ANTHRO BULLETIN

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A digital magazine that celebrates cultural diversities of India.

ABOUT ANTHROPOS INDIA FOUNDATION

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

ABOUT ANTHRO BULLETIN

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

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

All submissions can be emailed to aif.newsletter2025@gmail.com. We also welcome sponsors who would like to support this magazine.

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FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR'S DESK

Happiness Quotient

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

Dear All,

Following Shalina ma'am's insightful editorial, I felt inspired the way, we have lost that to reflect—perhaps in a simpler, more personal way—on some of the existential questions that often come to mind. If only it were easy to know what truly makes us happy, the world would be a far better place to live in. How many of us really know what brings us joy? Have we ever paused to think about the moments we have cherished most-those that made us feel alive and grateful? Life is short, unpredictable, and fleeting. In this brief span, how many meaningful, memorable moments have we truly created?

Whenever I urge my father to travel to faraway, exotic places, he smiles and reminds me that every person has their own happiness quotient. "Real happiness," he says, "often lies in the small and ordinary things." He once spoke of a friend from the defence services who found his greatest happiness in something as simple as sitting under a roof while it drizzled, smoking a cigarette, and watching the raindrops fall.

Happiness, indeed, does not require great wealth. Many things that bring us joy are free. Of course, one needs enough resources to live comfortably—but beyond that, joy lies in simple pleasures. For me, happiness means listening to music, taking long walks, wandering through forests, admiring the colours and shapes of trees, sharing meaningful conversations with loved ones, and teaching in a classroom full of curious students.

Have you ever made a list of things that truly make you happy? Try it-and do them more often. I often wonder how global "happiness indices" are created-how can we measure happiness across diverse lives and experiences? While basic needs are essential, can anything beyond that really buy happiness? Each individual carries a unique understanding of joy. In this fast-paced, technologically driven world, we are slowly losing touch with ourselves, with others, and with nature. The greatest loss, perhaps, is not spending quality time with the people we love-or with our own selves. Let's make it happen before it slips away forever.

We take everything too seriously, even life itself. We forget that we, too, are passengers here, with only a finite time on this beautiful planet. In our frantic race to prove ourselves, time passes before we realize it. Everything is finiteincluding life and time. The best we can do is slow down, relax, and give time to ourselves and those who matter most.

Perhaps that is why simpler societies often seem more content. Their happiness lies in collective expressionscommunity music, dance, art, and festivities that harmonize with nature's rhythm. The richness of Indian culture, too, lies in celebrating life-through rites of passage, shared rituals, and moments of togetherness. Somewhere along

essence amid glitter, display, and extravagance.

Can we return to the quiet joy of simplicity? The way, we have lost essence amid glitter, display, and extravagance.

Can we return to the quiet joy of simplicity?





CHIEF EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Reiterating plural Narratives of knowledge and Wisdom

Prof. (retd.) Shalina Mehta, Department of Anthropology, Panjab University

"THE UNIVERSE IS MADE OF STORIES, NOT OF ATOMS"
-Muriel Rukeyser

Dear Readers,

Intellectual insights reflected in the contributions made by young researchers to the *Anthro Bulletin* are edifying learning for me. In this edition Kulesh Bhandari's narrative of Santhal rituals associated with the sowing season titled "Where Monsoon Begins with Buna Buni and shravan songs" is an embodiment of metaphors of ethnoscience^[1]. Knowledge rooted in traditions of experiential learning is neither rhetoric nor mythical as some believers of universal truism of 'science and scientific method' may try to tell us. In a recent informal discussion, a very senior professor of biological anthropology insisted that there is no scientific wisdom in ancient Indian texts and indigenous knowledge systems. It is a phantasmagoria that is being channelized by a popular political discourse. Contrary to the perception of this senior human biologist from India, a distinguished research professor of philosophy at ULCA, Sandra Harding (1997, P.37) writes: "The perception of scientific claims as universal, objective and rational is itself locally constructed and not an internal, trans-cultural feature of any truly scientific processes, any appeal to such notions should carry no more authority than the claims can command on other grounds."

Exclusive wisdom of western science and its hegemony denies the plural^[2] origins of knowledge systems and its relevance. Anthropologists (Turnbull, 1993; Watson Varren Helen and David Turnbull, 1995) are pioneers in promoting narrative of Ethnoscience taking cognizance of diverse indigenous scientific practises. Turnbull (1993, p.30) extending the argument calls for western systems of techno-science as just another system of knowledge and is not the hallmark of attribute of 'objectivity and rationality'. To call local knowledge as oxymoron in the context of master narratives of modern science is antithetical to the fundamentals of science itself. Take for instance this headline from NBC podcast^[3] making a cynical judgement-Stone Age Cultures Survive Tsunami Waves. This was typical of arrogance rooted in western scientism. Brief that followed headline showed reluctant acknowledgement of relevance of ethnoscience stating -Experts believe that ancient knowledge of the movements of wind, science and birds may have saved indigenous tribes on an Indian archipelago from the Tsunami's full wrath^[4]. They simply don't say that ancient knowledge of meteorological transformations is far more superior to technological predicators available to contemporary science.

Principles and grand theories of science have emanated from numerous interactive processes. Over the years there was systematic denial of contingency of these knowledge systems. With the narratives of post-modernism gaining momentum in the last decaded of the twentieth century



preponderance and popularity of hard-core scientific theories and prominence of technological dominance is feeling threatened. In a 2025 publication titled War on Science, edited by Lawerence Krauss, 39 celebrated scientists have challenged assiduousness of 'theories of gender', existence of 'trans people', 'critical race studies', 'colonization of knowledge of mathematics'; and have labelled their growing political and public acceptance as Current Threats to Free Speech, Open enquiry, and Scientific process. In this volume Gad Saad refers to "postmodernist, radical feminists, cultural relativists, and social Constructivist for being 'parasites' on the body politic for their fear of 'biophobia'. By biophobia, he implies fear of using biology to explain human behaviour. I recommend young researchers in anthropology, social sciences and humanities to read the book to understand how decades of postcolonial intellectual discourse that propagated biological, cultural and linguistic diversity, gender, race and class parity is being attacked under the pretext of protecting the hegemony of western science.

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heterogenous practices.

⁽¹⁾ The term ethnoscience was coined by Harshberger in the year 1890 and implied "the study of uses of scientifically identified environmental data" as is done by Kulesh Bhandari's deconstruction of Buna Buni Santhal rituals to what Ford (1978. p. 39) describes as focus on "the native point of view".

(2) Latur (1987) emphatically stated that there are no homogenous entities of science and technology, there are instead dynamically interacting set of

^[3]nbcnews.com Jan 5th, 2005; accessed on 1st November 2025.

^[4]On 26th December 2004, 'Under Sea Megathrust Earthquake of 9.2-9.3Mw' hit the Indian Ocean resulting in a Tsunami of maximum 167 ft causing loss of nearly 227,698million lives and colossal damage to other bio-species and infrastructure in 14 countries. Its maximum impact was experienced by Sumatra, Indonesia, Tamil Nadu in India, Sri Lanka and Khao Lak in Thailand. There was a lesson for the hegemonic discourse of science. In this Asian Tsunami not only all the Onge Survived but Morken Tribe of Thailand popularly called Sea Nomads predicted that a "laboon" was coming that would swallow their Island. Paying heed to the warning most of them escaped unhurt following learnings from their oral tradition, while millions living with scientific knowledge and predictability died. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/dec/10/indian-ocean-tsunami-moken-sea-nomads-thailand accessed on 211.2025.

ARTICLE 1

Where Monsoon Begins with Buna Buni and Shravan Songs



By Kulesh Bhandari

The arrival of the monsoon is tracked across much of India by satellite images, meteorological updates and the rumble of machinery preparing the land. In North India, farmers rely on their instinct but also wait for the Indian Meteorological Department's forecast before sowing seeds. In southern and coastal regions, the southwest monsoon sweeps in with dramatic winds and a sudden greening of the earth. But in one corner of eastern India, the monsoon arrives not with technology, but with tradition.

In the tribal heartland of Santhal Pargana in Jharkhand, the monsoon doesn't begin with tractors or forecasts. It starts with a prayer, a ritual, a song — handed down not through books, but through breath and belief. It starts with Buna Buni.

On the 19th of July this year, as the clouds hovered low over Dumka district's red soil, villagers gathered under the open sky to perform Buna Buni. This age-old Santhal ceremony marks the formal beginning of agriculture. It is not just a celebration; it is an invocation. Women with soaked sarees, men with tilak-smeared foreheads and elders carrying baskets of seed gather beneath the sal trees to ask the Earth for permission. To plant. To hope. To begin. "Marang Buru is not merely a deity, but the ancient breath of the Santhal landscape — a living mountain spirit whose silence holds the memory of rains, roots, and reverence, older than any scripture and deeper than any myth."

In the Santhal tradition, no seed is sown until the Buna Buni is performed. The entire village comes together to bless the soil and pray for rain. There is music, but not for festivity—it is for memory. The beating of drums, the chanting of elders, the fragrance of mahua and rice beer: all blend into a humble, sacred call to the sky. These rituals are also marked by the offerings they carry. In Hindu farming villages of Jharkhand and Bihar, the Aasahri Puja is held during the Aasharh month, before the first plough touches the soil. Farmers offer kheer—rice cooked in milk—symbolising purity, nourishment, and the hope for good rainfall.

In Santhal communities, Buna Buni is accompanied by the offering of "paanch misti" — five kinds of sweets placed together: batasa, laddu, jalebi, khorma, and lacto (or jhuri). Khorma is a traditional Santhal sweet made from refined flour (maida), kneaded into a soft dough, rolled out and cut into long, flat strips. These are deep-fried until golden and then soaked in sugar syrup, giving them a crisp texture with a sweet glaze. Khorma is not just a food item but a festive delight, symbolizing abundance and communal joy.

Lacto, also called Jhuri in local terms, is another sacred festive sweet shaped like thin, twisted sticks. It is made by



twisting strips of flour dough and frying them until crisp, followed by coating them generously with crystalized sugar. Their unique shape and crunch make them a favorite among elders and children alike during the Buna Buni celebration. These are not fancy delicacies but simple, familiar, local flavors. They represent the essence of the Earth and the sweetness of beginning. To the Santhal mind, these items are not just food — they are gestures of humility and celebration offered back to the land. What makes Buna Buni more than just a ritual is the way it embodies an ecological intelligence. The Santhals do not speak in terms of "climate resilience" or "sustainable agriculture" - but what they practice is nothing less than that. By aligning the sowing of seeds with the rhythms of the moon, the behavior of birds and frogs, the flowering of sal and mahua, they have built a traditional weather wisdom far more accurate than many modern predictions.

During my observation this July, I witnessed elders discussing how the silence of the night frogs or the direction of termite flights signals when the rains will truly arrive. One elder from Ramgarh village explained, "If the frog sings before Buna Buni, we know rain will come within seven days. If he stays silent, we wait."

These signals should not be seen as superstition. They are science — filtered through centuries of survival, relationship with the forest, and faith in cycles larger than themselves. There are no mobile apps here, yet crops are sown at the right moment. No meteorological charts, yet rain is read through the soil's smell and the ants' movements. It is time we realized that much of traditional knowledge appears superstitious to us today because its original context has been lost over time and further distorted in translation.

Buna Buni is also a cultural firewall. It marks a collective moment of humility before nature - a reminder that farming is not control, but collaboration. To ask the land to give, we must first bow to it. The Earth is sacred-both through the lens of ecofeminism, but also as a matter of common sense—demanding our respect and reverence before we till, touch or take from it. Sadly, as modern farming methods spread and younger generations migrate, rituals like Buna Buni are fading. Some villages skip it entirely. But those who still perform it - like the community I visited this July - preserve not just a tradition, but an ecological code. I believe India needs to listen to these quiet villages more. Not out of romanticism, but because the climate crisis is already here. And perhaps the answers lie not only in innovations, but also in old songs sung under the clouds of Shravan.

Additional Suggestion

During the Buna Buni festival, elders of the Santhal village gather in a solemn baithak (village council) near the sacred Manjhi than — the tribal altar of worship. The ground is freshly smeared with gobar (cow dung), believed to purify the space, and offerings are placed beneath the thick roots of the sakua (Shorea robusta) tree — a sacred tree symbolizing life and strength.

Here, prayers are whispered not to idols but to Marang Buru — the "Great Mountain," the supreme deity who resides in nature itself. Through this ritual, the community invokes rain and a bountiful harvest, trusting nature's rhythms more than any modern forecast. Elders recount how, after this puja, rains often graced the soil.

Among the offerings are handmade sweets like khorma and jhuri, prepared from kneaded flour, deep-fried, and dipped in sweet syrup. Each piece carries not just flavor but ancestral memory.

Marang Buru, the "Great Mountain," is not a god in form, but a force — a spirit of the hills, forests, and winds — worshipped by the Santhals as the very soul of creation. In honouring him, they honour Earth itself.



ARTICLE 2

Annakoot: Feeding the Divine



By Shefali Sharma

On the morning after Deepawali, India not only wakes to fireworks but also to the fragrance of food. Temple courtyards are filled with the smell of the smoke of ghee diyas lit last night. Temple priest arranges chhappan bhog in front of Lord Krishna to pay him gratitude and reverence. Slowly, a mountain of food rises, which is an edible hill of devotion called Annakoot, the mountain of grains (Fig. 1).



Figure: Annakoot display arranged before Lord Krishna.

The festival embarks on a continuation of a century-old tradition which links food, faith and ecology. It is not a mere ritual offering, but it reflects a structured relationship between human, environment and social exchange.

The origin of the Annakoot festival lies in Hindu scriptures. Bhagavata Purana (Book 10, Chapter 25) gives the detailed history of this event. When the people of Braj were preparing to worship Indra, the god of thunder, Lord Krishna urged them to honour Govardhan parvat instead of Indra. This angered Indra, and he unleashed relentless rains. Krishna, with his little finger lifted the Govardhan parvat and gave shelter to the villagers. When the storm subsided, villagers prepared and offered a feast for the mountain in gratitude.

This feast offering became the genesis of Annakoot. To honour this memory, devotees rebuild Govardhan mountain with food. It reminds us that the world, too, shelters them when they show reverence in return. It also showcases that dependence of human survival is on nature's generosity.

The Offering as Relationship

Annakoot is not just a feast of luxury; rather, it is a language of offering. Eachhousehold brings what it can: sweets, grains, etc. Once placed before the deity, the food loses its ownership and converts to prasadam, which belongs to all.

This gesture is a living form of reciprocity. It is not the barter of goods but is exchange of gratitude. This offering is not an economic transaction, but rather a moral one. People give back to nature what they have received throughout the entire year, harvest, milk, etc. In doing so, the cosmological balance is renewed that ties humans to Mother Earth.

Feeding the Earth That Feeds Us

Annakoot is also a ritual of ecology. The time of arrival is so prominent, as itarrives with the end of the monsoon and the close of harvest. At this time granaries are filled, and the fields rest. People build a small replica of Lord Krishna holding Govardhan parvat in his hand with cow dung and decorate it with flowers (Fig. 2).

Cows, who are dear to Lord Krishna, are fed first.



Figure: Ritual representation of Govardhan parvat made of cow dung.

This practice is based on Traditional Ecological Knowledge, which argues that human survival depends on care for the environment. Even as cities are expanding and fields are shrinking, the ritual now carries its ecological core into new spaces. Temple Hall has replaced the cowshed. Cow dung is replaced by clay and mud. Urban devotees offer packaged foods instead of homegrown grains. But the underlying message remains the same. The Annakoot festival also demonstrates the Nature-Man-Spirit Complex of L.P. Vidyarthi (1961). Here, nature (mountain), man (community preparing food) and spirit (Lord Krishna) are interwoven within one act of worship (Fig. 3). It integrates ecological reverence, social participation and spiritual devotion into one system of cultural balance.

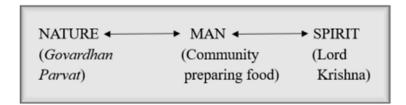


Figure: . Diagram representing the Nature-Man-Spirit Complex in the Annakoot festival.

Sacred Food and the Sense of Equality

While sharing prasadam, Annakoot dissolves social boundaries. For some time, caste, class and wealth subsided. For a short period of time, economic and caste distinctions are set aside. Annakoot here is creating 'communitas' as described by Victor Turner (1969), where food is dissolving the hierarchy and is becoming a moral equaliser.

To eat together is to acknowledge shared dependence. Annakoot explains that the food feeds, but it also teaches that abundance can only gain meaning when it is circulated.

Continuity and Change

Like every other living tradition, Annakoot has also evolved. In oldentimes, households offered food from their own harvest. Today, temple kitchens prepare elaborate displays called chhappan bhog. Communal collections are replaced by corporate sponsorships. Cell phones capture the mountain even before it is shared with the devotees. Images of food offerings circulate online and virtual events are organized to honour the festival's significance. These changes highlight that continuity and change co-exist. The mode of worship might be changed, but the purpose of the ritual remains constant.

Annakoot is more than a festival. Economically, it highlights the ethics ofreciprocity; ecologically, it honours the earth; symbolically, it transforms nourishment into prayers; socially, it binds the many into one. This festival demonstrates that in Indian culture, food is not merely sustenance; rather, it is a sacred substance that connects all aspects.

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ARTICLE 3

Celebration of Femininity in Odisha: The Ritual World of Kumar Purnima



By Ruchisri Sahu

In Odisha, the full moon night of Ashwina marks a festival of Afternoon: Sociality and Sisterhood light, laughter, and longing: Kumar Purnima. Often By noon, homes echo with laughter and odiya jhoti designs feminine consciousness.

Through its rituals, songs, and social gatherings, Kumar Purnima becomes a mirror of how Odia society ritualizes femininity, not as passive purity, but as a living force tied to nature, aesthetics, and aspiration.

Morning: Invoking the Sun and Youth

As dawn breaks on Kumar Purnima, young unmarried girls bathe early, dress in new clothes, and offer anna, chuda, kadali (banana), coconut, and khai (puffed rice) to the rising sun. This anjali is offered with folded hands and whispered wishes for beauty like Mahalakshmi and fortune like Savitri. From an anthropological lens, this morning ritual links the human life cycle to cosmic rhythm. The rising sun, representing vitality and masculine energy, is ritually engaged by young women at the threshold of womanhood. The offering is both devotional and symbolic like a prayer for balance, fertility, and the fullness of life.

Elders often recall that Kumar Purnima coincides with the day Kartikeya (Kumar), the handsome celestial bachelor and son of Shiva and Parvati, was born. Hence, the day is believed to be auspicious for unmarried girls who seek grace, charm, and a desirable match. But beneath this mythic surface lies a subtle social pedagogy of teaching young women the art of self-care, ritual discipline, and aesthetic expression.





overshadowed by the grandeur of Durga Puja or Diwali, this blossom on courtyards. Girls visit each other's houses, festival holds an intimate and profound place in the lives of exchange chuda-dahi-kadali (flattened rice, curd, and Odia women and girls. It celebrates maidenhood, beauty, banana), and sing folk verses teasing the moon and the and desire, and symbolically, it honours the awakening of gods. It is a day of togetherness-without the burden of work, school, or domestic obligations. For those who grew up in the villages, the festival evokes vivid memories: girls gathering under mango trees, oiling their hair, trying out new jewelry, and comparing bangles. Kumar Purnima becomes a collective performance of femininity-ritually authorized and socially celebrated. In an anthropological sense, this communal participation creates a "female space" within the social structure. Unlike most ritual occasions dominated by male priests or paternal authority, Kumar Purnima is entirely owned by women. Mothers supervise, but daughters lead. The collective participation, laughter, and competition subtly reinforce gender solidarity, allowing women to reimagine themselves beyond domestic identities.



Evening: The Moon as Witness

The most enchanting moment of Kumar Purnima arrives with dusk. As the full moon rises, girls gather again, facing the open sky with khaee, kadali (banana), and betel leaf in their hands. They offer arghya (libation) to the moon while reciting the traditional line: "Kumar purnima janha, to pakhare to bhaja, to haatare dhana, mo haatare mana." ("O bright full moon of Kumar, you hold grains in your hand; grant me a loving heart in mine.") The act of offering to the moon which is gentle, cool, and luminous that expresses the aspiration for grace, emotional fulfillment, and love. The moon, feminized in Odia songs yet pursued like the ideal beloved, becomes a reflective symbol of womanhood itself is soft yet constant, distant yet intimate. After the ritual, villages come alive with games, dance, and playful competitions. Puchi khela, a rhythmic squatting game, is the highlight of the night. The games, accompanied by song and laughter, are not mere entertainment but they are performative rituals of agility, beauty, and social bonding. Anthropologically, these evening practices transform ritual piety into space acts as a liminal zone where neither domestic nor public, where young women can be free, visible, and joyous.

Lyrics with Transliteration and Meaning

କୁଆଁରି ପୁେଣଇ ଜହ୍ନ େଗା, ଜହ୍ନ େଗା, ଜହ୍ନ େଗା, କୁଆଁରି ପୁେଣଇ ଜହ୍ନ େଗା । Kuanri Punei Jahna Go, Jahna Go, Jahna Go, Kuanri Punei Jahna Go

O moon of Kumar Purnima, the full moon night for maidens, I bow to you with devotion.

କୁଆଁରି େଦେଖ ଜହ୍ନ ମୁହଁ, ଝିଅ େଦେଖ େବାଉ ମୁହଁ,

ବୋଉ େଦେଖ ଝିଅ ମୁହଁ ଜହ୍ମ େଗା ।

Kuanri dekhe Jahna mukha, jhia dekhe bou mukha, Bou dekhe jhia mukha Jahna go.

The unmarried girl looks at the moon's face, the daughter looks at her mother's face, and the mother looks at her daughter's face — all in love and hope under the moonlight.

ଖଇ ଖାଇଲି ଜହ୍ନ େଗା, େକାଲା ଖାଇଲି ଜହ୍ନ େଗା, ଖଇ େକାଲା ଖାଇ େମାର ଜିବନ ସ୍ୱନ୍ଦର େହଉ ଜହ୍ନ େଗା ।

Khai khaili Jahna go, kola khaili Jahna go,

Khai kola khai mora jiban sundar heu Jahna go

I have eaten puffed rice and banana, O Moon — may my life become as beautiful and pure as your light.

ମୋତ େଦଅ ତୁେମ ଶୁଭ ଭାଗ୍ୟ ଜହ୍ନ େଗା, େମା ସଜନ ତୁଳସୀ େଚୀକା ଜହ୍ନ ଗୋ, ସୁନା ର ରୁପା ହାତ ଗହନା ଜହ୍ନ େଗା ।

Mote deo tume shubha bhagya Jahna go, Mo sajana tulasi chouka Jahna go, Suna ra rupa haata gahana Jahna go.

Bless me with good fortune, O Moon. May my future husband be as pure as the sacred Tulsi altar, and may my married life be adorned with gold and silver ornaments.

କୁଆଁରି ପୁେଣଇ ଜହ୍ନ େଗା, ଜହ୍ନ େଗା, କହ୍ନ େଗା, କୁଆଁରି ପୁେଣଇ ଜହ୍ନ େଗା । Kuanri Punei Jahna Go, Jahna Go, Jahna Go, Kuanri Punei Jahna Go.

O moon of Kumar Purnima, shine your blessings on all maidens tonight.

The folk song "Kuanri Punei Jahna Go" encapsulates a complex web of meanings that intertwine gender, ritual, and cosmology within Odia society, offering a fertile ground for anthropological interpretation.

The moon (Jahna) emerges as a symbol of masculine beauty, calmness, and virtue. The maiden's invocation of it reflects her yearning for an ideal partner who embodies these divine traits. This representation underscores the cultural construction of male ideals within a patriarchal framework, where the male is imagined as both distant and benevolent, embodying cosmic stability. The ritual foods - khai (puffed rice) and kadali (banana) - symbolise fertility, purity, and abundance, reinforcing the agrarian connection between nature's productivity and womanhood's potential. Likewise, the verse "Kuanri dekhe Jahna mukha" mirrors intergenerational female relationships, showing how ideals of femininity, beauty, and morality are transmitted from mothers to daughters.



The song thus functions as both pedagogy and performance, teaching girls about purity, devotion, and patience through joyful participation. Yet, beneath this apparent innocence lie deeper structures of power: the song binds womanhood to marriage, equating social worth with the possession of a husband and ornaments, hence reproducing patriarchal expectations. Still, within this controlled setting, the collective singing of girls under the moonlight constitutes a rare space for female sociality and expression, subtly resisting the confines of everyday gendered discipline.

From a structural-functional perspective (Radcliffe-Brown, Malinowski), the ritual maintains social equilibrium by transforming youthful desire into a culturally sanctioned devotion, fostering emotional bonds and communal continuity. Symbolically, following Clifford Geertz, the song operates as a "text of culture", a layered narrative where the moon, the offerings, and the maidens' voices become symbols that reveal how Odia society interprets purity, aspiration, and cosmic order. It dramatizes the negotiation between individual desire and social morality, expressing a longing for completeness within an ideologically prescribed framework.

Anthropologically, the song exemplifies how ritual, symbol, and performance construct and communicate social values. It functions as what Victor Turner would call a "liminal" space where girls temporarily inhabit an in-between state, neither child nor wife, participating in a transformative act that affirms both cultural continuity and female identity. In contemporary contexts, while its literal devotional meanings may fade, the song persists as a performance of Odia identity and nostalgia, reflecting how folklore adapts to modernity while retaining its symbolic power. Thus, "Kuanri Punei Jahna Go" endures not merely as a song of devotion but as an anthropological text, one that encodes the aesthetics, moralities, and contradictions of womanhood in Odia society.

Rituals, Body, and Meaning

In Odia cosmology, Kumar Purnima occupies a unique position—it celebrates femininity not renunciation or suffering, but through adornment and joy. While fasting (brata) rituals such as Savitri Brata or Khudurukuni Osha emphasize devotion and endurance, Kumar Purnima highlights leisure, self-presentation, and emotional aspiration. The emphasis on beauty-new clothes, turmeric baths, flowers, ornaments-reflects not vanity but cultural aesthetics. The Odia notion of saundarya (beauty) integrates purity, harmony, and auspiciousness. A girl dressing beautifully for Kumar Purnima does not objectify herself; rather, she participates in a sacred aesthetic that links body and cosmos.

Through this ritual performance, femininity is sanctified and socialized. The festival trains young girls in collective ethics—respect for elders, cooperation with peers, and harmony with nature. It simultaneously allows emotional expression, especially desire, in a culturally acceptable framework. Thus, Kumar Purnima becomes a rite of passage where the female body is neither silenced nor shamed, but celebrated as a vessel of life and beauty.

Modern Reinterpretations

In contemporary Odisha, especially in urban areas, Kumar Purnima continues to thrive though its forms have evolved. Instead of open courtyards, girls gather on terraces, rooftops, or host small get-togethers. Jhoti designs now appear on Instagram stories, and folk songs are replaced by curated playlists. Yet, the emotion remains unchanged—a collective nostalgia for tradition and sisterhood. Many young Odia women reinterpret the festival as a celebration of selfhood rather than marital aspiration. The image of Kumar, the handsome god, becomes less a literal suitor and more a metaphor for personal growth, confidence, and independence.

This modern turn does not dilute tradition—it enriches it. As one college student in Bhubaneswar expressed during a field visit: "For me, Kumar Purnima is not about waiting for the right man. It's about celebrating who I am under the full moon." Anthropologically, such reinterpretations reflect the dynamic adaptability of tradition. The ritual persists not because it resists change but because it accommodates new meanings of womanhood—where devotion and self-assertion coexist.

Femininity as Heritage

To study Kumar Purnima is to glimpse how Odisha envisions femininity as heritage—cyclical, aesthetic, and social. Each ritual act—from offering to the sun to gazing at the moon—embodies a conversation between the individual and the cosmos, mediated through the female body. Unlike festivals that merely venerate goddesses, Kumar Purnima celebrates living women—their aspirations, desires, and bonds. It transforms ordinary



spaces into sacred stages, where young women learn to see themselves not as passive bearers of tradition but as its active creators. In a world that often commodifies or silences femininity, Odisha's Kumar Purnima stands as a luminous reminder: that womanhood, in its ritual and lived form, remains a site of beauty, autonomy, and cosmic connection.

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Telangana's Self-respect Bathukamma Festival



By Rambabu Rodda

The Bathukamma festival is a festival very close to the hearts of Telangana women. It is a flower festival celebrated for nine days during the monsoon season, between September and October, leading up to the Dussehra festival. Bathukamma means "mother of life". The flower festival, which is played only by girls and women, has gained enough importance to be officially celebrated as a state festival. Although there are many stories behind Bathukamma, one is that when a young woman commits suicide because she couldn't bear the injustices of the landlords, hence, the flower festival is celebrated as a symbol of the struggle of the woman and her family members against it. It is believed that the girl who passed away is mourned as Bathukamma and celebrated in her memory. Despite various speculations about Bathukamma, this festival is celebrated regardless of wealth, status, or caste. The last day of the nine-day festival is the Saddula festival Bathukamma Kannula Refore Saddula Bathukamma, women from tribal villages, towns, and cities sing and dance Bathukamma in groups of 20 to 30 people, each in their own area of residence. On the day of the Saddula Bathukamma festival, the entire village, town, and city come together as one, as all the women gather in one place on a large scale and play with Bathukamma dolls. In Telangana, mainly at Padmakshi Gutta in Warangal city, thousands of women and young girls gather there to celebrate the festival. Thus, the Saddula Bathukamma festival is celebrated in many places across Telangana, including Jayashankar Bhupalpalli district, Konaraopet, Mulugu, and Karimnagar in a district of Telangana. Along with Telangana women settled in different states and countries also gathered in one place on a large scale and played with Bathukammas. The first day begins with the playing of "Engilipoola" Bathukamma, which begins on the new moon day. On the second day, Atukula Bathukamma is performed, on the third day, Mudda Pappu Bathukamma, on the fourth day, Nana Bathukamma, on the fifth day, Atla Bathukamma, and on the sixth day, Aligina Bathukamma (Bathukamma is not performed on that day because the Bathukamma is worn out). Bathukamma is prepared and played every day under different names, such as neem fruit bathukamma on the seventh day, butter lump bathukamma on the eighth day, and saddula bathukamma on the ninth day. To make Bathukamma, the women's brothers, uncles, and grandparents go to the forest and bring flowers.. Bathukamma is made with tanged flowers, teak flowers, pumpkin flowers, sitajada flowers, chamomile, ball, lotus, & gunugu flowers. Women have special respect in Telangana. On the ninth day, sattupindi, palli, neem, rice mixed with jaggery (a strong food for women) is given. This means that the sattu prepared by one person is given to another, a symbol of the great cultural traditions shared by all. Women and young girls wear silk clothes and cotton sarees and sing and dance to Bathukamma.

No matter how poor they are, they dance this Bathukamma with dignity. When the mothers and sisters sing a good tune, everyone claps and cheers, singing and dancing with great enthusiasm. The Bathukamma festival is celebrated with devotion and enthusiasm by women, performing dances. The festival symbolizes the cultural traditions with flower displays, colourful processions, and Telangana songs. Representing women from all walks of life, the Bathukamma festival symbolizes equality, natural wealth, land, love, and connection to nature. The Bathukamma festival means protection of nature and protection of people. The concept of worship we offer to flowers and nature. Saddula Bathukamma is a special day celebrated on the last day of the Bathukamma festival. Women prepare a large Bathukamma and take it to a nearby pond, lake, Bathukamma is immersed in the Godavari river and streams with their family members. It gives self-respect and self-confidence, especially to women of all castes. By celebrating Bathukamma, Telangana women declare their self-respect. not written by poets, writers, or scholars. These songs of life emerged from the voices of the women of Godavari, despite their lack of scholarship.



Figure: The scene where Bathukamma is taken to the playground

Remarkably, even uneducated adults sing songs with melody.Its speciality is that while one woman sings the song, the others sing the chorus. These songs are mostly by Uyyalo, Mallello, Tummeda, sung Rela Chandamama, Kol, Oh raana gummadi; words like these are used a lot. These songs reflect the hardships and joys of women, love, affection, friendship, kinship, history, as well as current circumstances..Bathukamma, the golden Bathukamma..You are our life (Batukamma... Batukamma.. Bangaru Batukamma..maa Batuku Neevamma.!Along with the songs, the speciality of the Tangedu flower is expressed by the words, 'Tangedu flower.. Mother flower.. The fruit of our dreams for generations.(Tangedu puvvu...Talli Puvvuraa...Tara Tarala mana kala pantara). The song goes like this: This festival, which is celebrated exclusively in Telangana, reflects a life in harmony with nature. Flowers, ponds, water, rivers, traditional Sattu Pindi, songs of life in the Janapath, hardships and joys, and family values. It is no exaggeration to say that this Bathukamma festival teaches many lessons about living together. Bathukamma should be recognised as a national festival: The Bathukamma festival, which is celebrated for 9 days by tribals from Gudem to villages, towns and cities across Telangana, should be recognised as a national festival.If the national festival is recognised, the culture and traditions of Telangana will be known to the world across India. The people of Telangana want the state and central governments to develop the Bathukamma festival.



Figure: Women singing Bathukamma songs singing and playing Kolatam





Figure: 63 feet high Bathukamma. They set a Guinness Book of Record by arranging for 1354 women to play at the same time



Figure: A scene of Bathukamma being immersed in a pond



Figure: Telangana makes History: 1354 women perform largest synchorized Folk Dance Arround worlds tallent Bathukamma - 2025 at Saroor Nagar Stadium, Hyderabad, setting Guinness World

ANTHROPOLOGIST OF THE MONTH

Prof. Dr. S Gregory



Interview by Saba Farhin

Professor S. Gregory is a distinguished Indian anthropologist whose academic and professional contributions have significantly enriched the field of Social Anthropology. Former Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Chairperson of the Department of Anthropology at Kannur University, he has held multiple key leadership roles including Director of the School of Distance Education and Director of the Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC) at the same institution.

Prof. Gregory holds an M.A. from Poona University and M.Phil. fromMadras University. He earned his Ph.D. from the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore, under IDS, Mysore University. He is a recipient of the prestigious Fulbright-Nehru Visiting Lecturer Fellowship (2011–12) and taught at the University of Chicago during the Spring Semester of 2012. He also received two Occasional Lecture Funds from IIE, CIES, Washington DC, which facilitated lectures across several U.S. institutions including George Washington University, California State University, Los Angeles, Boston University, and Rutgers University.

Prof. Gregory's research and academic initiatives extend beyond national boundaries. He organized a panel at the 17th World Congress of IUAES in Manchester (2013) and was instrumental in hosting the 10th INCAA Anthropology Congress the same year. With over 60 scholarly publications and 5 authored books, his research spans Sustainable Development, Participatory Research, and Decentralized Planning.

His enduring commitment to fieldwork, community-based knowledge, and academic mentorship continues to inspire generations of anthropologists in India and beyond.

Your journey in anthropology has spanned decades, including international recognition and leadership roles. What initially inspired you to pursue anthropology, and how has that inspiration evolved over the years?

Born the youngest of nine children and having lost my father in infancy, my widowed, unlettered mother, my elder siblings, and I were repatriated from Myanmar when I was just two years old. I grew up in a drought-prone village in southern Tamil Nadu, amidst hardship and resilience—an environment that profoundly shaped my anthropological sensibility. Those formative years nurtured an acute awareness of social

vulnerability, human dignity, and adaptive strength—values that would later find intellectual articulation in my anthropological research and fieldwork, grounding my academic pursuits in empathy, justice, and the broader human condition.



Му iourney into anthropology began in 1986 when I joined the Master's programme at the University of Poona-one of India's most vibrant centres for anthropological teaching and research. Though I initially entered on the waiting list due to my modest undergraduate record, I soon found in anthropology not merely an academic discipline but a lifelong vocation. My choice was guided less by prior familiarity than by the discerning counsel of my superiors in the Madurai Province of the Society of Jesus, to which I then belonged. The Jesuit emphasis on justice, education, and transformative engagement resonated deeply with anthropology's humanistic spirit, aligning with the Province's mission of a "preferential option for the poor."

During my formative Jesuit years, a series of transformative experiences shaped my intellectual and moral outlook. A week-long barefoot pilgrimage across 200 kilometres revealed the generosity and resilience of rural communities, while social action programmes organized by PALMERA (People's Action and Liberation Movement in East Ramnad Area) grounded me in the lived realities of the marginalized. A monthlong Social Analysis Course at the Indian Social Institute, Bangalore—under the guidance of Fr. Stan Samy—introduced me to critical tools of social interpretation, which later resonated deeply with my anthropological training.

My subsequent two-year study in philosophy at Pune exposed me to epistemological, phenomenological, and Indian philosophical traditions, guided by eminent teachers such as the late Prof. Cyril Desbruslais, whose onadras, under the supervision of Professor U. C. Mohanty, I undertook a study on the urban encounters and adaptive strategies of the Irula tribal communities in Chennai. The research revealed that differing trajectories of migration and modes of engagement with the urban environment produced distinct

pathways of adaptation and integration among the Irulas—demonstrating how structural conditions and cultural resilience intersect in shaping marginalized communities' urban experiences.

My early career as a Research Assistant at the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore, was equally transformative. Working on the World Banksponsored Beneficiary Assessment of the National Sericulture Project, under the guidance of Professors M. N. Srinivas, Joe Tharamangalam, and G. K. Karanth, offered an extraordinary opportunity to study the social impacts of development interventions in South India. The project explored gender, class, and caste dimensions in the adoption of sericulture technologies, combining extensive fieldwork across Tamil Nadu with annual national seminars that brought together research teams, administrators, and policymakers. This dynamic model of concurrent evaluation—linking ethnographic with ongoing project implementation demonstrated anthropology's power in informing development policy.

Under the supervision of Professor G. K. Karanth, my doctoral research examined the interface between development and society, with a focus on sericulture in Tamil Nadu. The fieldwork entailed living with my life partner, Jancy Francis — herself a trained anthropologist and our daughter, Jovitha Preethi, who was then less than two years old, and is now a gastroenterologist. We spent an extended period in a rural village, sharing in the local rhythms of work, kinship, and everyday hardship. This deep immersion not only enriched my also ethnographic insights but grounded understanding of development as a lived and shared experience.

Another significant area of my academic engagement has been participatory research, sustainable development, and social change, with special attention to livelihood issues among marginalized communities. My project on Understanding the Micro-level Impact of Decentralization Kerala acquired in particular significance during the state's pioneering People's Planning Campaign, which transformed the Ninth Plan into a mass participatory exercise in local governance. This study examined people's participation in planning processes and their effects on the empowerment of weaker sections, particularly women. The findings culminated in my book Development, Livelihood and Empowerment, which introduced the conceptual model of the Livelihood and Empowerment Circle of Sustainable Development (LECSD).

My publications have since explored a range of themes—tribal and village studies, social action, decentralization, sustainable development, education, and ethics in anthropology—reflecting a lifelong attempt to bring produced distinct.

As the years unfolded, my inspiration evolved from curiosity to conviction—from understanding humanity to nurturing others to do the same. My engagement with curriculum reform, professional associations, and policy-oriented research deepened my realization that anthropology is not just a career but a way of life—a mode of seeing, listening, and relating to people. This conviction has sustained me through administrative roles, including as Director of the School of Distance Education and as Director (i/c) of the UGC Human Resource Development Centre.

Among your many contributions, ranging from sustainable development research to organizing major academic congresses, what do you consider your most significant impact on the discipline of anthropology?

I joined the University of Calicut in 1994 as a Lecturer in Anthropology at its Thalassery Campus, which later became part of the newly formed Kannur University. initiation into professional life was characteristically anthropological, as I proceeded directly to the field to participate in the supervised fieldwork of postgraduate students among the Kurichiya tribal community of Kannavam. This formative experience reaffirmed my conviction that anthropology cannot be confined to the classroom-it must be lived, observed, and experienced. Over the next twenty-three years, I remained deeply engaged in guiding fieldwork across tribal and non-tribal contexts, supervising more than sixty master's dissertations and a dozen M.Phil. and Ph.D. theses exploring a wide spectrum of communities, livelihoods, and social processes.

As Head of the Department (2010–2014), I sought to foster a collaborative and participatory academic environment. Guided by a shared vision, several initiatives were undertaken—including curriculum restructuring, examination reform, infrastructure enhancement, and the strengthening of field-based pedagogy—with the objective of giving anthropology a more professional identity. These efforts, along with field visits, study tours, archaeological explorations, and interdisciplinary seminars, reinvigorated the department's academic culture and reaffirmed its commitment to experiential learning—the cornerstone of anthropological education.

One of my most fulfilling achievements was introducing Anthropology into Kerala's Higher Secondary School curriculum—a goal that took years of advocacy and collaboration. As Core Resource Person (Anthropology) at the State Council for Education, Research and Training (SCERT) from 2000 onwards, I was deeply involved in syllabus design, teacher training, examination reform, and textbook development. This initiative marked a crucial step in bringing anthropology closer to younger generations

and fostering public appreciation of its relevance.

My engagement with the Kerala State Higher Education Council further extended to curriculum planning and restructuring at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. While my initial attempt to introduce a five-year integrated course in anthropology did not materialize during my tenure, I take great satisfaction in seeing it realized today—a testament to the persistence of ideas. I also had the opportunity to launch an undergraduate course through the School of Distance Education, which, although short-lived, represented a meaningful step toward expanding the discipline's reach.

My Fulbright-Nehru Visiting Lectureship (2011-12) at the University of Chicago marked another defining phase. Co-teaching Ethnographic Methods in such intellectually vibrant environment broadened academic perspective and reaffirmed anthropology's universal resonance. The two Occasional Lecture Fund awards from the International Institute of Education (IIE), Washington, D.C., which, along with other sponsored invitations, enabled me to visit and lecture at major U.S. universities-including George Washington, Boston, South Florida, Rutgers, Phoenix College, and California State University (Los Angeles)—and to interact with scholars at Columbia and Fordham. These experiences deepened my understanding of global anthropology's institutional strength and pedagogical innovation.

It was fascinating to observe that departments of anthropology were integral to nearly all major American universities. Moreover, anthropologists were embedded across diverse fields—Music, Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, South Asian Studies, and International Relations—demonstrating anthropology's transdisciplinary vitality. It underscored for me the need for Indian academia to recognise anthropology's integrative potential across disciplines.

Beyond teaching, I have always valued public engagement. As Programme Officer of the National Service Scheme (NSS), Staff Advisor, Fine Arts Advisor, and Staff Editor, I led several social, cultural, and environmental initiatives that enriched student life. I also established a unit of the Kerala Sasthra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP)—a popular science movement—on campus, organizing programmes to promote scientific awareness and social consciousness.

participatory Μv involvement with approaches through deepened PLANET-Kerala (Participatory Learning and Action Network), initiated under the guidance of Prof. Robert Chambers of the University of Sussex. As one of its founding members, I contributed to research promoting participatory methodologies in development planning. I also served as Chairman of the Special Technical Advisory Group for

the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) on poverty reduction and social security under Kerala's XI Five-Year Plan, helping link anthropological insights to decentralized governance.

Institution-building has been another enduring commitment. As founder secretary of the Kannur University Teachers Association, I helped shape its organizational framework and align it with state and national federations. I later served as sectional committee member for Anthropology at the 95th Indian Science Congress, and as Joint Secretary and Governing Council Member of the Indian National Confederation and Academy of Anthropologists (INCAA). The formation of the INCAA-Kerala Chapter and the hosting of the Indian Anthropology Congress 2013 at Kannur University, during the silver jubilee year of postgraduate teaching in Kerala, remain cherished milestones. The Congress culminated in the Kannur Declaration and produced three edited volumes, reaffirming anthropology's social relevance in the Indian context.

Given your experience with both academic and applied aspects of anthropology, how do you envision the future of the discipline in India and globally, and what role should anthropologists play in addressing contemporary societal challenges?

The year 2020 marked a defining moment for Indian anthropology with the formation of the United Indian Anthropology Forum (UIAF)—a vibrant, inclusive platform envisioned as an online academic community for the exchange and consolidation of anthropological thought. Emerging amidst debates surrounding the organization of the World Anthropology Congress 2023, the Forum represented a collective call to uphold the spirit of anthropology and reaffirm its autonomy from colonial or exclusionary institutional tendencies.

Under the leadership of Prof. Deepak Kumar Behera and with stalwarts like the late Prof. P. C. Joshi, the Forum united anthropologists across regions and generations, reaffirming the discipline's intellectual independence and inclusivity. As its Member Secretary, I had the privilege of contributing to this effort, which culminated in the successful organization of the World Anthropology Congress 2023 and its associated academic events across India.

Organisationally, the UIAF comprises five zonal committees, six task-based standing committees, sixteen research domains, and forty-six specialized research forums, all designed to promote collaboration and dialogue among anthropologists across regions and institutions. These initiatives aim to create an integrated academic network that connects departments, research institutes, and practitioners of anthropology throughout India. It is my earnest hope

consolidating these that institutionalising and structures will bring both resilience and renewal to Indian anthropology—an endeavour that requires collective commitment and critical introspection within the discipline. The UIAF also maintains a vibrant website and blog series that have already attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors. Looking ahead, the Forum envisions evolving into a comprehensive knowledge repository, featuring dedicated sections for fellowship research domains, opportunities, institutional news, and personalized academic profiles for each member.

Anthropology's integrative approach is particularly vital today, when rapid socio-economic and technological transformations challenge traditional values and ethical frameworks. Anthropologists must serve as interpreters and mediators in this changing world—bridging science, culture, and policy through grounded understanding. The discipline's strength lies in its ability to foster empathy and coexistence amid diversity.

Institutional strengthening is essential. Departments must foster networks, create policy translation centres, build alumni and placement systems, and engage beyond academia. Anthropologists themselves must embody lifelong learning, humility, and professional integrity. Our task is not only to teach anthropology but to live it—to model the values we impart.

As someone who has guided numerous students and contributed actively to curriculum development, what advice would you offer to young scholars entering the field of anthropology today?

Despite its wide applications, anthropology faces a paradox: opportunities abound, yet employment prospects remain limited. The challenge lies not only in structures but also in our ability to demonstrate anthropology's value in real-world contexts. We must ask whether we are preparing students to apply anthropological perspectives meaningfully, and whether we communicate our unique lens powerfully enough to create demand for it.

Anthropology demands maturity—intellectual, ethical, and professional. Students must approach it not as an easy option but as a rigorous discipline requiring deep reflection, methodological training, and empathy. Fieldwork, the heart of anthropology, is more than data collection—it is an exercise in humility and human understanding.

To young scholars, I would say: begin with curiosity, but anchor it in compassion. Learn to listen, to observe, and to understand communities on their own terms. The world needs anthropologists who can think critically, act ethically, and engage across boundaries—from development and public health to digital cultures and climate change.

Above all, anthropology must remain a moral enterprise—one that honours human dignity and diversity in all its forms.

Conclusion

Looking back, my journey in anthropology has been one of continual learning—moving between the field and the classroom, research and policy, local and global contexts. Each phase has deepened my conviction that anthropology's enduring relevance lies in its capacity to illuminate the human condition in all its complexity. From the resilience of rural communities in Tamil Nadu to international collaborations and academic leadership, anthropology has not been merely my profession but my vocation—an ethical commitment to understanding and nurturing humanity in an ever-changing world.



YOUNG SCHOLARS: NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Traditional Fermentation Practices and Cultural Significance of Indigenous Alcoholic Beverages among the Gadaba Community of Odisha: A Note from the Field



Bv Nibedita Bhoi

The Gadaba are an indigenous community residing in the eastern part of India, primarily in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. In Odisha, they are predominantly concentrated in the Koraput district, with significant populations in the Lamptaput, Simliguda, Potangi, and Nandapur blocks. The Gadaba are well known for their traditional Dhemsa dance and the distinctive Kerang fibre garments. Linguistically, the community is divided into two groups-Ollar Gadaba and Gutob Gadaba. However, at present, most Gadaba people speak Desia, the local language of Koraput.

The Gadaba community traditionally consumes various indigenous alcoholic beverages such as Pendum, Landa, and Salap. Pendum is produced from fermented rice, Landa from fermented finger millet (mandia), and Salap is extracted from the sap of the Caryota palm tree. Both Pendum and Landa can be further distilled to produce stronger variants-Pendum Illi and Landa Illi, respectively.



The preparation of Pendum begins with cooking rice-referred to as Kerang Lai in the Gutob dialect. The cooked rice is spread out to dry on a large, flat bamboo plate known as Takla in Gutob. Once dried, approximately ten small rice balls (Pendum Oso), mixed with herbal additives, are crushed and blended with each kilogram of the cooked rice (Pictures given below).







The mixture is then placed in an aluminium pot (Handi)-earlier, clay pots were used-and left to ferment for 3-5 days. The duration of fermentation depends on the season; fermentation completes within three days during summer, while it may take up to seven days in winter.

After fermentation, the mixture is sieved using a strainer. The filtrate, a milky-white beverage, is called Pendum. When this liquid is distilled, the resulting beverage is known as Pendum Illi or Mada in the Gutob language.

The distillation setup traditionally consists of three Handis: two large and one small, and a clay stand. The lower large pot contains Pendum; a small clay stand called kapri is placed inside it, and another clay pot called saraei on top of saraei to collect the distilled liquid. Another large utensil filled with cool water is placed on top, sealing the junction with cloth and clay. The lower pot is heated over a firewood stove (Chulhi), causing the alcohol to evaporate and condense on the cooler surface of the upper pot. The condensate drips into the small utensil, forming Pendum Illi (the distilled liquor). A similar process is followed for Landa Illi, which is made using sprouted millet (Mandia or Samel in Gutob). (Pictures given below).









Cultural and Social Role of Indigenous Alcohol

Landa and Pendum serve as vital components of Gadaba social life. They are consumed during social gatherings to strengthen kinship and inter-clan relationships. Before drinking, community members sprinkle a few drops of the beverage with their fingers as an offering to their ancestors, followed by the customary salutation Juhar. During festivals, marriages, naming ceremonies (Naam Karan), puberty rites (Uthani) and death rituals (Dasa), guests bring Pendum, Landa, Illi, and Salap to the host's house. The beverages are collected in large bamboo containers, while separate containers are used to collect rice and vegetables brought by the guests. (Pictures given below).









Haridwar (The Gateway of God)



By Swastika Mukherjee

Haridwar is a major pilgrimage place situated on the bank of the river Ganga in Uttarakhand state of the northern India. HARIDWAR is one of the seven sacred cities of Saptrapuri. This site is believed to grant Moksha / Liberation according to the Hindu mythology.

Haridwar comes from two words: 'Hari' means God Vishnu, and 'Dwar' means Door, i.e, 'Door to God'. It is a gateway to other Hindu pilgrimage sites, especially the Badrinath Temple. According to Hindu mythology, during Samudra Manthan few drops of Amrita fell in Haridwar at Brahma kunda. This event is celebrated by 'Kumbha Mela', which is held every 12 years and Ardha Kumbha Mela every 6 years. This place is also very important in this sense that all over India, there are only two places where the temple of god Brahma is situated, one at Haridwar and another at Pushkar in Rajasthan.





Figure 1: This is the view of Haridwar Ghat. It is called 'Har ki Pauri' means 'Feet of God Vishnu'. It is said that lord Vishnu came here once upon a time. Pilgrims take a dip in the holy water of the river to get liberation and offer 'Gangajal' to worship the Sun God.



Figure 2: The purity of the water is felt with its divine touch to any person- at first it feels cold, but after standing for some time it becomes normal. The Alaknanda and the Bhagirathi rivers are headstreams of the Ganga of Haridwar.



Figure 3: In the early morning, the priests of Haridwar offer morning AARATI. The Priests do Aarati by lighting Special Lamps, chanting and ringing bells. The echo of HAR HAR GANGE can be heard all around. After Aarati, pilgrims give ARGHYA in the river Ganga. Arghya is the ritual of offering flowers and a Diya in the river. The meaning of giving arghya is "offering respect".





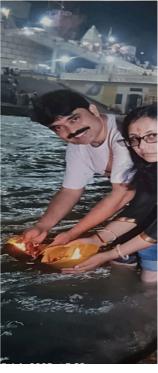




Figure 4: Again in the evening, Sandhya Aarati is done by Figure 6: About 4 KM from Haridwar (at Kankhal) priests. People from all over the world come to see this Daksheshwar Mahadev temple is located. It is named Sandhya Aarati. The view of the Ghat is so amazing and after King Daksha Prajapati, the father of Sati. Here, unforgettable. Pilgrims also offer Arghya. The Aarti and the YAJNA KUNDA of King Daksha is placed where Arghya in the morning and in the evening are a gratitude Mata Sati gave up her life and burnt herself into the to the rising Sun and setting Sun and water because they YAJNA KUNDA when Shiva was being spurned by his make a balance of life on the Earth.

father. This place verifies the truth of Hindu mythology.



Figure 5: At Har ki Pauri, there are many ghats and temples, but the Brahma Mandir, Ganga Mandir, Ghantaghar (clock tower), statue of Ma Ganga in the river are its main attractions.

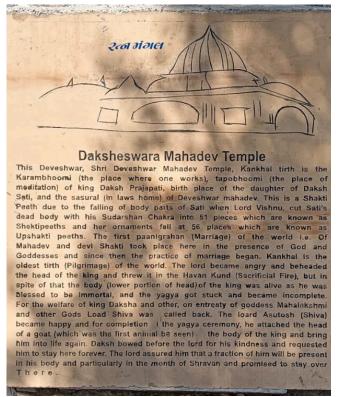


Figure 7: The whole story of Mata Sati and her sacrifice in Yaja Kunda is depicted on a stone at the outer of Dakheshwar Mahadev Temple (Petrography). This place feels like heavenly divinity.

"Decoding Ambedkar: Ideas of Nation and Nation Building", by Vivek Kumar, New Delhi.



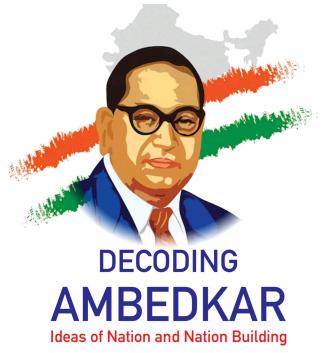
Review by Haider Ali

Vivek Kumar's Decoding Ambedkar insists on more comprehensive engagement with the intellectual and moral range of B. R. Ambedkar, situating him not merely as a leader of the oppressed but as a thinker of global stature. The book raises a critical concern regarding the selective remembrance of Ambedkar within Indian political and intellectual discourse, where his legacy is often confined to a narrow set of symbolic milestones, such as his role in drafting the Constitution, while the depth and diversity of his thought are overlooked. Kumar interrogates this reductionism by questioning why Ambedkar has not been accorded the same academic standing as figures like Gandhi or Nehru, despite his extensive body of work across law, economics, sociology, political theory, and philosophy.

Kumar grounds his perspective in the theoretical propositions of social scientists such as C. Wright Mills, Pierre Bourdieu, and Paulo Freire. Drawing on these thinkers, he examines how the interplay between sociological imagination and historical conditions shapes Ambedkar's perspectives, and how the accumulation of cultural capital often remains confined to the offspring of families through hereditary transmission. Kumar has also pointed out how Bipan Chandra and Arun Sorien have tried to "ignore Ambedkar's contribution to the Constituent Assembly and role as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee."

In contrast to Chandra and Sorien, he highlights the acknowledgement of T.T. Krishnamachari, a senior member of the Constituent Assembly, who stated to President Rajendra Prasad that "I am one of those in the House who have listened to Dr. Ambedkar very carefully". Four to five out of seven members were on leave, replaced and involved in state affairs. Ultimately, the burden of drafting the Constitution fell entirely on Ambedkar.

The book further points out the question of caste annihilation. Ambedkar ardently asserted, "The real remedy is to destroy the belief in the sanctity of the Shastra... you must, therefore, destroy the sacredness and divinity with which caste has become invested. This means you must destroy the authority of the Shastra and the Vedas." He further called for the abolition of a priesthood monopolised by one caste. Ambedkar believed that as long as caste remained intact, neither dignity of life nor genuine equality could be realised for Dalits



VIVEK KUMAR

On the question of nation-building, Ambedkar believed that India was not yet a nation, but rather a "nation in the making." He observed that the Anglo-Indians were persistent in declaring that India was not a nation, a view that reflected the broader colonial perception of the subcontinent. British I

Indian civil servant John Strachey famously asserted that "there is not and never was an India," while Sir Alfred Sheeley similarly described India as "only a geographical expression like Europe or Africa," lacking the unified characteristics of a single nation or language. Ambedkar noted that even Rabindranath Tagore, the national poet of Bengal, acknowledged that India is not a nation.

The book aims to "deconstruct the reductionist approach adopted by mainstream Indian academia and intelligentsia" in engaging with Ambedkar's work. Its analysis uncovers the many dimensions of Ambedkar's personality, thought, and action, highlighting his vast reservoir of scientific reasoning, governance expertise, and leadership presented in his full complexity and multiple shades.

REFLECTIONS ON ANTHRO BULLETIN

An early-career researcher's perspective to "Rabindranath Tagore Jayanti: An Anthropological Reflection on the Legacy of a Global Humanist - by Miss Ria Ghosh" (Volume 4, Issue 5)



By Saumya Seal

The article offers a richly textured anthropological rendition of Rabindranath Tagore's legacy in modern Indian history, one that moves beyond commemorative truths into the realm of cultural theory, pedagogical praxis and ethical cosmopolitanism. I am writing to add a few points on your framing of Tagore not merely as a literary and nationalist icon, but as an enduring inspiration to researchers across disciplines. He was an architect of civilizational dialogue whose life and work continue to challenge disciplinary boundaries.

Having experience as a researcher in a tribal belt in Madhya Pradesh during a short stint at the ICMR-National Institute of Research in Tribal Health, Jabalpur and currently as a PhD student in Anthropology in Slovakia, I found your invocation of Tagore's hybrid worldview resonant and translatable across cultural contexts. His refusal to dichotomize East and West, sacred and secular, or tradition and modernity mirrors the tensions we navigate in tribal-based research in anthropology, especially when confronting variabilities across ethnic groups. Tagore's emphasis on naturalism and humanism offers a philosophical and methodological scaffold for validating workflows that honour these complexities without flattening them.

Your discussion of Visva-Bharati as an experiment in applied anthropology is very compelling. In my own research, I've sought to emulate a similar ethos, such as integrating protocols with contextual sensitivity and designing workflows that foreground transparency among the participants. Tagore's Sriniketan model, where learning is embedded in community engagement, anticipates today's participatory paradigms, where local knowledge and ethical accountability are central to research interpretation.

I also appreciated your treatment of Tagore Jayanti as a site of communitas, echoing anthropologist Victor Turner's notion of performative solidarity. These rituals, at once aesthetic, pedagogical and devotional, remind us that cultural memory is not archived, it is enacted. In a researcher's terms, one might say that Tagore's legacy is not just textual but gaited; it moves through generations, often orally, embodied in voice and rhythms.

Finally, your reflections on gender and ecology open fertile ground for future anthropological inquiries. Tagore's female protagonists, grappling with autonomy and desire, and his ecological reverence, suggest a sensorium of ethics that anthropology and tribal studies must increasingly engage with, especially as we confront questions of representation, consent and environmental justice during data collection.

I congratulate you for a piece that not only discusses many unsaid ethos of Tagore but reactivates his relevance. In an era of methodological silos and disciplinary fatigue, your essay reminds us that cultural theorists like Tagore remain as our country's one of the enduring interlocutors.



APPRECIATION FOR ANTHRO BULLETIN

"Sunita ji and Shalina ji you have been contributing substantially by picking up very relevant thematic discussion through the bulletin..Deserve special recognition ..."

By Dr. Shree Bhagwan Roy Founder Chairman of IBRAD

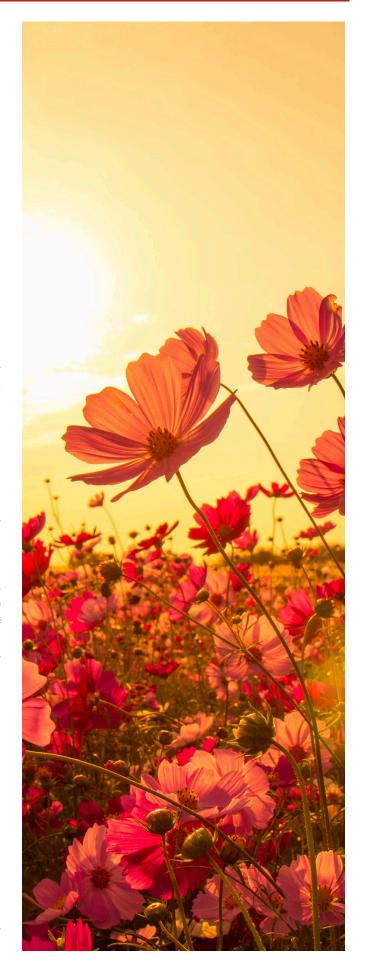
"Enjoyed thoroughly the August Issue of Anthro Bulletin. Mg Ed Sunita Reddy's comprehensive capture of 'Cultural Pulse of August' compels to await anxiously the come September tunes in the next issue. The 'Anthro Bulletin' celebrates truly the Cultural Diversity of India by providing articles from different regions of the country and also by having contributions from related disciplines like social work, sociology, economics etc. To bring this type of rich Bulletin on time regularly is not easy. During the ongoing Ganapati Utsav, article on 'Values of Ganesh Fest' was valuable and covering Varanasi - Mahadev's nagari in monsoon was a nice comforting combination. Providing insights from the 'Anthro of the Month' speaker by Interviewing him/ her separately is also useful. Book reviews and Job Alerts at the end makes it a perfect package. For all that Anthropos Editors & the team deserves a sincere salute.

On academically sound discourse on 'Embodied Identity' /Tattoos by Chief Ed Shalina Mehta, a meaningful Message to budding anthros was timely. Her message opens with a quote by Michael Foucault, and thereafter quotes by John Bulmer, Levi Strauss, Rubin and Konyak & Zhim, to explain the evolving nature of Tattoos. This message (thick) balances the other articles (relatively thin in Geertz terms) of the Bulletin. One may wonder why some budding anthros take up the subject of Tattoos on celebrities, players, etc. For example, many of us are charmed by the type of Tattoos on cricket players Virat Kohli, Pandya brothers & others. Analysis of their Tattoos may bring anthros closer to contemporary issues and trends."

By Dr. Lalit Kumar, Former Joint-Adviser, Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog).

"Wonderful August edition indeed by Dr Sunita Reddy and her team. Dr. Lalit has elaborated it in full details so beautifully which is very true. You have created a good online newsletter whose readership is increasing day by day. The editorials, the interviews of the month, the writes-ups. I am sure in short time you may want to upscale it to a bulletin and then a journal too. Best wishes as we welcome September's tune too

Dr. Nita Mawar Former Director-in-Charge of ICMR-NARI.

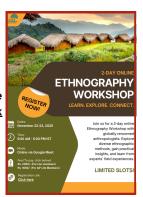


FORTHCOMING EVENT

An online lecture will be organized as part of our Distinguished Guest Lecture Series, along with a 2-day Online Ethnography Workshop.
 Registration Link for the Ethnography Workshop: Click here

For updates, please follow our website's events page--

https://events.anthroposindiafo undation.com/



PAST EVENT

 For our Distinguished Guest lecture series, an online lecture was organised and delivered by Prof. S. Gregory on October 30th 2025, 6:30 pm onwards

For more details - Click here

YouTube live Link - Click here

 To explore how Anthropology can be reimagined to meet the challenges of tomorrow, a Round Table Meeting engaging with leading anthropologists was held on September 23rd 2025, 6:30 pm onwards.

For more details- $\underline{\textbf{Click here}}$





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1. University of Hong Kong - Max Planck PhD Studentship in Population Studies

Last Date to Apply: 17.11.2025
Application Link: Click here

2. Ph.D. program in Demography at University of

Pennsylvania

Last Date to Apply: 15.12.2025 Application Link: Click here

3. Vacancy for Programme Monitoring Unit (PMU) for Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India

Last Date to Apply: 04.12.2025
Application Link: Click here

4. Postdoctoral Fellowship in Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT Kanpur

Last Date to Apply: 30.11.2025 Application Link: Click here



We're thrilled to announce a brand-new column in our *Anthro Bulletin*, Through the Lens - a visual journey through photo essays capturing the richness of human experiences, cultures, and everyday life.

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