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The Insiders' Experience of an Undergraduate Level Ethnographic Fieldwork Training Program in India

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Abstract

Research on fieldwork experiences is not something new to the discipline of Anthropology. However, undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training programs in India as a research area still remained unexplored. The purpose of the study described in this paper was to explore the proceedings of undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training programs in India. This article uses the authors' own recollections regarding an undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training program carried out by a college affiliated with the University of Calcutta. All four authors along with their 21 fellow students have participated as trainees in this fieldwork training program. Through a qualitative analysis of these recapitulated events involving the acts of "preparation before the field trip," "doing fieldwork" right up to "writing of field reports," the study stresses one of the less emphasized and methodologically significant issues of education and the socialization process the trainee fieldworkers pass through while doing fieldwork. This article illuminates how the real-time field exposure guides naïve students to realize the utility of different research tools, techniques, methods, and some of the true requirements of an ethnographic fieldwork.

Keywords

Fieldwork Experiences, Undergraduate Level Ethnographic Fieldwork Training, Ethnographic Collaboration, Socialization, India

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Research on fieldwork experiences is not something new to the discipline of Anthropology. However, undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training programs in India as a research area still remained unexplored. The purpose of the study described in this paper was to explore the proceedings of undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training programs in India. This article uses the authors' own recollections regarding an undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training program carried out by a college affiliated with the University of Calcutta. All four authors along with their 21 fellow students have participated as trainees in this fieldwork training program. Through a qualitative analysis of these recapitulated events involving the acts of "preparation before the field trip," "doing fieldwork" right up to "writing of field reports," the study stresses one of the less emphasized and methodologically significant issues of education and the socialization process the trainee fieldworkers pass through while doing fieldwork. This article illuminates how the real-time field exposure guides naïve students to realize the utility of different research tools, techniques, methods, and some of the true requirements of an ethnographic fieldwork. Keywords: Fieldwork Experiences, Undergraduate Level Anthropological Fieldwork Training, Ethnographic Collaboration, Socialization, India

Fieldwork as a research method over the years has made a profound impact on the characteristic and growth of the discipline of anthropology. Fieldwork is considered to be one of the most unique methods adopted by anthropologists for finding answers to a wide array of research questions. Besides, fieldwork provides a perfect opportunity for testing different theoretical propositions in light of rich firsthand ethnographic data, which has helped anthropology to become one of the major limbs of social sciences (Srinivas, 1998, p. 136). As Mandelbaum (1963, p. 5) explains, that field training enables anthropologists to develop an expectant awareness of a wide range of possibilities regarding human behavior, which makes them alert and ready to see and seize "diverse explanatory factors about multiple potentialities in culture and behavior," whenever and however they may turn up. Perhaps due to this reason, today it is expected that students, teachers and researchers of any sub-discipline of

anthropology needs to have some sort of experience in carrying out intensive fieldworks for fulfilling their research aims and having a firm grip of the subject itself.

In a general sense, fieldwork is considered to be a process of social research in which the investigator attempts to enter the universe of meanings and participate in the moral system of the respondents (Wax & Wax, 1980). But, as someone speaks about the process of ethnographic research, issues of “participation” and the “process of immersion” come to forefront, which allow anthropologists to “step into,” analyze, understand and write about “the world of morals and meanings” of the respondents. Interestingly, for some people (Lowie, 1937, p. 232; Powdermaker, 1967, p. 19), the process of immersion has been as easy as stepping into a bathtub or leaping into a swimming pool. Others, however, (Dahal, 2004; Van Maanen, 1988), have found it to be much difficult because respondents, due to their cultural barrier, at times judge anthropologists as “anthrofoologists,” “management spies,” or “government dupes.” Some scholars (Blommaert & Dong, 2010; Patton, 2002; Sambrook & Stewart, 2007) explained that fieldworkers can overcome a few of these issues with a meticulous preparation before the fieldwork. Again others (Faubion & Marcus, 2009; Janesick, 1983; Pollard, 2009), after all their experiences and expertise in teaching different research methods to their students, have concluded that some of these research methods used in fieldwork can only be learned by experiencing fieldwork from start to finish.

The fact that the process of immersion, as Wax (1971, p. 43) points out, involves complex social and psychological accommodations by both the fieldworker and the recipient group led us towards two important questions; (i) what are the sort of things involved with the process of fieldwork preparation that actually make the process of immersion easy for some while being difficult for other and (ii) how does the process of immersion work exactly in real time? To explore some of these issues, we focus on a particular case of undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training program in India.

Our emphasis on this specific area is firstly guided by the fact that the area of undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training in India, except a few discussions in passing (Beteille & Madan, 1975; Chaudhuri & Sen Chaudhuri, 2014; Kumar, 1992; Thapan, 1998), has largely remained unexplored, when scholars from all over the world are emphasizing the importance of observations on fieldwork participation (Tedlock, 1991), research on educational settings (Burgess, 1984; Woods, 1986) and the analysis of fieldwork experiences (Dahal, 2004; Davies & Spencer, 2010; De Neve & Unnithan-Kumar, 2006; Faubion & Marcus, 2009; Gardner & Hoffman, 2006; Hendry, 1999; Meinert & Kapferer, 2015; Spencer, 2010, 2011; Van Mannen, 1988). Secondly, the nuanced experiences of an undergraduate level anthropological fieldwork training, other than depicting how some of the “tricks of trade” are passed on to the next generation (Becker, 1998), would help readers in understanding the socialization process of the naïve fieldworkers or “process of immersion” in general, which according to Van Mannen (1988) involve “intriguing episodes of embarrassment, affection, misfortune, partial or vague revelation, deceit, confusion, isolation, warmth, adventure, fear, concealment, pleasure, surprise and insult at times” (p. 2)

Thus, the present work in a wider perspective directly correlates with the development of ethnographic fieldwork tradition in India. Some of the observations of this study would be of interest to trainee ethnographic fieldworkers and teachers conducting such programs in general. The reflections of this study can be used by researchers as a foundation for carrying out future researches on the undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training program in India on much larger scale. This would help them in projecting a true picture about the availability of teaching and training facilities for undergraduate level anthropology students in a developing country like India, which contains the second largest pool of professional anthropologists in the world (Danda, 1995, p. 34), most of whom are posted in various

important Government bodies¹ and responsible for major planning in human resource development of this country.

Literature Review

Research on fieldwork experiences, fieldwork participation or carrying out ethnographic fieldwork is not something new to the discipline of Anthropology. Prominent research on these particular issues started during the 1970s when postmodern theoretical propositions put forward some of the most integral questions regarding the authenticity and the validity of field level information and experiences (LeCompte, 1987; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). During this period, some of the ethnographic novelties were being challenged (Weiner, 1976), which up until that period was considered to be the benchmark for future anthropologists. Annette Weiner's restudy of the Trobriand Islanders in the year 1976 showed how women's important contribution to the economy, their role in the trade and political system was overlooked by even the great Malinowski himself. And this has triggered a minute methodological transformation within the anthropological fieldwork tradition.

With the growing realization about the importance of "having an insider's perspective on events occurring in the field," anthropologists had to shift their attention to "observations of fieldwork participation" in place of "participant observation" (Tedlock, 1991). Thereafter, fieldworkers (anthropologists) started paying attention to the "power relation between fieldworker and informant," the "inter-subjective construction of field notes," and the "translation of experience and dialog into authoritative texts," which ultimately brought about the "reflexive turn" in anthropology (Clifford, 1988, pp. 21-54; Robben, 2007, p. 445). An entire generation of ethnographers, after this event, started imbibing upon their own "reflexive selves" (Dumont, 1978; Evans-Pritchard, 1973; Favret-Saada, 1980; Hobbs & May, 1993; Jackson & Ives, 1996; Perry, 1989; Rabinow, 1977).

In spite of the rift of opinion regarding the issue of "writing self into research," the tradition of "reflexive," "auto-ethnographic" and "autobiographical" genre of writings are still continuing today. Even scholars like Reed-Danahay (1997) and Ellis and Bochner (2003) believe and openly advocates in favour of such methodological experiments. A number of research works can be cited as examples which tried to cover emerging issues around this methodological transformation. In this context works of Van Maanen (1988), Hendry (1999), Dahal (2004) and Pascariu (2013) are important. All these works are prime examples of personal experiences of ethnographers conducting fieldworks in various cultural settings. Among the aforesaid works, Van Maanen (1988) was the first person who divided fieldwork experiences into three major categories of "realist," "confessional" and "impressionist" on the basis of his own empirical observations. With these three categories of fieldwork experiences, he has shown that both the "presentation" and the "content" of any research are equally important.

Some of the later research works (De Neve & Unnithan-Kumar, 2006; Faubion & Marcus, 2009; Gardner & Hoffman, 2006) of this genre took up the methodological challenge of producing a clear and reflexive understanding regarding the process of fieldwork itself through portrayal of various anthropologist's initial preconceptions, assumptions, and expectations. It is important to mention that works of this genre have shown the challenges and intricacies of "anthropological rite of passage" in fieldwork.

The following period saw research works (David & Spencer, 2010; Spencer, 2010, 2011) which argue that participant observation in fieldwork is an embodied relational process

¹ Like National Institute of Community Development, National Institute of Family Planning, International Centre for Population Studies, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, National Institute of Health and Family Welfare

and mediated by emotions. These works further advocate in retrieving emotion from the methodological margins of fieldwork since understandings of emotions of anthropologists at the time of fieldwork may strengthen qualitative methods of fieldwork and at the same time help anthropologists to achieve transformative learning potential. On the contrary to these works, Meinert and Kapferer (2015) argue for “deepening of the methodological significance of events and situations in anthropological ethnographic practice” because they believe that analysis of generative moments through events hold the key to understanding larger social situations.

Nonetheless, research works carried out on the proceedings of fieldwork practices in India have been rare. Works of Beteille and Madan (1975), Kumar (1992), Thapan (1998), Chaudhuri and Sen Chaudhuri (2014) are some of the exceptions. Beteille and Madan’s book *Encounters and Experiences* (1975), for example, present 11 unpretentious personal accounts of trials and triumphs of anthropological fieldwork in India and abroad. Kumar’s work (1992) presents her personal, evocative account of fieldwork experiences. Through portrayal of problems of choosing between “self” and the “other,” “objectivity” versus “bias,” and the “familiar circumstances” versus “new and dismaying ones” that a fieldworker often faces, Kumar’s work demonstrates how a researcher’s habits, preferences, expectations deriving from childhood memories, and areas of ignorance impose themselves on the process of selection, observation, and interpretation in research. Thapan’s edited volume *Anthropological Journeys: Reflections on Fieldwork* (1998) through essays by well-known anthropologists take up these and other issues arising out of their own fieldwork experience. Chaudhuri and Sen Chaudhuri’s edited volume *Fieldwork in South Asia: Memories, Moments, and Experiences* (2014), also is a valuable attempt of listing to and learning from the memories and significant moments of fieldwork in South Asia. Unfortunately, in spite of all these effort “undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training programs in India” as research area still remained unexplored.

Undergraduate Level Ethnographic Fieldwork Training Curriculum in India

The case of carrying out undergraduate level fieldwork in anthropology is a little bit different in India from any other research exposure that students of anthropology or well-equipped anthropologists collect over the period of time. Undergraduate level field-researches usually involve a demonstration and capacity for the application of some basic research skill to solve a particular research problem that may have been solved already. The difference can also be seen on many essential elements such as pre-fieldwork preparation as well as teaching and supervising methods during fieldwork. Unlike the students of foreign universities, undergraduate level anthropology students in India hardly go through these same meticulous procedures of pre-fieldwork preparations.

Undergraduate level Anthropology syllabus in most of the renowned Indian universities is designed in such a fashion that anthropology undergraduate students usually set their first steps towards learning some the tools and techniques of ethnographic fieldwork in the third year of the course curriculum when fieldwork training program becomes their main source of learning. After this first exposure, those who eventually receive a Graduate Degree and continue with Master Degree Anthropology courses offered by various Indian universities, get another chance to taste what research looks like while doing Master Degree dissertations. Master Degree level anthropology students are expected to apply their acquired knowledge independently for solving a particular research problem. Thereafter, it’s either the full-time research scholars or teachers who pursue anthropological research, get further chance to taste and rectify some of these acquired skills in real-life situations. But, Ph.D. research demands a lot more than mere application of these acquired skills to a particular problem. Often it requires a capacity for the application of specialized research skills that can make a significant and

original contribution for the advancement of knowledge. With the huge pressure of meeting institutional agendas apart from the interest of their own, these people hardly get enough space to embark on the issues of personal learning. Perhaps, due to this reason, the undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training program in India is considered to be so important for inculcating proper attitude, the right amount of discretion in using different tools and techniques among naïve students. Reflections of which can be found in the syllabi of many renowned Indian universities (as depicted in Table 1).

Table 1. Undergraduate Level Ethnographic Fieldwork in the Course Curriculum of Different Major Indian Universities

Name of the University	Aim of Fieldwork Training and Area of Emphasis	Target Population	Methods to be Taught and Used during Fieldwork Training	Duration
University of Calcutta	To develop an updated and relevant understanding of methodology and its relation with the work carried out, which can help each student to attain a convincing understanding of their own experiences.	Any previously less known/ unknown community or group or settlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative, Mixed and Ethnographic methods • “Household Survey” and at least one qualitative method • Process of Selection, different tools and techniques of data collection, analysis and importance of maintaining a field diary 	15 days to one month Maximum
Delhi University	Comprehensive Ethnography	Not Specified	Not Specified	Two Weeks’ at least
Vidyasagar University	Not Specified	Tribal or rural village/hamlet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of earlier literature on the community to be studied • Establishing rapport with the community • Mapping • Household census • Use of different tools and techniques for data collection and analysis 	10 days at least
Guwahati University	Not Specified	Tribal or Caste community living in rural area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of preliminary census data all the households of the village • Use of different field methods and techniques applied for data collection and analysis • Necessity of drawings, graphs, photographs in regard to data presented 	15 days at least
Burdwan University	To train the students to conduct field survey by using conventional anthropological research methods and field techniques	Any village or an urban area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of the locality/ people/ problem • Contact making, rapport establishment, key informant, • Different techniques of data collection, taking of Field notes, data analysis and report writing 	12 days and not more than 15 days
West Bengal State University	Not Specified	Little known/ unknown community in any village or locality (tribal or multi-caste) in India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of the locality, people, problem • Contact making, rapport establishment, key informant. • Qualitative & Quantitative methods such as Case study analysis, Narrative analysis, Content Analysis. 	15 days and not more than 21 days

The undergraduate anthropology syllabus of the Guwahati University (in Assam), Vidyasagar University and West Bengal State University (in West Bengal), for example, even though does not clearly specify the aim of ethnographic fieldwork training programs. But for their emphasis on teaching students about the importance of “rapport establishment,” “mapping” “use of different tools and techniques for data collection and analysis” covertly speak about the objective. It has been specified in the undergraduate level anthropology syllabus of the University of Calcutta that undergraduate level anthropology fieldwork training programs are carried out so that the students can develop an updated and relevant understanding of methodology and its relation to the work carried out, which can help them to attain a convincing understanding of their own experiences.

However, compared to practices found at many foreign universities (Evans-Pritchard, 1967; Trotter, 1991), undergraduate level anthropology fieldwork curriculum in India is a bit different. The real difference lies in regard to the duration, actual aim of fieldwork and manner in which this aim is being achieved. Where most of the Indian universities just strive to ensure that the undergraduate students get a glimpse of the actual scenario by teaching different technicalities of ethnographic fieldwork, the foreign universities take their students one step further.

The supervising teachers in the foreign universities in most cases ensure that field observations are finally carved into something meaningful, which Indian students learn to achieve only during their Masters or sometime in the Ph.D. level. And the irony is that the duration of fieldwork in most undergraduate anthropology course curricular in India is so short that supervising teachers cannot achieve to the actual aim it even if they wish to do so.

Objective and the Role of the Researchers

In this article, we look back at an 18-day long undergraduate ethnographic fieldwork training program carried out by a college affiliated to the University of Calcutta during 2002. We try to provide a glimpse of what undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training program in India looks like in situ; where undergraduate trainee fieldworkers suddenly encounter different nuance situations and eventually learn to tackle some of the unforeseen challenges of living within an alien environment and working on people about whom they are hardly aware.

All four of us have different areas of research interests. The first author, Dr. Abhradip Banerjee, works as an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the Government General Degree College, Singur, West Bengal. He specializes in Social-Cultural Anthropology and his research areas include “handloom weavers,” “economic anthropology,” “pharmaceutical anthropology,” “material culture,” “history of anthropology” etc. The second author, Dr. Krishnendu Polley works as Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Bidhannagar College, Kolkata, West Bengal. He specializes in Archaeological Anthropology and his research areas include “typo-technological study of lithic tools” “experimental archaeology,” “flint-knapping,” “rock art” etc. The third author Arun Makal is full-time researcher and works as a Cultural Research Officer in Cultural Research Institute, BCW Department, Government of West Bengal. He has submitted his Ph.D. thesis on Agricultural Anthropology to the University of Calcutta which is under adjudication. He specializes in Social-Cultural Anthropology and his areas of research interests include “material culture,” “food security” apart from “agricultural anthropology.” And the fourth author Dr. Bhubon Mohan Das works as an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Haldia Government College, Purba-Medinipur, West Bengal. He specializes in Biological Anthropology his research areas include “reproductive and sexual health,” “demographic studies,” “anthropometric body composition,” “health status and health behavior.”

However, in spite having the differences all four of us have a lot of things in common. Firstly, all four of us by virtue of carrying out different research have accumulated a number of fieldwork exposures at different point of our career as both students and professional anthropologists. Secondly, three among the four of us currently teach anthropology at the undergraduate level which involves the task of supervising ethnographic fieldwork training programs for naïve anthropology students. And finally, all four of us were batch-mates where we have undergone the same undergraduate and post-graduate course curriculum of the University of Calcutta. Hence, imperatively we have been fascinated to look into the proceedings of undergraduate level fieldwork training curricular itself which is one of the most important parts of Anthropology undergraduate education.

Methods

For the portrayal of proceedings of the undergraduate level ethnographic training curriculum in India, we have adopted a qualitative approach. The approach adopted by us is much similar to Van Maanen (1988), Trotter (1991), Hendry (1999), Dahal (2004), De Neve and Unnithan-Kumar (2006), Pollard (2009), Faubion and Marcus (2009), Spencer (2011), Hurn (2012), VandeSteege (2012), Pascariu (2013) and Meinert and Kapferer (2015) who have emphasized the importance of these simple “generic events.”

Proceedings of one particular undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training program constitute the main substance of this article. This ethnographic training program has been carried out in the year 2002 by a college affiliated to the University of Calcutta. 25 third year anthropology undergraduate students, including all four of us, have participated in that training program. We have been taken to a remote village situated under Jhargram Subdivision of Paschim Medinipur district in West Bengal, India. Through this ethnographic training program, we have gathered our first exposure of carrying out ethnographic fieldwork among the Kora community in West Bengal.

The reflection that we put forward through this article is an ethnographic memoir, where the process is less participant observation and more toward participant description, or “I-witnessing” (Geertz, 1988, p. 73). Unlike traditional ethnographic attempts, the reflection regarding the socialization process of a group of Indian undergraduate trainee fieldworkers has been constructed on the basis of the first-hand experiences accumulated by all four of us, firstly, as “naïve trainee fieldworkers,” where we faced different nuanced situations including the first taste of living with some of our classmates with whom we were hardly accustomed with outside the classes. And, finally as “trained professionals” or “ethnographers,” where we have managed to learn some of the intricacies and difficulties of making sense out of field-level observations.

It’s true that forming an understanding about the undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training program in India from our own experiences makes the genre of this article auto-ethnographic or autobiographical. Moreover, on the issues of generalizability, one may consider this particular case of undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training to be an isolated case altogether, because, this study regarding the undergraduate level ethnographic training program in India have been carved out from our own understanding of one such program. But, this same self-indulgence or self-emancipation (Coffey, 1999; Scholte, 1972; Sparkes, 2000), “exploratory nature of this study” and “sample being one particular case” also provided a unique opportunity of gauging different nuance and everyday situation and interactions of the said fieldwork training program in a much more in-depth manner that very few previous studies have able to achieve. Besides, incorporation of both our own assessment regarding our role in the learning environment as well as others assessment regarding the same (Coy, 1989) in this article was inevitable as almost all anthropological understanding regarding

any event goes through what Ulin (1984) calls “epistemological problem” or the “dialectical process of self-understanding” (p. IX).

Use of Co-writing

Looking at the “nature of the task at hand,” we have purposively used methods of “ethnographic collaboration” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Clerke & Hopwood, 2014; Lassiter, 2004). Collaborative methods, in this article, have been used from two perspectives. One from the perspective of putting together our own collective “flashbulb memories” (Brown & Kulick, 1977) regarding the aforementioned ethnographic fieldwork training, bits and pieces of teachings, the place, the participants, and last but not the least the effect this training module had on us “as a team” (Erickson & Stull, 1998) into a sequence. And the other from the perspective of using “co-writing as research strategy” (Clerke & Hopwood, 2014), which provides the opportunity to take more sensitive and honest approach towards the ethical and political circumstances under which the entire fieldwork training program has been carried out. Here, the strategy of co-writing has provided us the perfect opportunity of peeling back upon the “multiple layers of consciousness,” implicit within our own experience regarding different episodes of this fieldwork training program; where we act both as “researchers” and as “objects of study” (Ellis & Bochner, 2003, p. 209).

Due to this reason, the entire co-construction regarding the socialization process of a group of Indian undergraduate anthropology fieldwork trainees has been narrated in a style that in parts reflect our own critical, reflexive, subjective and inter-subjective positions (e.g., O’Byrne, 2007, p. 1381).

For depiction of our experience about this particular ethnographic fieldwork training program, we took cues from the theories of “organizational socialization” (e.g., Noe, 2005; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) which suggests that almost any socialization process includes: (i) an “anticipatory stages,” where participants presume about the things to follow; (ii) “the encounter,” where participants face the actual events; and (iii) the “settling in stage,” which is marked by growing realization about requirement for immersion.

Firstly, by using what Tulving (1972) has termed as “auto-noetic” or “episodic memories” regarding many integral aspect of this ethnographic fieldwork training, we have recounted our entire experience through three sequential phases like: (i) the “anticipatory stage,” when we along with their fellow students were partially made aware of the pros and cons of ethnographic field trips; (ii) the actual “encounters” of “doing fieldwork,” when we came across different events and situation while learning the guile of “building of rapport,” “the art of making observations” and “using different tools and techniques for collection of field information”; and last but not the least, (iii) the “settling in stage” when we started realizing about true requirements of an ethnographic fieldwork, as we took part in the process of jotting down necessary information for framing of the ethnographic report. Finally, we have also made use of our present position of being “trained professionals,” “ethnographers” and “teachers”; from where we have tried to provide our critical reflection regarding the efficacy and the utility this entire ethnographic fieldwork training module by comparing some of our observations with similar work carried out in different parts of the globe in the concluding section.

“The Anticipatory Stage”: Preparations before the Field Trip

The aim of the ethnographic training program in which we all participated as trainees was not different as depicted in the undergraduate syllabus of a number of major Indian universities. Interestingly, except the instances of occasional discussion where we got glimpses

about some of the backstage stories of fieldwork that have already been carried out by our supervising teachers, not many classes were devoted to introducing different research methods, their applications and some of the core technicalities of an ethnographic fieldwork to us before the field trip. Instead our basic idea about “how hard fieldwork would be” in those days was formulated more by some of the informal exchanges that we managed to have with some of the senior students and our supervising teacher who already have gone to many such field trips. Through all these exchanges one thing became certain that “fieldwork would taste our physical and mental resilience.”

Long before we left for our first field trip, it has been decided that we would be taken to a place where we would gather our first exposure of carrying out ethnographic fieldwork among the Kora community in West Bengal. We had nothing to do with the procedures of “field-site selection” or “selection of target population.” In the initial stages at least, nothing was revealed to us regarding these two very important aspects. We were told that relatively less amount of research works carried out on Kora population enacted as one of the primary reason behind selection of Kora as our target population.

But as researchers or teachers, that some of us have become over the period of time, it isn't hard for us to guess that, the academic bounding of not carrying out ethnographic fieldwork on same tribal community every year might have covertly prompted selection of Kora as target population in our case. An ethnographic study on Kora community has been welcomed as a fresh change to meet the requirement of Anthropology undergraduate course curriculum of the University of Calcutta. It has been decided that we, along with our supervising teacher would go to a place which is mostly inhabited by Kora community. Besides, to meet the course requirement of gaining mandatory field exposure as Anthropology undergraduate students, we need to collect information on different aspects such as the “area and locality,” “demographic profile of the studied area with special emphasis on target group itself,” “their material culture,” “rituals and religious festivals,” and last but not the least on their “economic, social and political organization.”

After crossing two of the hurdles of choosing of research problem and the target population, the next obvious step was to find out one such Kora dominated area for field visit and collection of information. But we were not told a single thing about the procedure of site selection. Our supervising teacher took the entire responsibility on himself. It was only after returning from the field trip we were made aware of the rationale of the selection procedure. We now understand that selection of suitable field-site wasn't that obvious as 2001 census figures show that there were at least three districts of West Bengal namely Bardhaman, the undivided Medinipur and Purulia which had a significant number of Kora population. However, after taking consideration of communication, suitable area for setting up of field camp, availability of basic facilities of food and toilets and last but not the least the security of female students, it has been decided that we would carry out our first ethnographic fieldwork at village Bindukata located under Jhargram Subdivision of Paschim Medinipur district (undivided Medinipur then) in West Bengal.

We have been informed that village Bindukata is situated at a distance of 15 kilometers from Block and headquarter, Jhargram, therefore, we along with our supervising teacher would stay and set our field base at Sebayatan B.Ed. College which at that time was perhaps the closest place with all the facilities that our supervisor was looking for. Firstly, Sebayatan B.Ed. College had a residential campus with large dormitory style rooms each of which could accommodate 15 to 20 students, which can be utilized as bedrooms. Secondly, the campus had good facilities of security, toilet, electrification and classrooms which would enable us to utilize the nights during the time of fieldwork. And thirdly, the timing of our field stay, which was perfectly coinciding with the vacation of B.Ed. students, would help us to carry out our formalities in an unflustered way.

Meanwhile, with all the necessary arrangements going around in the backdrop, the day when we began the journey for our first fieldwork, finally arrived. We were asked to gather at the New Complex of Howrah Railway Station on the day of our journey. All that we could remember of that day that it has triggered a mixed feeling amongst many of us. Being naïve most of us were wondering what will happen during our first fieldwork. Different sorts of questions like how will we gather the data, what would be our method of approaching people for information, how would they react, and how would we be performing as group, were coming across our mind, as a few of us were romanticizing that our fieldwork will probably be like some of the stories of fieldwork that we were told prior to the journey. The other thing of that particular day that still stuck in our mind is that a few of the parents who came to see their son and daughters off were standing with grim faces. They were probably anxious about the fact that their sons and daughters have never traveled that far distance without them. They were greatly concerned about their safety as they knew their son or daughters were yet to learn the art which enables a person to live independently. However, all these thoughts and worries started to vanish as the train left for Jhargram. After a while, all 25 of us started having fun. We were sitting in groups, cracking jokes at one another, and most of all enjoying the journey.

It was close to 3.30 in the afternoon when we reached Jhargram. One of the first challenges that we encountered at that time is to get off from the train. The numbers of luggage were so high and the size of them in few cases was so huge, that we had a difficult time getting down from the train with all of them. Eventually, the train guard had been informed, and we got off with our entire luggage in time. After getting off we got engaged with the hiring of trackers which would drop us up to our field base at Sebayatan B.Ed. College. Three tracker-jeeps were hired, two for us and the other one for the luggage. We finally reached Sebayatan by 4.00 in the afternoon.

Firstly, rooms were allotted as part of setting up camp at Sebayatan B.Ed. College. It was decided that our female colleagues would stay in a room on the first floor, all male students would stay in the room on the ground floor, and our supervising teacher would stay in a room which is near to us. Further, it was decided that all the classes would be taken on the first floor for the convenience of female students.

The other important thing that was done during the evening is that our supervising teacher called all students in his room and has taken an informal class. He introduced us to a key person who belongs to Kora community. We were informed that the role of this person would be to introduce us to the other community members. Moreover, the person would work as “Key informant.” To make it understandable for us our teacher explained how this person would help in bridging the communication barrier that we may face during the time of fieldwork. Even the person may help in “building rapport.” We were told that our daily task would involve writing down our observations and field information right from next day onwards and submit it to our teacher by that day evening. Even we were asked to maintain field diaries which we would need to submit along with other reports. Besides, our supervising teacher instructed us to write a brief note regarding “our journey to the camp” and submit it by next day. This was one of the first tasks that we received from our teacher. Finally, at that night, we were reminded of our tasks and the upcoming responsibilities respectively one by one. We were then asked to cooperate wholeheartedly with other colleagues so the ultimate objective of this fieldwork is achieved.

Encounters during the Fieldwork Training Program

We began our journey for Bindukata in the next day morning. The supervising teacher accompanied us for the first day. Bindukata was around 7 kilometers away from the camp, hence, the supervising teacher ensured that we left by 6.30 in the morning. The first thing that

we noticed during our first-day journey to Bindukata that our teacher was specifically asking us to take elaborate note on the nature of the landscape, flora and fauna that we were encountering, though he never explained about the requirement.

In those days, there were no facilities of communication, so we had no other way but to reach Bindukata on foot. And we did that at each day morning. It was quite tough even for young chaps like us, so the difficulties that some of our female colleagues faced while walking is quite needless to mention over here. However, after a while, everyone got accustomed to this hardship.

Perhaps our thoughts in those days were occupied by the academic hardship of collecting information from a group alien to us than the immediate physical woes, which pushed us to pursue enthusiastically. We knew that we had to cover a lot of ground. Right from being naïve, to gaining of theoretical knowledge, to learning some of the techniques of data collections, up to applying some of these techniques in actual field situations was something else for which no preparation was enough, however, meticulous they might be. From this perspective, it was a lot more than 7 kilometers that we traveled each day.

We were realizing it each day. Each day some of our preoccupations regarding the fieldwork were vanishing slowly as we found stories of fieldwork and actual fieldwork to be radically different. Soon the realization that “the adaptive nature of anthropologists is perhaps the best tool that helps him or her to carry out fieldwork” overshadowed all our preoccupations. And this was one of the first lessons that we learned.

The next thing that we had to learn is to get familiar with the informants because we were told that “familiarity often leads to information.” However, this was not the easiest job on our part. Some of us were very skilled at starting a conversation. But we soon realized that a bit more is required for fetching information from a respondent than just mere conversations. Villagers behaved very strangely to us when we entered the village on the first day. It was indeed a strange situation. Villagers haven’t shown a lot of enthusiasm, nor did they ask us to leave. They, being unsure about the purpose of our visit, just stood still with their inquisitive eyes.

After this incidence, our supervising teacher in one of his lectures during this fieldwork training program explained about the importance of building rapport with the respondents. According to him, our main objective should be to get familiar with the respondents in such a way is that they become open to us and provide the required information without any hesitation. Thereafter, he taught us about many common tricks which are used for gaining familiar with the respondents. But in real time, “openness” came at a cost. Because very few of us able to avail some of these common methods of offering *bidi* or cigarettes to the respondents for smoke or accepting their offer for drinks like *mahuya* or *hariya* (locally made liquor) which was one their customary ways of socializing.

The incidence involving one of our male colleagues that took place during this fieldwork training program epitomizes how ones’ way of getting familiar with his respondents can become a source of misinterpretation to the respondents. While asking a mother about one of her girl child, this person lifted an elderly girl in his arms which her mother misinterpreted to be too close to their sense of comfort. She thought the person was doing this with an evil intent in mind. Hence, she started screaming, scolding and chased the person up to the road outside their house. Another incidence that took place during this fieldwork, proves that both “we” and our “respondents” were going through a period of “culture shock.” Our supervising teacher told us to cross-check about the age at marriage of female members by asking whether the person has got married before the commencement of her menstrual cycle or not. Nobody was ready to ask any such sensitive question, especially after the first incidence. Besides, we were hindered by the belief how could one ask such a question to a woman which is considered to be private even in our own culture. But this was something that we would invariably need

to ask. Two of our friends took the burden on them and went into a household where they saw a married woman was carrying out her daily household activity and her husband was sharpening his chopper. One of them asked another to give a second thought about asking such intimate question, as this could easily get misinterpreted by her husband. This may even lead to a terrible mishap. After a bit of thought, the person asked the women whether she has got married before the commencement of her menstrual cycle. Much to the surprise of both of our friends, the women answered in the affirmative, as if nothing has happened as if asking such question is perfectly alright and her husband also did not react to it.

None of these, though, became a hindrance in our way of getting familiar with our respondents. Soon these people realized that we were students and have gone there to collect information on their life, society, and culture. The key informant belonging to Kora community, who has been assigned to look after our specific needs at the time of fieldwork, played a major role in this regard. After three to four days of continuous visits, the respondents became open to us. They started sharing vital information like family income, beliefs in different gods and goddesses, community rituals and festivals along with some of other sensitive aspects such as ritual relation to their life cycle.

Needless to say, that our everyday tasks during this fieldwork training program revolved around one single objective of “collecting sufficient amount of information on Kora community of village Bindukata” which would enable us to have a proper understanding of their social-cultural life. Keeping in mind the time the respondents might take to become open, it was decided that we would only ask for some basic information like the number of family members, their respective age, sex, occupation, educational status other than the general information about the area and locality at the initial stages. Bindukata at that time was a small village, so instead of taking a sample of the total population we were asked to cover the entire population, which is constituted by 53 Kora and 4 Santal households. These 53 households are then allotted amongst 25 undergraduate students, which meant that each of us was assigned the responsibility of collecting information from specific households. Depending upon the number of households allotted to a student pre-designed census schedules were handed over to each of us. Over a period of 3 to 4 days, we visited the households of Kora people of Bindukata village and collected information on the age, gender, occupation, education and marital status from all Kora 234 individuals residing in 53 households in numeric form. The strategy worked well for us, because, by the time we finished the collection of basic information the respondents were willing to talk on other pertinent issues that were of far more importance.

It was probably due to this reason while collecting information on their economic organization, and information on their life cycle rituals we kept visiting the same households with whom we have managed to grow some sort of familiarity. In course of time, to supplement our understanding regarding the overall proceedings of the Kora life, we had to take the help of in-depth observation on their agricultural activities, life style, and food habit. We often visited their agricultural fields and kitchens. In the early stages, we never bothered to ask any question to our respondents. Instead we just watched, observed and photographed these people while ploughing, weeding, or sowing seeds in their agricultural field which revealed much about the division of labour and different procedures associated with their agricultural practices. Our supervising teacher made sure that we collected all these information in as much detail as possible. Sometimes he used to check our involvement with the respondents by asking us to enact and explain some of the procedures of agricultural activities in his classes during this fieldwork training program.

Later the case studies and interviews on the economic activity, religious practices and life cycle rituals of the Kora people of Bindukata village, which we took as a follow-up measure for substantiating our basic idea developed from the general observations, given us another important task of establishing the reliability, correctness and validity of the field level

information. We were often in a quandary as respondents often provided multiple versions of a similar event. Being naïve, we were not in any position to identify that the sequence of the marriage ceremonies or the agricultural activities in many such cases revealed by the respondents were similar. Often the different level of detailing associated with each version which made them look different pushed us to seek help from the key informants who personally sorted out many of our quarries involving some of these gross misinterpretations. This event other than generating an overall understanding about the proceedings of Kora community of Bindukata village has also helped us in tackling the issues of variability of field level information in better manner in the next few days. The key informant then helped us immensely during the collection of information on political organization' and religious ceremonies and festivals especially, because, he took us to key personnel who were in charge of these social events on which we were seeking vital information.

If collection of information was one side of the coin then writing down observation and field notes was another which proved to be difficult task for us. Most of us were not accustomed to the rituals of writing of field observation or field notes or maintaining a field diary.

The first thing that comes to our minds that we were getting information from interviews, case studies filled up schedules, but were largely unsure about content of a "field-diary." We were asked to maintain field diaries, but were never clearly told why or for which purpose we are to maintain them. Therefore, we kept flooding our field diaries with information like the time when we woke up, the time when we had breakfast, the time when we entered the field-site and finally the time when we left the field. It was only when our supervising noticed this mistake and mentioned in one of the field diaries that "are you trimming the grasses in between? Or are you watering the plants at the time of fieldwork?" we understood what we should have been writing on the field diaries right from beginning. And the second thing was that merely all of us were having a great difficulty in producing detailed informative field-notes from raw Bengali transcript that were originally taken at the time of our field visits. As per our assessment we were having a great amount of difficulty due to our lack command over the English language. Perhaps our supervisor, because of his prior experiences of supervising the undergraduate level fieldwork training programs, anticipated that naïve undergraduate students usually face trouble in taking field notes in English. That's why he encouraged us to take detailed field notes in Bengali so that we could concentrate more on taking field-notes in as much detail as possible. He has also given specific instruction to each of us to submit a detailed translated version of our each day's reports by next day evening.

That means we hardly got any time for this translation apart from the nights. Due to this reason, all of us use to spend most of our leisure time in writing and rewriting of field level information. Writing and re-writing used to be one of the most integral parts of our routine when we returned from fieldwork each day. Indeed, it became a ritual for us. All the boys, including all four of us, use to sit in a horde for discussing, developing, and strengthening our basic idea about Kora people. During nights, we often shared our field level observation amongst friends and colleagues, and those who have some sort of proficiency in the English language helped one another in translating the Bengali field-transcripts. Sometimes we even copied each other's information when the other one was asleep, because no one was willing fall behind in the covert competition that was going around. The other important areas of discussion during those nights was the "remarks" or "notes for modification" given against each of our submitted reports. Sometimes these remarks became the matter of our great concern as they hardly helped in providing any clue regarding what to do next or how to improve our common mistakes. There was no scope for face-to-face discussions with our supervisor regarding the mentioned matters, because, our teacher always used to discussed about the mistakes that we commonly committed. In spite of all the difficulties we never complained as

our own group discussions at night eventually helped us in covering up some of the common weakness that we all were suffering.

Most of us, who never had any prior experiences of living in group away from protection of home and parents were certainly got stuck between a tough regime and rituals of an ethnographic fieldwork. We used to get out for fieldwork at 6.30 in the morning and used to return for lunch at around 3.30 in the afternoon. Truly speaking in those days, other than two to three hours in between, we hardly got any time to take rest. There was no one to look after our everyday needs and expectations except one another, with whom we were hardly accustomed to outside the classes. After a few days, we noticed there were certain compatibility and some unknown equation growing among people we hardly thought of during theoretical classes.

It was indeed a strange situation, as we saw such cooperation continuing even after returning to our camp at Sebayatan B.Ed. College each day, which no one of us have seen prior to this field trip. We saw people loudly singing romantic numbers for his (un)known beloved, who otherwise happens to be very timid person, we saw people secretly waiting on the stairs for a glimpse of someone he wanted badly, we saw love letters being delivered through exchange of match boxes, we saw our supervising teacher taking part in cricket match with us in one of the afternoons. We saw groups being formed on the basis of gender, economic condition and the intellect of the students. We saw a lot of cooperation, misunderstanding, quarrels, and noncooperation taking place between these groups. We understood the gravity of the situation later only when one of the love affairs resulted in marriage a few years later. Indeed, this field trip had it all as there was no shortage of life.

After a while, all of us found people and groups to get along with. Memberships to some of the groups were retained till the end. While translating our rough field notes we used to sit together in groups, we used to crack jokes, pass funny comments at each other's mistakes, and pull each other's leg. However, there used to be a covert competition amongst these groups, which in the worst case scenario led to not sharing of vital field level information and noncooperation. Interestingly, in spite of having such tension between groups a few of the group members secretly shared field information with the other groups as they had other interests to meet. Nonetheless, it was a lot of fun, especially for the boys like us. We were having the first taste of living lives freely like never before, and which we knew would soon come to an end for a while as soon as we return home. Therefore, we used to continue our mischief till very late at night.

“The Settling in Stage” while Putting the Ethnography Together

The basic understanding about the aim and objective of an undergraduate level anthropological fieldwork training program started to grow when we returned home and were assigned the task of formulating a meaningful field report cumulatively from the field level observations. We got the real taste of what ethnographic research looks like when we actually got involved with the task of putting an entire field report on Koras of Paschim Medinipur together. By that time a general realization started to grow among all the trainee field-workers, that carving out a meaningful piece of ethnography from our messy chaotic field experiences was something quite new and different challenge altogether which none of us have faced before. It was unlike writing an answer to a theoretical question, where there were plenty of hints to be found from the available textbooks. It was evident to us that the job would require creativity, imagination, and above all skill of expression through which one can pass on the exact message to an adjudicator. And we were mostly falling behind in all of these aspects.

It's not like that we had any shortcoming regarding fieldwork or data collection. We had nearly all the things required for jotting down an ethnographic report. Some of our field

level observations were in fact quite neat. We even had our naïvely written field diary that to some extent included our personal dilemmas, problems, and joys in studying particular social settings of the Koras of Bindukata village. But we never had the knowledge or the experience to utilize this information for reflection, writing and rewriting some of the key ingredients of our field report. Understandably, our supervising teacher had to enter the arena for our rescue. He took care of the task of preliminary level analysis of field transcripts for us because we were running much behind of deadline for final report submission. Looking into the rough field notes for a while, our supervising teacher decided about the probable structure and content of our first ethnographic field report. But he never bothered to teach us about some of the procedures of finding “preliminary themes” from these rough field transcripts. Perhaps he never had that much of time either.

During one of his lectures after this field trip, our supervising teacher explained that a standard undergraduate anthropological field report should contain: (i) “an introduction,” where one needs to provide information on what fieldwork is, why it is being done in anthropology, a brief glimpse of research tools used by anthropologists; (ii) “description about the area and people,” where one needs to furnish information on the landscape, vegetation and people of the studied region; (iii) “an overview of their economic pursuit”; (iv) “discussion about their life cycle rituals”; (v) “description of their religious ceremonies and festivals”; (vi) “information about their health and hygiene”; (vii) “some information regarding impact of development”; and the last (viii) “a list of references.” It was during this time we were told clearly, that “the basic aim and objective of an undergraduate field trip is to make students familiar with different tools and techniques that anthropologists use for finding answers to a wide array of research questions.” Besides, we have learned to use some of the key tools and techniques according to the need of the situation and therefore have nothing to worry about.

Naturally, some of us raised one of the most important questions, that is, “do we have enough data to fulfill the requirements of all the subsections?” It led to other co-related questions, “from where we would be finding information about the different tools and techniques that anthropologists often use or information about the studied region, its landscape and vegetation, moreover, the roles and requirements of fieldwork in anthropology.” All these questions led us to the study of relevant literatures. Our supervising teacher allotted the task amongst a few of us who went to the National Library for the collection of relevant information regarding “requirement of fieldwork in anthropology,” “different research tools and techniques” and “about the studied region.” Meanwhile, others were given the task of rewriting field information as per aforesaid subsections from the already written field notes.

During organizing different materials for the field report, we learned about the importance of some of the documentary pieces of evidence which we thought would be much less important during the time of our field visit. At that time only two of our fellow students had cameras with them. They took up the responsibility of taking field photographs and capturing important moments. Pictures were random; some of them even contained normal moments of our leisure time in our camp as we were not made aware of the importance of taking photographs during fieldwork. While jotting down all the relevant field information and rewriting them in the form of an ethnography we realized how important some photographs were as they were the evidences of lived experiences. All of us agreed to share these randomly taken photographs as we had no other way at that time. Through our already perceived experiences of reading a book we placed photographs within different subsections and some of us did it quite skillfully. Photographs of the sacred place of Kora people (*Jaher-than*) for example proved to be important during the time of adjudication. It was through some of the objects (terracotta figurines of horses and elephants) captured in one of the photographs of Kora sacred place, which is directly connected to their religious belief we were able to prove the photographs were indeed taken at Bindukata, and not in any other place.

It was indeed a great learning experience. This incidence taught us an important lesson regarding the subject and content of field photographs which we followed in all our next field visits. Besides, this entire experience of organizing documentary evidence taught us about another very important aspect, that is, secondary level data analysis. It gave us the impetus to look for similar instances and occurrence of similar patterns within the already analyzed bits of information. Although we never did all these things consciously at that time, but while putting together all the bits and into single readable field report, we eventually had to look for the “conceptual linkage between the same type of events as well as the linkage between concepts that emerged from different kinds of information.”

Tabulation of demographic information and their analysis was another area in which we faced difficulty at the time of jotting down the field report. We realized that one cannot perform this kind of job entirely on his own. Hence, we allocated the task amongst one another and finished some of the tabulation parts at the time of our field visit. However, because of the time constrains, we postponed our next task of analyzing this tabulated demographic information for later.

After coming back from the field as soon as we took up the task of analyzing this tabulated information we faced difficulty instantly. At that time, very few of us were conversant with computers, therefore we had to rely on the manual methods of analysis which was indeed time-consuming. On top of all the small groups that were formed during fieldwork, this difficulty gave birth to two more groups: one who would be doing it manually and others who would either be doing it themselves or depend on people who are well conversant with computers. By that time all of us have realized that it would be impossible to carry out this task single-handedly and we needed to pursue a much larger objective of “getting the job done,” which is much beyond the interests of these small groups, for that we needed an intergroup cooperation and understanding and everyone cooperated dutifully.

This ethos continued till the end even up to writing, rewriting, and production of field reports. As undergraduate students, we never had any prior experiences of writing an academic field report. Therefore, our idea about the target audience (field-report adjudicators), was blurring because it has been formulated from what we have heard from our seniors and the supervising teacher. No one taught us how to write as there were hardly any classes on academic writing. Therefore, we got stuck while making choice between the genre of academic and practical writing in the early stages of writing and rewriting. Our lack of proficiency in the English language made this decision even tougher for us as we were mostly in a dilemma whether to include some of our own reflections within the final piece of field report or not. Eventually, we took the safe way out. We purposively decided to exclude our own reflection and written our field report in the genre of practical writing which have a hint of academic orientation.

As soon as we finished the corrections and the process of rewriting of field note as per the requirement of the specific subsections, we exchanged the corrected handwritten manuscripts amongst each one of us for the production of final field reports. It was quite exciting for us as we were going through mixed emotions of having done something that we hadn't done before on one hand, again were unsure of its quality on the other hand. We were trying to gauge the marvels of our first achievement and were having an anxious time thinking whether the adjudicators would like our field report or not. We thought our job was over, but we were to soon realize how wrong we were.

We found great difficulty in producing the final ethnographic field report. Finding out the right people who would get the job done for us was indeed very tough. Even if we managed to find the right people they demanded a lot of money which at that time was quite unaffordable for some of us. We talked with some of the senior students who gave some of their contacts. Invariably we had to travel to a lot of places for finding suitable persons who would agree to

do the job in exchange of an affordable price. Eventually, we had to take help from either a typist or computer operator who ultimately did the job for us. And after a lot of sleepless nights the first piece of our creation became ready for adjudication.

Observation and Conclusion

The present article offers some important observations regarding undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training program in India. This work offers some unique in-depth observations on teaching and training facilities available for anthropology undergraduate students in a developing country like India, which very few studies have able to provide earlier. Besides, this study also reflects upon one of the less emphasized and somewhat dialectical relationship between the “ethnographers” or the persons (who are the most important research instrument within ethnography), and the education or the process of “socialization” they pass through while doing fieldwork. Moreover, it reconfirms the methodological importance of these simple generic events within anthropological ethnographic practice (Aiello, 2010; Faubion & Marcus, 2009; Meinert & Kapferer, 2015; Van Maanen, 1988). Some of the generic events experienced by four authors during this fieldwork training program do represent both similarity and difference with works carried out in different parts of the world (Hurn, 2012; Pollard, 2009; Spencer, 2011; Trotter, 1991; VandeSteege, 2012) on many aspects, which eventually determine the outcome or the quality of research.

This article reflects that unlike the hardcore research exposures given by various foreign universities, undergraduate fieldwork preparation in India is a bit different. Undergraduate course curriculum of some Indian universities still follows the same fieldwork training methods invented by British anthropologists, but in a little bit modified form. Evans-Pritchard (1967, pp. 75-77) points out that research students at the University of Oxford usually spent at least two years for gaining firsthand field exposure, and a rigorous preparation and study of the literature on the target community that include the firsthand knowledge on the language of the community concerned. Again Trotter (1991, p. 7) shows that the research students at the National Arizona University receive an introduction to reading ethnographies, with special emphasis on learning to critique some of the previous ethnographic research work so that they can develop a clear understanding of (i) methods, (ii) strength of coverage, (iii) support of theoretical positions, and how some of these work ultimately contributed towards the (iv) advancement of knowledge. However, unlike the practices of these two foreign universities, undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork training programs in India are carried out within the time span of mere 15 days to one-month maximum. The study also shows that undergraduate students don't enjoy that much liberty while choosing of research problems, target groups or field-sites. In most of the cases, all of these tasks are performed by the supervising teacher as experienced by the four authors.

A critical analysis of this entire fieldwork training program also reveals many covert elements related to the selection procedure of the target population and field-sites. The study shows that instead of making a proper assessment regarding the actual requirement for carrying out fieldwork training program, issues like the academic burden of not repeating the same target group every year, better accommodation and safety of the students are given far more importance at the time of making choices. Furthermore, the timing and duration of undergraduate fieldwork training program also reflect the academic compromise made, because, in most of the cases the fieldwork training programs are carried out during the vacation for simply accommodating the needs of both teachers and students. The study also reveals that undergraduate trainee fieldworkers in India usually go for fieldwork with very little knowledge of research methods and the target population. Literatures for precise knowledge of research methods and target group are usually consulted as these students return from the field trip.

Sometimes these literatures are consulted at the time of data analysis. And, due to their poor intellectual preparations before fieldwork, Indian undergraduate students often struggle to get a grip on various assigned tasks in the first few days of fieldwork, as they go through a period of culture shock.

Nonetheless, the phenomenon of coming across difficulties during the first few days of fieldwork is not something exclusive to Indian students. Some of the previous studies carried out in different parts of the globe show that anthropologists often come across the feeling of a “marginal natives” (Freilich, 1970); or a “self-reliant loners” (Lofland, 1974); or a “self-denying emissaries” (Boon, 1982); or a “professional strangers” (Agar, 1980); or at times a range of feelings like “loneliness,” “shame,” “bereaved,” “betrayal,” “depression,” “lack of preparation,” “disappointment,” “frustration,” “guilt” and “harassment” altogether (Pollard, 2009). But two separate incidence that took place during aforesaid fieldwork training program — one of them being the case where one of the trainee fieldworkers, while building rapport, got too close for comfort of a respondent and she reacted, and the other one involving trainee fieldworkers, who almost backed out due to their own prejudice that respondents might react to one of their very intimate questions — are important examples of two opposite ends of culture shock which Indian undergraduate students usually encounter. These two incidences much like Bloch (1991), Pollard (2009), Spencer (2011) and Hurn (2012) further reinstates the fact naïve undergraduate fieldworkers learn about intricacies of interviewing techniques and other research methods through a prolonged engagement and lesions of maintaining a discrete attitude during various emotionally charged situations. Particularly, Spencer’s observations in this regard reveal how emotions play a significant role in “knowledge making” during the ethnographic process. She explains how emotional reflexivity of the students supersedes their fear of “rejection” during fieldwork. Due to this reason, they become more confident in their own abilities as budding ethnographers and ultimately learn to conduct themselves in an emotionally reflexive manner by asking meaningful questions to their informants. Perhaps the same thing has happened with all the students of undergraduate fieldwork training program of 2002, where that particular group of anthropology undergraduate students actually became more adept in asking questions as they learn to conduct themselves during different emotionally charged situations involving the issues of trust, friendship, loyalty, interpersonal relationship, intra-group conflicts, cooperation and the process of data collection.

Finally, this article depicts one of the most important facets of undergraduate level anthropological fieldwork training programs in India, where undergraduate students go through lesions of analyzing field level information and writing them in the form of ethnographic field-reports. The study reveals that while analysis and compilation of field report undergraduate students face the real challenge where they needed to make the transition from being naïve students to keen ethnographers. The study demonstrates that contrary to the practices found in many foreign universities the part of undergraduate field-level data analysis too differs in many important aspects. Unlike the studies carried out by Trotter (1991) and VandeSteege (2012), findings of this study clearly show why Indian undergraduate students encounter a great amount difficulty in making this transition? Reasons are quite clear, other than what VandeSteege (2012, p. 35) calls “unlearning” some of the past habits and experiences which they have gathered through previous educational exposures, most of the Indian undergraduate students had to cope with many other pertinent issues like; not having the sufficient level of proficiency in expressing different social events in English language and the minimum knowledge of computers which are considered to be integral aspects responsible for the success of any ethnographic training program. The study also shows that Indian undergraduate fieldworkers perform some of the common fieldwork rituals of maintaining field diaries and submitting the field notes on a regular basis. But due to the lack of critical assessment of field transcript by the supervising teachers, which fieldwork training programs carried out by the

foreign universities ensure on a daily basis (Trotter 1991, p. 9), Indian undergraduate fieldworkers fail to integrate the some of the theoretical understanding with their own empirical observations. And this leads to the production of messy field-transcripts, ultimately which lengthens the time period for the compilation of final field report.

All of this indicates towards an important fact that the understanding regarding the actual requirements of undergraduate level ethnographic fieldwork in India, as Pollard (2009, p. 18) points out through his observations on post-fieldwork students, like almost many other similar instances, takes place in a “gradual manner” as students learn to use some of the “tricks of trade” as they finally learn to tackle some of the problems on their own. Because, student’s assertion towards pre-fieldwork training courses, as illustrated by Pollard, suggests that no training, however, comprehensive or practical they might be, can ever really prepare any student for fieldwork, until and unless the person or group learn to do fieldwork by doing fieldwork. Findings of this study thus, much similar to the proposition of Ingold (2002), reconfirm about the inherently social nature of apprenticeship of ethnographic fieldwork. This also indicates towards the universality of distinct methodological advantage that anthropologists from all over the world enjoys (Bloch, 1991) which allows them to learn about other people’s everyday and specialist practices, knowledge and understandings by engaging in practices, imitating and embarking upon personal learning trajectory. And this in itself isn’t that bad thing to happen as it provides a perfect opportunity to take a more “grounded approach” towards ethnographic theory building (Charmaz, 2006; Dey, 1999; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

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