

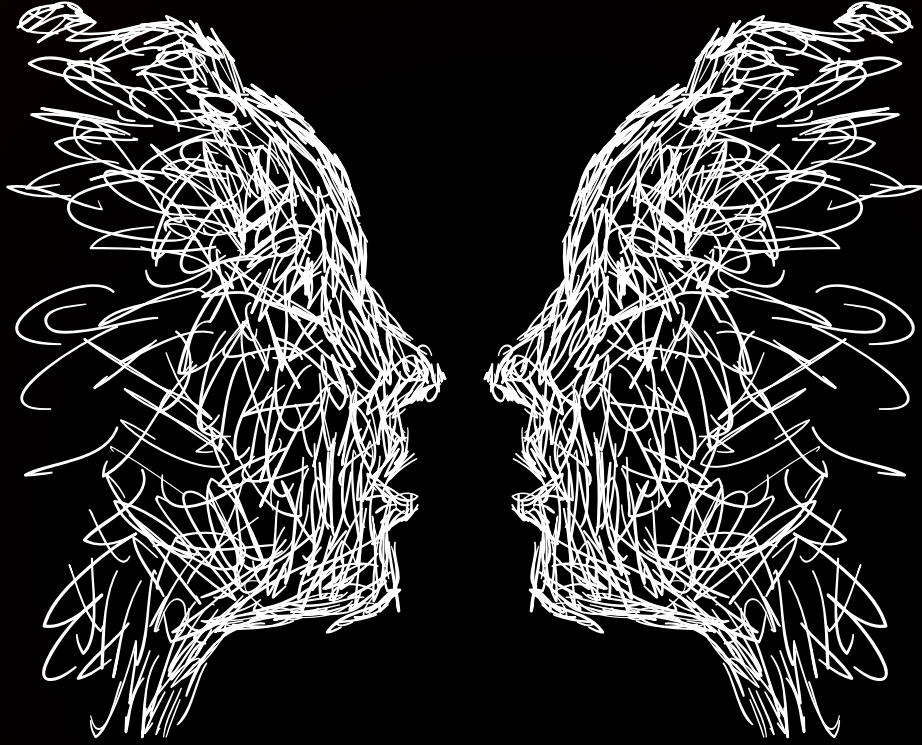


BMU
BML Munjal University

SoLS
School of Liberal Studies

#1

Edition, July 2024



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WELCOME FROM THE DEAN

In a world where Artificial Intelligence and machine learning is expanding its footprint, education for humans require reimagination and reorientation. Merely imparting a set of skills will not constitute an education that can remain relevant in the face of rapidly changing technology and the evolving landscape of jobs. More importantly, the novel and eclectic nature of challenges that we face presently also creates newer demand on education.

Questions around public health have been radically altered, both in terms of scale and interventions, over the last two decades. Frequent cross-continental epidemics since early 2000 and the COVID pandemic in 2020 has not only underscored the importance of public health in our lives but also instructs us about the need for aggregating, assimilating, and synthesizing knowledge from various fields. Life sciences, medicine, urban design, water and sanitation systems, geopolitics, socio-economic structures, among many other areas of knowledge, emerged to be of essence during the pandemic.

A liberal education should enable a student to engage with such complex and multidimensional issues spontaneously and with deft. To do this, one needs to recognize that thinking is the most precious handicraft that humans continue to possess. Nurturing the art of empathetic thinking amongst young people and enabling them to express their learnings in multiple and exciting forms that connect well with the society form the core values of liberal arts.

-Arindam Banerjee

Dean, School of Liberal Studies

HUMANISTIC DESIGN SUMMIT



Summit winners DPS Dwarka students and teachers with their prize money and trophy and Prof. Arindam Banerjee)

The world is at a critical crossroads. Even as we are witnessing environmental crises, a large portion of the world's population struggles to fulfil basic needs – access to food, shelter, and clean water. The impact of disasters or pandemics manifest differently at various spatio-temporal scales and disproportionately affect the socio-economically marginalized sections. Often these social challenges are inter-linked; hence addressing one challenge demands a holistic consideration of other allied challenges involving multiple competing perspectives. Collective thinking and a multidimensional analysis of a problem is necessary for imagining humanistic design solutions that will create a better world for all.

The humanistic design summit, held between May and June 2024, was an opportunity for students to design innovative solutions for complex real-world problems. By training students in social design principles, BMU faculty mentored students to unpack one such challenge. An initial two-day workshop helped orientate students to understand complex societal challenges, and how best to identify and address design failures. After this, each group adopted design principles to offer a humanistic solution to a single challenge. Eighteen groups of school children from around the region took part. Of these, six were shortlisted to present their solution : Blue Bells Model, DPS Dwarka,

DPS Vasant Kunj, DPS RK Puram, DPS Knowledge Park-V, and Nirmal Bhartiya. These schools passionately engaged with topics such as Rethinking Fast Fashion, Public Health: Access and Quality, Agrarian Distress and Rethinking the Foundation of Society, and Rethinking Fast-Paced Life and Tackling Depression. The main objective of this summit was to bring design into dialogue with ethics, polity, nature, and natural intelligence.

We are pleased to announce that DPS Dwarka emerged as the winner of the summit, with DPS Vasant Kunj as the first runner-up and DPS RK Puram as the second runner-up. The success of this inaugural summit highlights our commitment to organizing many such events in the future. We congratulate all the participants and extend deep appreciation to the teachers who mentored them on this new learning trajectory.

SOLS CONVERSATIONS 1: HINDI: VAAD-VIVAAD-SAMVAAD

हिन्दी: वाद-विवाद-संवाद

*A conversation on the Hindi language,
its evolution, contestations and multiplicity*



The SOLS Conversations presents a forum for deliberating and engaging with complex issues and evolving situations in the contemporary world. The Conversations traverse the diverse world of economy, society, culture, politics and the psyche. In the process, it explores the interconnectedness of these apparently independent spheres. In a rapidly changing world with novel challenges for humankind and nature, this aims to participate in and contribute to public discourses on the most important issues of our times.

eminent scholars/poets/journalists/editors. It was a conversation on Hindi: Vaad-Vivaad-Samvaad where Mr. Ashok Vajpeyi, Hindi poet-critic and editor-translator, Ms. Mrinal Pande, veteran journalist, television personality and author, Mr. Asad Zaidi, Hindi poet, critic and translator and Mr. Salil Misra, Historian of Indian national movement, partition and language participated. The eminent panel discussed the Hindi Language, its evolution, contestations and multiplicity.

In the inaugural episode of the Conversations on 20th April 2024, we were privileged to host four

CONVERSATIONS 2 : TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION: BRIDGING ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES



The 2nd SoLS Conversations featured a fascinating discussion among eminent scholar-activists working at the intersection of environment, society, culture, and humanity. The dialogue, with insights from Prof. Madhav Gadgil, Prof. Amita Baviskar, and Mr. Ashish Kothari, addressed the challenge of bridging the value-action gap in reorienting human-environment relationships. They offered insightful points on redefining classroom boundaries, seamlessly integrating classroom and real-world experiences, introducing inclusive learning materials that provide context-specific insights, rethinking the roles of teachers and students to cultivate lifelong learning practices, and fundamentally reimagining the relationship between material-economic growth and human well-being, focusing on non-material pathways to qualitatively better and sustained well-being.

At the School of Liberal Studies, BMU, we are thrilled to see such resonance with the points raised in the discussion, aligning closely with our curriculum design and the central role immersion pedagogy plays. We agree that ensuring such quality education, capable of bridging the value-action gap, needs to be made more accessible to a larger section of society, beyond the boundaries of privatized educational spaces. Our school-connect program aims to bridge the gap between higher education and school education to that end, ensuring a holistic and impactful learning experience for all.

The recording of this insightful conversation could be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/live/VceTwxAjQoM> (23 minutes onwards).

CELEBRATING SUDHIR KAKAR: REMEMBRANCES AND REFLECTIONS



In a collaborative effort, the BMU School of Liberal Studies and Oxford University Press recently honored the distinguished scholar, Professor Sudhir Kakar, commemorating his life and significant contributions.

Celebrating Sudhir Kakar: Remembrances and Reflections, the event served as a platform for engaging discussions on Professor Kakar's groundbreaking work in psychoanalysis, Indian studies, and social theory. Renowned as a psychoanalyst, cultural theorist, and captivating writer, Professor Kakar's legacy is celebrated for bridging the realms of Western psychoanalysis with the diverse tapestry of Indian culture.

His seminal texts, such as *The Inner World* and *Culture and Psyche*, along with compelling fictional narratives like *The Ascetic of Desire*, continue to leave an indelible mark on scholars and readers worldwide, inspiring further exploration and understanding in these multifaceted fields.

WELCOME TO DR. SARAH HAQ

Dr Sarah Haq joined the School of Liberal Studies on 5 June 2024. She completed her M.Phil. in Sociology from the Delhi School of Economics and her Ph.D. in Sociology from Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence, Sonipat. She has five years' experience. Prior to joining us, she was associated with Dr B.R. Ambedkar University, Delhi, as a Guest Faculty. Her research includes work on the sociology of gyms.

Three quick questions with Dr Haq:

What does liberal studies mean to you?

Liberal studies mean the confluence of different disciplines coming together in harmony. It is trying to find up a better social.

Why did you choose to study gyms and not a more traditional area?

It came from own interest in the changing urban dynamic. I see fitness culture cutting across more commonly studied and popular categories such as gender, and also class. And particularly in the context of the emergent Delhi culture, fitness cuts through identities of masculinity and gender binary in a fairly peculiar way.

Do you ever find yourself sociologising the people around you? Colleagues or family, for example?

My interest in sociology comes from my own experiences as a young Muslim women in a supposedly multicultural context, how my own body is being looked at in my interactions with different groups. In my own personal dealings, what I do in the education sector is not cut off from my own personal life. It cannot be sutured off.

FACULTY RESEARCH COLLOQUIUM (FARC)

The Faculty Research Colloquium (FaRC) of the School of Liberal Studies (SoLS) meets regularly during teaching semesters. The authors of papers presented are drawn from the faculties of SoLS and other Schools of BML Munjal University but, significantly, guest presenters are frequently invited from other universities, research institutes, civil society organisations, from domains of policy practice, activism and academe.

The papers, initially presented in FaRC, are generally revised following feedback from the discussant/s and FaRC participants, following which they usually appear in

the SoLS-FaRC Discussion Paper Series (DPS). The DPS, which is also open to other research papers of SoLS Faculty, is intended to serve as a forum for further feedback to the author, prior to formal publication, through diffusion to a wider circle of researchers and to an engaged lay readership. Authors are subsequently encouraged to offer their papers to be considered for publication in appropriate, peer-reviewed journals and forums.

It was another successful semester of the FaRC, with a wide range of papers from authors inside and outside the university, and lively discussions.

30 January 2024

Paroma Ghose

Postdoctoral Scholar, Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History, Munich

‘What’s goin’ on in the world today?: Popular Music and the Politics of a Postcolonial Sound’

14 February 2024

Saeed Ahmad

Asst. Professor, Jindal School of Art and Architecture, Jindal Global University

‘Forging Communal Space: Negotiating Streets and Practices in Delhi, 1922-1965’

21 February 2024

Arjun Appadurai

Emeritus Professor of Media, Culture and Communication at New York University

‘Language, Stories and Pictures: The Big Data We Should Not Forget’

28 February 2024

Pulin Nayak

Visiting Professor of Economics, Ashoka University

‘Is there something called ‘Indian Economic Thought’?’

06 March 2024

Saumya Maheshwari

Assistant Professor, SoL BMU

‘The Social Life of Love Jihad Laws and Religiosity in Authoritarian India’

20 March 2024

Kit Patrick

Asst. Professor, SoLS BMU

‘The crisis in research: bias or non-replication?’

03 April 2024

Yamini Aiyar

Former President, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi

‘The Public Policy Professional and its Discontents: An Inquiry into the State of the Profession’

10 April 2024

Amita Baviskar

Professor, Environmental Studies and Sociology and Anthropology, Ashoka University

‘Living with Heat: Bodies and Persons in Urban India’s Changing Climate’

17 April 2024

Kalpita Bhar Paul

‘Introducing a Tripartite Dialogue to Public Philosophy’

24 April 2024

Manu Mathew

Asst Professor, SoLS BMU

‘Curriculum, Subversions and the Internal Dialectics of Crisis in (Technical) Higher Education in India’

08 May 2024

Arindam Banerjee

Professor, SoLS BMU

‘“Natural” Basis for Surplus, Industrialisation, and the Ecological Question: Re-interpreting Economic History’

15 May 2024

Idrees Kanth

Asst. Professor, SoLS BMU

‘Political Culture and Discourse in Kashmir’

FIELD IMMERSION WITH BODH



The students and faculty of SoLS visited Bodhgaon, a rural campus in the remote Aravalli mountains, Rajasthan. The field immersion visit ran from February 24 to 28 2024, and was done in close partnership with the NGO Bodh, that over the last 33 years has worked with schools and communities across the state to build a conducive environment wherein children can transcend the limitations of their specific contexts and become empowered and enlightened individuals rooted in and oriented towards collective living. Students and faculty were prepared for the trip through workshops and training. The purpose of the field immersion was to introduce students to community-based teaching, and to help bridge the gap between the classroom and the world beyond.

During the field immersion, students visited and observed several schools supported by Bodh, speaking with principals, teachers and students alike. They visited the communities that supported these schools, talking to parents of school children from different backgrounds about their hopes, concerns and ambitions. The students also worked closely with Bodh staff, learning their approach to pedagogy, and immersing themselves in the natural habitat around Bodh's campus. Night times were spent around the campfire, sharing stories and songs.

This marks the start of what we hope will be a close partnership, one that brings a distinctive practical approach to studying liberal studies at BMU.

FACULTY IN THE MEDIA

Analysing local environmental footprints

What is the importance of evaluating household environmental footprints? Which are the three footprints analysed in this study? Do these footprints associated with luxury consumption show an increase as one analyses households that are richer and affluent? What should policymakers do?

EXPLAINER

Sourajit Bhara

While climate change is a global concern, issues such as water scarcity and air pollution are often localised or regionalised. For example, excessive water use in one region may not directly affect water scarcity elsewhere. Focusing on local environmental issues is crucial, and herein comes the importance of understanding household environmental footprints.

How are household environmental footprints distributed in India?

A recent study titled 'Water, air pollution and carbon footprints of conspicuous/luxury consumption in India', of which the author is one of the contributors, highlights the environmental impact of affluent individuals, particularly those who engage in consumption beyond basic needs. This study specifically examines the CO₂, water, and particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) footprints associated with luxury consumption choices among households in India across different economic classes. The analysis contrasts these luxury consumption footprints with those associated with non-luxury consumption. The luxury consumption basket includes various categories such as dining out, vacations, furniture, social events etc.

How were environmental impacts assessed in this study?

Methodologically, the study employed an input/output analysis of the entire economy to map or link different components of household consumption to the resources or materials involved in their production. This approach enabled the capture and aggregation of the (indirect or embedded) environmental impacts associated with each stage of production. For example, the water footprint was utilised to quantify water



GETTY IMAGES

usage throughout various stages of production of different goods and services, as well as direct water usage by households. The PM_{2.5} footprint encompassed both embedded emissions and direct emissions from household activities such as the use of fuelwood, kerosene, and vehicular fuels. Similarly, the CO₂ footprint was used to capture both embedded and direct CO₂ emissions associated with household consumption.

What were the key findings?

The study reveals that all three environmental footprints increase as households move from poorer to richer economic classes. Specifically, the footprints of the richest 10% of households are approximately double the overall average across the population. A notable surge in footprints is observed from the ninth to the 10th decile, with the air pollution footprint experiencing the

highest increase at 68% in the 10th decile compared to the ninth. Conversely, the rise in the water footprint is the lowest at 39%, while CO₂ emissions stand at 55%. This suggests that Indian consumers, particularly those in the top decile, are still in the 'take-off' stage, with only the wealthiest segment exhibiting substantial increases in consumption-related environmental footprints. The heightened footprints in the 10th decile are primarily attributed to increased expenditure on luxury consumption items.

What are the key contributors?

The study identifies eating out/restaurants as a significant contributor to the rise in environmental footprints, particularly in the top decile households, across all three footprints. Additionally, the consumption of fruits and nuts is highlighted as a factor driving the increase in water footprint in the 10th decile. Luxury consumption

items such as personal goods, jewellery, and eating out contribute to the rise in CO₂ and air pollution footprints. Notably, the presence of fuels like firewood in the consumption baskets of poorer households is emphasised, showcasing contrasting impacts of modern energy transitions. While transitioning from biomass to LPG reduces direct footprints, the lifestyle choices associated with affluence lead to a rise in PM_{2.5} footprints (and subsequently, the CO₂ footprint).

The average per capita CO₂ footprint of the top decile in India, at 6.7 tonnes per capita per year, is noted to be higher than the global average of 4.7 tonnes in 2000 and the annual average of 1.9 tonnes CO₂eq/cap required to achieve the Paris agreement target of 1.5°C. While still below the levels of the average citizen in the U.S. or U.K., this disparity underscores the need for urgent attention from policymakers. Given the influence of elite lifestyles on broader societal aspirations, policymakers should prioritise efforts to nudge consumption levels of affluent households downwards to align with sustainability goals.

What are the implications?

The study emphasises that while sustainability efforts often focus on global climate change, global environmental footprints do not necessarily align with local and regional scale footprints. However, local and regional environmental issues exacerbated by luxury consumption disproportionately affect marginalised communities. For instance, water scarcity and air pollution disproportionately impact marginalised groups, further marginalising them, while affluent sections can afford protective measures such as air-conditioned cars and air purifiers. This underscores the importance of multi-footprint analysis in addressing environmental justice concerns and ensuring equitable sustainability efforts.

Sourajit Bhara is Assistant Professor at the School of Liberal Studies of BML Munjal University, Gurgaon.

THE GIST

A recent study highlights the environmental impact of affluent individuals, particularly those who engage in consumption beyond basic needs.

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The study emphasises that while sustainability efforts often focus on global climate change, global environmental footprints do not necessarily align with local and regional scale footprints.

Faculty from the School of Liberal Studies continued to make waves in the national media, including opinion pieces and explainers in the pages of the Times of India and The Hindu.

Understanding the nuances of the liberal arts

PREMIUM

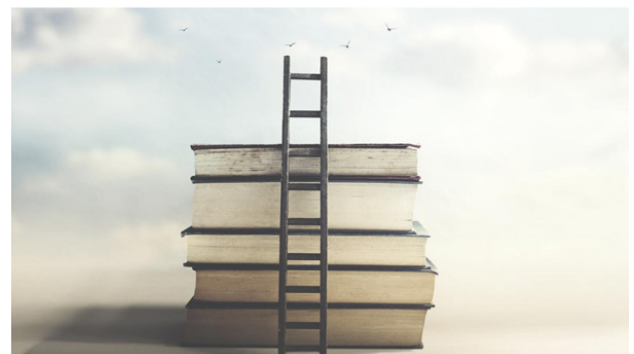
A greater understanding of the value of liberal arts education is essential for a more harmonious future — a point being lost sight of in contemporary popular and right-wing articulations

February 07, 2024 12:08 am | Updated 02:10 am IST

ANANDINI DAR



READ LATER PRINT



'A liberal arts education, seeking to be transformative, encourages students to be more humane, while recognising differences and identities, and understanding how power operates within our societies.' | Photo Credit: Getty Images/Stockphoto

Liberal arts degree programmes are on the rise in the context of Indian private higher education. At the same time, liberal education is gradually misunderstood and viewed with scepticism in contemporary...

MEET THE STUDENT MS. SHEETAL TOPPO



ive questions with Sheetal Toppo, who has just finished her first year of Liberal Studies.

If you were queen of campus for a week, what would you change?

I can't imagine being the Queen! I think there is nothing that I would be able to change, because I feel it's a good place. Nobody judges each other. Or even if they do judge each other, they don't talk about it in front of me.

Tell us about someone you remember from the field trip to Bodh?

I remember a girl I met when we visited a school and were attending the classes. They were talking about why you would want to be the youngest child in your family. Every child in the class had to answer. Lots of the children said they want to stay the youngest because they want to be cared for. One girl answered, saying 'I want to stay young because when we get older even our own mothers betray us. They will force us to get married, and it's like they sell you.' But also I was affected when she said that I was like 'wow'. It was amazing that she was so young and felt she could say such a thing.

You love fashion. What's fashion like on campus?

I don't wear the same things that I wear at home. At home I wear normal, covered clothes, baggy t-shirts. If I visit some places with family or friends, I usually wear jeans and a top and a full sleeved top. In college I wear all types of clothes, including traditional clothes like salwar, but also dresses. The clothes at college make me look presentable and give me confidence. Every individual in college has a different sense of fashion. Many have jeans and tops, baggy t-shirts, palazzo, but every individual has a unique way of dressing.

What was the hardest thing coming to college?

I believe for me the hardest thing coming to college was that I felt that I'm very different to other students. I'm from a very different background. Even my friends talk about their family, about how they enjoy being at home, and what fun activities they do. Some friends say that whatever they ask for, like a new phone or new shoes, their family will provide. I feel bad about that. Last month my phone wasn't working. The phone I use was my older sisters', but it wasn't



working. My friends said your family can buy you one, just call them and tell them you want a new phone. But it's not possible. It makes me feel upset.

And sometimes they complain about foot and hostel facilities. But I feel like they are perfect for me.

What did you learn about in class this year that you want to know more about?

I liked psychology. I'll probably take it as a major. I want to know more about how our unconscious mind works. Why do we dream? And why do we dream about something that didn't happen in our lives? Does it reflect our personality? Another topic: is it necessary that we will change our personality as we grow older? We change our personality to suit others, even if we don't want to. Why? Is it a good idea? others, even if we don't want to. Why? Is it a good idea?



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