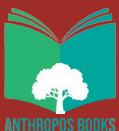


ANTHRO BULLETIN

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ANTHROPOS INDIA FOUNDATION



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.

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"The Smile of the Gond Elder."

"This photograph portrays an elderly man from the Gond Tribal Community in Khursidhana. His warm smile reflects the simplicity, dignity, and cultural richness of indigenous rural life in central India. The image captures an authentic ethnographic moment, highlighting human connection, traditional identity, and the lived experiences of tribal communities."

Captured by Akash Lalwani, Department of Tribal Affairs M.P. Government

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Quality Research and Publications: What Is Lacking?

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

A recent report published in India Today (July 1) highlighted an alarming trend: India now leads the world in research paper retractions, with six Indian universities figuring among the top ten institutions globally for retracted publications. The reasons cited include plagiarism, manipulated peer review, questionable research practices, and ethical violations—raising serious concerns about the credibility and quality of research emerging from our universities. What is particularly worrying is that the list includes not only some private universities but also reputed institutions such as VIT.

Having taught in universities for more than twenty-five years, I wish to share a few reflections. These observations are not based on a systematic research study but emerge from my academic experience as a teacher, researcher, and mentor. They are personal views, offered with the hope that they may encourage young scholars to reflect on the future of research in India.

The first concern is the lack of methodological rigour and research ethics across many universities—state, central, and even some national institutions. This perhaps explains why India continues to struggle in global university rankings, with only a handful of institutions, particularly the IITs, finding a place within the top 500. Research excellence cannot be achieved merely by increasing publication numbers; it requires building a culture of quality.

Good research begins with clarity of concepts, careful formulation of research questions, sound methodology, theoretical grounding, coherent writing, and unwavering adherence to ethical standards. Most universities offer a single course in research methods, assuming that this alone prepares students for independent research. While such courses are essential, they are only the starting point. The real challenge lies in helping scholars select appropriate methods, techniques, and analytical tools for their specific research problems. This demands continuous guidance from supervisors and active engagement from Research Advisory Committees (RACs). If either fails to perform its role seriously, research quality inevitably suffers.

Further, research methods can be strengthened during post graduation, beside course, every semester to have advance and multi discipline learning mechanism. Responsibility, however, does not rest solely with faculty members. Research is equally dependent on the commitment, curiosity, and perseverance of the student. Serious scholars seek feedback, ask difficult questions, engage actively with their supervisors, and make full use of the support systems available to them.

Theory has to go in tandem with methodology, 60% of classroom teaching with 40% field experience in masters course will help them to do good research.

Another significant limitation in Indian academia is our inability to work collaboratively. Research has increasingly,

become a collective endeavour yet many scholars continue to work in isolation. Internationally, high-impact publications are often the result of collaborative efforts involving researchers with complementary expertise. Today's complex social and scientific challenges require teams rather than individuals. Building trust, respecting diverse expertise, and embracing collaborative authorship can significantly improve both the quality and impact of research.

Equally important is the growing relevance of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research. These terms are often used interchangeably, although they represent distinct approaches. Contemporary problems—whether related to climate change, public health, artificial intelligence, education, or social inequalities—cannot be adequately understood from a single disciplinary perspective. Applied and action-oriented research increasingly requires collaboration among social scientists, engineers, technologists, data scientists, AI specialists, and policymakers. Universities must encourage such cross-disciplinary engagement rather than confining research within traditional departmental boundaries.

Recognising the need for methodological training, the Anthropology India Foundation (AIF) began organising workshops on ethnography nearly a decade ago. The first workshop, held in 2016, featured the late Prof. Vinay Kumar Srivastava, whose lectures inspired participants from across the country, including students who travelled from the Northeast to attend. At that time, online learning had not yet become mainstream. The COVID-19 pandemic transformed academic engagement, making online workshops on ethnography, academic writing, research methods, and publication practices accessible to scholars across India.

Online learning has undoubtedly democratised access to expertise and reduced costs. However, face-to-face workshops continue to offer unmatched opportunities



for interaction, intensive mentoring, collaborative learning, and hands-on training. The richness of direct academic engagement remains difficult to replicate in virtual environments.

Improving research quality also requires continuous learning by university faculty. Faculty members must regularly update themselves by participating seriously in faculty development programmes, advanced research methodology workshops, and collaborative research initiatives. The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) has long supported intensive research methodology programmes, yet participation remains uneven across institutions. Many universities still do not have functioning Institutional Ethics Committees or Ethics Review Boards. Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), for example, established its Ethics Review Board in 2018 and has since institutionalised ethical scrutiny for research projects and doctoral dissertations. Such mechanisms should become standard practice across all universities.

JNU also deserves recognition for another reason. Since its establishment in 1969, its founders envisioned an academic structure organised around interdisciplinary centres rather than conventional departments. This model encouraged faculty from different disciplines to teach and research together, creating a vibrant intellectual culture that many institutions could learn from. Although some centres retain disciplinary orientations, interdisciplinary interaction remains one of the university's defining strengths.

Today's students often have easier access to information than their teachers. Digital databases, AI-assisted tools, online libraries, and powerful search engines have transformed knowledge acquisition. Consequently, the role of the teacher must also evolve. Rather than serving primarily as providers of information, teachers must become mentors who guide students in framing research questions, selecting appropriate methodologies, interpreting evidence, reading foundational texts critically, and developing analytical thinking.

Critical thinking cannot be taught through lectures alone. It develops through discussion, debate, constructive criticism, repeated revisions, and intellectual engagement. Faculty members should encourage students to publish jointly, seek peer review, present at conferences, and revise their work multiple times before submission. No accomplished scholar becomes an excellent writer overnight. Every successful academic article or book is the result of sustained effort, repeated revisions, and a willingness to learn from criticism.

Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers* popularised the idea that mastery often requires around 10,000 hours of deliberate practice. While the exact number may be

debated, the broader lesson remains valuable: excellence is built through persistence, discipline, and continuous improvement.

First-generation learners like myself often had few mentors to guide us. Much of our learning came through trial and error. Fortunately, today's scholars have unprecedented opportunities to connect with peers, mentors, and experts across the world. They should make full use of these opportunities.

Through the Anthropos India Foundation, we have tried to create such academic networks by organising workshops, mentoring young researchers, and facilitating scholarly collaborations. Our Springer Nature book series, *People, Cultures and Societies: Exploring and Documenting Cultures*, has provided a platform for emerging scholars to publish quality work. We also established Anthropos Books to offer affordable publishing opportunities while striving to maintain academic standards.

My final message to young scholars is simple: the sky is not the limit—it is merely the beginning. Knowledge today is literally at your fingertips. During your PhD years, you have the rare privilege of immersing yourself deeply in one research problem. Later, professional responsibilities, family commitments, and numerous competing priorities will demand your attention. Make the most of this precious period.

Read widely. Think critically. Write regularly. Revise relentlessly. Seek feedback without hesitation. Collaborate generously. Uphold research ethics uncompromisingly. Above all, cultivate intellectual curiosity and integrity.

If you aim for the stars, you may at least reach the moon. But if you aim only for minimum requirements, excellence will always remain beyond reach.

With my best wishes to all young researchers embarking on this exciting journey!



Why Anthropology Matters More Than Ever: Knowing Others, Understanding Ourselves

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

As I write this editorial on the contemporary relevance of anthropology, I find myself reflecting on the extraordinary transformations and uncertainties that characterize the twenty-first century. The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, the growing consequences of climate change, persistent geopolitical conflicts, large-scale migration, and the resurgence of identity-based politics are reshaping societies across the world in profound ways. These developments raise important questions about how we understand human behaviour, social relations, and cultural change. They also invite us to consider what anthropology, as a discipline devoted to the study of humanity in all its diversity, can contribute to understanding these challenges and addressing their consequences.

In thinking about these issues, I am reminded of Tim Ingold's book, *Anthropology: Why It Matters* (Polity Books, 2018), where he argues that anthropology is not merely a body of knowledge about different peoples and cultures but a way of engaging with the world through observation, dialogue, and critical reflection. At its core lies a deceptively simple yet enduring question: what does it mean to be human? This question continues to animate anthropology's four major subfields—social and cultural anthropology, biological anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and archaeology—which together provide a broad and integrated perspective on human life. At a time when public debate is often dominated by technological solutions and statistical abstractions, anthropology reminds us that human experiences, values, and relationships remain central to understanding the world around us.

The anthropological principle of cultural relativism, pioneered by Franz Boas (1887) and his successors, urges us to understand beliefs and practices within the cultural contexts rather than judging them against external standards. In an increasingly polarized world, this perspective remains one of anthropology's most valuable contributions to fostering dialogue, tolerance, and cross-cultural understanding. When international/national aid organisations have failed in their missions like distributing food violating local dietary laws, or designing developmental interventions ignoring local priorities, it has often been for want of this anthropological sensibility. Numerous examples could be cited to substantiate this argument; however, a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of the present message due to space limitations.

Biological anthropology occupies a particularly significant place in contemporary public discourse, especially at a time when pseudoscientific notions of racial superiority and biological determinism continue

to find expression in digital media and extremist political narratives. Drawing upon evidence from evolutionary biology, human genetics, and the study of human variation, the discipline offers a powerful scientific rebuttal to such claims. For more than a century, anthropologists have demonstrated that race

is not a biologically discrete category but a social construct shaped by historical, political, and cultural processes. Biological anthropology challenges racial essentialism and exposes the scientific weaknesses of discriminatory ideologies. In doing so, it contributes not only to scholarly understanding but also to the broader pursuit of social justice, equality, and human dignity.

Prehistoric Archaeology, often perceived primarily as the study of ancient civilizations and material remains, has increasingly emerged as a valuable source of insight into contemporary environmental challenges. By reconstructing long-term records of human-environment interactions, prehistoric archaeologists provide a unique perspective on how past societies responded to climatic fluctuations, ecological stress, and resource scarcity. Such investigations illuminate the factors that contributed to both societal resilience and societal collapse under changing environmental conditions. In an era of accelerating climate uncertainty, our knowledge of prehistoric archaeology offers critical lessons for understanding the vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities of human societies across time. It also reminds us that climate change is not an unprecedented abstraction but a recurring challenge to which human communities have responded with varying degrees of creativity and failure. Such a deep historical perspective is particularly valuable for policymakers and planners seeking to formulate responses to environmental and social challenges whose impacts transcend the immediate timeframes of development administration.

Linguistic anthropology investigates the relationship between language and social life: how language shapes perception, encodes power, and constitutes identity. As digital communications increasingly favour globally dominant languages and modes of expression, and as thousands of minority and Indigenous languages face the threat of extinction, the questions addressed by linguistic anthropology become more pressing than ever. Linguistic



anthropology has shown that the language one speaks influences how one categorises time, space, colour, and social relationships. The loss of a language is therefore not merely the loss of a communication system; it is the loss of a unique cognitive and cultural heritage. Linguistic anthropologists seek to document and revitalise endangered languages that encode generations of highly precious indigenous ecological, medicinal, and cosmological knowledge.

Ultimately, the enduring relevance of anthropology lies in its capacity to illuminate the human dimensions of the complex challenges confronting contemporary societies, for these are, fundamentally, challenges of humanity itself. Questions of inequality, cultural conflict, environmental change, migration, technological transformation, and social justice cannot be understood solely through economic indicators, political calculations, or technological innovations. They require an understanding of how people make sense of their lives, negotiate differences, adapt to changing circumstances, and imagine their futures.

Anthropology offers precisely this perspective. By combining scientific inquiry with a deep appreciation of cultural and historical contexts, it helps us see beyond simplistic explanations and easy solutions. Its lasting value lies not only in expanding our knowledge of human societies but also in cultivating the intellectual humility and empathy necessary for living in an increasingly interconnected world. At a moment when societies everywhere are grappling with uncertainty and division, anthropology's commitment to understanding human diversity and shared humanity remains as relevant as ever.



Purna-Purushottama Masa – The science and spirituality of the intercalated month (Adhika-Masa)



By Priyanshu Banerjee

The Adhik maas or Mal maas or Purushottama Maas is an intercalated month in the Hindu calendar that is inserted to keep the lunar calendar aligned with the months of the year. It is an additional lunar month added to the Hindu calendar approximately every 3 years to balance the difference between the lunar and solar calendars.

There are two Hindu calendars a solar calendar according to which the seasons are aligned and lunar calendar according to which the festivities are aligned. The Hindu lunar calendar follows the movement of the moon, while the solar calendar follows the movement of the Sun. The Moon takes about 27.3 days to make one complete orbit around the Earth. The Earth orbits around the Sun once every 365.2422 days. The Earth and the Moon in 29.53 days have moved as a system about 1/12th of the way around the Sun. This means that from one full moon to the next full moon, the Moon must travel 2.2 extra days before it appears again as a full moon, due to the curve of the Earth's orbit around the Sun. This creates a variance of 10.87 days a year between a lunar year and a solar year. According to the Surya Siddhanta an extra month or Adhika Masa falls every 32.5 months on an average. The solar year is made up of 365 days and about six hours while the lunar year is made up of 354 days. This causes a gap of 11 days, 1 hour 31 minutes and 12 seconds between the lunar and the solar years. As this gap accumulates each year it approximates in 2.7 years to one month. If the appropriation is not done then the lag between the solar and lunar calendar increases and it will eventually something subtle begins to shift, Diwali starts slipping out of autumn, Holi drifts away from spring, the festivals begin to lose their quiet alignment with the seasons they were born to illuminate. So, every 32 to 33 months an extra lunar month is inserted not as an interruption but as a correction, re-balancing.

When the sun does not at all transit into a new Rashi (30-degree sidereal Zodiac) but simply keeps moving within a Rashi in a lunar month, then that lunar month will be named according to the first upcoming transit. It will also take the epithet Adhika or Extra. The process or transition of the sun from one Rashi to the next is called Sankranti. For instance, if a lunar month elapsed without a Sankranti and the next transit is into

Vrishabha (Taurus) then this month without transit is labeled Adhika Jyeshtha. The next month will be labeled according to its transit as usual and will get the epithet Nija (original) or Shuddha (clean), in this case Nija Jyeshtha. Above description is for the Amanta system (Amavasya to Amavasya) it is mainly followed in North India while in the Purnimanta system (Purnima to Purnima) is followed in South India; it would be first half of Jyeshtha then Adhika Jyeshtha and then second half of Jyeshtha. The Adhika Jyeshtha would be sandwiched between Prathama (first) Jyeshtha and Dwitiya (second) Jyeshtha. Such details and descriptions are found in the Brahma - Siddhanta and Kalatatva-Vivechana shastras. However, Kalatatva-Vivechana is given more significance.



The Adhik Mass was earlier known as the Mal maas. The Padma Purana states the detailed story of this event. The solar calendar has 12 months each having a presiding deity the 12 Adityas or Dwadashi Adityas, the 12 forms of Surya Narayana or Suryadeva (Sun God). Similarly in the lunar calendar there are 12 months, each one having a presiding deity, a God who claims it, protects it, gives it purpose; like Chaitra belongs to Vishnu, Vaishakha to Madhusudana, Jyeshtha to Indra and so on. Every month has a name, a home, a place in the cosmic order. But then there is the 13th month which appears every 32 - 33 months an extra month that the calendar needs to stay in alignment with the Sun. Nobody chose it. Nobody wanted it. The priests would not schedule prayers inside it; families would not place weddings during it. It was given a name, but not lovingly - Mal maas, the Dirty month or the unwanted one.

According to Padma Purana the Mal maas the rejected and unclaimed one went to Vaikuntha abode of Lord Vishnu to seek his divine blessings. Lord Vishnu who has always had a particular softness for what the world has pushed aside did not think twice and stated "You belong to Me". He gave it his own name Purushottam as (Sri Vishnu is Purna-Purushottam) meaning the highest form of God. He declared that whatever takes a whole year of sincere effort in other months can happen in a

single moment of genuine turning in this month. The month that had been called impure became in that instant the most spiritually potent month in the entire calendar. Adhik Maas is not considered a month for outer show but a month for inner correction. During this month all Kamya Karmas (actions driven by desire) are paused like weddings, Griha Parvesh, new ventures etc. But Nishkama Karmas (selfless actions) like donating food and clothing, doing charity, chanting or reading Vishnu Sahasranama, Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavat Purana, Hare Krishna Maha mantra, offering water to Tulsi, feeding cows all of these can create deep inner peace. Adhik Maas is even considered more beneficial than the Karthik or Damodar Maas. It is said that if anyone observes even one Ekadashi in this month it will yield the benefits of 100 Yajnas. The Padmini and Parama Ekadashi have fallen in the 2026 Adhik Jyeshtha maas, observing them would give 16 times more benefit than one Ekadashi in Karthik or Damodar maas. The same particular month again becomes Adik mass in about 19 years. The main deity of Adhik or Purushottam March is Sri Hari Vishnu; many devotees also worship Sri Krishna, Sri Ram, Lakshmi Narayana and Tulsi Mata. The Adhik masa teaches that sometimes life gives us an "extra chance" by the grace of the divine case. It reminds us to pause, reflect and realign ourselves with Dharma, gratitude, discipline and devotion.



Khajana Ki Khoj: A new approach towards visitor engagement at National Museum of Mankind, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh



*By Samir Maharana, Student,
PG Diploma in Museology, IGRMS*



*By Sukanya Guha Niyogi,
Museum Assistant, IGRMS*

The People's Museum, popularly known as the Museum of Man and Culture or Humankind, IGRMS, is an Autonomous anthropological institution situated in the central Indian region that comes under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. Museum functions as a living heritage that represent live size structure of objects and specimens. It operates with a special focus on the New Museological approach in the present period through research, education and visitor engagement methods. Museum of Humankind has also actively participated in the theme 2026, followed by the International Council of Museums, "Museum Uniting a Divided World," with that museum conducting educational and visitor-engaging programs like a tour to the Bhopal museums, an astro night collaboration with the regional science centre, Bhopal and the great treasure hunt (Khajana Ki Khoj), which is formerly known as heritage hunt. Through this event, the museum shares the cultural knowledge among young visitors.

A year-long innovative treasure hunt conducted by IGRMS. On 17th May, 2026, as a centrepiece, a day before the International Museum Day celebration. Designed to transform a standard museum visit into an interactive adventure, it used the campus area for active learning. In this event, open to the public and employees, with separate categories and various stages. On that event day, entry was free and easy to access. Social media, IT and Art professionals are involved in making all the preplanned arrangements. The event is conducted in the morning hours under the supervision of the Director, IGRMS, and other assigned officers in charge. Flag off was done by the director at 8:30 AM. The activity featured a partner bike rider where the pairs navigate the signage together. Clues were distributed across the Sangrahalaya campus and outside the campus. These clues required the participants in the open and staff (Family and Friends of the Institution) categories to observe artefacts, interpret, recall traditional practices, and puzzle solve related to Indian heritage in 1st round. In both categories, all the team who submitted the first-round assigned paperwork copies with proper signatures collected from the various check posts are eligible to enter the 2nd round. This is conducted in the auditorium hall, IGRMS building. Questions are in multiple-choice format; participants don't have any time restrictions to submit their answers to the officials. Museum officials

focus on knowledge enhancement, creating heritage awareness, and building interest in the younger generation through fun games and experiential methods. In the early morning, I woke up and moved for the weekly heritage walk visit with museum officials assigned for the task, with 3 registered participants. Our walk is going to be completed at 7.30 AM. In the meantime, my fellow mate met the director, IGRMS. We don't have any plans to attend the treasure hunt event because we are both staying in a home away from home, so we don't have a vehicle. After some time, we try to arrange a hero vehicle, an old model bike, then, after receiving instructions to wear a helmet, unfortunately, we collect it from one of our security members. After some time, we received an envelope having assigned question paper, but we are in trouble question paper is set in the Hindi language only, and we are facing issues to read properly. After a 10-minute gap, we started with the bike and directly moved according to our question number one, we took some secret ways to reach to the tribal habitat open-air exhibition, and we took some photos with the exhibit with my fellow participants. We calculate the head of Mithun hanged in the Naga house and the bamboo gate of the Assam house, and so on. After TH, we move with officials to the Himalayan village, followed by the Mythological trail, the Coastal Village, the Desert Village and other outside campus landmarks. Almost we try to complete all the tasks are completed in the question paper. Then, after we joined in the second, this question was asked about local heritage and history and tribals living in India. Being a student of Museology, I am really happy to be a part of this treasure hunt. We will never forget this experience provided by IGRMS.

Museums sometimes face struggles in visitor attraction. Khajana Ki Khoj introduced a gaming, participatory model that significantly boosts engagement of local and outside visitors, which is suited to the IGRMS open-air space. By combining physical activity with intellectual challenges. It promotes active learning, emotional connection and collaboration with museum exhibits. In modern museology, this is a shift from object-centred to community and visitor-centred experiences through museum communication. Participants' active learning in a living tradition helps to gain better knowledge and understanding of the museum. It provides a platform for the youth to enhance skills, observation, teamwork and

thinking to protect culture. The event supports a broader prospective aim of inclusivity, community well-being and relevance in contemporary society. It represents how the museum entered into the public spaces for the development of people. Open feedback from the participants in offline and online social media reflects high encouragement for this interactive format. Many opinions received about this event are exciting and knowledge-based. Participants enjoy the event a lot with their fellow participants. This kind of approach strengthens public support and increases footfall in the museum. People are more curious and ask for the upcoming events at the museum.

To create interest and motivation among the participants, the museum celebrates the achievement with the participants. Awarded a cash prize and a momentous occasion at the next event organised by IGRMS. Prizes were categorised for public and staff participants.

Conclusion:

Khajana Ki Khoj is a progressive visitor-centred model in contemporary museology. In a fast-growing digital age, museums must adapt beyond their traditional role to offer a meaningful, interactive experience to a diverse audience by implementing gamification, physical exploration and cultural education. IGRMS shows how an ethnographic institution can actively play its role in the current context to directly support the International Museum Day, 2026. Such interactive skill enhancement activity gives lifelong learning among the participants and highlights the contribution of the museum in social enhancement, tourism and sustainable development. This museum attracts new visitors depending on loyalty among the regular. According to this, the museum is a living community hub rather than static landmark. The visitor-centred new museum approach is welcoming in museums to remain dynamic, engaging in dialogue and cultural promotion in the modern world.

Photographs of the event (Sourced IGRMS photography Section):



Fig. 1: Cross Verification of Online Registration and Offline Entry



Fig. 2: Event inaugurated by the Director, IGRMS



Fig. 3: Exploration by walk in Tribal Habitat, Open Air Exhibition



Fig. 4: Participants taking a signature from the checkpoint assigned Marshal



Fig. 5: Quiz Round at Veethi Sankul, Auditorium Hall



Fig. 6: Engagement of Visitors in Indoor Museum



Fig. 7. Prize Distribution

Parasangada Gendethimma: An Anthropological Reading of Rural Modernity and Cultural Collision

By Dr. Doraboina Udaya Kumar

ABSTRACT

This article examines Parasangada Gendethimma (1978), is a landmark Kannada Classic directed by Maruti Shivram and based on Sri Krishna Alanahalli's novel, as a cinematic ethnography of rural Karnataka. Positioned within Kannada "Bridge Cinema," the film documents the cultural collision between village innocence and urban modernity. Through an anthropological lens, it interrogates marriage, acculturation, and rural social institutions, offering insights into the psychological anxieties of modernization in India.

Introduction:

Cinema often functions as a mirror of society, capturing the transitions and tensions that written ethnographies may overlook. Parasangada Gendethimma is emblematic of this role, portraying the life of Thimmana (Played by Mysore Lokesh), an innocent, hardworking tribal youth (belongs Parivara Scheduled Tribe – The Union Cabinet approved Scheduled Tribe status for the Parivara and Talwara Communities, recognizing them as synonymous with the Naica Community in Karnataka), and his tragic marriage to Maranki (Rita Anchan), a town-bred woman with modern perspectives, individualistic desires, and a taste for city comforts. As Maranki struggles to adapt to the conservative, primitive ethos of the village, and Thimma fails to understand his wife's evolving modern anxieties, their marriage becomes a battleground of cultural alienation. The tragic disconnect between them eventually snowballs into a devastating climax. The film's narrative becomes a case study of cultural incompatibility, reflecting broader anthropological concerns about modernization, migration, and social change.

Hero of this film Lokesh's finest performance in his career, earning him the Karnataka State Film Award for Best Actor. He sheds all theatrical artifice, portraying Gendethimma with a raw, heartbreaking vulnerability. His expressive eyes perfectly capture the shift from pure, innocent marital bliss to absolute, uncomprehending despair. Heroine Rita Anchan as Maranki delivers an exceptionally layered performance. Her portrayal of Maranki is remarkably nuanced. Rather than reducing her to a cliched image of a city influenced "vamp", she conveys the character's suffocating sense of entrapment and inner turmoil, rendering Maranki's choices comprehensible, though not entirely defensible.

Maruti Shivaram's direction is subtle yet impactful. He refrains from idealizing village life, instead presenting it in all its stark reality, muddy, dusty, and weighed down by social constraints. The hallmark of the film's technical brilliance lies in its iconic soundtrack composed by Rajan-Nagendra. The songs such as "Thera Yeri Ambaradaage" – Rendered by S.P. Balasubrahmanyam and "Notadage Nageya Meeti" serve not merely as songs but as emotional pillars of the narrative. The sorrowful reprise of "Notadage Nageya Meeti" in the climax exemplifies how music can be harnessed to intensify cinematic tragedy with masterful precision. I usually listened to these songs hundreds of times while riding my bike over long distances, that's how much I love them.

Findings:

1. Rural Ethnography on Screen:

The film authentically depicts village life, food habits (mudde or ragi balls), dress codes, gossip networks, and the functioning of local panchayats (village councils). It highlights child marriage, family relations, women activities and gossips, patriarchal authority, and community sanctions, offering visual ethnography of rural Karnataka.

2. Marriage as Cultural Contact:

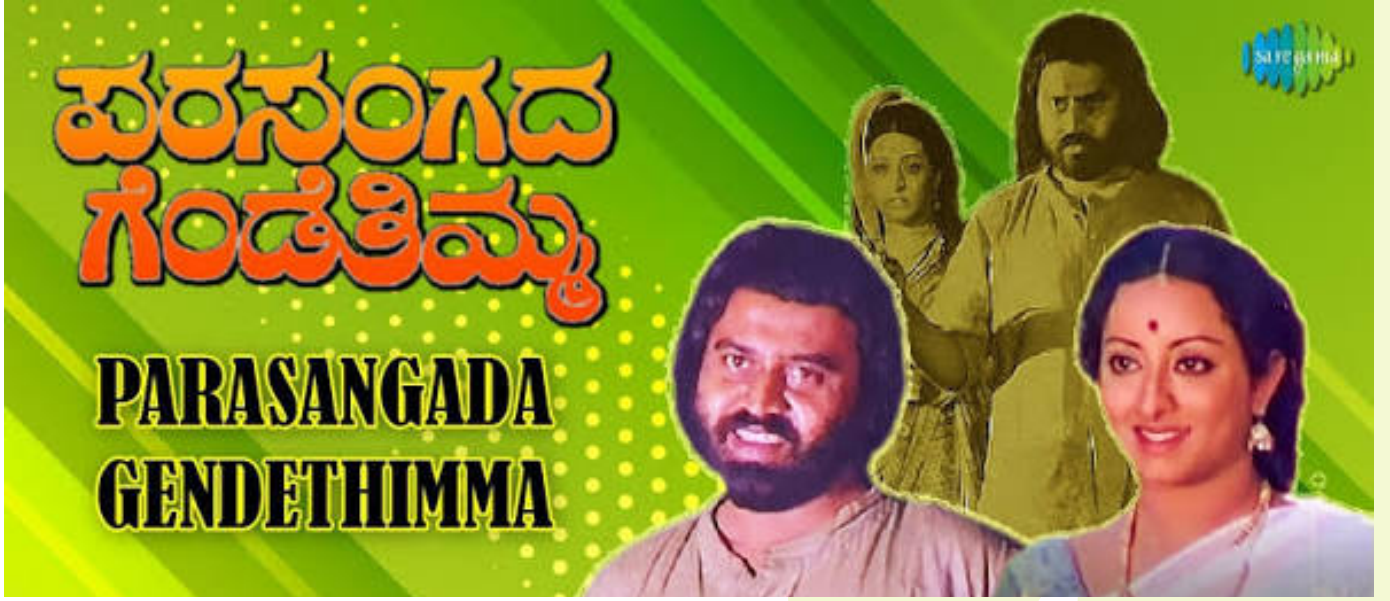
The union of Thimmana and Maranki exemplifies this cultural collision. Their incompatibility reflects the clash between the collective village ethos and individualistic urban values. Marriage becomes a microcosm of the psychological toll of modernization.

3. Cultural Shock and Alienation:

Maranki's inability to adapt to village conservatism and Thimma's failure to grasp her anxieties highlight the destructive impact of culture shock. The tragic climax, both partners committing suicide, symbolizes the unbridgeable gap between two social realities.

4. Deconstruction of Rural Utopia:

Unlike mainstream cinema, which idealizes villages, Parasangada Gendethimma exposes vulnerabilities such as ignorance, mob mentality, and destructive gossip. It dismantles the myth of rural innocence by presenting villages as contested spaces of tradition and modernity.



Source: Collected from Google Images

5. Theme of the Movie:

Thimma asks the Maranki: 'ಮತ್ತಿಗೆ ನಮ ಶರೀರ, ನಮ ಬಟ್ಟೆ ಸುಧ್ವಾಗಿ ಬಿಟ್ಟಿ ಸಾಕ, ನಮ ಮಾನ್ಯನು ಸುಧ್ವಾಗಿ ಇರೋದು ಬೇಡ್ತಾ? (Mattiga nama śarīra, nama baṭṭe sudhvāgi biṭṭe sāka, nama māṁsūnu sudhvāgi irōdu bēḍvā?)

Meaning: Now, it's enough to keep our bodies and clothes clean, but shouldn't our heart be clean too?

Conclusion:

Parasangada Gendethimma is more than a cinematic masterpiece; it is an ethnographic text that captures the anxieties of modernization in rural India. Its anthropological significance lies in documenting cultural collisions, deconstructing rural utopias, and exposing the psychological costs of social change. For scholars of anthropology and cinema, the film remains a timeless case study of cultural incompatibility and modernization.

Acknowledgment:

My special thanks to Dr. Goutham Avarthi, Visual Anthropologist and Ethnographer from Mysore, who suggested I watch this film and guided me toward appreciating its anthropological depth.

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Litha: A New Age Summer Solstice Celebration



By Saheli Chatterjee

Introduction

There is a lot more to this world than what we know. There are religions, practices and related festivals that hardly come to light either because they are just too small to be known, or because there is a lot of misconception around them, or due to the general change in belief about the concept of religion, among various other factors. Litha is one such lesser-known festival that is celebrated to honour the summer solstice, largely by pagans, witches and Wiccans. The summer solstice by itself is traditionally observed by many cultures around the world, like the Nordics, Slavs, Balkans, Pyrenees, Chinese, and even Indigenous American cultures. However, Litha specifically is celebrated by new age religions and spiritual practitioners.

Debunking misconceptions and myths about witches and pagans

Before further discussing Litha, it is crucial to debunk misconceptions about pagans and witches. Historically, both terms got a bad reputation due to Abrahamic biases. 'Pagan' originally meant someone practicing an indigenous or polytheistic religion. However, a negative bias grew as the ruling elites adopted Christianity or Islam, leaving the rural peasantry practicing their traditional faiths. Similarly, the idea of a witch as someone dealing with the 'Devil' is an Abrahamic concept. These religious and patriarchal views led to the brutal witch trials in Europe and North America, and unfortunately, similar witch hunts still happen in rural India today.

However, in the new age, the term witch, has been rebranded. It has a more positive undertone to it. Anyone can be a witch as long as they have good intentions to benefit others and themselves, to help and heal others. Today, it is a deeply spiritual practice involving rituals and spells, not to harm, but to help. Wicca is a growing neo-pagan religion that was founded by Gerald Gardner in the mid-20th century. It involves worshipping a god and a goddess and celebrating Sabbats, or festivals. Some Wiccans decide to incorporate witchcraft into their practice; some do not. It has its own theology, mythology and system, therefore, making it a separate religion.

Litha

Coming back to Litha, many modern pagans, witches and Wiccans believe in a wheel of the year; a symbol of time turning and seasons changing. A Sabbat is celebrated with every major turn. For example, according to the Wiccan tradition, in the northern hemisphere, the wheel starts at Samhain, which falls on Halloween. It then turns to Yule,

the winter solstice, then Imbolc on 1st-2nd February, then Ostara on spring equinox, Beltane on May 1st, then Litha on summer solstice, Lughnasadh on 1st August, Mabon on the Autumn Equinox and finally Samhain again. The Sabbats are reversed in the southern hemisphere.

Therefore, Litha is one of the eight Sabbats in the wheel of the year. It is typically celebrated between 20th and 22nd June in the northern hemisphere and between 20th and 23rd December in the southern hemisphere. The summer Solstice is an astronomical point between 20th and 22nd June, which marks the sun at its most northern point, meaning this is when the Northern hemisphere leans most towards the sun due to the Earth's axial tilt. It is the longest day and shortest night of the year, and in the days that will follow, the days will grow shorter and nights will become longer again.

The word solstice comes from the Latin words 'sol', meaning sun and 'sistere,' meaning to stand still. That is because the sun appears to stand still at the northern or southernmost point before changing its direction.

The term 'Litha' was first documented by the Anglo-Saxons in the 8th century AD. It rightly meant soft, mild or gentle, and it referred to June and July. The term was used again with the revival of paganism and the emergence of neopaganism. As Litha is a modern festival that was revived around the mid-20th century, borrowing its celebrations from many cultures. The name may have been revived, but some of the customs and festivities date back to when agriculture was developing. Agricultural societies relied on astronomical markers, such as the phases of the moon or the intensity and position of the sun. As the summer solstice marks the longest day and shortest night of the year, it is an important day for farmers as it is directly related to their livelihoods.

The summer solstice is the period between sowing the seeds and harvesting the crops. It is a time when the earth is fertile, plants are germinating and growing. It is a period of rest for the farmers who can sit back and watch the crops grow, necessitating a celebration.

Celebrations

Litha is associated with livelihood, vitality, fire, and growth. It is one of the fire festivals in the wheel of the year because of the sun's maximum intensity. Fire is a symbol of the sun because both are sources of light and heat.



Figure 1. Image of a bonfire. Photo by Toa Heftiba on Unsplash



Figure 2. Image of a sunrise at Stonehenge. Photo by Howard Walsh on Unsplash

As such, in many European cultures, such as Celtic, Germanic, Slavic and Baltic, a bonfire would be lit up on top of a hill, a symbol of honouring the space between heaven and earth. It was also tradition to jump over the bonfire as a purification ritual. The bonfire is also allowed to burn down, and its ashes are sprinkled on the fields to ensure agricultural success. Sometimes the ashes are kept for other spells and rituals for luck. Ancient Celtic cultures were known to light up a wheel on fire and roll it down a hill into a water body, a symbol of the strong sun weakening from that point onward. This practice has been recorded since the 4th century AD, and it was practiced until the early 20th century.

Midsummer is a popular summer solstice festival celebrated across the Nordic countries, especially in Sweden, Finland and Iceland. In Sweden, for example, men and women wear flower crowns, dance around a maypole and enjoy traditional foods and drinks like pickled herring, new potatoes and strawberries. Midsummer is especially important in these areas to celebrate the few months of light and warmth in contrast to the longer months of cold and darkness. In many parts of Europe, the pagan traditions of the summer solstice were absorbed into Christianity and began to be celebrated as Saint John the Baptist's Day, on 24th June.

Another popular celebration is to visit Stonehenge, in Wiltshire, England, to see the sunrise on the summer solstice. Stonehenge is believed to be aligned with the movements of the sun, making it a significant spot for summer solstice celebrations. Wiccans and witches typically celebrate Litha by decorating their altars with solar symbols like sunflowers, sundials, bright candles, and keeping idols of sun deities.

They burn lavender, citrus, rose, and pine incense at the altar. They enjoy going outside and gathering seasonal herbs like mint, basil, sage and rosemary. They cast spells that require a lot of energy, such as fire rituals, purification, love, abundance and fertility spells. They like to go outside and soak in the energy of the beaming sun. Some even practice solar magick (the k is intentional to distinguish spiritual magic from illusion) on this day to bring joy and happiness into their lives. Some just take this time to pause and enjoy the sun's warmth, reflecting the sun's stillness that day. Some use brightly coloured crystals like citrine, yellow topaz, sunstone, etc., to meditate with. No celebration is complete without food, and on that day, many celebrate by eating colourful vegetables, spicy foods, honey, flame-grilled foods, seasonal fruits and ice cream. Ice cream is not only for cooling down, but acts as a symbol for the cooler days ahead.

Celebrating Litha in India

The United Nations declared June 21st as International Yoga Day upon India's proposal. The reason being that it aligns with the summer solstice. Indian Wiccans attempt to celebrate Litha just like the rest of the world; however, they may need to adapt their practices to the local environmental and societal conditions. For instance, when temperatures soar to 45°C or more, going outside to enjoy the sun is hardly an option. Some ways to celebrate would be to go outside early in the morning to see the sunrise and take in the solar energy, then to do the Surya Namaskar or the Sun Salutation to welcome the sun just after it rises. Others would like to perform spells and rituals. Personally, this would be a great day to plant some summer herbs like mint and basil and use the day to pause and rest.

Conclusion: To conclude, Litha is a revival of ancient midsummer and summer solstice celebrations. Whether it is observed through ancient customs, newer rituals or personalized practices, it reflects humankind's long-standing relationship with nature. In a fast-paced world, Litha offers a moment to pause and reconnect with the natural world.

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Dr. Khirod Chandra Moharana



Interview by Saba Farhin

Dr. Khirod Chandra Moharana, Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology, University of Allahabad, is a scholar whose work brings together medical anthropology, tribal studies, mental health, sustainability, gender, and human-environment relations. Trained at the University of Hyderabad, where he received the University Gold Medal in Anthropology, and later at IIT Delhi, where he earned his PhD, Dr. Moharana's academic journey reflects a sustained commitment to understanding the human condition through ethnographic, theoretical, and interdisciplinary perspectives. His research is guided by a fundamental anthropological question: what does it mean to be human? This question has shaped his work on mental illness and society, embodied suffering, medical cosmologies, indigenous knowledge systems, climate change, consumption, and sustainable development. His writings examine how social suffering, structural violence, cultural meanings, and political-economic processes are lived and experienced by communities, particularly among tribal and marginalised populations.

Dr. Moharana has published extensively in journals, edited volumes, self-learning materials, MOOCs, book reviews, and regional-language writings. His recent publications engage with themes such as menstrual taboo and women's agency, the evolution of human sexuality, traditional healing practices in India, tribal identity, and mental illness in tribal Odisha. His book chapters with publishers such as Springer, Routledge, Concept Publishing, and National Book Trust further demonstrate the range of his intellectual engagements, from political economy and gender to sustainable development goals and mental health. Recently he has published a poetry book titled *Unlearning the World: Poems on Self, Society and Nature*. He is currently Principal Investigator of an ICSSR-funded project titled *Ethnography and Livelihood Options among the Great Andamanese: A Study towards Sustainability and Empowerment in the Andaman Islands*. He has been recognised by various organisations such as United India Anthropology Forum and the Exeter University Presidential Scholarship for Leadership for Global Challenges. Alongside research, He has served on editorial boards, delivered invited lectures across major academic institutions, convened panels at national and international conferences, and guided doctoral research on childhood, caste politics, death rituals,

health, migration, and mining. He stands out as a scholar committed to expanding anthropology's relevance for understanding contemporary human and planetary concerns.

What drew you to anthropology, and how has your journey brought you to your current work on mind, mental health, and Vedic/Ayurvedic traditions?

Thank you for the question. In fact, many anthropologists have very interesting stories about their tryst with the subject. I too have a similar incident. In the Final year of my BSc Zoology in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack I experienced an emptiness about my training. I felt I should know about human beings and its evolution, but a BSc Zoology talks only about non-human animals. And moreover, it does not talk about our mind, our society, our norms, our religion etc. I had deep curiosity about how all these came to exist? I began looking for a field where I could study the biological, socio-cultural, and psychological evolution of human beings. One of my favourite teachers suggested me to study Anthropology. He said that there is lot of chance that I can answer my questions by studying Anthropology. Before that, I had never heard of the subject. After that incident I came to know about the subject, I applied for it and I got selected for Anthropology at University of Hyderabad. The core question that troubled me was "what is man?". My 2 years training in anthropology at University of Hyderabad was able to give the required platform which enabled me to assess what can be answered about man with the help of anthropology. Gradually I realised that for a holistic understanding of man we need to examine man with all its complexities. For me, the most complex phenomena in and with our body was mental illness. As a novice I started to enquire what is mind? The kind of experience that I had with my mind and for that matter for any young adult was confusing, incomprehensible and nuanced. I just wanted to know what is the nature of mind and why it becomes ill? Is the mind the same as the brain? Is it the self? How are all these associated with society? These questions continued to trouble me. Modern science does not accept mind the way we in India understand it. In fact, modern science does not accept mind as empirical and



thus keep it outside of scientific investigation. All these complex questions led me to focus on mind and mental illness. I think anthropology of mind and mental health has great potentiality to enable us seeing the interaction between body, mind and society. We can understand the nature of our reality if we closely observe and study mental illness. We can also find how society is being written on our bodies, how relationship is being written on our bodies, and how belief system is being written on our bodies. Study of mental illness opens a lot of avenues which can enable you to understand man in all its complexities. We can also understand nature of our being, if there is any.

The Upanishads capture all these complexities associated with mind. Mind is not the self, according to the Upanishads. Ayurveda and Yoga Darshan conceptualise mind in slightly different ways. Analysis of this instrument of perception, as it is called in Upanishads, is very sophisticated. We have concepts such as manas, buddhi, chitta, and ahankara to represent various functional states of mind. For all these ancient Indian traditions, Self is pure consciousness whereas mind is material. Mind is matter but very subtle. This subtle organ model of mind opens possibility of scientific investigation of mind. Rather than keeping it away from scientific investigation as Rene Descartes had proposed, mind, according to Indian knowledge traditions, can be brought to systematic observation and study. Across cultures we observe various concepts of mind. These understandings shape our experience of the world. Anthropology of Mind and Mental Health has this unique scope to examine various conceptions of mind and human experience of the world differ according to these distinct conceptions. This is how I started enquiring the concepts of mind associated with Indian knowledge traditions.

Which of your contributions, from your tribal research in Odisha to your work linking anthropology with public health, do you consider most significant, and why?

Among all my works, I think my ethnography of mental illness in tribal Odisha is most significant. I worked among the Ho tribe in Odisha. The Ho community in the Jajpur district of Odisha is a fast-changing community. The Ho community has experienced industrialisation, displacement, and resettlement. There are also fundamental changes in their livelihood, migration pattern and belief systems, etc. Moreover, Modern education and modern medicine have spread in the region. In this context I studied their mental illness. My study argues that social suffering gets translated into mental illness. In other words, social determinants of mental health need to be recognised and incorporated into mental health interventions for a successful mental health care system. Also, I argued that only anti- psychiatry

movement will not yield anything. What we really need is the recognition and incorporation of social and cultural factors into diagnosis and treatment of mental illness. My work on tribes of Odisha is an invitation to recognise social and cultural factors in mental illness experience. I argue that social and cultural factors are important in origin, diagnosis and treatment of mental illness. The contemporary mental health interventions need to incorporate community-based treatment. My work also highlights the role of local medicine man in mental health care. I consider this work as the most significant among all my works.

How do you view the current state of anthropology in India, especially its relevance to issues like mental health and climate change?

Anthropology in India is steadily evolving. Many scholars are contributing to various branches and sub-branches of the subject in real sense. There are substantial works in archaeological anthropology, biological anthropology, and social anthropology. However, there are certain challenges too. We are heading towards specialisations and super-specialisations. But anthropology is not about specialisations only. We are disintegrating. Various branches and sub-branches are parochializing themselves. We do not talk to each other. How many social anthropologists are working with biological anthropologists? How many medical anthropologists are working with palaeoanthropologists? We love our cocoons. We are defeating the core purpose of anthropology.

Both individual as well as systemic apathy are responsible for this. I have observed lack of communication among the specialisations in the same department too. There should also be encouragement at disciplinary level for generalist and integrationist approach. Project fundings and fellowships in anthropology need to recognise this concern and work towards it. This is more relevant for the field of mental health. As discussed earlier, mind is simultaneously physical, psychological, social, cultural, political and linguistic too.

Anthropologists of mind and mental health cannot afford to be closed and settled. They have to collaborate with neurologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and cognitive scientists to say something sensible. In India we have not developed a trans-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approach in a true sense yet. If you propose an interdisciplinary topic for PhD research it may face logistical and administrative challenges, and sometimes your own colleagues may oppose it stating that “it is not anthropological”. Only a few Indian scholars are engaged in Anthropology of mental health. Majority of funded works are by scholars based outside India. Scholarship ranges from ethnography of mental illness

in tribal community, social suffering, mental health problems at boarder area, to hospital ethnography, and urban mental health. Some works on clinical ethnography of mental health programmes, gender aspects of mental health, and traditional healing of mental illness are also there. India is a treasure for Anthropology of mental health research, but it is under-utilised. I feel there is a need for strong leadership and lobby which can encourage interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research so far as study of mind and mental health is concerned. The same applies to climate change too. Climate change is a planetary crisis based on human consumption at both individual as well as industrial level. Industrial production for mass consumption as well as massive production of defence equipment including weaponries are the real culprit. But at a deeper level, we can see an all-consuming self rapidly spreading length and breadth of this world. This neo-liberal self wants more products, more luxury, and more security. It does not know the cost. Or it pretends to be ignorant about the cost. The cost is the climate change. So, we can see how climate change is a complex phenomenon comprising of various factors linked to various disciplines. The need of the hour for Anthropology is to collaborate with other disciplines for examining climate change. Climate change is not only an environmental or technical issue; it is also a cultural, social and moral issue. Climate change policies and mitigation practices need to be based on anthropological research examining impacts on livelihoods, food practices, water use, migration, health, and human-nonhuman relationships. Anthropology of climate change is growing but weakly institutionalised.

In India, we need to make anthropology more public, more collaborative and more engaged with urgent contemporary questions. Whether addressing mental health, climate change, displacement, gender, tribal livelihoods, or technology, anthropology shows that solutions must be grounded in lived experience and cultural context. For me, the future of Indian anthropology lies in this capacity to connect the intimate world of everyday life with the large global crises of our time. Also, we need an urgent need for leadership and lobby for the subjects' wide acceptance and incorporation into various activities linked to nation building.

What advice would you give young scholars pursuing interdisciplinary research connecting anthropology with health and sustainability?

My advice to young anthropologists is to remain relevant to contemporary needs of our society. Think out-of-the-box and have courage to question traditions in the discipline which are outdated. No discipline has grown without changes in its practice and beliefs when required. Now there is a fundamental

change in the global order and the western hegemony in the academic world will witness a change. Young scholars need to capture the opportunity to rethink anthropological praxis in India.

The fields of health and sustainability is fundamentally linked to anthropology. A clear understanding of man with all its complexities and dimensions is essentially linked to any interventions in health and sustainability. My urgent advice to the young scholars of health and sustainability will be to remain deeply grounded in anthropology while remaining open to other disciplines. As anthropologist your expertise such as long-term fieldwork, attention to lived experience, cultural interpretation, and sensitivity to local worlds are essential ingredients for any successful interventions. These skills along with the art of doing ethnography are extremely important when we study health, climate change, sustainability or development. Another crucial point young scholars need to remember is to honestly consider communities as reservoir of knowledge. Superficial consideration in this regard will not yield anything. Local knowledge comes from trial-and-error method for thousands of years. We must stop considering any community as only the source of our data. In health research, local knowledge about illness, suffering, healing, and care deeply influence health experience. In sustainability research, local ecological knowledge, livelihood practices, human-nonhuman relations, cosmology, and moral relationships with land, forests, rivers and animals are equally important. Young scholars need to learn first from the field and then design culturally suited solutions in collaboration with the community. Another important advice is about methodology. Methodology changes according to changing social, technological and academic culture. We need to come out of our cocoons to embrace new tools and techniques to solve anthropological questions. One thing we have to remember is that core anthropological question and orientation must be intact. That is important. Fields of health and sustainability will require collaborating with doctors, psychologists, environmental scientists, public health experts and planners. So, we need to be flexible in terms of methodology.

My last advice for the young scholars will be to write on public issues. Research should go beyond the academic journals to reach common men. Then only anthropology will be known to all and will be relevant for all. Anthropology is a great subject. It can contribute immensely and meaningfully to policy, community well-being and public understanding. We must embrace this responsibility.



The Smile of the Gond Elder

By Akash Lalwani

Travelling along the winding road that passes through the forests of Tamia, we reached Khulsaan village during the first phase of Census 2027. As a Census Supervisor, I had arrived with my team members to record information on households and population. However, beyond collecting data, the visit offered me an opportunity to listen to numerous stories and conversations through which I gained a deeper understanding of how people, the environment, weather patterns, and the passage of time had shaped local life and brought about change.

One afternoon, while completing our work in a small settlement, we arrived at a house where a group of Gond elders were seated beneath a large tree, engaged in conversation. The wrinkles on their faces reflected decades of lived experience, and their discussions carried memories of a very different era. Among them was an elderly man whose gentle smile later became the subject of my photograph.

After exchanging greetings, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of our visit. The elder arranged chairs for us while he himself remained seated on the threshold of his home. As our conversation progressed from the census to everyday life, the discussion gradually turned toward roads, communication, and development. Pointing toward the road that now connects the village to the outside world, the elder remarked that life had been very different just a decade ago. He recalled how villagers once travelled nearly sixty kilometres to the district headquarters to sell their agricultural produce. The journey was made through forest paths using bullock carts. Since travelling to the market alone could take eight to ten hours, families carried food and water and prepared themselves for an exhausting trip that often stretched across more than a day. After selling their produce, they would purchase essential goods and undertake the long journey back home. Simply reaching the market was, in itself, a significant achievement.

Comparing those days with the present, the elder explained how improved roads and transportation had transformed everyday life. Tasks that once consumed an entire day can now be completed within approximately two hours. Farmers are able to take their produce to market more easily and return home the same day. Better connectivity has enabled the younger generation to access services available in towns and cities and strengthened links with nearby markets and administrative centres. He also reflected on changing prices, noting that while a few rupees were once enough to sustain a family for a day, such a reality is no longer possible in the present economic context. His words reminded me that development is often understood through statistics, policy reports, and discussions in conferences. Yet its true meaning becomes visible through lived experiences.

For the people of Kursidhana hamlet in Khulsaan village, development was not an abstract concept. They measured it in terms of shorter travel times, easier access to opportunities, and stronger connections with the wider world.

Despite these transformations, the Gond way of life continues to reflect a deep relationship with nature. Traditional house-building techniques and the use of natural resources demonstrate a profound understanding of and harmony with the environment. Food habits, although evolving in certain ways, still retain many customary practices. Agricultural methods have changed, and tractors and machinery now accompany the bullocks once used exclusively for farming. Living close to forests, people continue to derive both their identity and resources from their natural surroundings. Nature remains central to cultural traditions and rituals, while the simplicity and collective spirit of village life are still evident in community gatherings and family ceremonies.

The photograph I captured reflects this balance between continuity and change. The gentle smile of the elder embodies the coexistence of two eras. It bears witness to a world that once moved at a slower pace while simultaneously acknowledging the realities of a rapidly changing modern age. His smile revealed the wisdom of someone who had personally witnessed his village's transformation from relative isolation to improved connectivity and opportunity. As I come back from Khulsaan, the elder's words stayed with me. Time continues to move forward, and so do people. We live in an era where distances are shrinking and communication is instantaneous. Yet the stories of those who remember the past remind us that development is not merely about roads, infrastructure, or technology. It is also about understanding how communities adapt to change while preserving their cultural identity.

Whether among the Gond people or any other community, culture continues to foster a sense of belonging and solidarity. Religious festivals, cultural celebrations, and family ceremonies bring people together, reinforcing social bonds and maintaining community resilience. For this reason, the photograph is more than a portrait. It offers a glimpse into a community that is embracing new possibilities while carrying forward its traditions. Behind that simple smile lies a story of resilience, memory, and the passage of time. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as a Census Supervisor during Census 2027. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Tehsildar Tamia and Census Charge Officer Mr. Sanjay Masram, Master Trainer Mr. Manoj Usrethe, Technical Expert Mr. Dinesh Uikey, and Enumerator Mr. Netram Uikey, whose direct and indirect support made this experience possible.

Living Advaita: A Participant Observation at Ekatma Parva 2026



By Neha

Introductory Note

This photo essay is based on participant observation, one of anthropology's core fieldwork methods. As a participant in the Advait Youth Awakening Camp 2026, I lived alongside nearly 700 young participants at Ekatma Dham, Omkareshwar, engaging in daily lectures, rituals, discussions, cultural performances, and community life. The programme culminated in diksha, after which I became a Shankardoot. Documenting the festival from within provided an emic perspective, revealing how Advaita Vedanta is experienced as a living tradition through ritual practice, immersive learning, and collective participation rather than as philosophy confined to texts.



Photo 1. Ekatma Dham: The Landscape of Oneness

The monumental Statue of Oneness and the emerging Ekatma Dham formed the cultural landscape of the festival. More than a pilgrimage site, it functions as an educational and philosophical centre dedicated to Advaita Vedanta. Anthropologically, the site illustrates how architecture and sacred space become institutions for preserving and transmitting cultural memory.



Photo 2. Advait Youth Awakening Camp

Participants from different states lived together during the ten-day residential camp, studying Vedanta under Acharyas while practicing discipline, yoga, community living, and service. Shared routines transformed strangers into a learning community, demonstrating how immersive education creates collective identity beyond regional, linguistic, and social differences.



Photo 3. Learning Through Dialogue

Interactive group discussions encouraged participants to interpret Advaita in relation to contemporary issues such as ethics, society, technology, and environmental responsibility. Rather than passive learning, knowledge emerged through dialogue, collaboration, and reflection, illustrating education as a participatory cultural process.



Photo 4. Ekatma Parva: Celebrating Acharya Shankar

The five-day Ekatma Parva united saints, scholars, artists, and camp participants in celebrating the birth anniversary of Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya. Discourses, panel discussions, cultural performances, and inter-tradition dialogue demonstrated how philosophical traditions continue to engage contemporary society while maintaining cultural continuity.



Photo 5. Raso Vai Sah: Philosophy Through Performance

Evening performances of Bharatanatyam, Odissi, Manipuri, Hindustani music, and other classical traditions interpreted Advaita through artistic expression. Anthropologically, performing arts functioned as vehicles of intangible cultural heritage, communicating philosophical ideas through embodied practice rather than written texts.



Photo 6. Yajña and Sacred Ecology

Vedic rituals, including the yajña performed during the festival, reflected the continuing relationship between spirituality, ecology, and community life. Ritual participation transformed the sacred space into a collective expression of faith, continuity, and environmental consciousness.



Photo 7. Diksha on the Banks of the Narmada

On the fifth day, coinciding with Acharya Shankar's birth anniversary, nearly 700 participants gathered on the banks of the Narmada for ritual bathing before receiving diksha through a collective Vedic sankalpa. The vow affirmed commitments to self-awakening (Atma Jagarana) and human welfare (Loka Kalyana). Anthropologically, the ceremony functioned as a rite of passage, marking the transition from participant to Shankardoot.



Photo 8. White as Ritual Identity

Following diksha, all participants wore traditional white South Indian attire—white sarees with golden borders for women and white dhotis for men. The shared dress symbolized equality, discipline, and unity, temporarily transcending regional and social identities while reinforcing collective belonging.



Photo 9. The Making of Shankardoots

Ekatma Parva is part of an annual initiative to prepare Shankardoots—young ambassadors of Advaita Vedanta. Through immersive education, interaction with Acharyas, community living, and ritual practice, participants are encouraged to carry the values of self-awareness, ethical living, and social responsibility into their communities. Participants' travel, accommodation, and meals are supported by the Government of Madhya Pradesh, enabling youth from diverse backgrounds to participate.



Photo 10. Beyond Observation

This fieldwork blurred the conventional distinction between observer and participant. As both an anthropology student and a Shankardoot, I documented not only an event but a lived process of cultural transmission. The photographs reveal how Advaita Vedanta continues to evolve through education, ritual, performance, and youth participation, demonstrating that philosophy becomes most meaningful when experienced as everyday social practice.

SUICIDE



Reviewed by: Puneet Kour

Emile Durkheim [1858-1917] was one of the founding figure sociologies. He did investigations in different fields such as labor, suicide, religion, etc. His major work is the division of labor, the elementary form of religious life, The rules of sociological method, and suicide; a study in sociology. He believed that society influences our actions, even in the most personal decision. One of his most important studies focused on something as personal and devastating as suicide. The book was originally written in French under the title LE SUICIDE and published by Alcan Press in Paris in 1897. It was translated into English as Suicide; A study in sociology and published in 1951 by the Free Press [translated by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson]. The book is structured into an Introduction followed by 3 main sections (called "Books"), which are split into a total of 12 chapters. Introduction (1 chapter equivalent): Durkheim defines suicide strictly as a measurable social phenomenon rather than a purely individual act.

Book I: Extra-Social Factor

This contains four chapters. By dedicating the first part of the book to these 'extra-social factors' Durkheim is basically saying that we cannot blame suicide rates on the weather, biology, or isolated madness. Because these non-social factors don't match the data, the true cause must be found inside society itself.

Book II: Social Causes and Social Types

This contains six chapters. By pairing these two concepts, social cause and social types Durkheim is making a bold claim that you can actually diagnose the specific sickness of a society by looking at the types of suicide it produces. When society fails to balance these forces, it creates the specific social environments that drive people to take their lives.

Book III: General Nature of Suicide as a Social Phenomenon

This contains three chapters. This book represents Durkheim's grand conclusion that now, I have proven that suicide is driven by society, we must accept that social forces are real, recognize that our modern society is currently hurting, and take deliberate, practical steps to rebuild our social bonds. The book has been reprinted by various publishers over decades. The exact page count varies depending on the edition. However, the definitive, widely read Free Press English edition contain roughly 400 to 435 pages. This book sets an act to explain why people take their lives and how society plays a significant

EMILE DURKHEIM SUICIDE

A STUDY IN SOCIOLOGY

Edited with an introduction by George Simpson

Translated by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson



role in this tragic decision. The findings were groundbreaking because this showed that suicide is not just an individual act. It is also a social phenomenon. Durkheim believed that society impacts individual behavior. In this book, he identified four types of suicide, each influenced by the relationship between individual and society. Each one helps us to understand how our society has a strong effect on our behavior and deeply shapes our personal acts. The four types of suicide are Egoistic suicide, Altruistic suicide, Anomic suicide, and Fatalistic suicide. Egoistic suicide; this happens when people feel disconnected from society. When an individual does not have strong family ties, close friendship, or a sense of purpose within a group. This lack of connection can leave them feeling lonely and isolated, making them more vulnerable to taking their own lives. Durkheim found that people who were not married or who lacked strong community support were more likely to experience this type of suicide. Altruistic suicide; it happens when someone feels so

deeply connected to a group or cause that they are willing to sacrifice their life for it. Example a soldier who in battle or people who end their lives for the good of their community. In these cases, the individual sense of self is so closely related tied to the group that they see their death as serving a higher purpose. It is like a pressure in which someone can feel prioritizing the group over their own life. Anomic suicide; this type of suicide occurs when people experience sudden and overwhelming changes in their lives, particularly when social norms and rules seem to break down. Example if someone is losing a job, going through a divorce, or living in a society that has just experienced an economic collapse. In this situation, people can feel like they have lost their way as if the world no longer makes sense. They feel hopeless and resort to suicide. Fatalistic suicide; according to Durkheim, it is rare but important. It happens when people are trapped in a situation where their lives are controlled by strict rules or oppressive circumstances. Example, someone is living under authoritarian rules or enduring endless abuse. In these cases, the future can seem so black and unchangeable that suicide feels like the only escape.

Durkheim's study of suicide revealed something incredibly important about the way we connect to society matters deeply. He showed that even something as personal as suicide is influenced by the social world. His work also changed how we think about mental health and societal responsibility. It is not enough to look at individual struggles; we also need to look at the social environment. Today, Durkheim's theory of suicide is still incredibly relevant. We see examples of his ideas in modern issues like mental health crises, economic uncertainty, and social disconnection. Understanding his work helps us to see that solution needs to go beyond treating individuals.

REFLECTIONS ON ANTHRO BULLETIN

Reflection on "GenZ, Identity, and Digital Expression: A Visual Anthropological Case Study from South Asia"



By Esha Jaiswal

Published in the March 2026 issue of Anthro Bulletin, Neha Singh's article "GenZ, Identity, and Digital Expression: A Visual Anthropological Case Study from South Asia" explores the digital performances of two subjects: a Kashmiri Muslim Rajput (Khan) and a Bihari Hindu Rajput (Singh), to illuminate how the Gen Z activist-performer deploys Instagram as a stage for political identity and sociability. The article argues that the digital space has transformed into an anthropological site of identity-making, where politics and spirituality, protest and preservation, and the public and the private coexist. Neha's article delves into the revolutionary potential of the algorithm, demonstrating how individuals use Instagram to express radical views, document their lives through personal digital diaries, and forge solidarities with like-minded communities. However, the other side of the algorithm is populated by South Asian creators who perpetuate conservative and misogynistic ideologies through their content. For instance, creators such as @anushkaalife and @tanishkkatiwari went viral on Instagram a year ago for their "A Day in My Life as a 21-Year-Old Married Girl" content. Such creators take pride in their roles as traditional, young brides and portray an idealised image of marital bliss, influencing young girls to view financial dependence on their spouses as desirable, even though these creators themselves earn an independent income through content creation. In a country like India, where young women are often pressured to marry, such content reinforces existing social expectations, potentially placing women in

vulnerable situations by normalising restrictive gender roles. In some cases, these pressures may contribute to women feeling trapped in abusive or coercive circumstances, with devastating consequences, including being driven to flee their homes, take their own lives, or commit heinous crimes, as seen in the case of Siya Goyal.

A different group of creators, such as @writer_sahab and @jsd.adv, position themselves as right-wing intellectuals and facilitate the dissemination of casteist and Islamophobic ideologies to a wider audience. Their confident narration, seemingly supported by citations and evidence, are but half-truths and exaggerations mobilised to fabricate a convincing case that advances their agenda of promoting hatred and communalism. In a conversation with my colleague, Anmol, she observed that the disillusioned individual, grappling with an unstable economy, and housing and climate crises, often feels "the need to belong". Content of this kind makes them feel less isolated, evokes strong emotional responses, and enables the algorithm to amplify engagement through these "affective economies" (Sara Ahmed). Although digital media has the potential to foster activism and resistance, it can also be employed, perhaps even more effectively, to proliferate hatemongering and intensify social and political polarisation. Ultimately, it is the user's responsibility to remain cognizant of their content consumption and refrain from interacting with such inflammatory content.

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 APande. 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, ICAR etc.

- Dr Nita Mawar



FORTHCOMING EVENT

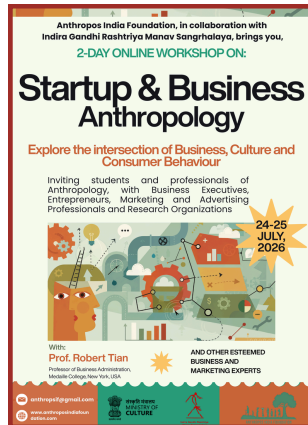
- An online lecture will be organised as a part of our Distinguished Guest lecture series.

For updates, please follow our website's events page- <https://events.anthroposindiafoundation.com/>

- AIF with IGRMS, Bhopal is jointly organizing a **2-Day Online Workshop on Startup and Business Anthropology with Prof. Robert Tian** as a key speaker, via Google Meet.

Date: 24-25th July, 2026

Registration Link: [Click here](#)



PAST EVENT

- For our Distinguished Guest lecture series, an online lecture was organised and delivered by **Dr. Khirod Chandra Moharana** on **25th June 2026 at 5:30 pm onwards**

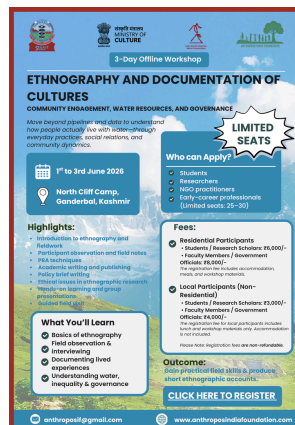
For more details - [Click here](#)

YouTube Live Link: [Click here](#)



- As part of the AIF-IGRMS collaborative initiative to conduct a series of offline workshops on "Ethnography and Documentation of Culture," a three-day workshop was organized from 1-3 June 2026 at North Cliff Camp, Ganderbal, Srinagar, Kashmir.

For more details - [Click here](#)



FELLOWSHIPS AND JOB ALERTS

- Project Technical Support-III at ICMR-NIRWoH, Mumbai and MRHRU, Vani (Nashik)
Last Date to Apply: 15.07.2026
Application Link: [Click here](#)
- Senior Consultant, Health Policy and Integrated Planning/ Human Resources for Health, NHSRC
Last Date to Apply: 28.07.2026
Application Link: [Click here](#)
- Technical Advisory Group on Leishmaniasis at WHO
Last Date to Apply: 24.07.2026 (midnight Geneva time)
Application Link: [Click here](#)
- Applications for ICSSR's Senior Fellowship 2026
Last Date to Apply: 21.07.2026
Application Link: [Click here](#)

NEW!

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 fourth workshop of this series soon — 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.

Three-Day Offline Workshop on Ethnography and Documentation of Culture

The Three-Day Offline Workshop on Ethnography and Documentation of Culture was held from 1-3rd June 2026 at the North Cliff Camp, Ganderbal, Srinagar, Kashmir. Jointly organized by Anthropos India Foundation (AIF), Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS), and Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology - Ganderbal, it marked the third workshop in the series focusing on immersive Ethnographic Research, Cultural Documentation, Community Engagement, Water Resources and Governance in Kashmir.



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'CHILDHOOD MATTERS'

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