PREFACE

Research took front seat in my life when I joined Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law (RGNUL), Punjab at Patiala in the year 2007. The founder Vice-Chancellor of this institution Professor Dr. Gurjeet Singh played a vital role in igniting my interest not only in research but also in inter-disciplinary research and studies. Such an approach has professional reasons also since RGNUL is an institution for legal studies and I being a teacher of Political Science was expected to deliver the inter-relationship between the two disciplines which is immense in scope. Once I started this journey of establishing the relevance of other disciplines to the discipline of Political Science, I found myself in the spectacular world of inter-disciplinary ideas to which I could relate as a young academician.

After completing Post Graduation from the Department of Political Science, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar I cleared UGC-NET exam in the discipline of Political Science. I had also done Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) in International Relations from Himachal Pradesh University, Simla. My next plan was to get enrolled for a doctorate degree. Meanwhile, I attempted some paper presentations and writing of a few research papers which are have now been published in different journals of national as well as international repute and as research articles in edited books. I continued this academic exercise throughout my doctoral work as well. In 2008 categorically, I began exploring possible research topics for doctoral level research.

On the basis of the research work done by me earlier and after considerable reading, I zeroed down to my area of interest for higher research and that was ‘South Asia’. However, I was yet not clear about which aspect of the South Asia I would work on. Professor Gurjeet Singh who, in addition to being a strict boss, was a fatherly figure for us, did appreciate my line of thought, and gave me some of his own as well as some other author’s papers related to the topic.

Simultaneous to my search for a pin pointed topic related to South Asia, another
activity began at RGNUL. A Specialisation Group in the subject of Human Rights was to be introduced at the University and a number of teachers including me were assigned with the work of drafting syllabi for different papers to be taught and also to prepare the study material for the proposed course.

That is how I came to learn about the regional mechanisms of human rights and also about the debate regarding the absence of such a human rights system in Asia. This gave me a particular direction to look for my doctorate topic. I carried on with my reading regarding the human rights monitoring at international at regional level and this time I focussed on human rights aspect in South Asia.

Eventually, I could finalise my research topic that is “South Asian Human Rights Mechanism”. When I shared my almost finalised idea of the research topic with Professor Gurjeet Singh and also that I wanted to do an inter-disciplinary research for my doctoral, he encouraged me to go ahead with the topic as well as with the approach. For further clarity, I also discussed the topic with Professor Surinder Kler Shukla, from the Department of Political Science, Panjab University, Chandigarh. Professor Shukla being an expert on South Asia herself also appreciated the topic.

I also visited my parent department, that is, the Department of Political Science, at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. During the two years of my study there, that is, from 1998 to 2000, I idealised each of my teachers who always appreciated me and always pushed me towards higher goals in life. As fortune would have it their opinion about me supported me while my job in the Department of Political Science at Punjabi University in 2006, several years after I had left my parent department. I feel blessed that my teachers had been a guiding light for me ever since I became their student.

In addition to this, I surfed a lot of websites of Indian as well as of the foreign universities which were doing research on South Asia. I found that South Asia was being studied for so many aspects. However, I found the region’s regionalism and scope for a human rights mechanism needed more research. I also found some good articles on the internet which discussed SAARC from a different aspect where the regional organisation was appreciated for its efforts. I must confess here that the knowledge which I could gather from the internet proved very helpful throughout the research.
During this exercise, I realised that there were a very few senior academicians who believed in an inter-disciplinary approach of the study. However, to my good fortune Professor Gurjeet Singh and Professor Shukla were among the very few who did believe in this kind of research. Almost at the same time at RGNUL a Doctoral degree for Social Sciences with Law was introduced which and I decided to do my doctoral under this scheme. Accordingly I expressed my desire to do my doctoral research under Professor Gurjeet Singh and Professor Shukla, since both were having world class experience on human rights and South Asia respectively, which both of them very graciously agreed to.

Further the herculean task of writing the synopsis began in early 2008 and during that period I consulted (Dr.) S.K. Puri, retired Professor, Department of Political Science, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar; Mr. YSR Murthy, the then Director Research, National Human Rights Commission, New Delhi and Dr. Satish Sharma, Professor, Department of Political Science, Punjabi University, Patiala.

I felt honoured when Professor Gurjeet Singh asked me to get my final synopsis checked by Dr. Werner Menski, Professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London in England, who had been supervisor of Professor Gurjeet Singh for his second Doctorate Degree. Dr. Menski sent me a very prompt response appreciating the topic of my research which greatly added to my confidence in the research.

Since I was just a toddler in the field of research, I studied books, journals, periodicals and articles on the subject of human rights in general and on regional human rights research in particular to develop their understanding. When I was creating a web of ideas related to all aspects of the doctoral topic, both my learned supervisors very aptly pointed out the importance of reading good books on research methodology too. On the top of it, Professor Gurjeet Singh also made us attend all the classes on the subject of research methodology being taught by him, which proved very helpful in the final formatting and setting of the thesis.

Meanwhile, I visited the libraries of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR); the Indian Society of International Law (ISIL); the National Human Rights Commission of India, New Delhi; Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar; Panjab University, Chandigarh; Punjabi University, Patiala for preparation of the Synopsis
and for collection of the research material. The synopsis for the Ph.D. Degree was presented in September 2008 and was approved too.

Later, in the year 2009, I visited the libraries of the Strasbourg University and the International Institute of Human Rights (IIDH), both situated at Strasbourg in France, where I had gone to avail scholarship to attend the 40th Study Session on Human Rights. In the libraries of the IIDH and the Strasbourg University, I found some very important material on regional organizations like the United Nations, the League of Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organisation of American States, the African Union etc. etc. and of course on human rights which could not have been easily and ordinarily available in India. I cannot stop myself from mentioning here that the period of a little over a month that I spent in Strasbourg was torturing for the mother in me as my kids were just four and two years of age. Also this period was a testing time for my husband and my whole family. But they stood by me as rock.

Further in the year 2010, I visited the libraries of the International Islamic University of Malaysia, where I went to present a paper at the 7th ASLI Conference. In the libraries here I found an insight to the Arab and the South East Asian approach to human rights and also found some good material on the Arab League, the ASEAN etc. etc.

In addition to having visited these libraries, I was also greatly benefited from the discussion that I had with the scholars and the intellectuals in these countries. I am still in touch with many of them and they keep enriching me by sharing their activities and the research work.

In 2011 I took an initiative of organizing a Multi Disciplinary Congress (MDC) in RGNUL on annual basis with the sponsorship of ICSSR-NWRC, Chandigarh. The purpose behind having this event was to establish and explore the idea of bringing knowledge of different disciplines on one common theme. The success of the MDC can be imagined that the conference proceedings of the MDC of 2012 RGNUL got an offer from the Cambridge Scholars Publishing, United Kingdom to publish the proceedings and the contract has been recently finalized in June 2013.

Further in the year 2013, my proposal for a School of Social Sciences and Inter-disciplinary Studies (SSSIS) was approved by Professor (Dr.) Paramjit Singh Jaswal,
Vice-Chancellor, RGNUL and was very well supported by Professor (Dr.) GIS Sandhu, Registrar, RGNUL. I hope this School provides a platform to strengthen research in Social Sciences to produce a consolidated knowledge. Both these initiatives of mine are an example that I have not only conducted this interdisciplinary doctoral research but have actually believed in it and would keep working on it in future as well. None of this would have been possible without the able guidance and freedom to endeavor provided by the two authorities at RGNUL. I will try my level best to keep their faith in me and in this School.

Every bit of what my journey has been since 2007 had one golden thread in it throughout and that is my supportive husband, my young children and my understanding family. I do not want to belittle their value by just saying thanks but I want to mention them as part of my academic journey as they are the foundation of it and of me.

No work is ultimate and final. So is the case with this doctoral work. However, I have made my best effort to gain an insight to the doctoral topic not only by writing on it and reading about it but also by participating in various international and national conferences, seminars and workshops, by discussing it with experts, friends and colleagues at RGNUL etc. etc. with the sole aim of gaining more clarity of what I wanted to do in my doctoral work. I hope all these efforts are visible in this thesis!

Place and Date
Patiala 30 June 2013

Shveta Dhaliwal
RGNUL, Punjab