

**UCL-BALM Research Unit,
BALM
Chennai, India**



This ground breaking North-South & Academic-Clinical collaborative venture was launched in July 2008. The broad objective is to pursue cutting edge interdisciplinary research in mental health focussing on the concerns of marginalised populations. The Unit will research into developing culturally valid mental health theory that addresses local suffering. Alongside this objective, the faculty will aim at research capacity building for BALM researchers.

The UCL-BALM Research unit is nested within BALM offices at Chennai & Kovalam, and jointly directed by Dr Sushrut Jadhav (Senior Lecturer in Psychiatry, UCL) & Madhu Sharan (Executive Director, BALM).

Research faculty

The research faculty include a multi-disciplinary team of medical anthropologists, clinical academic mental health professionals, and social scientists; from BALM & UCL.

Dr Jane Derges, *Postdoctoral Fellow, Anthropology Department, UCL*
Dr Sushrut Jadhav, *Academic Director, UCL-BALM Research Unit*
Sumeet Jain, *PhD scholar, Department of Mental Health Sciences, UCL*
Roland Littlewood, *Professor of Psychiatry & Anthropology, UCL*
Madhu Sharan, *Administrative Director, UCL-BALM Research Unit*

Current research

A full time research assistant, Dr Swapnil Gupta, was recently employed to collect pilot data for topics 1) & 2). Team members from the Banyan have collected pilot data for topic 3). Application for a full grant proposal to academic funding bodies, linking topics 1) & 2) is in development and will be submitted by mid 2010. Currently, Dr Lalit Narayan is undertaking further preliminary research in support of the grant application process for projects 3) and a limited ethnographic study of the Protected Community at Kovalam.

Pilot topics include:

1. *Narratives of Recovery and Return of the Homeless Mentally Ill Women*
(Lead: Jane Derges, Madhu Sharan, & Sushrut Jadhav)
2. *Stigmatisation of Severe Mental Illness amongst rural and urban population of Tamil Nadu*
(Lead: Sushrut Jadhav, Madhu Sharan & Roland Littlewood)

Outcome

The Unit aims at submitting a minimum of 2 joint research grant applications and 2 publications by the end of the proposed period. It is intended that the subsequent life of the research unit will be supported through external grants. Findings generated from such research will also feed into future UCL-BALM teaching course content and development of local texts for mental health professionals. This is in keeping with the overall objective of generating locally valid mental health theory for the marginalised population.

Funding

Jointly funded by UCL Office of the Vice Provost (Academic & International), & BALM.

Contacts

Madhu Sharan (madhu.sharan@thebanyan.org) &
Dr Sushrut Jadhav, UCL (s.jadhav@ucl.ac.uk)

Web Links

www.ucl.ac.uk

www.balm.in

www.thebanyan.org

<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/canm> - Anthropology and Medicine

About the Research Faculty

Ms. Madhu Sharan, Executive Director, BALM Co-Director

Madhu Sharan is a Sociologist, having completed her postgraduate and M. Phil studies at Jawahar Lal Nehru University, New Delhi in Sociology. She is currently completing her Doctoral research at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi on the theme of "Empowerment of Women and Micro-finance Programmes." Over the last decade and a half, her career has spanned the worlds of academia and civil society. Her sustained and abiding interest in the subject of gender issues, Women's Empowerment and Social Change is evident from the several papers she has authored and talks that she has given on these themes. She is also deeply interested in the pedagogy of Sociology and has been Adviser and Consultant to various National level institutions including National Council of Educational Research & Training, Central Board of Secondary Education and National Open School since 1991. Prior to joining as Executive Director, BALM in 2007, she has worked as Project Director in Hand in Hand Tamil Nadu since 2004 and was looking after the design and implementation of several self-help group projects and partnership programs including being a member of the Advisory Team assisting the ASGI-SA programme of the Govt. of South Africa.

Dr. Sushrut Jadhav, M.B.B.S., M.D., MRCPsych., Ph.D. Co-Director

Sushrut Jadhav is Senior Lecturer in Cross-cultural Psychiatry at University College London (UCL); and Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist, Homeless In-patient Services, Camden and Islington Community Health and Social Care Trust. He is Founding Editor of the international journal, *Anthropology and Medicine (Taylor & Francis)*. Dr Jadhav graduated from Grant Medical College, Mumbai, and completed his postgraduate training in psychiatry at the National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences, Bangalore. He subsequently obtained his PhD in cultural psychiatry at UCL researching white British natives of London. His current interests include 1) the development of cultural dialogues to engage with acutely unwell psychiatric patients; 2) mental health dimensions of marginal groups with a focus on South Asia; 3) examining the cultural premise of western Psychiatry; 4) studying the cultural encounters between overseas doctors in UK and their white British patients; and 5) stigmatization of mental illness. He is also Co-Director (with S.Dein and R. Littlewood) of University College London Masters in Culture and Health. He currently supervises doctoral candidates conducting research on the cultural appropriateness of community psychiatric services in rural Uttar Pradesh & the trajectory of Child Soldiers in Nepal.

Dr Jane Derges, Dip COT, MSc, PhD

Jane Derges, currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at UCL, is both a trained Occupational Therapist and a Medical Anthropologist. She has spent most of her career working in the mental health sector and has clinical expertise across a range of sub-disciplines including; community psychiatry and the rehabilitation of the long-term mentally ill. She has also carried out an ethnography of how 'suffering' is expressed among refugees attending a western psychiatric hospital and undertaken anthropological research to study the impact of war on a small Tamil community in northern Sri Lanka. This focused on how traditional healing and rituals were used as a way of managing 'trauma'. This work follows a special interest in critiques of western theories and categories of diagnosis and treatment whereby according to western

models, social suffering is viewed as a disease. Her research seeks to understand how rituals contribute to the healing process.

Mr. Sumeet Jain, B.A., M.S.W.

Sumeet Jain is pursuing doctoral research in the Department of Mental Health Sciences, University College London. He trained in Development Studies at the University of Toronto and in Social Work at McGill University. His current research examines the processes through which patients, their family members, mental health professionals, bureaucrats and policy makers shape the conceptualisation and delivery of community mental health services in northern India. He has recently conducted a clinical ethnography of a community psychiatry team and the rural population they serve, in the State of Uttar Pradesh, India.

Professor Roland Littlewood, BSc (Hons), MBBS, MRCPsych, FRCPsych, DipSocAnthrop, D.Phil, D.Litt., DSc

Roland Littlewood is Professor of Anthropology and Psychiatry at University College London. He is the Course Tutor for the MSc in Culture and Mental Health and the MSc in Intercultural Therapy and is an Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist with Camden and Islington Community Health Services NHS Trust. Professor Littlewood's field research was done in Trinidad and in 1999 he was Wilde Lecturer in Natural Theology at the University of Oxford. He has made a number of television films about Haiti and Lebanon. His current research interests include mental health, medical and cognitive anthropology. His current projects include postadoption incest, the anthropology of Western psychological illness and the embodiment of the experience of organic brain disorder, zombification in Haiti, Druze religion in Lebanon, blood feuds and trauma in Albania. Among his book publications are *Aliens and Alienists* (Penguin, 1982), *Pathology and Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), and *Pathologies of the West* (Continuum, 2002).