

Shobhita Jain

AN ANTHROPOLOGIST AND ANTHROPOLOGIST'S WIFE

Abstract

This unique narrative traces a woman's experiences of training and fieldwork in anthropology combined with discovery of the self overlapping domestic life within the framework of a patriarchal social order. Since this was a journey of self-discovery through varied encounters, the author does not stick to a strict chronological order and traverses freely from India, Australia, Malaysia and U.K. back to India again. She describes the experience of living in the Malaysian estate labour-lines, training and living in Oxford, fieldwork in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh as well as revisits to the field. Her simultaneous journey into the domestic and professional self enabled the cultivation of a critical global perspective in anthropology.

Keywords: *Autoanthropology; familial and professional roles; patriarchy; life-long learning; cross-cultural perspective.*

Received: 29th May 2020 **Revised:** 15th June 2020 **Accepted:** 17th June 2020

To be both, an anthropologist and an anthropologist's wife, at the same time is not easy. Being an anthropologist and being an anthropologist's wife are two very different issues in several ways. One way is that of going through a longer, a much longer process of discovering oneself in a gradual manner and trying to become an anthropologist in one's own right. But again the difference comes in the sense of both, being a product of a patriarchal society and therefore taking up too many responsibilities, playing the roles of a dutiful wife as well as being a professional at the same time. Consequently one role has to be subsumed by the other and one did succumb to the usual hierarchy of male dominating the female roles. The realization of this subordination and playing to the gallery of lip service practitioners did become a habit, an acceptable habit (of being a *poonchha* or a tail). Yet one ought to write on this topic since no anthropologist has so far performed this exercise. The general impact of this being a 'cow' (my daughter's term for me) is apparently showing up in aging too early or at least aging earlier than my husband¹ physically, mentally and cognitively but not being unconscious about it so I do feel hurt, pained and my pride takes a knock (as my ex-daughter-in-law said). So be it

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but I ought to write just to prove myself that all is not lost and I am the same person who was, is and will be till my end.

An example of an Indian anthropologist couple is that of Leela Dube and S. C. Dube, in the sense of being an anthropologist in her own right and yet being dominated by the patriarchal order of Indian society. She did not write anything on this theme. Or take the example of Jayashree, the economist wife of Arjun Sengupta (see the obituary in *The Wire* by Jayati Ghosh 2020). I was inspired by anthropologist wives of Raymond Firth and Maurice Freedman in taking up anthropology as a profession and completing all its stages in a gradual manner. It is not that the anthropologist husbands are not aware of this fact or do not encourage and inspire their wives. They do so, very consciously and carefully (to the extent that the present piece is being written by me at my husband's prompting and encouragement). But Judith Djamour, the Egyptian wife of Maurice Freedman or Rosemary Firth, the English wife of Raymond Firth, did not write about their experiences of going through the process of discovery of the 'self'.

I recall that during our dating days (literally these were days), my fiancé (already an M.A. in Anthropology from Lucknow University, and a much loved student of the then famous anthropologist, D. N. Majumdar) told me (after giving me to read Clyde Kluckhohn's book, *Mirror for Man*) that if I would be able to sleep on pual (a bed of grass) and I showed my willingness and this is how we developed friendship under the influence of our youth. We did not simply flirt but actually went through a process of 'an arranged marriage' in the sense of negotiations between my elder sister (Pushpa, later a wife of Hindi litterateur, Dharmavira Bharati) and his (fiancé's) parents in Calcutta. So, in popular terms of India, ours was a kind of marriage in-between an 'arranged marriage' and a 'love marriage'. But my parents being Brahmins by caste did not take part in negotiations and there was no such expectation on the part of his (fiance's) parents also. In a hypogamous marriage it was taken for granted that the higher caste Brahmins would not agree to a marriage between a Brahmin girl or bride and a Bania or Jain boy or a groom. But as a matter of fact this issue never arose and my sister took it upon herself to see us married. I had completed an M. A. in Ancient Indian History and Archaeology from Lucknow University in 1960. On January First in 1961 we were married through a Civil Court in Calcutta (now Kolkatta). His (fiance's) maternal grandfather performed a hawan (ritual of lighting a sacrificial fire) at home and asked me to repeat Namokar Mantra (a Jain hymn) after him and he was very happy to discover that I already knew this mantra (hymn) as it was in my Ancient Indian History course. While living with my sister in Calcutta I had written a review of a Hindi book which was sent to my sister and so the review was published in a journal in her name but when my sister told his (fiance's) parents about the reality of that review, his elder sister (being a poetess) and parents (both literary persons and authors of books in Hindi) felt very happy

that their would-be daughter-in-law can write critically. So everybody in his family showed their approval and I, too, naturally behaved just as per my socialization of a patriarchal society. My husband, a temporary lecturer in the department of Anthropology of Lucknow University, received the offer of a scholarship to do his Ph. D. in Anthropology from the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra, Australia. The news was attributed to my good luck as is custom in India (any bad news is similarly attributed to the bad luck of the bride). Accepting my good luck attribution I was elated to go to a foreign country for the first time in life and take the responsibility of setting up a new household (though I had no such training as the experiences of setting it up showed clearly). I was also expecting my first child (without confirming the pregnancy Dr Kutty of K. G. K. Medical College, Lucknow, simply said that often people miss the bus and when a colleague asked my husband "how is your new wife?", quite innocently he replied, "Oh, she puked this morning" the colleague responded, "This is something to be happy about." Then only we knew that I was pregnant. The ANU scholarship provided funds for the wife too. That was great and his family prepared for our first foreign trip. By Qantas, my first flight was quite an experience. With brand new passports we reached Sydney and then took a flight to Canberra after a shower and lunch at the airport. The University House (hostel for married scholars at ANU) was charming with heated floor in its bathroom. We were getting to know each other and nearer the time of expecting the child, a quarter was allotted to the anthropologist scholar who was in regular touch with his supervisor who had come to receive us at Canberra airport. When he carried our very heavy suitcases to car park, for us it was an experience of a guide carrying suitcases whereas in India this is done by a menial specially appointed for this job. Canberra airport is (or was in 1961 May) a small one without luggage trolleys so we felt strange while Professor Barnes was very natural in his action of carrying our suitcases. But for many days after the event both, I and my husband, talked about this. Naturally, this was our first experience of human dignity of labour and cultural difference, so without realizing we had a culture shock. Also we had for the first time an experience of hearing the Australian accent when the receptionist at the ANU kiosk asked us "Have you come hear to die?" She was from her side saying 'today' but the way she said the word, to our ears it sounded as 'to die'.

In Moorhouse Street there were eight flats for ANU scholars. Our flat was number 6. In our front flat was an English couple and a paternal grandmother had come from England for the delivery and no 7 was the flat of a Canadian couple whose wife was going to have her first baby next month. I was to have the child after two months (An English couple's wife gave birth to a daughter on the same day as I did in Canberra Community Hospital.) I had been offered the job of a cataloguer at the Australian National Library's Oriental section, housed in the National Parliament Building. While working in the library I got the training of a week in cataloguing and at the library I made

friends with Wendy Benson and Tracy Judith (Wendy was a faster friend). At ANU's Department of History I was invited to give lectures on Ancient Indian History. My husband encouraged me to take up this assignment and he prepared an outline for my lectures. I was very nervous in being ready to take up lecturing. On the basis of his prompting I took up the offer and completed it (those were pre-laptop and pre-computer days).

I had also joined some clay pottery classes after the birth of my first child, a daughter. At ANU my husband decided on the advice of his supervisor to do research in Malaysia (or then Malaya) on a rubber plantation instead of continuing his initial research proposal on the Asur tribals of Chhota Nagpur (then in the State of Bihar). With this he started learning Bahasa Indonesia as it would have been helpful while working in Malaysia (without realizing that on a rubber plantation most labourers were Tamil speakers and he would have been better off learning Tamil which both I and he learnt to speak later). I regret not learning to read or write Tamil as it is a very rich language with vast literature and literary and musical tradition.

The quality of partnership that we developed during the Malaysian anthropological fieldwork has remained with us on a life-long basis. This period was important in the sense that I received training in anthropological fieldwork in a very imperceptible way. The process was natural and had the element of exquisite partnership. It was a learning process that came to me naturally. I was not conscious of the process being there but it taught me forever and I am grateful for it. (I often say, "We were like babes in the woods, exploring ourselves.")

Living in labour lines was the outcome of a decision of my husband whose supervisor had suggested that his student would be better off doing his first anthropological fieldwork on a rubber plantation in Malaya (now Malaysia after its Merdeka day celebrated annually on when Malaya became separated from Singapore and it was renominated as Malaysia). While working on rubber plantation in Malaya it was imperative that a social anthropologist lives with the people he was to study and on a rubber plantation he goes to live where labourers lived.

Going to live in labour lines was a gradual process as Malaya was a new country for us and we had no idea of the Tamil people and their culture and each rubber estate area was a part of the privately owned property of the European owners. My husband first carried out a reconnaissance of rubber plantations in Malaya and then decided to carry out his work in the State of Selangor near Kuala Selangor. At the time of reconnaissance, we hired a flat in Petaling Jaya (near the University of Malaya) and lived there for two months with our first child, a daughter of three months only. Since I was feeding the baby, I was very weak and one day while getting the milk bottle from our front door I fainted. Then my husband took me to see one Indian doctor (Dr. Malal) who recommended that I should stop feeding the baby and wean her to milk from the bottle and take a course of about 10 vitamin B injections to get the strength back. At that

very time I complained about having rice all the time without any roti (puffed round bread made of whole wheat flour, a part of the staple diet of people from north India) and we were told by acquaintances to visit the Kashi Brahmin Restaurant to get fresh roti served with delicious vegetables. When I went to that place only one piece of roti satisfied me and I wanted no more. After some regular visits to Dr. Malal and her treatment of injections, along with weaning away the baby from my milk, I was happy again to eat rice for my meals because we loved the taste of food from south India. Kuala Lumpur had very many good South Indian Restaurants, (just like Singapore where we stayed in the University guest house and enjoyed South Indian meals).

After choosing a rubber plantation and consulting my husband's supervisor about his selection, we moved to live at the government guest house on top of a hill in Kuala Selangor (in Singapore we had bought an Austin A 40 red car for fieldwork in Malaya so it was not an issue doing a reconnaissance of Malayan rubber estates as well as going to the guest house (on top of a hill). Just below the hill was a one man-owned restaurant of South Indian meals and he charged us only five valli and irubad kas (5.20 Malayan dollars). His wife cooked the meal and he served us hot cooked rice with sambar (cooked lentils with vegetables, powders of spices and water) and an apalam (thin roasted wafer) each. Once when his wife was not well and he cooked the meal and served us. The meal was tasteless and I complained and then he narrated the true story. Sometimes we took our meals at the guest house where the Chinese caretaker served us daily delicious breakfast, tea and Chinese meal (whenever we wanted provided we told him in advance). There we introduced our child with a drop of Coca Cola soft drink. She just loved it. Once during the afternoon a Malayan officer had visited the guest house and he peeped into our window when my husband and I were asleep but I noticed a man looking after removing our window curtain and peeping into the room. I complained about it to my husband. He had immediately gone out and slapped the man for his indecent behaviour without asking him his identity. Later the stranger wrote some awful report about the upkeep of the guest house and the caretaker was hauled by the District Magistrate, In-charge of the upkeep of all government guest houses in the district and the caretaker explained the matter to his boss. Then instead of saying anything to the Malay officer, the Chinese district Magistrate saved the Chinese caretaker writing against the visitor from India and Indian culture of treating all caretakers as Pariahs (lower caste of south India, in general and of Tamil Nadu in particular). In any case we had to stop living in the government guest house by living somewhere nearer the rubber plantation of my husband's selection after the reconnaissance. Just by chance we came to know of a manager's furnished bungalow falling vacant in the vicinity, known as the rubber plantation of Kuala Selangor, just three kilometres away from Pal Melayu (a pseudonym for the actual estate in his later published book, see Jain, R. K., 1970). Living for three months in that bungalow, we employed a Tamil girl, Mariamma, the daughter of a rubber estate labourer.

She taught our daughter to speak her first word, *poo* (for a flower in Tamil). There we had a gas-run refrigerator in the house. While lying on the floor the small baby had a curious habit of gazing at the gas-flame, lit at the bottom of the fridge. This is where my husband's supervisor visited him in the field as well as the anthropologist friend Maurice Freedman who had worked on the Chinese population of Malaya and was visiting Malaya for a short while. Professor Barnes, the supervisor, told my husband to live in the labour lines as soon as feasible and advised against keeping the small child with us in the unhygienic conditions of Malaya in general and of the estate labour lines in particular. We had to request my husband's parents to keep our first-born with them. They liked the idea of keeping a baby with them and we had to arrange her transport to Calcutta (where they lived at that time). Then my husband discussed the matter with the manager of the rubber estate, the Frenchman Mr Jaubert, who had to be permitted by the higher-ups in the bureaucracy of the company owning the estate. All this took time. In-between the Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies, A.N.U., Sir J.G. Crawford, visited Malaya and my husband put this problem before him and he promised to find the solution by talking to his friend at the golf club. This friend played golf with him and represented Australia in Malaya. Sir Crawford fixed a meeting between him and my husband. After the meeting the High Commissioner spoke to the owners of the rubber company in Malaya and the manager was given the permission for us to live in the labour lines of the estate, Pal Melayu. In the meantime a small house occupied by a Malayali supervisor (the Malayalam speakers from Kerala, generally employed on rubber estates as clerks or supervisors of labourers on Malayan rubber estates of European ownership) became vacant. So we moved to that quarter and one day the manager of the Pal Melayu told us to move to the labour line of its Division A and we decided to send our child to Calcutta with an airhostess on a flight from Singapore. There we met Maurice Freedman again. He was told by the fortune teller of Pal Melayu, Kuppusami, that he would die early. Feeling happy on being alive to meet us again he carried our baby daughter on his shoulders in a busy Singapore market. After a brief holiday at the famous resort of Fraser Hill in Malaya, we said good bye to our child and handed her over to the Singaporean Chinese air hostess who delivered the child to her grandmother at Calcutta airport. Maurice Freedman admired us for the love of anthropological fieldwork and we were much enthused by his words we did not realize the gravity of the situation as Freedman and his wife were without a child so they could admire us only. My husband's supervisor was quite circumspect about the decision and wrote to him that either way we were caught in a dilemma but in the end we will realize that we took the right decision because we cannot reverse 'time'(a situation of similar sort came before us when we decided to leave Oxford for joining JNU in January 1975), after meeting the JNU Vice Chancellor, Mr Parthasarathi and we realized that there is no reversal of time.

After seeing our daughter off at Singapore airport we returned to the

plantation and moved to our labour line room in a block of four rooms for four labourers and their families, built on stilts so that the downstairs space could be used for cooking daily meals. We bought a wooden bed (takhta) with a gadda (a home-made mattress, bought in the local market), a table with a chair and a lock for the room. Downstairs we used for cooking and in addition we bought a mobile toilet for bathing and ablutions, employing a labourer for its daily cleaning (all labourers of the estate used a common toilet facility and a common source of water for bathing) and we employed a small girl for stray household chores. For breakfast from the days when we lived in a kirani (clerk/ supervisor) quarter of Pal Melayuy one family on the estate had offered to give us at nominal cost idlis (round steamed cakes of soaked ground rice and black gram lentil) and sambar. We cooked rice and sambar for lunch and dinner on a spirit gas-run small cooker. We used a small patromax for light at night. The three boys, our friends and interpreters during our learning of conversational Tamil, studying at the local English medium school for 'O' level, were always with us reading and writing and helping us, The labourers of Pal Melayu called our car 'danger', as it was red in colour and the three boys washed it often at the site of the estate factory with a big hose for water, available at the factory only. They also went to the estate office for our letters and often there was no letter and they called out 'ille', 'ille' (nothing). Once a woman was pointing to me and scolding her child and I asked the boys if that woman was angry with something I did and they explained that she is only telling her child to be like me and behave herself. So not knowing fluent Tamil did cause problems. Daily we took a sociological census of the local population and filled out each form. We were getting better by each day yet the language was so unfamiliar and nothing was like Hindi in Tamil so learning each word was entirely new and difficult for us. Nonetheless we followed the local marriage pattern which is very different from the one in north of India, very familiar to us. But once properly understood everything made a better sense of what we observed, being practiced and prevalent in the labour lines, e.g. the Thiratti (first menses of a girl child) ceremony, Adithiruvida (a Tamil annual festival) ceremonies, Teepavali (an Indian annual festival) celebrations with accompanying goat sacrifices, collection of goat-blood by women, much merriment among the labourers (being unfamiliar to us as we practiced vegetarian habits of eating our meals), Murugan and Mariamman worships, the Klu (local rotating money association) and local Kovil (temple) meetings and visits of goldsmith to labour lines, were all attended and participated by us.

My husband visited the Kaka Kadai (local liquor and ration shop run by a Malayali man on the estate) quite often, with young male labourers and he narrated to me all that he was able to observe there. He came to know about ekor (a kind of lottery game which the estate workers participated in by guessing the correct number of the winning horse at races in Kuala Lumpur) when a digit from our car number-plate was often used as an auspicious number. Once I bought ear tops from the goldsmith visiting the lines and all women labourers wanted the same design tops that the goldsmith promised to provide them on his next visit to the

lines. Each week the labourers were shown a Tamil movie on a big cloth screen and we also watched some Tamil movies without subtitles. As we lost interest in watching movies without understanding the story line, we stopped this ritual after sometime but we could make out much excitement among the labourers about Tamil movies they were able to watch free each week on the estate without realizing that this was the ploy of the management to bind them to the estate labour. There were many such mechanisms employed by the management (e.g. giving an 'advance' for buying ration at *kaka kadai* (Tamil word for a shop) against the salary that workers received each week, running of a free Tamil primary school for estate children, allowing the running of *klu* or rotating money association in labour lines, free housing and free medical services). Such practices of tying the unwilling workers to their work were common to all plantations owned by colonialists, be it in Malaysia or Mauritius or India or Fiji or Ceylon (now known as Sri Lanka) or the United States of America.

The reconnaissance exercise of all Malayan rubber estates had made us familiar with the structural similarities in Malayan plantation world so we were able to visit them in all parts of the country and understand quickly their general set-up. At that time one had hardly contemplated the vast structural changes in Malayan Plantation world that the simple change in the crop of rubber being replaced by oil palm would bring about. After the replacement of rubber by oil palm cultivation, there was a huge unemployment among Tamil estate workers who were later asked live in cheap flats in and around Kuala Lumpur city (the capital of Malaysia).

All the same one was sincere and honest with what one was doing and it was earnest anthropological fieldwork and that has endured even after 50 years or half a century and I am certain that its quality would inspire future anthropologists as it does today. Though I am sure that my husband was very conscious about his work on the Rubber plantation, we had common friends, common discussion topics and common wave length about anthropology (see Jain, R. K., 1970). As a consequence my husband has now become more of a feminist than I am, though I am not known among anthropologists as much as he is. His specialisation is the study of Indian diaspora while I have remained on the plane of a generalist, being a bit of this and that, taking up as and when whatever came my way. At the National Open University in New Delhi (IGNOU) I became interested in social and cultural aspects of forestry and for my Ph. D. work I undertook research on tea estate gardens of Assam (later I managed to relate the tea garden work with forestry). When my brother (the eldest one) learnt about it, he said that just like rubber plantations your work will be on tea gardens. No problem, you can simply repeat your experience of rubber plantations in your study of tea gardens".

As a matter of fact I did exactly that but the difference was my focus. By that time my Oxford Anthropology training had taught me to have my own focus and my study was quite different from the Malaysian experience. Yet I learnt a great deal from that experience in terms of how to carry out

anthropological fieldwork. In-between I had also worked as a lecturer in Sociology at a Delhi University Women's College (Kamala Nehru College) for a year in a leave vacancy and also worked as a researcher at the Indian Social Institute in New Delhi. At that time my husband had accepted the offer of Associate Professorship in the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. My husband came to know about JNU when its Vice Chancellor, Mr G. Parthsarathi, had visited Oxford in search of faculty for the new university in India and he did recruit two scholars. Of the two one was my husband and the other one was the historian, S. Gopal, son of India's ex President, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (the philosopher). My husband had decided to give up his permanent position at Oxford University to return to India and he joined JNU. I did my Ph. D. at JNU with Professor Yogendra Singh (now the late Professor Singh as he passed away on 10th May, 2020) of the same department as that of my husband. By that time my B. Litt. Degree at Oxford University had been upgraded to an M. Litt.. After my diploma in social anthropology at Oxford University with Rodney Needham as my tutor, I did my B. Litt. Degree based on literary sources on cosmology among the Jains of North India, with Godfrey Lienhardt. At my examination of the post-graduate diploma in social anthropology I was expecting my second child and my husband had told me that do not be nervous as my son is looking after you. The second child was a son indeed. For my B. Litt. Degree my internal examiner was Evans Pritchard (the external examiner was the noted scholar of Buddhism, Richard Gombrich). The Oxford training was important for me. I realised that when my husband mentioned about it in one of his books on Indian diaspora. So the process of discovering the 'self' was gradual indeed. While talking about our Oxford days, I recall that just before the war with Pakistan (in Bangladesh) Mrs Indira Gandhi visited Oxford as she was being decorated with a honorary D. Litt. by Oxford university and she, being an ex-student of the college, came first to Somerville College where I was also a student, with its Principal as my tutor. She decided that being a student from India I should welcome her by handing her a bouquet of flowers. When a flower got dropped from it, I had promptly put it back in its place and the Principal saw this and admired my alacrity to the Vice Principal. Next day, Oxford Mail, the local daily newspaper, carried on its front page a photograph of me, handing over the bouquet to Mrs Gandhi. During the welcome drinks one Pakistani student of the college asked Mrs Gandhi, "Are you going to war with East Pakistan?" Her reply was, "No comments" and she turned to me to chat away. After asking her question the Pakistani girl disappeared as if she had been planted there by somebody and the very next day Indian army had actually attacked East Pakistan.

The awareness of Asian patriarchy came to me much later, when at the end of our anthropological fieldwork we decided to sell our car and advertised it in the University of Malaya. One of the respondents to that advertisement had cheekily asked, "with or without the wife" as I was always present in the car waiting for my husband's return from the meetings he had fixed with different

scholars in the university. That was the patriarchal society of Malaysia. I took this joke in my stride as at home in Malaysia I also participated in the Indian variety of patriarchy by cooking our daily meals and generally looking after my husband and child. So were also the Tamil labourers on the rubber plantation, Pal Melayu. The fact of our sending away our first child to her grandparents came to me as a shock when during one of our return visits to Pal Melayu, an old man accusingly pointed out waving his index finger at me and saying in Tamil to his grandson, "She is the woman who sent her child to India when the child was only eight months old." (By that time our Tamil had become quite rusted and it was a pleasant surprise that it came back to us during that short visit. Of course things had changed a lot on Sungei Rambai and the main change was that rubber was replaced by oil palm cultivation and most labourers had left it and the new ones were mainly from Indonesia. But we looked for older workers and found one old man still living in labour lines of Pal Melayu). This old man asked me if my child is well and my response was that that the child has a husband and daughter who is two years old. The old man (he must have been a young man in early sixties) was feeling satisfied at the fate of the child who was sent away. I realised that it must have been a shock to the labourers in labour lines of Pal Melayu as they were also patrilineal and patriarchal. Even now when I think of that event I shiver and feel the pain but at that time I was unaware of the pain I was going through. Though I remember that during an in-between the fieldwork trip to Canberra, in our flat in Manuka I was crying at night and the sound disturbed the couple in downstairs flat and the man hit the ceiling with a pole. Of course, I stopped myself and we did get our daughter back after the fieldwork was over in Malaya. These stray incidents made me aware that it was not easy to part with one's child, whatever the reason. Even now women (e.g. SriKala in Kottayam) marvel at the fact of my having done so, they ask me how I could do this. The fact is that I did and did it willingly, knowingly. Labourers on the rubber estate criticised us at our back but said nothing in our presence because of the kind of society they were part of. It was magnanimity of grandparents that they accepted the advice given by the guide of their son and accepted to have our child living with them for a year and a half. It was a shock to the child of small age, facing separation twice, once from the mother and again from her loving grandmother. Once our daughter dreamt about her grandfather and not knowing anything about dreaming she insisted that she saw her grandfather at night and asked to see him again. We tried to placate her saying that we will take her to the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta where she will see her grandfather. Instead we took her to the War Memorial in Canberra but it was a desolate place, very unlike Victoria Memorial of Calcutta with so many vendors going around selling snacks to small children and where many people go each evening for a stroll. So only then we realised that the child too was suffering the separation (when due to an attack of eczema on her skin, we showed our child to a famous homeopathic doctor, he said that this is a very sensitive child who is going through culture shock and we need to be careful about her)'. We tried to make her listen to the sounds of all family members in

Calcutta on a tape which we asked to be sent to us with people singing, talking and sending her their lovely messages. So actually without my realizing consciously, actually my child was the major focus of my anthropological fieldwork. Of course I learnt a great deal of all sorts (e.g. how to take a sociological census in the field, actually later advising a Ph. D. student, who was informally a student of my husband but being supervised by another colleague as my husband had retired by that time from JNU, on the advice of my husband I prepared a form of taking a sociological census for this student) of details from the experience. The readers can see for themselves how I trained my 'self' in anthropology. It was not an easy process.

To talk about anthropological researches I continued to be a trained anthropologist as I taught sociology at Kamala Nehru College and carried out fieldwork in Assam tea gardens and among the Narmada development project displacees of Harsud town (they were not displaced then). Along with my colleagues from MARG, we also visited several villages where I caught some infection. Our host in Harsud called a doctor who said, "I will give you father of an injection and you will be able to travel the next day". I got scared of this doctor and recalled that I had my husband's cousin living in nearby town of Indore and he is a trained doctor. So next day I went to him and his wife and her small son looked after me and the doctor cousin treated me to go to another anthropologist friend of my husband, Mr. I.S. Chauhan, in Bhopal. Both he and his wife received me in Bhopal and looked after me very well indeed. The Narmada valley experience among the would-be displacees was unique in the sense that I was happy to take up the World Bank project on displacement and as I was free to develop any course at IGNOU. I introduced a master's level diploma on displacement (unfortunately this course has been discontinued at IGNOU because my economist successor died prematurely and there was none else to take its care). But as I organised a seminar on this theme at IGNOU, I edited a book with my economist colleague, Madhubala, on economics and politics of displacement (See Jain and Madhubala 2006). At the Indian Social Institute a fellow researcher, Sagari Ramani, marvelled at my ease while talking to people displaced by Commonwealth Games Development Project in Delhi. Little did she know about my training in anthropological fieldwork (when we talked in Tamil with total strangers, the labourers in Pal Melayu. We got to know them inside out, daily taking sociological census of the labouring families, attending all their festivals, weddings and illnesses we became their friends and they welcomed us when we moved to labour lines). Even now during return visits to that rubber plantation, we live with a friend, Ganesh, who has now moved to a nearby town of Batang Berjuntai with a house and restaurant. This is one of the three boys (one is Mangalam, an engineer now with a Malaysian private naval company and now lives in Italy. He visited us in Oxford and washed our car in memory of old days in Malaysia when the three boys did this chore quite often in return of our taking them free to Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia and the other one is Kesavan who was ill during our stay in labour lines. He had lost

memory of his entire family and after sometime when his father took him to some relatives in Seremban he got his memory back and now he lives in Seremban where he is a teacher). Of the three boys studying at that time in the early sixties in the local English medium School, Ganesh is now a grandfather, with a graduate son who lives in Kuala Lumpur. Nearby to Ganesh's family live some old friends from Sungei Rambai. The old woman, once living and working in Pal Melayu rubber estate and now living in a neighboring house in the small town of Batang Berjuntai, showed me a gift of grinding stone and pestle that I gave her while leaving for Canberra. She had shown the worn out gift with such feelings that I was overwhelmed with gratitude of knowing these people. Obviously I am leaving out many details while describing the process of discovering my 'self'. But I do want to emphasize the fact that had I not lived with my husband during his anthropological fieldwork in Malaysia I would not have become an anthropologist. I do realize that many things in anthropology I understand that I do not practice that these are part of my being, though not a part of my practice as I have not devoted that much time to my career as an anthropologist as much time I have devoted to nurturing aspect of making it possible that others around me blossom and prosper. Yet, it would be a folly to not say that I enjoyed each day of service at IGNOU where I served as Director of its largest School and a professor of Sociology, though at IGNOU I practiced Social Anthropology only as I knew it in a department of Sociology. I had no training in Sociology but eclecticism has been our motto and I treat both Sociology and Anthropology as sister disciplines and find no difference between the two. I have said the same in the preface of my book (in Hindi) on kinship in India (See Jain forthcoming, it is a revised version of an earlier book published in 1998).

In Armidale, Australia I carried out anthropological fieldwork among the Australian mixed-blood aborigine population on a nearby Reserve which I visited daily for three months as Professor Bell, the Head of Anthropology Department of the University of New South Wales in Armidale, had asked me to give a few lectures on the tribal population of India and I had never even seen a single tribal person in India, so one solution of my problem was to visit the local aborigines and to get to know them. I made some good friends on the Reserve. They were a very friendly lot and made me participate in their game of running across the field in front of the Reserve and an old lady visited us at our house and she told after her visit that she could enter our kitchen too. This made us aware that perhaps a mixed-blood Australian aborigine could not enter the kitchen of a White Australian. This is only my guess and this may not be so. Rather this visitor may have heard about Indians being hierarchical and not allowing some people to enter their kitchens. Though friendly to me, the people on the Reserve seemed to me to be somewhat morose and I regret not being with them longer to get to know them better. I did not write anything about my experience on the Reserve. It was my maiden effort at being an anthropologist. Later on an Assam Tea Garden (Hanwal) I tried once more. This time I was on a research scholarship of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)

and as its doctoral fellow I had to write a dissertation as well. The result was that I found better bearing in anthropological fieldwork, with the help of my family, comprising my husband and two school-going children, one daughter and one son. I have already acknowledged this in the preface of my first publication (See Jain 1988). My second publication came out the same year when from Trinidad and Tobago I was invited by the FAO (UN), Rome to go to Gujarat for some fieldwork among the agriculturists involved in farm forestry (See Jain, 1988). The third one came out 1998 when I worked with Dr Rhoda Reddock in Trinidad and Tobago (see Jain 1998).

In Madhya Pradesh experience of my husband's research project, Status and Power in the Bundelkhand Region of Madhya Pradesh, with special reference to economic networks and social change, I decided not to send the second child to his grandparents in Calcutta, though our daughter wanted to visit them for a short while. This research project was carried out at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Simla so we sent to Simla and lived for a short while in the Rashtrapati Nivas (earlier known as President's lodge during the British colonial period). In Simla, our daughter went to a school in Simla but she did not like it at all being in a new country and unfamiliar surroundings. She visited her grandparents and then returned to Bundelkhand when my husband was doing his anthropological fieldwork (during this period he suffered from an attack of anorexia and could not eat his meals and only after a visit to Lucknow did he get better to be able to eat something at a restaurant in Lucknow). Initially we lived with our relatives from my husband's father's side in Chhatarpur and also visited off and on the relatives in Jhansi on the side of my husband's mother. Being in Madhya Pradesh was also continuation of my training in anthropology. We also spent a few months in the Government Rest House of Chhatarpur where we made friends with the then District Magistrate, Mr. Vinay Shankar, who was also a friend (L. M. Bali) of my husband's younger brother, Ashok Jain. The Madhya Pradesh days and experience of visiting the Jain relatives and also my husband's ancestral Jain temple inspired me to take the study of the Jains of North India and their cosmology for my B. Litt. at Oxford University. This research was mainly based on secondary sources, so I made good use of the books on Jainism and original books on Jain religion in the Indian section of the Bodleian library of my university. Not that I understood each book in original by Jain sages but I do remember them to be very logical and full of numbers of arithmetical type. I seemed to enjoy reading the philosophical aspects of these books. My notes were systematized by me in a thesis form and when I gave the first draft of my B. Litt. dissertation (completed from my side) to my supervisor. He returned it to me saying: These are simply notes from other books and now you are ready to write a thesis, based on what you make of your useful notes. Then only I realized that writing a thesis is not easy and I needed to work harder and think harder. Eventually I did produce a thesis which was passed by my examiners and the University awarded me a research degree. Then there was the question of my doing a Ph. D. and for that I had to select a place and

carry out an anthropological fieldwork. This had to wait until we returned to India. This must have been one of the reasons for my husband's decision to return to his roots. There were several reasons for his decision, e.g. we thought about the future of our children who could barely speak Hindi but did not know their country or its people. What if they ask us later in view of discrimination in a country of 'white' people, why we did not return to India? We would not be able to answer this question as we could not ask 'time' to reverse (mentioned earlier too). Now grown-up, the daughter has decided to take up her Australian citizenship while the son has decided to remain an Indian national to join the Indian public service as a bureaucrat.

As I said earlier I remained a 'generalist' without any special area of study (I have included in references only books written/edited by me and omitted my articles/ reviews which are quite numerous to mention in this short piece). But I must say that taking up a career at a late stage I did go through the process of being an anthropologist and later with the help of a financial adviser I was able to earn enough funds out of some investments that paid for buying a plot of land in Hartola village of Nainital district and also build a house on that plot which is shared with the son-in-law of my husband's younger brother. The house was designed by me on the basis of living in several houses but since by nature I am a very non-diplomatic talker, I had differences with both the contractor and the architect. Both took advantage of my weakness and left our house incomplete that still requires a ramp and stairs to the store in basement. We have yet to get this portion built up. We share a common water source on our land as well as plumbing for getting the water from the source and also the railing at one side of the house with the son-in-law of my husband's younger brother. The two parties have the entire plot ownership of thirteen and a half nails Local measurement of land). If we decide in favour of our permanent residency of Canada, then we may have to sell the house and our land in Hartola and if we decide against this proposal of accepting permanent residency of Canada then there is no reason why we should even think of selling it. Sooner or later we have to decide this. But in the meantime I have lost my power of memory, cognition and I feel quite a bit of pain in my knees. All this is real or imaginary—I do not know but I am facing quite a bit of difficulties because of aging very fast. Is there a way out? May be writing about the past may prove to be a therapy or I should try and improve my abilities to perform simple acts and then move on to more difficult ones. In Hartola we (I and my husband) read old books from our collection of books (never read by us or only looked at cursorily) and discussed them after reading the texts. We quite enjoyed each other's company and solved by and by the issue of home help by finding a family to work for us. This arrangement is so far working well. Hartola has good climate for summer months but it gets quite cold during winter months so we have to arrange our living in two places or go to south during winter months. But we are never bored in Hartola and take regular walks on mountain roads. After retirement from IGNOU I continued to work as a consultant and participated in conferences (see Jain 2011). So at the end of my story (not given here

chronologically, I have been flitting here from one place to another) I need to say that being an anthropologist and an anthropologist's wife are two different things, not easy ones too.

Notes

1. My husband, Prof. Ravindra K. Jain, is a well-known anthropologist. He started his teaching career in the Department of Anthropology, Lucknow University, then taught as University Lecturer in the Social Anthropology of South Asia and Fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford University, and finally retired as Professor of Sociology and Dean, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University. In the following account I have also recounted our experiences of joint anthropological fieldwork in different parts of the world.

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