



DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

Celebrating 75 years of Foundation

METHODOLOGY AND FIELDWORK

Vinay Kumar Srivastava Memorial Seminar



3 - 4 December, 2021

09:30 AM

Convenor

Prof. M.P. Sachdeva
Head of the Department

Organizers

Prof. R.P. Mitra & Dr. Chakraverti Mahajan

[Day 1 Zoom Meeting Link](#) | [Day 2 Zoom Meeting Link](#)



A Humble Tribute to a Legendary Anthropologist and a Great Human Being

The seminar takes its title from Prof. Srivastava's much acclaimed edited work, 'Methodology and Fieldwork', published by Oxford University Press in 2004. Since its publication it has been a standard reference text for teaching of fieldwork in anthropology and consulted widely by those intending to take up field based research. Fieldwork, which has been an inseparable, inalienable and an indispensable essence of any anthropological research, over the years, has also come to acquire a great significance and acceptability across disciplines in understanding complexities of social interactions and cultural processes. At the same time, the mystique of fieldwork, its epistemological basis and its 'scientific sanctity' continues to be debated and discussed. Prof. Srivastava's work was a noble attempt to demystify this process and a significant contribution towards understanding field research methodology.

The two-day seminar proposes to carry forward the fundamental issues discussed in the text relating to epistemology, fieldwork and anthropology. It shall examine the recent debates relating to the concept of social reality, the question of inter-subjectivity, emicity, positionality and their interplay in conducting fieldwork based researches. The seminar will also review the progress made in ethnographic research methods, qualitative data analysis, and writing up field-data three pillars of the fieldwork methodology.

In recent times, the Covid pandemic has cast its dark shadow on all human affairs and influenced the way anthropological research is carried out. It has thrown a serious challenge towards pursuing intensive fieldwork, the kind that made possible thick-description of social reality, thereby raising doubts about claims of empirically grounded nature of anthropological work. However, this has not deterred anthropologists from exploring fieldwork alternatives in the form of 'data collection from distance' using technology to overcome the limitations of physical contact. As we slowly return to normalcy, the seminar will examine how these new ways of conducting ethnography contribute to fieldwork methodology. Even before the pandemic, questions were being asked about the feasibility of unisited, immersive, intensive classical Malinowskian techniques of participant observation and hollow claims of a positivistic scientific understanding of subjective social realities. The seminar will discuss these ideas of scientific rigor in the art and science of fieldwork as well as advances made in fieldwork methodology.

