I am in such a junior position, let me be...’ Someone said that, ‘Why don’t you write about your

laboratory?’ I said, ‘Laboratory? What laboratory? I have got seniors.’ You know, advantage. Anytime, I can just, just deride them and say, look, you have made me so powerful, you have given me that power, power to say, say—just shook off this thing. I am only accountable to my students, I’m only accountable for my course, I have to finish it, I have to take examinations, [whispers] get lost. Did you get my point? [laughs]”

“Yeah.” I did get it.

“Yeah, my father passed this day, a year back.”

“So the vice chancellor wrote you a letter saying that—”

“Everything is in order. Nothing has gone wrong. Because there are people, in this department, it’s a—cronies of him—and, you know, how the, uh, sort of impression is created. Suppose, okay, I am in power. And I want to know about you. Okay? There is somebody who knows you. Alright, the person—it doesn’t happen to a strong person. It happens only to those people who are, who have got some kind of a inferiority complex and who are at the seat of power. Okay? So what will happen, the third person will say, ‘Oooh, she—ahhh, the other day, I saw her roaming around in some mall or market, is she serious about her studies?’”

“Are you kidding me?” I wondered, how could she be spotted in a market, except by someone who was also in the same market? But, then, questioning a scholar’s seriousness based on their

shopping habits sounded incredibly gendered. I doubted a male professor seen shopping in a market would be interpreted the same way.

“This type of gossip goes on. How do I know? The vice chancellor, himself, in another interview, came—just, he went out and then he came and then he said, “Well, what is your publication in 2013?” Exactly like this. He just crossed me. So I was very respectful. Why shouldn’t I be? After knowing all this. So I said, ‘Sir, in 2013 August, my research paper is published in the journal by the... Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla—’”

“That’s a very prestigious institution—”

“—in their journal, they have published it, August 2013. You know what he asked me?”

“No,” I said.

““Hah, is it a original research paper?””

“Are you kidding me? Does the Institute of Advanced Study in Shimla publish anything other than that—?”

“Listen, listen, listen. What was my reaction? I said, ‘Sir, they do not’—I was just sitting like this, I said, ‘Sir, they do not publish anything but original research papers.’ ...Why? Why he has said this? Because he must have got feedback from my colleagues here that, ‘Hahaha, she is an

archaeologist, what can she write originally?’ Not realizing that there can be archaeology without digging. Interpretation.” She pulled out a student’s thesis as proof and made me flip through it. She said, of her student, “She has slogged for so, so many—this is thesis in archaeology. But she has not excavated. It is—”

“No, you don’t need to excavate to do archaeology,” I confirmed.

“But, but someone who is from mathematics background.” She was implying that the current vice chancellor’s training in another field (i.e., mathematics) meant he was less familiar with the variety of methods that could potentially be used in original archaeological research.

“That’s a destructive methodology,” I said, “if you can do something without excavating, it’s better.”

“Yes, yes, yes. Yes, exactly, exactly. And when the expert asked me, ‘What do you think should be the trust area in archaeology, Indian archaeo—?’ I said, ‘Indian archaeology?’ He said, ‘Yes, Indian archaeology.’ I said, ‘Interpretation.’ ...interpretation of the data that we have already got. Wonderful excavations have been carried out, and there is a need to putting those in context, in local context, in regional context, in global context. And, and interpretation. It is the most— theoretical archaeology. It’s most needed. And especially in India. Because so much has been excavated, there is no need to destroy any sites anymore, unless there is a pressing need, or some pressing answers that we are looking for. [He] said, ‘Hmm, well, I think...’ [i.e., he disagrees].”

“Wow.”

“Feel free to think anything,” replied Dr. B now, after the fact, to that scholar. She explained that, “one thing good about studying archaeology is, we archaeologists are reading between the lines. Hermeneutics. If the person is saying something, there has to be—why the person is saying like this? Why vice chancellor said that ‘is it original research?’ That means he has doubt. Doubt not only on me, but my specialization, archaeology. So what could have happened? He must have got feedback from here, from my department, from my colleagues, who would say, ‘Hahaha, *vo kya karegi* [what will she do], archaeologist, nothing new could be said, she is not digging and all.’ And he, being a novice, not knowing it, but I don’t think he should be like that, it’s idiotic thing to—” Dr. B was also trying to make sense of her situation by connecting the information she had.

“But isn’t that why they have experts to evaluate things, because they need people to—? Like you shouldn’t decide for yourself, if you’re a mathematician or a biologist—”

“No, but in India, no, they are know-alls. And not only that, if they do not—see, what they have done is—I thought that if the experts say, yes, she should get the promotion, it is for the office to decide and calculate from how many years would be the time for her promotion.”

“So, the experts have no say in—” I was confused.

“Shouldn’t. And if I contest this in the court, court is going to give the same judgment. But it is going to take a very long time. I don’t have time on my side... And if I rock the boat now, then it would affect my pension, my—I don’t want it. And besides, my peace of mind, my peace of mind. I’m not bothered about money or anything, right... So I want to keep a very low key existence in this department, for my peace of mind, and for others. When they cut out these six, seven years from my career, and I was slightly upset... So, imagining my family, knowing me well, they knew, and my son came out with a wonderful thing. ...it is very good, and I always remember this, morning, evening, and night, I say this. He told me, ‘When you read a paper, research paper, you read the title of the paper, subject of the paper, who has written it. Do you know which position the person is occupying? Do you know? Most of the time we don’t even realize in which institute the person is, because we are concerned with, what we are—the subject matter of it. How does it concern you, whether they write “assistant professor” in front of your name, or associate professor, or a professor? Your matter, whatever you are writing, has to be absolutely A-1.’ Nobody would ask me whether seven years have been deducted from me. My son was furious, ‘Why are you bothered? How much money do you want?’ ‘No, I don’t want money.’ ‘What else do you want? Why are you so—you want your position to show power and all?’ I said, ‘No, I don’t.’ But you know, every time they say, they write or say, ‘assistant professor,’ with someone who has joined [the department recently]... Someone who has joined a week before me has become two years senior to me. He’s my friend. I have no hard feelings. Fine. And I feel bad for the person. Because that person has lost four years. I have lost six years or seven years, he has lost four or five years. Okay. It matters to him. He has gone to court. Whatever happens happens. I am not ready to do it. My father asked me to do it; I have written

letter to the chancellor, and got the answer. Thank you very much. I have kept it. Okay, fine. It was expected. Done. Ooooooh, I spoiled your day.”

Despite her efforts to make the best of a very difficult situation and work environment, her relationships with her colleagues and their treatment of her clearly troubled her. At different points she explained events in terms of her position as an “outsider,” her colleagues’ insecurities, and intellectual differences (for example, regarding the importance of excavation to archaeological research). While she did not explicitly refer to gender, her narrative strongly indicates its importance as well. The idea that she could be dismissed as frivolous after being spotted shopping was highly gendered, as were the ideas she encountered about what constitutes “original” research, with digging read as “active” and supposedly masculine, in contrast to non-invasive and more interpretive methodologies characterized as more “passive” and supposedly feminine. I certainly never heard male professors there suggest they had ever been made to feel they should downplay their academic qualifications (like “FRAS”) to avoid threatening colleagues. And, perhaps most significantly, if she had not been forced to hold off on beginning her own academic career because of gendered family obligations, she would not have been as close to mandatory retirement age and the delay in her promotion would not have served to prevent her from ever being promoted to full professor. While her son may have reassured her that she would be judged on the quality of her publications and not her job title, I suspected she was at least as aware as I was that, among many academics, this was far from the case.

Dr. B’s story was actually corroborated in another interview I conducted with a senior retired archaeologist from the department who described her in the following way:

She is a misfit, she doesn't know archaeology, she's from a history department, and she's been pushed by political appointment... she doesn't know archaeology. She knows medieval history, she knows early ancient history... but Stone Age archaeology is a different cup of tea. It's not everybody's cup of tea. Everybody doesn't have stones in their drawing room. I have stones there... and she's a zero. But anyway, we are tolerating her. When I was there also, I used to tolerate her. I don't know what she does now.

The senior archaeologist never explained why he took for granted that she needed to be an expert in a particular kind of archaeology or study a particular time period to qualify for a job as an archaeology professor as opposed to a historian. Most archaeologists in India are trained in departments of archaeology or ancient history. Very few archaeologists work in anthropology departments. So, even though she was trained in “archaeology” and now employed to teach “archaeology,” she had crossed a disciplinary boundary and it was up to the senior archaeologist—the only person ever previously hired to teach archaeology in that department—to draw the lines. Whatever his vision for the future of archaeology in his department might have been, it was clearly not embodied by Dr. B.

It is interesting, then, to note that, although the senior archaeologist was a student of the DU anthropology department, his subdisciplinary entry into archaeology was also as an intellectual outsider and came after he finished his PhD. He, however, was able to overcome this obstacle by linking himself to appropriate academic lineages and returning to teach in his home department.

He earned his BSc from Allahabad University in 1958, in physics, chemistry, and mathematics (students commonly choose three fields of concentration at the undergraduate level). He was very idealistic as a young man. As he put it in our interview, “I don't know how it developed,

that hyper morality, I don't know. The age when boys whistle at girls, I used to run to the slums, help people, I was very funny, I don't know, I was [a] mad person." After graduating, he became a *sadhu* with Vinoba Bhave in the Bhoodan movement, which angered his parents. He said, "I joined that movement in April, and this was around September, and I, spur of the moment I decided, nonsense, nobody's moral, nobody's ideal. I left. Immediately." By then, it was too late to apply to post-graduate programs, but luck and familial connections gained him a place in the DU anthropology department. He described:

I used to love physics and mathematics. They're very structured science... no department was open, all admissions are closed in July. Session starts in 15th July. And it was September. But somehow the department of anthropology, head of the department at that time was a man called PC Biswas. And PC Biswas was a disciple of my father. Disciple in the sense—my father is a priest, was a priest, very knowledgeable priest. Not *sadhu*, but he was a Sanskrit teacher in school, and he used to perform the rituals... and this gentleman used to come to my father, this PC Biswas, because he had three daughters, and they're not getting married. So he used to come for horoscope-making... So my father said, look at this bloody fool, donkey of my son. He suddenly went for joining and became a *sadhu* and now he's come back in September, all admissions are closed, and I don't know what to do. Biswas looked at me and said, "Come to my department tomorrow." I went. He made me fill a form. He gave me the money and said, "Go and deposit the money." So I got anthropology.

His focus as an anthropology student, however, was physical anthropology. He described his unusual path into archaeology and how he was hired in the DU anthropology department in 1964 in his talk at the "Celebrating the Spirit of Anthropology" seminar.

As he explained, there had not been much archaeology in the department in the beginning, aside from Hilda Raj. They didn't have actual tools to learn from, so the students would just trace illustrations of tools. An archaeologist, Rameshwar Singh, was hired but left, ultimately rejoining the department he'd been trained in. After earning his PhD, our senior archaeologist taught in

Lucknow, but missed Delhi very much. So he applied for an archaeology teaching position at DU, thinking at the least it would get him a free trip to Delhi. Previously, he had applied for a post-doctoral fellowship from CSIR (the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research), analyzing urine with a photodensitometer. As the necessary equipment for his proposed research was not available at DU, he had to travel to another institution to do it. There, the professor in charge told him, “This is stupid research. One should do research to alleviate human suffering...”

Our senior archaeologist continued:

I was humiliated to the roots. I came back to the department on the same day, served my resignation letter to CSIR. Fortunately, I had not received the first installment of the fellowship till then, so it was easy for [them] to accept the resignation. Next day, I applied for UGC postdoctoral fellowship. This time my topic was, social anthropology... Not only did I change to social anthropology, I went to the extent of distributing all my prized collection of physical anthropology books to a younger colleague...

On hearing my topic of postdoctoral research, my social anthropology professor called me to his room, locked it from inside, and said many things. The essential component of what he said, quote-unquote, “Do not flirt with a subject you are not trained in.” As luck would have it, an extremely benign professor of social anthropology, who had just returned from England after completing his PhD under Commonwealth fellowship was my neighbor, and with his guidance and help, I instructed myself and entered the portals of structuralism, then functionalism, and finally structural functionalism...

Thus, entering for the selection process for a post on archaeology, without any kind of expertise in archaeology did not make me nervous... anyway, I'd flirted with... social anthropology. I must record here, that I had [gotten]... as low as 48 marks out of hundred in my MSc Previous [i.e., the first year of the MSc program in anthropology] archaeology paper. The main attraction for me was that Delhi University provided me train fare to come back home, so why not? I tried. Irawati Karve and DK Sen were the two experts, neither of them asked me any question on archaeology, perhaps because they themselves were not very conversant in the subject. I got selected, and joined the department in December. I was asked to take only racial history classes for the remaining four months.

In May, my professor sent me to Professor Hasmukh Dhirajlal Sankalia [1908-1989] at Pune to learn archaeology. This was a total turning point in my life. HD Sankalia was a dedicated teacher, such a dedicated teacher that I'm not hesitant to call him a saint. Allow me to give an example to establish my view. He would knock at the door of the room where I was staying at Deccan College campus. My class-friend, Professor KC Malhotra, had a small quarter allotted to him in the campus. It was still dark, around 5 am. He [Sankalia] will have a *manki topi* [a kind of hat] on and will advise me to carry some headgear to protect myself from the early morning chills. We will walk together for nearly two kilometers before we would reach the beach on the river Mula-Mutha...

Please believe me when I say that this lean and extremely thin man, who was crossed sixty, who walked much faster than me—I was just about 26 years—together we'll go down to the riverbank, he in the front, I following behind. It is a common knowledge that riverbanks are always used for defecation by many labor groups... early morning, the entire area was spread with fresh human excreta, stinking to high heaven. Professor Sankalia [was] oblivious of the stink, his milk-white dhoti, clean dhoti touching the ground when he kneels down at a place where he must have brought many other students before me. With extreme excitement and glow in his eyes, he will clear the soil with his own hand and say, "You see? This is the actual gravel of the second flovation that I was talking about." I'll never forget that scene. I could see the white head of a thin man and a glow in his eyes when he's looking at me; I'm still standing. "You see?! This is the actual gravel of the second flovation that I was talking about." I could only see the top of the bent white head or the bright pair of eyes looking at me with such a pride as if he is showing me the actual gate of heaven. I could not even use a handkerchief to cover my nose when I saw the excitement in his eyes. I was a nobody, and what he was doing for me was entirely unfathomable for me.

It is not only this, he asked his artist... to make a model of the river section in a portable box with a glass cover for me to take back to Delhi. And he would give a mischievous smile and say, "You can't take your students to the river, so let the river come to the classroom." I don't know where it is now; I left it all in the department. I'm told that a series of Indiana Jones films was responsible in doubling the number of students registering for archaeology course in the American universities... The attraction of mystery and adventure draws anybody, but I was drawn by the dedication of a saint who, like a guru, ingrained in me... that teaching is a major path of nation building, because students of today are going to become the future leaders of research. A person who had never seen a prehistoric tool, except in the illustration of books, was now drowned with tools from every surveyed sites. Within two months, I became completely satisfied that I can deal with Indian prehistory with confidence. I came back to Delhi with plaster cast of many such classical ceramic types... As a footnote, I might also add, that I also had the rare and most fortunate luck to gain a wife from one of the most reputed families from Pune during these visits.

Coming back to Delhi, I thought, the students must see real tools within their original context. This required changing the syllabus. The head was very kind and allowed me to include a fieldwork as a part of practicum... Within about twenty years, we had collected

such an enormous amount of tools from almost all the periods of Paleolithic and Mesolithic that we could easily donate tools to many colleges and universities. One fine morning, on entering the department, I saw all my beautiful collection has been thrown outside in a garbage dump by the new head of the department. ...I came to know that the new head felt that these tools are responsible for spreading white ant in the museum... Please do not think I'm trying to pass a judgment; I am not. What I'm trying to say is that in the few decades that has passed from the time we were student... anthropology has chosen such a path of specialization, that one branch finds the methods of another branch completely irrelevant. Once I tried to convince a social anthropology colleague of mine that prehistoric archaeology deals with culture, which we also use the expression "lithoculture." He laughed out to show his disagreement and advised me to read Maurice Opler. "You read Maurice Opler, you'll understand what is culture." ...[speaks about a visit to a professor in France] Simple life and *extreme* simplicity in behavior are the crowns of these two gurus who came in my life. I earnestly tried to be like them in all my actions and behaviors with my students. [Discusses examples of how he tries to link archaeology to other subfields] ...Anthropology can't be wished away in the rush of views coming from historians. We must not sacrifice the whole for the sake of the part."

This senior archaeologist's story interweaves ideas of guru-shishya and religious lineages of masters and disciples (also a term to which Srivastava referred) with teacher-student relationships—from his father's relationship with Biswas, to his time as a follower of Bhave and his calling HD Sankalia a saint and guru from whom he learned about the value of "simplicity in behavior." In the latter case, he became connected to one of the most prominent archaeological lineages in India in a relatively short period of time (two months) as well as connecting himself permanently to that region through marriage. Nowhere in his public talk did he refer to Biswas (his supervisor at DU) as his teacher, let alone his guru—in fact, he spoke critically of Biswas in his interview—rather, he spoke as an archaeologist, and as such he presented himself largely as a student of Sankalia. In a sense, those two months enabled our then not-yet-so-senior archaeologist and the DU anthropology department to import a second academic lineage into their department, where they had failed to retain an archaeologist before. Thus, he was able to cross disciplinary and sub-disciplinary boundaries with relative ease.

Whereas in the senior archaeologist's and Srivastava's stories we can see how an actively cultivated membership in multiple academic lineages facilitated their crossing of disciplinary and sub-disciplinary boundaries (between anthropology and sociology, or across subfields of anthropology), Dr. B's story demonstrates how the outsider-hood resulting from a lack of appropriate locally linked intellectual kinship networks can combine with issues of gender- and intellectual markedness to make any attempt to cross those same boundaries extremely difficult, if not a painful source of social tension and ostracism. On a practical level, the extent to which those boundaries sometimes may seem quite "blurry" and permeable or, conversely, rigid and nearly impenetrable is in significant part related to how scholars conceptualize their intellectual generational relations and genealogies. What those boundaries mean to scholars is never solely about differences in subject matter and intellectual approach, nor is it simply about institutional boundaries. It is about how all of these things relate to one another.

Dr. B's story was not the first time I heard women scholars talk about how their gender shaped their careers during my fieldwork, whether through social and familial responsibilities, or through gendered discrimination and harassment. For example, I heard talk of an "old boys' club" promoting their own in gendered ways, family responsibilities restricting potential field sites or mobility for employment purposes, and even some of the kinds of blatant sexual harassment that have since received public attention with the rise of the #MeToo movement. Though I wish to acknowledge the importance of these issues, my discussion of them is limited by a need to respect the wishes of the people spoke with, as most of those who shared such stories with me in any depth asked me not to write about them. The narratives above were also not the first time caste played a role in stories of intellectual kinship. With the exception of the

mention of Dr. B's colleague of lower-caste background, it might almost go unnoticed due to the ways in which academic life can particularly serve to make the unmarked category of "upper caste" appear to be almost caste-less and naturally meritorious (Subramanian 2015). However, both Dr. B and her senior archaeologist colleague would have benefited from upper-caste privileges, something which is quite explicit in the senior archaeologist's intellectual autobiography when he mentions how his caste (as the brahmin son of a pandit) gave him the opportunity to join the post-graduate program in anthropology even after all administrative deadlines to apply had passed. Based on our knowledge of PC Biswas's published work, it is clear that he believed his fellow upper caste members of the supposedly "good stock" were inherently more worthy and deserving of opportunity. Thus, what is going on with intellectual kinship is by no means separate from what is going on with kinship more generally and in relation to gender and various forms of community, something that will be explored further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

“How to Think”

If intellectual kinship coexists with a broader variety of ideas and practices of kinship, then how do these (tentatively speaking) “different kinds” of kinship and genealogies come together, clash, and play with each other? We can get a deeper sense of how some of these processes intersect by looking at them through the lens of the life and work of anthropologist Nadeem Hasnain, a man who grew up in Old Lucknow, in a Shia Muslim family with deep roots in the region, studied anthropology at the University of Lucknow, and eventually went on to join its faculty.

In the context of my earlier discussions of generations and internal hiring, Hasnain’s life trajectory might seem unsurprising. In some ways, it is predictable. In others, though, it is anything but. A look at Hasnain’s life and work can be instructive in thinking through how the kinship of families of birth, intellectual kinship in the form of academic genealogies, and intellectual kinship in the form of lineages of ideas/thought often play into, with, or against one another in the lives of academic anthropologists.

Meeting

I first met Nadeem Hasnain in the summer of 2009, when I was a student in the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) Urdu Language Program. I was already fairly set on Delhi as a field site, given the sense I was getting from my many conversations with social scientists that all academic roads somehow lead back to Delhi, an assumption time in Lucknow helped unsettle. I was not yet set on what (or how many) other field sites I might work in. As the program progressed and the instructors learned more about my research interests, the language program director suggested he could put me in touch with the head of the Lucknow University Anthropology Department. He got me Hasnain's mobile (cell) number, telling me what a highly respected scholar Hasnain was, having served as the pro-vice chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya (Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University) in Maharashtra before returning to Lucknow.

When I heard Hasnain's name, I immediately guessed that he was Muslim and, I'm ashamed to say, a sort of internalized ethnic and religious bias briefly took hold over me. I wondered if I was being introduced to Hasnain simply because of a shared religious affiliation and not because of his academic qualifications, which a tiny voice in the back of my mind began to question just a little bit, despite my efforts to push it away. I stared anxiously at the phone number for days, trying to gather up the courage to call. The call itself was brief; he agreed to meet and gave me a date and time. The trip to the university was my first attempt to navigate Lucknow's shared auto-rickshaw and "tempo" transportation system alone. I was nearly convinced I would get lost and miss the appointment. Eventually, I found my way to the U-shaped colonial-era building that

houses the anthropology department on one side of the second floor. Despite its obvious age, it looked grand with its many arches, pillars, and domes. Before it was established as the site of Lucknow University (currently housing much of the faculty of arts), the building was part of Canning College and dates back to the late nineteenth century.

There were a couple men sitting in the hallway leading to the main departmental office. This hallway also leads to other hallways, labs, classrooms, teachers' rooms (offices), and a departmental library with books mostly organized as collections named after the retired anthropologists who donated them. As I would later learn, since the entrance to the main hallway is closed outside normal operating hours, this can present an obstacle to anyone wishing to access their offices or materials after hours, or, say, in the event of the not-so-infrequent labor strikes. University campuses have multiple levels of such quite literal gate keeping, from the university as a whole, to various academic units/faculties, to individual departments. This was a source of all kinds of issues during my fieldwork, in both obvious and sometimes unexpected ways; the gatekeeping I was used to looked a little different.

On this day, the men looked inquisitively at the entrance of this curious stranger, but as soon as I mentioned the name Hasnain, they quickly swept me into the main office at the end of the hallway, where I stepped over a sort of speed bump in the cement floor to speak with the secretary who sat on the other side of a desk, facing the doorway. To my right was another door leading to the Head of Department's room. On the front end of the long office, there were small sofas on each side and a table in between for group conversations over tea, and behind those, at

the other end, was a large desk with cabinets against the walls around it. Once I had permission to enter, I found Hasnain behind this desk, inviting me to sit.

I nervously described my general interests in studying anthropology departments, fully expecting him to be unimpressed by my limited knowledge and less than excited about the prospect of being studied. Instead, I found him quite enthusiastic about the idea. I scrambled to write down his many suggestions, books to read, places I should consider including in my study. He seemed to think my research could bring some much-needed attention to anthropology in India and probably also Lucknow's place in it. The conversation was going so much better than expected that I somehow even found the courage to ask him if he would write a letter in support of my application for a Fulbright-Nehru student research grant, which ultimately became the biggest source of support for my fieldwork.

Professor Hasnain, as I came to call him, was not, however, at all impressed with my Urdu. I was then taking a strange mix of beginning and intermediate Urdu. This was due to the unusual circumstance of having had no Urdu and just one year of Hindi, but also being a native speaker of Farsi, which gave me a greater ease with the script and access to an assortment of advanced vocabulary. So my Urdu was barely functional and mostly a source of embarrassment.¹³ But Hasnain had met some of my colleagues who had been studying Urdu for years, were well versed in Urdu literature, or even Urdu poets in their own right. The joy he took in reciting (or sometimes composing) a particularly meaningful line of poetry to make a point, to crack a joke,

¹³ Farsi terminology and poetry is prestigious in Urdu literary circles. Therefore, the combination of (initially) limited Urdu-speaking abilities with knowledge of high-register Persian terms was sometimes surprising for Urdu-speaking audiences.

or just to appreciate its beauty or cleverness reminded me of my Iranian parents' obsession with (especially very old) Farsi poetry. Refusing to sit patiently as they tried to teach me to decipher a line written in the 11th or 13th centuries had been an early act of rebellion on my part. I did, however, appreciate how the remembrance and recitation of classic poetry was an art, and how it could be a source of cultural pride, especially to those trying to keep a culture alive. And here I was, suddenly wracking my brain for the few lines of poetry that had stuck with me from long drives with my parents, only barely managing to trade on the same cultural capital I had turned my nose up at as a child.

His love of poetry and literature was one of many respects in which Hasnain seemed to embody the stereotypical manners or *adab* of educated, "cultured," and largely elderly Lucknowis.

Another was his openness and generosity. Throughout my fieldwork and my visits to Lucknow (as my fieldwork there was based on a series of trips, rather than one extended stay), Hasnain's support and encouragement were constant, even though my project didn't take the directions he might have imagined for it, and despite my never coming close to achieving the fluency with Urdu poetry he'd hoped (though my language skills certainly improved in the interim). He helped provide introductions or contact information for most of the people I interviewed in Lucknow. He encouraged my interest in exploring the "Old City," which he was fond of and knew well, having grown up there before moving to more recently developed parts of town. And, most importantly, he shared a great deal of his time to talk with me about himself, his city, his family, his department, his politics, his teaching, and his work. Our conversations, whether at the department office (when he was Head), in his office (after his term as Head ended), at his home

(after his retirement), or in his new office at the Giri Institute of Development Studies (during his ICSSR Senior fellowship) were always a highlight of my visits.

Work

Hasnain's work tends to focus on "marginalized," disadvantaged, and overlooked groups, interests that align with his political views, non-academic writings, and activism. He frequently likes to joke that, while many Muslims make their *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca, he made his pilgrimage to Karl Marx's grave in London instead—a statement on the influence of Marx's ideas on his thinking as well as on his relative religiosity.

His first book, *Bonded For Ever* (2012[1982]), was based on his doctoral dissertation fieldwork "between 1973—early 1976" (ibid: ix) with the Kolta, "untouchable" groups living in the Himalayas who were classified by the Indian state as either a "scheduled caste" or a "scheduled tribe," depending on the area (ibid: xiii). The main social scientific topic with which the book engages is literature on poverty, especially Oscar Lewis's concept of the "culture of poverty" (1959). The ethnography was clearly intended to bring attention to the plight of members of the Kolta community. It provides an account of how their exploitation in a system of bonded labor affects their lives in a variety of domains, from folk songs to food to girls sold and trafficked into prostitution. It was republished in 2012 with the encouragement of (and a forward by) one of Hasnain's favorite writers, Mahasweta Devi.

But Hasnain is actually best known for his textbooks. Social sciences like anthropology or even sociology are rarely any student's first-choice field of study. However, one common reason (or excuse given to parents) for studying social sciences is because they can serve as optional subjects for extremely competitive civil and state service examinations. Hasnain explained to me that anthropology had been an optional examination subject but was dropped due to a "lack of response," until 1985, when it was reintroduced. Many of those choosing to take the anthropology exam did not have any academic training in the subject or books to study from. As a result, a Lucknow anthropology professor recruited a group of colleagues, including Hasnain, to write textbooks on different areas of anthropology that could be used as test preparation materials. While most of the group did not ultimately complete their books, Hasnain's part came out in the 1980s as *Tribal India* (2009). Since then he has written other textbooks, like *Readings in Indian Anthropology* (1991[1988]) and *Indian Society and Culture: Continuity and Change* (2004), all of which became popular. Some have been translated to additional Indian languages like Hindi, Telugu, and Kannada.

For a little over a decade, Hasnain was also involved with teaching students preparing for the anthropology civil service exam at a private institute in Lucknow, until he gave up his ownership and association with it. He speaks about this work with some pride, saying that there are now "hundreds of bureaucrats throughout India who succeeded with anthropology" and "that's how we tried to popularize anthropology." I asked him if he thinks this knowledge of anthropology has had any impact on their work. He replied that some of these bureaucrats tell him it made a difference in their "understanding of people's problems and their sympathy with the people."

A good deal of Hasnain's subsequent and more recent work is about Muslims. For example, he is the author of *Shias and Shia Islam in India: A Study in Society and Culture* (1988) and editor of *Beyond Textual Islam* (2008). He also started and serves as editor of the journal *Islam and Muslim Societies*, the most recent volumes of which are kept open and accessible to the public on its website. In a way, this is a return to a topic of previous and personal interest; as he wrote in *Bonded For Ever*, "After my master's degree, I had made up my mind to work on the North Indian Muslims in the changed socio-political climate of the post-Independence era. But the very first visit to the above areas [on a government research project] was sufficient to force me to change my mind" (2012: xix). Finally, his most recent book, a kind of ode to Lucknow, was the result of a large research project funded by "the Ayodhya Shodh Sansthan (an autonomous organization of the Department of Culture, Government of Uttar Pradesh)" (Hasnain 2016: 16) to provide an ethnographic profile of Lucknow, a sort of overarching social view of an entire city.

Tour

During our first more formal recorded interview, which didn't take place until April 2014, after his term as Head of Department had ended but before his retirement, I briefly listed the main autobiographical questions I wanted to discuss and mentioned I was hoping he could give me a tour of his room (office) and what was in it. He decided to start with the description of his office, probably thinking it was something he could finish quickly. Somehow, over the course of about two and a half hours, we didn't even make it halfway through the first wall.

Hasnain had chosen this room in part because it was one of the few offices whose entrance faced the main balcony/hallway of the building, so he could access it after the departmental office closed, if he wanted to work late. The corner of the room near the doorway housed a small refrigerator where he kept his lunch, which one of the department workers (often referred to as “peons”) brought out for him to eat along with the tea he’d brought us earlier. Hasnain offered me some of his food, and I accepted a few small pieces of fruit. There was a cabinet where he was storing papers for a member of the teaching staff who was away. And then, we began discussing the signs posted on the remaining cabinets.

Hasnain had posted these quotes, he said, to send messages to his students and visitors. One, “In our system of justice, you can be found not guilty, which is not the same thing as found innocent,” was directed at Narendra Modi and posted a couple of months before the then-Chief Minister of Gujarat, and leader under whose rule the 2002 Gujarat riots took place, was elected Prime Minister of India. His favorite, “Freedom is for all or for none,” he explained, expressed how those in power “try to restrict the freedom of others, sometimes in the name of religion, sometimes in the name of ethnicity, sometimes in the name of gender, whatever it is.” Finally, another he described as very dear to his heart, “Children must be taught how to think, but not what to think,” represented his teaching philosophy. Hasnain explained that he never tries to pressure his students to agree with him, rather he tries to encourage them to ask questions, regardless of how incoherent the questions may be to him or anyone else. He contrasted this with much of the instruction in Indian universities, which he characterized as professors giving a “monologue” and “obedient students listening.”

Hasnain described how he explains to his students why he values questioning, “that they won’t serve any purpose if they follow me like deaf, dumb, driven cattle... And I tell them that what my discipline has taught me... one of the biggest contributions of anthropology, I personally think is that it raises questions in our mind and it helps you learn how to be suspicious... You must have suspicion. You must have a sense of doubt. And you must have a spirit of inquiry. Unless you have a sense of doubt and a spirit of inquiry, you will not be breaking new ground... and you will continue to follow the previous generation. I also tell them that perhaps that is why those who break new grounds, those who invent new directions, they can never make their elders very happy, because the elders want you to follow them... So I tell them that you just have this courage to say that you don’t like my idea, you don’t agree with me. In most of the cases, I find the teachers don’t like it.”

I asked if his students actually take him up on this challenge and disagree with him. “Yes,” he said, “several of them.” They often challenge his views on religion, for example, the assertion “that man has been fabricating gods right through our biologic period onwards.” And they debate his ideas about the caste system and disadvantaged groups. Some of his students believe “Dalits [previously “untouchables”] are being promoted at their cost. So they are against the reservation in jobs.”

I asked whether there were Dalits in his class and, after he answered in the affirmative, the conversation took an interesting turn. “And then, the Dalit students have got a network of their own. And the message goes that here is a professor who is very sympathetic to your cause, that’s why—”

“They come to your class?” I asked, thinking perhaps he meant they sign up for his classes because they’ve heard he’s less likely to discriminate against them or more likely to treat them with understanding.

“Yeah, they come to my class,” he confirmed, adding, “Or, the students of different departments, they visit me, take my advice or invite me to their functions... many students know that I also take up their cause, the cause of the students, with the university authorities, if any injustice is done to them. Like last year, one student was being victimized by the university, mainly because he posted a handbill... a handwritten poster announcing that a meeting would be held in philosophy department’s auditorium to discuss something—and the proctorial board, they said that you have violated this code of conduct, you are not supposed to do it... and he was suspended... And he came to me. I asked him, you are not my student, I have never seen you, why did you come to me? Of 400, 450 teachers of the university, why did you come to me?”

“What’d he say?” I asked.

“He said, because I—you have this reputation of take up all such causes of the students. I said, I really feel flattered. He said that the university authorities want every democratic expression to be crushed. There is no students’ union here, nothing like—”

“There’s no students’ union?”

“Last several years. So I said, I cannot take this battle all alone. Let me identify a couple of other professors who are likeminded. So I then called [two other professors]. And we decided to seek an appointment with the vice chancellor and go in a delegation. So we explained this thing to the vice chancellor [no longer the vice chancellor at the time of the interview].”

The vice chancellor had not heard about the situation, so he called for the chief proctor (responsible for discipline in the university) to come to his office immediately. “And he said that what is the matter? Because, they are very senior professors and they are taking up the case of a student. And he said that, I’m really surprised, and this is for the first time that I see that some senior professors are taking up the case of a student, of a rowdy student, indisciplined. And I told the vice chancellor, ‘Look at this man, look at this man, and see his mindset’ ... I said, ‘What was his crime?’ We said, ‘When we sought explanation from him to explain why action should not be taken against him, he wrote an explanation of sixteen pages, arguing with me verbally as well as in writing, of the democracy, and the discourse on democracy, and the place of university in everything.’ I said, ‘What was wrong in that?’ Then I asked him straight, ‘What is your problem with him?’ He said, ‘*Bahut bahas karta hai*, he argues a lot.’ I said that, ‘Gentlemen, my friend, university is a place where one could debate, argue, all these things. If you cannot argue, cannot debate in university, then where else?’”

“What did he say to that?” I asked.

“He was not amused. And, vice chancellor said, ‘Please, look into the matter.’ When nothing was done, we again called the vice chancellor and said nothing has been done. And then they also

rusticated [suspended] him from the hostel... On some other pretext... Anyhow, he was allowed to appear in the examination, so he—one year was not lost. But that is how reputation goes, that there are some professors who take up your cause, your just cause. And perhaps that is why all these Dalit organizations of the students, Dalits, left, all of them call us, thinking that perhaps we take up all those issues.”

“So you’re not supposed to argue at Lucknow University.” I commented.

“Yeah. Don’t argue. You can be a fundamentalist, you can be a communalist, you can whatever you wish, but don’t argue, don’t argue with the authorities. It’s a typical—I mean, it’s got a very strong fascist streak.” Hasnain said indignantly.

He blamed the pattern on a “culture of sycophancy in most of our universities.” He said, “Even senior teachers, they try their best to keep the authority—especially vice chancellor, and dean, and all these people—in good humor, so that they get all those undue benefits. But if you’re [principled] and you think that I don’t want any undue thing, and whatever is due to me, you cannot deprive me of that. If you take this stand, then you will not be scared of anybody. So when we took up this matter with the vice chancellor, many of our friends said, ‘What are you doing? The vice chancellor will be very angry.’ [I] said, ‘So what? Are we his bonded labor? We are not. He cannot sack us. And we don’t want any undue favors. We want only our pay—salaries. That’s all.’ But most of these think that they should be appointed at some post or something to get some pecuniary, financial benefits and all this, and that is why they don’t raise their voice.”

Hasnain continued on to explain that he had found himself speaking up on behalf of students a number of times. Another example was within his own department. When Hasnain joined the department as a professor, he was in just such a position speaking to the then-Head of Department, a woman who had taught him as an undergraduate student.

“I tried to persuade her to see the reason,” he said. “And she was so dictatorial in her behavior that she was not listening to... the students. And then, once I told her that, If you don’t consider this case sympathetically, then I will be taking this matter on behalf of the students with the vice chancellor. And then please don’t complain to me that I’ve taken this matter out from the department, and I may also be leaking all these things to the press, to the local press, who will be very happy to report... She did not say anything to me, but when on a particular day when I was not in the department, I was on leave on that day, she told that, ‘It was so disappointing, disgusting that a colleague, who was also my student at that time, now he has got the cheeks to say all these things to me, to my face, I’m really shocked.’ And when this matter was reported to me by some of my colleagues, I again confronted her. I said, ‘Madam, you cannot browbeat me with all these things, because you know that I entered this department after facing all this opposition from you... You tried your best. I know that. You tried your best to block my entry into the department.’”

I was surprised to hear this and asked Hasnain why the department head had opposed his appointment.

He explained, “And this is one of the most perhaps unfortunate episodes in this department, when I applied for that post, several other candidates were also there from outside, and some of my colleagues, my friends, they told me that I should see the vice chancellor before the interview. I said, I’m a candidate, how can I meet the vice chancellor to plead my case? They said, no, it has been a tradition here that the internal candidates, the candidates from Lucknow University or affiliated colleges, they seek the blessings of the vice chancellor... So I sought an appointment with him at his residence. He knew me. He said—he just asked me as to what exactly I want to discuss. I said, ‘Nothing, I’m just here to seek your blessings because I have also applied for the post of professor.’ He said, ‘I know. I know because I am under tremendous pressure to block your entry.’ And he said that, ‘Please don’t quote me. As long as I am vice chancellor here, please don’t quote me that I have told you all these things.’”

“He’s not vice chancellor anymore,” I assumed.

“He’s not anymore in the world now. He also died sometime back... But he was [a] very sympathetic and very secular person, while the lady was a rabidly anti-Muslim. His [sic] husband was a justice, judge in High Court... In UP, he is notorious for his anti-Muslim comments and. And they had a very strong dislike for me. Mainly because of two reasons: First, because I happen to be Muslim. And the second was that since she did not have any academic credentials.” Meaning, he explained, that she “did not do PhD, she did not have any publications, nothing.”

I was baffled that this was possible. When I pressed him on it, Hasnain said, “That is really unfortunate in most of our universities, that in the name of career advancement or personal promotion, they have been promoting such people, who don’t have any academic achievements.”

I asked if she had an MA and from where, Hasnain said she did, from the Lucknow anthropology department. Her supervisor had been KS Mathur, the same professor who had supervised Hasnain’s doctoral dissertation and who Hasnain always described with great fondness and emotion. I found this additionally puzzling.

“Professor Mathur. Mathur had one weakness. He was a Kayastha, and he always favored Kayasthas.” Hasnain explained. “Caste is a very important factor. Except Shukla, all other teachers were Kayasthas. Shukla was a Brahmin.”

When I asked Hasnain to tell me more about the Kayastha caste, he said it was a higher caste and listed some of the family names associated with it, which also happened to be the names of many of his colleagues and teachers in the Lucknow anthropology department. “There are also caste stereotypes. Kayasthas in Awadh region were always under the nawabs, and nawab was hiring them for various official purposes. Most of the ministers in the nawab courts happened to be Kayasthas. And they were very well versed in Urdu and Persian. So they have been a very literate, very educated caste.¹⁴ So this is a very unfortunate episode of this department then, at this point of time, when, after completing my tenure in this department—I’m on my way out—

¹⁴ In Awadh, Shia Muslims and Kayasthas were historically seen as allied as Persian/Urdu-using urban elites, at least until the end of the 19th century, so this story is also part of a larger one about the de-coupling of this alliance due to both the Hindi-Urdu conflict and the rise of nationalism.

let me recollect it again as to what happened during those days, because that shows that even the anthropologists can be so prejudiced, full of prejudices.”

Hasnain continued with the story of his conversation with the late former vice chancellor who didn't want to be quoted while he remained in that position. “So I said, fine, I said, ‘What is the matter?’ He said, ‘I'm under tremendous pressure. I know, I know that you are the strongest candidate, you are the most deserving candidate of all those eight people who have applied. I know it. My problem is that I have been under all sorts of pressure. Some high court judges are there.’ And then I understood as to what has happened.”

“My God,” I said. “Her husband.” The not-so-subtle implication was that the department head had her husband, a judge, pressure the vice chancellor to block Hasnain from being hired.

“He [the Vice Chancellor] said, ‘But, I can make you at least one promise. And that is, if all the three subject experts who will be intervening—if all of them unanimously recommend your name, then I will be going with the experts.’ No, let me tell you the structure of the selection committee. The vice chancellor chairs the meeting... There are three subject experts, from outside.”

I asked about who these subject experts were and how they were selected.

Hasnain responded, “Any professor of anthropology, some senior professor of anthropology, from different universities. They have got a panel of such experts with the chancellor of the

university, the governor. And what happens is that the university takes about ten or twelve names out of that and send[s] it to the chancellor, and chancellor takes any three of them, and then they are invited to conduct the interview... So there are five members in the committee. [...] Those three, then vice chancellor, and the head of department. ...He said that, 'If all the three experts unanimously favor you, recommend you, your case, then I will be going with those experts. And if she does not agree, then perhaps she may record her dissent. So that will be four to one. But if one of the experts drops out and is not with you, and concurs with the head of the department, then I will be going with the head of the department, because that will be very embarrassing for me, to go against my head of the department.' I said, 'Fine. I have no problem.' And [...] as I was leaving his room, I said, 'Sir, justice should be done to me. I know that I belong to a minority community, and I have full faith in your sense of justice. You also being a Rajput.'"

Before his interview, Hasnain had not met any of the subject experts, two of whom were physical anthropologists. He described that at the start of the interview, "one expert said to my vice chancellor that, 'Sir, I am very surprised. 'Cause we thought that Dr. Hasnain must be a very senior professor here and he's appearing for the post of professorship. And we know his name. And all of our students... read his books and everything. And teachers recommend his books. So we always thought that he must be a very senior person.' Then our vice chancellor said that, 'Unfortunately, there is no professorship in the colleges. It's only in the university here. And that is why, perhaps, he has been serving as associate professor for the last fifteen years, without any hope of upgradation. And that's why he has applied here.' And the interview kept on going and almost forty, fifty years—forty, fifty minutes. The current, the present head, he was also one of the applicants. So I was appointed and his case was rejected then at that time. So he was also an

applicant. Then a couple of applicants were from... some other universities also. And then I was appointed.”

“So I take it the three experts all agreed.”

“All agreed. And what happened, that the lady did not know, perhaps, that these things never remain very confidential, when five persons are involved. Though the vice chancellor never told me anything about the proceedings, what went on in the selection committee.” Not long after Hasnain joined the Lucknow anthropology department, he ran into one of the experts at a seminar at Delhi University.

“He narrated the entire thing,” described Hasnain. “He said, ‘At one point in time, I had to make this comment, when she was coming out with one objection after the other—she said that “[Hasnain] has got more books than research papers”... then she said that, “He has been teaching in a college but not in the university.” And we virtually countered every argument. And she was coming with one argument, one objection after the other. And then, I was so provoked, that I made the comment that, “Mr. Vice Chancellor, it seems that his candidature is being opposed simply because he belongs to a minority community.”””

Hasnain continued to retell the subject expert’s story, “He said, ‘I have no other reason to be here. He’s being opposed simply because he belongs to a minority community.’ And the lady was really embarrassed. And then [the] vice chancellor said, ‘Now, enough is enough, we have already discussed this matter for more than half an hour. And now, let’s go and those who

dissent with it, please record your dissent. [...] So all four of us recommend his case, his appointment and, if you don't agree, please write that you don't agree with it.' And then there will be voting. And then she said, 'Okay, then I will go, go by with your opinion, and my only request is that all my objections and all my arguments should not be recorded, should not go on record.' It's because she knew that if I joined and then I come to know of all these things, then there will never be very pleasant relations. But I always maintained very cordial relations, even after knowing all this. Simply because she was my teacher, she taught me at BA. I never misbehaved with her. It was only once... when she was harassing the students. Then I said that, now enough is enough, 'You have tested my patience, I know whatever happened in the selection committee proceedings. Don't think that I don't know. I know everything. And I also know that you made this comment, in the presence of so many people here in the department, that "When a peon, a peon could not, a Muslim peon has not been here in the department, how can a Muslim be a professor here?" I also know it. But still, I try to accommodate your views and everything because you happen to be my teacher.' [She] said, 'I never made this comment, and I did not oppose you because you happen to belong to a minority community, I had some other reservations.' 'What sort of reservations did you have? Just tell me. Who was better qualified among all those seven people? Just tell me. Honestly, just honestly tell me. Which candidate did you think was better than me, of all those seven candidates?'"

"What'd she say?"

"She did not even answer. And I said, 'Despite all those provocations, I tried to maintain cordial relations with you, and you know more than me that in such situations—and this is not for the

first time that it has happened, in several other departments, when the chairman opposed the candidature, and against his wishes when a candidate is appointed, and the candidate then also comes to know of it, then all those years, till the chairman retires, he is not allowed to rest in peace by the person who has been appointed against his wishes. But I did not create any problem for you. I could have. And you would have been in trouble. And don't think that I'm alone. I am such a person who has been involved with so many organizations where I used to be the only Muslim. And I have been heading all those organizations, I've been leading. Don't think that since I belong to a minority community, I will always be very defensive. No. All my associates, all my friends, all my followers, they happen to be Hindus. I have led all those organizations. I have been general secretary of Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society for ten years, unanimously elected, for five terms. I headed the largest institute for providing pre-examination coaching for the civil services examination, the largest institute in North India, where I was the only Muslim. I was the director of that and... whatever organization that I headed, I was the only Muslim. And I always enjoyed enormous respect and love of people, and none of them were Muslims.”

Lucknow

Old Lucknow, the area of the city where Nadeem Hasnain grew up, is known for its imambaras, dargahs, and shrines dedicated to the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, particularly those recognized as imams by Shia Muslims, and of those, particularly the grandson of the prophet, Husain and his family and companions. Many of those imambaras are small shrines in people's homes, but larger ones were designed to sometimes double as mosques or meeting places for large public gatherings. To this day, they serve as important sites for the commemoration of the

martyrdom of Husain and his companions (and the subsequent imprisonment and mistreatment of the women and children traveling with them) in Karbala (in Iraq) in 680 CE during the Islamic lunar month of Muharram. The most well-known imambaras are public monuments built by the nawabs, a series of Shia Muslim rulers of the Awadh princely state from 1722 to 1856, roughly as the Mughal empire began to dissolve and well into the British colonial period. Although Lucknow has changed dramatically over the past century, the culture, manners, and architecture associated with the nawabs and Shia islam remain heavily associated with the city in popular culture and imaginations.

In fact, when Hasnain was still in the early stages of research for what eventually became his book *The Other Lucknow: An Ethnographic Portrait of a City of Undying Memories and Nostalgia* (2016), he explained that one of his goals for the project was to provide a picture of Lucknow that was about more than (the Indian Revolt of) 1857, nawabs, monuments, and the history on which past works on the city have focused. He wanted to talk about the overall population and its demographics, different castes and communities, syncretic trends between Hindus and Muslims, practices and occupations on the verge of extinction, migration after independence (and the partition of British India), and the advent of mall and multiplex culture. These pictures of Lucknow are by no means mutually exclusive or independent; their impacts can be seen even just in Hasnain's own life, family, and work.

As Justin Jones puts it in his history of Shi'ism in colonial India:

scholarship has been unanimous in identifying the cataclysmic events of 1856-8 as a defining moment. The annexation of new territory by the East India

Company, the removal of key figureheads of Muslim rule, the seizures of inherited landholdings and the imposition of ‘Western’ education all induced a sense of disenfranchisement and humiliation (*zillat*) among the Muslim elites of the region, and spurred them to devise new forms of Islam which could endure outside the framework of Muslim political control and state patronage. (2012: 1)

Shia Muslims took the brunt of this blow. Jones has detailed how many of the attempts at recovery and adaptation to these new circumstances occurred through the development of an “associational Shi’ism” (ibid: 121), a particular form of a broader phenomenon of “associational culture” in North India at the time (ibid: 117). The associations and institutions created in this period attempted (with varying degrees of success) to connect, build, organize, and sometimes politicize a religious community. Educational institutions were an important part of this process and its related internal fissures and frictions.

As mentioned above, ‘Western’ education had long been viewed with skepticism as something imposed by colonial powers and was met with some resistance. As Juan Cole describes, “Shi’i clerics accommodated themselves to many things Western, but the professional clergy rejected modern science. On the other hand, ...upper-class Shi’i intellectuals... often took an interest in Western learning...[For example, one clergyman] Sayyid Muhammad himself felt secular sciences to be secondary, holding the religious sciences the most important of all” (1988: 264). Among those who embraced and promoted ‘Western’ education was Sunni reformist Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in 1875, which became Aligarh Muslim University in 1920.

On the face of it, the story of another university in another city (Aligarh) in Uttar Pradesh may seem far removed from Lucknow and Hasnain. However, by some accounts, this religious and

political history also played an important role in the founding of Lucknow University. The university's own account of its history on its website identifies Mohammad Ali Mohammad Khan, Raja of Mahmudabad, as the originator of the idea for the University of Lucknow. This idea was then brought to fruition through the assistance of Harcourt Butler, who was serving as the first Member for Education of the Viceroy's Executive Council before he became Lieutenant Governor and then Governor of the United Provinces (roughly, present-day Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand). According to a source intimately familiar with Mohammad Ali Mohammad Khan and his family's history, there was more to why the Raja of Mahmudabad, owner of one of the largest land estates in the region, was so interested in establishing this university. Incidentally, around the same time as Lucknow University was founded (in 1920), the Raja of Mahmudabad was appointed as the first vice chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University. In this telling, Lucknow University was founded because of disagreements between Shias and Sunnis about Aligarh. Some Shias were raising money to start a separate Shia university in Lucknow (Jones 2012: 160). Mohammad Ali Mohammad Khan wished to prevent this from happening, perhaps, as Jones suggests, because he "saw the campaign as a government-manipulated attempt to break Muslim solidarity" (ibid: 163) and to "undermine Aligarh's emergent student radicalism and to diffuse the funding, attention and ideological legitimacy that the latter had long procured" (ibid:162). So the Raja of Mahmudabad, a political leader and member of the aristocracy, used his connection with Harcourt Butler to create a legal prohibition on the establishment of more than one university within a certain distance of another. They then helped found Lucknow University as a university open to the public so that a separate Shia university could not be established there. The efforts to create a Shia institution resulted in what is now the Shia PG

College¹⁵ (in Old Lucknow), which later became affiliated with Lucknow University once it began accepting satellite colleges. The cooperation around the Shia College was “used by many Shi’a factions as a way of [temporarily] building an apparent consensus on... the issue of Western education, perhaps the single most serious case of cleavage among the Shi’a throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (ibid: 164).

Lucknow University would initially have been a prestigious university compared with Delhi University but was gradually somewhat provincialized along with Lucknow. After independence, Lucknow University became a state university (funded and run through the government of the state of Uttar Pradesh) as opposed to a central university (funded and run through the central government of India). State universities are generally much less well funded, which we could see in the smaller size of the Lucknow versus the Delhi anthropology department or the lack of funds for new acquisitions for the university library collections, among many other areas. In some ways, its status as a state university also arguably makes Lucknow simultaneously more receptive and susceptible to regional cultural and political changes. We can see such receptivity, for example, in the language of instruction. In Delhi University (a central university), English is generally the primary language of instruction (albeit with plenty of code-switching into Hindi) and, in reviewing dissertations and theses at D School, I found them written exclusively in English. In Lucknow University, the primary language of instruction has gradually shifted from English to Hindi. According to Hasnain, until 1972, MA anthropology classes were all taught in

¹⁵ This story may outwardly appear to be at odds with the fact that the Shia College was founded earlier, in 1917. However, its own website on its history substantiates this account, explaining that “A delegation met the Lieutenant Governor [James Meston, Harcourt Butler’s predecessor in the position] of the then United Provinces of Agra and Avadh to seek permission for the establishment of the College. The plan could not materialize immediately at that time due to the restrictions imposed by the State Government in view of the proposed unitary teaching-cum-residential University at Lucknow” (Shia PG College 2017). Jones (2012) has described the role of sectarian politics in the founding of Shia College in detail.

English. He estimates, especially beginning in the 1980s, the percentage of students coming from a “Hindi-medium” (rather than “English-medium”) educational background increased. Now, about 5 out of 40 students have an English-medium background, and 25-30% of PhD dissertations are written in Hindi. Another professor told me that even many of the students who do write theses in English would prefer to write in Hindi, but don’t want to take on the work of translating any English-language academic literature they cite into Hindi.

That susceptibility was also visible in Hasnain’s references to how regional caste politics affect academic life and how state public officials can pressure university leaders to make particular decisions. There is some irony in the fact that a university founded by a Shia Muslim, likely in part to impede communal division and antagonism, grew to be less than welcoming to his coreligionists. Later on in the same interview quoted extensively above, Hasnain described that, “Actually, ...though this university is located perhaps in one of the biggest centers of Muslims in the country, but unfortunately in this university you will hardly come across any Muslims—except in the departments of Urdu, Persian, and Arabic. After my retirement... there [will be] no other [Muslim, full] professor in any of these departments or faculties, in the entire university, except in the department of Persian, Arabic, and Urdu.” He went on to point out that there were no Muslim anthropology faculty members at DU and he could only think of a few in any Indian anthropology department. In its entire history, he said, “I think only five or six Muslims must have passed out in this department with a degree of master’s.” In terms of anthropology PhDs from Lucknow, aside from Khwaja Arif Hasan (a student of Majumdar/DK Sen who taught in the department briefly before moving to the US), he could only name two others, whom he himself

had either supervised or mentored.¹⁶ Hasnain characterized another potentially up-and-coming PhD student as having come from “outside” (i.e., having completed previous degrees at another university) and not being a “product” of Lucknow University.

When I asked Hasnain about why he thought this was all the case, he suggested it wasn’t all about active exclusion and that “it’s only since recent times that Muslim students are going to new fields. Otherwise, they have always been very apprehensive of new fields. ...all those tried and trusted disciplines like political science or English literature or history—they have been going to them. And they have no idea about anthropology.” In some ways, this view goes along well with the history of the “Western education” debates mentioned above. On the other hand, it seems to contradict his own observation about the lack of Muslim full professors, not just in anthropology, but in the university overall (excepting three languages associated with Muslims), as it was based largely on his personal experience, which is certainly reflective, even if not fully explanatory, of broader social and historical processes in the area. Indeed, Hasnain went on, “Let me cite my case to you, and you will find it very interesting.”

“My case was that I had no aptitude for physics, chemistry, or mathematics. I was very interested in literature and, humanities, social sciences. But in my generation, what happened was that the parents used to impose their wishes. If you are a boy, then you have to be an engineer. If you are a girl, then a doctor... In all those educated families. So my father wanted me to be an engineer,” began Hasnain.

¹⁶ This information is consistent with the PhD theses I was able to review in the university and departmental libraries.

“Wait,” I asked. “So what did your father do?”

“He was a police officer,” he said. I was surprised. In all our conversations, this had never come up before. “And most of the period of his service was spent during British times. Because he retired in 1952 [when Hasnain was two]... So he wanted me to be an engineer. And I, all the time, I was telling my mother that my heart does not lie there. Because I had no guts, I had no courage to talk to my father. He was so strict... He was not at all communicating with me. And all the time I was so over-awed by him that I was not facing him all the time. I was communicating only through my mother. I told my mother that, ‘*Mera dil nahi lagta. Main nahi parhunga* [My heart isn’t in it. I won’t study] physics, chemistry, mathematics.’ *Unhone kaha, ‘Tumhare father maar daalenge to.’* [She said, ‘Your father will beat you, then.’] Then I did my intermediate, that’s the eleventh, twelfth class, with great difficulty. And then I got admitted in BSc.”

“Where?”

“At Shia Degree College. And what happened was that, I knew that I won’t be able to handle physics and mathematics. I was interested little bit in chemistry. *To maine ye socha ki* [so I thought that], if, as per the plan of examination, if chemistry comes first, and if I am able to score very highly in chemistry, then perhaps there is some chance that I will be getting second division, perhaps... Otherwise, there was no chance. And thankfully, chemistry was scheduled first. And unexpectedly I could not do well. And I knew that I would be placed in a third division category, and I will be having no career, I will not be getting admission anywhere. So in the next day, after

two days, when my physics paper [exam] came, I did not appear in that. When my father asked, ‘When your physics paper is scheduled?’ I said, ‘After a week.’ And when the time passed, it was afternoon, and I was scheduled to appear in the morning session from nine to twelve, I went to my mother and told that I have dropped out. Used the word ‘drop,’ ‘*Main drop kar diya.*’ [I laughed.] That is the way we speak here. ‘*Hamne drop kar diya.*’ [We/I dropped out.] ‘Drop *kar diya?! Ab kya hoga?!*’ [You dropped out?! Now what will happen?!] *To meri maan ne kaha, ‘Esa hai. Ab to tum jaao. Tum ghar men na raho. Is liye tumhare father puchenge tumse,* [So my mother said, “It’s like this. Now go. Don’t stay in the house. Because your father will ask you] he will be asking you about your paper, and then what will you say?’ I said, ‘But what can I do? Anyhow, he will come to know of it.’ By evening, or perhaps by next day the news leaked that I dropped out. And my father was furious. He was furious. When my brothers came from office—we were three brothers, and six sisters, a large family. [Hasnain was the eighth of the nine siblings.] ...*To ye hua ki* [So then it happened that] father—and he did not speak to me for at least a week. The only comment that he made was that, ‘Do whatever you wish to do, *jahannum men jaao!* Go to hell!’

“So, then I decided to get admission in BA, with humanities/social sciences. And, when the admissions are announced, then I just picked an application form for admission to BA classes here at Lucknow University, and then was just filling up the forms. So I decided to go for two literatures and one social science. So, initially I thought that I would be going for English literature, Urdu literature,¹⁷ and then political science, because I was very interested in political science. And I was very—”

¹⁷ It is worth noting that Urdu literature had, by this time, been heavily influenced by Marxist thinkers and the Progressive Writers Movement.

“Especially with your Marxist tendencies,” I joked.

“At that time, there was no Marxist tendencies at that time.” He replied.

“But your mother’s brothers were—” I interjected. I was referring to some of what I had learned about his mother’s side of his family, with whom he had spent summers in Ghazipur (near Varanasi) as a child, while his maternal grandfather was still alive. His maternal relatives were highly educated. One of his uncles had been a director at the Reserve Bank of India and a representative to the World Bank in DC. But another was Professor Moonis Raza (1925-1994), a “committed Marxist” (Urdu Studio 2015) who was a founder of Jawaharlal Nehru University and served as vice chancellor of DU and chairman of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, among other positions. Another maternal uncle was Rahi Masoom Raza (1927-1992), a famous writer, known for novels like *Adha Gaon* (Reza 1994[1966]), which was based on real people like Hasnain’s mother, as well as for his scripts for popular movies or the classic *Mahabharat* TV series of the late 1980s. Rahi Masoom Raza, more like Hasnain, was not a party member, but was quite “progressive” (Urdu Studio 2015).¹⁸ Hasnain’s maternal grandfather had been active in the Muslim League and later joined the Congress Party. Apparently, at one point, he ran for town chairperson only to be defeated by a *chai-wala* his sons had supported.

“Yeah, but I was not aware of all these things,” Hasnain clarified, “I was just fascinated by these people, but I never knew what Marxism is all about... So what happened was that, I was just

¹⁸ I also later learned that Hasnain also had an “uncle” (mother’s first cousin) who had served as the head of the DU Persian department and as a dean.

filling up the form and one of the gentlemen who was our neighbor, he was also a Shia... and he was a teacher of economics at some college in Barabanki... And he used to come to our home virtually every evening... There was only one newspaper in his home and that was in Urdu and he wanted to see an English newspaper and then my father was also very fond of English newspaper, my brothers were also reading English. We were not purchasing any Urdu newspapers. So he used to come to our place and just see the newspaper. So when he came to our drawing room and said, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'I'm just filling up the form.' He said, 'Have you dropped out of BSc?' I said, 'Yes.' 'Okay, okay. I knew that you won't be continuing this. Okay, you are doing right thing now. So what subjects you have decided to opt for?' I said, 'English literature, Urdu literature, and political science.' He thought for a while and said, 'Why political science? I know that you are very fond of literature, go for literature, why this subject? *Urdu men ham bolte hain, bahut ghisa pita subject hai*, it is the most dreaded subject, *bekar hai* [it's useless], *kyun le rahi ho*, why are you opting political science? Why not anthropology?!'¹⁹ I said, 'What is anthropology?' I had never heard of anthropology at that time, never heard of this word, 'anthropology.' He said, 'It's a new discipline here, in the Indian university, and you will find it very interesting. In fact, it studies man as an animal, it studies man as a social being, it studies man in the past—' He had some idea about anthropology. 'Go for that, it's a new subject. Perhaps there may be some demand also in the job market.' I said, 'Fine. Let me opt for anthropology.' And then I just cut [out] political science and wrote anthropology... That is how—I mean, in the absence of any proper counseling, we were just opting for it, just by sheer accident... My father never asked me which subject I am going for. My brothers never asked me.

¹⁹ Most anthropology departments in India fall under their institution's faculty of science but, for historical reasons, in Lucknow the department began in the faculty of arts and was only added to sciences in the late 1980s, so that students can now earn either BA/MA or BSc/MSc degrees in anthropology depending on their other coursework.

Jo mera dil chaahe le liya [I took whatever my heart desired]. ... *Unhone kaha*, 'Political science *nahi lo*, anthropology *lo*.' *To anthropology le leta hun*. [He said, 'Don't take political science, take anthropology.' So I take anthropology.]"

"Why not?" I said, laughing.

"Why not. And when I studied anthropology, I really enjoyed the subject... And I thought there's no—I will be doing master's [in] that also. And that is how I came in touch with Professor Mathur and he made the subject very interesting also. And this subject fascinated me. And this fascination continues."

"That's clear. Did your father ever change his mind?" I wondered.

"I had done my master's before him—when I was first class, first division here, in this. He was very happy. And I told him that, well, had I not dropped out at that time then perhaps I would have been placed in third division category and you perhaps must have felt ashamed of me, but today you said that you are proud of me, it's mainly because of anthropology," Hasnain laughed.

"What did he say?" I asked.

"He was happy... And then, I also got a job in his lifetime. I joined my first job in Shia Degree College as a lecturer, as a temporary lecturer, in December 1973. And he was there at that time, he passed away in 1975. By the time, I had already got a job."

“So he got to see his son, the professor.”

“Yes, yes. He said I’m very happy that—and, I had already got myself registered in PhD, and he was very happy for that, because he did not have any high degrees in education.”

“He was a policeman.”

“Policeman and moreover, during his times. You know, he came into service in perhaps 1922 or 23. And he was educated right up to the middle—middle at that time was called the 8th standard... He passed middle, that is 8th standard.” Hasnain kindly translated school system terms for my benefit. “Not even high school. And he was very happy that that one of his sons will now be going to get a PhD degree. And he always appreciated that I encouraged all the children to go for higher education, though he did not have any high degree in education.”

“So was your mother’s side more educated than your father’s side?”

“Yeah, they were more educated. My father, from our father’s side, they were middle-level *zamindars* [landowners]—middle, not big landlords, but middle-level landlords. And, we believe that we are the descendants of a Sufi saint who came from Iran, and this is our eighth generation. Shah Ali Mullah. And he has got his *mazar* in our native village in Azamgarh... So it is believed that two brothers from Iran came and many of the Shias trace their ancestry to Iran. So, and they settled down here. One settled down in the village where he’s buried. And the second came to

Jaunpur, the adjacent district. And both married local women. And that is how we are the progeny. And, the older one, that is my ancestor, my *munis-e-aalaa*, was Shah Ali Mullah. My cousin-brother who looks after all this land and everything, he has got his *mazar* constructed. And in the last two hundred years, or three hundred years or so, it has become a center of devotion for the local population. And most of the devotees happen to be Hindus, who visit his *mazar* on every Thursday. So, from our father's side, they did not have any higher education. On my mother's side, they were highly educated people. Although they were also *zamindars*. But they are very strong intellectual traditions. My mother's father was MA, LLB of *that* time, way back in 1880s or so. That time.”

At “that time” it was highly unusual for Indians to hold such advanced degrees. It certainly suggests that Hasnain's maternal grandfather was among those in favor of “Western education” and that this early position impacted his children and grandchildren's lives as well. Hasnain did his BA in anthropology at Lucknow University from 1969 to 1970, when, he says, the degree only took two years. He started his master's in 1971, graduating in 1972. In December of 1973, he was hired as a lecturer in anthropology at Shia Degree College. He then enrolled in the PhD program with KS Mathur as his supervisor. He was awarded his PhD in 1978 and continued to teach at Shia College until he was hired as a professor²⁰ in the Lucknow University anthropology department in 2004.

²⁰ This is actually a difficult transition to make. Hasnain explained that one of the requirements for the position was to have supervised doctoral research, which he did not have the opportunity to do while teaching at a college. He was able to satisfy the requirement because a foreign student (now prominent scholar) with related research interests asked him to serve as an external member of his committee.

Memorials

On another occasion, when we were discussing the story of his hiring into the Lucknow Anthropology Department, Nadeem Hasnain recollected a conversation he had with KS Mathur's widow after his appointment: "Mrs. Mathur rang me and congratulated me and I felt sad because my teacher and mentor could not become a professor and I was appointed to the same post. So I told her my problem is that I cannot rejoice and cannot celebrate. He deserved professorship much more than I. Mrs. Mathur on the phone wept bitterly and said that I know you loved your teacher and mentor." To understand why his appointment was so bittersweet and the meanings it carried for him, we first need to understand how heavily the history of this department continues to weigh upon it, perhaps even more than the other departments I studied. Unlike at the DU Anthropology Department, when I met anthropology students in Lucknow, they could name the founder of their department, DN Majumdar, and some could even tell me a bit about his work. Everyone, down to the person who brought the tea, referred to him with pride. It seemed as if the department still carried some special greatness or reason for existing by virtue of being his creation.

Within the span of a few days, in March 2015, I attended two different major honorary lectures named for Majumdar. The first was organized by the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society (EFCS) as part of their annual conference and the second was organized by the Lucknow University Anthropology Department. Both of these organizations trace their origins to Majumdar, his work, his reputation, and his efforts at institution building. It seemed in many

ways as if the events were competing to commemorate and lay claim to the legacy of their founder. But how this legacy is remembered and why varies substantially.

In order of seniority, Radhakamal Mukerjee (1889–1968), Dhurjati Prasad (DP) Mukerji (1894–1961), and Dharendra Nath (DN) Majumdar (1903–1960) were the main figures in what is locally often referred to as the “integrated” Department of Economics and Sociology (and anthropology) at Lucknow University from the 1920s to the 1950s. They are sometimes referred to as the “Lucknow School,” though the appropriateness of this label is debated—Joshi (1986) argues that Radhakamal Mukerjee explicitly intended to start such a school but a prominent alumnus, TN Madan, cautions that this label does not account for the differences in these men’s approaches (Uberoi et al 2007: 29). However, something they ostensibly shared was skepticism about “the proposition that modern progress can be achieved by Westernisation by ‘substitution’ of Eastern by Western institutions” (Joshi 1986: 1455). These three scholars were all born and raised in Bengal and influenced by intellectuals of the Bengal Renaissance, characterized by “a fine-tuned receptivity toward the ethical precepts of Christianity and the intellectual, literary, and artistic achievements of the West; and then... a resurgent, redefined Hinduism alongside a rediscovered Sanskrit literary tradition” (Madan 2007: 258), as well as Indian nationalist thinking which motivated especially Radhakamal Mukerjee to attempt to “achieve the same end through the medium of social science what [sic] the greatest of Indians were trying to achieve through the medium of culture (Tagore) and through the medium of politics (Gandhi)” (Joshi 1986: 1456).

Radhakamal Mukerjee was part of the first class of students to receive a master's (and later PhD) from the new program in economics and sociology at Calcutta University in 1910 (Madan 2011: 120), where he had studied history and literature as an undergraduate (Madan 2007: 259). He had become interested in social sciences out of a desire to alleviate problems of poverty in India and had previously begun establishing a system of adult schools and village banks which were closed down by the British. He cited one of the greatest influences on his scholarly work as Patrick Geddes, urban planner and founder of India's first sociology department at the University of Bombay (Madan 2011: 121), an influence which could be seen, for example, in Mukerjee's insistence on the importance of interdisciplinarity and fieldwork. Mukerjee is also often described as having "pioneer[ed] the discipline of social ecology" (Guha 2003: 164). He was one of the first two professors hired at Lucknow University (Madan 2011: 123) and later served as its vice chancellor.

DP Mukerji received master's degrees in history and economics at Calcutta University and worked as a teacher before being invited to Lucknow University by Radhakamal Mukerjee. Despite socialist leanings, DP Mukerji referred to himself as a "marxologist" and was an early critic of "forces of anti-intellectualism in the socialist movement" (Joshi 1986: 1455). He was critical of "the emergence of a spurious middle class" (quoted in Madan 1978: 17) and of intelligentsia and policy makers who were advocating failed development policies "chiefly on account of their ignorance of and unrootedness in India's social reality" (ibid: 22).

Finally, DN Majumdar was the youngest of the three and the only one formally trained as an anthropologist. He was an early student in Calcutta University's anthropology department where

he studied with, among others, LKA Iyer and Panchanan Mitra (Madan 1982: 13), before going to Cambridge for his PhD. Radhakamal Mukerjee justified hiring Majumdar in 1928 for a position in “Primitive Economics” with the argument that someone was needed to teach non-monetary economics (Madan 2011: 135). Lucknow University would only gain a distinct anthropology department when, according to Hasnain, Majumdar planned to leave for a position at another university and then-Vice Chancellor Acharya Narendra Dev offered him an independent department if he stayed.

These scholars and the Lucknow University of their time are often evoked in discussions of the history of social science in India, particularly in imagining what might have been, the possible paths social sciences in India might have taken if social scientists and the state had taken their vision for social sciences more seriously or heeded the Lucknow School’s critiques of notions of “development” and “progress” from Europe and the US.

Interestingly, aside from a couple memorial pieces in Majumdar’s honor (e.g., Madan 1982, Majumdar and Mathur 1987), most of the more recent works discussing the contributions of the Lucknow School gloss over Majumdar’s work, if they mention him at all (e.g., Visvanathan 2006; Joshi 1986; Madan 2011; Madan 2007). Like TN Madan, they may emphasize his impact as a teacher, or they may discuss his importance in institutionalizing and professionalizing anthropology and sociology in India, through founding professional societies and making Lucknow a competitor to Bombay as an academic center for anthropology (Upadhyaya 2007:241). One possible reason for this could be that Majumdar’s work seems somewhat more in line with both what Sinha refers to as “the Rivers-Hodson-Hutton brand of diffusionism” and the

functionalisms of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown that became influential after (1991: 347). Majumdar's work does not seem to fit quite so squarely into narratives of the Lucknow School's early Indian critique of progress, development and Westernization, of the Lucknow School as having provided alternative directions for anthropological and sociological scholarship, or the Lucknow School as having existed in contrast to the London School. As Visvanathan puts it, "The Lucknow School lost out to the dreams of planned development. It was the London School, not the Lucknow School, that dominated independent India" (2006:246).

In fact, Majumdar's work appears to have been greatly influenced by British colonial and North American Boasian research. While in England, he also attended Malinowski's seminar and seems to have been greatly influenced by him as well as by a number of the Boasians, whom he taught in his theory course at Lucknow (Madan 2011: 243). He was interested in a holistic approach to anthropology. Although trained primarily as a social anthropologist (as we heard in Chapter 2), Majumdar expanded his research to include some physical anthropology as well. In 1941, Majumdar measured "about 3,000 persons belonging to 21 castes and did blood group tests on about 4,000" (Madan 1982:4) as part of "an anthropometric and serological survey of the United Provinces" (ibid:4) for the census. Apparently, he was an admirer of the work of Herbert H. Risley (ibid: 15), who conducted the first *People of India* (Risley 1969[1908]) project/ethnographic survey of India based on the 1901 census, a project designed to make Indians comprehensible to the British, to categorize them so as to make them easier to rule, especially after the Indian Revolt in 1857 (Jenkins 2003: 1148). Majumdar saw an important role of sociologists as social engineers able to direct and speed up development (Madan 1982: 19-20). In his introduction to a publication on the lives of the Garos, Majumdar (1956) argued for the

usefulness of applied anthropology and relevance of anthropological knowledge of tribes for administrators, though he problematized the use of the terms “tribe” and “criminal tribe.”

Majumdar also played an important role in spreading the village studies that came to dominate much Indian social anthropology of the 1950s and 60s (Deshpande 2007: 509), something also quite apparent in my review of early anthropology PhD dissertations in Lucknow.

None of this should be read as a dismissal of Majumdar’s work or influence in the development of anthropology in India. By all accounts, the Majumdar was able to accomplish an impressive amount from his position in Lucknow, including managing multiple national and international academic collaborations, creating his own anthropology department, facilitating scholarship in a wide variety of topics in anthropology, and training numerous scholars who went on to grow both academic and government anthropology and sociology in India and abroad. It is easy to critique approaches and theories that were popular or even cutting edge in the early to mid-twentieth century. The point is simply that it is not immediately clear that Majumdar’s work actually fits so easily into this popular narrative of the “Lucknow School” and its criticisms of Euro-American ideas of development in an Indian context. The fact that he is remembered in this way likely has at least as much to do with the fact that Indian scholars are still grappling with difficult questions about what it means to be involved in disciplinary projects that largely spread through imperialism and colonialism, and the fact that many academics (around the world) look for answers to these questions in histories and past figures.

Similarly, albeit for quite different ends, both the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society and the contemporary head of the Lucknow anthropology department were looking to the memory of

deceased and honored ancestors like DN Majumdar to fulfill certain roles in the present day. In both cases, the Majumdar lectures helped define these organizations as part of (or rightful heirs to) a proud tradition of anthropological scholarship, and they provided means and reason to attract important alumni to return and speak on campus. Additionally, at this particular EFCS conference, a JS Bhandari memorial lecture helped to emphasize the links between and relatedness of anthropologists from Delhi and Lucknow. JS Bhandari (1937-2001) was a student of DN Majumdar in Lucknow before going on to spend his career teaching at Delhi University. One of only a few social anthropology professors at DU, Bhandari played an important role in training subsequent generations of social anthropologists there. As one of his students and colleagues described in an obituary, “He was always there for his students and he was a father figure for many of them” (Channa 2001: 89-90) and “The social anthropology branch of the Department of Anthropology, Delhi University remains in debt to him forever for contributing to its strong roots in spite of the dearth of numbers. His students will keep alive his brilliant mind in their works for he had like an expert potter, crafted them to become whatever they have become in life” (ibid: 91). His memorial lecture was brought to the EFCS conference by the president of the Indian Anthropological Association, based in and run through the DU Anthropology Department, with a number of comments explicitly referencing how Bhandari (as intellectual kin of scholars from both departments) had connected Lucknow and Delhi anthropology.

On the other hand, the Lucknow University Anthropology Department-sponsored DN Majumdar memorial lecture a few days later ended up evoking his memory and legacy towards somewhat different ends. The lecture was held at the Hotel Gemini Intercontinental, in the Hazratganj business area of town, and was invitation-only. I was invited by the speaker, one of Majumdar’s

former students, retired from government service, who had just completed a painstakingly researched manuscript on Majumdar's life and work. There was only a small group in attendance. The catering and wait staff seemed intent on creating an air of exclusivity and high society. When time came for the lecture itself, the then-head of the anthropology department didn't look like he was paying attention at all, at times seeming more interested in taking photographs as he faced the audience from his seat behind the table next to the speaker. He seemed much more interested in his own moment in the limelight when he'd made some welcoming comments. He took this event as an opportunity to present his department in a positive light to the vice chancellor of the university, who was also briefly in attendance. In doing so, he also attempted to use the occasion to lobby the vice chancellor publicly to help him consolidate his own power and influence as the head of the department. To that end the head not only asked the VC to fill several vacant posts in the department, but also demanded that the VC hand Majumdar's old room (office) over to him to be turned into a "DN Majumdar Gallery," and arguing that Majumdar intended for the EFCS to be an "organ" of the anthropology department (rather than an independent organization) and urging it become part of the department once again.

Granted, this particular department head may have been the single most poorly regarded academic I encountered in my fieldwork. Rumors abound regarding both his professional and personal lives, stories ranging from regularly failing to show up to teach his own classes and free-riding at conferences to theft/misappropriation of student research funds, demanding bribes to sign off on theses, and domestic violence. He also named one of the classrooms in the department after himself. My formal recorded interview with him did little to help put him in a

better light. He was only able to name one publication (which I have been unable to locate) in all his years as an academic and when, at one point, I asked about what his PhD fieldwork was like and whether he had enjoyed it, he talked about how he had spent most of his already brief time in the field busy sightseeing. In many senses, he is not representative of his colleagues, but similar strategies for operationalizing the memory of Majumdar (and other ancestral academic figures) are widespread and have a long history in the department.

I return here to hiring stories.²¹ While we have already seen that hiring stories provide a common frame for discussing department ethics, politics, and social groupings among other issues, Lucknow is a bit unusual in the extent to which its history been shaped by sudden, unexpected deaths.

DN Majumdar died unexpectedly in 1960. His death left the future and direction of the anthropology department somewhat uncertain. Apparently, when Majumdar had negotiated to create the anthropology department, he was given a position as a full “professor” that was tied to him. This meant that if Majumdar was no longer holding the post—for example, if he left Lucknow, retired, or died—the post would no longer exist. The Lucknow anthropology department has always been a small department in terms of regular, “permanent” teaching positions. Even at the time of this writing, there are only three regular members of the teaching staff. As a result, temporary teaching staff have long carried much of the burden of instruction in the department. These instructors are often, but not always, Lucknow anthropology alumni, some of whom have gone on to distinguish themselves elsewhere. This issue of non-“regularized”

²¹ I must stress again here that these stories have many interpretations and should not be taken as reflections on the broader character of any of the individuals discussed.

employment goes far beyond the teaching staff to other university employees as well. In recent years, including during my fieldwork, demands for “regularization” have been a major source of strikes shutting down most of the campus.

Many of Majumdar’s living former students were reluctant to broach the subject in depth, and not all of the details I did hear were consistent, but it is clear that serious tensions and conflicts arose between a number of them for some time after Majumdar passed away about who would lead the department next. Majumdar seems to have made a great impact on his students, as one of them describes, “His love for and interest in his students was unbounded. Mrs. Majumdar wrote to me after his death that he used to tell her that his students were his sons” (Madan 1982:12). While he was alive, these sons/students surrounded Majumdar and, well aware that their mentor would decide which jobs/positions to send each student to, competed for his attention. One retired senior civil servant I interviewed reflected with some regret that Majumdar had not chosen him to pursue an academic research career. If anything, this fraternal rivalry may have only intensified after Majumdar’s death.

DK Sen, later a director of the Anthropological Survey of India, briefly took over as head of the department until Majumdar’s student and (much later) Hasnain’s PhD supervisor, Kripa Shankar (KS) Mathur (1929-1977) was hired as a reader (in a lecturer/reader/professor ranking of titles) and served as the Head of the department (1962-77). It wasn’t until the early 1970s that the Lucknow anthropology department was allotted its first full professorship. The legal dispute that ensued went all the way to the Supreme Court of India and did not end there.

It was not uncommon, especially in the case of highly contested jobs and even more so in departments with very few positions ever available, that one or more of the unsuccessful job candidates would then sue for the position. The lawsuit would often take some time to be resolved and, in the meantime, would usually place some burden on the person who was hired to defend their qualifications.

I found a record of part of this process in the Supreme Court judgment on the case *G. Sarana v. Lucknow University & Ors.* The judgment was issued on the 28th of July, 1976. As it describes, in late 1973, Lucknow University advertised an open position for a full professor of anthropology in the faculty of arts. The only applicants were Gopala Sarana and KS Mathur. At the time, Mathur was 44 years old, was the head of the department, and had been a Reader (since 1964) and Lecturer (1951-64) since getting his PhD from Australian National University in 1960. Sarana was 38 years old, was a full professor of anthropology at Karnatak University (since 1970) where he'd also been a reader (1966-70), prior to which he'd taught as a visiting lecturer at the University of California, Santa Barbara, as a lecturer at Panjab University, and as a temporary lecturer in Lucknow (1955-62). He earned his PhD from Harvard University in 1966. The court judgment also suggests Sarana had a larger number of publications (28 articles and three books to Mathur's "several research papers").²²

The selection committee had consisted of the vice chancellor, the dean of the faculty of arts, and three experts: SC Dube, SRK Chopra, and TB Mayak. After the committee chose KS Mathur, Gopala Sarana sued Lucknow University, naming several others, including Mathur, as additional

²² *G. Sarana v. Lucknow University & Ors.* 1976 AIR 2428, 1977 SCR (1) 64. Pp. 3-4.

respondents. Sarana alleged that SC Dube and SRK Chopra were biased against him, saying that Dube would often stay with Mathur when he was in Lucknow, and Chopra bore hard feelings since they had run against each other in an election for the president of the Anthropology Section of the Indian Science Congress and, as department head in Panjab University, Chopra had “opposed his application for leave to avail of the offer of fellowship from Harvard University and stopped forwarding his salary bills to the Executive, Council.”²³ Sarana’s petition had previously been dismissed by the High Court so he had appealed to the Supreme Court. This court also ruled against Sarana, finding that he had effectively accepted the make up of the selection committee by submitting to its evaluation and not objecting to its constitution in advance, that there was no evidence any biases had affected the committee’s decision, and that Sarana had not yet exhausted other possible remedies (such as appeal to the Executive Council or to the chancellor of the university).

In an interview in April 2015, Sarana’s son, now a political science professor in Lucknow, still seemed aggrieved on behalf of his father. He said he wished his father had stayed in the US after he’d graduated from Harvard, but Gopala Sarana had wanted to return to India to teach. The younger Sarana was angry at the way his father had been treated by his colleagues and suggested that they had discriminated against him because he was from a more rural background (others also allege discriminatory behavior/attitudes on the part of Sarana). While I haven’t found any further legal records after the Supreme Court ruling, based on the accounts I heard from Hasnain and others, it seems that Sarana likely continued to contest Mathur’s appointment, perhaps through the channels suggested by the court.

²³ *ibid*, p. 4.

The dispute only concluded when, like his mentor before him, Mathur died suddenly in 1977. Some of Mathur's students and colleagues blame the stress from the long and bitter legal battle with Sarana for his death. Gopala Sarana was eventually able to return to Lucknow as a full professor and headed the department from 1979 to 1995 (based on my information, this was the single longest headship in the department's history). This was only the beginning of generations of legal and administrative disputes. Not all of them were as personal. For example, in one case, I was told that the parties remained friends, would have tea together, and ride in the same car to attend court hearings. In another case, which I was unable to independently verify, though it is consistent with information I have about appointments, the courts were tasked with determining the limits of disciplinary boundaries. The case involves Virendra Nath (VN) Misra (1935-2015), a distinguished archaeologist who had studied under Majumdar at the undergraduate level and who returned to Lucknow as a professor of anthropology in 1983. Another candidate for the job (allegedly with Sarana's support) sued, arguing that Misra did not meet the minimum qualifications because his PhD was in archaeology and not in anthropology. Apparently, Misra had to bring in works by Alfred Kroeber and other American anthropologists as proof that archaeology was a subfield of anthropology and, thus, that he was qualified. Misra seems to have prevailed but left Lucknow not long afterward for Deccan College. According to Hasnain, and we can see some of this in the Supreme Court's judgment in *Sarana v. Lucknow University & Ors.*, at some point the courts, probably tired of hearing such cases, required objections to be made to the chancellor of the university (the governor of the state of Uttar Pradesh) first, before being taken to court.

Hasnain characterizes his relationship with KS Mathur as a very close one. They would meet and discuss work regularly. He would often recall stories of his mentor; for example, how Mathur would invite Hasnain to join in when influential scholars from other parts of India or academics around the world came to Lucknow to visit or meet with him. I often wondered if Hasnain was intentionally following his example; I wasn't sure, but it didn't always seem entirely coincidental that our meetings and conversations tended to overlap with or involve meetings with his students. One of his PhD advisees had a desk in the back corner of his room (after his term as department head had ended) and would often be there working—and, I assume, listening in. Hasnain would always make it a point to introduce them and discuss their research interests.

Nadeem Hasnain was one of the last people with KS Mathur before his death. He says that Mathur died of a peptic ulcer burst on the night of September 19th, 1977. Hasnain had submitted his PhD thesis, which was in the process of being reviewed by the examiners. He and Mathur were together until 5:30 pm that evening. Mathur told him not to forget to come in the next morning at 10:30am as they needed to discuss some important things. When Hasnain returned in the morning, he found the department locked. The staff were all leaving. He asked what happened and they told him, “Mathur Sahib is no more.” He explained to me that Mathur must have gone home after their meeting, eaten dinner, and then fallen ill around 9:30pm, when he was rushed to the Medical College, where he died. Apparently, peptic ulcers were not diagnosable there at the time. Mathur remained an associate professor [Hasnain's translation for “reader”] until he died heartbroken, said Hasnain.

A number of the ideas and themes we've seen in this chapter are recurring ones from preceding chapters. In the first chapter, we saw intellectual kinship as an observable phenomenon, that people talk about it themselves, put it into practice in relating to and understanding one another. We could see this again in Lucknow. For example, we saw DN Majumdar referring to his students as his sons. We saw Delhi anthropology professors describing JS Bhandari as an intellectual father. We saw how these memories cultivated and reinforced feelings of relatedness between anthropologists trained in Delhi and Lucknow. We saw in these relationships again the conceptions of growth (Bhandari the potter) and shared being (students keeping the ancestors alive) that some have characterized as defining of kinship. We also saw aspects of kinship that are less easily romanticized, like conflict and competition over succession and inheritance. These disputes sometimes involved debates about disciplinary boundaries, as in the case of VN Misra's qualifications to be an anthropology professor as an archaeologist. This resonates well with the issues discussed in the last chapter, where we saw how intellectual kinship and inheritance can have intellectual ramifications, especially in terms of disciplinary boundaries (at the same time as we explored its social consequences, e.g., in terms of gender discrimination and ostracism).

In Hasnain's stories, some connections between his "personal" and "professional" lives are more noticeable, or even explicit. And, in many ways, those stories and connections may seem familiar, even if taken out of context. The narrative of the young college student who decides to major in social sciences and humanities, against their parents' wishes and societal pressures that they pursue prestigious or more lucrative fields, is one many people can relate to. The fact that parental and family education levels affect the likely educational attainments of subsequent

generations is something almost taken for granted at this point. While Lucknow's history is unique, discrimination against members of stigmatized minority groups in educational institutions is rampant worldwide.²⁴

So, it would be simple to say that Hasnain's family background affects his position as "Shia" and "minority" in a Kayastha-dominated academy; that it also made him both more and less likely to pursue advanced education in anthropology; that it also affected his teaching and research—made him more interested in writing about marginalized groups and minorities (especially laborers and Muslims), more likely to advocate for people falling into those categories in the university, or more sensitive to the suggestion that he should behave as "bonded labor" in his professional conduct (whether that be challenging previous academic generations or university administrators).

In this view, it's not surprising that Hasnain was hired, because (at least in the academic senses discussed earlier) he's an "insider," male, and fits within the genealogy and lineages of the department. As he once put it, "Persons of my generation are students of direct students of DN Majumdar. That is how this lineage goes." At the same time, it's highly unusual, particularly given the relative position of Muslims and context of caste-based preferences in his university and department. In this instrumental sense, Hasnain's hiring story represents a sort of interplay between the intellectual kinship that positions him quite well as a productive and worthy descendant of Majumdar and Mathur on the one hand, and the kinship of the family he was born into that categorizes him as a Muslim by ancestry (with little regard for what he himself believes

²⁴ Hasnain's story is also interesting as part of a much longer historical process remaking a former ruling elite (Shia Muslim *zamindars*) into a religious minority community.

or practices) on the other. These were arguably some of what the vice chancellor must have been weighing as he decided whether to side with the external experts or his department head.

It would be equally simple to suggest ways that Hasnain's intellectual kinship has influenced his "private" family life. Near as I could tell, the ideas from his anthropological work pervade every aspect of his life. I once asked his wife, a very kind woman with a sense of humor to compete with her husband's, about her opinion of anthropologists; she responded with conviction, "They do very important work, because they tear apart people's prejudices." I got to know Hasnain's son and daughter-in-law, whom I consider friends, when we shared a flat in Delhi for a month early on in my fieldwork. They were also there for doctoral dissertation research. His son, a sociologist, was comparing Shia and Muslim identity formation in Lucknow and Hyderabad, interests not far removed from his own.

None of these statements or views is "wrong" or false. However, they all rely upon viewing the relationships between intellectual and "other" kinships as more or less equivalent to the relationships between "family" and "education." In other words, they reproduce categories and domains of social life and its analysis that have long encouraged social scientists to think about "kinship" as more about the "private" than the "public," and part of a sphere separate from "politics," "economics," or even "gender" (Yanagisako and Collier 1987). Such domaining has the additional effect of making it more difficult to recognize intellectual kinship as kinship in the first place.

At its opening, I framed this chapter as exploring the interactions between “different kinds” of kinship. I’ll revise that now. Intellectual historians or science studies specialists sometimes analyze how scholars’ “personal” or “family” backgrounds or “political” views play into their intellectual development. They also often look at scholars’ relationships with the teachers who may have influenced them or trace genealogies—both genealogies of teachers and students, as well as of ideas and thought. The only real reason to call intellectual kinship something other than just “kinship” is to mark it into visibility. One reason it is less visible is that it’s been categorized as part of a domain that, at least in the present day, is often seen as separate from kinship. But it might be helpful to think of it more along the lines of different instances or manifestations of kinship. The trouble is there are many unmarked, taken-for-granted manifestations that have convinced us that we know what kinship is when we see it, that everyone knows which relationships and people they refer to when they ask about their “family.” Everything else is assumed to be “fictive,” “metaphorical,” an “extension,” which is always based on an established “real” thing.

Hasnain’s career, however, challenges what counts as “real” kinship. If we look at his “intellectual kinship” as separate from the “kinship of his family of birth,” we can see that the former has arguably shaped his life at least as much, if not more than the assumed “real” kinship ties of religion and birth. Even in his research, that he ultimately chose to do work related to Islam and Muslims more later in his career challenges assumptions of what a “Muslim” anthropologist would do. On the other hand, if we are less eager to conceptualize types of kinship apart from each other or place them in some sort of hierarchy, we can also see how the kinship that grew Hasnain as a person, scholar, and professional involved, for example, both the

sharing of knowledge with kin from his family of birth, as well as moral obligations (McKinley 2001) reaching personhood-defining levels with kin gained through his academic life.

When Nadeem Hasnain was hired as a full professor in the Lucknow anthropology department, one could say that he was continuing the legacy of (at least) two fathers; both the one who was never able to become a full professor, and the one who was never able to finish high school.

Before his retirement, I wondered how Hasnain felt about leaving an institution he clearly cared deeply about and was very invested in when it was at what many (both in Lucknow and elsewhere) saw as a low-point in its history. Hasnain replied that he was at peace with it because, he said, he knows about the life cycle; his hope was for young people to emerge and restore vitality to the department.

CHAPTER V

Naga Spears

“I’ve told you as well as I can how it is to be an institutional man. At first you can’t stand those four walls, then you get so you can abide them, then you get so you accept them ... and then, as your body and your mind and your spirit adjust to life on an HO scale, you get to love them.”

— Stephen King in *“Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption”*
(1982: 92)

In September 1973, Indera Pal Singh Monga (1928-2016), better known as “IP Singh,²⁵” traveled from Delhi to Chicago to attend the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (ICAES, now called the “World Congress”), a conference of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES). Always looking for ways to build the discipline (and his department) in India, he asked permission to host the next congress in India five years later. IP Singh also met Margaret Mead in Chicago and invited her to come speak in Delhi. She was to deliver the annual Nehru Memorial lecture that November, among other engagements.

²⁵ Singh told me that he stopped using “Monga” after Gandhi encouraged Indians to drop caste names.

I specially invited her, explained IP Singh.²⁶ Then I asked the university to give her an honorary degree. No anthropologist had been given an honorary degree. It passed through the faculty, then went to the academic council. One chemistry professor said, “Who’s Margaret Mead?” Before I could answer, a botany professor said, “You don’t know who Margaret Mead is?” They were both South Indians so he [the chemistry professor] got quiet and no one objected after that. But students were agitating against the VC then, wherever he went. Professor Sarup Singh was VC. He was my English professor at Hindu College. He said, You got the degree, but the boys may shout. I said I’ll take care of it. He asked me how.

Singh continued: We had these Naga spears in the museum then. I said, I’ve told my students, they will stand outside with Naga spears. Don’t allow them to come in, and if they do, break their legs, and I’ll take care of you with the police. At that time I was proctor, so I knew the police. The VC asked, Is this the right way to talk? I said, This is the only language they understand. So we filled the convention hall. Margaret Mead came and gave a good lecture. The students shouting didn’t even enter the compound of Shankar Lal Hall. I said [to the students, spread around that] it was a function, not of the VC, but of the Department of Anthropology, and we shall not allow anyone to disturb it, and we’ll break your legs. So nobody entered that road.

²⁶ I am not using quotation marks here because this interview was not recorded. This account is based upon my hand-written notes and the notes I typed up afterwards.

*Management*²⁷

IP Singh was a major figure in the history of the Delhi University anthropology department. People had recommended that I talk to him but, since they described him as primarily a physical anthropologist (albeit one of the early ones who dabbled in a bit of everything), I hadn't prioritized it. As I read through the archived annual reports of the university though, I began to get a sense of his importance to the institution, and developed a growing curiosity about his institutional memory. His formal association with the department began in 1948, as part of its second batch of master's students, and ended with his retirement in February 1993. Over the course of those 45 years, he held numerous administrative positions and even served as a member of India's University Grants Commission (UGC). I was most intrigued by his several consecutive terms as DU's proctor, the central university office responsible for discipline on campus. He held this office from April 1973 until he retired, which meant he was DU's chief disciplinarian during the Emergency (1975-77, when the constitution and democratic rule were suspended, and activists on campus were being jailed) as well as during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots following Indira Gandhi's assassination (which, in turn, followed Operation Blue Star and the invasion of the Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar), when thousands of Sikhs were murdered in Delhi alone. During the latter period, many Sikhs, including Sikh academics at Delhi University, like sociology professor JPS Uberoi and his family were fleeing their homes and hiding from the angry mobs. In fact, JPS Uberoi was IP Singh's predecessor as proctor. I was curious how Singh

²⁷ This section title is inspired by Mario Savio's December 2nd, 1964 speech on the steps of Berkeley's Sproul Hall, where he famously said,

I ask you to consider, if this is a firm, and if the board of regents are the board of directors, and if President Kerr in fact is the manager, then I tell you something, the faculty are a bunch of employees, and we're the raw material. But we're a bunch of raw material that don't mean to be—have any process upon us, don't mean to be made into any product, don't mean, don't mean to end up being bought by some clients of the university, be they the government, be they industry, be they organized labor, be they anyone. We're human beings!

viewed his role as proctor (especially as a Sikh responsible for discipline during anti-Sikh riots), how he saw student activism, and how it related to his work as an anthropologist. I'd heard that IP Singh was a friendly man and a big supporter of the Congress Party (the party historically controlled by the Nehru-Gandhi family), so I was hopeful there might be a way to broach these topics eventually, but given how sensitive they remain, I knew to tread carefully.

What I was not expecting was for IP Singh to skirt around some of these issues at our very first meeting in November 2014. Friendly, indeed—he even took the initiative to call me to ask to set up a time to be interviewed! I got to know him well over the course of our many conversations at his home not far from DU (where he lived with one of his sons and his family), at another son's home in South Delhi, or at the India International Centre, where he was a member. Like his story suggests, he could be very firm and assertive when it came to making things happen, but I hadn't anticipated his sense of humor, generosity, and soft-heartedness. It was a bit confusing at times; I'd never imagined myself laughing along with a story about threatening students with physical violence.

Apart from the ridiculous imagery of students guarding Margaret Mead with Naga spears from a museum, the story is particularly rich with information about what was happening in the university at that time from the perspective of a senior administrator. It brings up ideas about regional solidarity, particularly in relation to the othering of South Indians in North India. It alludes to the low position of anthropology among the sciences (the chemist, ignorant of anthropology and instinctively skeptical that it could be appropriate to honor an anthropologist). It provides a sense of the university's governance structures and decision-making processes (in

this case, the decision to award an honorary degree first had to go through the faculty of sciences before being approved by the academic council). It refers to ongoing student protests at the time, against the university administration and the vice chancellor in particular. It suggests that the unmarked gender and age of students, particularly those involved in campus activism, was male and not fully adult (i.e., “boys”). It points to the existence of differing administrative perspectives on how best to deal with student protest (the vice chancellor questioning if threatening violence is an appropriate way to speak to students). It raises questions about how anthropologists think about cultural artifacts and field sites (there are now scholars from Nagaland associated with the department, but this was not the case at the time). It makes explicit the relationship between university discipline and state discipline (e.g., as proctor, he knew the police and could operationalize this connection to extend the state’s monopoly on violence and protect students from prosecution). It emphasizes the relevance of teacher-student relationships and alliances to the functioning of the institution (both in appealing to Sarup Singh as his former teacher and in taking for granted that his own students would obey his command) and signals what kind of student the university was trying to create (a kind closer to the ones willing to dissuade colleagues from protesting by spreading a threat of violence, and more removed from the ones protesting). It provides one view of how scholars in the US and Indian academies relate to each other. And, as we will continue to see, it begins to highlight the importance of guest-host relationships in academic life (e.g., calling it a function of a department to avoid disruption, or raising the profile of the department through hosting a famous scholar). In other words, and most importantly for this discussion, it combines views of the university as a bureaucratic state institution with views of the university as familial and a home.

On this same occasion, we spoke (or, to be more accurate, IP Singh spoke and I could not get a word in edgewise) about a number of his favorite topics. He particularly enjoyed telling the story of how he managed Margaret Mead's visit to DU in November 1973. At that time, Singh was head of his department, dean of the faculty of science, and proctor of the university. But there was actually more to the visit. Mead was also to speak to the anthropology department, in advance of which the department had made some improvements to its seminar hall, including the installation of new light fixtures. But because of the massive crowds filling the department starting in the morning, many having traveled from other cities to hear Mead speak, the talk had to be moved out onto the lawns, which were open then, as the part of the building closing them off hadn't yet been built. IP Singh described the event and Mead's arrival in Delhi:

The entire lawn filled. On the veranda, people sat on the floor. She was a marvelous speaker. We went to receive her in the airport. She was afraid; it was her first time in India. So as soon as she saw my face, she was happy. The secretary said she hadn't sent her lecture in advance, so I asked her for it. She asked for a typewriter and sat at it and wrote a one-page note on what she will say. In her talk, she spread out to different topics, and we were afraid that it wouldn't connect, but in the last five minutes she brought it all together. A student asked her an embarrassing question, about the treatment of blacks in America, that brought tears in her eyes, and she said she was sorry this is happening. I didn't want to embarrass her. So I brought in [the student] and said, you are the president of the students' association in the department, so you have to give her a present. We wrapped a Kullu cap lying around. So, since he had to present her with the gift, he kept quiet [at her later lecture in the anthropology department]. Lady Irwin College wanted to have her speak, so we took her there. Her visit was very helpful to the department and anthropology in general.

After Mead's visit, IP Singh set about preparing for the 1978 ICAES. He had to get permission from the government of India to hold it. There was some vying between leading scholars over which city (and, thus, department) would host the conference. Singh explained that the Ranchi people wanted it held there because LP Vidyarthi (1931-1985) was dominant there and HD

Sankalia (1908-1989) wanted it in Pune. He himself, of course, wanted it in Delhi, arguing that the city had more appropriate facilities, major hotels, and Vigyan Bhavan (the government convention center). He asked them, “In Ranchi, where will they keep a foreign delegation? Same thing in Pune.” Because Sankalia was mainly an archaeologist, Vidyarthi was elected president by consensus. IP Singh became the local secretary for the national conference. So he formed a national committee and went to ask Indira Gandhi (1917-1984) for her blessings and to inaugurate the conference in five years’ time. The prime minister agreed and promised five lakhs (500,000 rupees) of funding—and, added Singh, “we knew we could get another five.”

Unfortunately for Singh and the ICAES, the Emergency occurred in the intervening time and once it ended, Indira Gandhi was voted out of office. “The new PM [Morarji Desai (1896-1995)] had no interest in anthropology,” said Singh, “but the government had made a commitment.” They had wanted to have a dinner hosted by the prime minister, but they “were told that all dinners had been banned by the PM.” So, nothing if not persistent, IP Singh got Desai to agree to do high tea, explaining, “Our idea was to give at least one meal free. We said to serve *chole bathure* and anything else you want to give.” One week before the conference, they were told the prime minister would not come to inaugurate it, “and we’d advertised it and also had gotten the Vice President to come for the valedictory address.” They then got the Vice President to come inaugurate, but then two hours later they received a letter of regret, because apparently “they don’t go where someone else [i.e., the PM] had refused to go,” but he would still deliver the valedictory address.

The inauguration was to be in the Ashok Hotel, and the rest of the congress would be held in Vigyan Bhavan. The night before, IP Singh went to check if everything was set for the next day, because, as he put it, he delegates tasks, but also follows up to make sure things were done properly. The manager told him that they couldn't use the convention hall because it was now booked for something else, since they hadn't paid the advance. Singh checked [with the person who was supposed to send it] and verified that they had paid. Luckily, they then spotted their check lying under the glass on the manager's desk. They asked the manager why he said they hadn't paid when the check was clearly right there and they were hosting an international conference there the next day. It turned out that a powerful MP (member of parliament) had booked the hall for his daughter's wedding. So they threatened to go to the press. Stuck between pressure to satisfy the MP and fear of bad press, the manager offered them use of the hall (which they had booked long before) in the morning, but not in the afternoon. IP Singh responded, "Give it to us in the morning, and we will leave our students in the room; you call the police, they won't leave." The wedding was moved to the lawns.

Perhaps realizing that he was starting to paint a particular kind of picture of his relationship to student dissent, IP Singh later backtracked a bit. "But students can do anything they want. Student power is great," he said, changing gears to tell a story from his days in charge of the Gwyer Hall hostel. One year, during the Holi holidays, he got a message that the Delhi Milk Scheme wouldn't deliver milk because they incorrectly believed that the hostel had not paid its bills, for which it had receipts. Because it was a holiday, the office wasn't open to clear things up. So Singh called the chairman's secretary, who was very unhelpful and insisted that nothing could be done until after the holiday. He told the secretary to get in touch with the chairman and

inform him that the students were restless and wanted to march to the chairman's house, adding, "and I will march with them because they're in the right." Frightened, the secretary asked for 30 minutes. Fifteen minutes later, she called back saying that the milk supply had been restored until they could bring in the receipts on Monday. Singh concluded, "Students are powerful, but they have to use it in a constructive manner. The problem is they use power only when they get into destructive ideas."

IP Singh never did explain exactly which ideas were "destructive" and which were not. It was as if, for him, this was self-evident. And, maybe it was. Two clues in his narrative were the reference to the trouble-making student at Mead's talk as a "leftist" (Singh also suggested that the student's father may have been a communist), and the characterization of most existing student activism as destructive. As for who gets to decide and how, the answer was clearly himself and those sharing his understanding and perspective on what was going on around him. In a sense, for Singh, the person in a position to properly assess the nature of student power, was the person who was trying to control and channel it. Its destructiveness and constructiveness was directly related to the extent to which it served what he saw as the purpose and vision of the institution; for example, when it helped the hostel milk supply arrive or helped ensure a major conference was opened smoothly. Like academics often do, Singh was in significant part identifying his own survival—or the survival of his "self"—with the survival of the institution. This view contrasts with Hasnain's "life cycle" view we heard in the previous chapter, and it is not a coincidence that Hasnain and Singh also demonstrated markedly different views of student activism. This is not to entirely valorize one view over another; they were each dealing with different historical moments, over thirty years apart. There are also many kinds of student

activism from across the political spectrum, some of which can certainly inspire cynicism—the story we heard of a Dalit student suspended for posting on a Lucknow campus wall may evoke the sympathy of anyone supporting academic freedom or opposed to caste-based discrimination, but it gets more complicated when one adds into the mix, say, career student politicians in business as “fixers” (Jeffrey 2008; Jeffrey 2010) or orchestrating unrest in order to silence other student groups.

Dissent

Since my fieldwork, these issues have increasingly made international headlines. For example, sedition charges against students organizing a protest at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU, a campus famous for its history of left-leaning intellectuals and integration of political activity with academic learning) in Delhi sparked messages of solidarity and “standing with JNU” from around the world. When two of those students, labeled “anti-nationals” by Hindu-nationalist groups, were scheduled to speak at a February 2017 academic event on “Cultures of Protest” in Delhi University’s Ramjas College, members of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) showed up to attack students and professors, bringing the event to a violent halt. The ABVP is the student wing of the Hindu-nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and generally recognized as working alongside or in support of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). No one familiar with university politics in India could have been especially surprised by this course of events, even if (rightfully) upset by them.

Over three years earlier, on May 16th, 2014, the results of India's general election were announced; the BJP had won an unprecedented number of seats in the Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament), so that it would not even need alliances with other parties in order to form a government. Narendra Modi was about to become the new prime minister. Modi was then serving as the chief minister of the state of Gujarat, a position he'd held since before the 2002 Gujarat riots. While he has not been convicted of any wrongdoing in court, at best Modi sat idle during and, at worst, was complicit in the attempted genocide of the state's Muslim residents. Although many Indians purportedly supported him because of his promises to increase foreign investment, create a more business-friendly environment, and improve infrastructure, his election sent a clear message to minorities, especially one of the world's largest Muslim populations, about where they stood in the country. It also began to send a message to academics, particularly those who might object to the ideologies and policies of the incoming government.

After watching the news and exchanging a few text messages with friends who were also trying to make sense of the election results, I took an auto-rickshaw from my flat in Mayur Vihar Phase-1 (in East Delhi) to the Delhi University North Campus. On the way, I was surprised to see few cars out on the normally congested major roads. Once at DU, I walked through the northern gate facing an entrance to part of the Delhi Ridge where students and families could often be found exploring pathways through the trees, many of which were just barely hiding 14th-century ruins that had doubled as cover or storage for soldiers during the Indian Revolt of 1857. Inside the gate, I was greeted by a statue of Mohandas Gandhi. I walked past some administrative buildings, through the gates of the rose garden, passing the well-guarded former colonial viceregal lodge, now the office of the vice chancellor. I don't think I'd ever seen the

campus so empty. Even in the summers, there were usually plenty of people around; the writing and work of the post-graduate students or research scholars, at least, never really seemed to pause. Nearby, I didn't find much going on in the old colonial building housing the anthropology department (rumored to have served as an office for Lord Mountbatten himself at one point) either. So I decided to stop by D School to check if anyone was around. I took a (to me) well-hidden, popular shortcut through a narrow alleyway and maze of gates connecting the Central Science Library (next door to anthropology) to the departments of geology and zoology, and an open gate to Chhatra Marg (literally: "Student Street"). As I approached Chhatra Marg, I began to hear a loud banging noise in the distance. Walking up the street, nearing the entrance to the Arts Faculty (a common location for demonstrations), I found the source of the noise. A group of at most 50 young men, presumably ABVP members, were marching around, beating a large drum, and shouting Hindu nationalist slogans. I assumed they were celebrating their party's election victory, though their numbers seemed rather small for a real celebration. I kept walking through the otherwise almost deserted street.

When I arrived at D School, though it was also less populated on this day, I spotted a group of students playing carrom around a table set up behind the JP Tea Stall. I joined them, grateful for both the attempt at distraction and the company in processing what the election might mean for the future. The students all looked dejected and the atmosphere was somber, as if, on a bright summer day, a black cloud were hanging over us and this was the calm before the storm. After some time, a faint sound of beating drums in the distance grew louder and several of the men I'd seen shouting slogans earlier made their way into D School. The students around the carrom table were unsurprised; they seemed to expect that the ABVP would march around campus,

perhaps particularly to this part of campus, to announce that they were in charge here, that they had the power of the state behind them now. As soon as he saw the group coming down the path from the D School gates, one of the activists (who would have fit IP Singh's "leftist" student troublemaker stereotype quite well) among the group I was standing with suddenly fled. Next thing I knew, with the support of his friends, he'd disappeared behind a building and didn't come back out until after the ABVP members were gone. Apparently, he recognized a couple of the young men; they had attacked him before, and if they saw him now during their victory march, he feared they would beat him again.

This wasn't the first time the ABVP had threatened students—it's an almost standard mode of operation—but their targets and demonstrations were usually concentrated in other areas of campus. Given perhaps D School's reputation for not being very politically active (reportedly earning them the criticism of colleagues in JNU) and the fact that I'd never so much as heard of the DU anthropology department holding events remotely likely to attract the ire of politicians or administrators (someone described them as historically "statist"), this was the first time I was witnessing the fear they could evoke for myself. I'd missed the seminar, "Emergence of Hindu Fascist and the Pogrom in Muzaffarnagar" (India Tomorrow 2014), at D School that January with a group of academics and journalists who had just released a report on the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots. The ABVP had shown up and attempted to violently shut it down, perhaps in an effort to substantiate the event title. I heard later that the event, and a student, had been saved by a professor who managed to close the doors in time. In early August of 2015, just before I left India, some of the same students were present at DU's Kirori Mal College for a showing of *Muzaffarnagar Baaqi Hai* (Sawhney 2015), a documentary on the riots that also

shows some of the ways in which they can be orchestrated and encouraged by politicians. This time, the ABVP successfully stopped the showing, leading to a number of protest screenings around the country. An organizer of such a screening at the University of Hyderabad, Dalit activist Rohith Vemula, was labeled an “anti-national” by the ABVP and suspended. Not long after, Vemula hanged himself, and his suicide note was shared and read widely online. Many called his death an institutional murder or martyrdom.

Watching the near ordinariness of a student running to hide and the chill that seemed to spread on that hot day, I couldn’t help but think back to some of the narratives I’d read and heard about the Emergency (June 1975-March 1977). Campus politics and activism have undoubtedly changed in many ways and the parallels are limited, so it may have partly been my inexperienced outsider’s eye, and the comparison is certainly ironic, as the BJP’s rise as a political party was historically rooted in its opposition to the Congress Party’s suspension of democratic rule at that time. In the book *D. School: Reflections on the Delhi School of Economics* (Kumar and Mookherjee 1995), a number of D School alumni share memories of their time there. Two of the sociologists, Patricia Uberoi and Shiv Visvanathan, emphasized the impact the Emergency had on them. Uberoi described the somewhat ridiculous process she and her husband (JPS Uberoi) came up with to discreetly get rid of some broadsheets detailing “the detentions of all manners of people (including many academics and journalists), of demonstrations, and of acts of resistance and repression” (ibid: 215), that she had picked up in the then-research room. Even in the research room, students would uncharacteristically look away and pretend not to have noticed these papers. Having been warned by several people that her husband’s name appeared on “lists

of disaffected or potentially dangerous academics” (ibid: 216), the Uberois didn’t want to risk being caught with contraband like these papers if their home was raided.

Visvanathan’s essay was more critical of D School as an institution. As he himself introduced it, “The kingdom of God on earth was the university. It was the city of youth and ideas... Delhi School was for me the university and my story is about how the myth of the university dissolved for me” (ibid: 195). He was there as a student in the 1970s and taught there in the early 1980s. The D School in Visvanathan’s account was one with a certain rigidity of thought, dominated by work on functionalism and development. He suggested that the situation worsened after founder MN Srinivas’ departure: “Taught by his epigoni [sic] Srinivas’ sense of the everyday disappeared. [AM] Shah, [BS] Baviskar and Veena Dua were rigid custodians rather than successors. They museumized the old man in strange ways” (ibid: 197). He described faculty threatened by “inventive ideas” and unable to hear out criticism of their own work when it was assigned (ibid: 200). This was not something limited to the faculty, however. Visvanathan also provided a different perspective on Margaret Mead’s visit to Delhi, remembering that when she “delivered a tired lecture at Teen Murti²⁸ a few months before the Emergency [then-student Vijay Pratap] got up and asked her: ‘How can you speak in this house about shame when slums gird the building, and talk in the presence of this woman who talks of *garibi hatao* [“remove poverty”]²⁹ and has only removed the *garibi* of her son?’ Vijay was picked up and questioned right through the night at Chanakyapuri police station” (ibid: 199). Visvanathan explained that,

²⁸ “Teen Murti” (literally: three statues) is a popular name for the former home of Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first prime minister and father of Indira Gandhi. It is so named because of three statues which serve as a landmark at the intersection in front of its gates. It later became the site of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Visvanathan’s memory appears to disagree with the officially recorded date of Mead’s lecture there, which was over a year before the Emergency.

²⁹ The woman in question was presumably Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who had used this slogan in her 1971 campaign.

out of hundreds around campus, “only” a few D School students were “harassed” (ibid: 198): specifically, Vijay Pratap, Harsh Sethi, and Hira Singh,³⁰ who were all jailed and/or spent time in hiding. But we can see from Patricia Uberoi’s account how such harassment had a far more widely chilling effect on academic freedom.

While the Emergency clearly affected Visvanathan, in its aftermath, he was disappointed by what he saw as an inadequate response within the institution, writing, “But the Emergency taught D.School [sic] nothing. There was not one question about knowledge, one doubt about development. The Emergency did not shake our paradigms” (ibid: 199). Visvanathan had expected the suspension of the constitution and democratic rule to provoke fundamental questions about the national project and social scientists’ role in it. His explanation for this state of academic business as usual was that “The D School was too close to power. It was a perpetual promise of upward mobility. From the D. School to Cambridge, the IAS [Indian Administrative Service], or the UN. The bribe was built into the system” (ibid: 199-200). Visvanathan did name some exceptions to this characterization of D School: professors like JPS Uberoi or Veena Das, whose innovative work going against the grain to study semiotics he appreciated, for example, or the many fellow students whose company and intellectual engagement he enjoyed. “I remember the day we enacted Erving Goffman’s *Asylums* in class,” he wrote, “The chowkidar [gatekeeper] came repeatedly to check what the commotion was” (ibid: 201).

³⁰ Hira Singh was a frequently recurring character in the memories and narratives of D School faculty and alumni I spoke with. Heavily influenced by Marxist thought, he had a reputation for always asking a question about class at lectures. His imprisonment was most commonly associated with reflections on the Emergency. A number of people recalled that a sociology professor hid Hira Singh in his home for a time, or that members of the D School community showed up in support at his court hearing. Singh later moved to Canada where he became a sociology professor at York University.

Total Institutions

It is interesting that Visvanathan brought up Goffman's work in that context. *Asylums* (1961), after all, centers around an analysis of the workings of "total institutions," broadly referring to institutions like prisons or mental hospitals where a group of people ("inmates" [Goffman 1958: 46]) live in batches, separated from their broader society, and going through their day-to-day activities together in a routine that is highly structured by institutional "staff" (ibid: 46) and ostensibly designed to achieve an institutional mission (ibid: 45). While institutions "dealing with 'problem' populations" (Fitz Gibbon et al 1999: 21) are the most commonly discussed examples of total institutions, Goffman categorized a variety of institutions this way, including educational ones like "boarding schools" (1961: 5). Academic administrators have gone so far as to use his concept to determine how best to market and run their institutions (e.g., Fitz Gibbon et al 1999). Although he never explicitly made the connection, Visvanathan's characterizations of D School and Delhi University have much in common with Goffman's total institutions. The image of a literal *gatekeeper* checking up on a group of students to ensure that their discussion of *institutionalization* did not get too rowdy or disruptive illustrates that quite well. His story of disillusionment continued with the realization that "this School was a club... What clubs stress is good behaviour, not ideas, not inventiveness" (Kumar and Mookherjee 1995: 202). He explained:

One realizes that a club closes itself mentally and physically to the environment, whereas a university is a strangely open institution. It reacts with the environment creatively in order to become the theatre of ideas. Yet today... the theatre of ideas is no longer the university... The D.School is merely an intellectual plantation, a feeder for the

bureaucracy... Yet it plays at being deeply committed to ideas and openness. The D.School is captive to roles. People are playing academic, liberal, professor, intellectual—such that there are no persons there... The old notion of master and disciple is gone and what we have is each teacher demanding a loyalty count. (ibid: 202-3)

Here Visvanathan has painted a picture of an institution where a group of people, who actually refer to themselves in terms of “batches” (as in cohorts, or a class admitted in the same year), has “close[d] itself” from its environment and, as in a “plantation,” is training people to keep in line with what has been institutionally defined as “good behavior” in order to produce good bureaucrats or functionaries for other (elite) institutions, even while presenting itself as a generator of innovation (i.e., the “myth” versus his disillusioned view of the reality of the university). Goffman’s framework could also be seen as predicting that myth in his typology of inmate adaptations: “situational withdrawal” (1958: 59), “rebellious line” (ibid: 59), “colonization” (ibid: 60), “conversion” (ibid: 60), and a combination of adaptations he called “playing it cool” (ibid: 61). The feeling of “having found a home” (ibid: 60) at an institution or internalization of its meritocratic ideologies (or myths) are examples of colonization adaptations, where “Experience of the outside world is used as a point of reference to demonstrate the desirability of life on the inside” (ibid: 60).

It’s not entirely clear when, where, or if Visvanathan’s idyllic past university, “theatre of ideas,” and “kingdom of God on earth” ever existed. His D School was still just barely coming out of its infancy as an institution. Its institution builder, VKRV Rao, may have envisioned it as a sort of theatre of ideas when he initially set it up to have greater autonomy from the university administration, but the project of development (and the supportive hand he believed sociology could lend to economics in it) were of central and explicit importance to him. Indeed, from an

administrative perspective, the university had arguably been attempting to be a total institution for some time. Its own literature states that “It was established in 1922 as a unitary, teaching and *residential* university by an Act of the then Central Legislative Assembly” (University of Delhi 2018; emphasis added). The fact that DU was intended to be a residential institution is not incidental to its relationship to student dissent. This is evident, for example, in how the official Delhi University annual reports addressed the issue of the Emergency. Here are excerpts from the 1975 annual report:

It was at this stage that the emergency was declared in the country. Our University has also been a beneficiary of this national measure... to the extent that the *atmosphere of normalcy* that we had succeeded in creating through hard struggle at every step got strengthened and the subsequent period of academic session has been a peaceful one, enabling the students and the teachers to spend more time in the classrooms than in earlier years and also enabling the university to implement more seriously its programmes of faculty improvement and introduction of research or pre-research courses. In addition to academic improvements, extra-curricular activities of students were strengthened and channelised in *constructive* directions. (1976: ii; emphases added)

The University is now, therefore, in a position to *pay greater attention to some of its outstanding pending problems such as housing* for its academic and non-academic staff... Needless to say that the spirit of discipline that prevails today will go a long way in enabling the University community to strengthen around [sic] efforts for channelising the positive activities of the students and in creating a spirit of dedication among all sections, a spirit for which the University stands.” (ibid: ix; emphasis added)

It is important to keep in mind that these annual reports are sent to senior administrators, professors, and government officials like the Delhi University chancellor (the vice president of India) and the same national leaders who gave themselves emergency powers, controlled university funding, or could be involved in the appointment of senior administrators. Official documents would not have openly opposed government policies in any case, even more so in a situation where dissenters were being imprisoned, but the praise here was probably not

disingenuous either, particularly as IP Singh was still expressing similar sentiments four decades later. This annual report frames the campus situation in the same way he did. It even uses the same language of channeling student activism and energies into “constructive directions,” implying the ongoing dissent was destructive. While we can’t be sure, this is unlikely to be a coincidence because, as the proctor, Singh would have been the obvious person to consult with in the preparation of any part of the report addressing discipline on campus.

In addition to echoing Singh’s administrative perspective, the report helps make the meaning of “constructive” more explicit. According to the report, the atmosphere of fear the Emergency created helped facilitate “normalcy” in the university. Normalcy meant the quieting of protest and campus political activity, accompanied by its replacement with “discipline” and “dedication,” described as what the institution stands for. Those things also meant the administration could focus more of its attentions on implementing its programmatic agenda and fulfilling responsibilities to meet certain needs of members of the university community. One of those responsibilities was to provide housing, which has long been short in supply and, thus, a problem discussed in annual reports regularly for some time. For example, for many years after VKRV Rao founded D School, the annual reports would mention the inadequate housing for its students and the need to build a hostel for them.

Hostel life is where the university reaches peak totality as an institution. The person in charge of the hostel is called the “warden.” Like many other complexes and units on the campus and in the city, they are gated and guarded. Entry and exit is even more strictly monitored and generally forbidden during curfew hours. The quality of the accommodations varies considerably. As an

example, during my own short stay at a girls' hostel in Lucknow, even as a woman much older than the mostly college-age residents, although the warden agreed to let me leave and re-enter in the evening for fieldwork, I was required to submit a written application explaining why it was necessary and obtain special permission in advance of each occasion. If the guard was not aware of the special permission, I had to wait outside until he located the warden and verified that he could let me back in. While I was there, a CCTV camera was installed in the dining hall to catch students if they attempted to pilfer any of the barely edible food (on which I broke a tooth). A male staff member once locked me in my room from the outside, and I spent several minutes shouting for other students to help me escape. To their credit, the other residents were quite friendly. I'd had it on good authority that this hostel was one of the more lenient and well-run.

The levels of surveillance, confinement, and even quality of food in student hostels are highly gendered. This issue garnered progressively more attention after the brutal gang rape and murder of a young woman student in Delhi in December 2012 provoked massive protests, particularly by young Delhiites, and led to widespread public discussions (including a day-long seminar at D School) about issues of women's safety in the city as well as the confinement or shaming of women taking place in the name of their protection. Of particular concern to many women students were the draconian rules they were subjected to in hostels, such as curfew times early in the day that made it difficult for them to take advantage of the full study hours of the library, to complete lab work in the sciences, or just to go out and enjoy the city. These discussions helped build momentum towards what eventually became the *Pinjra Tod* (literally: "Break the Cage") Delhi student movement demanding government officials take action against excessive restrictions and abuses of power in women's hostels.

One of the common dismissals of student activism across all these examples—the Emergency, *Pinjra Tod*, and the JNU protests mentioned—is the characterization of their actions as being at odds with an idea of the kind of student educational institutions are supposed to produce and the aims they “stand for.” For instance, the annual report excerpts above depict student dissent and political activity as, at best, a serious distraction impeding the proper functioning of the institution; rather than behaving so destructively, the report’s ideal student would demonstrate “discipline” and “dedication” to academic studies (measured in relation to “time in the classrooms”).

Over time, as the university grew exponentially, the idea that it should provide housing to all the students and employees needing it would become increasingly unrealistic, even as the kinds of services the institution attempted to provide seemed to expand (from health care to affordable food, its own post office, and access to banking). This “handling of many human needs by the bureaucratic organization of whole blocks of people,” is, according to Goffman, “the key fact of total institutions” (1958: 45). The societal interdependence necessary to handle such diverse needs is also one of the main reasons no institution can ever be a completely total institution, not even prisons. Goffman himself described the concept as an ideal type (1961: 5) and distinguished between institutional functions and representations: “Many total institutions... seem to function merely as storage dumps for inmates, but... usually present themselves to the public as rational organizations designed consciously... as effective machines for producing a few officially avowed and officially approved ends” (ibid: 74).

Regardless of how complete the level of control or separation from an external broader society may be, the extent to which institutions are imagined to be total is in itself important. With regard to prisons, Farrington argued that it's the "image" and "shared construction of reality" (1992: 18) of the total institution that is important to analyze in that it allows us "to believe we have solved at least a portion of our crime problem... Even if our nation's prisons do not really make the crime problem any better, we can gain some solace from the fact that they are able to satisfy — at least in the short term — our desire to protect ourselves and our loved ones, by removing from our streets... some of our most dangerous and unpredictable peers" (ibid: 22), "adhering to this myth of the prison as total institution... protects our images of ourselves and the social order in which we live" (ibid: 23). Are educational institutions, like Delhi University, then also serving to protect certain images of the societies in which they are placed? What kinds of tensions does an idea of the university as a storage dump for scholars and students reflect? If teachers and students are, as the annual report suggested, only properly fulfilling their roles when their "disciplined" energies are "dedicated" to studying, research, and classroom learning, then does the university as total institution serve to generate innovation, or to protect a broader society from the perceived potential dangers of the "wrong" kinds of innovation? At least in the historical case of the Emergency, it is fairly clear that the very control that administrators characterized as constructive in allowing them to implement and maintain a focus on academic programs served to stifle critical or innovative scholarship that could (be imagined to) threaten the status quo. The institution was there, from an administrative perspective, largely to encourage scholars to "paint" (or innovate) within the lines. While the arrests and lack of meaningful legal recourse may then have made for less fuzzy lines and raised the stakes for crossing them, many

of the “controlling processes” (Nader 1997) at work in the institution³¹ were not specific to that time period.

Moral Relations

One might be surprised to learn, then, that IP Singh disapproved of some of the ways police and the university administration were responding to student protests and dissent more recently, during my fieldwork:

I was so shocked that they used water cannon on students and they were injured. Now, this is very wrong... our policy has been—with all the eight vice chancellors I worked with—that the only way to keep the students satisfied or happy is talk to them. Don't shut your doors... But we talked. And they accepted it. And afterwards they would come back satisfied. But these people, he doesn't want to talk, and he is not able, he's using this water cannon for the students. This is extremely wrong. If I was there I would stand myself against the—when this happened, in police headquarters we were there, and we stood with the students... And students never harmed me... I used to walk in, into the students' mob, and they respected it. Students are students. They're like our children. And what we do is treat them as children. After all, parents also scold their children, they also give them a beating sometimes. But this is not supposed—they are not meaning to hurt them. They do it because they think this will be useful for them.

Singh framed his quite consciously paternalistic view of the relation between students and university administrators as a moral and familial one. We've seen how, on a more individual level, academic relationships can involve kinship, and that ideas about how such kinship works can affect how scholars relate to each other (e.g., in terms of insiders and outsiders), but does this

³¹ That power of institutionalization is arguably evidenced in Goffman's theory of total institutions in that it focuses, even depends, on delimiting the scope of analysis to interactions internal to these institutions. The valuable insights this perspective can provide simultaneously neglect important aspects of broader social, political, and historical processes. Goffman opposed the idea of studying up, down, and sideways (Nader 1972), saying, “No, no, no we don't know how to do that kind of work” (Nader 2017).

extend to the university as a whole? What does it mean for kinship to exist within this kind of bureaucratic institution? If we were to stick with Goffman's view, such a phenomenon would be a contradiction in terms, as he actually defined total institutions in opposition to family life, writing:

Total institutions are also incompatible with another crucial element of our society, the family. Family life is sometimes contrasted with solitary living, but in fact the more pertinent contrast is with batch living, for those who eat and sleep at work, with a group of fellow workers, can hardly sustain a meaningful domestic existence... Whether a particular total institution acts as a good or bad force in civil society, force it will have, and this will in part depend on the suppression of a whole circle of actual or potential households... The total institution is a social hybrid, part residential community, part formal organization; therein lies its special sociological interest... each is a natural experiment on what can be done to the self. (1961: 11-12)

The logic there is that living in a total institution where batches of people eat, sleep, and work together, precludes the possibility of living with family. If that is the case, then total institutions are particularly interesting *because* of their circumvention of familial ties, which are generally integral to conceptions of personhood and self. However, to an extent, this view underestimates the capacity of human beings to make kin and the persistence of kinship through time while, ironically, not fully appreciating the importance of social constructions of space in favor of the bureaucratic in institutional settings. These are complicated questions to work through. In the context of universities, for example, Prendergast and Abelmann have explored similar contradictions, concluding that "universities are both families and corporate entities. Pernicious are those attempts at glib renderings of university family, such as today's *in loco parentis*, that obscure all difference (often in the name of diversity) or explain away all difference with the logic of market value, such as *MyRichUncle*" (2006: 51). Their focus was on ideas of a university as a whole as a family, for example, in the legal concept that they act in the place of

parents or the notion of an “alma mater,” as well as on how narratives of academic sponsors or patrons supposedly compensating for the disadvantaged resources of model students of lower socioeconomic background can serve to hide and reproduce broader social inequalities.

By now, it should be no surprise that these issues arose in conversations with IP Singh as well. He actually spoke about intellectual kinship and ideas of the university as family and his own family together. On one occasion, in the car as he and his driver were giving me a ride back to the Vishwavidyalaya (university) metro station, IP Singh was talking about family, a frequent topic when we weren't discussing the university or anthropology. He was very proud of his own children and grandchildren, and he had strong opinions on changes he'd observed among families in India more broadly. He started talking about his view that the joint family is now breaking apart, that everyone is doing their own thing, and he said it's also like that with the department and university. He said, it used to “work like a family; now it's individualistic.”

I asked him, “How do you mean ‘like a family’?”

He gave me a few examples. In the moment, I was a bit impatient listening to the first example, as I thought I was more interested in Delhi University and the anthropology department than his children and grandchildren, but I realized my error later, as it was significant that he saw this particular combination of examples as relevant to helping convey his meaning. He described a family event where they were with his son's teacher, who thought of and treated Singh's grandson like his own grandson. They'd go to each other's family events, he explained. At one of these gatherings, this professor took Singh's grandson into a room and, turning off a light,

showed him the stars on the walls and told him about them. The story showed how this professor cared for the child.

The second story was about a then-senior professor in the anthropology department recollecting to him how, when they were students, they would come to the department and tell him [IP Singh] about what had happened on the bus ride and such, just as they would with their own father. But he said, now “times have changed” on both sides, the faculty not caring as much about students and the students not respecting the faculty as much.

His third story was about another anthropology professor’s son. This colleague came and told IP Singh that his son wanted to join the Indian Police Service and his wife was trying to force their son to join an administrative service, like something dealing with taxes, because if he joined the police he could be posted to potentially dangerous places, whereas in administrative jobs he’d be in cities. This professor asked for help for his son. Singh told his colleague that it depended on “what the boy wants.” He asked the colleague whether they get promotions more quickly in administrative or police jobs, and it turned out that the police service had more rapid opportunities for promotion. Singh said he told the professor, Well, if he does administrative work and ten years from now, his friends are advancing more than him and he’s not doing as well as he could have been in the police, he’ll never forgive you. Singh ended the story saying that the son is now doing quite well, he’s in an important position where he has lots of people running around doing things for him, and so his mom is quite happy.

Next, he told the story of a professor in another science department at DU. Apparently, this professor had fallen in love with his research assistant. He wanted to divorce his wife and kick her out of their (university-provided) home. His wife refused to leave. Since this professor was in a position of power in the university, he responded by refusing to pay the electric bill, so the electricity to the house was cut off. His wife went to the vice chancellor to ask for help. He said he didn't know what he could do about her husband, since he was just the VC, but she told him he was the "head of the family." There was an implication that this appeal had some sort of an effect on the VC, but Singh didn't get into what happened next.

Finally, as we neared the metro station, IP Singh mentioned how he used to invite everyone in the department over to his house on his birthday. He said, Now, if you invite, you only get 50%. People say it's not their job. I asked him about why he thought this change (from "family" to "individualism") had happened. He answered that it was because of "prosperity" and "ego."

These stories are clearly colored by Singh's perspective as a retired professor and former administrator. That doesn't necessarily make them inaccurate, though, at least during my fieldwork, DU anthropology students were still going to some professors (especially trusted younger ones) not only to talk about how they were doing, but also even to seek personal or relationship advice. The change Singh's former student turned senior professor perceived in student-teacher relationships might just as easily be attributed (among other possible explanations) to idiosyncrasies of individual personalities or ways of relating changing with differences in age. All of the examples of familial behavior Singh cited emphasized specific interpersonal relationships, reciprocity, and care as examples of how the institution as a whole

worked. Were these behaviors familial? And did they translate to the university as a whole? It can often be easier to view them as such from a position of power. This is evident in how Singh distinguished between familial and contractual relationships. His familial view of academic relationships had allowed Singh to expect extra-contractual investments of time and care (like attending a birthday party, or guarding conference/lecture venues) from colleagues and students, whereas his colleague's wife's appeal to family did not carry quite the same force of obligation with the vice chancellor, who attempted to emphasize the limits of his contractual role as "just the VC." None of this in itself necessarily contradicts the idea that the university could be a family. Families and kinship are often established through contracts and, although IP Singh's examples focused more on the positive, exploitation and abuse are common among kin as well. But it does highlight that characterizing the university as family or not in any given situation carries certain kinds of stakes and can involve particular interests.

One part of the changes that Singh was noticing may relate to the growth of the university over time and a corresponding shift from a more face-to-face to a more "face-to-faceless" (Nader 2002: 55) setting. The sole use of examples of individual interpersonal interactions to support a concept of university as family loses much of the cohesiveness it may have held four decades earlier, in the context of what is now an institution with hundreds of thousands of students.³²

Still, Visvanathan's description of Delhi University—during the same time that IP Singh saw it to be working like a family—as an "intellectual plantation" suggests there is more going on.

Although they understood the institution of the 1970s and 80s quite differently, there are actually

³² At the time of this writing, the university literature states "there are 16 faculties, 86 academic departments, 77 colleges and 5 other recognised institutes spread all over the city, with 132435 regular students (UG: 114494,PG:17941) and 261169 students (UG:258831,PG:2338) in non-formal education programme" (University of Delhi 2018).

significant resonances between Shiv Visvanathan's and IP Singh's narratives. Both discuss an institutional "present" that has lost meaning in contrast to a somewhat idealized "past" way of doing education. IP Singh's past familial relationship may have been Visvanathan's present "loyalty count," but both were critical of what they saw as excessively instrumentalized and market-oriented approaches to academic relationships (e.g., viewing collegiality in terms of job duties, or turning an institution into a maker of bureaucrats), and preferred a past in which intellectual life and community were more about interpersonal relationships (i.e., "it used to work like a family" or "[t]he old notion of master and disciple"). IP Singh and Shiv Visvanathan were certainly not the first or only scholars to bemoan a depersonalization of education in relation to a tension between the moral/familial/personal on the one hand, and the market-driven/institutional/bureaucratic on the other. A wide variety of critiques of "corporatization," "privatization," "commodification," and the "neoliberal" in universities (among other terms) echo similar sentiments and expand on them extensively. David F. Noble, for example, described something similar through his distinction between training and education:

[T]raining involves the honing of a person's mind so that his or her mind can be used for the purposes of someone other than that person. Training thus typically entails a radical divorce between knowledge and the self. Here knowledge is usually defined as a set of skills or a body of information designed to be put to use, to become operational, only in a context determined by someone other than the trained person; in this context the assertion of self is not only counterproductive, it is subversive to the enterprise. Education is the exact opposite of training in that it entails not the disassociation but the utter integration of knowledge and the self, in a word, self-knowledge. Here knowledge is defined by and, in turn, helps to define, the self. Knowledge and the knowledgeable person are basically inseparable.

Education is a process that necessarily entails an interpersonal (not merely interactive) relationship between people—student and teacher (and student and student) that aims at individual and collective self-knowledge. (Whenever people recall their educational experiences they tend to remember above all not courses or subjects or the information imparted but people, people who changed their minds or their lives, people who made a

difference in their developing sense of themselves. It is a sign of our current confusion about education that we must be reminded of this obvious fact: that the relationship between people is central to the educational experience.) Education is a process of becoming for all parties, based upon mutual recognition and validation and centering upon the formation and evolution of identity. The actual content of the educational experience is defined by this relationship between people and the chief determinant of quality education is the establishment and enrichment of this relationship. (2001: 2)

Noble was making this distinction in the context of training near its extremes: online and distance education. His argument focused less on the medium of education and more on the fact that the profit-driven logic behind it failed to recognize that quality education (in contrast to training) is necessarily labor-intensive and, thus, expensive (Noble 2001: 4). And though, with the appropriate resources and labor, interpersonal relationships may be established at a distance, that online and distance learning so often serve as excellent examples of the limitations of training is a sign of the importance of space and residence.

Goffman's total institutions (or "storage dumps") take some level of bureaucratically controlled group confinement in the same space as their basis, but outside of kinship and family. Another way in which social scientists have grappled with connections between social organization, relatedness, and space is in the anthropological literature on "house societies." The concept was originally Levi-Strauss's suggestion for how to make sense of kinship among certain groups of people (e.g., Kwakiutl, Yurok, medieval European nobility) whose kinship practices did not fit so nicely into recognized categories like "matrilineal" or "patrilineal." Levi-Strauss found that these groups shared an overlap between "filiation and residence... brought about by the simultaneous existence of what... one may call, as in ancient Europe, 'noms de race' (ancestral names) and 'noms de terre' (territorial names)" (1982: 179). He recognized supporting institutions of these societies in the "'towns' among which the population distributed itself; and, above all, within

each town, the ‘houses’... constitut[ing] jural entities” (ibid: 172-3), and defined as “a corporate body holding an estate made up of both material and immaterial wealth, which perpetuates itself through the transmission of its name, its goods, and its titles down a real or imaginary line, considered legitimate as long as this continuity can express itself in the language of kinship or of affinity and, most often, of both” (ibid: 174).

Levi-Strauss’s phrase “in the language of kinship” is important to note because he didn’t quite see the “house” as kinship. He saw it as an “institutional creation that permits compounding forces which, everywhere else, seem only destined to mutual exclusion because of their contradictory bends... as if, in the last analysis, the spirit... of this institution expressed an effort to transcend, in all spheres of collective life, theoretically incompatible principles” (ibid: 186). He saw houses as resulting from “a latent conflict between the occupants of certain positions in the social structure” (ibid: 186) where

political and economic interests... [that] have not yet overstepped the ‘old ties of blood’ ...In order to express and propagate themselves... must inevitably borrow the language of kinship, though it is foreign to them, for none other is available. And inevitably too, they borrow it only to subvert it... [by fusing] categories which elsewhere are held to be in correlation with and opposition to each other, but here are henceforth treated as interchangeable: descent can substitute for affinity, and affinity for descent (ibid: 186-7).

Levi-Strauss noted that, in these examples, “the basic units of social structure seem shaped by a supposed descent from a mythic ancestor who built his home in a definite place” (ibid: 164).

Quoting Kroeber on his inability to define a clear system of authority among the Yurok, he described, instead, men “whose wealth, and their ability to retain and employ it, have clustered about them an aggregation of kinsmen, followers, and semi-dependents to whom they dispense assistance and protection” (ibid: 172). Much of this has clear parallels to the narratives we’ve

seen of academic departments: founding, almost exclusively male, ancestral figures who built a department in a definite place and with control over various kinds of capital that clusters about them an aggregation of intellectual kin followers, and semi-dependents to whom they dispense assistance and protection.

Walls

Some of the importance of “houses” can be seen in how they are physically built and the meanings involved in that process. In the case of the Delhi University anthropology department, IP Singh volunteered an account of his involvement in building the department, “in terms of the building.”

The anthropology department was first based in the arts faculty building. “When we shifted here,” he began, “I probably told you that we went there [the arts faculty] because there was no money to complete that building. But then we wanted to be in science faculty... So we are to come in this complex. And since law faculty got money for their own building outside, they had this building, and law was the prime department... because Sir Maurice Gwyer [1878-1952], the founder vice chancellor, he was the chief justice of India. So he liked law... But then the law had to move, so then he offered that we also had money for our honors classes, that we will take this building, and we’ll give the money to law to complete their building. But what we inherited was, there [was] no left wing. That was added [later]. On the other side, there was no front wing. And, where you have science library now, there used to be that law faculty club, students’ club. So we had to fight, and there was no money.”

This colonial building the anthropology department inherited from the law faculty became the subject of a great deal of long-term political maneuvering. At one point, when the dean of the science faculty, a zoologist who did not like PC Biswas, was looking for a location to establish the new science library, he attempted to take over the anthropology department's space for their anthropology museum (formerly the law faculty library). Biswas and the department were forced to fight to keep the space.

Singh continued, "Then Professor [Chintaman Dwarkanath] Deshmukh [1896-1982; DU vice chancellor, 1962-1967] luckily came and saw and he allowed us to have the museum here. And now they wanted to open the library somewhere. And science faculty wanted it in its own complex here. So [the science faculty dean] was there and this fellow [Ram Charan] Mehrotra [1922-2004], he was the vice chancellor [1974-79], he was a chemist. And I believe chemists have no aesthetic sense. We had a beautiful view of the rose garden. And, he agreed to [locate the library] in [one] portion on this corner, left corner. They began to dig foundation for the science library to come up there, which would have spoiled our view and everything, and also looked very odd. So we protested, but then the vice chancellor... [asked, then] where should we go? But then the other faculty members from physics and—they all got together and made a big noise that this'll spoil the view and you find some other place. So committee was formed, and of course I was there... [as a senior administrator, and other senior] officers were there, sitting down to find a solution." A proposal was made to put the science library in the former law faculty club building belonging to the anthropology department.

Sometime previously, as the anthropology department had not been making heavy use of the building, when the geology department was founded and waiting for its own building to be constructed, it was given some space in the law faculty club building. Once their building was ready and geology was preparing to move, IP Singh “kept on writing to the university that, I’m short of space, I must have rooms.” The university refused at first, but Singh continued to press them for space: “We said, nothing doing, please, give us at least one room, because I knew if I put one foot down, inside, then nobody—I will have my say. So I got one room. And I put first-year class there, myself, and [a] practical [class], so that we [would be] using it.” Now that the university was looking for space for the science library and the others at the meeting were suggesting taking the department’s space for it, Singh used it as leverage to negotiate an addition to the main anthropology building: “I said, I have no objection, you can take this building, but you have to construct an equal amount of construction in the building to add to my front... I don’t mind. So the dean of colleges said, Dr. Singh is acting like a Shylock—he’s the professor of English. I said, if it’s for my department, I will act more than a Shylock.” Singh laughed, “This is no question, this is a give and take; you take this space, give me this space here. Before that, I got one room which is on the corner... that we constructed. We said, no no no, we have less space. So we kept on fighting, then we got for one room... then we added [to it]. So that’s why that room doesn’t have the veranda. This side came only with the IUAES conference in 1978.”

“They built it for the conference,” I responded.

“The right side,” he clarified, “The right, on our left side... where [naming the professors who were then using the space] sit, they sit. Now that place was open.”

“That was open?”

“Just open. Nothing. So people used to walk. This was a—people from physics, from chemistry would walk through the lawns of our department and go through the main gate out. This saved them distance... And we had Professor [BN] Ganguli [1902-1978; DU vice chancellor, 1967-1969], a very nice and kind-hearted person, he came. We said, Sir, put in some fence, we have trouble. So they put some fence with wire; it break within ten days, within a week. So we said, build a wall here... He said, no, I can't see. He came [to] check, and he found a path [worn in the ground from foot traffic]... So that path was there. So he said, but you see, people are using it, so this is a useful path to go. And we had got that cold storage for water... on the corner. I said, Sir, it's not only that, people come here and drink—take away the cold water at night, to their rooms, and in the morning we don't have. He said, No, no, people are using it. We said, no, people are using it, but it's meant for the students, in the morning they get hot water. So, but [Ganguli insisted], 'It is, I think it is useful for people to do it.' We said, well, nothing will happen with him, with this. But then the next vice chancellor [KN Raj (1924-2010; DU VC 1969-1970)] came and I began to make the plea that the whole [IUAES] congress is coming, and we are... we are the hosts, and what will they see? Too many people, two thousand people... come from abroad, and what they will see? Anthropology department of Delhi University is just like this? Open? So they said, [there's] no money. Then, we had to wait for five years, and if we wait for [the government's next five-year] plan, then the conference will be over. So they said that we

have some money for minor works, five lakhs, so I said, give us from [the] five lakhs. Then they asked the engineer, chief engineer, because being in the office—university team, they all knew me and I would help them and they would help me. So I said, well, find a way out. He said, Sir, what can I do? You need three rooms here, so, and three rooms is more than one lakh, and this minor works says, you can't have—it's only five lakhs total, and you can't get more than one lakh for one project. So what we can do, we can ask for tender for three rooms, separately. So he asked for tender for [each room]... separate[ly]. So it was less than one lakh [each].”

Unfortunately, actually getting that funding and constructing the additions in time for the congress would prove much more challenging: “But then, you have the committee, and André Béteille used to be there on the committee. And I was supposed to be there, but I said I was with too many meetings, so I said, I don't want to be on this building committee... So that committee, they couldn't meet, because the vice chancellor was busy. And conference was approaching. So I would keep on writing and, then the vice chancellor—we need this, I said, do something. VC's not given time to hold a meeting and conference is—when will you construct? When [will] you get tender and all that? So we advertised the tender, and after the tender, so the meeting couldn't be held, the work was awarded to somebody, [through a] contract. Of course, there was four contracts... So [the contractor] began to dig, and he filled the foundations, ...[and then when] we were going a little up, the meeting was held. And there, everybody fumed, that, what is this? There is only five lakhs, and they are meant for putting a small room here, a small room bathroom there, ...and we have given 4.35 lakhs to Department of Anthropology, and this is not correct. André [Béteille] fumed great deal, and shouted. So, naturally, one person shouts, another

should join. And I was not there to put them down, but I heard everything... So ultimately, they said, stop this [project].”

“Stop it?” I asked, puzzled, knowing that the additions were now there.

“Don’t, we can’t do it. We said—then [we] said okay. If the vice chancellor said, if the committee decides that we should stop, we stop. [Someone said], *Haan* [yes], we are stopping it, stop the work. They said we have done wrongly and [it] should not be completed. But then the engineer came, and he said, ‘Sir, we can stop the work if you decide, of course, you are the masters, but we have to pay for the work, what has been done so far, and that will come to about 1.25 lakhs. And, we have to pay compensation for cancelling the contract, that is another one lakh. So we’ll have to pay it, about 2.5 lakhs, anyway, to the contractor.’ So the vice chancellor said, ‘Oh well, I think this is not good, university can’t afford this, that we lose two lakhs for nothing, so let the building be completed, and we record, that no contract ever be given for a construction building unless the committee meeting is held,’ and we got it through. Of course, when the [congress] came, our building was up; we were still plastering when they came.”

A recurring passing topic in stories—not only from senior people with long institutional memories, like IP Singh, but also even from some of the advanced students I came to know during my fieldwork—about the Delhi University campus were spatial changes that were necessary to understand whatever people were explaining. This information could come up in memories of former professors and colleagues and the spaces or rooms they occupied, in mentions of changes in use of space (e.g., construction of additions, moves between buildings,

social spaces like Uberoi's research room), or in descriptions of pathways taken (past and present). Departments (including D School Sociology and DU Anthropology) often started out with very limited space in a shared or main building. Finding funding for and moving into a building of their own was always an important milestone in becoming properly established. As is clear from Singh's account above, making additions to allow for or accommodate growth was also a major feat. Even general maintenance and landscaping is a sign of how an academic or administrative unit is doing financially; one can tell that funding has been coming in for a unit based on the state of its lawns and flowers. I use the word "unit," not to indicate any kind of parity across departments or colleges, but to emphasize the ways these have all become walled or fenced off from each other over time. This was the most frequently mentioned point of stories involving changes in campus space. People would be talking about how they used to walk from one part of campus to another and then add that, by the way, that was only possible then because many barbed-wire fences, walls, and gates did not yet exist, that the campus was more "open," but now a wall has been installed and students are forced to travel along major streets around campus to get between buildings that are actually fairly close to each other. The fences have effectively increased the distance between buildings that neighbor each other. These additions and divisions parallel the stories the DU annual reports tell of the proliferation of units within the institution. Although the Lucknow Anthropology Department shares a building with many other departments of the faculty of arts, I heard such talk of walls there as well. For example, during a visit to that department, a retired professor began advising teaching and administrative staff to have a gate built at the archway leading into the main entrance, to protect that space for the department and, in doing so, assert itself.

These walls are not quite like those of Goffman's total institutions. At least, in expressing their significance, faculty administrators describe them less in terms of confining or reforming inmates, and more in terms of literally building a collective identity and controlling the resources necessary to maintain its home and social standing. That "corporate body holding an estate made up of both material and immaterial wealth," as Levi-Strauss (1986: 174) put it, is then related through both the "ancestral names" of genealogies of teachers and students as well as through "spatial names" of association with particular "houses." In the context of the University of Delhi (and probably in many other universities), this view can help provide the beginnings of a way to make theoretical sense of kinship formed in and through institutional spaces. From this perspective, IP Singh's political maneuvering—even at risk of being seen as a "Shylock" for his department—can be seen as part of the power plays among a class of nobles advocating for their houses, where hospitality serves as both an important measure of and strategy for building the home. It would have been horrible if the anthropology department had to host someone like Margaret Mead from an inadequate home, but the fact that she was coming was also part of a strategy to improve the stature of that house (in both material and social terms).

The idea of the "house" lends itself well to conceptualizing the spatial processes of building intellectual kinship and academic relationships more generally; for example, how academic spaces connect people of different academic generations who may never have met. This is particularly visible in how alumni often relate to their former "home" departments or universities, how "nostalgic" recollections of particular places (e.g., eating at the canteen, getting readings from the photocopy shop, chatting with friends at the JP Tea Stall, working frantically to meet a supervisor's deadlines in the Ratan Tata Library reading room, sitting with friends on

the sociology lawns, or snacking at a favorite *bhelpuri* food cart outside the D School gates) that they associate with interpersonal experiences that are not just shared, but also experienced as formative in shared ways, as helping to shape or grow people in particular ways. The extent to which this role of the academic house is integrated with intellectual kinship and learning was evident, for example, in how we saw alumni narratives associating different D School “families” (i.e., lineages associated with Uberoi/Das, Béteille, Shah), along with their distinct mentoring styles and intellectual approaches, with different locations of interaction and uses of space in the first chapter.

Accounting for relationships between scholars (and especially alumni), who have a tendency to spread out geographically, in terms of houses defined by fixed locations may seem counter-intuitive at first. However, Bahloul has demonstrated that even among migrants “the imagined house is a mobile concept” (1999: 247) because of how

people re-enact their past physical relation to places and people... [at] family gathering[s] of a ritual nature... The performance of memories of the house allows the illusory reconstitution of family stability. In addition, remembering in family gatherings accentuates the moralization of the past house as a kinship construct... The recounting of Dar-Refayil memoirs, by older relatives to younger ones around a festive table, is a verbal operation of kin communion. Those who recount are related to those who listen, and all are related to the characters evoked in the narrations. Telling memories of the past family house unfolds as the transmission of genealogical knowledge; it is a timeless and symbolic communication between generations in the same speech event (ibid: 247).

Do academics have ritualized family gatherings? Of course they do. They just call these gatherings professional conferences, seminars or, sometimes, honorary lectures and book launches. Indeed, these events, including major conferences of national professional societies, are commonly *hosted* by a particular department that often struggles with organizing the labor

and funds necessary to make such a large event (often including food and housing for attendees) happen. They may not consciously realize that's what they are doing; i.e., it may appear to be an incidental perk that such events happen to attract people of different generations or bring together people with links to the same "ancestral" or "territorial" names. It is no coincidence that such gatherings are often occasion for talk of genealogies, memories of spaces, and honoring ancestors. This sort of talk may seem natural and taken for granted if to people who are part of the group, or while those who are not related may brush it off despite feeling a bit out of place.

Breaking Up the House

Like many ethnographers, I became intimately familiar with that "out of place" feeling, despite commonalities with the academic environment I had come from. One early experience of institutional culture shock came when I could not figure out how to read the program for a national conference of the Indian Sociological Society (ISS). I saw listings of "committee" meetings, but no listing of times or locations associated with particular papers. Every inquiry was met with a question about which committee I belonged to, and then puzzled looks when I replied that I belonged to none. Eventually, after many exasperating attempts to find out when and where any specific paper would be presented, I figured out that each committee would meet in a certain room, and every paper was presented to the committee it was categorized under. It seemed that the most important factor in determining the order of papers was whether the author was actually in the room so that the chair could call him or her up to speak. When I expressed frustration to other attendees about how I was unable to plan which papers to attend, they seemed confused. Why would I want to sit around listening to papers all day? The point of showing up for the

conference was to get a certificate verifying that you presented a paper. The few people who learned what I'd been charged for registration as a foreigner were even further perplexed. Really, who in their right mind would pay 11,000 rupees to attend a conference, *not* present a paper, and *not* get a certificate? Perhaps, they suggested, I should see if I could get a certificate for attending. I was still confused as to why I would want a certificate; it sounded like some sort of symbolic consolation prize. But apparently this document needed to be presented for hiring and employment purposes. Someone mentioned departmental and UGC requirements that faculty provide certificates to prove they presented at a certain number of conferences including national ones. This was an entirely new concept to me.

But, in case I should doubt the significance of the certificate, it seemed that this year the organizers were attempting to force attendance and prevent early departures by centralizing distribution of certificates away from committee chairs to ensure that only people who had presented could get a certificate, and only get them near the end of the conference. This did not sit well with the sociologists, who were complaining and on the verge of revolt. When the time for distribution of certificates came, I witnessed a veritable stampede of sociologists surrounding the poor professor who'd volunteered to organize this. I saw someone curse at him and lift an arm as if to strike the organizer before others held him back. Ultimately, the professor gave up, the certificates were scattered around on a table for people to sort through one by one, and any attempts to organize or restrict access utterly failed—for the time being, the sociological masses had prevailed. I was later assured that this was by no means normal in any conference. Regardless, I found myself more confused than ever as to what on earth had just transpired around me and how it was even possible.

When I first began to consider India as a possible field site, I heard from several scholars of South Asia that I should not go into this research expecting to find any parallels to the discussions around “neoliberalism” and “corporatization” of universities that had captured my interest in the context of the US and many other parts of the world; after all, how can there be corporatization in universities that are funded and run by the government? Is that not a contradiction in terms? Leaving aside how that ignores the relatively recent proliferation of private universities in India, the term “corporatization” (however it is defined) implies a process, rather than a fixed administrative state. At the very least, the systems I saw in place at the ISS conference reflected the presence of “audit cultures” (Strathern 2000) that have become pervasive in academic institutions around the world, while simultaneously treating scholars with a default of suspicion, surveillance, and rewards/punishments that are designed to encourage engaging with the institution (and eventually peers and students) in terms of gaming a system. In this case, the system of certification and documentation was justified as ostensibly in place to prevent fraud and ensure “fairness” and “objectivity” in point-based appointments and merit promotions. As we have seen in earlier chapters, such bureaucratic rules barely even achieve the appearance of fairness or objectivity; in some cases, their enforcers can prove to be the greatest violators. More importantly, over the course of my fieldwork, I began to hear many academics themselves critiquing their institutions and policies in terms of “privatization” and “neoliberalism.”

In the summer of 2014, I was spending a great deal of time in the Delhi University archives going through its old annual reports. While I was there, a major controversy unfolded as the then

newly elected BJP government began to flex its political muscle to fulfill its and the ABVP's campaign promise to "rollback" the vastly unpopular Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP). DU had begun admitting undergraduates under the FYUP the previous year, after it had been pushed through in rather authoritarian fashion by the also unpopular then-Vice Chancellor Dinesh Singh. I hadn't attempted to investigate the issue in depth, as the students I was working with were almost all post-graduate students, and much of the politics of the DU Students' Union seemed a bit removed from their lives. However, I was aware of the controversy, given that one could hardly walk across campus without passing signs advocating against the plan to completely change undergraduate education at DU. I had heard and read a number of commentaries on the issue. Some emphasized that the VC had called meetings of academic decision-making bodies without adequate notice or at times when most faculty were away on breaks, so as to ensure those amenable to his cause would be more likely to attend and vote. Some discussed the speed at which the plan was pushed through, forcing faculty to completely overhaul and create new curricula and syllabi in a period of weeks or less. Others criticized how this effort was attempting to emulate American higher education and had been justified in terms of providing students with greater breadth (as opposed to more specialized emphasis on majors) at the undergraduate level. Critics questioned whether the plan would even achieve that, given how it was pushed through without meaningful consultation with faculty, albeit with the encouragement of ministers of the previous Congress Party-ruled government.

In June, just before it was time for admissions to begin, the newly appointed minister of Human Resource Development (HRD, under which the UGC falls), Smriti Irani, initially appeared to be emphasizing DU's status as an "autonomous institution" and, thus, the existence of limitations

on her ability to interfere. But not long later, the UGC issued an order to DU to get rid of the FYUP. The DU Academic Council passed a resolution to keep the 3-year bachelor's program, and make the 4th year optional for anyone who wanted an “Honours” degree, in effect keeping the FYUP. The UGC wrote another, sterner order to DU to only admit students for a 3-year degree or else lose government funding, which would have effectively closed down university colleges and institutes that didn't have other funding (i.e., wealthy alumni). The VC asked the Supreme Court to hear a case arguing that this was infringing upon the autonomy of the university, but the Supreme Court declined. The High Court was on vacation and refused to hear the case before the beginning of July, which would have meant an even more significant delay in the admissions process for the thousands of applicants from around the country who had descended upon Delhi. The whole situation was creating a crisis of determining who could make decisions or give orders in the university and by what process. Suddenly, people were trying to figure out the meanings of positions, like “Chancellor” and “Pro-Chancellor,” that they had usually taken for granted as practically ceremonial. The ordinary bureaucratic functioning of the university had become a legal question.

I was in the former viceregal lodge, where the VC's office is (as well as the university archives) when a bunch of students who were doing a one-month history internship there were checking the news online and saw all the major news outlets were reporting that the VC had resigned; it was the top story, the talking heads were still debating it later on the evening news. The woman in charge of the students instructed them to leave, not to talk to the press outside the gates, and to wait for her to contact them in the morning to let them know whether to come in the next day—apparently, the archive and the students' internship were projects supported by the VC and so

might disappear with his resignation. The students were also worried because many of them were in a new four-year interdisciplinary “BTech in Humanities” degree program the VC had started. It later became apparent that this resignation announcement was not official and the VC had not actually resigned. Celebrations around campus had been premature. Later, DU issued a statement that they would get rid of the FYUP. As some of the rhetoric advocating for the FYUP had been about making the university more like US universities, likewise some of the rhetoric against it was about not following the US. Many of those who had opposed the FYUP on grounds that it had been passed through authoritarian means were also against the way the UGC (and in effect, though not in name, the new government) was threatening the autonomy of the university.

This was, of course, neither the first nor the last of major policy changes coming from the UGC. Years earlier, for example, there had been policies implemented to force the university to switch from a year-long system (with examinations at the end of the year) to a semester system and moving academic titles from a lecturer/reader/professor system to an assistant professor/associate professor/professor system. Not long after the ending of admissions to the FYUP, DU was forced to comply with a new national system called the Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS). CBCS was supposed to put syllabi at universities and colleges around the country on par with each other, and allow for the easy transfer of credits between institutions for any students who needed to move. Personally, I found the idea of the UGC dictating what should be taught disconcerting, knowing that DU was already among the best universities in India, and coming from a system where instructors have considerably more individual freedom to decide what to teach rather than being forced to teach material that may not have even been officially updated in over a decade or papers that exclude major topics like gender (see Palriwala 2012). In the months after I left India,

there was a move at the UGC to end “non-NET” fellowships (for PhD students who had not passed the NET exam), under the guise of protecting funding for the most meritorious, a term of thinly veiled casteism as Subramanian (2015) has pointed out. This move was met with an “Occupy UGC” movement of students sitting outside the UGC headquarters in Delhi, demanding not only the continuation, but also the expansion of fellowships that were crucial to helping lower-income students access post-graduate education. Lest anyone confuse this writing with some sort of superior expertise, suffice it to say that the sharpest critiques I have seen of such UGC policies have come from Indian academics. While I was fumbling around trying to see the connections between these policy changes, a number of them (in spite of ever present internal debates) were hitting the proverbial nail on its head. Doing so generally requires seeing through the UGC’s misleading language and policy justifications.

One helpful aid in this pursuit is known as the Ambani-Birla Report or, officially, the “Report on a Policy Framework for Reforms in Education” (Ambani and Birla 2000) put together by a “Special Subject Group on Policy Framework for Private Investment in Education, Health and Rural Development” for the Prime Minister’s Council on Trade and Industry. Mukesh Ambani was the convenor of the group and Kumarmangalam Birla was a member. Anyone familiar with India will immediately recognize these names as they belong to two of the wealthiest billionaires representing two of the most influential families in India, with Ambani heading Reliance Industries and Birla the Aditya Birla Group. It’s important to note that their report was not written by or for any sort of educational council—these two men would be completely unqualified to develop education policy in and of itself—rather, it was produced in consideration of the relevance of education to the interests of trade and industry. Some of the recommendations

in the Ambani-Birla Report include: defunding and largely privatizing higher education, increasing vocational training in universities, creating a system of transferable credits and similar national educational material to allow students to move between institutions, attracting international students, and creating free market conditions for private industry in education. Every one of these measures has either already been put in place or been attempted, regardless of what party was in power. It's easier to begin to see these policies as connected when influential business leaders have issued a public report pushing the government to take the very measures that are slowly coming to pass.

A recent example, at the time of this writing in early 2018, is a controversy about the UGC granting “autonomy” to a number of institutions. On the face of it, autonomy seems like something to celebrate. Was it not the lack of respect for university autonomy that was the source of objection with the rollback of the FYUP? However, this “autonomy” would continue to give the UGC substantial control over the institutions (for example, requiring them to remain in compliance with the CBCS), while relieving the government of much of its responsibilities to provide funding, though those institutions would then be encouraged to make up for the funding through vocational courses, public-private partnerships and, of course, increased fees (or lower-quality distance education) to make quality higher education less accessible for even more of the general population. This is all justified as a kind of self-sufficiency (Bhattacharya and Ramdev 2018) that would also have the added effect of further opening up a lucrative higher education market to private companies, both foreign and domestic. All of it had been explicitly outlined and recommended in the interests of private industry 18 years earlier.

Speaking or organizing in opposition to these and other administrative, state, or corporate-supported measures can sometimes have severe consequences for academics. A few—water cannons, arrests, intelligence surveillance, labels of “anti-national”—have already come up. I would like to draw your attention to another potential consequence that will seem quite minor in comparison to those, but that is particularly relevant to this discussion. Late in my fieldwork, I came to learn that the D School sociology department was hiring. A number of the recent graduates and advanced students of the department were applying. When time came for interviews, many were waiting their turns patiently in a holding room at the viceregal lodge building all day long. Everyone was quite curious to find out who would be hired. Eventually, I heard the news through some of the students: The two men who had just been hired were from outside D School. One had not yet even earned his doctorate. The other had previously been involved with student politics giving him connections with university administrators. These people were vastly less qualified than other candidates. They named some of the D School alumni who had applied, people whom I had come to consider not only friends, but also sharp and eminently qualified colleagues. The explanation they gave was that this was the vice chancellor’s way of punishing the department because many in sociology had opposed his Four-Year Undergraduate Programme. Now that the public drama was over and he had not resigned, he was exacting his revenge. I shared in their shock.

By this point, what I might have previously regarded with skepticism as an absurd allegation from the friends of job candidates who felt slighted, now seemed like a very reasonable and plausible explanation. The outrage was not even about the competitive applicants who had been rejected, as much as it was anger at damage being done to both a place I had somehow come to

regard as sacred and a field of study to which I've devoted decades of my life. In all likelihood, I will never know what took place in the hiring process with any great certainty. It is also very possible that the explanation seemed reasonable to me because, after three years in India (and a lifetime around academic institutions), I too had become institutionalized or had internalized some ways of thinking common to my surroundings. Perhaps this was part of the process through which the moral stories of personal and institutional injustice that I had been hearing serve to inspire action in their audiences. Was this different from the allegation that the hiring of Dr. B, the junior archaeologist we encountered earlier, was a "political appointment"? I reminded myself that these new hires, especially facing additional obstacles as "outsiders," deserved a chance. At the same time, the DU anthropology department has never been known for major challenges to the university administration or for rocking the boat politically in any way likely to earn punishment or the wrath of senior officials; on the contrary, for most of its history, it has had faculty participating in senior administrative roles, particularly in the proctor's office. It is easier to believe that, in recent years, senior officials might seek to punish the sociologists in some way. The sociology department has actually hired a fair number of total "outsiders" through its history, certainly in comparison with the other departments I studied, but their qualifications are generally unassailable and a large number have held doctorates from elite foreign institutions.

But why should this be a method of choice for punishment? From a total institutions perspective, one could perhaps argue that a brute exercise of power helps keep the inmates and even the staff in their places. Still, there are so many possible ways of exercising such power. From a house societies perspective, one might say that this particular exercise of power is particularly

significant because of how it not just threatens, but actively works to help break up the “house,” as many of the other “neoliberal” attacks on universities previously discussed arguably also attempt to do. This sort of punishment threatens the continued transmission of “ancestral names” and, particularly, their connection to “territorial names.” The next chapter will look a bit more at some of the reasons such attempts to break up a house can be significant.

Blood and Sweat

While the house societies perspective, like the total institutions perspective, is useful, it too has its limitations. For example, the powers involved here are not simply a battle between academic “nobles” and their houses, but involve national and international political and economic interests. Both perspectives also fail to account for kinship existing, even created and perpetuated, *within* and through bureaucratic institutions. For Goffman’s total institutions, kinship of that sort is a contradiction in terms, an impossibility. For Levi-Strauss’ house societies, it can be characterized as a power struggle that steals and “subverts” the “language of kinship,” for lack of another language, to bring together principles that are “theoretically incompatible.” But if ethnographic evidence suggests something contrary to theory, then it seems appropriate to consider questioning the theory rather than assuming the ethnography is misleading or based on deception. In other words, a lack of appropriate language (theoretical or otherwise) to account for or precisely describe an observable phenomenon does not in itself mean we are not really observing the phenomenon.

These two perspectives need not be seen as incompatible. As mentioned, they both attempted to account for connections between social organization, space, and relatedness. Goffman did this from a more bottom-up perspective, whereas Levi-Strauss focused more on the perspective of nobles heading houses. Both involve separating groups of people—one, more in the name of societal interests, the other, more in the interests of the household, but it is not clear that these are mutually exclusive. Both are about processes of institutionalization—though, this is shared more in the sense of making certain practices more permanent and creating certain kinds of people. And, both assume that kinship somehow precedes the administrative and bureaucratic.

Institutions, space, genealogy, and transmission all shape each other. There are many possible ways to account for how that happens. One is in ideas of kinship as about growth. These can be found in various forms and are vividly expressed in Fox's (1971) discussion of Rotinese kinship terminology and relationships as based on growing people like plants. Similar ideas come up in virtually any discussion of kinship as based on some form of consubstantiality, whether in milk kinship (e.g. Parkes 2005), from (among other things) the heat of a hearth (Carsten 1995), based on the multiple substances involved in Nuer kinship (Hutchinson 2003), or having to do with the sharing of semen among the Etoro (Kelly 1993). Note that some of these ideas of kinship are also related to social conceptions of space and place—growing people like plants is literally based in certain ground, and the heat of a hearth is based on ideas of “house”—so that place is often essential to that process of growth. Ray Kelly has additionally argued that “There is no analytic utility in artificially restricting the category of kin relations to relations predicated on some but not all of the constitutive processes of personhood because these processes are culturally formulated as components of an integral system and the social relations they predicate are all of

the same logical type, i.e., relations of shared substance or shared spirit” (1993:521-2). Noble’s definition of education (as opposed to training) discussed earlier fits very well with all of these views of kinship as about growth.

A similar approach is apparent in what Shryock has referred to as one of Marshall Sahlins’ “auxiliary definitions of kinship” (2013: 278); i.e., “the transmission of life-capacities among persons” (Sahlins 2013: 29; as cited in Shryock 2013: 278). But “transmission” is perhaps too narrow a term for the variety of conceptions and practices of intellectual kinship. Barth has suggested that in “Indian concepts of personhood... Both body and social identity are maintained by the same flow of substances, and... Knowledge is valued highest, as the essence of generative substance” (1993: 648). He saw recitation of lineages of teachers as one part of “tight institutional regulation by a system controlling authorization” (ibid:645-6) to maintain the authority of gurus. While direct transmission can be one way of sharing knowledge as a life capacity, Ingold has argued that:

Knowledge... is not merely applied but generated in the course of lived experience, through a series of encounters in which the contribution of other persons is to orient one's attention... along the same lines as their own... In every such encounter, each party enters into the experience of the other and makes that experience his or her own as well. One shares in the process of knowing, rather than taking on board a pre-established body of knowledge. Indeed in this education of attention, nothing, strictly speaking, is ‘handed down’ at all. The growth and development of the person, in short, is to be understood relationally as a movement along a way of life, conceived not as the enactment of a corpus of rules and principles (or a ‘culture’) received from predecessors, but as the negotiation of a path through the world (Ingold 2000:145-6).

The flexibility in how knowledge can be shared, attention oriented, and persons thus grown, contributes to a flexibility in how intellectual kinship can be understood, created, or torn apart.

The agency of creating that kinship does not simply belong to a “transmitter.” An institution can simultaneously be the hearth, the house, the facilitator or creator of kinship, *and* the source of its destruction. One might ask is all this intellectual kinship merely a historical artifact, a remnant from (as Levi-Strauss put it) before people “overstepped the ‘old ties of blood’,” or is it a more persistent phenomenon? Broadly speaking, kinship has proven far more persistent and resilient than it is often given credit for.

After IP Singh told me the story about how he negotiated the additions and renovations to the anthropology department building before Margaret Mead’s visit, he concluded with the following, as usual with a laugh and a grin to accompany his seriousness and conviction:

So... this is what I tell my students; I say, Look, it is—what we call in Hindi, “*Khun pasine ki kamayi hai* [*literally: it is the earning of blood and sweat*],” it is the blood and the sweat which has built this department... But I believe that nowhere in the world universities have money, and anthropology departments, of course... There is zero. So we have to fight. We have to find ways up and down, get these things done. And André [Béteille]’s still angry with me on that... I told him, he said, No no, you’ve done so much... [I said,] I’ve not done anything; it was the chief engineer who did it.

CHAPTER VI

Limits

In early 2010, the Delhi School of Economics Department of Sociology inaugurated its European Study Centre Programme³³ in the face of protests by students and opposition from many of its own faculty. The program ended before I began my main period of fieldwork, but I still occasionally caught whiffs and mentions of the accompanying controversy. Having read a piece by Gerald Sider (2009) early in graduate school that had somehow made a more lasting impression than I'd realized, come time for fieldwork, I tried not to ask too many direct questions, especially about sensitive topics, so as to leave room for people to share however much they felt comfortable telling me. I did speak to some people about this particular controversy, but much of what they had to say is already expressed or reflected in a variety of texts (e.g., news articles, blog posts, websites, public statements, funding applications). So, while I explore the controversy here in hopes that it may be instructive, I will make minimal references to what people told me specifically. It was clear that, although people with different views on the issue often felt strongly about their positions as a matter of principle, none of them particularly

³³ Some of the publications that came out in association with the program's occasional papers series include: Baisnée and Marchetti 2010; Beaud 2011; Fassin 2010; Gheorghiu et al 2011; Heilbron 2010; Latour 2011; Palriwala 2011; Thapan 2011; and, Thapan and Deka 2010.

enjoyed its divisiveness, being pitted against colleagues or classmates. One professor told me she still has nightmares about the ordeal.

At first, all I knew was that there had been a program where the European Union funded students and professors from the D School sociology department to go do fieldwork studying Europeans. I wondered, naively, why this would be so controversial. If anything, I thought it was overdue; there should be more people from India studying Europeans—and Americans, for that matter. Someone suggested that it was due to a sort of parochialism, that some students and teachers think that Indian sociologists should focus on studying India, that they saw colleagues wanting to study Europe as too oriented toward the west. I was dumbfounded; if some sociologists wanted to focus on their own country, that was their prerogative, but what business did they have trying to prevent colleagues or students from taking advantage of a rare opportunity to do otherwise? Eventually, I learned that a few of the students I'd come to know well were among those who had opposed the program; I had trouble imagining them fitting into simple political caricatures. One pointed me to the archives of the New Socialist Initiative (NSI) student group website, where I found several posts (New Socialist Initiative 2010; Firoz 2011) critical of the program. I also eventually obtained a copy of the funding application to the EU for the program and a statement circulated publicly by some of the sociology faculty members outlining concerns about the program, both in principle and in regard to potential consequences of its implementation. The faculty statement is the most succinct, so rather than paraphrase the concerns, I'll reproduce it here in their own words (without naming the signatories):

European Studies Centre at the Department of Sociology: Some Concerns

1. The Department of Sociology (DoS) at the University of Delhi has received a grant of 300,000 Euros (approximately 2 crores of rupees) from the European Union for a two year period, to set up a European Study Centre. The issue of setting up of a European Study Centre was never discussed and debated in the Department of Sociology's Staff Council, and the group responsible for initiating it informed the faculty only after their proposal was accepted by the EU. This is completely unprecedented in the functioning of the Department.
2. This application makes, ostensibly in the name of the DoS, promises that the EU study centre will redesign the existing sociology syllabi of the MA and M. Phil programs at DoS in consultation with European participants. It also commits itself to framing new syllabi, and teaching them within an interdisciplinary framework, all with European advice.
3. The application to EU states that 'once a European Study Centre Programme is established in the Department of Sociology, it will be integrated into the regular syllabi and ongoing curriculum. There is scant likelihood of European studies being removed from our teaching schedule regardless of EU funding...' And further, 'with the programme as an integral part of the Departmental activities, continuity is inbuilt as the DoS will attract younger scholars and faculty with teaching and research interests in tandem with the goals of the programme.' Setting up of the European Study Centre in the DoS in this manner and to this end amounts to a negation of the identity of this half a century old Department.
4. The focus of the proposed Centre, as set out in the application, is completely at variance with the UGC mandated thrust areas of the Centre for Advanced Study at this Department. According to the Guidelines for Grant applicants, 'the scope of the Study Centres (in India) is delimited to focus exclusively on recent times (from the 20th century and onward), current state of affairs and expected developments in the EU'. There is not only little scope then for discussing the imperial history of some of these nations, but also the unequal power relationships between the nations constituting the EU is beyond its purview. 'Location' in terms of intellectual hegemony is perhaps more important than it ever was in Indian education.
5. The study of Europe and European works by individual faculty and students has always been and continues to be encouraged in the Department. Indeed, much existing sociological theory has a Eurocentric focus. A renewed focus on European studies would come at the expense of strengthening a comparative focus with other parts of the world, such as South America and Africa, which have much to contribute to the development of world sociology and anthropology.
6. The Department has a major role to play in Indian higher education and in furthering the discipline of sociology in India. This cannot be ensured if a large number of faculty and students are occupied with establishing the European studies centre at the Department. At precisely the time when the Department has expanded its role in training larger numbers of students and in training students of underprivileged sections of society,

the focus of the Department has been set to shift to a study of contemporary Europe.

7. Under this program, a few students in the Department will be selected to go on a 6 weeks all expenses paid “field-trip” to select countries in Europe. We certainly need to do research on Europe as on other societies, but we need it on our own terms and not necessarily with EU funding. The offer of such a short ‘research’ trip abroad sends out negative signals to our students regarding the department’s priorities in encouraging substantial, long-term field research. Moreover, only 25% of our research students at the M. Phil and Ph.D. level receive fellowships and those too not adequate to support them, let alone any kind of research.

8. A fundamental distinction needs to be made between the autonomy of individual faculty and students to pursue research of their choice, and the focus and character of a public institution of higher learning. Any change in the latter must follow a transparent and democratic process of discussion. Past practices, Departmental traditions and focus areas may be changed on the basis of an open debate, but cannot be dispensed with selectively.

Given the enormity of the decision to set up a European Study Centre within an existing Department of Sociology, it should have involved a serious democratic and transparent debate. It is in the interest of restoration of institutional autonomy and democracy in Indian Higher Education that we are widely circulating this statement to initiate a public debate.

Beginning with its title, the list of concerns frames the issue as about a European Study *Centre*.

This was actually a major point of contention: was the funding intended for a “centre” or a “programme”? Those opposed to the project alleged that their colleagues had changed the name from “European Study Centre” to “European Study Centre Programme” in order to circumvent more rigorous university procedures for the approval of new centers on campus. By calling it a program, embedding it within an existing department (rather than creating a new area studies center), doing an end-run around the department’s staff council, and getting it “passed through direct backdoor negotiations between DoS and the DU Vice-Chancellor” (Firoz 2011), the applicants were able to avoid subjecting their new endeavor to any serious scrutiny. Some opponents pointed out that the program would require a substantial investment of DU resources (as the EU was providing only 52% of the funds) and made commitments of support on behalf of

all sociology faculty members without having so much as informed them about it in advance.

These arguments could even border on or extend to allegations of fraud and misrepresentation on the EU application.³⁴

The program-vs-center debate was also significant because of its potential repercussions for the department and institution. If it was just a program, then the basis for challenging it would be more limited, in that there was an assumption that a program would remain within the realm of projects that “individual” faculty and students could choose to participate in or not, much like professors are generally encouraged to obtain funds for research projects and involve students in order to strengthen their training and/or provide them with more financial support. Indeed, the then-vice chancellor of DU, Deepak Pental, responded to concerns, saying, “I don't think we should create such a fuss about the issue. It is not a departmental programme; but a project proposed to be run by some teachers of the university... I believe that we should give more academic freedom to our teachers” (Edmond 2010). On the other hand, if it was actually intended to be a center, the very idea that any foreign governing power (let alone one representing multiple former colonizers) might march in and “advise” the sociology department to permanently alter its syllabi, tell it how to instruct its students, directly and indirectly limit its research agenda, affect priorities for the use of institutional resources, and place “a contractual obligation stipulating a seven years confidentiality agreement” (Firoz 2011) without much oversight or say on the part of members of that department would be alarming, to say the least.³⁵

³⁴ To be clear, I am not endorsing such a view. Even if I were to do so, while one can appreciate concerns over maintaining the integrity of the department, given the enormity of the historically incurred financial and social debts of some EU member states to India, the European Union would not have had much standing to dispute what, in comparison, barely amounts to pocket change—particularly since the stated missions of their program (India-EU Study Centres Programme 2018) were ultimately served.

³⁵ For my American colleagues who may be familiar with the controversy about Confucius Institutes sponsored by the Chinese government in the United States, it might be a useful intellectual exercise to consider how much

Such an arrangement would truly be “a negation of the identity of this half a century old Department” and an attack on “institutional autonomy and democracy in Indian Higher Education.”

But the faculty who had come together to apply for the grant denied that this was the case at all. As quoted in a news article, the then-head of the sociology department “said the proposal was for a programme and not for a centre, as was alleged. ‘There will be no restructuring of the present syllabus; we will only add a few electives or a paper on Area Studies,’ she said” (Edmond 2009). How was it possible for these colleagues’ perceptions of the situation to be at such odds with each other? It is, of course, possible that the perceptions of those opposed to the center/program were correct, and these faculty denials were simply an effort to cover their tracks after they had been discovered. There is some reason to doubt this explanation. If the faculty attempting to establish the center/program had planned major structural changes to their own department, they would have known their colleagues would eventually discover this, and one would expect them to have been better prepared to deal with the fallout. Although the proponents of the program did not issue written public statements or refutations, the combination of news reports and their funding application provides some information about their purpose.

Like any text, there are a number of ways to read and interpret this funding application.³⁶ There can also be a peculiar kind of disconnect between how a project is presented to a potential funder

stronger the academic reaction to having a foreign government determining emphases in area and language studies through centers located on university campuses might have been, if that foreign government had recently colonized and exploited their country in the most brutal ways.

³⁶ A scholar’s academic and political associations could quite easily play a role in the interpretations they find themselves most sympathetic to. I am no exception, even as I attempt to practice generosity towards individuals I care for with differing viewpoints, I am aware that in all likelihood none will be satisfied with my understanding.

and how the applicants themselves envision it. It is common for applicants to emphasize aspects of their projects that are likely to appeal to a funder and could help the funder achieve its own mission. In the words of Sydel Silverman, a past president of the Wenner-Gren Foundation, a successful proposal “must therefore make clear everything they need to know to make the decision you want” (1991: 486), i.e., to fund your proposal. One can argue that this should not be the case or note that such exercises are a mechanism through which funders can impact both the directions of scholarship and the terms in which scholars think about their own work, but it remains a widespread and effective approach. I bring this up because some causes of concern in the application might be chalked up to just such an effort to make clear to the European Commission how the activities the applicants wished to engage in could be seen to advance the mission of its India-EU Study Centres Programme (and, yes, the EU’s own literature used the term “Centres Programme”). At least, efforts to somehow definitively determine what the applicants “really” intended the project to do based on what the EU called for should be regarded as problematic.

As far as I have seen, while the EU may have preferred to support institutionally separate area studies centers focusing on Europe that would continue on their own in the future, this was not a requirement; in fact, some other Indian recipients of this grant neither created “centers” (in the sense of a new institutional unit or identity), nor ultimately showed signs that their programs were likely to continue in any recognizable form after the grant period. The application did specifically look for evidence of interdisciplinarity, of innovative pedagogy, of collaborative relationships with “partner” institutions in the EU, that the proposed program would contribute to scholarship, and that the program would advance a better understanding of contemporary

Europe. This could explain why the applicants discussed working with faculty in other departments at DU as part of the project (without creating a separate center), described plans to have European faculty teleconference into classes for instructional purposes, quite likely had to call in favors from European colleagues (whom they had visited/worked with in the past, or who had been affiliated with D School), and included lengthy discussions of the importance of knowledge of contemporary Europe to their scholarship. These statements were true, but they emphasized points that would encourage the funder to make the decision they wanted, while understating or leaving out points that would not. If they addressed the importance of knowledge of Europe, they probably didn't think this was the place to discuss how knowledge of other parts of the world is also important. If they talked about changes in curriculum, they would say these changes are important (as they may well be), but not add they didn't plan to change the identity and focus of their department. When the applicants proposed that their program should address the question, "how can Europe be constituted as an object of study?" or mentioned the importance of the comparative perspective their students would bring and gain from even short periods of fieldwork in Europe, they left out any explanation of the history of European colonial (and post-colonial) anthropologists constituting Indians as exotic or barbaric objects of study, or why the very act of turning those tables might be significant.

While some objections might be answered in this way, others are more difficult to explain: the confidentiality clause, the possible limitations on critiques of power differentials or Europe's colonial past, or the statement in the application claiming the support of all departmental faculty when that was clearly not the case, for example. At the same time, though the list of concerns above does not emphasize it as strongly as issues of democratic governance and transparency,

that statement does carry some strong undertones trivializing colleagues' interest in studying Europe. An example is where it frames the short research trips, which were never intended to qualify as major student research, almost like they were paid vacations. This accords with statements I heard from a few people who had opposed the program/center, questioning why other scholars wanted to go to Europe when India had enough of its own problems and issues it needed sociologists to study, though any further probing was invariably met with statements downplaying that view as a distraction from the main point of objection. In any event, even if we assume that everyone in the sociology department was operating with complete integrity and the best of intentions, that does not necessarily mean the same was true of the EU.

In all of these arguments, one can detect an anti- or de-colonial motivation, but based on different views of what that should look like or how to go about achieving it. Opponents of the program suggested its proponents were perpetuating Eurocentrism, considered European sociological knowledge more important than that of places like South America or Africa, and just wanted a free vacation or the prestige and academic capital of associations with important European institutions—that in order to achieve those ends they were willing to sacrifice their dignity and make an “admission of intellectual incompetence” (Firoz 2011). Meanwhile, the proponents wrote about wanting to constitute Europe as an object of study, creating a “more equitable research field for the production and dissemination of knowledge in the social sciences,” and giving their students access to new and broader academic resources and opportunities.

Witchcraft

One way in which these arguments are especially relevant to discussions of intellectual kinship (and vice versa) is how they reference ideas of dignity/self-respect, autonomy/independence, and identity or its negation—all fundamental to what an institution or “house” is about and stands for. The idea of a party “negating” the identity of another and attacking it under the guise of closeness (or some sort of relatedness) is very similar to phenomena discussed in the infrequent attempts to describe the limits of kinship, or what kinship is *not*. For example, witchcraft is often characterized as the opposite of kinship. Instead of sharing, transmitting, or growing life capacities, witches hoard, destroy, or eat them. Beidelman, in his extensive writings on ideas of witchcraft among the Kaguru, has described how “To Kaguru, to act without regard to kinship is to act like a witch... [and] Kaguru say that a witch ‘feeds on others’” (1963: 61). One of the ways to feed on others is through mis-/re-allocation of life-giving resources like food in that “Control of food is a sign of dominance... Abuse of [that control] is reflected by greed and, at its very worst, by turning others, even kin, into food themselves, as in cannibalistic witchcraft” (Beidelman 1986: 192).

Were programs like the India-EU Study Centres Programme that presented themselves as building bridges of understanding, collaboration, and intellectual exchange designed to foster some sort of kinship? Or, much worse, could they be seen as abusing a difference in power to feed off others under the guise of relatedness? It’s hard to tell about this program specifically, though publicly available literature on the “Joint Action Plan” between India and the EU (of which the India-EU Study Centres Programme was a part) does describe a need to do more “to

fully exploit all the potential of the EU-India partnership” (Delegation of the European Union to India 2018: 3). Regardless, there is certainly no shortage of historical reason for a degree of suspicion.

The New Socialist Initiative student group blog raised concerns about the existence of a “relationship between the EU’s ‘technical assistance’³⁷ sponsorship investments and its Foreign Policy strategies, as well as the typical asymmetry of power relationships between donors and receivers in academic projects” (Firoz 2011) that is linked to a sort of incremental privatization, but lamented that these sorts of concerns—as opposed to less “speculative” ones about what had already taken place—were considered “matters of opinion and paranoia and dismissed as such” (ibid). To the contrary, I would argue that these concerns were among the most serious ones to discuss. I will not attempt to summarize here the extensive literature, well accepted among anthropologists, about how the exploitative relations of colonialism have often continued into the present under the guise of “development” programs or qualification requirements for a variety of foreign “aid.” Suffice it to say that every sociologist at D School would have had at least some awareness of such potential pitfalls.

Some kinds of subterfuge that have historically occasionally taken place under the guise of intellectual exchange can be difficult to recognize and have even been known to occur without the knowledge of the scholars involved (e.g., when funded through CIA fronts). One reason they can be difficult to detect is that they can take the form of “dual use anthropology” (Price 2016), wherein a research project or collaboration can serve multiple purposes, both stated scientific or

³⁷ It is worth mentioning that this particular program also classified European institutions as recipients of technical assistance (Delegation of the European Union to India 2018: 9).

professional ones, as well as hidden ones relevant to some sort of national political interest. Based on massive collections of documents from archival research and Freedom of Information Act requests (so, focusing most strongly on examples involving Americans), David Price has demonstrated how such processes have operated in specific historical cases. One example relates to the Asia Foundation, whose offices in India were closed down after it was outed as a CIA front in a 1967 *New York Times* article (ibid: 181, 188). Prior to that, the Asia Foundation had been sending regular checks to the American Anthropological Association (AAA) to subsidize Asian anthropologists' AAA memberships, provide them with subscriptions to the *American Anthropologist*, and aid them in attending AAA meetings (ibid: 179). On its face, this certainly appears to be a genuine effort to support international exchange and collaboration. However, in exchange, the Asia Foundation was requesting names and contact information for the Asian anthropologists awarded this funding. After Japan, India had been home to the largest number of recipients of those funds (ibid: 180). In other words, the CIA, through the Asia Foundation and AAA, was using intellectual exchange as a ruse to collect information on Asian anthropologists.³⁸

Nicole Sackley has also written about the role of American foundations in shaping studies of South Asia and development work, particularly in relation to Cold War strategies. She has argued that Indians were not oblivious to all of this, as “By the late 1960s, Indian journalists and intellectuals had begun to regularly accuse the Ford Foundation of setting up projects as fronts for CIA activities... [its] ‘academic colonialism’, Indian critics charged, dictated intellectual priorities and colonized Indian public discourse” (Sackley 2012: 236). In fact, one of the very

³⁸ Knowledge of this history was one reason I decided against storing field notes online.

few people who outright declined my request for an interview, after bringing up David Price's earlier work, mentioned that he had no way to know if I was a spy. I was unsure how to respond aside from appreciating his concern; he couldn't be certain and, really, I didn't know how exactly I was supposed to go about incontrovertibly proving I wasn't one either. Once planted, such seeds of doubt are difficult to remove. Acknowledging these questions exist is not, by itself, paranoia; it's honesty. Much like witches, individuals and organizations that have abused their power and control of resources for scholarship and research in such ways have actually been feeding off of what trust and relationships scholars themselves have been able to build, all the while undermining or eating away at those same relationships. But this sort of parasitic feeding can take many more visible forms as well.

Ancestry

During my research on Lucknow, particularly when I spoke to older alumni who had worked with DN Majumdar, I often heard mention of what they referred to as the Cornell India Project. Some of Majumdar's students had worked as researchers under the project, conducted through a partnership between DN Majumdar at Lucknow University and Morris Opler at Cornell University. According to Cornell records, the project took place "with the additional participation of the Ford Foundation" (Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library 2018). The people I spoke with recalled that young, but soon-to-be important, foreign researchers, like linguistic anthropologist John Gumperz, were involved as well, some of them rooming together. At some point there was a falling out between Majumdar and Opler, which resulted in Majumdar withdrawing his support for the project. Apparently, Opler needed

an Indian collaborator to continue, and I was told this was when SC Dube stepped in. They were mostly either unwilling or unable to explain the reason behind this falling out, but one alumnus told me that Majumdar was upset with Opler because the Indian student researchers were not being treated as full analytical collaborators. He said that Majumdar wanted his students to participate in and learn about the process of analysis, but they were just being used to collect field data and turn over their notebooks without any knowledge of what happened from there. If this is true, then the relationship Majumdar had expected to help grow and give life to subsequent generations of both American and Indian anthropologists, was in fact growing its own students at the expense of the Indian scholars whose training and limited time/intellectual resources it was appropriating for its own ends.

It may be the case that any sort of association, even exploitative, with elite foreign scholars and institutions (like Opler and Cornell) can potentially serve as a kind of capital, but this is a result of generations of imperialism-produced inequality rather than some sort of objective superiority or merit. If anything, the example of the Nazi German influences on PC Biswas demonstrates how training with elite foreign scholars can even be potentially damaging. (He is also an example of the tokenism that can come with foreign academic networks, as when a racist publication needed to recruit a token Indian to their editorial board, and Biswas was someone they knew of and could think to turn to.) On the other hand, although the D School sociology department has many bright PhD students who could more than hold their own in seminars at any elite institution in the world, they can find themselves compared unfavorably to even foreign undergraduates.

André Béteille described to me a conversation he had with MN Srinivas after a student requested a reference to go study abroad. He said Srinivas told him, “You and I gave our backs to train these people, to teach them. And what do we do that for, to send them to Princeton? Why?” Béteille continued, “So that made me sit up. That we should be able to build up such a department—if some people want to go abroad, let them go abroad, but they should not go abroad because they feel that this is not a good place to be. But they still feel that going abroad is better than staying in India. Even if they go to Bloomington, Indiana, they feel it’s a better place than staying in India.”

There, Srinivas was talking about building a discipline in India. The work of building his discipline was inseparable from the work of growing scholars and, in doing so, giving the place and people the life capacities necessary to continue that work. If they all left for other countries, none of that work would bear fruit. If we see these departments as “houses” within institutions, the fear was that their genealogies and territorial names would begin to die out. Inequalities can fuel such processes in all sorts of ways. In addition to prestige, foreign institutions can be attractive simply for their access to basic resources, like scholarly publications. During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity, along with members of the Association of Students for Equitable Access to Knowledge, to attend court hearings associated with the copyright infringement case that Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, and Taylor and Francis brought against the tiny Rameshwari copy shop at D School. After the students formed their association and joined the case, they had to fight an uphill battle against three academic publishing giants for years, just to regain (in a landmark judgment about “fair use”) the right to purchase photocopied packs of required course readings. At one point in the courtroom, it

seemed fairly clear that the advocates on both sides and probably the judge himself had all benefited from such photocopies at some point, and it was unimaginable that especially poorer students would have any chance at a meaningful education without them. For more senior scholars, I have heard many stories about papers and collections permanently lost for lack of a proper archive in which to deposit them. In a sense, this is part of what IP Singh was getting out of sharing his stories with me, a “casser maison” ritual (Marcoux 2001) of sorts, constructing himself as an ancestor by giving away valued records from his “house.”

Another way in which the limits of kinship are sometimes discussed is through the idea of kinlessness. Feeley-Harnik has described, in regards to slavery both in Madagascar and in the United States, how “free people had ancestors, whereas slaves were ‘people without ancestors’” (2013: 182; referring to Feeley-Harnik 1991). She describes “kinning and dekinning ... as moral-political-economic processes” (2013: 212) because “Kinship makes all the difference between being recognized as a human or not and, beyond that, as a particular kind of human, part of the ‘people,’ however these may be defined” (ibid: 211). In the story of Majumdar and Opler, Majumdar and his students were not quite seen as part of “the people” engaged in the conversations of anthropology, even if they were actually shaping the directions of that conversation all along. I’ll return to the example I raised early on of the question, “Who do you work with?” When scholars hear names they recognize, they respond by making all kinds of assumptions about the person they just met, but that will also mean they are able to place them within their view of the universe of “people.” It is much more difficult to achieve that effect when they have never heard of one’s colleagues, teachers, or house. There can be substitutes, like a shared engagement with the works of a particular philosopher, but these are not quite the

same. When that lack of recognition is perpetuated through constantly reinforced inequalities, how does one go about becoming an academic social person? By dwelling almost exclusively in the circles where one's genealogies are recognized? By leaving and finding ways to join new genealogies? Is this even a possible or desirable goal?

Dell Hymes has defined "Scientific colonialism [as] a process whereby the center of gravity for acquisition of knowledge about a people is located elsewhere" (Hymes 1969; cited in Nader 1995: 52). If the current attacks on Indian higher education continue, that is where they will likely lead. The place to go to learn about India, will be elsewhere.

The Delhi School of Economics sociology department is unusual in that it has resisted teaching sociology as though it were almost entirely about the sociology of India. I was told numerous times by D School students that their department is criticized or dismissed for teaching too much from the "West." It is also unusual in that a number of people from the department have actually gone abroad to conduct fieldwork—in Europe, in Afghanistan, in the part of the world I'm used to calling the "Middle East" but which is some distance to the west of India. I discovered, partly through old annual reports, that the department also has a curious history of starting and failing to maintain programs of studies on different areas, whether within India or not. In the late 1960s, JPS Uberoi ran a Pakistan Area Studies Programme. In the early 1970s, the University Grants Commission approved a special cell for the sociological study of North Eastern Hill Areas. There was, of course, the European Study Centre Programme. And, near the end of my fieldwork, there was an inauguration of a North East India Studies Programme.

JPS Uberoi is probably the single biggest proponent of Indians studying Europe and the US anywhere, and certainly in Delhi. He challenged me to name a single published, full-length ethnography of the US or Europe written by an Asian and ultimately emphasized that none of the few examples I was able to provide were by scholars who did it from Asia (i.e., without moving to a foreign institution). Indeed, one of his advisees made it to Europe and studied a group of scientists but ultimately abandoned the project in favor of an acting career. Just making it abroad to do fieldwork from an Indian university comes with numerous obstacles. The infrastructure I was able to take almost for granted to support language studies in preparation for fieldwork in India doesn't exist. This is not an accident. The same political and military interests that led to the expansion of area studies centers and funding in the US also invested in encouraging Indian scholars to do certain kinds of research in their own country. Unfavorable exchange rates can be another obstacle.³⁹ Even if they manage to pull off the research, it may not be well received upon their return. One scholar who did fieldwork abroad published little about it and ultimately wrote a book based on other work in India. When I asked about this, she explained that one factor had been that publishers are not as interested in works about fieldwork abroad because they don't sell. One senior representative of an Indian publishing company I asked about this assessment, agreed.

Nevertheless, Uberoi continues to advocate for Indians to study and publish on the US and Europe. His position is, however, based on a recognition of the many challenges involved. He has been critiquing and writing about science and Europe for a long time (e.g., Uberoi 1978,

³⁹ For a deeper and better perspective on the challenges facing Indian scholars wishing to do fieldwork abroad, see Arif 2004.

1984, and 2002). In a 1968 talk on “Science and Swaraj,” Uberoi⁴⁰ discussed the relationship between science and Indian independence. He explained that science “cannot and does not live outside its era” (1968: 120) and that “problems of science in a rich, technologically satiated society are different from, even opposed to, its problems in a society of poverty lately liberated from colonial bondage” (ibid: 119). I should underscore that he said all of this in 1968 and, though these statements may seem obvious or passé today with the explosion of science studies, that was not the case then. He continued:

The end of our intellectual and practical apprenticeship in science is long overdue by any sensible reckoning, but we are constantly cajoled or browbeaten to prolong it for one reason or other. We can be frustrated by force where we cannot be contained by stratagem and system. Such things are done to poor nations and peoples today, in science as in politics, in the new fashion of a false cosmopolitanism and false humanitarianism, not in the old terms of colonial tutelage or racism. The latter ideologies emphasized discontinuities and hateful ones, while nowadays all talk is of *brotherhood*, harmony and sweet reasonableness, but the effects are not totally dissimilar. (ibid: 119-20, emphasis added)

Having recognized the pervasive talk of brotherhood among scientists internationally, Uberoi dismissed it as not the real thing; as something without basis in mutuality, growth, shared life capacities, self-defining moral obligations; and as something masquerading as kinship to keep Indian scientists in a subordinate position, as not fully grown scholars.

Uberoi, interestingly, also brought up a critique of an approach to understanding the status of Indian social science through asking questions about the persistence of the “colonial relation” (ibid: 122). The critique in question considered such an approach to be “a candid confession of

⁴⁰ In perusing my discussion of his ideas, readers should note that if Uberoi were ever to read any of my work, I fully expect he would consider it rubbish. If he were then to see me, I suspect he would tell me so and, if I were lucky, I imagine he might then suggest I abandon anthropology to pursue journalism, because I clearly don’t know what I’m doing. He is the grumpiest anthropologist I’ve ever met but, perhaps because it is genuine and on principle, he manages to make this an endearing trait. I left each of the few conversations I had with him feeling off balance, awkward, agitated, and confused, but also always provoked to contemplate something in a new way.

‘sterility’” (ibid: 122; referring to Ferreira 1967: 77), choosing instead to focus on the lack of “originality” in Indian scholarship (ibid: 122). Uberoi’s dismissal argued that in the claim of sterility, “the ‘colonial relation’ has disappeared from view altogether” (ibid: 122). This is an important point to address in a discussion of intellectual kinship. Talk of genealogies, loss of ancestors, departures of descendants, among other points could be misunderstood to be making a claim similar to Ferreira’s on sterility. In addition to misrepresenting academic life in India and elsewhere, a simple sterility argument does a disservice to anthropological discussions of kinship. It individualizes phenomena which Uberoi long ago pointed out are far from simply individual problems of “originality” or “sterility.” To repeat, kinning and dekinning are necessarily “moral-political-economic processes” (Feeley-Harnik 2013: 212). Kinship is relevant to analyzing academic life in part *because* its intimate connection with political economic processes can help make the processes through which inequalities like the “colonial relation” persist clearer and more visible.

CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

*Pundit, so well-read, go ask God
who his teacher is
and who he's taught.
He alone knows what shape he has
and he keeps it to himself,
alone.
Child of a childless woman,
a fatherless son,
someone without feet who climbs trees,
A soldier without weaponry,
no elephant, no horse,
charging into battle with no sword,
A sprout without a seed,
a tree without a trunk,
blossoms on a tree without a branch
— Kabir (Hawley and Juergensmeyer 2011: 57)*

Intellectual kinship, like kinship more broadly, has a remarkable ability to forefront inequalities, to demonstrate how pervasive and multi-faceted they are, and to recognize how they are imbued in not only the most dramatic, but also the most ordinary and taken-for-granted moments of people's lives. This is evident, for example, in how this explorative journey has come full circle from noticing details of interpersonal interaction like honorific terms of address, to the social scientific funding available through international development agencies, all while discussing the

same themes. Both Chapter 2 (“Scenes of Inheritance”) and Chapter 6 (“Limits”) deal with meeting grounds of elite American and elite Indian anthropologists. Those meeting grounds, especially given differences in power and access to resources within and across nations, make particularly visible the importance of ideas of relatedness to academic life by highlighting the consequences that can arise when one is unable to establish relatedness of either the “right” kind or any recognizable kind. Whereas Chapter 2 focused on how this happens between specific people every day, Chapter 6 focused more on how those same everyday interactions are at work in (and shaped by) international social scientific research collaborations, collegial relationships, funding agreements, and who studies whom or where. In between, we saw how intellectual kinship helps shape disciplinary boundaries affecting how scholars understand the very nature and purpose of the work they spend their lives engaged in; how it can be coopted, reinforced, and disrupted in institutions and by states; but that, in many ways, this is not surprising because those are the usual stories of how kinship more broadly shapes and defines persons and societies, and intellectual kinship is not separate from kinship.

But what exactly is intellectual kinship? How can we better understand and conceptualize the processes through which it is made, maintained, or broken? We’ve been watching these processes unfold throughout this work, so we can see that they are there, but finding precise language for to pin them down has been a challenge. As already discussed, this is in part because of a kind of circular reasoning that can reproduce cultural assumptions about what counts as kinship in our theories. But those cultural assumptions are not and have historically not been universal. And this brings us to the fact that intellectual kinship is simultaneously an extremely specific and extremely general problem. Earlier, I explained my use of the term intellectual

kinship as referring to “how many intellectuals sometimes describe, understand, or act upon their relationships with other scholars in terms of kinship.” This concept, as we saw most clearly in Chapters 4 (“How to Think”) and 5 (“Naga Spears”), serves best to draw attention to a class of ideas and practices rather than to delineate the boundaries of a particular “kind” of kinship. We have seen that this class includes practices that may, in fact, be outside the limits of kinship, as in some discussions of international “brotherhood” among scholars. At the same time, these ideas and practices are often strongly associated with kinship, even as they vary greatly.

Although I have focused this project on Indian academics, I have endeavored to make it clear that it was not just Indians who had or have intellectual kinship. Intellectual kinship may look different in different times and places, but it is by no means specific to the Indian academy. From academic genealogical databases run out of the US, the German concept of the “Doktorvater,” and ideas of succession of important ancestors in France, to name just a few, intellectual kinship begs for more in-depth and comparative research. For example, are departments everywhere “houses,” and, if so, how do their relations to lineages of descent differ? And, how are systems where a scholar has a clear line of officially recognized successors sustained? If anything, what we have seen in these departments in India makes contestation and competition in attempting to define who inherits what (e.g., jobs among DN Majumdar’s intellectual descendants, or the right to cross disciplinary boundaries) appear more natural. Indeed, that contestation is another reason why it is challenging to define what intellectual kinship is. I’ve referred to it all as “intellectual kinship” but the examples we have seen reflect the existence of many different, sometimes competing ideas about how intellectual kinship is made. There are a few ways to make sense of this, two of which I’ll discuss here. One makes sense of the diversity of ideas of intellectual

kinship in more general terms, while the other is more culturally and historically specific, but they are not necessarily contradictory frameworks.

The first way to make sense of the existence of different ideas of intellectual kinship among the same people is to simply note that kinship is usually complicated and contested in these sorts of ways. Even ideas of “biological” kinship that are presented as clear cut, have shown themselves to be quite debatable in situations of surrogacy, for example, when ideas about the source of “biological” kinship—whether through the “contributions” of genetic material or womb or milk (Parkes 2005)—come more practically and apparently into conflict. I’ve referenced Fox’s (1971) work on Rotinese ideas of kinship through growing persons as plants several times now. Fox focused on the crucial, generative and intimate relationships between mother’s brothers and sisters’ children. But even though the mechanisms through which the relationships were made seemed fairly straightforward, perhaps especially because of the importance of this relationship, who was entitled to the formal role of mother’s brother to a particular person was also notable in its contestation. One might think it should be genealogically quite clear who someone’s mother’s brother is, but there are a number of complicating factors: “The first... is that a woman may lack a brother... The second factor is that the role... is something of a titled right and may... be disposed of personally by its holder. The third factor is one of active role fulfillment... A final factor is the existence of defined exchange procedures which publicly affirm a relationship” (ibid: 228-29). These factors have a number of parallels in the academic contexts we have been discussing. For instance, doctoral “supervisor” is, in fact, a titled role that can be disposed of. If a supervisor leaves an institution or is no longer able to formally fulfill that role, there are legal and institutional procedures for assigning a replacement. On the other hand, while it may seem

clear that a person's doctoral dissertation supervisor is their teacher, in some cases, the person themselves or those who know them may talk about someone else as having been the "real" teacher who advised, worked closely with, and "grew" them. This suggests a view of intellectual kinship that privileges growth, time spent with students, an intensive intellectual engagement, or education as defined by Noble (2001: 2). Those are issues that are common in academic institutions around the world, which is why explaining how intellectual kinship works can seem to be an extremely broad and general question. This may make analytical precision all the more challenging, as is often the case with broad discussions of kinship, but it is also of great consequence, because it places studies of kinship at the core of any meaningful discussion of knowledge production and vice versa. Understanding how knowledge is made, people's attention mutually oriented (Ingold 2000), and institutional and political structures navigated requires understanding how kinship is made, shared, or transmitted. And, at the same time, it is necessary for kinship theorists to grapple with the many processes and competing ideas in which academic relatedness is enacted and manifests as we attempt to develop clearer, less culture-bound conceptions of what kinship is and how it works.

Fox also noted that he saw Rotinese conceptions of kinship (in terms of plants and growth) manifesting in some historically particular ways. He concluded that "[i]t therefore seems likely that the idiom will continue to develop with the relationship itself" (Fox 1971: 247). This brings us to another framework for thinking about differences in ideas about intellectual kinship. We can accept that different or competing ideas about kinship often coexist, while also noting how they are shaped by historical and political processes. I mentioned earlier that assumptions that kinship is somehow separate from intellectual or scholarly work are not cultural or historical

universals. In many times and places, the idea that it could be necessary to write an entire dissertation to argue that there is such a thing as intellectual kinship and that its significance is wide reaching would have been laughable because it would have been seen as incredibly obvious. Mana Kia's work provides some historical perspective on this. In the third chapter of her book manuscript, *The Persianate: Transregional Sensibilities of Belonging Before Nationalism* (n.d. [2018]), Kia discusses the 17th and 18th century Persianate, which encompassed and connected a large area from Persia through South Asia. She argues that:

the Persianate created a larger space where a set of ideals circulated as resources that could then be articulated in particular regions and political regimes. Articulations were mutually intelligible across regions, so that individuals moving from Safavid to Mughal domains were newcomers but nonetheless possessed familiarity with the ideas they encountered. Lineages were not only transregionally intelligible but shared, since ancestry included mobile fathers, teachers, masters, patrons, and other kin. (ibid: 7)

Kia's discussion is on ideas of "origin," which she found to exist more on a "gradient" (ibid: 1) rather than operating on some clear binary between Self and Other (ibid). These ideas of origins were deeply intertwined with ideas of kinship, especially including intellectual kinship. People would proudly announce and list their lineages to explain who they were and where they came from (ibid: 2), lineages that carried such weight that "[t]he language and practices that suspended or granted privileges and obligations of legal kin also marked relationships of service, tutelage, patronage, discipleship, and learning" (ibid: 10). This historical perspective is invaluable to understanding that intellectual kinship is not some timeless, socially unrooted phenomenon that just happens to be observable in academic institutions or educational relationships, even if in sometimes culturally specific ways. It also raises important questions about how and why such Persianate ideas have changed over time.

Kia herself suggests the rise of nationalism was an important part of the picture. We could actually see a bit of that in our discussions of the colonial and post-colonial history of Lucknow and its relation to debates about “western” and “secular” education. At various points, I have emphasized people’s characterizations of teacher-student relationships as guru-shishya relationships, as one example of how they can be kinship, citing Barth’s characterization of guru-shishya relationships as based on the transmission of knowledge as the “essence of generative substance” (1993: 648). I did not, however, underscore how inescapable these ideas and practices were. In addition to frequent references to teachers as gurus, outside of D School, nearly every academic conference I attended involved the creation of a shrine to one or more academic ancestors (thus far, always male) and rituals honoring those ancestors—both living (e.g., in presentations of gifts and mementos) and deceased (e.g., in prominently placed shrines with their photographs, complete with flowers and candle-lighting rituals). On Teacher’s Day, I watched students parade into their professors’ rooms with cards, gifts, and bending down to touch their feet. I don’t emphasize these practices to exoticize the Indian academy, but to bring out the fact that one prominent view, or model for understanding what intellectual kinship is and how it is made is consciously informed by cultural ideas of guru-shishya relationships and lineages. Popular characterizations of universities as a “secular” and “western” form of education are, here, demonstrably simplistic.

In Chapter 3 we saw that, among others, the senior archaeology professor—whose caste privilege saved him from the consequences of missed application deadlines and who was able to join new intellectual lineages to cross sub-disciplinary boundaries—relied heavily on ideas of

professors as gurus. Knowing that upper-caste, male scholars have long been greatly overrepresented in positions of power in the Indian academy, and observing that many themselves conceive of their academic lives in terms of guru-shishya relationships, raises a lot of questions about what other ways these models may have influenced Indian academic institutions. For example, guru-shishya relationships⁴¹ have historically been exclusive to “twice-born” (upper-caste) men. Kabir, the lower-caste 16th-century *sant* whose “upside-down speech” quoted at the beginning of this chapter is known to “defy comprehension” (Hawley and Juergensmeyer 2011: 41), was questioning the validity of just that sort of exclusive credentialing long before universities as we know them existed in India. When one is outside an established system of prestigious intellectual lineages sometimes going back unbroken ostensibly to the beginnings of time, one can be the child of a childless woman, a fatherless son, a tree without a trunk, a soldier without institutionalized coercive backing, and so on. Even just within India, patriarchy comes in many forms and from many sources, and there have been documented changes in the role of gender in guru-shishya relationships and lineages (e.g., see Bakhle 2008), but when a particularly prevalent understanding of intellectual kinship is explicitly influencing how scholars relate to one another, it is worth asking whether its ideas about who is even allowed to have or be intellectual kin in the first place have also shaped those relations.

Guru-shishya-based ideas of intellectual kinship are far from the only ones we have encountered and they have a significant amount of overlap with some of their historical competition (hence the common language of origins Kia writes about), even if they generally fared better under the

⁴¹ It is significant to note that in the past guru-shishya relationships often coincided with father-son relationships, (e.g., see Trautmann 1981: 244-5). As Patrick Olivelle describes in his translator's note to *The Law Code of Manu* (Manu and Olivelle 2004), guru is a “difficult term. In a few cases it refers to the teacher... but most frequently it does not. The general meaning is that of an elder, frequently the father, who deserves special respect” (ibid: xlvi).

British and after independence (as we saw in Lucknow). At the end of one of our meetings, unprompted, Nadeem Hasnain emphasized to me that the teacher-student relationships and lineages I was learning about were more than just teacher-student relationships, but were like guru-shishya relationships. Was this statement, particularly by a scholar of Muslim background, a reflection of the successful reproduction of an ideological and ritual system that necessarily consolidates and reinforces upper-caste (and especially Brahmin) power? Was it a modern form of Persianate sensibilities⁴² about origins and intellectual kinship, filtered through the *adab* historically associated with Lucknow? It's not clear, but these are just a few of the kinds of questions that arise when one attempts to make sense of intellectual kinship on a culturally specific level.

One final point I'd like to address is my worry that readers will attempt to judge intellectual kinship as "good" or "bad," especially given my discussions of the moral stories of inequalities and injustices that people sometimes associated with it, and despite my discussion of its importance to meaningful education (as opposed to training). This is where it is again important to remember that intellectual kinship is kinship. Asking whether kinship is good or bad would be quite a strange question. People are, have, and make kin—and this is an incredibly important part of human life. It may be important to many people not to appear or think of themselves as "traditional" (let alone, "nepotistic"), and so to attempt to hide or eliminate kinship from certain spheres of social life, but that approach alone often only serves the interests of those with

⁴² Such sensibilities may also have been what Srivastava was implicitly referring to when (in Chapter 2) he hoped I would understand the ideas of relative "insiders" and "outsiders" due to also being from a "traditional" culture (i.e., of Persian ancestry).

advantageous kin ties. In the long run, confronting and thinking through the necessary humanness of human relationships is likely to prove more fruitful.

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