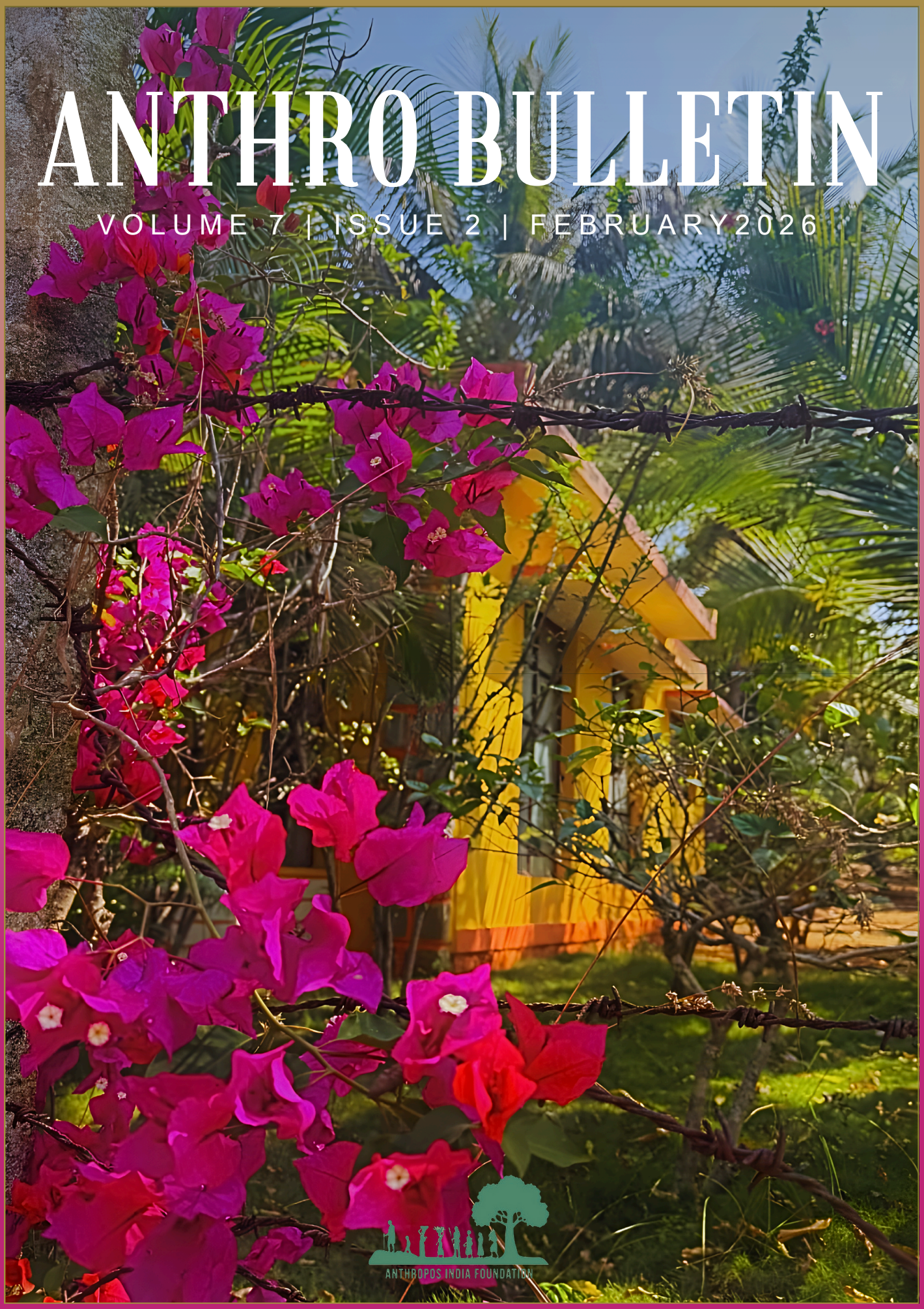
ANTHRO BULLETIN

VOLUME 7 | ISSUE 2 | FEBRUARY2026



ANTHROPOS INDIA FOUNDATION

ANTHROPOS BOOKS

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

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

MANAGING EDITOR
Dr. Sunita Reddy, *Founder-Chair, AIF*

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CONTRIBUTORS: Nibedita Bhoi, Nishita, Àgbède Oláolúwa Babatunde.

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ANTHRO BULLETIN
A Digital Magazine by *Anthropos Books*
Anthropos India Foundation, New Delhi
February, 2026

9818858383
anthroposif@gmail.com
https://anthroposindiafoundation.com

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Anthropology at the Crossroads of Ecology, Health, Faith, and Change

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

The February 2026 issue of Anthro Bulletin, presents a compelling portrait of contemporary anthropology in India, rooted in field realities, attentive to cultural nuance, and responsive to urgent social transformations. Across ecological crises, health transitions, museum practices, spiritual traditions, and borderland ethnography, this issue demonstrates how anthropology remains vital in understanding communities negotiating change.

Ecology, Precarity, and Riverine Resilience

The issue opens with a powerful field-based account from Bhutni Island in Malda district, West Bengal. Located between the Ganga and Fulohar rivers, the island's fragile ecology is both life-sustaining and destructive. The 2025 floods devastated jute cultivation, the community's economic backbone, exposing the deep entanglement between ecology and livelihood. The narrative moves beyond disaster reporting to highlight lived experience: submerged homes, destroyed granaries, fragile embankments, and a haunting reflection from residents. Urban populations fear traffic jams in the rain; they fear extinction. Through an emic–etic lens, the article captures a community whose resilience is forged through repetition of loss, yet whose vulnerability remains structurally unaddressed. Climate variability here is not abstract; it is existential.

Health Transitions in a Changing Tribal World

From ecological precarity, the Bulletin shifts to metabolic precarity among the Toto tribe of Totopara in Alipurduar district. Long considered isolated and endogamous, the Toto community now stands at the crossroads of modernization. Field research documents an alarming intergenerational rise in metabolic syndrome-hypertension, abdominal obesity, and lipid abnormalities, particularly among younger members. The findings underscore a rapid health transition driven by changing diets, reduced physical activity, and the influence of mobile technologies and market integration. The study reframes public health as culturally embedded rather than purely biomedical. Health, the authors remind us, is not merely physiological but shaped by environment, identity, and social transformation.

Museums as Living Sites of Unity

The third article transports readers to the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) in Bhopal, where the harvest festival Onam is celebrated as a "living tradition." Organized in collaboration with the Malayali diaspora, the event transcends regional boundaries and becomes a performative enactment of national unity. Rituals such as Pookalam and Onam Sadhya unfold within the museum's open-air coastal village exhibit, transforming the institution into a space where heritage is practiced rather than preserved behind glass. Drawing on the concept of "unity in diversity," the article highlights how museology can actively produce cultural dialogue, rather than merely display it.

Hidden Spiritual Sciences and the Anthropology of Consciousness

In contrast to public festivals, the exploration of Gupt Navratri delves into a lesser-known, inward spiritual tradition centered on the ten Mahavidyas. Framed anthropologically as a "science of consciousness," the article presents Gupt Navratri as a disciplined, lineage-based practice emphasizing inner transformation over spectacle.Through its detailed mapping of the ten goddesses from Kali's confrontation with time to Kamala's embodiment of grace, the piece interprets esoteric

esoteric ritual as structured engagement with fear, desire, loss, and integration. Rather than mysticism detached from society, it presents disciplined self-cultivation as cultural knowledge preserved across generations.

Borderlands, Mobility, and Indigenous Continuity: The "Young Scholars" section offers an immersive travelogue in Arunchal Pradesh near the Indo-China border. The account situates the Nah tribe within a landscape shaped by glaciers, military presence, and sacred geographies. The narrative emphasizes sustainable tourism, ecological reverence, and the need for culturally sensitive engagement. The borderland emerges not as a periphery, but as a vibrant site where heritage, governance, and resilience intersect.

Visual Ethnography and Everyday Life

Through the Lens captures lived experience among the Jaunsari tribe of Uttarakhand's Jaunsar-Bawar region. Photographs of the Mahasu Devta temple, Hurki dance, stinging nettle (Urtica dioica), and the Tons River illustrate how everyday practices from dairy production to ritual hierarchy, encode ecological knowledge and social structure. This section reinforces the magazine's commitment to visual anthropology as an epistemological tool: seeing becomes a mode of understanding.

Anthropology in New Domains

The book review of Business Anthropology: The Basics by Timothy de Waal Malefyt expands anthropology's relevance beyond traditional field sites into corporate and marketing worlds. While recognizing its accessible introduction to applied practice, the review also calls for deeper engagement with ethical tensions between profit structures and anthropological commitments.

Meanwhile, the reflection on Haridwar re-engages classic Indian anthropological frameworks, Vidyarthi's sacred complex, Nirmal Kumar Bose's lived religion, and M. N. Srinivas's institutional analysis, brings in the interpretation of pilgrimage as a co-production of devotion, governance, and economy. Sacred geography becomes dynamic process rather than static sanctity.

A Discipline in Motion

Collectively, this issue of Anthro Bulletin illustrates anthropology's breadth: from flooded islands to Himalayan shrines, from metabolic shifts to museum programming, from esoteric ritual to corporate boardrooms. It reveals communities negotiating climate instability, modernization, mobility, and identity, while preserving deeply rooted cultural logics. If a unifying thread runs through this volume, it is negotiation: between river and land, tradition and technology, ritual and administration, market and morality, isolation and connectivity. Anthropology here is not merely descriptive; it is diagnostic and reflective, attentive to both resilience and structural inequality. In a time marked by ecological uncertainty and social fragmentation, this issue reminds us that culture is neither static nor fragile—it is adaptive, contested, and profoundly human.

CHIEF EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Beyond the Sacred Forest: Interrogating Civilizational Narratives in Contemporary Anthropological Discourse

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

Quite recently, an engaging volume has found its way onto my study table, offering a stimulating perspective on the intellectual history of anthropology in India and its contemporary re-evaluation. Titled Decolonising Indian Anthropology: A Civilisational Approach to the Inter-relationship among People of the Forests, Hills and Plains (New Delhi: IGNCA and Manohar, 2026), and edited by Sachchidanand Joshi, Raghavendra Singh, and K. Anil Kumar, the book represents a recent scholarly effort to reconsider the discipline through a civilisational lens. The volume traces the trajectory of anthropology in India, examining its historical entanglement with colonial knowledge systems while also highlighting ongoing intellectual attempts to critically reassess and move beyond these inherited frameworks. In doing so, it contributes meaningfully to contemporary debates on the decolonisation of anthropological thought and the search for analytical perspectives that are more attentive to India's own historical experiences and cultural contexts.

Gurumurthy, in the Foreword to Decolonising Indian Anthropology, identifies four fundamental tensions between the assumptions of Western anthropology and the civilizational understanding of forests and forest-dwelling communities within the Indian tradition. First, he argues that the Western anthropological imagination has frequently depicted forest societies as isolated from the larger social order. In contrast, he contends that forest-dwelling communities in India were historically integrated into the broader civilizational framework over millennia. This interconnectedness, he suggests, is reflected in the narratives of the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, where forests and their inhabitants appear as active participants in the cultural and political life of the subcontinent.

Second, he highlights a deeper divergence in worldview between Western intellectual traditions and the Indian civilizational perspective. While Western frameworks have often construed forests as remote wilderness inhabited by primitive or backward communities, in the Indian tradition, he argues, forests are regarded as sacred landscapes and their inhabitants as participants within a shared civilizational order rather than as marginalized outsiders. Third, he points to the fact that foundational sacred texts such as the Vedas and the Upanishads are traditionally associated with forest hermitages, where sages pursued contemplation and philosophical inquiry. The forest, in this view, functioned not merely as a physical setting but as an intellectual and spiritual milieu that nurtured the development of early Indian thought. Finally, Gurumurthy suggests that the vast corpus of India's philosophical and spiritual traditions may itself be understood as a legacy of forest-dwelling sages whose lives of austerity and reflection within these environments generated enduring systems of knowledge. A critical engagement with these claims in the Foreword to Decolonising Indian Anthropology, however, requires examining them through multiple scholarly lenses—historical, anthropological, textual, and ideological. While his arguments foreground important questions concerning the relationship between Indian civilization and forest communities, they also invite closer scrutiny with regard to issues of generalization, evidentiary support, and interpretation. Gurumurthy's first contention that forest-dwelling communities in India were never truly isolated, finds partial support in literary and historical sources. In the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, forest regions frequently appear as arenas of interaction among sages, rulers, and forest inhabitants.

Such portrayals challenge the colonial anthropological stereotype that represented tribal societies as entirely segregated and "primitive." Yet it must also be acknowledged that epic narratives are primarily symbolic and didactic rather than strictly historical or empirical in nature. Consequently, they cannot be treated as direct evidence of social realities. Modern anthropological research indicates that the extent of interaction between forest communities and settled populations has varied considerably across regions and historical contexts, suggesting a far more complex and differentiated pattern of engagement than the epics alone might imply. His second argument underscores the contrast between Western anthropological classifications and the Indian civilizational understanding of forests as sacred landscapes. Concepts such as vana, aranya, and the tradition of sacred groves indicate that forests often possessed ritual and spiritual significance within Indian cultural and religious thought. However, the notion of a singular and unified "Indian worldview" has been questioned by many scholars, who regard it as an overgeneralization that overlooks the diversity of perspectives within the subcontinent. For instance, in the Mahabharata, the episode of the burning of the Khandava forest illustrates a moment where the forest is treated less as a sacred space and more as a resource to be cleared and transformed for political and territorial expansion.

The claim that the Vedas and the Upanishads emerged from forest hermitages reflects a widely recognized intellectual tradition within Indian thought. The association between forests and philosophical contemplation occupies a central place in the Indian spiritual imagination. To a considerable extent, this association holds validity. Nevertheless, the relationship between forests and textual production in early India should not be interpreted too literally or exclusively. Literary and historical evidence suggests that many texts were also produced within pastoral and early agrarian contexts. For instance, Vedic literature such as the Rigveda, as well as epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, preserve memories of societies undergoing a gradual transition from pastoral cattle-rearing communities to more settled agrarian polities.The final assertion by Gurumurthy that the corpus of ancient Indian literature represents a gift from forest-dwelling sages emphasizes the moral and intellectual authority of ascetic traditions. Undoubtedly, the figure of the forest sage occupies a prominent position in the intellectual and spiritual history of India. Yet, from a critical perspective, such a characterization risks overlooking the diverse range of contributors to Indian knowledge traditions. These traditions were shaped not only by ascetic sages but also by scholars, poets, courtesans, monastic institutions, and even tribal communities who participated in the transmission and creation of knowledge across different historical settings. Taken together, Gurumurthy's assertions provide an important civilizational critique of Western anthropological assumptions and draw attention to the cultural and symbolic significance of forests within Indian thought. At the same time, a critical evaluation suggests that these arguments are most persuasive when understood as ideological or interpretive interventions rather than strictly empirical historical claims. A balanced assessment therefore recognizes both the integrative cultural vision he articulates and the complex, and at times contested, historical realities of forest societies in the Indian subcontinent.

ARTICLE 1

Field Note: Struggle and Resilience on Bhutni Island

By Indu Bhaumik

By Chandra Shekher Upadhayay

Content: Original fieldwork-based. The first author pursued her PhD in this area. Both authors have been working in this area since 2019.

Bhutni Island, located in the Malda district of West Bengal, sits quietly between two restless rivers—the Ganga and the Fulohar. It is a landmass born out of the river's silt and sediment, fragile yet fertile. The people here live lives deeply tied to the soil and water, depending primarily on agriculture. Among all crops, jute is their lifeline. The "golden fibre" is not merely a commodity but the backbone of household survival, sustaining food, education, healthcare, and marriage expenses.

In the monsoon months of 2025, nature turned hostile. Beginning on August 13, torrential rains upstream, coupled with a swelling Ganga, caused the rivers to spill their banks. What began as knee-deep water creeping into the paddy and jute fields quickly became a full-scale flood. Within a few days, the water level had risen to nearly eight or nine feet in some low-lying parts of the island. The landscape was unrecognisable: mud houses submerged to their rooftops, cattle stranded on raised earthen mounds, and boats replacing bicycles as the primary means of transportation.

As we write these notes, the flood has still not entirely receded. More than a month has passed since that fateful August day, and though the water level is now a little more manageable, large tracts remain submerged or waterlogged. Fields are unusable, and the stench of decaying crops hangs in the air. People continue to live in uncertainty, waiting for everyday life to return.

For Bhutni's people, the most devastating blow was to their jute crop. Jute demands patience and care. From sowing to harvesting, it requires 100 to 120 days of close monitoring, followed by 15 to 20 days of retting, during which the stalks are left to rot in water to separate the fibre. Families invest their labour and their little savings into this cycle, expecting a modest return that secures half the year's household economy. However, in a matter of hours, swollen floodwaters submerged entire fields. The carefully grown stalks turned into useless debris. Farmers who had borrowed money for seeds and fertiliser saw their hopes for a successful crop sink.

The loss was not just agricultural but also symbolic. In Bhutni, jute harvests mark a seasonal rhythm, bringing people together for cutting, bundling, and retting. Young men work in the fields, women prepare food for labourers, and elders oversee retting pits. When the crop failed, this rhythm broke. Villagers described the scene with tears: "Six months of sweat washed away in six hours."

Daily survival became the immediate concern. Food grains stored in mud houses were destroyed. Cooking stoves were underwater. People gathered on higher land or on embankments, using makeshift tarpaulin sheets as shelters. Relief came, but in small doses. The government distributed packets of khichdi, dry food, and sometimes milk for children. While these provided momentary relief, they could not substitute for the long-term economic loss. Villagers expressed gratitude but also frustration: "Food fills the stomach for a day, but who will repay the debt for seeds?"

The flood also exposed the fragility of infrastructure. Embankments that had been rebuilt only months before crumbled under pressure. Narrow roads became muddy rivers, and communication with the mainland was cut off. Boats locally called donga became lifelines. Children were ferried to safer zones, elders were carried on shoulders, and animals were herded onto the few surviving highlands.

Women bore an invisible share of the burden. They cooked in flooded courtyards, took care of children who fell sick with diarrhoea and fever, and tried to salvage firewood and utensils from the water. Young girls collected clean water in pitchers, walking long distances where tubewells still functioned. Men engaged in saving what remained of the jute bundles, often spending hours in chest-deep water, hoping to dry them later. The community displayed a spirit of solidarity, sharing scarce resources and labour, but the weight of despair was palpable. Anthropologically, the flood highlighted the deep entanglement of ecology and economy. Bhutni Island is not an isolated case; many riverine communities in

Bengal live with this cycle of cultivation and destruction. However, in this condition, they were sticking to their own house and the neighbouring house. They adapt by building a temporary structure on their pucca house roof with bamboo and a trampoline. Here, mostly 85-90% had a pucca house. That provides them with a basic elevated structure. However, heavy rain and storms during that monsoon period thrashed that. During this time, even the stored grain in enormous mud granaries gets destroyed due to water (because of their immobility). Somehow, they manage to store the required food in bamboo baskets hung from the roofs (a high place) and craft boats as a household necessity. Due to continuous flooding and repeated encounters with riverine hazards, their cultural strategies of survival reveal resilience born of these repeated encounters. Still, the vulnerability cannot be masked by their resilience. These communities, like the Hindu, Kisan claimants, muslims, Binds (fishermen), etc., operate at the margins of state attention, where a single environmental shock can disturb their whole life again and again.

In conversations with villagers, they compared their fate with that of urban populations when describing the rainy season. By highlighting that “Urban people fear rain because of traffic jams; we fear it because we may lose our homes/ our existence.” Such reflections capture the wrath of the unequal burden of climate variability in a district/similar ecological niche. They conclude that “For some, what is an inconvenience becomes, for others, a matter of life and death”. Further indicating that rain does not always bring peace. From the anthroposcopic lens, the etic and emic approach makes clear that “From an outsider’s perspective, the flood transformed Bhutni into a watery world of despair and adaptation, but from insiders, it was again another reminder from nature that their survival and existence depend on negotiating with rivers that both give life and take it away. In other words, this is a game of their unpredictable neighbours, Ganga and Fulohar, revered and feared. We are fortunate to understand their situation, but unfortunate in being unable to provide any solution.

In The Shadow of Change: Documenting Health Transitions in the Toto Community

By Subhrajyoti Das

By Mithun Das

Nestled within the verdant hills of West Bengal's Alipurduar district, the Toto tribe represents one of India's smallest and most culturally distinctive indigenous communities. The fieldwork journey to this remote corner of the Eastern Himalayas sought to document the changing health profile of the Totos, a community at the crossroads of tradition and modernity. Anthropologists have long been interested in the Toto due to their endogamous nature, distinctive linguistic and cultural identity and isolation. But in their deeply traditional existence, the secret tides of change are revolutionising their health.

From Curiosity to Commitment

The idea for my (Subhrajyoti Das) PhD research originated from an interest I had developed during my post-graduation, exploring how lifestyle changes influence the health of indigenous communities. With discussions and guidance from my supervisor, Dr. Mithun Das, I identified the Toto, a small and relatively endogamous hill tribe, as an ideal population to study inter-generational health transitions. Through this fieldwork, I sought to examine how modern lifestyle practices, dietary habits, and socio-economic factors are shaping the prevalence of Metabolic Syndrome (MetS), a cluster of disorders such as hypertension, abdominal obesity, blood glucose and lipid abnormalities.

Walking into the Field

My fieldwork, guided by my sir, Dr. Mithun Das, took me to Totopara, the sole village where the Totos have lived for over 200 years, bordered by Bhutan on one side and the Torsa River on the other. Reaching Totopara was an adventure in itself—several rivers lie along the route, and during the monsoon, heavy rainfall often disrupts communication with the nearest town, Madarihat, and the nearby village of Ballalguri.

Once there, we were deeply moved by the kindness and generosity of the community. They welcomed me not as an outsider, but as one of their own. Some addressed me as a brother, others as a son; they shared meals with me, sometimes offering food from their own plates. These gestures of warmth and acceptance made my doctoral fieldwork a truly enriching experience

What the Data Revealed

The findings from our fieldwork reflect a clear picture of health transitions within the community. The prevalence of MetS was noticeably higher among the younger generation compared to their parental generation. The parental generation's physically active lifestyle and traditional dietary habits, rich in local cereals, fruits, and minimally processed foods, appeared to offer a protective influence. On the other hand, we have observed that a growing proportion of young individuals showed signs of abdominal obesity, abnormal lipid profiles, and elevated blood pressure, all of which are components of MetS. What struck us most was not only the prevalence of MetS but also the speed of change. Within a single generation, this once-isolated tribal population has begun to exhibit early signs of a major public health concern. These changes were closely tied to shifting diets, increasing reliance on market foods, reduced physical activity, and the subtle influence of modernisation. It has been observed that educational improvement, the use of mobile phones and social media have gradually distanced the younger generation from traditional ways of life. This fieldwork profoundly shaped not only my academic journey but also my personal perspective. It reminded me that health is deeply contextual, rooted in culture, environment, history, and identity. It also underscored the urgent need for community-responsive public health interventions, particularly for small tribal groups like the Toto, who stand at the cusp of rapid and potentially irreversible health transitions.

Unity in Diversity: Representing Community and Sectarian Identities through Onam Celebrations at Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS), Bhopal

By Satya Prakash Sahoo

Introduction

The Onam is one of the most vibrant and cherished Hindu harvest festivals, primarily celebrated by the Malayali community in Kerala, South India. Commemorates the mythical King Mahabali and symbolizes equality, prosperity, and communal harmony. The festival spans 10 days in the Malayalam month of Chingam (August-September), culminating on Thiruvonam, the most auspicious day. In 2025, Thiruvonam fell on September 5. The event took place on September 7, 2025 (a day after Thiruvonam), from 3:00 PM onwards at the Bhadrakali Ambalam Premises (open-air exhibitions at the Coastal Village site) within the museum's expansive 200-acre IGRMS campus. The Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS) in Bhopal, established in 1977, stands as India's foremost ethnographic museum. It powerfully illustrates the nation's concept of "unity in diversity" by displaying open-air living traditions and cultural exhibits. In 2025, IGRMS organized a special Onam celebration in collaboration with the local Malayali community, aligning with the museum's mission to showcase "living traditions" and foster cultural exchange.

History

Onam commemorates the annual visit of King Mahabali (Maveli), a benevolent Asura king who ruled Kerala during a golden age of equality and prosperity. Harvest festival (Onam), marking the monsoon's end and the Malayalam New Year, signifies abundance and gratitude to nature. Onam warmly promotes unity among people of every background, earning its cherished title as the “Festival of All Religions," a joyful celebration that breaks down all barriers of caste and community. Also, Manav Sangrahalaya is inviting everyone to share in the feast, flowers, and friendship as one big family. This annual event by Bhopal's Malayali community is hosted at the Coastal Village Open Air Exhibition at Bhadrakali Ambalam to promote cultural exchange. Onam reminds us of equality, gratitude, and joy.

Objective

- To explore how the Onam celebrations at IGRMS Bhopal show unity in diversity.
- Study the social bonds and understand how Onam fosters feelings of belonging.
- Examine how IGRMS, as a "living museum," shapes the Onam celebration.

Methodology

It was an anthropological study using an emic perspective among the Malayali community at the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya campus in Bhopal. The primary data was collected through interviews, participant observation, and case studies of the Malayali community.

Unity and diversity

IGRMS is dedicated to showcasing India’s diverse cultural heritage through open-air exhibitions replicating various ecological and cultural zones and emphasizes living traditions, community participation, and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Rooted in harvest traditions, Onam features rituals like Pookalam (floral rangoli), Onam Sadhya (feast on banana leaves), snake boat worship (Vallam Kali), and worship at sacred sites like Sarpa Kavu (serpent groves). This festival collaborates with local Malayali communities and IGRMs to reflect Onam's core message of inclusivity. The event showcased rituals, art, and community gatherings, emphasizing unity, prosperity, and devotion to King Mahabali. IGRMS not only preserves Kerala's harvest legacy but also embodies Onam's ethos of prosperity and oneness. At Coastal Village, more than 50 participants joined lamp-lighting at Bhadrakali Ambalam, Sarpa Kavu worship, and symbolic snake boat worship. Director Prof. Amitabh Pandey emphasized unity and explained the Onam festival and how to preserve the upcoming generations.

At IGRMS, Onam is not only a Kerala festival. It brings people from all over India together, helps them share and learn from each other’s cultures, and spreads peace and friendship. Onam at IGRMS is a living lesson in humility and shared heritage, turning a regional myth into a bridge for India's diverse communities. Onam is a ritual where everyone feels equal and connected, and it erases caste and religion.

Figure: Bhadrakali Ambalam Temple

Figure: Sarpa Kavu

Impact of the museum

Onam promotes ritual equality by involving diverse groups and boosts community participation and equality. Onam evolves IGRMS into a national integration platform and influences other Indian museums to adopt festival-led programming. It strengthens community bonds and records changing stories of the diaspora. Also, it enhances our museum economy and drives learning about the Kerala festival.

Conclusion

Onam at IGRMS is a symbol of both innovative museology and anthropological harmony. IGRMS reflects India's soul, where Onam celebrations echo the nation's resilient spirit against division. In an era of divisions, Onam at IGRMS believes in diversity, not division. It is our greatest strength. IGRMS is contributing to sustainable cultural preservation in a rapidly changing world. Onam festivals are a tool for establishing an identity and preserving cultural heritage. Such events preserve Mahabali's legacy of prosperity via common devotion in India; also, it deals with diversity. At IGRMS, Onam is our ongoing dedication to unity rather than a special event.

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Figure: Snake boat worship

Gupt Navratri and Das Mahavidya: A Tradition Guiding Human Existence Beyond the Physical

By Neha

Why was a festival kept secret for centuries?
Why does it focus on ten fierce goddesses instead of nine gentle ones?
And why does it take place in silence, not celebration?

Gupt Navratri is not a public festival of celebration or spectacle. It has no processions, no performances, and no mass visibility. Yet for centuries, it has functioned as a powerful inner observance within Indian civilization. Anthropologically, it represents a disciplined method for exploring human consciousness, preserved outside mass religion through trained knowledge lineages.

Why It Is Called "Gupt" Navratri

Gupt means hidden or non-public. The secrecy exists because these practices directly affect the nervous system and inner states, demanding preparation and precision. They function as experiential sciences—using breath, silence, mantra, and sensory withdrawal—and were traditionally transmitted through lineages, not institutions. Gupt Navratri is hidden not because it is dangerous, but because it is exact.

Why Exactly Ten Mahavidyas?

The number ten is structural, not symbolic. Across traditions, human consciousness organizes into ten core domains—time, void, desire, fear, power, illusion, silence, death-awareness, and integration. Together, the ten Mahavidyas form a complete map of human experience. They are ten, not because the number is sacred, but because it is complete.

Methods of Sadhana (With vs. Without Guru)

1.With Guru Method (Initiation / Deeksha)

The Bridge: The Guru acts as a link to the lineage (Parampara), stabilizing the intense energy of the mantra.
Safety: A Guru monitors your mental and emotional state, pacing the sadhana so you do not engage with a form you aren't ready for.
Activation: The Guru "wakes up" the mantra (Chaitanya), making it effective rather than just a repeated sound.

2. Without Guru Method (Foundation)

General Stutis: You can safely recite Stotras (hymns) and Sahastranamas (1000 names) without initiation.
Dakshinamurthy: In the absence of a physical Guru, tradition suggests seeking initiation from Lord Dakshinamurthy (the Jagatguru) via specific rituals like writing the mantra on a leaf at a temple.
Mental Worship: Performing Manasa Puja (internal mental worship) is generally considered safe for beginners.

Das Mahavidya Associated Devi

The Dasa Mahavidyas are understood as ten "cosmic frequencies" that represent the evolution of consciousness. Below are the specific descriptions of each Devi and the deep spiritual meaning of their mantras.

1. Kali (The Power of Time)

The Devi: She represents the primordial energy that consumes all things. She is the vacuum from which the universe arises and into which it returns.
Mantra: Om Krim Kalyai Namah
Meaning: "Krim" is the sound of transformation. This mantra means: "I bow to the Divine Mother who destroys my limited ego, liberating me from the fear of death and the constraints of linear time."

2. Tara (The Compassionate Guide)

The Devi: Known as the "Saviour," she is the energy that helps the soul navigate the "ocean of existence." She is associated with sound and the power of speech.
Mantra: Om Hrim Strim Hum Phat
Meaning: "Strim" is the seed of stabilization. It means: "O Mother, stabilize my mind and guide me through the turbulent waters of worldly difficulties to the shore of liberation."

3. Tripura Sundari (The Sacred Beauty)

The Devi: She represents the ultimate beauty of pure consciousness. She is the "Queen of the Three Worlds," symbolizing the harmony of mind, body, and soul.
Mantra: Aim Klim Sauh
Meaning: "Aim" is wisdom, "Klim" is desire, and "Sauh" is liberation. It means: "I invoke the beauty of the Divine to turn my worldly desires into spiritual wisdom and ultimate freedom."

4. Bhuvaneshwari (The World Mother)

The Devi: She represents infinite space and the physical world. She is the container in which all creation is born and nourished.
Mantra: Om Hrim Shreem Bhuvaneshwaryai Namah

Meaning: "Hrim" is the vibration of the heart-space. It means: "I salute the Queen of the Universe who grants me the mental space and physical resources to fulfill my life's purpose."

5. Bhairavi (The Fierce Transformation)
The Devi: She is the "Terrible" one, representing the heat (Tapas) required for spiritual growth. She destroys internal enemies like lust, anger, and greed.
Mantra: Om Hasaim Hasakarim Hasaim
Meaning: This is a rhythmic vibration of the breath. It means: "I invoke the internal fire to burn away my impurities, leaving only the pure light of the soul."

6. Chhinnamasta (The Self-Sacrificer)
The Devi: Depicted holding her own severed head, she symbolizes the transcendence of the mind and the sacrifice of the ego to achieve higher awareness.
Mantra: Om Hum Hum Phat Swaha
Meaning: "Hum" is the sound of the downward-moving force of the lightning. It means: "I cut through the illusions of the mind and ego to allow the vital life force (Kundalini) to flow freely."

7. Dhumavati (The Wisdom of Loss)
The Devi: The "Widow Goddess" associated with the void, frustration, and loneliness. She represents the wisdom gained through suffering and detachment.
Mantra: Om Dhum Dhum Dhumavati Devye Phat
Meaning: "Dhum" is the sound of smoke. It means: "Let the smoke of worldly illusion clear away, so that in the silence of the void, I may find the eternal truth that never dies."

8. Bagalamukhi (The Power of Silence)
The Devi: She has the power to "stun" or paralyze. She is worshipped to silence enemies, stop gossip, and overcome legal obstacles.
Mantra: Om Hleem Bagalamukhi Stambhay...
Meaning: "Hleem" is the seed of paralysis. It means: "O Mother, freeze the negative speech and intentions of my enemies and silence my own inner doubts so that Truth may prevail."."

9. Matangi (The Creative Expression)
The Devi: The Tantric Saraswati. She represents the arts, music, and knowledge that exist outside of traditional social norms.
Mantra: Om Hreem Aim Bhagawati Matangeshwari...
Meaning: "Aim" is the sound of wisdom. It means: "I invoke the Goddess of the Outcastes to grant me the power of perfect speech, creative mastery, and intuitive knowledge."

10. Kamala (The Divine Grace)
The Devi: The Tantric Lakshmi. She represents the beauty and abundance of the physical world as a reflection of the Divine.
Mantra: Om Shreem Hreem Shreem Kamale Kamalalaye..
Meaning: "Shreem" is the sound of prosperity. It means: "O Mother who dwells in the lotus of the heart, shower me with the grace of material prosperity and spiritual fulfillment."

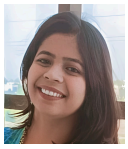
Conclusion: Gupt Navratri is India's silent science of consciousness, teaching disciplined training of mind and spirit. Through the Das Mahavidyas, it integrates fear, desire, loss, and power, reminding us that true freedom arises from inner mastery—and that humans are not merely social beings, but self-trainable ones.

Figure 1: Das Mahavidya Devi Worship, Self Clicked Photo, Location Ranchi, Jharkhand

Figure 2: Chhinnamastaka Goddess Photo, Self Clicked, Location: Ranchi, Jharkhand

Figure 3-4: Goddess Kamala Photo, Self Clicked, Location: Ranchi, Jharkhand. Combined Photo of the Das Mahavidya Goddesses and their names in English, Photo taken from Google.

Dr. Lalit Kumar



Interview by Saba Farhin

Dr. Lalit Kumar is a distinguished anthropologist and seasoned public policy professional whose career spans academia, governance, and the non-profit sector. A Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Delhi, he has successfully bridged disciplinary scholarship with an enduring commitment to public service.

With over three decades of service at the Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog), Dr. Kumar played a pivotal role in shaping India's national development strategies and contributing to key vision documents that continue to influence the country's policy framework. His leadership further extended to his tenure as Secretary of the National Foundation for Communal Harmony under the Ministry of Home Affairs, where he worked to promote peace, strengthen social cohesion, and support children affected by communal violence.

Beyond his contributions to government service, Dr. Kumar has been closely associated with Sulabh International Social Service Organisation as Honorary Senior Advisor, focusing on the WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) sector—an area central to human dignity, equity, and public health. His academic journey also includes post-doctoral research at the University of Arizona and Johns Hopkins University, with a focus on policy studies and philanthropy.

Widely published in national and international journals, Dr. Kumar has also served as a senior advisor and mentor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Delhi, guiding generations of students and researchers. In this interview, Dr. Kumar reflects on his intellectual journey, the evolving role of anthropology in public policy, and offers thoughtful advice to emerging scholars navigating the discipline today.

What initially inspired you to pursue anthropology, and how has your academic training at the University of Delhi shaped your journey into public policy and governance?

After completing my secondary school examinations, I began spending more time at the nearby Delhi Public Library, where I was deeply engrossed in reading a series on Lok Kathayen (folk tales) from different regions of India. These stories opened a window into the diversity of cultures, traditions, and lived experiences across the country. I found myself increasingly fascinated by the richness of human life and cultural narratives. During this period, I met Nirmaljit Singh, who was then a first-year B.Sc. (Hons.) Anthropology student at the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, and a classmate of the late Prof. Vinay Srivastava.

As we became friends, he shared the syllabus of the Anthropology programme with me. Discovering that there was a formal academic discipline dedicated to understanding cultures, societies, and human diversity was transformative. It aligned perfectly with my growing curiosity about people and their ways of life. That realization ultimately led me to pursue Anthropology. Both Nirmaljit and Vinay later became my one-year seniors during my B.Sc. and M.Sc. studies at Delhi University.

My training in Anthropology provided me with a strong conceptual foundation to understand human diversity, social structures, cultural processes, and social change. I also consciously broadened my academic exposure by attending lectures at the Delhi School of Economics, where I listened to scholars from sociology, economics, and geography and at AIIMS & ICMR. In the evenings, I frequently attended public lectures at the India International Centre. This interdisciplinary engagement during my years at Delhi University cultivated a holistic perspective, which later proved invaluable in navigating the domains of public policy and governance. Anthropology trained me to see policy not merely as administrative design, but as deeply embedded within social realities, cultural contexts, and human aspirations.

Having worked extensively with the Planning Commission, NITI Aayog, the National Foundation for Communal Harmony, and Sulabh International, what do you consider your most significant achievements and contributions as an anthropologist in policy and social sectors?

My tenure at the Planning Commission was both demanding and deeply fulfilling. One of the most significant highlights of my journey there was contributing to the drafting of the National Policy on the Voluntary Sector. This policy sought to institutionalize the role of civil society organizations in

in India's development process and create a more structured partnership between the state and the voluntary sector. For me, it represented the application of anthropological insight into governance recognizing the importance of community participation, grassroots knowledge, and social capital in shaping effective public policy.

During my stint as Secretary of the National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH), a particularly meaningful initiative was the creation of an inspirational video featuring Dr. Shah Faesal, the IAS topper of the 2010 batch. The video was designed to motivate children affected by terrorist, communal, or ethnic violence. Seeing the positive impact it had on young lives—instilling hope and aspiration in difficult circumstances—remains one of the most emotionally significant milestones of my career.

At Sulabh International Social Service Organisation, my work in the WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) sector further reinforced the importance of dignity and social equity in development practice. Among several rewarding assignments, conducting a rapid yet impactful study in Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh—home to the Apatani community—was especially memorable. Engaging with the Apatanis in their ecological and cultural landscape was deeply gratifying, as it allowed me to reconnect with the core anthropological method of field engagement while contributing to practical interventions.

Across these roles, I see my contribution as bridging anthropology with governance—bringing cultural sensitivity, community understanding, and a human-centered approach into policy and social development frameworks.

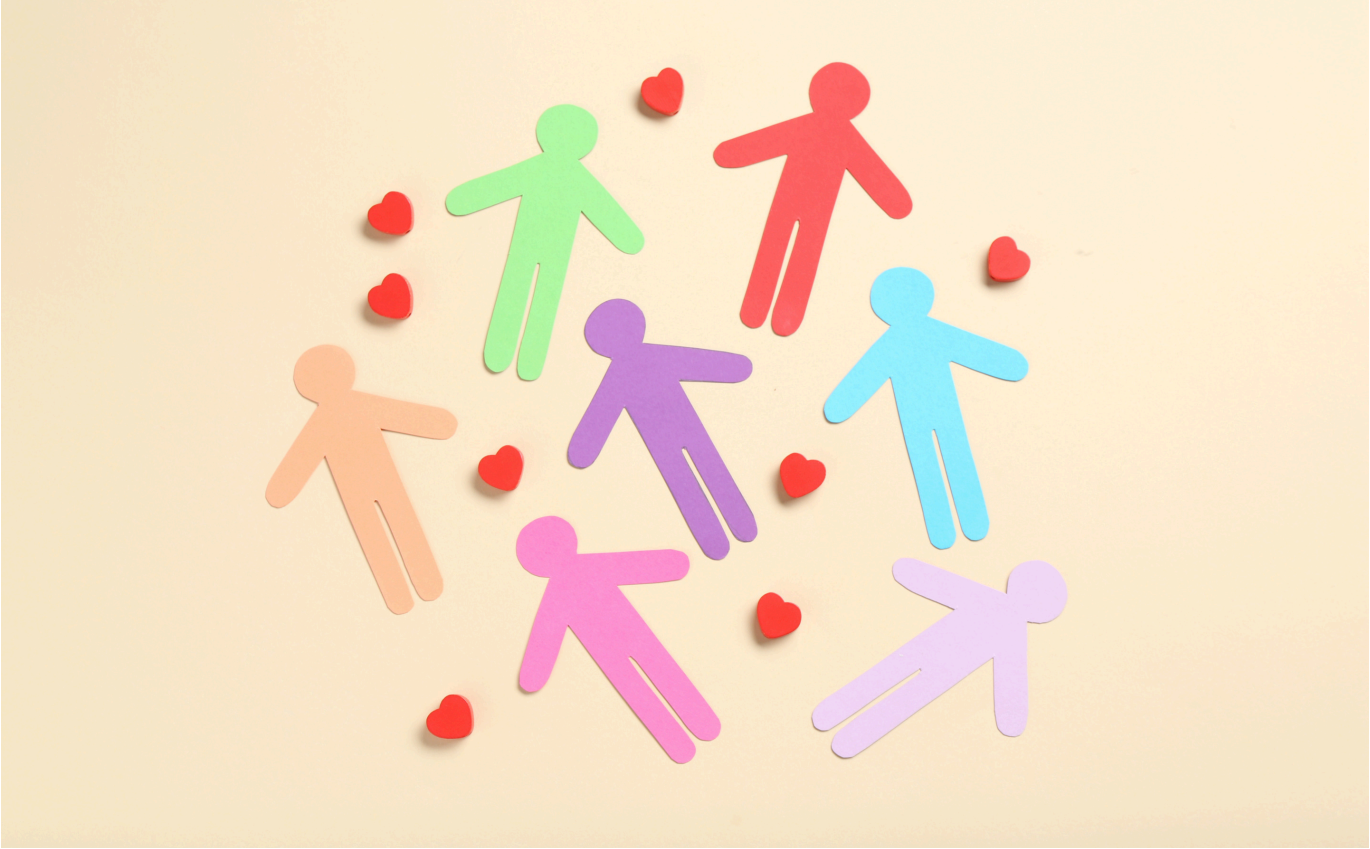
Anthropological grounding helped me to interact with political leaders, bureaucrats, corporates, academics, artists and people from all walks of life, with ease & comfort, some examples are shown below:

Based on your experience of applying anthropological insights to national planning, social cohesion, and the WASH sector, how do you see the role and future of anthropology evolving in addressing India's developmental challenges?

The role and future of anthropology in addressing India's developmental challenges hold immense potential. In a time when digital technologies and artificial intelligence are rapidly transforming every sphere of life and work, the deeper understanding of human behaviour, cultural contexts, and social dynamics becomes even more critical. Development is ultimately about people—their aspirations, identities, anxieties, and lived realities. Anthropology, with its emphasis on nuanced interpretation and grounded field engagement, is uniquely positioned to contribute meaningfully in this landscape. As governance becomes increasingly data-driven, there is a risk of overlooking the qualitative dimensions of human experience. Anthropologists can bridge this gap by ensuring that policies remain socially sensitive, culturally informed, and ethically grounded. Whether in national planning, conflict resolution, public health, or sanitation initiatives, understanding community perceptions and behavioural patterns is indispensable for sustainable outcomes. At the same time, the discipline must continuously evolve. The need to upgrade skills and engage with emerging tools—digital methods, data analytics, and interdisciplinary collaborations—cannot be ignored. Anthropology must complement technological advancements rather than resist them. The future lies in integrating classical anthropological insight with contemporary Innovations to create development frameworks that are both technologically advanced and deeply human-centered.

What advice would you give to young anthropology students and early-career professionals who aspire to make meaningful contributions in academia, public policy, or development practice?

My advice to young anthropology students and early-career professionals would be to remain intellectually agile and committed to continuous capacity building. We are living in fast-changing times, where disciplines increasingly intersect and compete. To remain relevant and impactful, anthropologists must consistently upgrade their skills and broaden their competencies alongside advancements in other fields. At the same time, one must never lose sight of the distinctive strength of anthropology—the depth, nuance, and attention to detail that the discipline brings to understanding human societies. This capacity for careful observation, contextual analysis, and empathetic engagement is invaluable across academia, public policy, and development practice.I would strongly encourage students and professionals to remain open to cross-cultural exposure and interdisciplinary learning. Engaging with allied disciplines, collaborating across sectors, and learning from diverse perspectives enrich not only one's scholarship but also one's practical contributions. The future belongs to those who can combine anthropological depth with interdisciplinary breadth, while remaining ethically grounded and socially responsive.



My Exploration to Taksing
The last village of India very close proximity to the Indo-China border

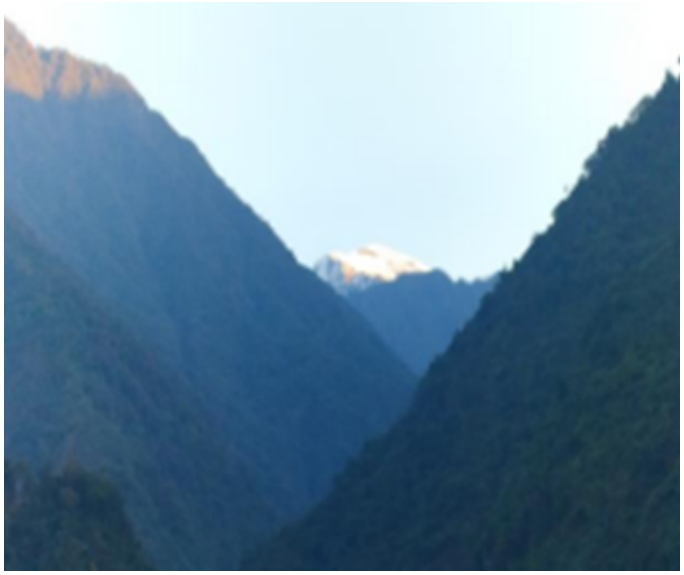
Dr. Likhan Chandra Doley

My journey started with careful preparation and packing to make sure I had everything I would need, including thick clothes for the predicted cold temperatures in Taksing, Arunachal Pradesh.Temperatures in Taksing often range from 3°C to 4°C, according to trustworthy websites like Google, highlighting the importance of wearing appropriate winter clothing.

At 10:30 p.m. on March 17, 2025, I boarded a super-luxury night bus that was going to Raipur from Jagdalpur Bus Station. The next day, I got to Raipur Airport at six in the morning. After a short wait, I boarded an aircraft at 8:40 a.m. from Raipur and arrived at Kolkata Airport around 11:00 a.m. I continued my flight after a long layover, reaching Guwahati Airport at 5:30 p.m.

I took a taxi to the Breezeland Hotel in Guwahati, and I got there at about 7:30 p.m. I stayed the night and enjoyed the food and hospitality of the locals. Mising Kitchen's outstanding vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes, which have a rich, varied taste palette, are why I heartily suggest it. I took a night bus to Itanagar the following afternoon, departing from Guwahati's Inter-State Bus Terminal (ISBT) at 6:00 p.m. The trip was pleasant, and I relished the cool Assam and Arunachal Pradesh air. When I got to Itanagar at 5 in the morning, I checked into the MoomsieHotel, which is renowned for its kind staff and reasonable prices. A team of four members met up at Moomsie. I, along with one of my co-teammates, went to Itafort and Gompa Monastery that day, two notable locations that highlight local history and culture. Perched on a hill above the Nehru Museum in Itanagar, the Centre for Buddhist Culture Gompa provides a peaceful and picturesque setting with expansive urban views. The location, which is reachable by a convoluted path and a vibrant doorway, has a white stupa with golden carvings and prayer wheels that represent the life cycle. It is the perfect location for photography because of its serene atmosphere. A significant archaeological site nearby is Itafort, an ancient brick fort thought to have been constructed in the 14th or 15th century by the Sutiya rulers. I later enjoyed a non-vegetarian Tali at Aalo Restaurant and studied tribal history through archive research at the District Research Office.

On 22nd March, we spoke with anthropology professors at Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU) and got to know Prof. Samuel Johns Simon, who is the director of the Arunachal Institute of TribalStudies. He supplied literature on the Nah tribe and helped establish contacts



Scenic Mountain views of Taksing Pattern Settlement in Taksing Circle

Nah tribe with the Defence Force

with local informants in Taksing. Our knowledge of tribal customs was enhanced by these exchanges, which also helped us get ready for the next fieldwork.

We (the research team) left early the following day and reached the Circuit House at approximately 4:00 p.m. We visited with the Circle Officer and Deputy Commissioner, two local officials, the next morning to explain our goal. We bought items under their supervision, such as clothes, shoes, and money (since Taksing doesn't have banking facilities). We hired a private car(Xylo) at 1:30 p.m. and set out on a strenuous journey on badly maintained roads, arriving in Nacho at around 8:00 p.m. The caretaker at the Inspection Bungalow made a basic dinner because it was late. The following morning, around 4:00 A.M., I awoke to the tranquil scenery of Nacho Valley. The scenery was stunning, with snow-capped mountains, meandering rivers, glaciers, and plenty of flora. In the midst of the symphony of nature, which included the sounds of rivers and birds, I took pictures of the breathtaking mountains, flowing waters, and lively village life. Although I was pressed for time and had to leave by 7:00 A.M. to continue my trek toward Taksing, the peace was remarkable.

After leaving Nacho, we drove by glaciers, waterfalls, and pure streams as we followed theSubansiri River's banks. We savoured a substantial lunch that included the local speciality, Mithun (Gayal) meat. Photographs of the area's unspoiled wilderness were taken along the path, which was lined with hanging bridges, expansive mountain views, and serene rivers. Around three o'clock in the afternoon, we reached Taksing and were welcomed by the breathtaking natural setting that characterizes this isolated outpost. The only place to stay in Taksing was Tsari Home Stay, where we booked our rooms. We visited the area in the evening and spoke with locals and ITBP staff to learn about their way of life. Indigenous customs are still important in Taksing, a secluded village that is home to the Nah tribe. With spiritual beliefs based on Donyi-Polo, honouring the Sun and Moon, their culture has strong roots in the natural world. Forests, rivers, and mountains are revered, and their ceremonies have both spiritual and ecological significance. The tribe's ancestors' ties to the land are reflected in their language, customs, and oral traditions. According to Tibetans, Taksing is a sacred place where Drukpa lamas meditated. It is thought to be a tantric charcoal ground called Ngampa Tratrok. A big tree connected to the chief Tsari field-protector denoted it. In the past, Tibetans gave the area the name Taksing, which is a combination of the words "Tak" (tiger) and "Sing" (lion).

The Indian Army and ITBP are essential to Taksing's growth because they encourage cultural preservation, upgrade infrastructure, and boost tourism. Renovating religious locations such as Gompa Monastery, setting up medical camps, livelihood initiatives, and promoting sustainable practices are some of the initiatives. In line with initiatives like the Vibrant Village Scheme, the military promotes collaboration with the community by placing a strong emphasis on environmental preservation and cultural sensitivity. We interacted with the locals when we were there and saw how they actively worked to maintain their identity in the face of progress. Important locations include the Gompa Monastery, which represents spiritual fortitude; Suga Palace, which exhibits Tibetan influence; and the Seju Festival, which honours Nah ancestors with dances and ceremonies. Glaciers, hot springs, lakes, waterfalls, and holy locations with cultural, spiritual, and therapeutic value, like Ogugu Digbin Mountain and Balija Hot Springs, are scattered throughout Taksing's geography. The nearby woodlands and traditional bamboo bridges are symbols of natural balance and tenacity.

Nah girls with their traditional attire

Gompa Monastery of Itanagar

Warm hospitality and enlightening discussions with locals and other tourists made my time at Tsari Home Stay unforgettable. During my 30-day stay, I only took one warm water bath after adjusting to local customs, which made taking cold water baths the most difficult. Strong winds and constant fog, rain, and cold were the meteorological conditions. Despite the difficulties, I loved the local food - pork, mithun, chicken, and jungle meats as well as the seasonal flowers and fruit trees that were in blossom. A lasting impact was made by the natural beauty and sense of community.

My 45-day trip included a thorough exploration of Taksing's cultural environment. Important historical features include the Gompa Monastery, which symbolizes spiritual tenacity; the Suga Palace, which demonstrates Tibetan influence; and the area's celebrations, such as the Seju Festival and Losar, which uphold native customs. These cultural manifestations highlight the tribe's deep connection to the natural world and their ancestry.

With its glaciers, hot springs, waterfalls, woods, and mountain views, Taksing's terrain presents a wealth of opportunities for ecotourism and adventure travel.

Both nature enthusiasts and spiritual pilgrims are drawn to sacred locations like Balija Hot Springs, which are only reachable by difficult hikes. The region's distinct charm is enhanced by the breathtaking Himalayas, traditional bamboo bridges, and waterfall legends. To protect this pristine environment,sustainable tourism that emphasizes environmental protection and involves the community is essential. After a 35-day journey, we left Taksing early on April 22, 2025, and returned to Kolkata and Raipur via Daporijo and Itanagar. Long drives, flights, and traversing rough terrain were all part of the return trip. After a long voyage of travel, cultural discovery, and perseverance, I reached my home in Jagdalpur by early evening on April 25. The lessons learned throughout this life-changing 45-day journey about the resiliency of indigenous people, the value of cultural preservation, and the necessity of sustainable development were priceless. Taksing's culture and geography, which epitomize peace between people and nature, made a lasting impression on me. The encounter made it clear how important it is to interact with distant tribes respectfully and to preserve their natural and cultural legacy for future generations.

The traditional hanging bridge remains enduring symbols of resilience, harmony, and indigenous wisdom

Everyday life and lived experience of a research scholar in the Jaunsari tribe of the Jaunsar Bawar region, Uttarakhand

By Tavishi Sinha

I have visited the Jaunsar area, in which there is a village named Kwanu village, which is subdivided into 3 parts: Majhgaon, Maloeth, and Kota. Although there are some more hamlets in this specific region, like Dasau, Ghamri and Gabela. But due to heavy rain, less work was done here. These photos were taken by me during my pilot study between February and March and in my field visit between July and August. The photos are a glimpse of some everyday life of the Jaunsari tribe and their cultural events. This period of research was both academically enriching and personally transformative. It highlighted the resilience of indigenous knowledge systems while emphasizing the need for respectful engagement and dialogue between tradition and modernity.

Mahasu Devta Temple

This photograph was clicked during my pilot study in March 2025 at Kwanu hamlet, Maloeth village in the Jaunsar-Bawar region of Uttarakhand, India. The temple in the image is dedicated to Mahasu Devta, the principal deity of the Jaunsari tribe. The temple's architecture reflects intricate wooden carvings and traditional Himalayan styles. Notably, the temple follows strict social norms- entry is restricted, as only members of the upper caste in the Jaunsari are allowed inside, reflecting the deep-rooted hierarchy still present in their cultural practices.

Home-Made Buttermilk

This picture shows the traditional making of buttermilk (dahi mattha) in the house using fresh cow's milk. Curd is first prepared in the home, and then churned with a wooden or metal device, separating the butter from the liquid. The remaining drink is buttermilk, which is light, cooling, and probiotic. Everything in the process, from milk to curd, is completely homemade, reflecting the self-sustaining lifestyle of rural households where natural, organic, and healthy food practices are still preserved.

Bicchu Ghas (Urtica dioica)

This is a photo of a medicinal plant known as Urtica dioica, commonly known as stinging nettle or bicchu ghas locally. The plant treats menstrual pain, sciatica, rheumatism, and skin disorders, and its leaves are consumed to promote lactation. Scientific studies support its anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, blood-sugar-lowering, and potential anti- cancer properties.

Chalda Maharaj Temple, Dasau

The image shows the Chalda Maharaj temple located in Dasau, a village in the Jaunsar Bawar region of Uttarakhand. The temple is a significant religious site for the local people, known for its distinctive architecture featuring multiple tiered roofs, intricate wooden work and golden embellishments. Chalda Mahasu Devta is known as the GOD OF JUSTICE among the tribes; he is one of the four divine brothers collectively called Char Mahasu Devta. He is the moving deity who travels to different locations and temples for varying periods of time.

Hurkiya/Hurki Dance

It is a dance form performed by men and women during festivals, weddings, and harvest celebrations. Accompanied by the hurki, a small hand drum, along with other traditional instruments like the dhol and flute. The dance involves circular movements, synchronized footwork, and rhythmic clapping.

This photo was taken during my pilot study in March. This was the wedding celebration in which the whole village was included.

Tons River

The Tons River is the largest tributary of the Yamuna River, originating from the Bandarpunch glacier in Uttarakhand's Garhwal region. This picture was taken during my pilot study between February and March. At this time, the flow of the river was low and steady. During the monsoon season, which is between August and September, its flow is moderate and this time cause flood in some regions of Uttarakhand

Business Anthropology: The Basics by Timothy de Waal Malefyt (2020)

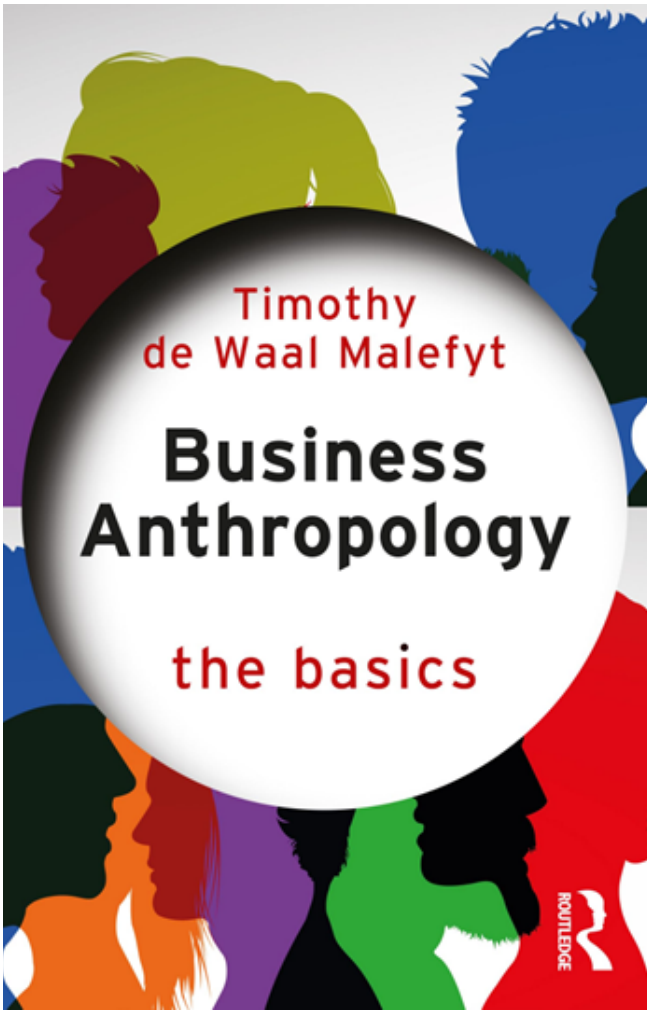
By Àgbède Oláolúwa Babatunde

Timothy de Waal Malefyt's Business Anthropology: The Basics presents itself as an introductory yet practical text that explains how anthropological thinking can be productively applied in business settings. The book, written by a scholar and practitioner with extensive experience in corporate and marketing environments, aims to bridge the long-standing gap between academic anthropology and organizational operational needs. Its primary goal is not to defend anthropology's relevance to business, but rather to demonstrate through explanation and example how anthropological frameworks already function within it.

The book is structured in a logical and accessible manner, beginning with a fundamental overview of business anthropology as a subfield and progressing through methodological approaches and key domains of application. Malefyt describes fundamental anthropological methods such as ethnography, participant observation, and qualitative interviewing, and translates them into language understandable to business audiences. The subsequent chapters cover consumer research, organizational culture, design anthropology, branding, and digital environments. Throughout these sections, the author emphasizes anthropology's holistic approach, its ability to place consumer behaviour, organizational practices, and market dynamics within larger cultural, social, and symbolic systems.

One of the book's main strengths is its clarity. Malefyt writes with the explicit understanding that many readers may come across anthropology outside of a traditional academic setting. Concepts are explained without being overly theoretical. Illustrative examples, often from marketing, branding, and organizational change, are also used to ground abstract ideas in concrete practice. This makes the text particularly useful for students, early-career professionals, and non-anthropologists seeking qualitative insight. The book also successfully demonstrates how anthropology's focus on meaning, ritual, values, and social relations provides explanatory depth that traditional business analytics frequently lack.

Another notable contribution is the book's emphasis on reflective and ethical thinking in applied work. Malefyt emphasizes the importance of understanding how power, context, and institutional structures influence both consumer experiences and organizational decision-making



He sees business anthropology not only as a tool for increasing profits but also as a way to engage responsibly with social issues like inequality, sustainability, and cultural diversity. In doing so, the text positions anthropology as an interpretive discipline capable of assisting in socially informed decision-making in commercial settings.

Despite these strengths, the book has clear limitations due to its introductory nature. While it raises important issues such as globalization, environmental challenges, and social responsibility, it rarely delves into them in depth. The structural tensions between anthropological ethics and corporate interests are acknowledged, but not thoroughly investigated. Questions about power asymmetry, labour exploitation, and global capitalism's political economy remain largely implicit.

As a result, the book occasionally presents an overly harmonious view of the relationship between anthropology and business, ignoring the practical and ethical conflicts that practitioners frequently face. Furthermore, the empirical examples focus heavily on Western and Global North contexts, particularly the US. This restricts the book's engagement with diverse cultural and economic contexts in which business anthropology can operate under very different conditions. Readers who want a more global, comparative or critically grounded perspective will need to supplement this text with additional specialized literature

In conclusion, Business Anthropology: The Basics provides a well-structured, readable, and professionally grounded introduction to the field. It successfully articulates the value of anthropological insight in business settings and establishes a solid conceptual foundation for future research or practice. While it does not address deeper critical debates or global complexities, it was not intended to. Within its stated goals, the book succeeds as a gateway text that invites readers to view business as a cultural and social system shaped by human meaning and practice.

REFLECTIONS ON ANTHRO BULLETIN

An Anthropological reflection on Swastika Mukherjee's article titled "Haridwar (The Gateway of God)"

By Sukanya Guha Niyogi

An anthropological reflection on Haridwar (in October 2025 Anthro Bulletin) shows how sacred geography, ritual practice, economy, and governance co-produce a living religious landscape. Located at the Himalayan foothills where the plains begin, Haridwar is imagined as a threshold between mountain and field, purity and pollution, worldly time and ritual time. This liminality is enacted through arrival itself: pilgrims recalibrate bodily conduct and attention as they enter the town, moving from everyday routines into ritually charged time. The sensory field—bells, conch shells, lamps, crowds, river spray—works as a pedagogy of the sacred.

At the centre of this sacred complex flows the Ganga, personified as a purifying mother. Bathing at Har Ki Pauri transforms doctrine into embodied ethics: purification is felt on the skin and coordinated through collective choreography. This emphasis on lived practice resonates with Indian anthropological approaches that prioritize everyday religion over textual abstraction. Nirmal Kumar Bose stressed that Hinduism is best understood through institutions and practices that organize daily life; in Haridwar, belief is inseparable from the disciplined bodily routines of dipping, offering lamps, and reciting mantras at the river's edge.

Haridwar can be an example of the "sacred complex," a concept elaborated by L. P. Vidyarthi, who argued that Hindu sacred centres are not single shrines but integrated systems composed of sacred geography (tirtha, ghats, hills), sacred performances (bathing, aarti, ancestor rites), and sacred specialists (priests, pandas, ascetics). The city's religious life becomes intelligible only when these elements are seen together: the river and ghats provide the spatial matrix; ritual cycles provide temporal rhythm; priestly lineages curate genealogical memory; ascetic orders embody renunciation; and pilgrims animate the system through recurrent movement. Haridwar's sacredness, in this sense, is relational and processual rather than merely locational.

Pilgrimage here also reveals how social organization is ritualized. Priestly families maintain genealogical registers for visiting lineages, converting episodic pilgrim visits into durable moral relationships across generations. This both softens and reproduces hierarchy: pilgrims experience moments of egalitarian togetherness at the ghats, yet inequalities reappear in access to ritual proximity and specialist services. M. N. Srinivas's insights into how institutions sustain social order in Indian society help read this tension: pilgrimage suspends everyday boundaries without dissolving structure; rather, it reworks hierarchy through ritual mediation.

The massive congregations during Kumbh cycles dramatize how devotion is co-produced with governance. Crowd control, sanitation, health services, and policing become part of the ritual ecology that enables millions to bathe safely. The sacred is thus not outside modern administration; it is staged through it.

This infrastructural choreography produces fleeting solidarities among pilgrims while revealing the state's role in materializing religious possibility. Haridwar's sacred topography also rises vertically to hill shrines like Mansa Devi Temple, where ascent materializes spiritual striving as bodily effort. Threads tied to railings externalize wishes into visible pledges, weaving private hopes into a public devotional landscape. The city thus binds biography to geography: individual life projects are inscribed onto enduring sacred forms.

Contemporary shifts—smartphone filming of aartis, environmental concern for river pollution, platformized accommodation—reformat rather than erode the sacred. Digital circulation extends ritual presence; ecological ethics recode bathing as responsibility as well as devotion. In the idiom of the sacred complex, new media and environmental governance become additional components that the system absorbs. Seen anthropologically, Haridwar is not a static holy spot but a rhythmic process—arrival and departure, immersion and emergence, remembrance and renewal. Through Vidyarthi's sacred complex, Bose's focus on lived religion, Srinivas's attention to institutional order, and Das's insights into everyday ethics, Haridwar appears as a continuously produced sacred world where bodies, infrastructures, and moral imaginations meet the river to feel transcendence in practice.

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

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- 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 is organizing an Online Workshop & Training Program on **Academic Writing and Publishing.**
  Date: 13-14th March, 2026

  For more details - **Click here**

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PAST EVENT

- For our Distinguished Guest lecture series, an online lecture was organised and delivered by **Dr. Lalit Kumar** on January 19th, 2026 at 5:30 pm onwards

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