

# ANTHRO BULLETIN

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A digital magazine that celebrates cultural diversities of India.

## ABOUT ANTHROPOS INDIA FOUNDATION

Founded in 2011, Anthropos India Foundation (AIF) promotes the discipline of Anthropology, its philosophy and its methods to engage in applied and action research. Our work seeks to address issues of local communities through a bottom-up approach that is unique to their cultures and people. We conduct community-based research rooted in local knowledge systems, local culture and ecology to inform policy initiatives and drive transformational impact. AIF also conducts workshops, trainings and advocacy on various issues, especially on children. AIF promotes Visual Anthropology through vibrant, authentic, meaningful ethnographic films and photo documentation.

## ABOUT ANTHRO BULLETIN

Starting from January 2025, AIF's monthly Newsletter has been upgraded into a monthly digital magazine, **Anthro Bulletin**, with a renewed focus and energy. As anthropologists, we have always been keen on covering the diversity of our country from various perspectives. Over time, we have explored a wide range of topics, and seeing the richness of the emerging content, we have transformed the Newsletter into something more appropriate and culturally stimulating. From now on, our monthly **Anthro Bulletin** will feature articles on themes related to Indian art, crafts, culture, and festivals from a unique, anthropological perspective, highlighting the country's rich diversity and traditions besides sharing the regular news updates. We have the 'Young Scholars - Notes from the Field' column featuring fieldwork, travelogues, or PhD-related work of young and bright scholars, providing them a platform to share their valuable insights and experiences here as well. We are also excited to introduce a new column, 'Through the Lens', featuring photo essays on human experiences. **Please write to us if you want to submit your article!**

**We also welcome you to share high-resolution, portrait-size, self-clicked pictures of cultural events, traditions, and festivals to be featured on our magazine's cover page every month.** Please note that the selection of articles and pictures is at the discretion of our editorial team and is based on several factors, including how well the submissions align with our objectives.

All submissions can be emailed to [aif.newsletter2025@gmail.com](mailto:aif.newsletter2025@gmail.com).

We also welcome sponsors who would like to support this magazine.

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## The Anthropological Journey of AIF

Dr. Sunita Reddy, Founder-Chair, Anthropos India Foundation

Dear Readers,

As we complete nearly fifteen months of publishing Anthro Bulletin, we look back with immense satisfaction and gratitude at the remarkable journey we have shared together. Over this period, the magazine has evolved into a vibrant platform showcasing a rich diversity of ideas, original writings, and insightful reflections from the world of Anthropology and beyond.

What makes this journey especially meaningful is the enthusiastic participation of young scholars and emerging anthropologists who have contributed extensively to the bulletin. Their writings reflect fresh perspectives, field-based experiences, and thoughtful interpretations of cultural practices and social realities. Through their articles, readers have travelled across regions, traditions, and communities, witnessing how cultural practices continue to evolve while retaining their unique local flavours. The coverage of festivals, rituals, indigenous knowledge systems, and changing social landscapes has added depth and colour to every edition.

The editorial guidance of our distinguished Chief Editors—earlier by Prof. Shalina Mehta and presently by Prof. K.K. Misra—has greatly enriched the intellectual quality of the bulletin. Their editorials maintain academic rigour while presenting meaningful perspectives on contemporary issues in an accessible and engaging manner. Each issue thoughtfully addresses important themes, encouraging readers to reflect critically and constructively. Equally captivating are the vivid photographs and field visuals contributed by young researchers, which bring ethnographic realities alive for our readers.

The inclusion of book reviews and scholars' field experiences has further strengthened the academic value of Anthro Bulletin. These sections not only guide students and researchers in their academic pursuits but also inspire them to engage more deeply with anthropological inquiry. Updates on past and upcoming events keep readers informed about the expanding activities of AIF, fostering a sense of collective participation and scholarly engagement.

We are delighted to share that the Foundation continues to grow steadily through its diverse academic and outreach initiatives. The uninterrupted monthly publication of Anthro Bulletin and the quarterly online magazine Childhood Matters over the past two years reflects our sustained commitment to knowledge sharing and academic dialogue.

In addition, AIF has been actively conducting capacity-building and training programmes, both online and offline, attracting participation from students and faculty members across the country. These programmes have created valuable spaces for learning, collaboration, and professional growth.



The overwhelming response to our non-paid internship programme—with more than sixty applications for each cycle—demonstrates the growing interest among young scholars to engage with AIF's activities. Although only a limited number can be selected each time, the internship programme has become a meaningful platform for nurturing creativity, research aptitude, and teamwork. Interns are encouraged to explore ideas independently while contributing actively through content writing, organizing lectures, workshops, seminars, and strengthening their skills in research and social media engagement. Personalized mentoring remains one of the most rewarding aspects of this initiative, helping interns build confidence and shape their future academic and professional pathways.

Our collective effort has always been to keep Anthropology vibrant, relevant, and accessible to younger generations. Today's youth are digitally connected and have unprecedented access to information; what they require is guidance in navigating and interpreting this knowledge through a meaningful disciplinary lens. Anthropology offers precisely that possibility—helping young minds understand cultures, communities, identities, and social transformations with empathy and critical insight.

This edition of Anthro Bulletin brings yet another enriching collection of articles covering themes such as gender, art and craft traditions, film reviews, and indigenous communities. We eagerly look forward to many more contributions from scholars, students, and faculty members in the coming issues. Your ideas, reflections, and perspectives are always welcome as we continue to build this collective intellectual space for future generations.

Happy Reading!

## Beyond Binaries: Rethinking Gender Relations in Tribal Societies

Prof. Kamal K. Misra, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, KISS-DU, Bhubaneswar

Popular discourses on gender relations in tribal societies, particularly with regard to the position of women, have long been structured by a discursive oscillation between two epistemic poles. On the one hand, developmentalist narratives, often articulated by state functionaries and sections of the non-governmental sector, foreground a teleology of progress in which tribal women emerge as emblematic beneficiaries of postcolonial intervention. Tribal women "empowerment" is rendered legible in this narrative through the idioms of participation, inclusion, and measurable advancement (Naveen et al. 2023). On the other hand, a critical analysis drawing attention to enduring asymmetries emphasizes the persistence of dispossession, gendered precarity, and structural marginalization of tribal women in India (Sundar 1997; Xaxa 2004). While both positions are anchored in empirically observable situations, they remain constrained by a shared analytic reductionism that flattens the heterogeneity of lived experience into mutually exclusive representational regimes.

This essay tries to argue that such binary epistemologies are fundamentally inadequate for comprehending the ground realities of gender in Indian tribal contexts. The classificatory impulse to locate women's status along a linear continuum, whether as relatively "egalitarian" or "subordinate", betrays a Cartesian dualism that privileges clarity through division, even at the cost of ethnographic fidelity. As Sherry Ortner (1974; 1996) has long cautioned, gender cannot be understood through universal hierarchies or symbolic oppositions alone; rather, it must be situated within historically specific "serious games" of social practice. Tribal societies in India, far from constituting a coherent or internally uniform category, are differentiated by geo-cultural specificities, kinship configurations, modes of livelihood, and cosmological orientations. Any attempt to generalize across such huge diversity risks reinscribing precisely the forms of abstraction that critical anthropology seeks to unsettle.

An ethnographically grounded perspective reveals that the routine lives of tribal women are constituted through a field of tensions wherein liberty and taboo, agency and subjection, are not discrete variables but relationally co-implicated processes. Economic participation, frequently considered as an index of empowerment, offers a telling illustration. Women's labor in agrarian cycles, forest-based economies, and artisanal production is both visible and indispensable, positioning them as central actors in the reproduction of household and community life. Yet, following Michel Foucault's (1978) insight into the productive and capillary nature of power, such participation does not straightforwardly translate into control over resources or decision-making power of the women. Power here is embedded in micro-practices of kinship, inheritance, and institutional access that simultaneously enable and delimit the horizons of agency. The ritual domain further complicates any unilinear reading of gendered power. In many contexts, women occupy positions as custodians of ritual knowledge and are integral to the maintenance of symbolic order. However, this ritual centrality often coexists with forms of exclusion, taboos restricting access to specific sacred sites or ceremonial roles, that are neither incidental nor easily dismissed. Rather than interpreting these as contradictions to be resolved, it is them in a Geertzian interpretive sense as part of a culturally constituted logic through which power more analytically productive to view is differentially distributed and embodied. Here again, Ortner's

emphasis on practice underscores how symbolic systems and social hierarchies are mutually constitutive rather than hierarchically ordered. Equally instructive are the modalities through which tribal women engage with structures of authority with "everyday forms of resistance." Such practices resonate with Foucault's understanding of power as generative of subjectivities rather than merely constraining them. Agency, in this sense, is not external to power but immanent within it, emerging through the very processes that seek to regulate conduct. Resistance, therefore, need not assume the form of overt defiance; it is frequently embedded in the quotidian, such as in gestures, silences, and strategic compliances that elude formal recognition. The persistence of binary frameworks can also be traced to broader epistemological commitments that privilege universality, comparability, and abstraction over situated knowledge. Developmental paradigms, driven by the imperative of quantification, render complex social processes commensurable but often at the cost of contextual nuance. In contrast, as Arjun Appadurai (1996) reminds us, social life unfolds within disjunctive and overlapping "scapes" that resist neat containment within linear models of progress. Tribal women's experiences are shaped not only by local structures but also by broader flows of development discourse, state intervention, and cultural imagination, producing hybrid and often contradictory subject positions. What is required, therefore, is a conceptual shift from static categorizations of "status" to a more processual understanding of gender as an emergent and relational field. Such a perspective foregrounds the ways in which identities, roles, and hierarchies are continually produced and reproduced through everyday interactions, institutional arrangements, and symbolic practices. This confirms to Ortner's concept of "serious games" through which actors negotiate power, meaning, and social reproduction, while remaining attentive to the broader regimes of discourse and governance. Anthropological inquiry in its ethnographic and interpretive orientations remains uniquely positioned to undertake this task. By privileging emic perspectives and attending to the textures of lived experience, it enables a more nuanced apprehension of how tribal women themselves inhabit, negotiate, and occasionally transform the structures that shape their worlds. This is not to deny the material realities of inequality or constraint; rather, it is to situate them within a broader assemblage of meanings, practices, and possibilities that are always in flux.

In this light, the study of gender relations in tribal societies cannot be reduced to a question of empirical verification within pre-given categories. It demands, instead, a critical interrogation of the conceptual apparatus through which such categories are constituted. The lives of tribal women, far from conforming to singular narratives, reveal a dense and shifting terrain where autonomy intertwines with dependence, and domination coexists with subtle forms of resistance. To engage with this complexity is not merely an academic endeavor but an ethical imperative, one that calls into question the epistemological foundations through which gender, power, and social life are theorized and understood.



## A Visit To “Remembered Village” in 2026 – Changes and Continuities



By Satyaki Mukherjee

“Remembered Village” is a classical sociological/anthropological literature written by Professor MN Srinivas in 1976, which depicts his experiences in Rampura village from 1948 January to 1948 November. He went there to study and depict village life in rural India as a social anthropologist. His vivid description of village life in rural South Indian villages started a transition in academic thought in sociology/anthropology from book view to the field view. It also laid the foundation of village studies in post-independent India. Though the latter scholars tried hard to find the exact location of the village, but they couldn't locate it. It was in early 2000, an attempt was made by the Mysore University and Anthropological Survey of India, Mysore, to locate the Rampura village, which they identified with Kodagahalli village in Mysore district, Karnataka. It was then restudied by Professor Tanka Bahadur Subba from Northeastern Hill State University.

We as part of our fieldwork visit was taken to the Kodagahalli village in the district of Mysore, Karnataka, by Anthropos India Foundation, and Indira Gandhi Rastriya Manav Sangharalaya, Bhopal, on 13th April 2026 to know the village, and carry out a small ethnographic fieldwork experience. Kodagahalli Gram Panchayat covers four villages, of which Kodagahalli village is the central village. It is an agriculturally enriched village, with paddy and sugarcane being the two major crops grown. The dominant social community within the village was the Vokkaliggas, Kurubas, and Harijans. The two major things that have stuck with me about the Kodagahalli village are the general wealth status of the households and the willingness of the households to discuss about their life.

Most of the houses in the Kodagahalli village are pucca. A few of the houses are also two - three storied. A few of the houses also own cars and motorbikes. Most of these households have access to electricity, and some amenities like televisions. It is very striking to me because from the region where I come, and the state I come from, we usually do not see this pattern of settlement. Though I am an urban dweller in the state of West Bengal. But, with my limited visits and exposure to rural Bengal, we do not find dominance of pacca households in the villages, and also two/ three storied buildings. Though, even in West Bengal villages, there are households of the type we have seen in Kodagahalli, but the proportion of such households is quite low. The second major thing that has stuck with me in Kodagahalli is the willingness of the people to discuss about their culture, traditions and beliefs with us. Generally, whenever there is fieldwork, we as researchers are the first thing that sticks with us is whether the people will cooperate with us in the field and share their thoughts with us, or they will not cooperate with us.

But what I find very interesting and perhaps unique is the willingness of the people of Kodagahalli to talk with us, and make us feel as one among them. We, as a part of the group, had talked to a total of three households in the village, and across these three households, the people have welcomed us with open arms, have talked freely with us about many important questions about village life and culture. They have helped us to know in great detail about village life in rural South India, which many of us do not know, and who come from various parts of India.





Glimpses of Rampura, 2026

## A Reflection on the Sacred Bamboo Worship of the Sarania Kacharis in Assam



By Dr. Angana Goswami

Sacred bamboo worship is one of the most significant traditional ritual practices of the Sarania Kacharis, an important sub-group of the larger Kachari community of Assam. , locally known as Baah Goxain Puja or Utsav, the festival centres on the worship of their chief deity, Baah Goxain, literally meaning the Bamboo God, who is believed to reside within bamboo. Traditionally, the ceremony begins on the first day of Bohag, the opening month of the Assamese calendar, and continues until the seventh day, usually falling in April, during which villagers gather at a village temple ground to worship the sacred bamboo deity. Inspired by this long-standing practice, the All Assam Sarania Kachari Students' Union began organising a state-based, larger central celebration in 2005, bringing together sacred bamboo deities from different parts of the state to a designated venue for annual worship. Since then, the festival has grown into one of the most prominent and widely attended cultural-religious gatherings of the Sarania Kacharis. This piece of writing is intended to bring forth a unique festival of India, which might be unknown to many readers.

The Sarania Kacharis have performed Baah Goxain Puja for generations through well-defined customary procedures. Before the ritual begins, each village traditionally holds a meeting to select important ritual functionaries such as the Deori (priest), Aag Dhora (holder of the upper portion of the bamboo), and Gur Dhora (holder of the root portion). The ritual is generally performed in three stages: Baah Kata (cutting the bamboo), Xori Furua (visiting households), and Khohuwa (removing the offerings tied to the deity).

During Baah Kata, the priest first seeks permission from the sacred bamboo grove before cutting a selected bamboo. Great care is taken so that the bamboo does not touch the ground, as it is considered the dwelling place of the deity. The Aag Dhora supports the upper part while the Gur Dhora steadies the lower section. Once brought to the village temple courtyard, the bamboo is trimmed, eeled, and ceremonially decorated with white cloth, a crown, gamusa or muksa (Traditional Towel), and ritual ornaments. It is then carried around the temple in three, five, or seven circles before being placed there for worship. The second phase, Xori Furua, begins the next day when the sacred bamboo is taken to each household associated with the temple. Families



Making of Baah Goxain (Source: Self)

welcome Baah Goxain with offerings such as flowers, betel nut, lamps, and other items of devotion. Prayers are offered, blessings are sought, and the host family provides food and water to all participants. This continues for the first six days of Bohag, strengthening kinship ties and collective participation. The final stage, Khohuwa, takes place on the seventh day. During this phase, all offerings tied to the sacred bamboo are carefully removed and preserved in temple boxes. The bamboo is then usually placed on the roof of the village temple. In some areas, especially around Tamulpur, the old bamboo is replaced with a new one and immersed in a nearby stream or water body. Community elders explain that this act symbolises the return of divine power to nature, where flowing water carries the sacred energy back to the cosmic realm.

An important transformation can be observed in the movement of the ritual from a village-centred practice to a state-level celebration. This shift has expanded the social and symbolic meaning of the festival, turning it into a platform for community solidarity, cultural revival, and identity assertion. Alongside religious rites, the festival now includes discussions on cultural values, traditional performances, rituals, and various public events. The festival space is richly decorated with sacred bamboo symbols, traditional attire, flags, souvenirs, and replicas of indigenous artefacts, all of which communicate collective memory and cultural pride. Thus, Baah Goxain Utsav is not merely a ritual of worship but a profound expression of the Sarania Kacharis' worldview, where bamboo, nature, community, and divinity remain deeply interconnected.



Devotees Performing the Ritual in the village (Self)

## Danda Nacha: A Sacred Tradition of Devotion and Discipline



by Subham Sahoo

Danda Nacha also known as Danda Nata, is one of the most vibrant and spiritually intense folk traditions of Odisha. Rooted deeply in the cultural and religious fabric of the region, this ritualistic performance is a unique blend of devotion, penance, theater, dance and community participation. The word “Danda” literally means “penance” or “self-discipline,” and “Nacha” refers to dance or performance. Together, Danda Nacha signifies a disciplined ritual performance undertaken as an act of devotion and spiritual cleansing. The festival stands out for its strict rules, fearless acts of devotion, and the strong sense of brotherhood it creates among its participants.

### When it happens and who can participate?

Danda Nacha takes place during Chaitra Masa, which falls between March and April. It begins on Meena Sankranti and continues until Vishuba Pana Sankranti. The festival usually lasts 13 days, though in some areas it extends to 17 or even 21 days. Only male members aged 15 and above are allowed to take part. The participants are called as Danduas, and there is no fixed limit on how many can join. The group is led by a chief performer called as the Pata Dandua, who is usually an elderly and experienced man, and he plays a central role in guiding the rituals and performances.

### Entering the ritual: Rules and Regulations

Before the festival begins, the Danduas build a temporary shelter called the Kamana Ghara, mostly made of bamboo and located outside the village at a quiet place. This becomes their home for the entire duration of the festival. Once they enter this life, the rules are strict and must be followed without exception. During this time, they adhere to strict rules of celibacy, fasting, and physical endurance. The Danduas are not allowed to return to their own homes. They cannot eat onion, garlic, or any non-vegetarian food. Food cooked at home or by anyone outside the group is strictly forbidden. They eat only once a day, in the evening, outside the Kamana Ghara. They cook their own meals using a limited set of ingredients such as sweet potato, raw jackfruit, and raw banana, etc. with no turmeric or spices added. They are also not permitted to touch anyone outside their group.

The festival officially begins on Meena Sankranti with a holy bath in a pond, known as pani toliba. The Danduas then wear a sacred thread called brata around their trunk and arm, and from that point, they always carry a sacred stick known as the danda badi. On this same night, at midnight, one of the Danduas goes blindfolded to a designated soil pit and carefully removes the main deity, Lord Banambara Mahadev (a form of Lord Shiva), who has been hidden there throughout the year. The idol is then brought to the Kamana Ghara for worship.



Figure. Performance during procession.

### The daily procession

Every day during the festival, the Danduas walk through the village between 2 and 3 in the afternoon, during the hottest part of the day. They carry musical instruments and torches called massal or danda muthi. As they move from village to village, they perform traditional dances, chant prayers, and carry out fearless acts involving fire and spikes. After the procession, they take an evening bath and then have their one meal of the day, eaten quietly away from the village.

### Mearu Masanta: The second last day

The second last day, known as Mearu Masanta, is filled with prayer and preparation. The Danduas spend the entire day reciting prayers and setting up fire pits for the rituals of the final day. The night is spent without sleep, as the group performs a folk dance called Chadheiya-Chadhauni.

A highlight of this night is a special event called Handola, performed in front of the Kamana Ghara. In this act, one Dandua is hung upside down above a fire altar. Two other



Figure. Handola

participants, one in front and one behind, swing him rapidly over the fire seven to eleven times. It is believed that if a Dandua receives any burn during the Handola, it is a sign that he has broken one of the rules of the festival.

### **The final day: Vishuba Pana Sankranti**

The final day is the most important and dramatic of all. In many villages, a fair called Danda Jatra is organized to mark the occasion. Burning charcoal is spread inside long pits, which range anywhere from 14 to 80 feet in length, and small square pits filled with water are placed nearby. After sacrifices are made at the fire altar, the Pata Dandua leads the way by walking barefoot across the burning charcoal while carrying the deity. All other Danduas follow behind him. Other activities performed are lying on beds of thorns, puncturing the skin with metal hooks and perform strenuous physical feats to demonstrate their devotion and endurance. These acts are believed to purify the body and soul, as well as to invoke divine blessings for the community. Performers often paint their bodies and wear elaborate headgear, masks, and ornaments to portray different characters. The use of

vibrant colors and symbolic designs adds to the dramatic effect, making the performances both captivating and meaningful. After the fire-walking ritual is complete, Lord Banambara is once again placed back into the same soil pit where he rests throughout the year (in some regions this ritual is completed on the night of Mearu Masanta). This is followed by a purification bath called Sudha Ghara and a communal feast. Once these final rituals are done, every participant is free to return home, marking the official end of Danda Nacha.

### **Significance**

Danda Nacha also serves as a medium for preserving oral traditions and indigenous knowledge. Through songs, dialogues, and enactments, stories are passed down from one generation to the next. These narratives often include moral lessons, historical references, and reflections on social values. In this way, the festival functions as both a religious observance and a cultural archive.

*Note: The rituals may slightly vary from region to region.*



Danduas walking on burning charcoal pit.

## The Courtesan and the Colonial Gaze: An Anthropological Review of Umrao Jaan (1981) : Film Review



By Dr. Doraboina Udaya Kumar

The author, Dr. Doraboina Udaya Kumar, is associated with the Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteers Department in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. My initial encounter with the film "Pakheeza" left a profound impact on me, prompting a conversation with my colleague, Dr. Madhavi. She recommended that I watch "Umrao Jaan." Consequently, I viewed the film on my mobile device via YouTube. Directed by Muzaffar Ali in 1981, the film stars Rekha in the lead role. It is a poignant period drama adapted from the 1905 Urdu novel "Umrao Jaan Ada" by Mirza Hadi Ruswa. At first, I felt a sense of melancholy as the narrative depicted a teenage girl living happily with her parents and innocently playing with her younger brother. The story unfolds the tragic life of a young girl named Ameeran (Rekha), who is kidnapped from Faizabad by Dilwar Khan was sold as revenge for her father's testimony against him in the 1840s and was sold to a brothel (Kotha) in Lucknow. She is sold to the Kotha of Madame Khanum Jaan in Lucknow, and renamed Umrao Jaan, where she is trained in dance, music, and poetry. The film begins with the onset of puberty, as the mother joyfully prepares the teenage girl for her puberty ritual with relatives and friends. However, she is alone, and the mirror symbolizes the unchangeable reality of her life as a prostitute.

Umrao is portrayed as an extraordinary person who falls deeply in love with Nawab Sultan Khan. However, due to differences in social status, Nawab's family refuses to accept a courtesan as their daughter-in-law, putting a strain on their relationship. As a result, he leaves her to marry the woman chosen by his family, leaving Umrao heartbroken. Life as a Courtesan: Throughout her life, Umrao is shown as a poetess who finds comfort in her artistic endeavors. Several men, including the bandit, pursue her Faiz Ali; she briefly runs away with him, but the police eventually kill him. Return to the Past: In an unforeseen twist, Umrao realizes that the wealthy Begum she meets in Kanpur is actually Ram Dai, the girl who was kidnapped years ago from beside her. Tragic Ending: Despite her fame, Umrao remains trapped by her circumstances and is forced to return to Kotha. The story explores themes of love, loss, and the loss of innocence within the sophisticated yet exploited environment of 19th-century Lucknow.

### The Kotha as a Matriarchal Miniature

From an anthropological perspective, the *Kotha* was a

unique social unit that functioned as a matriarchal miniature. Unlike the patriarchal domestic spaces of the 19th century, the Kotha was an independent economic unit. Women like Khanum Jaan held property, earned substantial incomes, and managed their own affairs, often possessing more financial power than male noblemen. Ameeran's transition into this world marks a "Rite of Passage". Her rebranding as Umrao Jaan signifies her transformation from a biological kin member into a cultural commodity and professional artist. This transition is formalized through rituals such as the Nath Utari (ring removal), which signifies a young girl's entry into the Kotha's sexual and artistic economy.

### The Tawaif Oxymoron:

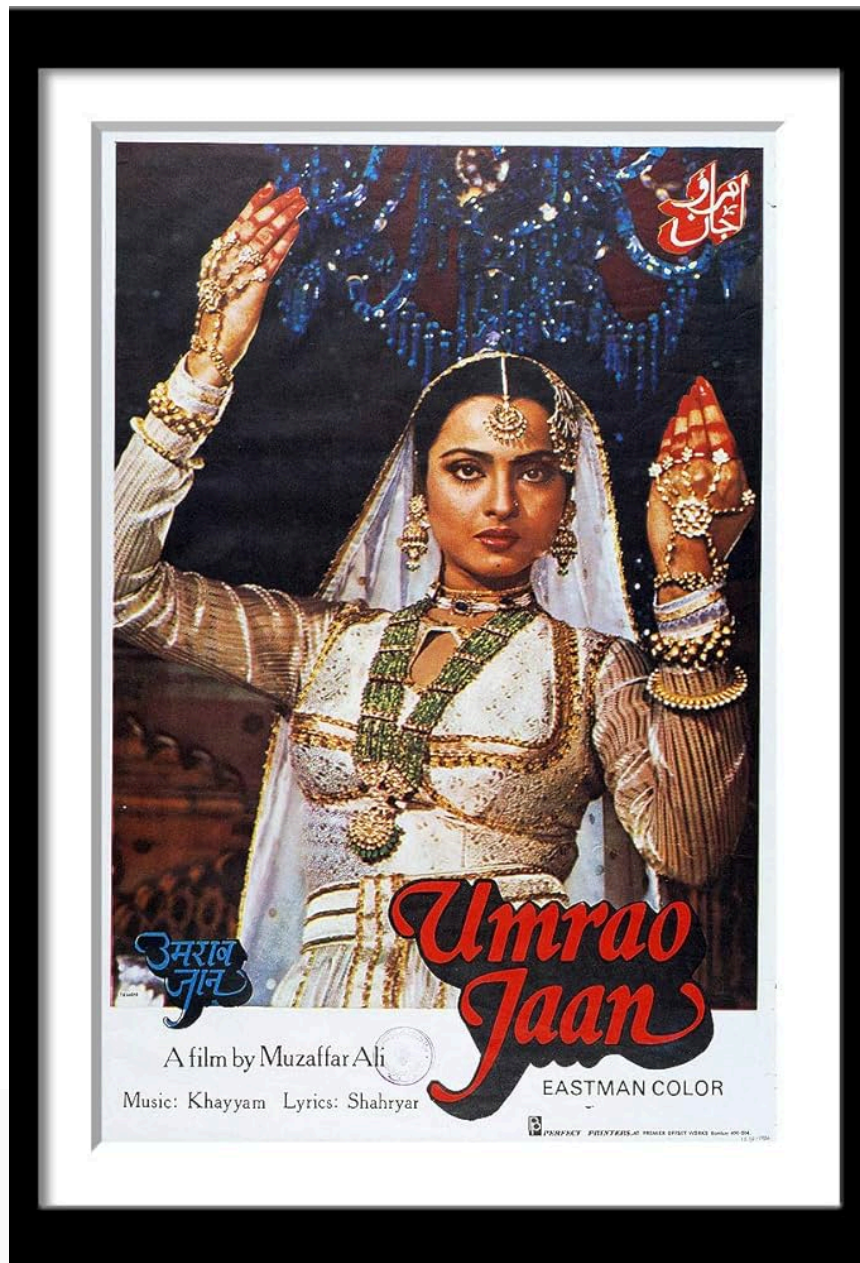
The *Tawaif* (Courtesan) occupied a "Liminal" space existing on the edges of respectable society yet serving as its cultural centre. They were the most educated women of their time, trained in 72 skills including poetry, music, and *Adab* (Etiquette). The film depicts *Riyaz* (Daily Practice) as a spiritual discipline where Kathak and classical music are taught, framing the *Tawaif* as a "guardian of the arts". The *Mehfil* (Gathering) was a space governed by strict *Adab*. Every gesture and recitation were a ritualized performance of social status and mutual respect. Despite their refinement, *Tawaifs* were excluded from traditional kinship systems. Umrao's return to Faizabad illustrates the failure of biological kinship to reintegrate "the tumbled". While her mother accepts her, her brother rejects her to enforce a community "Integrity" system, viewing her profession as a Social Contagion.

### Material Culture and Resistance:

The film's material culture acts as "cultural fossils," preserving *Awadhi* traditions before their colonial decline.

### Textiles and Attire:

Umrao is often seen in *Farshi Ghararas* (wide-legged, floor-sweeping trousers) made of Banarasi Tanchoi silks and Kashmiri Jamewars, signifying her wealth and independence. Men like Nawab Sultan wear *Angarkhas* and Pashmina shawls, draped to represent *Lakhnaviyat* (Lucknow's unique refinement). As Umrao's fortunes fade, her attire shifts to faded muslins, using textiles to reflect her emotional dislocation.



### Jewellery as Security:

The Pasa (side-head ornament) and Kundan jewellery were more than decorative; they functioned as the Tawaif's personal mobile assets. These investments provided financial security outside of traditional marriage. Director Muzaffar Ali used actual ancestral textiles to ensure authenticity, presenting this materiality as a form of resistance against the British "colonial gaze".

### The Sonic Archive: Music as History

The film's soundtrack serves as a "Sonic Archive," where *Ghazals* track Umrao's descent from a celebrated artist to a displaced wanderer:

1. "Dil Cheez Kya Hai": Represents the height of her agency and the *Lakhnawi* culture of patronage.
2. "In Aankhon Ki Masti Ke": Captures the ritualized flirtation and social codes that existed before Victorian morality labelled them "depraved".
3. "Yeh Kya Jagah Hai Dosto": Performed upon her return to a ruined Lucknow, documenting the physical and social erasures of her life.

The use of *Thumri* further emphasizes the "masculine" voice of Indian classical music, allowing the *Tawaif* to share her experiences through the "Soulful Cry" of the artist.

### Colonial Rupture and the Decline of Awadh:

The 1857 Sepoy Mutiny functioned as a "Total Social Estrangement," dismantling the ecosystem that sustained Tawaif culture. The British demolished large sections of Lucknow to create wide roads for surveillance, physically erasing the history of Umrao's habitation. The British introduced European Victorian morality, which could not reconcile a sexually active woman as a respected cultural figure. Through the Contagious Diseases Act, Tawaifs were reclassified as "prostitutes" and subjected to forced medical examinations.

### Conclusion: The Mirror of Identity

The film's final scene, in which Umrao looks into a mirror, symbolizes her realization that in a society governed by rigid kinship and colonial shame, her only true "home" is her artistic identity. Rekha's performance captures the tragedy of a woman who is no longer a "poetess of the court" but a social pariah. *Umrao Jaan* remains a vital anthropological lens, documenting a lost world where Hindu and Muslim cultures blended through the arts before being replaced by a rigid colonial order.

Prof. P. K. Misra



*Interview by Saba Farhin*

Professor P. K. Misra is a distinguished retired anthropologist based in Mysuru, India, widely recognized for his extensive contributions to the study of nomadic tribes, tribal development, and rural life. With a career spanning several decades, he served for over 25 years at the Anthropological Survey of India, where he played a significant role in advancing research on India’s diverse cultural and social landscapes. He later held the position of Professor at North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) and was also honoured as an ICSSR National Fellow.

Professor Misra’s scholarly work has been particularly influential in the field of nomadic and semi-nomadic communities. His in-depth studies on groups such as the Gadulia Lohar of Rajasthan highlight issues of mobility, adaptation, and socio-economic challenges faced by these communities in a rapidly changing world. His research reflects a strong commitment to understanding marginalized populations through a bio-cultural and applied anthropological lens. He is the author of several important works, including *The Nomadic Gadulia Lohar of Eastern Rajasthan*, *My Anthropological Journeys*, *Bio-cultural Development of Scheduled Tribes: Policies and Issues* and *Tribal Heritage: An Overlooked Chapter of Indian History*, which contribute significantly to discussions on tribal policy, identity, and heritage in India. His engagement with rural and action anthropology further underscores his dedication to linking academic research with real-world development concerns. In addition to his research and publications, Professor Misra has served as a Visiting Professor at the University of Mysore and other institutions in India and abroad. His work continues to inspire scholars interested in tribal studies, development, and applied anthropology.

**What inspired your journey into anthropology, and how has your academic and field experience shaped your perspective over the years?**

It was my elder brother, who inspired me to study anthropology at Lucknow University. Once I stepped into the field, there was no looking back. During my time as a MA anthropology student, a fieldwork trip among the Asur in Ranchi left a deep impression on me; it was there that my commitment to anthropology truly took shape. After completing my degree, I joined the Anthropological Survey of India in 1958. I was fortunate to be mentored by Professor N.K. Bose and later Dr. Surjit Sinha, who had just returned from the

USA after doing his PhD. Under their guidance, I learned what fieldwork really meant not just as a method, but as a way of understanding people and life. Soon after joining, I became part of the All India Material Trade Survey led by Professor Bose. This took me to the villages of the 8 districts of then Vidh-  
-arbha division of Maharashtra and then to the 26 districts of Rajasthan, where I visited at least two villages in each district. It was tough, moving from one village to another, meeting strangers, and trying to explain my work to people who often couldn’t understand what a “Material Trade Survey” was. To them, anthropology seemed to revolve around everyday things like pottery, bullock carts, or baskets which they found to be strange and at the same time gave them a sense of pride that somebody has come all the way to understand from them about ordinary things which they create. But this experience was invaluable. It trained me to observe carefully, adapt to different situations, and build trust with people. Over time, I became confident and skilled in conducting fieldwork, and this phase played a crucial role in shaping my training.



Years later, I wrote a theoretical paper titled “On Comparative Method” published in the *Journal of the Anthropological Survey of India* Volume 72:1 2023. In it, I addressed the complexities and challenges involved in comparison and generalization, the issues we often take for granted but are deeply problematic. I would encourage your audience to read this paper, not simply because it is written by me, but because it engages with the complexities of comparison and the challenges involved in arriving at generalizations. We tend to generalize quite readily, but there are serious theoretical issues underlying this process that deserve careful attention. After the Material Trade Survey, I undertook another demanding fieldwork among nomadic blacksmiths. I chose them not only because Prof. Bose suggested the topic but also because of the challenge involved in studying them. They were constantly on the move in search of work. Following them meant dealing with uncertainties like where to stay, how to manage basic needs of life, how to keep up with their pace of life etc.. It truly tested my limits. Yet,

beyond their identity as artisans, I discovered their deep curiosity about life. They would invite gurus to discuss questions of life, afterlife, jiva, and atma. Living in temporary shelters or bullock carts, facing rain and storms, and yet continuing their journeys with resilience; it was an experience that stayed with me. My next fieldwork, among food-gathering populations, brought a different kind of challenge. They were not very communicative, often responding with “gottilla” meaning “don’t know” in Kannada. It was frustrating at first, but it forced me to rely on observation rather than questioning. That experience taught me an important lesson: sometimes, silence can be more revealing than words in anthropology.

Another significant lesson came through my wife, Rajalakshmi, during her fieldwork among the Mullu Kurumba in Tamilnadu. I visited her village to supervise her work. I realized how much more effective fieldwork could be when conducted by a male-female team. There were clear limitations to my access to women folk whether it was in Rajasthan or Karnataka. In none of these places I could easily interact with womenfolk. Rajalakshmi, however, could connect with men, young girls, elderly women, and children with ease. They opened up to her, sharing intimate aspects of their lives, including their experiences of childbirth and she even helped in three deliveries. This showed me how gender plays a crucial role in shaping access and understanding in the field.

A further insight came through my student and friend Anandbhanu, who worked among the Cholanaikan of Kerala, the cave-dwellers. From their way of life, I learned three profound values: sharing of resources within the group, conservation of resources, and egalitarianism even with children, where nothing is imposed and learning happens through experience.

Earlier, especially under colonial anthropology, such practices were often dismissed as mere survival strategies. But they are much more than that. Values like sharing, conservation, and egalitarianism are not only vital for food gatherers but they hold relevance for all of humanity. In fact, when a lot of interest is being shown on Indian Knowledge Systems, these values deserve to be seen as broader societal, even national ideals. Rather than labeling such communities as “savages,” as was done in the past, we must recognize their deeply human ways of thinking. Their ideas carry insights that are valuable for the entire world. In a time when accumulation often takes precedence over sharing, and environmental degradation is a growing concern, these principles offer lessons we cannot afford to ignore.

**Among your extensive work on nomadic tribes, tribal development, and rural life, which contributions do you consider most impactful, and why?**

You see, as I mentioned in my last answer, development is really a double-edged weapon. On one hand, we certainly need it; there’s no denying that development improves people’s living conditions. But at the same time, there is another side we often overlook. These days, the idea of “sustainable development” is widely discussed, and while it is a good concept, in practice, it is not so simple. Once you build something like a road, you cannot fully control what follows, as traffic increases, movement expands, and new challenges emerge. I remember a group of students from Sikkim who were very eager for rapid development in their region. Sikkim, at that time, had not developed extensively, and they saw development as an urgent need. But I kept telling them that development is not a one-way road. The moment you introduce roads, transport, and infrastructure, it opens the doors for an influx of people. With that comes tourism, which is often seen as a beneficial industry but it brings its own set of consequences.

I have personally witnessed this in the Nilgiris region, where I have worked for many years. Over time, there has been increasing pollution, large-scale cutting of trees, and unplanned construction of various types of houses aimed at attracting tourists. The landscape and way of life begin to change rapidly. These are important concerns. The real challenge lies in understanding how to manage and regulate development; how to control its negative impacts; without disrupting the lives of the people who live there.

**How do you envision the future of anthropology in India, particularly in areas like tribal studies and applied anthropology, in addressing contemporary social and developmental challenges?**

If you ask me about the future of anthropology in India, I would say that it holds tremendous scope, provided we remain alert and attentive to the realities around us. This understanding did not come to me all at once; it grew over years of being closely associated with tribal development. In that journey, I often think of B.D. Sharma. He was not just an administrator but someone deeply involved in shaping tribal development in India. Before retiring as Commissioner for Scheduled Tribes, he had served as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, where he played a key role in designing many of the strategies we still talk about today like sub-plan approaches, development frameworks, and so on. In many ways, he was behind a large number of initiatives meant for tribal communities across the country. But what is striking is what happened after his retirement. When he stepped out of the system and began to see things as an ordinary citizen, he realized something unsettling; that many of the very plans he had helped design were not working effectively on the ground. It was a turning point for him. He understood that while it is possible

to design an ideal plan on paper, its implementation is far more complicated. Once such plans reach at ground level, so many interests and variables begin to pla besides ypersonal interests, and their original purpose often gets diluted or lost. This realization affected him deeply. He grew frustrated, even turning towards activism and taking a more extreme stance. While I may not agree with the path he chose, his life offers an important lesson. It reminds us that development is not just about planning; it is about what actually happens when those plans meet reality. And at the heart of this issue lies a deeper question of values. As Gandhiji once said, nature provides enough for everyone's needs, but not for everyone's greed. If development becomes a means for individuals to satisfy their greed, then no plan, however well-designed, can truly succeed. The real challenge, therefore, is how to safeguard against this; how to strike a balance, how to ensure that development serves people rather than distorting their lives. These are not questions we can afford to ignore. People must remain aware, engaged, and willing to question. If there is one message I would like to leave for those working in tribal development, it is this: designing a plan is only the beginning. One must also think carefully about its consequences; because that is where the real story of development unfolds.

**What advice would you offer to young scholars and aspiring anthropologists who wish to pursue meaningful and socially relevant research?**

If there is one lesson I have learned over the years, it is this: you cannot become a true anthropologist without stepping into the field. Books can guide you, theories can shape your thinking, but real understanding begins only when you start learning directly from people. And when you enter the field, the most important thing is the attitude you carry with you. You cannot go as a guru but you must go as a learner. After all, you are there to learn from others, from their lives and experiences. That requires humility. It means willing to live as they live, to see the world from their perspective. In fact, I would say quite strongly that if one does not have this humility, one should reconsider getting into the field of anthropology altogether. This discipline does not reward arrogance; it asks you to set aside the idea that you are more educated or come from a more "civilized" background. I remember one incident from my time with the Jenu Kuruba. We were sitting on a rock, and they were explaining how they trap elephants. Looking at them; small in stature, lean and wiry; I could not help but wonder how they managed such a task. I asked them, almost incredulously, how they could chase an elephant when it could overpower them so easily. One of them immediately stood up, jumped down from the rock, and said, "To capture and train an elephant, you need buddhi, not shakti." Not strength, but intelligence. That one

sentence carried a depth of understanding that no textbook could offer. Another moment has stayed with me just as vividly. There was a man known for his skill in trapping birds and shooting arrows. One day, his two young children were trying to set a bird trap. They kept failing, trying again and again for hours, while he and I simply watched. Finally, I asked him why he did not step in and show them how it was done. He replied calmly that they must learn from their own experience. Then he gave me an example: domesticated chickens, if left in the forest, would not survive even ten minutes, but wild birds thrive because they learn through experience. His message was simple yet profound; real learning cannot be imposed; it must be lived.

Moments like these remind us that anthropology is not an easy subject. Unlike history, where you study people of the past, or biology, where you study other forms of life, anthropology asks you to study fellow human beings; people who, like you, have values, emotions, and ways of understanding the world. This makes it a deeply delicate and challenging discipline.

The real difficulty lies in managing your own values while trying to understand others. You cannot simply admire or judge as you must learn to see people as equals, as part of the same human experience. And this kind of understanding does not come from reading alone. It comes from being there, from observing, from listening, and from allowing yourself to learn, slowly and humbly, from the field itself.

Before I close and if you permit me as an illustration to my talk I would like to add a study that was conducted by Dr. Sinha among the Bhumij in Manbhum. In one of his papers on the weekly market in Manbhum he stated that in that market Bhumij interact with 40 other communities and also have ceremonial relationship with some of them. Such markets are found all over India particularly the areas surrounding forest regions.



## Gender, Ritual Space and Purity-Pollution among the Chuktia Bhunjia- A PVTG of Odisha: A Note from the Field



By Manashree Manamukta Naik

### Profile of the Chuktia Bhunjia Tribe of Odisha

The Chuktia Bhunjia are one of the thirteen Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) residing in the state of Odisha. The term Bhunjia literally denotes “one who lives on the soil,” derived from Bhum (earth) and ia (dependent), reflecting their deep ecological and cultural attachment to land. Linguistically, the Chuktia Bhunjia speak a mixed dialect influenced by Baiga and Chhattisgarhi languages. Anthropologically, they are classified under the Proto-Australoid racial stock. Spatially, the community inhabits the forested and hilly terrain of the Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary (SWS) located in Nuapada district of Odisha.

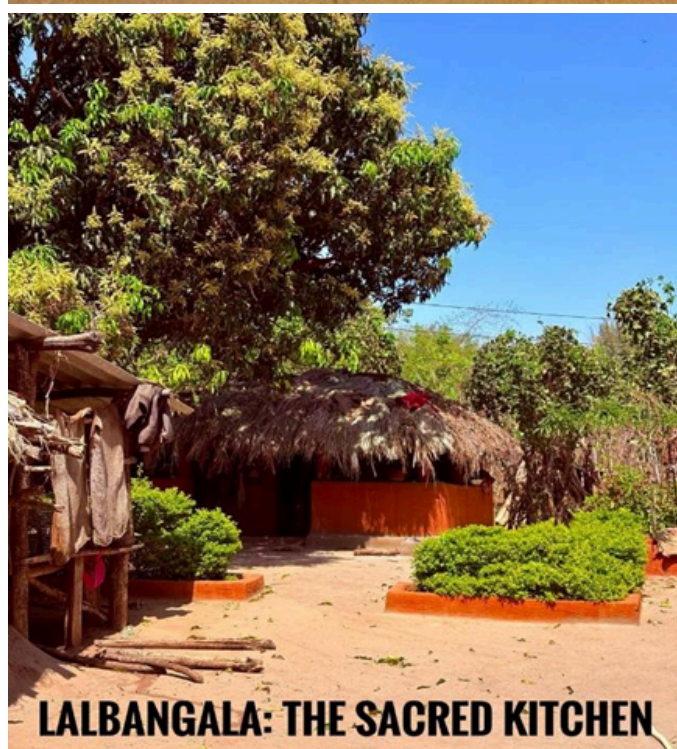
Chuktia Bhunjia settlements are typically located in sylvan hill ranges, and their domestic architecture reflects their socio-cultural beliefs. A traditional Bhunjia household generally consists of three separate huts: the largest serves as a living-cum-store room, the second functions as a cattle shed, and the third, situated in the front, is used as a kitchen (lambangala). The kitchen holds exceptional ritual significance, as it is believed to be the abode of ancestral spirits. Entry into this sacred space is strictly restricted; no unrelated individual, including married daughters of the household, is permitted to enter. Any perceived defilement results in the demolition and ritual burning of the kitchen, followed by the construction of a new one.

### Religious Beliefs and Ritual Practices

The Chuktia Bhunjia practice polytheism, worshipping several gods and goddesses. Their supreme deity is Sunadei, who is enshrined in a temple located in Sunabeda village. The worship of Sunadei is conducted through an elaborate ritual system involving three key ritual functionaries—Pujari, Chhatriya, and Katariya. The community observes several important festivals and ritual gatherings, including Chaitra Jatra, Dasara, Gauthas Jatra, Patalganga Jatra, Sosenga Jatra, and Jamgan Jatra, which play a crucial role in reinforcing social cohesion and religious identity.

### Gendered Restrictions, Purity-Pollution, and Women's Lived Experiences

Within the Chuktia Bhunjia community, women experience multiple restrictions rooted in the cultural ideology of purity and pollution, particularly during physiological phases such as puberty, menstruation, and childbirth. These restrictions are closely associated with



the symbolic understanding of blood and ritual impurity. During her first menarche, a girl is secluded in a separate room for seven days, during which she is prohibited from interacting with male members, including those from her own family. She is not allowed to touch household objects or step outside the house. On the seventh day, purification rituals are performed in the temple, followed by a communal feast involving close relatives. During menstruation, women typically use reusable cotton cloths after washing them thoroughly. They are strictly forbidden from entering the *lalbhangala* (sacred kitchen) during this period. Even after marriage, women—particularly married daughters—are prohibited from entering the kitchen, as any violation is believed to defile the sacred space, necessitating its destruction and reconstruction. Women are also barred from entering the *Sunadei* temple, reinforcing their ritual exclusion from central religious spaces. Based on personal interviews, it was observed that women often feel hesitant and uncomfortable discussing topics related to menstruation, menopause, and contraception, indicating limited reproductive health awareness and communication.

### **Mobility, Food Restrictions, and Maternal Practices**

Gender-based restrictions extend beyond ritual spaces to mobility and consumption practices. When community members travel outside the village, men are permitted to eat and drink freely, whereas women are prohibited from consuming food or water outside the village boundaries—even during government meetings or welfare camps where food is provided. Women often refrain from drinking water due to restrictions on using toilets outside the village. Dietary taboos are also gender-specific, women in this community do not consume chicken or eggs.

During pregnancy, mothers avoid foods such as ripe papaya, milk, and *lalbhang* (*Amaranthus* leaves), as these are believed to be harmful. Instead, they are encouraged to consume fruits, green leafy vegetables, and *kolatha dali* (horse gram), which is culturally regarded as beneficial for maternal health and effective in enhancing breast milk production. These practices reflect indigenous knowledge systems but also reveal nutritional limitations shaped by cultural norms.



Chuktia Bhunjia women in their costume

## The 10 Rupee Lifeline



*By Kazi Roson Mustafa Hasan*

In West Bengal, local trains are far more than transportation—they are the pulsing arteries of urban life, weaving together the fabric of Bengali existence. In West Bengal, local trains are one of the best modes of transport to go from one place to another. It is something people know is always there for them as if someone will always wait for people to come aboard and travel long or short. As urban anthropologists Rivke Jaffe and Anouk de Koning observe in their exploration of urban spaces, these everyday mobilities create profound social geographies where the mundane becomes meaningful. The paradox of comfort and struggle defines every journey—while trains promise connectivity, passengers wage daily battles for a single seat, enduring delayed arrivals and overcrowded compartments that alternate between suffocating density and hollow emptiness. Advertisement-laden bogies become mobile marketplaces where hawkers peddle everything from steaming tea to notebooks, transforming utilitarian spaces into vibrant social theatres. Here, the clerk, the student, the labourer and the housewife share the same metal benches, their diverse trajectories momentarily aligned by the rhythm of wheels on tracks. Travelling from Uluberia to Howrah Junction documented this and came to a realisation that in West Bengal, the local trains don't just take you places—they make you part of something larger, older and more enduring than any individual journey. They make you Bengali, one station at a time.

Bathed in the golden clarity of a sunny morning, local trains stand still—momentarily pausing the relentless flow of human transit. The empty stretch of platform contrasts with the rush that will soon follow. Anthropologically, this scene embodies the temporality of urban life—how public spaces like stations shape routines, pauses and aspirations. The bloodline of West Bengal pulses not just with movement but with these intervals of stillness, anticipation and everyday negotiation.



Wrapped in vibrant advertisements and layered aspirations, this local train stands still—its body buzzing with the silent impatience of packed passengers waiting to move. The train becomes a canvas of capitalism and mobility, caught between stillness and speed. As urban anthropologist Anouk de Koning reminds us, “Urban infrastructures shape how people inhabit cities, and how they imagine their futures.” Here, the wait is not just for a train, but for a better tomorrow in motion.

In the lifeline of West Bengal—the local train—time bends, but survival doesn't wait. Commuters cling to every inch of space, driven by necessity and routine.

This daily struggle embodies the anthropological theme of urban precarity, where informal adaptations to unreliable infrastructure reveal the resilience of working-class life amid structural neglect and socio-economic pressures.



In the morning rush between 8 to 11 a.m., the local train transforms into a moving mosaic of professions—teachers, labourers, office-goers—all packed together in a shared urgency. This image reflects the anthropology of everyday mobility, where class lines blur temporarily, and collective endurance defines urban life. The local train is more than transport—it's a lifeline that carries dreams, fatigue, and the rhythm of West Bengal's working population through the heart of the city. An unusual moment of stillness—an empty local train

compartment stands quietly at the station, perhaps moments after the rush has dissolved into the platform. This fleeting emptiness offers a pause in the pulse of Bengal's lifeline. Anthropologically, it reflects the cyclical rhythm of urban life where spaces transform from crowded arenas of survival to transient voids, revealing how public infrastructure and human presence co-produce everyday realities of movement, labour and urban belonging.



At the sprawling chaos of Howrah Junction, an elderly man waits patiently, eyes scanning for his local amidst the rush of converging express trains. His stillness contrasts with the urgency around him. This moment encapsulates the layered temporality of urban transit. Anthropologically, it highlights mobility inequality—where age, infrastructure and class intersect—revealing how the very veins of West Bengal's lifeline often marginalize those who depend on them the most for daily survival.





Wrapped in dhotis and quiet familiarity, elderly passengers gaze out of the open doors of a moving local train—West Bengal's lifeline in motion. This image captures not just a journey but a ritual of everyday life. Anthropologically, it speaks to generational continuity, the embodied rhythms of commuting and how these moving spaces foster a shared sociality—blending tradition, mobility and a deeply rooted sense of belonging to the city and its pulse. Amid the rhythmic clatter of West Bengal's local trains, two hawkers share a quiet exchange—an interlude in their everyday hustle. Their buckets brim with snacks and essentials, not just goods but lifelines of survival. This scene depicts the anthropology of informal economies where mobility, resilience and human connection weave a complex social fabric within the compartments of daily commute—a microcosm of urban life sustained on wheels.

They tell us to have a "comfortable journey", but reality tells another tale. In West Bengal's lifeline—the local trains—comfort is a myth for most. A three-seater bench barely fits three, yet even an inch of visible space invites a forceful push. For working women denied entry into packed ladies' coaches, the general compartment becomes a daily battlefield. Anthropologically, this space reflects survival, contested urban belonging and the silent endurance of the working class in motion.



Under the dim lights of a moving local train, a hawker rests—barefoot, weary and silent—maybe his day's earnings bundled beside him. This moment speaks volumes about urban survival and informal labour. From an anthropological lens, it captures the lived realities of precarity and endurance where trains become not just transit spaces but shelters, workplaces and resting grounds for those navigating the margins of West Bengal's bustling everyday economy.

## Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives



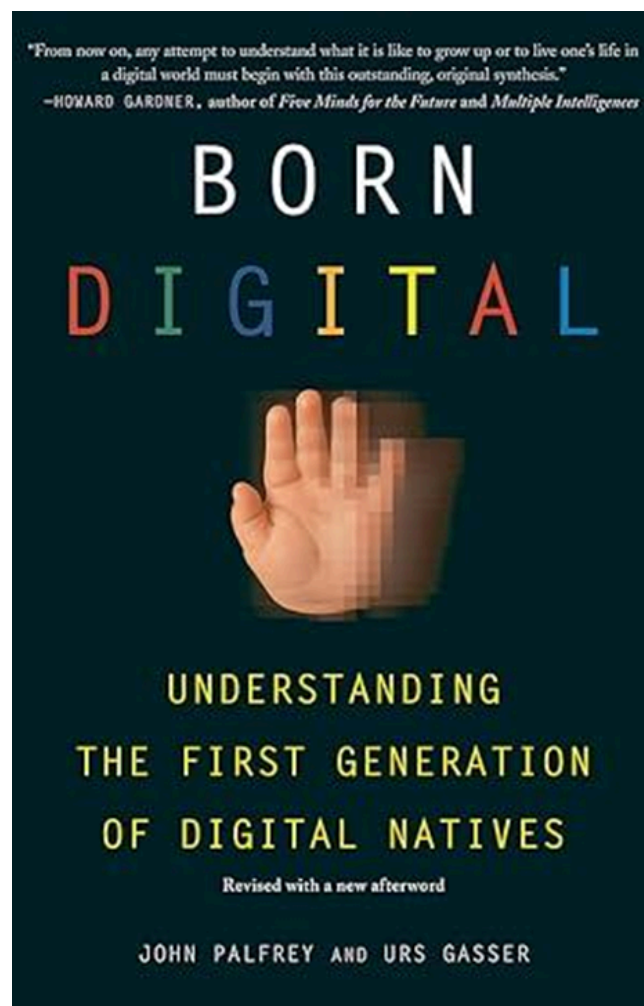
By Habiba Haroon

Palfrey, J., & Gasser, U. (2008). *Born digital: Understanding the first generation of digital natives*. Basic Books.

“Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives” by John Palfrey and Urs Gasser examines the first generation that has grown up with networked technology from birth, whom the authors referred to as “digital natives.” They explain how life online shapes this generation’s identity, relationships, learning, work and citizenship as well as the risks and opportunities that come with constant connectivity. Organized into 13 chapters (including Identities, Dossiers, Privacy, Safety, Creators, Pirates, Quality, Overload, Aggressors, Innovators, Learners, Activists and Synthesis), the book serves as a useful guide for parents, educators, policymakers, and young people who want to understand the digital present and shape the digital future.

One of the major strengths of this book is its interdisciplinary approach. Palfrey and Gasser draw on law, sociology, media studies, psychology and education to connect everyday digital practices to larger structural issues. They show how ordinary digital activities such as posting photos, sharing content, downloading media, etc., are linked to broader debates around copyright reform, privacy regulation and democratic participation. For the authors, digital technologies open up new possibilities for creativity, collaboration, and participation, but they also introduce serious challenges related to privacy threats, safety risks, information overload and growing inequality in access and skills. The opening chapter introduces key concepts and explains how digital natives differ from previous generations, referred to as “digital immigrants”. Digital natives are described as those who have never known a world without networked technologies and for whom being online is not a separate activity but an integral part of everyday life. This helps readers understand why traditional assumptions about learning, socializing and political engagement no longer hold. For example, digital natives are comfortable managing multiple online identities, moving across platforms and accessing information on demand. But this behaviour can appear fragmented or superficial to older generations.

The central themes of the book show that growing up with the Internet shapes culture, society and politics around it. Palfrey and Gasser explain how digital natives seamlessly blend online and offline worlds in their identity, relationships, and learning, and how constant connectivity alters notions of friendship, privacy, and participation.



Privacy is an important issue raised in the book as digital tools allow young people to produce and share content on a scale that was previously impossible, but the traces they leave behind in the form of photos, comments, posts, and search histories raise urgent questions about control, surveillance and long-term consequences. The authors show how these digital footprints can affect the futures of young people in ways they might not fully understand at the time of sharing. They also emphasize that they will reshape opportunities in economic, education, work and social life.

The book is engaging and written in a clear, non-technical way that makes complex issues understandable to a general audience. The authors rely on interviews, case studies, real-world examples and their own observations to make their points. When it was published in 2008, the book was ahead

of its time in treating the internet as the basic environment of a new generation, and not just as a novelty. This approach is useful for readers who are not experts in law or technology but want to understand the implications of growing up online. Moreover, the book has some limitations. It often generalizes about digital natives, as if everyone born after a certain date shares similar digital skills, attitudes and habits. The authors do acknowledge variation based on class, place and personality, but their idea of 'digital natives' still assumes that they all are naturally confident and good with technology. This perspective often overlooks those who lack access, struggle with digital skills or experience the

digital world in vulnerable ways. Despite these limitations, the authors offer a balanced account. They argue to avoid naïve technological utopianism but also to resist moral panic that the internet is dangerous for youth. Instead, they present a nuanced account that emphasizes both risks and opportunities. To conclude, this book provides a useful conceptual framework for students and scholars, and offers parents and educators insight into the experiences and expectations of younger generations. It also highlights the need for policymakers to develop laws and norms that protect digital natives while enabling them to thrive in this digital era.

## REFLECTIONS ON ANTHRO BULLETIN

### Reflection on Saumyanjali Mishra's article "Eclipse Etiquettes: Chandra Grahana and the Code of Conduct"



By Nishita

The article titled "Eclipse Etiquettes: Chandra Grahana and the Code of Conduct" by Saumyanjali Mishra from the Anthro Bulletin- September 2025 gives a great description and also, a personal experience on Eclipse Etiquettes, how different norms are followed during the times of an eclipse. The author talks about how eclipses are considered to be impure and are believed to be periods of disturbed cosmic energies and how certain etiquettes such as avoiding cooking, eating and engaging in religious rituals are believed to preserve the sanctity of sacred objects, foods and deities. The article is an interesting read, giving a good insight on how Astronomical events such as eclipses have a behavioural impact on the society.

This column in Anthro Bulletin Reflections explores historical interpretations of eclipses and examines their role in shaping social complexity and patterns of human thought. Total solar eclipses have fascinated and unsettled human societies since ancient times. In early human history, when there was no scientific understanding, a total eclipse of the day must have been terrifying. For hunters and gatherers, such an event would have appeared of a major disruption of the natural order. Due to their rarity in any given region, it was impossible to predict eclipses, reinforcing fear and uncertainty. Over generations, these events were remembered, shared, and gradually incorporated into collective knowledge systems. Without scientific reasoning, different cultures explained eclipses through myths and beliefs. The occurrence of an eclipse was seen as a manifestation of spiritual forces by many cultures. For instance, eclipses have been associated with Rahu, who according to Hindu mythology swallows the sun during an eclipse. Similarly, in the ancient culture of

China, people attributed eclipses to a dragon eating up the sun. Various other explanations were used by cultures to explain eclipses. These include the idea that the sun was swallowed by various animals, including frogs, bears, and dogs. Additionally, cultures have also seen eclipses as events in which the sun engages in either a battle or merger with the moon.

Historical records show that eclipses were among the earliest natural events to be systematically documented. Eclipse observation was carried out by the Chinese in the year 2043 BCE, followed by documentation on other media. Other groups, including the Zapotecs and the ancient Scandinavians, also recorded their observations of eclipses using diverse media, which include inscriptions and rock drawings. Around 500 BCE, more accurate explanations began to emerge, identifying eclipses as the result of the moon passing between the Earth and the sun. Despite this advancement, traditional



Possibly eclipse-inspired, these concentric circles carved into stone C16 of a Neolithic Irish tomb (c. 3000 BCE) have been interpreted as celestial imagery—though their exact meaning remains uncertain. *Courtesy: Frank Prendergast*

beliefs and superstitions persisted alongside scientific reasoning. Over time, however, the development of astronomy allowed humans to predict eclipses with remarkable precision. Scientific expeditions, particularly during the modern era, used eclipses as opportunities to study the sun and test physical theories, further increasing public interest and curiosity about these events. However, apart from their scientific and cultural relevance, solar eclipses might have even served as a trigger for deeper cognitive development. The uniqueness of the solar eclipse stems from its rarity, power, and universal accessibility— unlike other natural disasters, like earthquakes or volcanic eruptions, it does not lead to any physical damage but evokes strong emotions and thoughts. In other words, it is quite reasonable to say that the frequent occurrence of these inexplicable phenomena has promoted the development of a more complicated mode of thought. It is very likely that curiosity about the mysteries of eclipses has stimulated early scientific inquiry, which has led to an improvement of thought. However, in parallel with that, intellectual growth can be seen as a stimulus for social development. Research shows that the cultures experiencing eclipses on a regular basis display higher social complexity, characterized by the presence of more advanced politics, hierarchy, and culture in which the process of making decisions and thinking strategically takes place. From this perspective, a solar eclipse can be viewed as not only an astronomical phenomenon but also as a trigger of human curiosity and intellectual development. These phenomena emphasize a basic human tendency to look for explanations in their natural surroundings, while human curiosity is the very foundation of knowledge creation. Therefore, the study of solar eclipses helps to comprehend how ancient humans evolved from explaining astronomical phenomena through mythology to understanding the

true nature of the world around them through science.



Rahu swallows the Sun, referred to as Rahukalam

By King muh - <https://plus.google.com/109474777847963040390/photos>, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=45786714>

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## APPRECIATION FOR ANTHRO BULLETIN

Superb Sunita, many many congratulations 🌸🌸🌸 Well done team AIF🌟🌟🌟

-Prof Shalina Mehta

Thank you, all seniors n friends, we are trying to put our best efforts, and seek your support. Sunita with two senior and three interns is able to come with monthly edition, congrats to her efforts, then institution like manav sanghralya with a system should do its duty to share with its stakeholders it's works.

-Prof Amitabh Pande

Colourful and very innovatively designed. Very good articles. One on chhena poda is superb. Congratulations Sunitha Madam and best wishes always 🌸🌸

-Dr. Khirod Chandra Moharana

Congratulations Anthro Bulletin..excellent as usual with rich varied information.

-Prof S.B Roy

Hearty congratulations to Professor Pandeyji and Professor Sunita Reddy. Well done. Keep it up.

-Prof PK Misra

Great way to share your good work Drs Sunita Reddy and APandey. Your timely bulletine would many others know about Anthro work. I small sure you would have a long list of people and institutes who receive it through your mailing list. Can I request you to add all institutes of ICMR , Medical college, Medical council, FOGYC, Dental councils, AYUSH, funding agencies like CSIR, DST, DBT, ICSSR, ICAREtc

- Dr Nita Mawar

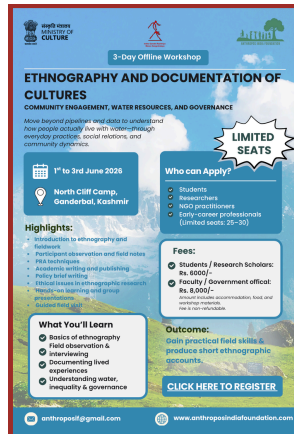


## FORTHCOMING EVENT

- An online lecture will be organised as a part of our Distinguished Guest lecture series. For updates, please follow our website's events page- <https://events.anthroposindiafoundation.com/>

- AIF with IGRMS, Bhopal and CIIL, Mysuru is jointly organizing a **Three-Day Offline Workshop on Ethnography and Documentation of Culture at Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore.**

**Date:** 12-14th April, 2026  
For more details - [Click here](#)  
Registration Link: [Click here](#)

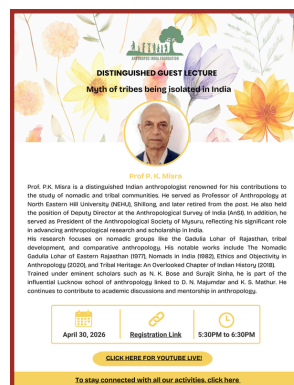


## PAST EVENT

- For our Distinguished Guest lecture series, an online lecture was organised and delivered by **Prof. P.K. Misra** on **30<sup>th</sup> April 2026 at 5:30 pm onwards**

For more details - [Click here](#)

YouTube Live Link: [Click here](#)



- The Three-Day Offline Workshop on **Ethnography and Documentation of Culture** was held from **12-14 April 2026 at the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore**

For more details - [Click here.](#)



- Local Health Traditions in India: Recognition, Legitimate Space and Policy Pathways** Conference held on **22-23 April 2026 at Bharat Ki Soch Foundation, Thapar House, New Delhi.**



## FELLOWSHIPS AND JOB ALERTS

1. Post Doctoral Fellowship in Japan by Matsumae International Foundation.

**Last Date to Apply:** 30.06.26

**Application Link:** [Click here](#)

2. DHR Research Grants & Fellowships 2026-27

**Last Date to Apply:** 30.06.26

**Application Link:** [Click here](#)

3. Grant Applications at Together Women Rise

**Last Date to Apply:** 05.06.26 until 5 p.m. ET

**Application Link:** [Click here](#)

4. Academic Associates - Kautilya School of Public Policy

**Last Date to Apply:** Rolling Basis

**Application Link:** [Click here](#)



We are thrilled to announce the collaboration between Anthropos India Foundation (AIF) and Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) to bring a series of offline workshops on "Ethnography and documentation of culture." We are excited to host the third workshop of this series in Kashmir in June 2026 — with many more to come!

Let's learn, grow, and celebrate anthropology together!

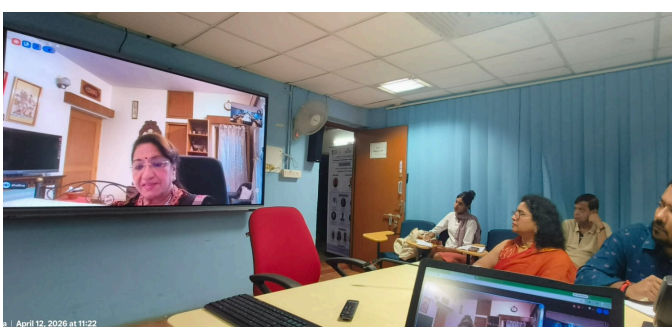
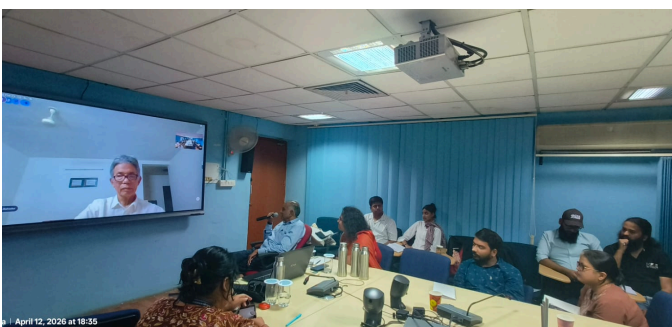


Please feel free to share your write-ups, comments and suggestions with us at [aif.newsletter2025@gmail.com](mailto:aif.newsletter2025@gmail.com).

## PAST EVENT

### Three-Day Offline Workshop on Ethnography and Documentation of Culture

The Three-Day Offline Workshop on Ethnography and Documentation of Culture was held from 12-14 April 2026 at the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore. Jointly organized by **Anthropos India Foundation (AIF)**, **Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS)**, **SRC Mysore**, and **CIIL**, it marked the second workshop in the series focusing on immersive ethnographic research and cultural documentation.



## PAST EVENT

### Local Health Traditions in India: Recognition, Legitimate Space and Policy Pathways Conference

The **Local Health Traditions in India: Recognition, Legitimate Space and Policy Pathways conference** was held on **22-23 April 2026** at **Bharat Ki Soch Foundation, Thapar House, New Delhi**. Jointly organized by **Anthropos India Foundation (AIF)**, **Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS)**, and **Bharat Ki Soch**, the event focused on formulation of a policy document for advancing dialogue around local health traditions & healers along with policy pathways in India.



## ANTHROPOS BOOKS

*A Publishing House of Anthropos India Foundation*

Visit AIF website to learn more about *Anthropos Books*

<https://www.anthroposindiafoundation.com/publications/book-series/anthropos-books.html>

### 'CHILDHOOD MATTERS'

AIF's other magazine which is Participatory, Multilingual, Quarterly and also Digital can be subscribed here: <https://forms.gle/UdvXdHRYAECXKVLP7>

For contributing articles and photographs to the magazine, sharing feedback or ordering print copies, kindly write to us at [aif.newsletter2025@gmail.com](mailto:aif.newsletter2025@gmail.com).



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*for organising workshops, or for contributing articles for our newsletter and digital magazine*
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Become a Life Member of AIF by registering with us for a one-time nominal fee of Rs. 3000/-.

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Life Members receive the monthly **Anthro Bulletin**, in-house research summaries, updates on AIF's courses and events, and notifications about our quarterly magazine **Childhood Matters** (with free access to past issues [here](#) ). They also enjoy **exclusive access to our new e-resource center, featuring articles by eminent anthropologists, and receive special discounts on our paid events.**

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