

Looking Forward

My association with JNUTA began primarily because I needed a roof over me. After getting a red alert from the landlord for vacating my flat I was extremely worried about a house inside the campus. I was new in the city and I did not have anyone to fall back on in case of emergency. And it was that moment when I first came to the newly elected office bearers of JNUTA, asking for a favor. Interestingly, I was not the only one who needed this. Several others were also equally desperate to come inside as lots of houses were lying unoccupied for quite some time. We moved from pillar to post, but all in vain. At last, it was our good fortune that the office bearers took the matter head on and confirmed that the process of allotment of the houses gets expedited.

It is just an ordinary, not-so-complicated story of a newly joined person. But there are several other complicated stories, both local and national, which require our immediate attention. These stories are stories not because of the fact that they are engrafted in the plot of some cost benefit calculation of a particular group of the teaching community, but because of the fact that such stories affect, or are going to affect mercilessly, the entire higher education sector of this country. For instance, the government's increasing patronage for the inefficient private players, its growing reluctance in investing money in the existing public institutions, its heartless provocation for getting everyone into the self-financed mechanisms, and most importantly, the parochial and insensitive imposition of a flawed system called API raise enormous concerns for all of us.

Given the depth of these issues on the one hand, and the limited resources and structural composition of the JNUTA on the other, it is well-understood that we cannot afford to go beyond a particular point in raising our voices. Nevertheless, we must not allow ourselves to be a helpless spectator when all these evils are getting adamantly settled in front of our eyes. Being a representative of the teaching community of a premier public institute JNUTA must need to go out to the larger platform for getting our voice heard. It needs to surpass the internal everyday-state-of-affairs and lead the other standardized voices at the national level.

However, here one might turn around and ask, why do we need to be bothered about such larger issues when we already have so many in our own backyard, such as delays in allocating basic resources to the newly appointed teachers, maintenance of the minimum cleanliness on the campus, promotional matters, infrastructural problems and so on? Of course, there cannot be any iota of doubt that we do need to debate and discuss these matters in a much efficacious manner. But, may be, here while conceding this, we also need to be little circumspect and envisage the fact that JNUTA stands, or should stand, not only for the betterment of our present status but also for the status of our future, which is now seemingly at stake.

I hope and trust that the present officer bearers, with their genuine interest, willingness, and ability, will surely take us to a new height. They just now need to move fast and move forward with the requisite support and cooperation from all quarters.

*Bhaskarjit Neog
Centre for Philosophy (SSS)*

Looking Back

जे एन यू : एक स्मृति

एक शोध छात्र के रूप में जे. एन. यू. में मेरा नामांकन अक्टूबर 1970 में हुआ। नामांकन के बाद हम लोगों को सप्रू हाउस होस्टल में निवास दिया गया। 1972-73 में सप्रू हाउस जे. एन. यू. ओल्ड कैम्पस में स्थानान्तरण प्रारम्भ हो गया। पेरियार, कावेरी व गोदावरी छात्रावास का निर्माण भी हो गया और स्टाफ क्वार्टर्स का निर्माण तेजी से आगे बढ़ा। दक्षिण पूर्व एशिया में प्रो. विशाल सिंह, प्रो. परिमल दास व प्रो. सी. डी. पालीवाल मशहूर थे, परन्तु प्रो. आनन्द और प्रो. सक्सेना भी उस एरिया के ज्ञाता माने जाते थे। प्रो. विशाल सिंह इन्डोनेशिया पर और प्रो. दास देश की राजनीति और विश्वविद्यालय की राजनीति में भी सक्रिय थे। संकट के समय लोग प्रो. दास के पास आते थे और दास साहब उनकी मांगों की बहुत ही अच्छे तरीके से बहस करते थे। उन्हें विश्वविद्यालय का स्टेच्यूट याद रहता था और वे अन्याय के खिलाफ लड़ते थे।

प्रो. दास के निरीक्षण में मैंने अपना शोधकार्य 1975 में सम्पन्न किया और आई. सी. एस. एस. आर. में रिसर्च एशोसियेट का काम प्रारम्भ किया। मेरे निरीक्षण में वहां **Indian journal of Asian Studies** प्रारम्भ हुआ था। लेकिन जब 1978 में शम्भूदयाल कॉलेज में प्रवक्ता की नौकरी मिली तो मैंने ICSSR छोड़ दिया, वस्तुतः मैं प्रारम्भ से ही एक शिक्षक बनना चाहता था और मुझे ज्यों ही मौका मिला, मैंने उसे हासिल किया। कॉलेज में कम्प्यूनिटी फीलिंग अच्छी लगी, एक दूसरे को सहयोग देना और लेना ही अपनापन बढ़ाता है। यद्यपि सप्ताह में 17 क्लासों लेना अनिवार्य था, परन्तु उसके बाद काफी समय मिलता था। उस दौरान मैंने महसूस किया कि **Asia India** सम्बन्धों के विभिन्न आयामों का अध्ययन पर पुस्तक नहीं है और मुझे उस पर काम करना चाहिए। अन्त में मैंने वह किताब लिखी और छपाई। मेरे जे. एन. यू. के शिक्षकों ने उस पुस्तक को सराहा और प्रोत्साहित किया। 1986 में दक्षिण पूर्व एशिया विभाग में एसिसटेंट प्रोफेसर के पद के लिए प्रज्ञापन पढ़ा और मैंने आवेदन कर दिया। उस समय मेरी दो पुस्तकें और कुछ शोध लेख छपे थे। सलेक्शन कमेंटी में प्रो. भी. एम. रेड्डी, जे. के. रे. और प्रो. के. के. घोष थे। वे सभी दक्षिण पूर्व एशिया के जाने माने विशेषज्ञ थे। उन लोगों ने मेरा नाम पैनल में एक नम्बर पर डाला और मैंने जहां से पी. एच. डी. किया, वहीं पर शिक्षक बनने का सम्मान मिला।

शिक्षा का वैश्वीकरण होने से प्राचीन मान्यता दकियानूसी विचार की हो गयी है। शिक्षक अपने क्लास में व्यक्तिगत उपलब्धि अनावश्यक भूमिका और समय बिताने का उपाय ढूँढते हैं। लेकिन कुछ वर्ष पहले तक सभी शिक्षक अपने कार्यों के लिए समर्पित होते थे। **SIS** में प्रो. विमल प्रसाद अपने परम्परागत मूल्यों, भद्र व्यवहार, गूढ़ ज्ञान और मानवीय गुणों से परिपूर्ण थे। उनका विचार, निर्देशन और प्रोत्साहन हृदयस्पर्शी होता था, परन्तु उनके कार्यमुक्त होने के बाद वह स्थान रिक्त हो गया। उनके पहले प्रो. अप्पादोराइ, प्रो. बी. आर. चटर्जी और प्रो. गिरिजा कुमार मुखर्जी अपने ज्ञान और सज्जनता के लिए मशहूर थे। प्रो. राजन, प्रो. रमनी, प्रो. सिसिद, प्रो. आनन्द, प्रो. अशोक गुहा, प्रो. उर्मिला फरनिस, प्रो. देवेन्द्र गुप्ता और प्रो. के. पी. कौशिक ने शोधकार्य में नाम कमाया और रिसर्च के लिए ठोस आधार प्रदान किया।

राजनीतिक रूप से यहां सभी राजनैतिक दलों को बौद्धिक ज्ञान देने वाले हैं, लेकिन साम्यवादी विचारधारा को मानने वाले शिक्षक एवं छात्र दोनों ही बहुमत में हैं। एक महत्वपूर्ण विषय यह भी है कि आज के माहौल में राजनीतिक सम्पर्क एक अलग महत्व रखता है। जे. एन. यू. में समाज शास्त्र निकाय में वामपंथियों का दबदबा है। जो दक्षिणपंथी हैं या अलग थलग हैं, उन्हें **CAS** के समय चुनौतियां तंग करती हैं, लेकिन विश्वविद्यालय में एक ऐसा सिस्टम बना हुआ है, जिसके तहत किसी का प्रमोशन नहीं रुकता। अगर शिक्षक शोधकार्य, निर्देशन कार्य और शिक्षण कार्य ठीक से करता है तो एक निश्चित अवधि के बाद उनका प्रमोशन निश्चित है।

मेरे ख्यालों में जे. एन. यू. प्रांगण में चुम्बकीय शक्ति है, जो भी एक बार आएगा वो सदा के लिए उसका हो जाएगा। निष्कर्ष में कह सकते हैं कि जे. एन. यू. विभिन्न संस्कृति व मल्टीकल्चरलिज्म का ज्वलंत उदाहरण है। यहां देश के विविध क्षेत्रों से छात्र व शिक्षक आए हैं और वे एक दूसरे की सभ्यता और संस्कृति से सीखते हैं। उसके विपरीत कोलकाता, चेन्नई और मुम्बई में उसी क्षेत्र के छात्र व शिक्षकों का जमाबडा है। फिर जे. एन. यू. में विदेशी छात्रा के प्रवेश के लिए आरक्षण है और यहां कई अन्य देशों के छात्र व छात्राएं मौजूद हैं। अतः जे. एन. यू. में पढ़ने वाले छात्रों का दृष्टिकोण व आयाम अलग दिखता है, जो इसे अलग पहचान प्रदान करता है। यह विश्वविद्यालय अपने सभी शिक्षकों और छात्रों को प्रतिष्ठित बनाता है। सभी शिक्षकों का अलग सम्मान है जो देश के किसी भी हिस्से में जाने से पता चलता है और जाने अनजाने में सभी शिक्षकों को जे. एन. यू. संस्था के प्रति आभार स्वाभाविक है।

प्रो. गंगानाथ झा

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Editors' Desk

This issue of the JNUTA bulletin starts with a note of thanks to many of our colleagues who critically examined the contents of the first issue and sent in their comments towards making it more lively and productive. So the issue carries diversified columns highlighting the activities being carried out by the JNUTA on its own, and in

association with others. We also received letters asking JNUTA's stand on the UGC Amended Guidelines on API - an issue which needs due attention in order to maintain the standards in Higher Education. This issue, as such, gives an extensive write up on the guidelines and the steps JNUTA is taking in this direction. JNUTA has always stood to protect the interests of the teaching community and would continue to protect the academic autonomy of the teachers and the universities. It expresses its gratitude to Dr. Debkumar Chakrabarty of Belur Ramakrishna Mission Vidya Mandir, Howrah, for drawing an appropriate cartoon revolving around this.

The issue also carries a column on 'debate and discussions' where it reviews the editorial by P. Balaram in Current Science - '**Research Assessment : Declaring a War on the Impact Factors**' by our colleagues of Sciences and Humanities.

The columns - looking back, looking forward, carry write-ups by our new colleague in the (Centre of Philosophy SSS Bhaskarjit Neog), who gives his future vision on JNUTA, and by our experienced, retired colleague of SIS, Prof. Ganganath Jha., who goes down the memory lane and speaks of his memorable days in JNU.

The follow-up of the JNUTA's long and exhaustive charter of demands occupies a special place in the bulletin - speaking of its continuing efforts towards the accomplishment of some demands and continued efforts towards fulfillment of others. Efforts are on to make the new website of JNUTA, more informative. Suggestions regarding the same are welcome and so are the photographs on various JNUTA's events, to be uploaded in the photo gallery.

We, as teachers, are deeply concerned and disturbed by the unprecedented incident at the SLL&CS on 31st July. We join hands with all the communities of JNU in initiating dialogues towards realization of the terms 'liberty and responsibility' for a safe campus. We are confident that JNU will emerge, despite such incidents as a stronger and united community.

The editorial team welcomes suggestions, views and active participation of the entire faculty towards making this bulletin a vibrant platform of debates, dialogues and discussions ...

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Secretary's Column

The utterly irrational act of a young boy in the School of Languages still looms large in our memory. When one relates this incident with the recent murder of the national level wrestler, allegedly by her boyfriend, or the suicide of a Bollywood actress following a break up, it is not difficult to see how brutal can be the forces and 'compulsions' of patriarchy! At a deeper level, however, this incident suggests a decline of "reason and tolerance"- we are so habituated to cherish at JNU. To fight it in this campus, there is an urgent need for greater engagement of all teachers to strengthen the democratic institutions of this university, promote dialogues between different sections and raise our levels of sensitivity and tolerance.

Incidentally, such decline of reason is also becoming apparent in the policy spectrum. While, in one part of the country it takes 20 long years and the death of a noted rationality activist to pass the anti superstition bill, in another part, only a few months' manoeuvring is enough to change the format of an established undergraduate course in one university, without analysing its impact on graduate and post graduate learning across the country! Such policies are also capturing the larger academic space seeking to curtail our academic freedom, ironically, in the veil of promoting academic excellence! It is now almost common knowledge that the recent guidelines of the MHRD and UGC, and their haphazard amendments, have been ineffective (and perhaps counter productive) in fulfilling the stated objective of attracting bright young people to this profession. Indeed there are early indications that implementation of these guidelines has encouraged a steady exodus of faculty from public universities. A fight to deal with this irrational policy framework has to be intense and comprehensive. JNU owes a great amount of responsibility to itself in this regard due to its relatively glorious past of progressive politics and rigorous academic pursuit.

The next few years could be a challenging period for us. With many retirements and new recruitments, JNUTA would have to be alert and proactive to ensure greater participation of younger colleagues in the political process of this campus by constantly raising issues that are important for our academic life. This is essential also because the 7th Pay Commission is merely a couple of years away. Remember, we could not intervene during the 6th Pay Commission movement, until very late, as effectively as we would have desired perhaps due to our collective apathy towards engaging with larger political issues. The price we paid for that is huge, be it in terms of having to accept increased bureaucratisation or reduced autonomy and dignity. If we want to reverse some of these eventualities, it is important that we 'participate' in preparing a vision of our own academic future well ahead in time.

Saradindu Bhaduri

JNUTA follow-up & Activities

Through sustained negotiation, we have finally succeeded in revising the rules pertaining to counting of past services. We are happy to note that most of our demands have been accepted by the executive council. We thank you all for your participation in this process. The JNUTA hopes that the pending cases will be solved expeditiously by the committee. To make JNUTA's decision making more participatory and inclusive, we had formed three committees, to propose modifications on project and finance related rules, UGC guidelines, and to assess the conditions of contract labourers on the campus. All three committees have submitted their reports and observations, which have been discussed in the JNUTA EC.

The committee report on project and finance was also discussed with the Vice Chancellor, and we have been assured of a major restructuring of the finance branch, keeping our recommendations in view. The JNUTA is closely watching the developments in this regard. The report on the UGC guidelines has also been discussed with the IQAC. However, more discussion is required on this issue in the light of the latest UGC amendments

The University has set up a committee to discuss the issue of contract labourers on the campus with JNUTA representatives in it. We will take up the observations made by the members of the committee on contract labour in these meetings. The JNUTA, along with JNUSU and the university administration, have been active in solving the problems related to bonus and salary of security personnel.

This year the JNUTA has also participated in the teachers movement in Indra Prastha University. We have shown our solidarity with the teachers association there, and protested against the undemocratic attitude of their administration which has denied even to recognise the teachers' association in the university. The JNUTA strongly demands that this basic democratic right of teachers has to be upheld, and all cases against the representatives have to be withdrawn at the earliest.

During this period, the JNUTA has also taken up the issue of day care centre on campus, and has suggested several measures to improve its functioning. We sincerely hope that the administration will pay attention to these proposals without further delay

The JNUTA is actively pursuing the demands related to UGC guidelines and MHRD notifications related to our service conditions. We have submitted our memorandum to the Minister of State, HRD Mr Jitin Prasad. In this memorandum we have raised, along with the demands related to MHRD UGC guidelines, the issue of providing flexibility in finance rules, and the long pending issue of some of our senior colleagues regarding conversion of CPF to GPF. We have also submitted our memorandum to Mr P K Biju, Member, Standing Committee, HRD, who is also a member of the Court, JNU. We are following up the matter closely. On this issue, we are also coordinating with other associations for a joint movement. We are happy to share with you that your long standing demand to renovate the faculty canteen could finally be initiated, and we are expecting renovation to get over soon. The work has also started on making children's play grounds at Paschimabad. As you are aware, the foundation stone for the Foot Over Bridge on the Nelson Mandela Marg has also been laid recently by Hon'ble Speaker, Delhi Vidhan Sabha, Dr Yagananad Shastri.

On the cultural front the JNUTA & JNUFC, in collaboration with National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language, MHRD, Govt of India, organised an International Mushaira on 14 April, 2013.

We hope that you have already had a look at our new website, and we welcome your comments and suggestions for its improvement. Specifically, we would like you to share any photographs you may be having on JNUTA's events for photo gallery.

Finally, you know that the JNUTA has demanded a revision in the norms of allotment of type 4 houses keeping in view recent surge in appointment of faculty and a drastic rise in the ratio of faculty to non-faculty positions in the university. We met the Vice Chancellor twice, and were assured of a positive initiative on the part of the administration. Unfortunately, however, this demand has remained as one of our key unmet demands.

We once again express our deep pain at the incident of the 31 July, and reiterate our commitment to strengthen the democratic institutions of this campus to prevent recurrence of such events. We have organised two meetings on this issue, and the views expressed by our members have been taken up in the deliberations of the 10 member committee formed to look into the incident and suggest remedial actions, by our representatives. The JNUTA remains committed to ensure a more socially, politically and gender sensitive campus in future.

UGC amended guidelines on API- A critical Appraisal

The storm over the anomalies of the UGC Regulations 2010 had barely subsided when UGC posted its second amendment on its website on June 14, 2013. The amended guidelines instead of settling some of the contentious issues made it tougher for the teachers to seek promotion under the CAS. There are several key policy changes that are going to harm the academic interests of the teachers and the institutions alike:



1. **The amendment clearly stipulates that the API scores will be used only for screening purposes and shall have no bearing on expert assessment of candidates in direct recruitment/CAS.** In such a case, it was rather normal to make the API score less stringent as the final decision on the selection will rest with the selection committee. Instead, the amendment seeks to put caps on various sub-categories of the Category III of the API ranging from 30% to 10%. Publication in journals has a higher cap of 30% where as the publication of books has a cap of 25%. While this different weightage on the

publications may be favorable for science streams, the same may not be true for other disciplines such as humanities and languages. All quality publications should have been given equal weightage; if at all the weightage is to be implemented. Effectively, a teacher has to forego a lot of hard earned points due to the application of the caps. Research guidance has the least cap of 10% which is in no way rewarding for the years of hard work a teacher puts in supervising a Ph.D candidate. Ironically, research projects undertaken by the teachers have a higher cap of 20% and thus are placed above Research Guidance. Such a stipulation dilutes the core academic activities of the teachers such as publication and research guidance. Further, the restriction of research supervision to one hour per student per week is detrimental to the academic interests of the research based institutions like JNU. The guidelines are also silent about the research guidance provided to the students for their M.Sc/M.A. dissertations.

2. **The document appears vague rather confusing with regard to the application of cap as % of the total score in category III or as % of cumulative API score in application.** (Page 2 of the document) Such a confusing and hard hitting amendment coming after the universities had barely started the process of appointments/promotions after much delay indicates the lack of direction on the part of UGC. While the time is approaching for the 7th pay commission, the UGC appears to be lost and confused. Such an approach will neither help maintain standards in higher education, nor will instill confidence among the teachers in universities and colleges.

3. One expected that good sense would prevail upon the higher ups and would **remove the biggest anomaly of all in the regulations; the 12+3 formula, and accord respect to the assistant professor category by following the more rational 9+6 formula.** However, despite several representations given to the UGC and the MHRD to this effect, the UGC is shamefully silent on the issue even though its various committees have recommended reversal of this fallacious formula in spite of the fact that it does not put any financial burden on the government.

Mujeebur Rahman (SLL&CS)

Debate & Discussions : Journal Impact Factor

Impact Factors: Some Reflections...

In "Research Assessment: Declaring War on the Impact Factor" (Editorial, *Current Science*, 104(10): 1267-1268, 25 May 2013) P. Balam has discussed a very relevant issue in today's academics, i.e. the use of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) as a tool of research assessment. He points out the extensive use of JIF in assessing research papers in today's world, especially in India, China and the countries of southern Europe. In his article P. Balam talks about the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) as a reaction to the use (misuse) of scientometric indices in assessing science. The purpose of the declaration is to stop the use of the "journal impact factor" in judging an individual scientist's work. The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) has opposed the use of JIF to assess an individual scientist's contributions, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions.

P. Balam further cites the argument given by Philip Altbach who argues that the misuse of the JIF is highly destructive. Philip Altbach further argues that the obsession about rankings for India or other developing countries is a mistake and the tools of measurement are far from perfect and underscores the limitations of two methodologically respectable systems to decide the Academic Ranking of World Universities, viz. the "Shanghai rankings", and the World University Rankings of Times Higher Education (THE). The present article also highlights the argument given by Phil Baty, the editor of THE rankings who believes that the under-use of the global ranking system would be a mistake for Indian institutions and policy makers.

P. Balam rightly thinks that the rules of the game should be appreciated by the institutions in order to achieve a competitive score. However, one should be cautious about the parameters used in ranking the individuals and the institutions.

Let us illustrate this point. It has been said that research and its impact is a tool for assessment in the ranking system. Certain investigations in the field of natural and human sciences may not have global impact, but it might be very useful and relevant in the local context. Does this factor make them less important?

Secondly, parameters cannot be absolute in nature. For example, the parameters to judge a research paper on chemistry and that on linguistics cannot be the same.

Thirdly, Philip Altbach rightly says that the parameters like teaching quality, reputation are highly controversial since they may be used subjectively by the people responsible in ranking the individuals and the institutions.

Review by

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Impact Factors: Misuse in Science

In May this year Bruce Alberts, the editor of *Science*, wrote in his editorial about the destructive use of impact factors in academics¹. Impact factors were designed to assess the quality of a scientific journal by calculating the number of times the articles published in that particular journal was referenced. Over the years it has been hijacked instead to assess the quality of the scientist! As Prof. Balam, subsequently pointed out in his editorial in *Current Science*, in the early days of research in India, scientists were particular about publishing in journals where their peers would read their papers². Hardly anyone worried about citation indexes. However, the constant desire to measure science using quantitative metrics has led the Indian science to obsess over impact factors and h-index. The obsession is so much that all of us, including the students, measure our success using the journal impact factor. When we apply for awards, we are asked specifically to state the journal impact factor of our publications. The academic performance index (API) devised by UGC asks us to classify journals in our respective areas into A, B, C, and D based on impact factors. The miasma has spread to our students who are constantly worried about the impact factor of their publications because their post-doctoral positions and grants like DST-INSPIRE are dependent on journal impact factors of their publications. In fact a student can apply for DST-INSPIRE fellowship only if he/she has a total impact factor of 10.

The impact factor is a flawed quantitative parameter as it is dependent on the number of times a paper is cited. A highly cited paper will push up the impact factor of a journal. Using it to assess a scientist's output is meaningless because the research paper published by him/her might or might not have been cited. Further, the number of citations a research paper will get is dependent upon its age- number of citations increase with increase in years after publication. Thus, the only way to truly evaluate a research output is to read it and then assess it. It is a qualitative measure but far more reliable than the impact factor of the journal.

The impact factor is not limited to India and the backlash against the journal impact factors led to the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) which was signed by members of the scientific community gathered at the annual meeting of the American Society for Cell Biology (am.ascb.org/dora/ May 16, 2013). **Specifically, the signatories have recommended that the journal impact factor should not be used as a measure of scientific success in funding, appointment and promotion consideration.** Instead they recommend that the research should be evaluated on its own merits. This is a very important recommendation as it moves away our evaluation parameter from quantitative assessments and instead seeks to restore research back to where belongs-in the hands of the scientific community to read and assess research publications. As Prof. Balam has correctly pointed out in his editorial it is time for our policy makers to understand the tools of research assessment before implementing them. Will UGC and funding agencies oblige?

References:

1. Alberts, B., Impact factor distortions (2013) *Science*, 340: 87.
2. Balam, P., Research assessment: declaring war on impact factors (2013) *Current Science*, 104: 1267-1268.

Review by

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