

Clinical Anthropology in South Asia an innovative North-South teaching and research collaboration



The Banyan, a Chennai based Indian non-governmental organization provides innovative treatment and rehabilitation programmes for marginalised and vulnerable homeless women with mental health disorders.



The Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health (BALM) is a strategic initiative of The Banyan established to:

- increase stakeholder participation in the mental health sector;
- train, nurture & equip human resources in the mental health sector with appropriate knowledge, skills & competencies;
- map, document and disseminate information on best practices, challenges, and progress in the mental health sector

South Asia Mental Health Programme Unit of Mental Health Sciences UCL

Examines relationship between Mental Health & Medical Anthropology in South Asia, to develop culturally appropriate mental health theory & practice (Lead: Dr. S. Jadhav, * PhD students)

Projects:

1. Stigmatisation of severe mental disorders in India (with J Derges & R Littlewood, UCL)
2. Exclusion and self-exclusion from supplementary nutrition program: Short ethnographies of selected villages in Gujarat (Wellcome - PHFI grant, with N Nakeeran, PI, PHFI Gujarat)
3. Cultural psychology of 'Child Soldiers' in Nepal (with E Medeiros*, UCL)
4. Cultural dimensions of healing at *Balaji* Temple, North India (with A Pakaslahti, Finland)
5. Suicide amongst Cotton Farmers in Andhra Pradesh (with N Kishore*, UCL)
6. Mental Health consequences of Human-Elephant conflict in Assam (with M Barua, Univ. Oxford & R Littlewood, UCL)
7. Caste, Stigma & Well Being (with B Davar, Co-PI, BAPU Trust NGO, Pune). Funded by British Academy (2011-)

The UCL-BALM Collaboration

- Aims to extend knowledge and build on existing theories that will generate a more inclusive approach to the study and treatment of mental illness in South Asia.
- Believes that cross-continent, multidisciplinary collaborations can create a dynamic force for change that is inclusive, challenging and vital to the greater understanding of what constitutes 'global mental health'; including ideas and experiences of suffering and well-being.

- Offers an integrative, intellectual space to address these issues through its research and teaching programme, aided by an experienced faculty that include a multi-disciplinary team of senior clinicians with social science training, and front line staff from the NGO sector.

- Its future lies in developing and refining this relationship to deliver informed, creative and ethically based, applied research that will generate texts and locally relevant service delivery models for the sub-continent.



Seven 3-day short inter-linked courses held in Chennai, India 2008-

MENTAL HEALTH AT THE MARGINS February 2008	INDIAN PSYCHIATRY ENCOUNTERS MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY November 2009
BASIC INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL PSYCHIATRY November 2008	RETHINKING PSYCHO-SOCIAL INTERVENTIONS IN SOUTH ASIA: November 2010
RECENT ADVANCES IN CULTURAL PSYCHIATRY FOR SOUTH ASIA February 2009	POSSESSION STATES IN SOUTH ASIA: THEORETICAL & CLINICAL DIMENSIONS November 2011
DISTRESS AND THE BODY: ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND CLINICAL DIMENSIONS September 2012	

Teaching Methods

**Clinical case discussions; seminars; debates, lectures; films;
panel discussions with service users
and traditional healers; & field visits.**

Teaching Outcomes

- ❖ Teaching modules and readings lists tailored to culture and mental health in South Asia
- ❖ A global social science network of both students and professionals interested in mental health in South Asia
- ❖ Preparations for a published volume/text on Mental Health in South Asia based on teaching courses. Currently in negotiation with Orient Blackswan Publishers & OUP, India



Participant Profiles

- 170 participants in seven courses. Mix of graduates, post docs, and front line clinicians in public and private sectors
- Participants included lay mental health volunteers. Social Scientists, Psychiatrists, Ayurvedic & Homeopathic Practitioners, Social Workers, Psychologists, Occupational Therapists
- Participant's Countries: India, Pakistan, UK, Netherlands, Germany, Norway, Canada, United States.
- Overall average rating (2 courses, 50 evaluations): 7/10

"The lack of hierarchy and protocol, the free exchange of ideas was at a level that I have never witnessed before..." – Doctor, Rural Health Clinic, Tamil Nadu State

"The discourses on anthropology and its application have made a significant impact on the way I perceive a patient in the community" - Social worker, NGO for Homeless children, Kolkata City

UCL-BALM RESEARCH UNIT, CHENNAI, INDIA

UCL-BALM RESEARCH UNIT, 2008 OBJECTIVES

1. Provide cutting edge interdisciplinary mental health research, focusing on marginal populations in South Asia
2. Collaborate on the development of culturally valid mental health theories that address suffering
3. Enhance and develop the research capacity of local Indian researchers
4. Apply for joint funding of UCL-BALM initiated research projects
5. Disseminate research findings through joint publications

RESEARCH OUTPUTS

1. Successful application for UCL Global Health Small Research Grant, 2010.
2. Employment for 2 local researchers on 2 pilot studies, 2008 and 2010.
3. Collaboration between the Wellcome Trust & Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), resulting in two PhD applicants to study at UCL (2010-) & research project with PHFI, Gujarat
4. Training in social science research methodologies, as part of yearly short courses at BALM
5. Challenges of teaching clinically applied anthropology & cultural psychiatry in India. Manuscript submitted to *Teaching Anthropology journal, Royal Anthropological Institute*, May 2012

PILOT STUDIES COMPLETED

1. Stigmatization of severe mental illness, deploying an ethnographically derived questionnaire (2010-11)
2. Lived experiences of stigma through an ethnographic study of a community for homeless mentally ill women, in Kovalam, Tamil Nadu, South India (2010-11)

CHALLENGES

1. Establishing culturally appropriate ethics protocols and procedures
2. Cross-continent supervision of Research Assistants
3. Economic, temporal, and spatial variants between institutions: UCL and BALM



FUTURE TEACHING & RESEARCH DIRECTION

§ The teaching and research arms of this collaboration aim to develop a sound base for strengthening relationships between UCL & Southern partners, to broaden research, training and capacity building across the two regions.

§ Submission of major external grant applications. DFID (2011), unsuccessful.

§ Applied, collaborative research into issues of poverty, the social determinants of mental health and well-being, homelessness and other marginalized populations.

§ Establish links with Indian Social Science University (TISS) to develop further certificate international courses. MoU between UCL, TISS & BALM extended for 5 years (2011)