

# Alumnus of the Month

After working in the policy consultancy space with Swaniti Initiative, Kunal Munjal is now pursuing PhD in Development Studies at the Economic Analysis Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, Bengaluru. His interest in this subject stemmed from the groundwork laid during his bachelors in Social Work (Rural Development) at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. It was enriched through fieldworks and internships across India on a range of issues: agriculture, local governance, rural livelihoods and migrant education. This encouraged him to join the public policy domain to connect the understanding of grass root realities with the top-down policy processes.

Reflecting on the MPP programme experience, Kunal opined that the modules on political economy, research methodology, and policy analysis have contributed immensely in his career. He particularly recalls Professor Haragopal and Babu Mathew's classes that helped strengthen political economy flavour in his orientation. The useful skill of developing policy briefs in Prof. Sony's courses helped him produce effective outputs at Swaniti while providing technical assistance for various MPs. An academically diverse batch of students was an added advantage that enriched his experience with diversity of ideas, he remarks.

Kunal, while at Swaniti as Senior Policy Analyst, was tasked with providing policy direction to a network of 22 NGOs in UP & Bihar. He was involved in direct field engagement, research & outreach activities with government officials and other stakeholders on the issues of human trafficking, child labour and bonded labour. He co-designed a study on codification of labour laws in India with a focus on migrant workers, the findings of which were presented to MPs of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour and also discussed at several national and international conferences and round-tables.

His doctoral endeavour focuses on agrarian relations and bargaining power which is an extension of the research ideas identified during his masters' thesis, with Prof. Aparajita, on economics of farming and the political economy of farmers' movement (on MSP). Research papers from masters' dissertation were presented in major global heterodox economics conferences in France (IIPPE) and Vietnam (YSI-INET), apart from several others in India (at ISI, NLSIU, ISAE, IASSI). He often collaborates for research with Foundation for Agrarian Studies, an organisation that he was involved with during his client-led project.

He believes that interdisciplinarity and heterodoxy in thought is an indispensable requisite to work in the development sector and public policy domain. He aspires to stay at the cross-roads of academia, policy making and civil society in the long run.



**“The discipline (Public Policy) has definitely emerged as beneficial one to strategize solutions towards developmental issues as well as non-developmental issues.”**



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