

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**.

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Bali: Where Geography, Faith and Craft Come Alive

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

Bali—the very name conjures images of beautiful sunsets, pristine beaches and ancient temples. Yet the island reveals itself as much more than a postcard destination. The steady inflow and outflow of tourists is remarkable. From the air, the scattered mountains rising across the ocean appear almost sculpted—some with picture-perfect contours, others marked by craters that bear witness to Bali's volcanic past.

Even the airport offers a glimpse into the island's distinctive aesthetic. The seamless movement through airports and immigration is accompanied by displays of bamboo and leaf torans, shops filled with colourful sarongs, batik shirts and skirts, Wayang Kulit shadow puppets, shell crafts and other souvenirs. It is a visual delight even before one enters the island proper. Returning home, the long queues at immigration can feel particularly dispiriting, leaving one wondering how an island of Bali's scale manages the enormous movement of tourists with such apparent ease.

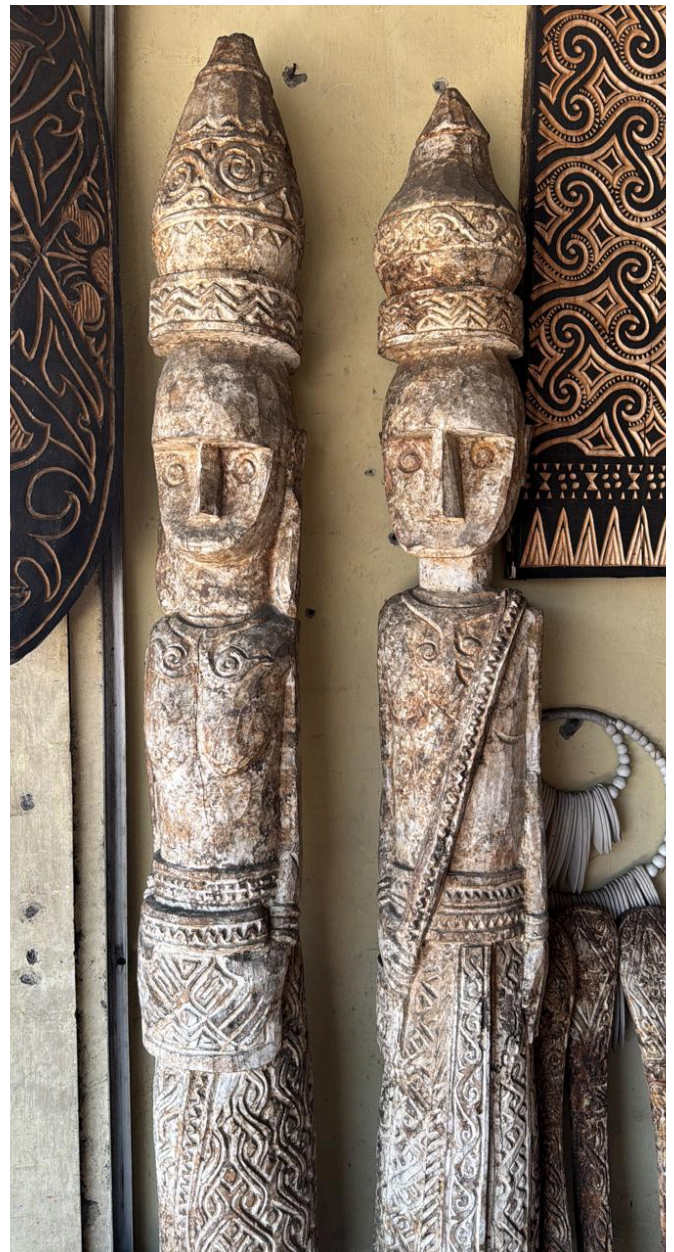
Bali is one of thousands of islands that constitute Indonesia, one of the world's most geographically dispersed nations. Situated between Java and Lombok, Bali forms part of the Lesser Sunda Islands. It is renowned for its distinctive Hindu culture, volcanic landscapes, terraced rice fields, temples, arts and highly developed tourism industry. For an anthropologist, however, Bali is much more than a tourist destination—it is an extraordinary living field site. Its lanes and markets unfold like open museums of material culture: intricate wood carvings, stone sculptures, totemic poles, paintings, textiles, earthenware and ritual objects. The island's appeal lies not only in its tangible cultural heritage but also in the intangible traditions, beliefs and practices that continue to shape everyday life.

In Balinese cosmology, the mountains are traditionally associated with the sacred realm of the gods, while the sea is associated with powerful supernatural forces. This sacred geography influences the orientation of temples, houses and settlements. Bali is often called the "Island of the Gods", an apt description given the extraordinary density of its temples, shrines and sacred spaces.

Sacredness is woven into the ordinary. Many homes have beautifully carved sacred pillars or shrines, sometimes without a specific deity, where offerings of flowers, rice and fruit are placed. These offerings become part of an everyday ecological cycle, often eventually being consumed by birds, squirrels and other creatures. Religion here is not confined to monumental temples or formal ceremonies; it is embedded in domestic spaces, streets, shops, fields and daily routines.

The Balinese temple system itself reflects different dimensions of community and cosmology. Pura Desa is associated with the village community; Pura Puseh with origins and ancestors; Pura Dalem with the realm of the dead; while Pura Kahyangan Jagat refers to major temples that form part of the wider

Balinese Hindu religious landscape. Alongside these temples are the ubiquitous Canang Sari—small, beautifully woven trays containing flowers, rice and other offerings, placed outside homes, shops and temples. Their presence transforms even an ordinary street corner into a small site of ritual and beauty.



Perhaps what stayed with me most was the way Bali integrates art into everyday commerce. Every bit of space—and, in a sense, every moment of time—seems to carry an aesthetic dimension. Shops are carefully curated, displaying crafts made from shells, straw, thread, rope, wood, volcanic stone, grass and bamboo. Traditional skills are not merely preserved as museum pieces; they are adapted into objects that can be bought, used, gifted and carried home.

This offers an important lesson for India. We possess an extraordinary diversity of craft traditions, probably far greater in scale and variety. What we need is not simply preservation, but innovation with cultural continuity—transforming traditional skills into contemporary, functional and aesthetically appealing products. Home-based craft skills can be strengthened when artisans are encouraged to experiment with new forms, designs and utilities while retaining the cultural vocabulary of their traditions. Thoughtful presentation, curated spaces and access to tourism markets can turn heritage crafts into sustainable livelihoods.

Bali demonstrates how culture can become both an experience and an economy without completely losing its everyday character. Its success lies partly in the visible integration of landscape, faith, community, agriculture, art and commerce. For visitors, this creates an experience that goes beyond sightseeing; for anthropologists, it offers an unusually rich example of how tangible and intangible culture remain interconnected.

For anthropologists, Java, Sumatra and Bali offer compelling field sites. Bali, in particular, is a volcanic tropical island where geography, Balinese-Hindu cosmology, agriculture, community organisation, ritual and artistic expression are deeply intertwined. Here, mountains are not merely geological formations, temples are not merely monuments, crafts are not merely souvenirs, and offerings are not merely rituals. Each is part of a larger cultural system.

Perhaps that is the real fascination of Bali: the extraordinary lies not only in its landscapes and temples, but in the way an entire society has woven geography, spirituality, aesthetics and everyday life into one living cultural tapestry.



Anthropology in a Warming World: Climate Change, Relationality and the Human Future

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

Climate change is no longer a distant possibility discussed only in scientific reports, policy documents, or projections of the future. It has become an everyday reality. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, receding glaciers, intensifying storms, droughts, floods, and changing agricultural cycles are transforming not only physical landscapes but also livelihoods, social relations, memories, and cultural worlds. The recent flash flood on 26 August 2026 that struck Nepal's Rasuwa and neighboring districts along the Nepal-Tibet border, is a stark reminder of this phenomenon. The UNICEF reports that at least 65,000 people, including 22,100 children, have been affected by this flood. For anthropology, therefore, climate change is not simply another environmental issue. It is a profound transformation in the conditions under which human beings live, relate to one another, and imagine their futures.

This is where anthropology has a distinctive contribution to make. Climate science can measure changes in temperature, rainfall, sea level, and atmospheric composition with remarkable precision. Yet numbers alone cannot tell us what environmental change means in the lives of those who experience it. They cannot fully convey what it means for a flood-hit village family to watch ancestral houses land disappear, for a pastoral community to lose the seasonal rhythms on which its animals depend, or for farmers to confront a climate in which inherited knowledge of sowing and harvesting no longer seems reliable. Anthropology brings climate change into the realm of lived experience. Through ethnography and sustained engagement with communities, it asks not only what is changing, but also for whom, in what ways, and with what consequences. Anthropology also reminds us that climate change is interpreted through culture. Environmental change is never experienced in a social vacuum. People understand drought, flood, heat, and ecological uncertainty through cosmologies, memories, moral values, religious beliefs, political histories, and systems of knowledge. Communities do not merely react to environmental change; they interpret it, narrate it, and incorporate it into their existing understanding of relationships between humans, non-humans, ancestors, and the wider environment.

The insights of anthropological theory are particularly valuable here. Tim Ingold's (2000) understanding of human life as one of "dwelling" challenges the tendency to treat nature as an external setting in which human society merely operates. Climate change, for Ingold, is also a disruption of ways of dwelling. When rivers change course, forests disappear, seasons become

unpredictable, or familiar species vanish, it is not merely an external environment that changes; the lived world itself is transformed.

Marilyn Strathern's (1998) work on "relationality" offers another important insight. She holds that persons are not always understood as

bounded and autonomous individuals; they may be constituted through relationships with others. Climate change similarly reveals the deep relationality of human existence. Its consequences move through relationships between households and communities, generations and institutions, humans and other species.



Pierre Bourdieu's (1997) concept of "habitus" helps us understand the embodied dimensions of environmental change. Bourdieu holds that climate change can be understood as a disruption of established habitus, compelling individuals and communities to renegotiate their embodied dispositions, everyday practices, and relationships with their environment. Such practical local knowledge, acquired through generations of experience, may become increasingly uncertain when familiar environmental patterns are disrupted. I have personally observed how rising temperatures, flash floods, intense rainfall, and landslides have affected the agricultural practices of the Bonda women of Odisha's Malkangiri district. The introduction of modern agriculture encouraged a shift from traditional millet-based mixed cropping to hybrid paddy cultivation. However, hybrid varieties proved vulnerable to climatic extremes on their hill farms, whereas traditional millet seeds remained more resilient and nutritionally reliable. Consequently, many Bonda cultivators returned to millet farming in their Dangar or shifting cultivation fields.

Climate change is also profoundly unequal. Its effects are distributed across societies already marked by inequalities of class, caste, ethnicity, gender, geography, and political power. Communities that have contributed least to greenhouse gas emissions are often among those most vulnerable to rising seas, prolonged droughts, crop failures, and climate-related displacement. Vulnerability is therefore not simply a matter of

geographical exposure; it is historically produced. Anthropologists and political ecologists have shown how environmental inequalities are connected with colonial histories, resource extraction, land dispossession, and unequal development. Who controls forests, water, minerals, and land? Whose knowledge is recognized in environmental decision-making? Who is displaced in the name of development? Who benefits from extraction, and who bears its consequences? These are not questions external to climate change; they lie at its heart.

Anthropology also has an important role in challenging the marginalization of indigenous and local knowledge. Communities across the world have developed sophisticated understandings of their environment, including seasonal change. Such knowledge should not be romanticized as a timeless remnant of a pre-modern world. It is dynamic and continually reshaped through changing circumstances. Nor should it simply be treated as supplementary information to be extracted for externally designed climate programmes. A genuinely collaborative approach must recognize local communities as knowledge holders and partners in shaping environmental futures. At the same time, an anthropology of climate change cannot simply speak for vulnerable communities. It must ask who has the authority to represent environmental suffering, whose knowledge counts as expertise, and whose voices remain unheard in global climate negotiations.

Methodologically, climate change also compels anthropology to think across disciplines.

This warrants multi-sited research and collaboration with climatologists, geographers, ecologists, and other scholars. New technologies may expand the anthropological toolkit, but they do not diminish the importance of grounded ethnographic fieldwork. A warming world therefore requires more than technological innovation. New energy systems, climate modelling, and effective policies are undoubtedly essential. But no technical solution can succeed without attention to culture, history, power, and the diverse ways in which people understand and inhabit their worlds. The ecological crisis demands not only a transition in technology but also a transformation in values and relationships.

Perhaps anthropology's most significant contribution is its insistence that climate change is ultimately a crisis of relationships: between humans and the environments in which they dwell; between communities unequally exposed to environmental risks; between present and future generations; and between humans and the innumerable other forms of life with which they share the planet.

In a warming world, anthropology's task is not to remain a distant observer, but to stay grounded in lived experience while connecting local realities to the wider structures through which the planetary crisis is produced. Its enduring lesson is simple yet profound: our lives are relational, and so are our futures. In this spirit, the Mahā Upaniṣad reminds us of the ideal of Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam—"the whole world is one family"—signifying universal kinship, interconnectedness, and relationality.



Healthy Outside, Damaged Inside: Unveiling the Hidden Threat of Endothelial Dysfunction



By Debjoyoti Das

Introduction: In today's digital world, physical inactivity has become a defining feature of modern life. Many people spend long hours sitting at desks, working on computers, attending online classes, scrolling through smartphones, or watching television. Although these activities have become routine, their impact on health is often underestimated. A person may appear healthy from the outside, maintain a normal body weight, and even have a normal Body Mass Index (BMI), yet serious physiological changes may already be occurring within the body. One of the most important but overlooked consequences of a sedentary lifestyle is endothelial dysfunction, a condition that silently damages blood vessels and increases the risk of future cardiovascular diseases.

Sedentary Lifestyle: A sedentary lifestyle is characterized by prolonged sitting, low levels of physical activity, reduced walking, and minimal engagement in exercise. When physical activity declines, the body burns fewer calories. As a result, fat accumulation increases while muscle activity decreases. Reduced muscle contractions also contribute to poorer blood circulation. The interesting thing is that, these changes do not always lead to immediate weight gain. Many individuals continue to appear lean or maintain a normal BMI despite underlying metabolic disturbances. **The Rise of Hidden Fat:** Instead of accumulating visibly beneath the skin, excess fat may begin to accumulate internally around vital organs such as the liver, intestines, pancreas, and abdominal cavity. This condition is known as visceral obesity. Individuals with visceral obesity may look healthy and maintain a normal body weight, but they carry excessive fat within the abdominal cavity. This phenomenon is often described as "Thin Outside, Fat Inside" (TOFI). Because the excess fat remains hidden, many people remain unaware of the health risks developing inside their bodies.

Visceral Fat: Visceral fat is not simply an inactive energy storage site. It functions as a metabolically active tissue that releases a variety of biologically active substances, including inflammatory cytokines, free fatty acids, and hormones such as leptin. Excessive release of these substances contributes to chronic low-grade inflammation, insulin resistance, oxidative stress, and vascular damage. Over time, these processes adversely affect the health of blood vessels.

Early Vascular Ageing: Under normal conditions, blood vessels are flexible, elastic, and capable of responding efficiently to the body's changing demands. However, prolonged physical inactivity, combined with visceral obesity and chronic inflammation, gradually damages the vascular system. Blood vessels become stiffer, less flexible, and less efficient in regulating blood flow. This process is described as early vascular aging, a condition in which young individuals develop blood vessels that resemble those seen in much older adults.

The Endothelium: The Guardian of Vascular Health

The endothelium is the thin inner lining of blood vessels which helps maintain smooth blood flow, prevents blood clot formation, reduces inflammation, and releases nitric oxide to keep arteries relaxed and healthy. Thus, a healthy endothelium plays a crucial role in protecting blood vessels and maintaining vascular health.

Endothelial Dysfunction: The endothelium can be damaged by factors such as high blood pressure, smoking, diabetes, obesity, elevated LDL cholesterol, chronic inflammation, and physical inactivity. When it loses its protective functions, the condition is called endothelial dysfunction, which is one of the earliest signs of vascular disease.

What Happens After Endothelial Damage?

Once endothelial dysfunction develops, the blood vessel wall becomes more permeable. Normally, the endothelium acts as a selective barrier, regulating what enters and exits the vessel wall. After damage occurs, harmful substances can penetrate more easily. These include LDL cholesterol, inflammatory cells, and other circulating molecules capable of causing vascular injury.

LDL Cholesterol Enters the Artery Wall: A particularly important event is the entry of LDL cholesterol into the arterial wall. Inside the vessel wall, LDL undergoes oxidation and becomes oxidized LDL, a highly inflammatory and toxic form of cholesterol. **Inflammation Begins.** The immune system recognizes oxidized LDL as harmful and responds by releasing specialized immune cells called macrophages. These cells attempt to remove the oxidized cholesterol by engulfing it. However, as macrophages accumulate large amounts of fat, they transform into foam cells.

Formation of Fatty Streaks: The accumulation of foam cells within the arterial wall forms structures known as fatty streaks. These fatty streaks represent the earliest visible stage of atherosclerosis. Although initially small,

they mark the beginning of a process that can continue for decades.

Development of Atherosclerotic Plaques

Over time, additional lipids, inflammatory cells, calcium deposits, and fibrous tissue accumulate within the artery wall. Together, these components form an atherosclerotic plaque. The growing plaque gradually narrows the artery and reduces its flexibility. This causes blood flow to become increasingly restricted, forcing the cardiovascular system to work harder to maintain proper circulation.

From Endothelial Dysfunction to Atherosclerosis

This entire sequence of events shows why endothelial dysfunction is often considered the starting point of atherosclerosis. The term atherogenesis refers to the biological process through which atherosclerotic plaques develop and increase within arterial walls. Atherosclerosis itself is a chronic disease characterized by the gradual accumulation of fatty substances, cholesterol, inflammatory cells, and fibrous material inside arteries. Over time, these plaques cause arteries to become narrow, hard, and less elastic, reducing blood flow to organs and tissues.

Why Does It Matter?

These vascular changes often develop silently for years before symptoms appear. As a result, individuals may seem healthy while hidden damage progresses within their blood vessels. Early detection of endothelial dysfunction is crucial because it can help prevent or delay hypertension, type 2 diabetes, atherosclerosis, and cardiovascular diseases. Regular physical activity, reduced sitting time, a healthy diet, and exercise can help to maintain vascular health.

Conclusion: Looking Beyond Appearance

The modern lifestyle may allow us to appear healthy on the outside, but true health depends on what is happening within our bodies. Understanding endothelial dysfunction helps us to know that good health is not defined solely by body weight or appearance. Sometimes the greatest threats remain hidden, silently developing beneath the surface long before disease becomes visible.

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When Craft Becomes Commodity: The Changing Life of Katamaraju Katha through Cheriya Dolls



By Rahana R. A



By Ar. Sudharshan R

Oral traditions in South India do not exist solely in speech; they move through gesture, pigment, rhythm, and object. Telugu folk culture, in particular, is deeply performative and visual, where stories travel through scrolls, puppets, dolls, and ritual objects (Gopalan, 2017; Da Fonseca, 2019)¹. This article examines how oral narrative assumes material form. The study begins with an encounter at the DakshinaChitra Museum, specifically within the Ikkat House of the Telangana section, where a set of Cheriya dolls was displayed. The visual immediacy of the dolls raised questions about how oral histories are preserved materially and how objects function as carriers of collective memory (Naik, 2025)². The encounter raised a central question: How does oral memory achieve material permanence, and what does this materialization do?

Multiple versions of the Katha, shaped by local histories, performers, and audiences, allow the epic to function as community memory, preserving pastoral identity, ancestry, livelihood, and resistance across generations (Narayanappa, 2021; Naik, 2025)⁶. The Cheriya dolls function as storytelling instruments rather than merely visual representations of Katamaraju Katha (Bose, 2016)⁷. During performances, storytellers use individual figures to activate the narrative through voice, gesture, and narration. Unlike Cheriya scrolls, which present stories through sequential visual progression, the dolls allow multiple characters to remain visible simultaneously, enabling relationships, groups, hierarchy, and episodes to be represented spatially. Their three-dimensional form allows storytellers to arrange and rearrange characters according to the needs of performance. The Katamaraju set documented in this research contains 53 named characters, presenting the epic as a collective social world rather than focusing only on its hero (Humanities Across Borders, n.d.)⁸. The positioning of Katamaraju alongside the Raju brothers and other pastoral figures communicates kinship, solidarity, and hierarchy.



Fig 1: Cheriya dolls displayed at the Ikkat House, DakshinaChitra Heritage Museum. Photograph by the author.

Katamaraju Katha is a Telugu oral epic about Katamaraju, remembered as a 13th-century herdsman and chieftain belonging to the Golla (or Yadava) sub-caste (Narayanappa, 2021; Deccan Chronicle, 2025; Humanities Across Borders, n.d.)³. The story is closely associated with cattle, migration, grazing rights, community honour, and resistance to political authority. According to the narrative, drought forces Katamaraju and his people to move with their cattle towards the Nellore region, where conflict arises with the ruling Chola authority over access to grazing lands (Humanities Across Borders, n.d.)⁴. The resulting battle becomes a story of pastoral assertion, dignity, and collective resistance. The epic is significant to Golla identity because its genealogy connects Katamaraju to Lord Krishna and the lunar (soma) lineage (Biluka, 2024)⁵. This ancestry establishes dignity, legitimacy, and continuity for the pastoral community. Cattle, central to the community's livelihood, also become markers of identity and social belonging.



Fig 2: Katamaraju and other characters represented in Cheriya doll form. Photograph from author's field documentation.

The story therefore emerges through relationships between figures, their arrangement, and the storyteller's interaction with them. This creates a form of "spatial historiography," where history is communicated through the arrangement of people and relationships. Their small, portable form is equally significant: unlike larger scrolls suited to fixed settings, dolls can be carried and arranged in temporary spaces, reflecting the mobile, pastoral context of the Golla/Yadava community and supporting itinerant storytelling (Da Fonseca, 2019)⁹. The study extended from DakshinaChitra Heritage Museum to Telangana, where a field encounter with a practicing Cheriyal artist provided insight into Katamaraju Katha and its material tradition. The artist shared his version of the epic and explained the process of making the dolls. The craft begins with sawdust and tamarind-seed paste, kneaded and shaped by hand into human and animal figures.

After drying, the figures are refined with facial features, ornaments, and clothing before being painted in the characteristic Cheriyal palette of red, yellow, blue, green, and white. According to the artist, a single doll may take nearly six months to complete, reflecting the labour and accumulated knowledge invested in its production (New Indian Express, 2020)¹⁰. However, the craft is more than a technical process. Cheriyal doll-making functions as an embodied knowledge system through which techniques, narrative memory, ethical values, and the cultural significance of Katamaraju Katha are transmitted through apprenticeship (Bose, 2016)¹¹. With practitioners remaining limited and knowledge transmission fragile, the tradition is largely sustained through family-based learning (Bose, 2021)¹². Its continuity therefore depends not merely on preserving dolls as objects, but on sustaining the knowledge of making, narrating, and remembering them across generations. The Cheriyal doll-making tradition survives through a limited number of practitioners, making its knowledge transmission particularly fragile (New Indian Express, 2020)¹³. The economic circumstances of the craft add another layer to this vulnerability. The artist depends significantly on institutional and museum commissions, making the tradition financially uncertain outside curated cultural spaces (Da Fonseca, 2022)¹⁴. At the same time, market preferences are changing what is produced (Kumari & Rani, 2021)¹⁵. Contemporary demand increasingly favours small decorative miniatures rather than complete sets of narrative dolls. Miniatures are more portable and commercially accessible, but this can reduce a complex storytelling tradition to individual aesthetic objects. This creates a major concern: the separation of the dolls from the story they were made to tell. Traditionally, the dolls were activated through the storyteller's voice, gestures, and interaction with the figures.



Fig 3: Cheriyal narrative scroll painting. Photograph by the author.

When individual dolls are produced primarily as decorative commodities, they can lose their original performative context (Hauser, 2002)¹⁶. This becomes visible when the dolls enter museums. At DakshinaChitra, for example, the dolls are preserved and made accessible as heritage objects, but their transition from performance tools to museum objects changes how they communicate. The voice, gesture, and audience interaction that once activated them are no longer automatically present in the display environment. The disappearance of Cheriyal doll-making would mean more than the loss of a distinctive folk art (Da Fonseca, 2022)¹⁷. It would interrupt a living system through which Katamaraju Katha is remembered, performed, and transmitted across generations (Naik, 2025)¹⁸. The dolls carry pastoral histories, genealogies, community identity, and memories of resistance, while the knowledge of making them preserves skills learned through embodied practice. When dolls become separated from storytellers and performances, their material form may survive while their narrative context weakens. What is at risk, therefore, is not simply a craft tradition, but a mode of remembering: a community's ability to carry its history through hands, objects, stories, and collective memory.

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Fig 4: Cheriyal artisan working on a doll. Photograph from author's field documentation..

Love, Memory and Digital Transmission: An Anthropological Study of Magadhi Lokgeet on Dashrath Manjhi and Falguni Devi from Gehlaur, Bihar



By Neha

Abstract

Folklore is an important medium through which communities preserve collective memory, cultural identity, and lived experiences. This article presents an anthropological study of Magadhi lokgeet based on original ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Gehlaur village, Gaya district, Bihar. During the fieldwork, eight folksongs and one biographical poem centred on Dashrath Manjhi and his wife Falguni Devi were documented from local singers and community members. The study explores how these songs preserve narratives of love, sacrifice, resilience, and social transformation while reflecting the cultural values of rural Bihar. The article also examines the changing modes of folklore transmission, showing how traditional oral performances are increasingly being preserved and circulated through digital platforms such as YouTube. The findings demonstrate that Magadhi lokgeet remain living expressions of community identity while adapting to contemporary forms of cultural communication.

Love, Memory and Digital Transmission

Across rural Bihar, folklore continues to function as a living archive of history, emotion, and community identity. While Dashrath Manjhi is nationally recognised as the "Mountain Man of Bihar" for carving a path through the Gehlaur hills, the people of Gehlaur remember him through songs that celebrate not only his physical labour but also his deep love for his wife, Falguni Devi. During ethnographic fieldwork in Gehlaur village, eight Magadhi folksongs and one biographical poem were documented through interactions with villagers, traditional singers, and contemporary folk performers. These oral traditions reveal that the community preserves Dashrath Manjhi not merely as a historical figure but as a cultural symbol whose life continues to inspire succeeding generations.

The collected folklore consistently presents love as the foundation of extraordinary human action. One of the songs declares:

*"Prem ke likhbai amar kahani yaad karatai duniya ge,
Hum tohar banbav Dashrath Manjhi, tu banihe Faguniya ge."*

This verse transforms the relationship between Dashrath Manjhi and Falguni Devi into an immortal love

story remembered by the world. Rather than presenting love as a private emotion, the song celebrates it as a moral force capable of inspiring courage, sacrifice, and social responsibility. Through oral tradition, a personal relationship becomes part of the collective cultural memory of the region.

Another song reflects the emotional pain that followed Falguni Devi's death:

*"Chhod ke akele kaha chal gaile Faguniya ge,
Tor bin biraan laage duniya..."*

Unlike official historical accounts that emphasise the construction of the road, this song preserves grief, loneliness, and emotional attachment. The community remembers Dashrath Manjhi not only as a labourer but as a husband whose perseverance emerged from profound personal loss. Such emotional expressions illustrate how folklore records dimensions of human experience often absent from written history.

The symbolism of labour appears repeatedly throughout the collected songs. The hammer and chisel are not represented merely as tools but as symbols of determination and devotion.

"Chenia Hathodiya se dhaahi ke pahadiya, rahiya banal Gahlor ho..."

The mountain becomes a metaphor for hardship, while the road represents hope, accessibility, and collective welfare. Through repeated performances, the songs transform physical labour into a moral lesson that values perseverance over impossibility.

Another important theme emerging from the fieldwork is collective admiration for Dashrath Manjhi's unwavering determination.

*"Bais baris mein kaile sapnawa sakaar ge bahni,
Dashrat Baba todle Gahlor ke pahar..."*

The reference to twenty-two years of continuous effort demonstrates how patience and commitment are celebrated as enduring community values. Elderly villagers described these songs as sources of inspiration for younger generations, reinforcing the belief that determination can overcome even the greatest obstacles.



Image 1: Statue of Dashrath Manjhi (Mountain man of India), self-clicked from the village Gehlore, Gaya Ji, Bihar.

The biographical poem "The Baba Dhun Ke Pakke", documented during the fieldwork, further strengthens this image by narrating Dashrath Manjhi's life from his family background to the completion of the historic road. Unlike written biographies, the poem combines factual memory with community admiration, illustrating how folklore preserves both history and emotion.

One of the most significant findings of this research concerns the changing pattern of folklore transmission. Elderly community members recalled that these songs were traditionally performed during village gatherings, agricultural activities, festivals, and informal evening meetings. Today, however, younger generations increasingly encounter the same songs through digital platforms. Folk singers such as Sunny Gehlori and other regional artists now perform Magadhi lokgeet on YouTube, making them accessible far beyond the geographical boundaries of Gehlaur.

This transformation does not indicate the disappearance of folklore but rather a change in its mode of transmission. Oral traditions that once depended upon face-to-face performance are now preserved through digital recordings, allowing regional cultural expressions to reach wider audiences while simultaneously altering their traditional social context. The village courtyard and community gathering are gradually being supplemented by mobile phones and online platforms. Digital media has therefore become an important archive for safeguarding local cultural heritage.



Image 2: A group of folk singers who were singing Manjhi's folklore on the death anniversary of Dashrath Manjhi, Self clicked from the village of Gehlore, Gaya Ji, Bihar.



Image 3: Bihar Bureaucratic Celebration of the Death anniversary of Dashrath Manjhi, in the Gehlore Village. Self clicked.



Image 4: Chisel and hammer, the only tool Dashrath Manjhi used for 22 years to carve the path through the mountain of Gehlore, to shrink the distance from 55 km to 15 for the sake of emergency access to the hospital.

The findings demonstrate that Magadhi lokgeet continue to shape community identity by preserving memories of love, resilience, and collective responsibility. The songs not only celebrate the achievements of Dashrath Manjhi but also recognise the often-overlooked role of Falguni Devi, whose memory remains inseparable from his legacy. Together, they represent ideals of devotion, perseverance, and hope that continue to resonate within contemporary rural society.

Conclusion

The original Magadhi folksongs documented during fieldwork in Gehlaur reveal that folklore remains a dynamic cultural tradition preserving the emotional and historical legacy of Dashrath Manjhi and Falguni Devi. Through songs, poetry, and oral narratives, the community continues to celebrate love, sacrifice, resilience, and social transformation. Although traditional oral performances are becoming less common, digital platforms have created new opportunities for preserving and disseminating these cultural expressions. This study demonstrates that folklore is not a static remnant of the past but a living tradition that adapts to changing social and technological environments. By documenting these songs and interpreting their cultural meanings, the article contributes to the anthropological understanding of oral tradition while supporting the preservation of Bihar's intangible cultural heritage for future generations.

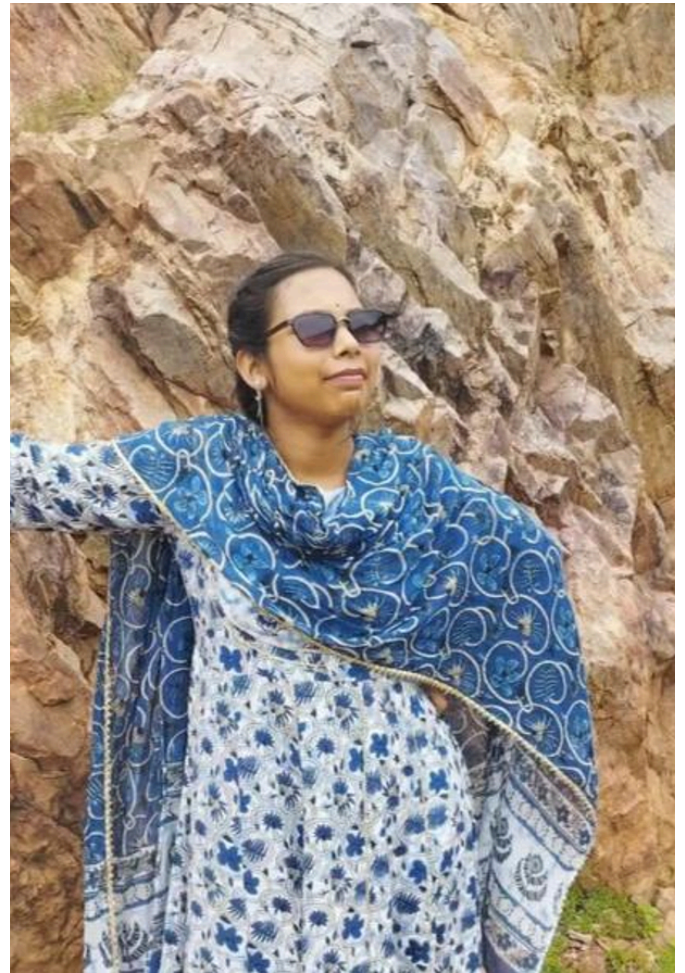


Image 5: The mountain of Manjhi (Manjhi ka pahaad) that was torn apart from the resilience of 22 years by the simple chisel and hammer.



Image 6: Dashrath Manjhi's mountain carving journey, the result of 22 years of determination and resilience. Photo taken from Google site.

Traditional material culture among the Oraons of Odisha

By Miss. Madhu Kumari

Material culture is the fundamental to being human. These are the medium through which we act, understand ourselves, and also related to others. People make and use different objects to meet their everyday needs, but these objects also reflect the way they live, work and interact with others. Houses, agricultural implements, household utensils, clothing, ornaments, baskets, tools and ritual objects are some of the common forms of material culture found in human societies. The study of such objects helps in understanding the relationship between people, their environment and their cultural practices. For anthropologists and archaeologists, material objects are particularly important because they provide evidence of human life even where written records are not available and help to reconstruct the socio-cultural organisation of the prehistoric communities by interpreting the material finding.

Malinowski opines that social heritage is divided into material and non-material culture. According to the Malinowski, Bidney and Piddington, there exist two aspects of culture, material and non-material. Material culture consist of the tangible objects of any culture such as house, means of communication, clothes, weapons, ornaments, utensils, tools etc and non-material culture is the intangible elements of culture such as knowledge, belief, fear, traditions, values, customs etc. The study of material culture in anthropology is old. There have been evidences of material culture from the pre-literate society or the human ancestors when there was no evidence of written records were available. Material culture helps to understand the culture of the primitive humans.

Oraons are known for their rich cultural heritage. They are one of the largest tribal group in India. The origin of this name of Oraons is traced to one of their mythical hero king named Karakh. They are known by different names as Uraon, Oran or Oram, Dhangar calls themselves as Kurukh. They resemble racially and linguistically to Dravidian group. They have their own language called Kurukh, which belongs to the Dravidian linguistic family but presently they speak Sadri, Hindi, Odia and other languages. Oraons trace their Origin from the Chota Nagpur Region of Jharkhand, presently they are also migrated in search of work and settled in adjoining states such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In Odisha, they are largely distributed in Sambalpur and Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Deogarh, and Keonjhar district. The study was conducted in Sambalpur district of Odisha in 12 padas/hamlets

namely Maharupada, Chhapalpada, Motiyapada, Baghapada, Jotupada, Dalipada, Champapada, Pinguapada, Litapada, Baradungri, Kudamunda, and Baghiya. These hamlets were selected using a simple random sampling technique from villages with a high concentration of the Oraon population. The data was collected by interview, participant and non-participant observation and no questionnaire was used for interview, however the responded was asked about the use, availability and cultural importance of the material.

Material culture of Oraons

Oraons are known for their rich material culture. The Oraons possess a number of household implements, tools and material culture required for their day-to-day activities. Some of this are self-made or purchase from the expert group or from locally available market. The nature and function of the material culture used by the Oraons is described below.

Ornaments

The Oraon women wear minimal ornaments in their daily life. Traditionally, women used to wear brass ornaments mainly on the neck, ears and arms. Some women still wear thick brass bracelets in a set of seven on each arm, locally called Balla. They also wear a thicker bracelet with pointed projections. Munga or bead necklaces and Chandumala, a coin necklace made of silver or brass, are also worn. Imitation coin necklaces are now commonly used. Women pierce both sides of the nose and wear a silver nose pin locally known as Besar, guna, nkachana. Iron or copper rings are worn on the fingers and toes. They also use hairpins called Khongso and wooden combs. At present, the use of traditional ornaments has decreased, and women generally wear simple ornaments such as bindis, bangles, anklets and necklaces. Modern and imitation ornaments are also commonly used. Men generally do not wear any ornaments.

Clothes/Dress

The Oraon generally use both traditional and modern dress. Traditionally, men wear Kareya, while women wear Khanria. These are made from self-spun yarn and woven by local weavers of the Ganda community. Traditionally, the Kareya and Khanria were mainly white in colour with red borders or designs. Small boys traditionally wear a small Kareya, while girls wear Putti tied around the waist. Older men are still seen wearing Kareya and head cloth, while women commonly wear sarees of different colours and designs. The younger men and boys generally wear

shirts, T-shirts, trousers and shorts. Young women and girls commonly wear sarees, salwar suits and other ready-made clothes. Footwear is also commonly used at present. The traditional white and red dress is still found among some older people, while the younger generation mostly prefers ready-made garments.

Animal traps

It is a traditional plunge fish trap locally known as polo. It was used as a fishing tool in agricultural field, pond and shallow or muddy water, although it is also used to trap chicken. It is made from bamboo, hand crafted using strong thin bamboo strips bound together with flexible wild creepers. It is usually conical in shape with wide open circular bottom and get narrower toward tip. At the tip small circular open space, it left to collect the fishes using hands.

Sil batta / traditional grinding stone

The traditional grinding stone is a flat, rough stone slab of rectangular shape, kept in a fixed position on the floor, along with a cylindrical stone hand-roller. Women generally sit on the ground while using it. The ingredients to be ground are placed on the stone slab and the roller is moved back and forth with both hands to crush and grind them. It is mainly used for grinding spices, herbs, chutney and pulses such as dal, particularly in the preparation of traditional foods. The grinding stone is usually purchased from the local market. It is found to be used in most of the Oraon household but some household also had modern mixer.

Dhenki (Husking tools)

The dhenki is a traditional wooden implement used by the Oraon for husking paddy and pounding grains. It is usually made from locally available wood such as Sargi (*Shorea robusta*) or Sagun (*Tectona grandis*). The dhenki is generally kept in a corner of the house, locally called bhadi, where it remains easily accessible to the family. It works with the help of a simple lever and fulcrum. An iron ring is fixed to the lower end of the wooden beam, which is used for pounding the grains placed in a hollow wooden base. The other end of the beam is pressed with the foot, and the repeated movement causes the iron-tipped end to rise and fall over the grains. Traditionally, Oraon women mainly operated the dhenki for husking paddy, pounding grains, Mahua seed (use for making dori oil) and preparing rice flour for household use. With the availability of rice mills and modern grinding machines, its use has gradually declined, although it is still found in some households and remains an important part of traditional Oraon food-processing practices.

Ghani/ Oil extraction machine

The ghani is a traditional wooden oil-extraction implement used by the Oraon for preparing dori oil from dori seeds/Mahua seed. It consists of a heavy wooden pressing arrangement operated manually with the help of a long wooden beam. The dori seeds are placed in the wooden cavity and crushed by the repeated movement of the beam. The pressure applied during the process releases the oil, which is collected in a vessel placed

beneath the pressing area. Traditionally, dori oil was prepared at the household level and used for cooking and other domestic purposes. The use of such traditional oil presses has gradually declined with the availability of commercially produced edible oils and mechanical oil-extraction machines.

Cooking utensil

Every Oraons household have aluminium utensil of different size for different use. They use it to store water for domestic purpose while some household stored drinking water in the brass handi (garia). They have handis, spoons, steel and aluminium bowls, aluminium buckets, aluminium serving plates, small round shaped bowls and flat shape bowls.

Chulha / Mud stove

It is a mud stove commonly found in the Oraons household and it hold cultural and spiritual significance. It is handmade mud structure in the shape of horse shoe from local clay, mud and cow dung and a handi is inserted whose side part is cut from where the crop residue or wood sticks are poured to burn fire. the top point of the stove contains handi top where the cooking is performed. To control the level of fire women, remove some wooden stick or to increase fire they blew air with the help of aluminium rod. The Oraons do not allow stranger to enter into their kitchen room. However, some household also has LPG gas with steel stove.

Sigri/portable mud stove

Its is a traditional charcoal stove, cylindrical in shape handmade by lining a metal bucket or wire frame surrounded by a thick layer of mud or clay found in some of the Oraons houses. These portable mud stove is used for slow cooking, boiling water or keep the meals warm using less fuel

Sup/ Winnowing basket

It is handmade by weaving thin, flexible stirp of split bamboo into a flat, square structure with raised edge on three side. The Oraon women used it for cleaning before consumption the grains and winnowing the cereals and pulses after thrashing. During winnowing, women hold the tray with both hands and gently fan the grains. In this process, the lighter husks and empty grains are blown towards one side, while the heavier sand and other small impurities settle at the lower corner of the tray. In this way, the grains are separated from the chaff within a short time. Pulses are usually winnowed first and then ground in the jata (traditional grinding stone) to remove the husk. After grinding, they are winnowed again before being used for cooking. This is purchased from the local market.

Tokri/bora

It is hand woven basket by hand using strong, thin strips of bamboo. It has a wide, shallow and oval bowl structure used for sun drying, collecting and carrying food.

Comb/Bagirka

Traditionally the Oraons used wooden comb which have been largely replaced by plastic combs. The wooden

combs were made by the locally available wood and was called as Bagirka, it is still preserved in some of the household.

Broom

In every Oraon household, a broom locally known as Bahāri is commonly found. It is made from Kata badhun grass (*Aristida setacea* Retz.) dried grass and is generally prepared by the women themselves by collecting and tying the grass together at one end. The broom is mainly used for sweeping the floor of the house, baranda and the open space in front of the house. It is usually kept near the entrance or along the wall for daily use. Brooms are also used for cleaning the courtyard and other spaces around the household.

Peedha/Pirda: Pirda is a small, low wooden stool traditionally used in Oraons household and it is self-made. It consist of rectangular shape solid piece of wood supported by four short wooden legs. It is used as a low seat to perform everyday household activities and is also associated with traditional practices of welcoming the guest but slowly it is being replaced by modern chairs. But still the practice of using pirda is continuing as it has cultural importances. During social and ceremonial occasions, particularly marriage-related gatherings, guests may be invited to sit on the pirda, where their feet are washed as a gesture of respect and hospitality.

Pottery/Kalasha/Handi

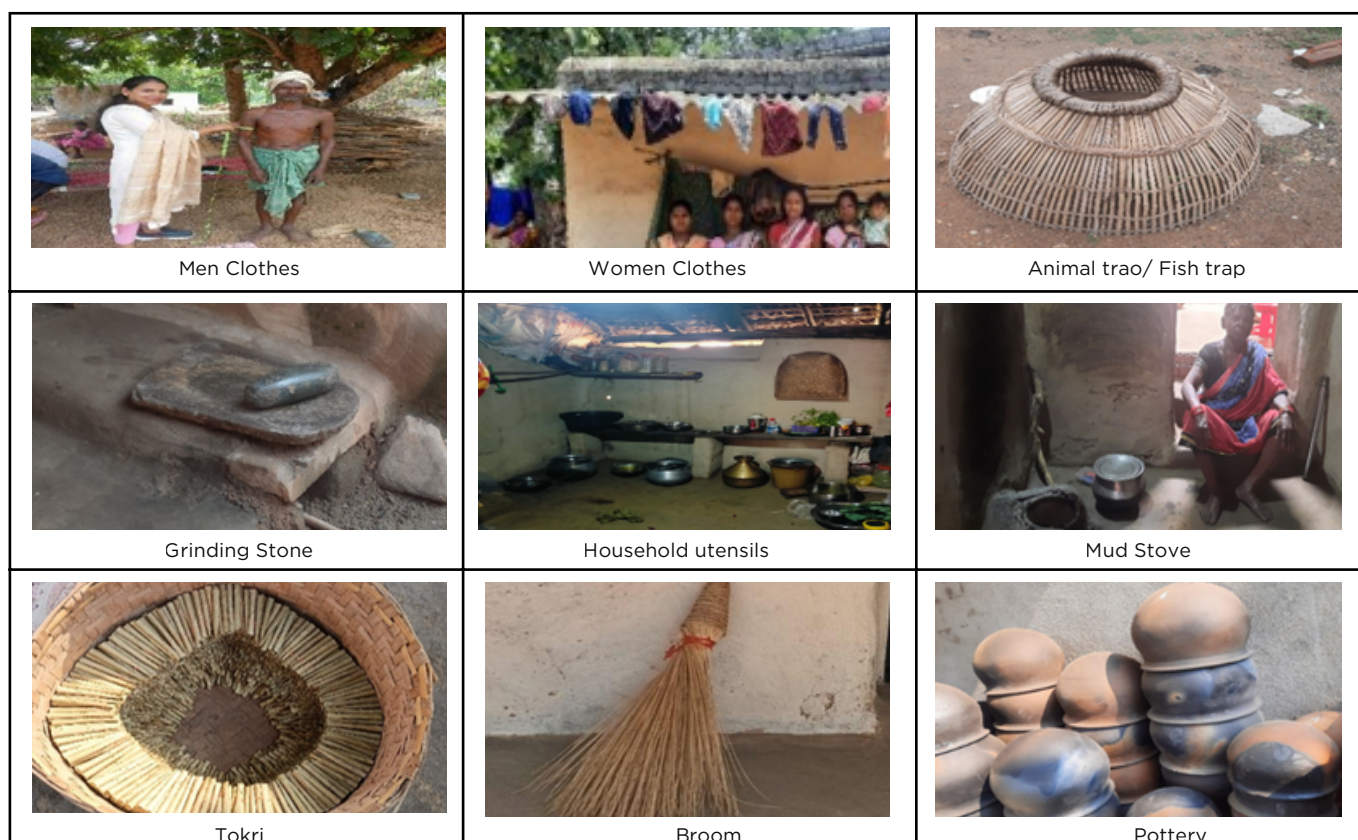
Handi is a traditional earthen pots used by the Oraons for domestic purpose for water storage, kusna (alcoholic drink) storing and for sacred ritual purpose. Some of the Oraon households have specialised skill for making pots using the clay. traditional manual potter's wheel locally

known as chaak/chaaki. A potter balances on the central pivot, place the clay and spin the chaaka vigorously by hand and give a shape and make a pot. There after the pot are dried in the sun light and then burn in fire to increase its durability. The most common form of pots were wide-mouth earthen ware pots used for fermentation of handia/kusna or to tie on the taad tree to collect tadi. A variety of other shape pots were also used for different purposes. These clay pots have cultural importance in marriage ceremonies, ancestral worship and seasonal festivals. These are purchased from the local Oraon potter.

Bed/Charpai

It is a traditional locally made woven bed commonly known as charpoy mostly used in every household of Oraons. It has a simple wooden frame with four sturdy wooden legs at the four corner, rectangular in shape and a tightly woven surface made of rope or coloured plastic stripes. The stripe is interlaced in a geometric pattern. These beds are used for sleeping, resting, beedi making and carrying out routine household activities. These beds are light weight, durable and are easy to move from one place to other.

Conclusion: The material culture of Oraons reflects the community close relationship with its natural surroundings, traditional knowledge and their culture. Household implements, bamboo products, brooms, ornaments, dress are not merely objects of practical use but also represent their skill custom and knowledge transmitted across generations. Their culture demonstrates both continuity and transformation, reflecting their ability to adopt to changing circumstances while maintaining aspects of their cultural heritage.



Prof. Dr. Shalina Mehta



Interview by Saba Farhin

Our anthropologist for the month of August 2026 is distinguished academic and former Professor of Social and cultural anthropology at Panjab University, Chandigarh, Prof. (Dr.) Shalina Mehta. Born on 28th August 1951, she embodies values of perseverance and continuous learning believing in Benjamin Franklin's famous quote that says-"investment in knowledge pays the best interest". Completing her masters in Anthropology from Delhi University in 1973 and Ph.D. in 1980, she started her long journey in academics, first teaching sociology at The Institute of Home Economics, South Campus, DU from 1974-77 and then joined as Lecturer in social and cultural anthropology at the Department of Anthropology, Panjab University in August 1977, where she taught for 39 years and served as professor for nearly two decades and chaired the department from 1993 to 1996.

Her illustrious career has traversed many milestones beginning with the issues of inter- community relations, ethnic tensions and conflict, public discourse on HIV epidemic; Janjati contestations and issues; environment and climate change; gendered marginalities and contemporary debates in the domain of political anthropology. She published extensively on explored research domains, having authored some critically acclaimed books including *The Eternal web* that examined empirical realities of Hindu-Muslim relations in Delhi in early decades of independent India. She authored two books on HIV/AIDS at a time when there was need to look at the emerging epidemic not only as a medical issue but as a social and cultural concern. Her next book was on environmental issues and most recent is an edited volume on *Gendered marginalities* published in 2026. She has also co-edited five other volumes of critical interest and nearly ninety research articles published in national and international journals and book chapters that went beyond core concerns of anthropology.

Her scholarship is widely recognized from the beginning of her career-few of these are a UGC Career Award in Humanities and Social Sciences, Research Associate and Visiting Fellow position at the environmental institute, Houston, USA; IDPAD exchange fellowship at IIAS Amsterdam in the Netherlands, Senior Fellowship with the Social Science Research Council in New York under its South Asia Regional Fellowship Programme funded by the Ford Foundation. She also served as a Guest Professor in

Gender Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. She served as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Anthro Bulletin* digital magazine, contributing to its editorial direction and the promotion of anthropological scholarship for a wider readership. She is recipient of R.P. Chanda Centenary Medal awarded



by the Asiatic Society, Kolkata, in 2021 for her significant contribution to Anthropology, Distinguished Alumnus Award from the Panjab University Alumni Association. Irrespective of age or health concerns she pursues her passion for anthropology relentlessly nurturing young talent, editing and guiding writings of emerging young scholars and engaging in discussion and dialogue and writing on various issues of humanitarian concern.

What first drew you to anthropology, and looking back over your forty years at Panjab University, how has your own understanding of the discipline evolved from when you began to where you are today?

My romance with anthropology started way back in 1965, three years before I formally joined the Department of Anthropology at Delhi University. It began, rather unexpectedly, with a photograph of an American Indian riding a motorbike in his traditional costume, which I saw on the cover of either *Life* or *The Post* magazine, sometime between 1963 and 1965. Being inquisitive and fond of reading and looking at pictures, I asked my American sister-in-law- 'who the man was?'. She told me about Native American Indians and how their lives were changing. That image stayed with me and perhaps laid the foundations of my early fascination with traditional, indigenous and native communities, though at that stage they were deceptively clouded as 'exotic'.

The second vivid recollection is of Irving Wallace's popular novel *Three Sirens*, which I read in 1966. The novel introduced me to charismatic, somewhat enigmatic characters called anthropologists. I had no clear idea then of what anthropology involved, but these early encounters created a curiosity that eventually became a lifelong intellectual passion. In 1968, I entered the corridors of the Department of Anthropology, Delhi University, and my appetite for the

discipline began to be formally nurtured. That same year, I also started doing radio programmes with All India Radio, Delhi. Two years later, that platform gave me the extraordinary opportunity to sit in a radio discussion with Margaret Mead, T.N. Madan and Andre Beteille. The occasion was particularly memorable because in 1970 Margaret Mead received the UNESCO Kalinga Award; the first woman scientist to receive it, and that too in India, from our first woman Prime Minister, Late Mrs. Indira Gandhi. I still recall Mrs. Gandhi reminiscing that if she had not been a politician, she would have been an anthropologist.

My own journey through anthropology, however, was not a linear movement within one sub-discipline. I initially had an interest in Human Genetics and epilepsy research, but an intensely personal experience during my student years led me towards Social and Cultural Anthropology. Later, my fieldwork and research took me through Hindu-Muslim relations, Adivasi communities, environmental issues, HIV/AIDS, gender, urbanization, cultural commodification, disability and auto-ethnography.

When I began my academic journey, a social anthropologist was largely expected to study a village or Adivasi community, conduct research on caste and examine social change. Over the years, my understanding of anthropology acquired innate dimensions. Anthropology, for me, is an approach that broadens the human perspective to examine empirical social situations and cultural configurations. I have learned not only from anthropologists but also from philosophers, psychologists, political thinkers, science, medicine and, importantly, literature. After many years in academic life, purposely and institutionally created disciplinary divisions become ineffectual. Knowledge has no boundaries and a discipline that celebrates human diversity, encodes cultural pluralism, chronicles indigenous and traditional knowledge systems, transcends subjective constraints and encourages contrarian arguments. In this era of cyber spaces, social media and artificial intelligence, anthropology needs to play a critical role in protecting human consciousness, behavioural sensitivities and silence of the zillions who cannot articulate their emotions and concerns.

What is the one piece of your work or one contribution you consider most significant and why does it stand out to you?

My Ph.D. thesis, *An Anthropological Analysis of Hindu-Muslim Relations in Sadar Bazar of Delhi: A Study of Identity Maintaining Mechanisms after the 1973 Communal Clash in the Locality*, continues to be one of the most important contributions of my academic journey, primarily for being my first field and research experience and for the vitality of the subject that was

not explored by anthropologists previously. It was a rebellion against the popular narrative that defined the discipline, it was reflexive as I had been perplexed because of multiple conjectures about my own identity.

The decision to work on Hindu-Muslim relations was deeply connected to my primary socialization and historical learning. As the daughter of a Punjabi Hindu refugee family, I grew up in a haveli vacated by its earlier Muslim owners during partition of 1947. The locality became a mixed Hindu-Muslim mohalla, after original occupants of the houses left for Pakistan and refugee Hindus were accommodated in these vacant houses. The area was close to Sadar Bazar in Old Delhi. We lived very close to our Muslim neighbours, but when it came to neighbourly interactions, we were miles away from each other. The place was rife with memories of those who left and those who occupied their new abode, assuming it was transient. The narratives of my mother and older siblings about their traumatic journey from Lahore to Delhi had also shaped my childhood understanding of the 'other'. My father an eminent criminal lawyer was part of the team that defended Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, and had strong political leanings. I lost him when I was only sixteen and his early physical departure pushed me into reading Aurobindo's life divine and several other spiritual texts that shaped my curiosity and attitudes. It motivated me to explore human relationships through my own experiential learnings rather than simply accepting inherited narratives.

When I started my research, questions of communalism and Hindu-Muslim tensions were discussed largely by political scientists and historians, often through ideas of disjuncture and rupture between the two communities. I felt the need to look beyond these established stereotypes and interpretations with an anthropological gaze and to generate empirical data that could offer alternatives to the understanding these complex relationships. The years of fieldwork in the narrow lanes of Sadar Bazar were among the most exciting years of my academic journey. They taught me about human interaction and, importantly, why rapport-building is critical to understanding human behaviour. Conducting fieldwork on such a sensitive subject during the Emergency was also challenging. It was a period of trials and tribulations about personal security and uppermost, the confidentiality of my research participants. I had to destroy substantial recordings of my research data to protect research participants identities and had to remain incognito for a few months because of threats of police warrants and unwarranted interference in data generation. The field experience challenged stereotypes and made

experiential learning central to my understanding of anthropological fieldwork. It also helped me comprehend how prejudice accumulated over decades and the mythical imagining of the 'other' that created stereotypes, prejudices and disrupted personal bonds. Partition histories and recently curated partition museums have chronicled the disconnect significantly.

I submitted my thesis on 30th October 1979. During my viva-voce examination on 23rd June 1980, my external examiner, Professor T.N. Madan, while appreciating the exhaustive research also gave me immensely important lessons in research writing. The day was momentous as former Prime Minister late Mrs. Gandhi's younger son Sanjay Gandhi died in an air crash that day and India's political history and my research journey acquired fresh contours. It shaped my future interest in political anthropology and my writings on several contemporary political currents. My greatest regret remains that I could not accept Prof. Madan's generosity and encouragement to publish my Ph.D. thesis way back in 1980 by Sage publications. My commitment to motherhood and to my two young children became my priority.

The manuscript drawn from the data and inspiration of the thesis was eventually published as *The Eternal Web* in 1992. Despite its shortcomings in printing, spelling and grammar and unethical conduct of the Publisher, the book received encouraging reviews from Mulkh Raj Anand and Badr-ud-Din Tyabji, along with appreciation from readers who felt that it rendered 'Yeoman's service to the society'. I still think of returning to Sadar Bazar and rewriting the text from a longitudinal perspective. Nevertheless, my thesis continues to be one of the most important contributions of my academic journey.

How would you characterize anthropology's growth and standing in India today, and where do you see it still falling short compared to its global counterparts?

When I began my academic journey in the 1970s, emerging anthropologists were largely expected to conduct ethnographic studies of Janjati/tribal communities, or to work on caste and social change, or to do village studies and examine emergence of peasant societies, following the footsteps of scholars such as M.N. Srinivas, and S.C. Dube and many others. Modernization, Sanskritization, Tribe-Caste continuum, caste structure and Jajmani relations were some of the prominent epistemological constructs of that period, followed later by debates on secularism and nationalism, nation building, tribal and peasant rebellion. Many anthropologists in those decades assumed the position of social doctors, occupying important administrative positions promoting policies for 'tribal welfare and development'.

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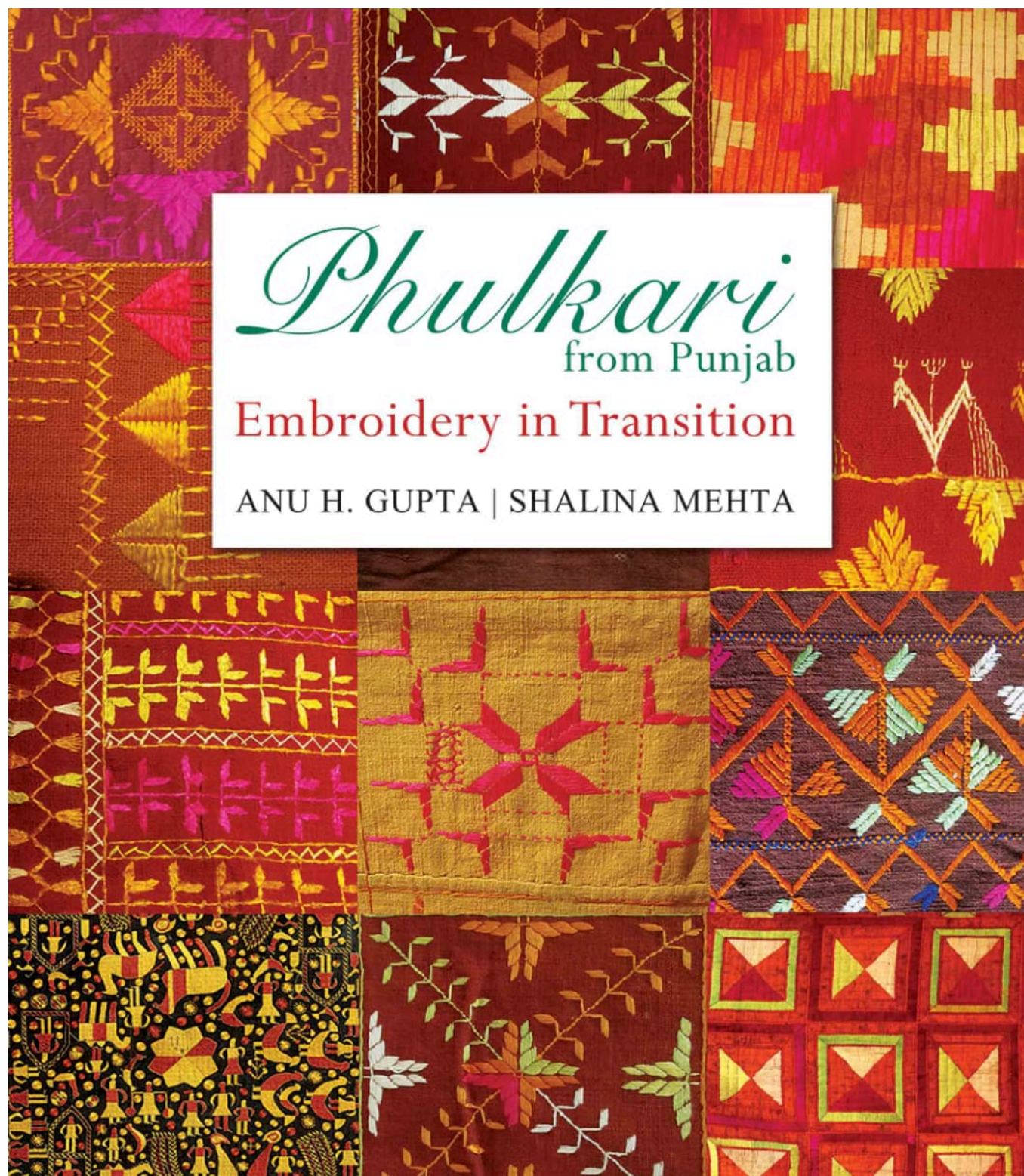
I submitted my thesis on 30th October 1979. During my viva-voce examination on 23rd June 1980, my external examiner, Professor T.N. Madan, while appreciating the exhaustive research also gave me immensely important lessons in research writing. The day was momentous as former Prime Minister late Mrs. Gandhi's younger son Sanjay Gandhi died in an air crash that day and India's political history and my research journey acquired fresh contours. It shaped my future interest in political anthropology and my writings on several contemporary political currents. My greatest regret remains that I could not accept Prof. Madan's generosity and encouragement to publish my Ph.D. thesis way back in 1980 by Sage publications. My commitment to motherhood and to my two young children became my priority.

The manuscript drawn from the data and inspiration of the thesis was eventually published as *The Eternal Web* in 1992. Despite its shortcomings in printing, spelling and grammar and unethical conduct of the Publisher, the book received encouraging reviews from Mulkh Raj Anand and Badr-ud-Din Tyabji, along with appreciation from readers who felt that it rendered 'Yeoman's service to the society'. I still think of returning to Sadar Bazar and rewriting the text from a longitudinal perspective. Nevertheless, my thesis continues to be one of the most important contributions of my academic journey.

How would you characterize anthropology's growth and standing in India today, and where do you see it still falling short compared to its global counterparts? When I began my academic journey in the 1970s, emerging anthropologists were largely expected to conduct ethnographic studies of Janjati/tribal communities, or to work on caste and social change, or to do village studies and examine emergence of peasant societies, following the footsteps of scholars such as M.N. Srinivas, and S.C. Dube and many others. Modernization, Sanskritization, Tribe-Caste continuum, caste structure and Jajmani relations were some of the prominent epistemological constructs of that period, followed later by debates on secularism and nationalism, nation building, tribal and peasant rebellion. Many anthropologists in those decades assumed the position of social doctors, occupying important administrative positions promoting policies for 'tribal welfare and development'.

Young researchers should also remain open to knowledge beyond the boundaries of the discipline. We must learn from the experience of our predecessors and knowledge creators. You must read the original texts of researchers like Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead and others. Contemporary fiction and non-fiction writers like Mahashweta Devi, Dr. Sidharth Mukherjee, Robert Murphy and many young writers have intuitive anthropological gaze. We must keep reading and not give up our most precious intellectual ability to lazy lures of AI, Gemini or any other tool as instinctive

creativity. Franz Boas's writings on cultural relativism and his belief in equality and his speech on radio on apartheid impacted my early learning and thinking in my academic journey. Ultimately, motivating young scholars to achieve the zenith of their potential is a legacy I inherited from my esteemed teachers. For me, building a meaningful career in anthropology is therefore about remaining curious, learning from experience, crossing disciplinary boundaries and being an honest and committed learner. Follow the motto of "Excellence is not being the best; it is doing the best".



Culture in sharing food—A fieldwork reflection

By Yashmine Tabasoom



Image 1. “An afternoon meal served to the researcher in the kitchen by one of the Tharu family during fieldwork shows everyday hospitality and community practices.”

Source: Fieldwork photograph by Yashmine Tabasoom.

However, it is equally showcased in everyday patterns. These everyday acts became a lens through which broader cultural values could be understood (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002).

Culture is reflected in everyday life patterns and routines.

During fieldwork, understanding daily routines showed the culture of the Tharu community. Food reflected the values and traditional history of the people. It was a medium through which they expressed their culture and identity. Anthropologists note that everyday practices, including meals, are central to understanding social life (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002). The rug on the floor or the cot on which food was served was more than furniture. It expressed their culture. As Miller (2005) explains, material culture is not just about objects but about how they shape social relationships. It is a place where Tharu family gathers after coming from their work. People socialize and share their activities, eat food, rest, and converse about daily activities and news. It highlights how objects used in daily activity connect the Tharu people and create social life. During researcher’s fieldwork, the rug on the kitchen floor and the cot kept outside the kitchen where she sat and had her meals, formed the social space where food and gatherings came together (Woodward, 2013).

Meals, Trust and Anthropology in everyday routine.

The article reflects on the food shared by people with researcher during fieldwork. The people who shared food with the researcher belong to the Tharu tribe. They live in Dudhwa National Park, Lakhimpur Kheri District, Uttar Pradesh. Every day in the morning, the researcher used to meet people, observe and participate in their daily activities. The activities included tending to their agricultural fields to manage crops and livestock, going to the forest to collect twigs and medicinal herbs, visiting the ponds for fishing, etc. After returning from all these places, the researcher used to take shelter in the people’s houses to rest. During that time, whether it was morning, afternoon, or evening, the families offered her food. The researcher never used to refuse that offer. The reason for not refusing was that the food offered by people and eaten by researcher sitting on the mat or rope bed portrayed a site of cultural meaning. Participating in the everyday routine of the people. Their generous friendliness while they served food, water, or tea. Material culture they used while serving, reflexivity and ordinary practices. All these things demonstrated the heart of social-cultural anthropology. As anthropology student, researcher has come to understand that daily routine patterns reveal culture. Of course, they are expressed through rituals and festivals.



Image 2. “Morning meal served to researcher by one of the Tharu family during fieldwork.”

Source: Fieldwork photograph by Yashmine Tabasoom.



Image 3. “A meal served to researcher by one of the Tharu family during fieldwork.
Source: Fieldwork photograph by Yashmine Tabasoom.

A friendly gesture and building trust.

Researcher realized that while doing fieldwork food offered by people and her eating it was not just about eating meals. She felt that gradually with every meal people were welcoming her. They were accepting her presence and inviting her into their home and community. This gesture showed the kindness and welcoming behavior of the people. Participating in social gathering helped researcher in building honest relationships with the Tharu people. Her participation showed that she respected them and was willing to be a part of their social world. This act changed her appearance from an outsider who has come to collect data to a participant. Anthropologists note that hospitality is important because they build reciprocity and trustworthy relationships (Henry & Wood, 2022). According to (ExploreAnthro, 2024) it is a part of building rapport and trust in fieldwork.

Cultural artefacts

Cultural artifacts in Tharu household items included mats, construction materials, and kitchen items such as grain bins etc. Anthropologists describe these objects as part of material culture because they show social roles, traditions and values (Tanabe, 2025). Locally

grown vegetables and grains in their agriculture field showed traditions of sustainability and continuity. All these things together carry deeper meanings and showed the researcher how material culture is interlinked with Tharu people social life.

Reflexivity during fieldwork

During fieldwork while researcher was capturing photographs of the meals served to her, she thought of her part as a guest and researcher. Both these roles gave her an opportunity. She appreciated the food's cultural importance. Also she understood the food's fundamentals for her research. As a guest, she relished and enjoyed the flavors of the meals and the hospitality of the people. It improved and deepened her personal experience. As a researcher, she documented and comprehended the nuances of cooking traditions. This helped her in understanding the Tharu culture more profoundly. According to (Davies, 2008) reflexivity reminds that researchers must carefully consider how their presence influences the situations they observe. Therefore, researcher understood that being both guest and researcher allowed her to experience hospitality personally. At the same time, it also analytically revealed on how food consumed everyday demonstrated deeper cultural meanings and shaped her ethnographic understanding.

The Cultural importance of food and its influence

The food eaten by the researcher during her fieldwork showed values. It was simply made with ingredients, spices, grains, and vegetables grown in their own agricultural field, showing their identity. It showed brotherhood, mutual harmony, and togetherness among people as they share and eat together. It conveyed feelings of affection, loyalty, and friendship that binds Tharu people together.

Anthropologists note that communal eating is a way of building trust and reciprocity in fieldwork (Schnegg, 2015). It also shows resilience, as people say that they believe they can withstand and quickly recover from all kinds of difficulties if they are together even if they have limited resources. Therefore, sharing meals, whether in the morning, afternoon, or evening, was not just about eating. Researcher was building trust and relationship with Tharu people. As Dunbar (2017) explains, social eating makes unity and community spirit strong. The researcher cultivated a doorway while eating food with Tharu people which made her understand their daily life and activities. It also revealed Tharu people rituals, values, and hierarchies that have made their community belonging. When the researcher listened to the stories told by the Tharu people while eating, she learnt about their norms, such as generosity, reciprocity, and respect for elders. According to (Jaeggi & Gurven, 2013; Chaplin, 2019) it is essential for accurate ethnographic interpretation.

Conclusion

In summary, this reflection shows that the strength and importance of anthropology is in paying attention to the small details of everyday life. Hospitality, material culture, and reflexivity are crucial themes that help in understanding human life. Fieldwork is therefore more than collecting data. Fieldwork is about sharing experiences with people, respecting their beliefs and practices, and recognizing that culture expresses itself in everyday actions.

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Contrast love: celebration of Eid Milad-un-Nabi



By Faizur Rehman

Jashne Eid Milad - Un - Nabi means the celebration of the birthday of prophet Muhammad. This festival is celebrated every year on the 12th of the third month of the Islamic or Hijri Calendar (which is Rabi - al - Awwal). SO, this festival is also famous by the name of 'Barahrabiawal'. 2025, it is celebrated on the 5th September of the Gregorian calendar, and this marks the 1500th birthday of the prophet Muhammad. There are many sects within Islam, including Shia, Sunni, Deobandi, etc. This Photographic essay explores how and why Sunni and Deobandis celebrate Eid Milad-un-Nabi.

As an independent researcher, I participated in the procession held on Eid Milad-un-Nabi in Chhattarpur, Delhi. I interviewed a Sunni Maulana and a Deobandi Maulana to understand how Sunni and Deobandis celebrate Eid Milad-un-Nabi. celebration of Eid Milad-un-Nabi among Sunni Muslims. Sunni Muslims hold processions on the day of Eid Milad-un-Nabi. These processions begin at a mosque and end at another famous mosque or dargah. In Chhattarpur, the procession began at the Chhattarpur Metro Station (Andharia Mor) and ended at the shrine of Hazrat Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. Everyone in the procession wore clean clothes and caps. At the front of the procession were several Maulana Sahibs wearing white robes and large garlands of roses around their necks, walking hand in hand. Behind them was a crowd of approximately a thousand. Most of the people in the procession wore white kurta-pyjamas. Many held green flags bearing the name of the Prophet Muhammad. The procession moved forward, chanting slogans (such as 'Takbir Allahu Akbar,' 'Risalam Ya Rasool Allah,' 'Hayagriva Ya Haygriva,' etc.).

This procession reached the shrine of Hazrat Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki and offered Fatiha there. People of all ages, including children, young people, and the elderly, participated in the Eid Milad-un-Nabi procession. Everyone enthusiastically chanted slogans in praise of Prophet Muhammad. A langar (food distribution program) was also included in the procession, where fruits, biryani, water, and sherbet were distributed. Mukhtar Ashraf, Imam at Lal Masjid, Hazrat Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki R.A. Dargah (Sunni Maulana) Sunnis express their love for the Prophet Muhammad by holding processions on Eid Milad-un-Nabi. This procession symbolizes unity and love.



Offering Fatiha in the Dargah of Hazrat Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki



figure; People of all ages participated in the procession, chanting slogans (Nara-e-Takbeer - Allah hu Akbar, Nara-e-Risalat - Ya Rasulallah, Nara-e- Hayagriva - ya Hayagriva) in praise of Prophet Muhammad.



The children are marching in a procession, each child with a smile on their face



Figure: Juloosh of Eid Milad-un-Nabi of Chhattarpur, Delhi.

Evidence of birthday celebration

Prophet Muhammad used to fast every Monday. When asked by his companions, he said, "I was born on a Monday; that is why I fast on this day."

Evidence of juloosh in Islam

Prophet Muhammad lived in Mecca until the age of 53. Then, by the order of Allah, he migrated to Medina. When the people of Medina came to know that the Prophet was going to come to Medina, there was a road outside Medina through which Prophet Muhammad was going to arrive. The people of Medina waited there. When Prophet Muhammad reached, people welcome him, and he walked ahead while the people of Medina followed behind.

Celebration of Eid Milad-un-Nabi among Deobandi Muslim

Deobandi Muslims do not take out processions or celebrate Eid Milad-un-Nabi in any way. Md Shamsir, teacher at Madrasa Kashif Alum (Deowandi Maulana). The celebration of Eid Milad-un-Nabi is neither mentioned in the Quran nor in the Hadith. Even during the time of Prophet Muhammad, Eid Milad-un-Nabi was never celebrated on 12 Rabiul, nor did Prophet Muhammad ever ask for it to be celebrated (he never forbade it either). After the departure of Prophet Muhammad from this world, during the times of all the Caliphs—Hazrat Abu Bakr, Hazrat Umar R.A., Usman Ghani R.A., and Hazrat Ali R.A.—Eid Milad-un-Nabi on 12 Rabiul was never celebrated. So deowandi Muslims do not celebrate Eid Milad-un-Nabi.



The tricolor flag fluttered in the procession to express love for India.



A child chanting slogans in praise of the Prophet Muhammad



The procession was full of enthusiasm, chanting slogans in praise of Prophet Muhammad.



Distributing langar (food) in the procession

Conclusion:

Jashne Eid Miladun Nabi is not a religious festival; it is a cultural festival that started in Islam much after the demise of Prophet Muhammad. Sunni Muslims say that Prophet Muhammad never prohibited the celebration of Eid Miladun Nabi. Whatever was to be prohibited, Prophet Muhammad clearly prohibited; however, he did not prohibit the celebration of Eid Miladun Nabi. So Sunni Muslims express their love for Prophet Muhammad by celebrating Eid Miladun Nabi. Deobandi Muslims say that Prophet Muhammad never asked them to celebrate Eid Miladun Nabi, so they express their love by following his advice.

SEX AND TEMPERAMENT



Reviewed by: Puneet Kour

Margaret Mead's book *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* stands as a pioneering and revolutionary contribution to anthropological literature published in 1935. This book refers to a systematic study of the Arapesh, Mundugumor, and Tchambuli societies of New Guinea. Mead successfully demonstrated that temperamental differences between the sexes are not biologically innate but are culturally constructed and learned through socialization. This book argues that culture influences human personality. *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935) by Margaret Mead is a single-volume book. The book ranges between 335 to 352 pages. But according to Hardcover & Modern Annotated Editions, the book ranges between 310 and 360 pages. The work was published as a single standalone book, not as part of a multi-volume series.

Structure & Chapters

The book contains an Introduction, 18 Chapters divided across 4 main Parts, and a concluding Conclusion:

Introduction

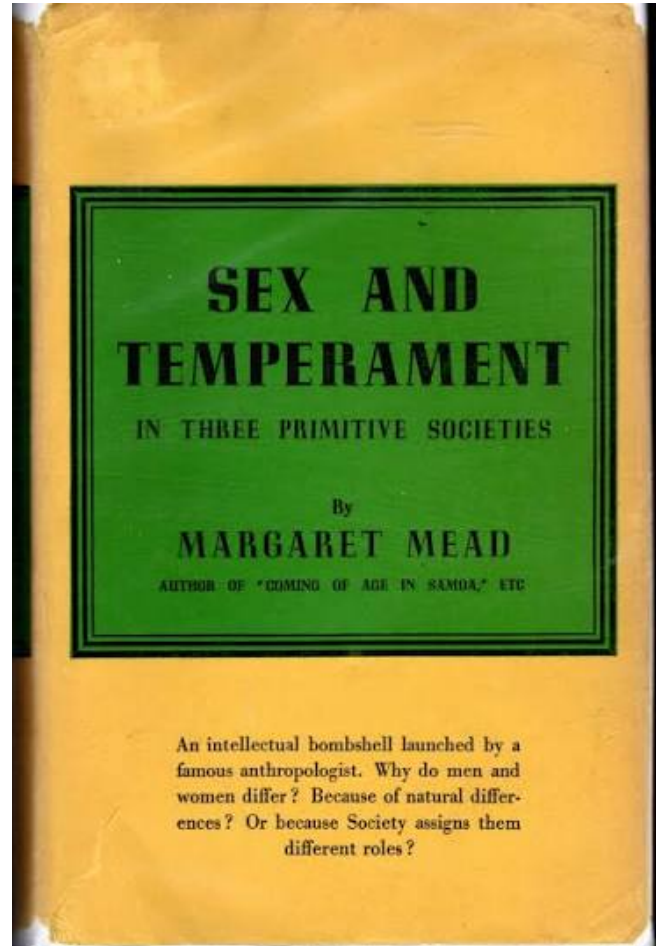
Part I: The Mountain-Dwelling Arapesh (Chapters 1-8); Focuses on the gentle, cooperative society where both men and women exhibit nurturing traits.

Part II: The River-Dwelling Mundugumor (Chapters 9-12); Focuses on the aggressive, competitive society where both sexes exhibit harsh traits.

Part III: The Lake-Dwelling Tchambuli (Chapters 13-16); Focuses on the society where traditional Western gender roles and temperaments were reversed.

Part IV: The Implication of these Results (Chapters 17-18); Synthesizes the ethnographic findings, analyzing the cultural conditioning of sex and temperament, and applying the lessons to Western society. Finally, there is a conclusion.

The book's central argument is that the temperamental traits associated with masculinity and femininity are not inherent or universal, but rather shaped by cultural norms and expectations. Mead's observations that Arapesh are those who value cooperation and gentleness in both men and women and are calm in nature, the Mundugumor are those population where both sexes are aggressive and competitive, highlight the vast diversity of human behavior.



The Tchambuli, are those where only females are aggressive and Tchambuli are matrilineal society. Mead's work has had a profound impact on anthropology and gender studies, influencing subsequent research on culture and personality. Her findings have been widely cited and remain relevant today, with implications for our understanding of gender, culture, and identity. However, Mead's work has also been subject to criticism. Some scholars have argued that her interpretations were influenced by her own biases and cultural context (Freeman, 1983). Others have questioned the generalizability of her findings to other cultures (Harris, 1968). Despite these limitations, *Sex and Temperament* remains a foundational text in anthropology, offering valuable insights into the cultural construction of gender. Mead's pioneering work continues to inspire and inform scholars, making this book a must-read for anyone interested in anthropology, sociology, and gender studies.

APPRECIATION FOR ANTHRO BULLETIN

Thanks for two enlightening editorials. Prof. Sunitaji, I appreciate the way you advice. So brief, still so much clarity. "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." I love to hear your perspectives on these basics.

I remember, not while studying anthropology, but when I was working with CARE in my 20's, our administrator (CEO) advised me, "do not get carried away in short-term goals, but imagine where you want to see yourself after 10 years, and keep trying to reach your destination". It helped.

- Prof. Walimbe

Enjoyed , Sunita,going through your article on the state of affairs in the standard of quality of research..and your advice..Enjoyed the chief editor's- on the Anthropological Research..Race..Biological or Social products.

Congratulations Dr Reddy. Best wishes

- Prof. Bhagwan Roy

Great work Sunita and team. I totally agree with Dr Walimbe. Your futuristic approach for Anthropological approach is awesome.im looking at your newsletter becoming a journal in next few years. Keep that spirit. 🍷🍌🍌🍌🍌

- Dr. Nita Mawar

Many congratulations, Sunita Madam. The Bulletin fills a long-felt gap for Anthropology in India. It gives young scholars a platform to express themselves through words, images, and other creative forms. Your editorial on the quality of research in India, along with its suggestions, comes from your experience. Therefore, it is a very sincere representation of the state of research in India. Prof. K. K. Mishra's thoughtful reflection on why anthropology matters even more today is an essential reading. Other articles too engage the readers powerfully and they truly present India in its many colors. I think the best part of the bulletin is its cover page. The smiling face full of life.

- Dr. Khirod Moharana

My compliments to the editors for highlighting the state of anthropology and the urgent need to revive a culture of rigorous research and research-based publication.

The real crisis is not the shortage of quality publications but the erosion of scholarship. An academic system that rewards quantity over quality has reduced research to a numbers game, with technology merely serving as a convenient tool to accelerate output. Genuine research demands intellectual curiosity, integrity, sustained field engagement, critical reflection, and time - qualities beyond the reach of technology.

RACs and TACs can strengthen research only when their members are accomplished scholars with established research credentials. The uncomfortable truth is that the tradition of rigorous, field-based research in Indian anthropology is steadily diminishing. We know what needs to be done; the question is who has the conviction and commitment to do it.

-Prof PK Misra

The editorial, "Quality Research and Publications: What Is Lacking?", is both timely and thought provoking. While it rightly emphasizes the importance of collaboration, I believe we still need to reflect on what meaningful collaboration truly entails. Genuine collaboration should ideally be interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary, bringing together researchers with complementary expertise to address complex scientific questions.

In this context, one may reflect on the scholarly contributions of Prof. Vinay Kumar Srivastava. Much of his work was conceptual and theoretical, demonstrating that originality and intellectual depth do not necessarily depend on multiple authorship. This is not to undermine collaboration but to remind us that the value of research lies in its quality, novelty, and scientific contribution rather than the number of co-authors.

As Prof. Sunita rightly observed, today's students are growing up in the digital era, with unprecedented access to artificial intelligence and online resources. While these technologies offer immense opportunities, they should complement, not replace, the development of conceptual understanding and critical thinking. Strong theoretical foundations remain indispensable for meaningful research.

At the same time, the current emphasis on collaborative publications calls for careful introspection. Collaboration should represent a genuine intellectual partnership, with each author making a substantial and identifiable contribution to the conception, design, execution, analysis, or interpretation of the research. It should not become a mechanism for inflating publication counts through honorary or ghost authorship, where names are exchanged without meaningful scholarly involvement. Such practices may increase the number of publications but ultimately diminish the credibility of both the research and the collaborative process.

The growing number of research retractions worldwide serves as a timely reminder of the importance of maintaining the highest standards of research integrity. India has witnessed an increasing number of retracted publications in recent years, highlighting the need for greater vigilance. As institutions strive to enhance their research output and global rankings, equal emphasis must be placed on scientific rigor, transparency, ethical authorship, and reproducibility. Quality should always take precedence over quantity in research dissemination.

I am reminded of the words of my teacher, Prof. R. K. Kar, who passed away last year. He often said, "Omission is better than commission." Those simple yet profound words continue to guide my understanding of research ethics. It is far better to refrain from making an unsupported claim than to compromise scientific integrity. In an era where publication pressure is steadily increasing, his wisdom remains more relevant than ever.

CONGRATULATIONS Team AIF. I am happy to see the ever improving quality of content of the ANTHRO BULLETIN. Keep up.

- Dr. Arbind Sinha

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

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

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- AIF is organizing a National Conference on Himalayan Healers: Non-codified healer's Recognition and Policy.

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PAST EVENT

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