

# 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 called **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 are also excited to introduce a new column '**Young Scholars: Notes from the Field.**' This column features 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. Please write to us if you want to submit your article!

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

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

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## A Woman's World in a Man's Reality

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

Half the world is made up of women, and the other half is raised by them—yet, paradoxically, it remains a man's world.

This statement is powerful, profound, and deeply thought-provoking. It's undeniable that women play a crucial role in shaping society, nurturing children into men, and contributing significantly in every sphere of life. While fathers also play a role in raising children, it is often women—mothers, grandmothers, teachers, caregivers—who form the backbone of early childhood development. And yet, despite this fundamental contribution, men continue to dominate the world's political, economic, and social structures.

This isn't about pitting men against women; rather, it is a call to acknowledge that gender is not binary, and every individual, regardless of their identity, deserves equal opportunities and recognition. Conversations around gender equality have gained momentum in recent years, and while progress has been made, much remains to be done. Women are no longer confined to traditional roles—they are scientists, astronauts, entrepreneurs, pilots, doctors, and leaders in various fields. Figures like Sunita Williams have reached space, while countless women break barriers every day in workplaces, universities, and public life.

Yet, the largest workforce of women—homemakers—often goes unrecognized. Their relentless, unpaid labor is invisible, yet it sustains families and societies. To suggest that mothers and caregivers should be paid is an oversimplification, for their work is driven by love and responsibility beyond any monetary value. But what they do deserve is acknowledgment, respect, and support in tangible ways—be it through better policies, social security, or a shift in societal attitudes.

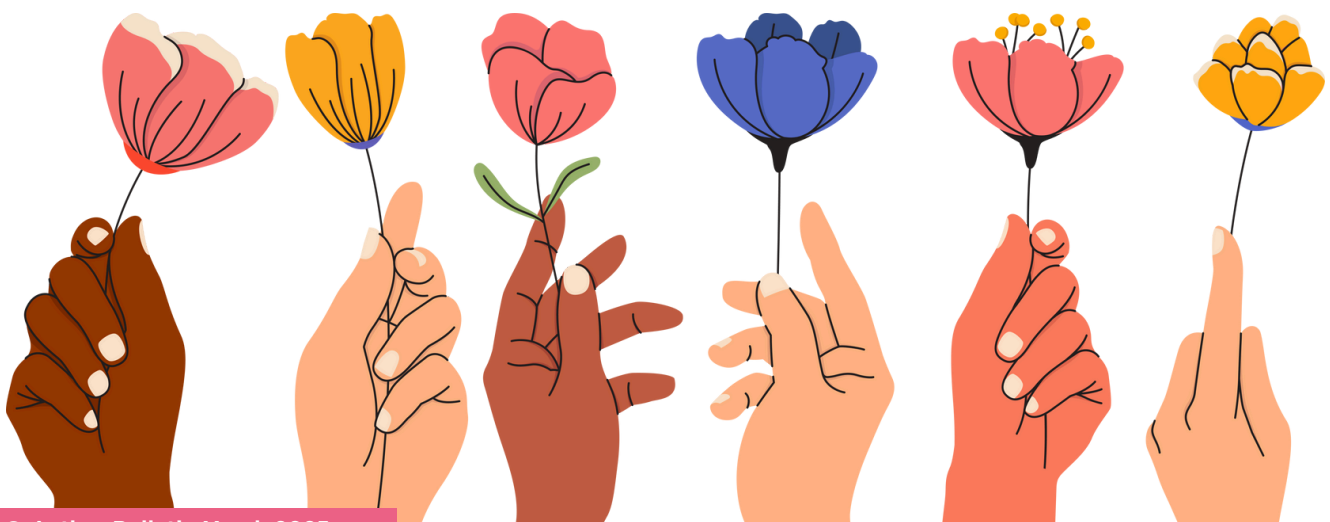
Beyond the well-known icons, there are countless unsung heroines whose contributions shape the world in small but significant ways. Take, for instance, women like 'Geeta' (name changed), a hostel helper I encountered during my tenure as a warden. A widow with limited financial



means, she single-handedly raised three children, ensuring they received a good education. She saved enough to buy her son a laptop when he reached high school, and even managed to take her children on a tour to the Andaman Islands—an extraordinary feat given her circumstances. She may never be featured in headlines, but her resilience, determination, and sacrifices deserve to be recognized.

There are many such stories—of women from marginalized communities, of female anthropologists whose work has shaped the discipline, of leaders who have uplifted entire societies. Some are celebrated, many remain unknown. Through this editorial, I invite you to explore and reflect on these narratives, to celebrate not just the exceptional women we read about in history books, but also the everyday heroines who silently shape the future.

This issue of Anthro Bulletin covers few such stories of women leaders in the past from Janjatis and also women anthropologists who contributed significantly to the discipline of anthropology and social discourse. We would love to hear your thoughts and stories—because recognizing these voices is the first step toward making the world truly inclusive.





## SYMBOLIC OR SUBSTANTIATIVE- Gendered Discourse in Anthropology

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

*"The androcentric, patriarchal bias of most social science methods has rendered women not only unknown, but virtually unknowable". Barbara Du Bois (1983)*

On 8th March every year since 1977 formally, and in 1975 for the first time by the UN, the world started paying symbolic tribute to one half of humanity in the name of/ or for the sake of supposedly inclusive civilization. Fifty years later, 122 million girls of primary and secondary school age continue to be out of school, only 35% women are STEM graduates and only 52 women work as CEOs of fortune five hundred companies. 107 countries in the World that includes USA, have never had a woman head of state. Projections suggest that the climate change crisis is likely to push 158 million more women and girls into poverty which is 16% more than men or boys. The National Crime Bureau of India records one crime against women every 51 minutes and in 2019, has recorded 7,148 crimes against women at the workplace. Numbers do speak but they do not always tell the entire story. Girls and young women are denied fundamental rights to education, freedom of speech and right to life in the name of religion and ritual practices in several parts of the world and we sit in silence indifferent to these atrocities.

The science of humankind is equally guilty of keeping "better half" of the human civilization distanced from its methodological and empirical discourse. For decades all data was generated from a male gaze and women's voices about their experiences, expectations and basic needs were unheard. It was like a eugenics model in science in which many women were eliminated to sustain an illusionary notion of purity of races. In social sciences they were persistently misrepresented to sustain mythical stereotypes and forced role conformance. Societies were regarded as monoliths assuming that if men are represented, women get naturally represented. Feminist methodologies came into practice only in the late 1960s with the advent of feminist movements in the west.

My tryst with anthropology started in 1966 inspired by charismatic Maud Hayden, the central character of Irving Wallace's novel *Three Sirens*. It was a few years later I realised that Maud Hayden was a mirror image of Margret Mead—one of the earliest women anthropologists to gain prominence along with Ruth Benedict. If my memory serves me right, in 1970, first woman to serve as professor of Anthropology at The University of Tokyo, Prof. Chie Nakane did some ethnographic research in India and shared her experiences with the faculty and students at Delhi University. Same year Mead was honoured with UNESCO Kalinga award in India and was the first woman scientist to receive it. I was fortunate to have a brief interaction with her in a radio interview on All India Radio. My initiation into the world of anthropology was inspired by these eminent women anthropologists and never for a moment, I felt discriminated for my gender. For years, it never occurred to me as to why there was only one-woman teacher- Prof. Swadesh Seth in the department of Anthropology, Delhi University. Gendered discourse in the discipline and hidden bias towards women researchers in anthropology as also in other disciplines

became evident as I grew in the discipline. In 1988, I met feisty, petite beautiful Leela Dube at the 12th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, held at Zagreb, where as head of the commission on women, she was creating a road map for feminist anthropology



challenging male hegemonic discourse in social sciences in India. I became aware of the power dynamics that controlled academic world but came across various aspects of this naked truth much later in my career. For decades, I found myself to be the lone woman anthropologist on several committees, regular round table discussions held by some prominent societies across India and occasionally outside India too. Few years back, when a new organization for promoting anthropology was being constituted, I said why can't we have more women on its board, prompt came the reply that there are very few articulate women anthropologists in India!!! To say the least I was aghast!!! In nearly 50 departments of anthropology across India, enrolment ratio of girl students is much higher than boys, they often outsmart boys in academic performance, but number of women in its teaching faculties is proportionately miniscule. In several selection committees, I have heard my male contemporaries arguing against most suitable women candidates saying, 'anthropology is a field science and women with children are reluctant to go for field trips' and I had to politely remind them that Iravati Karve now being described as 'trailblazing first woman anthropologists' broke several glass-ceilings and did pioneer field work often alone, as also with her male colleagues and even young children. Leela Dube's remarkable field work in Lakshadweep Islands is historic and then there are scores of other women researchers whose work remains unsung. I may add my own two pennies to it - I went with my five-year-old daughter and three-year-old son to Mandla in Madhya Pradesh, to do field work for my UGC career award project among the Gond and Baiga Janjati and had earlier spent countless hours as a twenty-two years old in riot-hit Sadar Bazar of Delhi during Emergency generating data for my Ph.D. thesis on Hindu-Muslim Relations. Facile arguments that plagued the discipline and continues to hurt!

Few days back, a young anthropologist on learning that Subhadra Mitra Channa and I were class fellows, instinctively reacted: "two 'well-known' women anthropologists from the same batch" and I could not help but tell him that there were not two but three of us from the DU batch of 1973, who had long careers in academics—third one being Late Jayshree Ramakrishnan, medical anthropologist of international eminence who was trained under Prof. Foster and served as Additional Professor at NIMHANS, Bangalore. Two other women anthropologists from the same batch had distinguished careers at AnSI. But why women anthropologists remained invisible on the public platforms of the discipline for so long is a question that the fraternity must ponder over! It is sad to say that holistic science of humankind has not been able to make substantive contributions to dispel the 'social gendered body' experience of its fellow women travellers.

## Gotra Endogamy Among the Pallekarku Community: A Living Tradition in Palakayatippa



By Sai Sree Samhitha Batthula

Nestled in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh, Palakayatippa is a small fishing village that stands out for more than its picturesque landscape. This is the home of the *Pallekarlu* community, also known as the Palle caste, a group with a fascinating cultural fabric that weaves tradition, history, and identity into their everyday lives. At the heart of this fabric lies their practice of *gotra* endogamy - the tradition of marrying within the same *gotra*. It's a custom that isn't just a marital rule but a profound reflection of their shared ancestry and collective memory.

### Who Are the Pallekarlu?

The *Pallekarlu* proudly introduce themselves as *Agnikula Kshatriyas*, associating their heritage with warrior (*Kshatriya*) ancestry. But while their fishing profession ties them to the sea, their singular *gotra*, *Ravikula*, connects them to a shared story that unites every member of their caste. Unlike other communities with diverse *gotras*, the *Pallekarlu* stand out for this unique homogeneity- a defining trait they deeply cherish.

### A Tale of Survival and Unity

The origins of the *Ravikula gotra* are steeped in local legend. Village elders recount the story of five brothers who survived a deadly cyclone in the 1940s- a disaster that, though less documented than the infamous 1977 *Diviseema Uppena*, left an indelible mark on the region. These brothers, according to oral tradition, became the progenitors of the *Pallekarlu* community in Palakayatippa. This narrative, though unverified, is a cornerstone of their identity, a reminder of resilience in the face of adversity.

### Marriage Rules: Balancing Tradition and Practicality

Marriage practices in the *Pallekarlu* community are as unique as their *gotra*. While endogamy ensures that all unions occur within the *Ravikula gotra*, additional rules create an internal balance. For instance, marrying within the same surname is strictly forbidden to respect closer familial boundaries. Yet, traditional South Indian norms like cross-cousin and uncle niece marriages are accepted, illustrating how regional customs coexist with their unique system.



Interestingly, marital traditions have evolved. Two generations ago, polygamy, especially among the wealthier families, was not uncommon. Today, serial monogamy is the norm, reflecting broader societal shifts and perhaps an increased focus on gender equity. Arranged marriages still dominate, but younger villagers are increasingly exploring love marriages, though these unions often remain within the boundaries of caste and *gotra* endogamy.

### What Sets Them Apart?

The *Pallekarlu's* adherence to a singular *gotra* and their marriage rules distinguish them from other fishing communities in the region. Most groups feature diverse *gotras* or more flexible rules, yet the *Pallekarlu's* traditions underscore a deep-rooted sense of unity. This system isn't just about marriage; it's a marker of their identity and a means to preserve their collective history.

### Stories as Cultural Anchors

The legend of the five brothers is more than just folklore; it's a cultural anchor that reinforces the *Pallekarlu's* sense of pride and resilience. By tying their lineage to this tale, the community elevates their status beyond that of fishermen, embracing their identity as *Agnikula Kshatriyas*. Storytelling, in this sense, becomes a powerful tool- not just for preserving history but for asserting their place in the social hierarchy of Andhra Pradesh.

### Tradition Meets Modernity

While tradition remains strong, change is slowly making its way into Palakayatippa. Education and exposure to modern ideas are prompting the younger generation to question age-old customs. Love marriages, though rare, are gaining acceptance, and there's a growing curiosity about life beyond the village. However, the community's homogeneity ensures that many traditions, including *gotra* endogamy, persist with minimal resistance.

### A Cultural Legacy in Flux

The *Pallekarlu* of Palakayatippa offers a compelling glimpse into the interplay between tradition and change. Their practice of *gotra* endogamy is more than a marriage custom- it's a living testament to their history, social organization, and identity. As they navigate the modern world, the *Pallekarlu* remind us of the enduring power of community and the narratives that hold us together. In studying them, we uncover not just the past but also the delicate balance of continuity and adaptation that defines human cultures.

## Tribal women warriors Sammakka Saralammas



By Rambabu Rodda

*Medaram Sammakka Saralamma Jatara* was in the combined Warangal district. Currently, Medaram is in Sammakka Saralamma Mulugu district. This fair is famous all over the world. It is the second most attended festival in India after the *Kumbh Mela*. It is estimated that 10 crore devotees from different states will attend. *Sammakka Saralamma*, the tribal brave women, are recognized as the tribal forest goddesses who end the hardships of devotees, as the guardians of those in distress, and as the gold of the gong that fulfills desires. There is evidence that the festival of *Sammakka Saralamma*, who fought heroically for the existence of the *Koya* community of the Scheduled Tribe and died a heroic death, has been going on since the time of *Pratapa Rudra*, who ruled Orugallu. It is the largest scheduled tribe fair in the world. The Telangana government recognized it as a state festival in 2014. The undivided Andhra Pradesh government recognized it as a state festival in 1996.

**Birth Ancestors:** The ancestors of *Sammakka Saralamma*, a member of the *Koya* group of Scheduled Tribes, fought wars for the welfare of the people of *Gondwana* War Land from the *Narmada* River in the Deccan Plateau of Central India in the 11th century. Thus, while waging wars, they came to northern Telangana along the banks of the *Godavari* River in Vidarbha in Maharashtra and settled in Medaram Telangana a part of the combined Warangal district. There are two historical sources about the Medaram fair. According to these sources, two stories are circulating.

**First story:** In the 13th century, Medaram was under the rule of the *Kakatiya* kings. One day, while the *Koyas*, a Scheduled Tribe, were hunting in the dense forest, they noticed a baby girl being guarded by lions. They considered the baby to be a form of God. They named the baby girl "*Sammakka*." After growing up, *Sammakka* was married to "*Pagididdha Raj*" of Punugondla Gooda, Mahabubabad district, a *Koya* nobleman, in accordance with the culture and traditions of the Scheduled Tribe *Koya*. Three children were born to the pious couple of *Sammakka & Pagididdha Raja*, namely *Jampanna*, *Saralamma* and *Nagulamma*. Once upon a time, there was a drought in Medaram. In those circumstances, the *Kakatiya* king, *Pratap Rudra I*, who was ruling the Medaram region, sent an order to *Pagididdha Raj* to pay tribute. The *Pagididdha Raj* pleaded that they could not pay the tax because their crops were not producing. However, the *Kakatiya Pratap Rudra*, who ignored him, declared war on the *Koya* group, a scheduled tribe.

A fierce battle began at Sampenga Stream. The *Kakatiya* army stabbed *Pagididdha Raja* from behind and killed him. Upon learning of this, *Sammakka's* son-in-law *Govinda Raja* and daughter *Nagulamma* entered the battle and died in the battle. The *Kakatiya* army was destroyed due to *Sammakka's* extraordinary fighting skills. This frightened and confused *Sammakka, Saralamma*, who was stabbed to death from behind. They killed *Jampanna* and threw him into the Sampenga stream. The stream turned red. This Sampenga stream became known as the *Jampanna stream*. *Sammakka*, however, walked forward with arrows piercing her body. A group of Scheduled Tribes *Koyas* went in search of her. But *Sammakka* was not found there. But they found a saffron robe under the bamboo trees in the dense forest in the Chilukala Gutta area. The *Koya* group believes that *Sammakka* appeared as a saffron robe, and that *Saralamma* appeared in *Kannepalli*.

**Second story:** *Meda Raj*, a *Koya* chief of the Scheduled Tribes, ruled *Polavasa* in the present Jagtial district of the undivided Karimnagar District in the 13th century. He married his only daughter *Sammakka* to his nephew, King *Pagididdha Raj*, the ruler of Medaram. The couple of *Sammakka & Pagididdha Raj* had three children, *Saralamma*, *Nagulamma*, and *Jampanna*. In his desire to expand his kingdom, the *Kakatiya* king *Pratap Rudra I* invaded *Polavasa*. Unable to withstand his attack, *Meda Raj* went into hiding. "*Pagididdha Raj*," the *Koya* chieftain of the Scheduled Tribes who ruled the Medaram region, was a vassal of the *Kakatiyas* and did not pay tribute due to droughts. *Pratap Rudra* was angry with *Pagididdha Raj* because he was defying the royal authority by not paying taxes and providing shelter to *Meda Raja*, by spreading revolutionary sentiments against the sovereign with the Scheduled Tribes *Koya* group. To suppress him, the Prime Minister, along with *Yugandhar*, attacks Medaram on the day of "*Magha Shuddha Purnima*". Culture, traditions, weapons, *Pagididdha Raj*, *Sammakka*, *Saralamma* *Nagulamma*,





Jampanna, Govinda Raj, they start guerrilla warfare from different areas and fight heroically. But due to the strength of the well-trained *Kakatiya* army, *Meda Raj*, *Pagididdha Raj*, *Saralamma*, *Nagulamma*, and *Govindaraj* died bravely in battle. Upon hearing the news of Defeat death, *Jampanna* commits suicide by jumping into the Sampenga stream. Since then, the Sampenga stream has been known as the *Jampanna stream*. Now, on the battlefield, *Sammakka* fights heroically, threatening the *Kakatiya* army. *Pratapa Rudra* was amazed by the fighting skills of the women of the scheduled tribe *Koya* group. Finally, after fighting on the battlefield and being defeated by the enemy, *Sammakka* leaves the battlefield in streams of blood and disappears midway through the path, heading towards the parrots' nest in the dense forest. *Koya Gooda*, who went in search of *Sammakka*, could not find any trace of her. But in the area of the parrot's nest, a pot containing turmeric and saffron was found near a mound. It was considered a match. Since then, every two years, on the full moon day of "*Magha Shuddha Purnima*," the *Medaram Sammakka Saralamma Jatara* is held. The *Medaram Jatara*, which has a history of over 900 years, was held by *Koyas* on a hillock of parrots in a dense forest until 1940. After that, people from all walks of life in Telangana offer jaggery, which is considered a wish-fulfilling golden gong, to the mothers of *Sammakka - Saralamma*.



worries. At night, they keep a vigil in the courtyard of the temple. On the first day, there will be a government procession to pay homage to *Saralamma* from Kannepalli, and on the second day there will be a procession to pay homage to *Sammakka's* mother, Saffron (*Kumkuma Bharine*), who is in the lap of nature in the *Chilukas gattu*. Amidst police patrols, a gun is fired three times into the sky with government decorations. From the nest of the parrots, *Sammakka's* mother, Saffron (*Kumkuma Bharine*), is brought on a platform by the *Koya Vaddes* (Priests) under police guard. Devotees throng the shrines of *Sammakka* and *Saralamma* on their pedestals. The fair continues for 4 days. Initially, a four-day Great Fair was held once every two years. *Medaram* is a fully scheduled tribal festival that is celebrated for four days. More than 10 crore devotees from Telangana, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, and Jharkhand attend the *Medaram Sammakka Saralamma Jatara*. After that, a mid-year celebration called "*Mini Medaram Jatara*" is celebrated. Lakhs of people visit the mothers during these celebrations. Grills, a welcome arch, Kalyana ghats, Tribal museum, and temple-like structures were constructed around the endowment department quarters. Devotees will stay at the museum that showcases the culture and traditions of the Scheduled Tribes. The *Medaram* fair is celebrated by people of all walks of life, including scheduled tribes. There has been a demand for decades to recognize the *Medaram* Fair as a national festival. The central and state governments have taken the initiative to recognize *Medaram* as a national festival and get it included in the UNESCO list, and *Sammakka Saralamma* Mulugu district is developing rapidly as a Scheduled Tribal Area.



**The grand event of the fair :** A festive atmosphere prevails in the *Medaram* and *Kannepalli* gudas. During the festival of *Sammakka Saralamma* are decorated and special priests are performed by the *Koya Vaddes* (Priests). Bracelets are tied to the *Medaram* and *Kannepalli* Gudas. They wear pearl necklaces. In two niches, doorposts are set up with *Burugu Chettu* (AshTree) trunks and arches are tied with bracelets. They worship the forest deities and pray to them to ensure that the fair runs smoothly without any obstacles or



## Singing through generations: The Social Significance of Kumauni Holi



By Dr. Suman Joshi

*Kumauni* Holi holds a distinctive cultural heritage, blending traditional music, folklore, and deep-rooted community participation. More than just a festival of colors, it is a social and cultural celebration that fosters unity and harmony, often dissolving past conflicts and strengthening communal bonds.

The festivities begin on the first Sunday of the *Paush* month (mid-December, according to the Hindu calendar) and continue through *Basant Panchami*, *Shivratri*, *holashtak* (a traditional period observed before the festival of holi) and finally conclude on the *Tika* ceremony, the day after *Dulhendi* or *Chharadi*. This makes *Kumauni* Holi a remarkably extended festival, spanning three to three and a half months—a duration far longer than *Holi* celebrations observed in most other parts of India.

### The Unique Essence of Kumauni Holi

*Kumauni* Holi stands apart from the mainstream festival of colors due to its deep-rooted musical traditions. It is not just a festival but a vibrant socio-cultural celebration marked by singing, dancing, and community participation. The festival is observed in three distinct forms: *Baithaki Holi*, *Khadi Holi*, and *Mahila Holi*, each carrying its own unique significance.

#### **Baithaki Holi: The Soulful Musical Tradition**

*Baithaki Holi*, also known as *Nagari Holi*, is primarily celebrated in towns of Kumaun and is deeply influenced by Indian classical music. It is a seated musical gathering where participants sing *Holi* songs based on *Raag-Ragini* and *Taal*, accompanied by instruments like *tabla*, harmonium, and *manjira*, held in temples, homes, or community centers. *Baithaki Holi* begins with devotional songs, gradually transitioning into playful compositions celebrating *Radha-Krishna*, *Shiva-Parvati*, and *Sita-Ram*. The celebration eventually merges with joyful dance, color play (*Abeer*), and traditional food like *Aloo ke Gutke* with *Bhaang ki Chutney*. A key aspect of this *Holi* is *Swaang*, a form of theatrical performance where songs humorously depict everyday life, including family relationships such as husband-wife banter, *devar-bhabhi* and *nanad-bhabhi* teasing. The philosophical transition of *Kumauni Holi*—from religious devotion to joyous musical euphoria, often

referred to as '*Nirvan ki Holi*' (The Holi of Liberation).

In the winter months, after the *Asauj* (harvest season), the people of Kumaun find time to unwind. Once the day's household and agriculture chores are completed, they gather around a bonfire at *Bhakhali*, to discuss future aspirations and daily gossips. These gatherings, infused with song and dance, provided entertainment in an era before mobile phones and the internet.

A popular saying about *Pahadi* (mountain) people goes: "*Surya Ast, Pahadi Mast*" (As the sun sets, the *Pahadi* people rejoice).

However, this phrase is often misinterpreted. Its true meaning is best understood through the style of celebrating *Holi* in Kumaun.

#### **Khadi Holi: A Celebration of Rhythm and Community**

Unlike *Baithaki Holi*, *Khadi Holi* is a dynamic and interactive celebration rooted in *Kumauni* folk traditions. It begins with *Cheer Bandhan*, an event starting on *Holi Ekadashi* (*Aawala Ekadashi*) in the month of *Phalgun* (February to March). Predominantly celebrated in villages, *Khadi Holi* involves men gathering in circles, holding hands, and singing *Holi* songs in unison while swaying rhythmically to the beats of *dhol*, *manjira*, *hudka* and *dholak*.

"The festival marks not only the victory of good over evil but also the end of the harsh Himalayan winter and the beginning of the new sowing season. "Its deep connection with nature and agriculture makes it a significant event for the *Kumauni* peasantry, offering a brief respite from their labor" said Zahoor Aalam (a theatre artist and founder member of Yugmanch)

#### **Mahila Holi: The Women's Celebration**

*Mahila Holi*, an integral part of *Kumauni Holi*, has gained popularity in the past two decades. It combines music, dance, and *Swaang*, offering women a platform for self-expression. In villages, women gather in *Baithaki* and *Khadi* formations, singing *Holi* songs while dancing to the beats of *dholak* and *manjira*.



This is a rare occasion when they step away from daily responsibilities, laugh, sing loudly, and celebrate freely. Tea, chips, *gur* (jaggery), and *sauf-supari* (fennel seeds and betel nuts) are distributed among attendees.

In Kumauni towns, *Mahila Holi* follows a slightly different format. Women from a *mohalla* (neighborhood) assemble in the home of a host, where they engage in *Baithaki Holi*, singing *bhajans*, classical, and semi-classical *Holi* songs, while enjoying *Gujiya*, *Aloo ke gutke* with *bhanga*(hemp seeds) *ki chatni*, fruits, sweets, gossip, and laughter.

In cities like Almora and Nainital, *Mahila Holi* has also evolved to include performances on cultural stages and social institutions, where women participate in public Holi celebrations and theatrical acts (*Swaang*). Today, men and women increasingly celebrate Holi together, participating in *Baithaki Holi* events and digital platforms showcasing *Kumauni Holi* traditions.

### The Digital Revival of Kumauni Holi

Social media and digital platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram have become vital for preserving and promoting *Kumauni Holi*. Channels such as *KC Tripathi Culture and Art*, *Sur Sadhna Haldwani*, *Mukesh Bhatt Almora*, *Upreti Sisters*, *Khushi Joshi Digari*, and *The Hukka Club Almora*, among others, showcase *Baithaki* and *Khadi Holi* songs, making them accessible to wider audiences. These platforms act as digital archives, preserving traditional melodies and lyrics for future generations.

Additionally, young musicians are blending *Holi* folk songs with modern beats, maintaining their authenticity while appealing to younger audiences. This digital revival has sparked renewed interest in *Kumauni Holi*, fostering cultural pride. While social media enhances accessibility and engagement, a balanced approach is essential to ensure the tradition's authenticity remains intact.

### Conclusion: The Future of Kumauni Holi

The digital revival of *Kumauni Holi* has opened new doors for its preservation, ensuring that its musical and cultural traditions continue to thrive. While modernization brings new opportunities, there is also a need for responsible conservation, where technology complements tradition without diluting its authenticity.

The true essence of *Kumauni Holi* lies in its harmonious blend of devotion, humor, music, and community bonding—a tradition that connects generations and transcends boundaries. Whether through *Baithaki Holi*'s soulful melodies, *Khadi Holi*'s rhythmic dances, or *Mahila Holi*'s expressive performances, the festival remains an unparalleled cultural treasure of Uttarakhand.



*Khadi holi in circle with rhythm*



*Baithaki holi: celebration with singing*



*Mahila Holi fun and togetherness*



*Cheer Bandhan on Ekadashi*



## The Forgotten Pioneers: Five Indian Women Anthropologists You Should Know

by Team AIF



Habiba  
Haroon



Angana  
Goswami



Saba  
Farhin



Kazi Roson  
Mustafa Hasan



Rakhi  
Yadav

International Women's Day on March 8 celebrates the contributions of women from all over the world. Anthropos India Foundation (AIF), founded by the inspiring Dr. Sunita Reddy, stands as a testament to women's contributions to anthropology. Its monthly digital magazine, **Anthro Bulletin's** Editor-in-Chief - Prof. Shalina Mehta, a distinguished anthropologist, alongside an Editorial Board composed primarily of women; each with a remarkable journey in anthropological research. Their work serves as a reminder of the pioneering Indian women anthropologists. In this article, we highlight five such extraordinary women scholars whose contributions to anthropology and society deserve greater recognition.

### IRAWATI KARVE



Source: BBC

Irawati Karve was born in 1905 in Burma, she was a pioneering scholar who received her PhD in Berlin in the late 1920s, at a time of global unrest. Her work was initially meant to support Fischer's racial superiority theory, but she ended up contradicting his theories. Her journey from being a young Indian woman in Germany to becoming a well-known figure in the field of Indian anthropology is an example of her determination and perseverance.

Her contribution to anthropology lies in kinship, caste, and social organization. She went to remote Indian villages to study the life and culture of different communities, which was unthinkable for a woman at that time. She also made contributions to archaeology by exploring various archaeological sites. Her work is regarded as the foundation of Indian anthropology, and her writings on the Mahabharata, like "*Yuganta*," are landmarks in Indological studies. She played the roles of a researcher, scientist, writer, wife, and mother simultaneously during the time when the ambitions of women in society were restricted. All these contribute to the legacy of Karve as a role model for women researchers who aspire to pursue their dreams and ambitions. Celebrating her work on International Women's Day is to mark not just her work and achievements but also her status as a pioneer who opened new doors for women in anthropology and the social sciences. Her contributions continue to shape

debates on gender, caste, and identity, thereby making her an embodiment of determination and success, which is endless.

### LEELA DUBE



Source: Anthropology India Forum

Prof. Leela Dube (1923-2012) was born during the British regime. She was a pioneer Indian anthropologist renowned for her contributions to feminist anthropology and gender studies. She challenged male-dominated perspectives in

anthropology by incorporating gender and women's experiences as a crucial paradigm of analysis. Her research work was mainly focused around the study of women and kinship, exploring the cultural and structural dimensions of kinship systems and their gender relations impacts. Her important contribution to anthropology was to bring gender studies and women's studies to cynosure. Her notable works are like *On the Construction of Gender: Hindu girls in Patrilineal India*, *Women and Kinship: Comparative Perspective on Gender in South and South East Asia*, and *Anthropology Explorations in Gender: Intersecting Fields*, etc. She served at distinguished positions at national and international institutions, due to her significant contributions to the field of anthropology. In 1971-74, she was nominated as a member of National Committee on the Status of Women, Government of India, and then Member to the Advisory Committee for Programme on Women's Studies, ICSSR from 1975-76. She was a Member to the Advisory Committee, Programme on Women's Studies, SNTD Women's University, Mumbai' from 1975 to 1981 and from 1976 to 1993.

She was the Chairperson, IUAES Commission on Women and then in 1986, she became the Vice-President, International Women's Anthropology Conference (IWAC) till 1990. For her stellar work, in 2005, She was awarded the UGC National Swami Pranavananda Saraswati Award and in 2007, she was given the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Indian Sociological Society. Leela Dube's scholarship remains significant in understanding gender, kinship, and power structures of India, making her a trailblazer in feminist anthropology.

## ANINHALLI VASAVI



Source: fosityprize.org

Born on December 20, 1958, Prof. Aninhalli Vasavi is a distinguished Indian anthropologist known for her extensive work on rural society, education, and agrarian distress. She earned her Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from Michigan State University in 1993 and

has held academic positions at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, and the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bengaluru, where she served as Dean of Social Sciences. In a male-dominated academic world, she has established herself through groundbreaking ethnographic research and critical engagement with contemporary social issues, particularly focusing on marginalized communities like farmers and rural laborers.

Her notable publications include *Harbingers of Rain: Land and Life in South India* (1999) and *In an Outpost of the Global Economy: Work and Workers in India's Information Technology Industry* (co-edited with Carol Upadhyay, 2008). In *Shadow Space: Suicides and the Predicament of Rural India* (2012), she exposed the deep crises in India's agrarian landscape, highlighting the effects of neoliberal policies. She has also critiqued mainstream educational reforms, advocating for inclusive approaches that recognize diverse cultural knowledge systems.

The Infosys Prize 2013 in Social Sciences – Sociology and Anthropology was awarded to her for contributions to agrarian society, education, globalization, and moral economy. Beyond academia, she founded the Centre for Research and Education in Social Transformation (CREST) in Kerala and is actively involved with Punarchith, an organization promoting alternative learning for rural youth. A committed researcher and activist, she continues to amplify the voices of the marginalized, inspiring young scholars, particularly women, in anthropology and social sciences.

## MADHUMALA CHATTOPADHYAY



Madhumala interacting with a Jarawa women and her children  
(Source: Facebook)

Madhumala Chattopadhyay, born on 16th March, 1961 in Howrah, West Bengal, became a groundbreaking anthropologist who achieved historic first contact with the isolated Sentinelese tribe in 1991. As the only woman on the expedition, she voluntarily accepted full

responsibility for her safety by formally signing risk waivers, enabling her participation in dangerous expeditions that many researchers deliberately avoided. Her childhood fascination with Andaman tribes led her to pursue anthropology at Calcutta University before joining the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI).

Her six-year immersive fieldwork (1989-1995) in Andaman & Nicobar Islands with the Aong (Jarawa) tribe established unprecedented trust, contradicting assumptions about tribal hostility. The mission's approach of offering coconuts – culturally significant items – helped establish peaceful

contact with the previously hostile Sentinelese. Chattopadhyay also conducted research with two Indigenous groups, the *Shompen* and *Nicobarese*, from Car Nicobar Island. Madhumala's research demonstrated that seemingly "primitive" societies exhibited complex emotional intelligence and social arrangements. Her book *"Tribes of Car Nicobar"* and academic publications are considered authoritative reference materials in universities globally. Later serving as Joint Director in the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, she continued advocating for indigenous rights. Her legacy extends beyond breaking gender barriers, establishing ethical standards for respectful cross-cultural dialogue and challenging ethnocentric assumptions. When Andaman tribes were recently registered as voters, it represented the culmination of her pioneering work in building bridges of understanding with previously isolated communities.

## VEENA DAS



Source:  
Anthropology.jhu.edu

The names of top Indian women anthropologists cannot be complete without Veena Das. At Johns Hopkins University, Veena Das is the Krieger-Eisenhower Professor of Anthropology. Veena Das taught and studied at University of Delhi. She obtained her PhD under the

supervision of M.N. Srinivas. Das has researched a broad range of subjects in anthropology. She gained recognition for her pioneering research on the aftermath of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi, which shaped her focus on how communities experience and narrate violence. Her edited book, *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots, and Survivors in South Asia*, published by Oxford University Press in 1990, was among the pioneering works to incorporate violence into the anthropology of South Asia.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, she co-edited a trilogy on similar themes with Arthur Kleinman and other collaborators, which significantly reshaped these fields. The volumes—*Social Suffering*, *Violence and Subjectivity*, and *Remaking a World*—provided new perspectives and directions for research in this area. Noticeably, her early engagement with classical sociological theories and Sanskrit texts, combined with her fieldwork in India, helped her bridge traditional knowledge with contemporary social issues, making her a leading voice in anthropology and sociology.

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## Prof. Geetika Ranjan



Interview by Saba Farhin

Prof. Geetika Ranjan is a distinguished anthropologist and former Head of the Department of Anthropology, North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong, India. With over two decades of teaching and research experience, she has made significant contributions to various subfields of anthropology, including the Anthropology of Politics, Anthropology of Children, Literary Anthropology, Ethnographic Research, and Tribal Studies. Her early research focused on the political organization among the Bhoksa tribe, culminating in her book, *"Political Organization among the Bhoksa: A Tribe in Turmoil"* (2014). This work provides in-depth insights into the socio-political dynamics of the Bhoksa community, highlighting the challenges faced by this tribal group.

Throughout her illustrious career, Prof. Ranjan has been the recipient of several prestigious awards. In 2001, she was honored with the Young Scientist Award by the Indian Science Congress for her paper on the role of elites in the development of the Bhoksa tribe. Later, in 2016, she received the UGC Research Award for her research on *"Girl Child Domestic Labour: A Study in Lucknow City,"* emphasizing her commitment to addressing pressing social issues. She holds the honour of being nominated by the Ministry of Forest and Environment as a Member of the committee to look into the village relocation programme from the tiger reserves of India. Her academic endeavors extend beyond research. She has served as a warden at NEHU for seven years (2009-2016) and has been an active member of various university committees, including the Yoga Committee, Internal Complaints Committee (2019-2021), and the Committee for Admission of Foreign Students.

Additionally, she has contributed to the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) at NEHU. Prof. Ranjan's research portfolio is diverse and impactful. She collaborated on an international project titled *"Nepal on the Move: Conflict, Migration and Mobility,"* focusing on Nepalese migrants in the coal mines of Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya. This project, in partnership with Aarhus University, Copenhagen University, and Kathmandu University, was funded by the DANIDA Fellowship Centre, Denmark (2011-2016). Her findings shed light on the risks, remittances, and return patterns of these migrant workers. Another notable project, funded by the University Grants Commission (UGC),

examined the plight of girl child domestic laborers in Lucknow City (2016-2018). She holds the honour of being nominated as Member of the Village Relocation Committee by the Ministry of Forest and Environment in 2012. An active member of the academic community, Prof. Ranjan holds life

memberships in organizations such as the Indian National Confederation and Academy of Anthropologists (INCAA), Indian Anthropological Association, and the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society. She has also served on the editorial boards of esteemed journals, including the Bulletin of the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, and The NEHU Journal (2013-2018).

Her extensive list of publications encompasses books like *"Approaches to the Study of Indian Culture and Society"* (2016) and numerous journal articles. Noteworthy among them is *"The Place of Kwai in Khasi Society: Food for Thought,"* published in the Indian Journal of Physical Anthropology and Human Genetics (2018). She has also contributed chapters to edited volumes, addressing topics such as border management and the consequences of rat-hole mining in Meghalaya. Prof. Ranjan's dedication to anthropology is evident not only in her research but also in her active participation in national and international conferences, where she has delivered invited lectures and presented papers, further enriching the field with her insights and findings.

In this interview, Prof. Geetika Rajan reflects on her journey in anthropology, her contributions, and her insights on academia and mentoring future anthropologists.

**What initially inspired you to pursue anthropology, and how has your journey in this field evolved over the years?**

In terms of higher education Lucknow University is my alma mater. After completing Class 12 from Loreto Convent, Lucknow, when I enrolled in Lucknow University for the BA programme, I was certain about taking English and History, as I had already made up my





mind about them. However, choosing the third subject was a dilemma. At that time, my main concern was selecting a subject that would help me score well. While I loved both English literature and History, I wanted a subject with the practical component that could boost my overall aggregate. Anthropology caught my attention because it was introduced at the BA/BSc level, and this meant that I didn't need prior knowledge of it to pursue it. To be honest, I had no idea what anthropology was when I opted for it at the graduation level. However, once I started reading anthropology, my perspective changed completely. Thanks to the wonderful teachers who taught me, like Professor Gopala Sarana, the subject soon became much more than just a means to an end. The Department of Anthropology at Lucknow University was flourishing at the time, still continuing with its prestigious label of being hailed as the "*Lucknow School of Anthropology*." I had the privilege of being taught by some of the best minds in the field, which deepened my interest in the discipline. Anthropology captivated me because it studies people holistically. It explores cultures, ways of life, and human diversity in a deeply meaningful way. For a young undergraduate student, the subject was introduced in such an engaging manner that it sparked my curiosity. In BA third year, when, as a rule, I had to drop one subject, I chose to continue with History and Anthropology, letting go of English literature. Eventually, I pursued my Master's in Anthropology, followed by research, and later entered academia. The integrative and humanistic nature of anthropology and its ability to understand people in an integrative way, is what ultimately led me to take it up as a career. Looking back, I realize that many of us come to anthropology by default, but eventually fall in love with it; a sentiment I have even written about in one of my articles.

**What do you consider your most impactful contribution to anthropology, and how has it influenced policy or academic discourse?**

During my doctoral research, my interest gravitated towards development issues and how political leadership is instrumental here. My initial study was on the *Bhoksa/Buksa*, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), where I explored the leadership structure. Leadership goes a long way in determining the quality of life of people. Over the years, the interface between leadership, administration and good governance has intrigued me. The interplay between these terms is also covered in some other areas where I have been engaged in terms of research. One such area is the issue of labour migration which I studied from two different dimensions. One was looking into the situation of the Nepalese migrant workers working as coal mine labourers in the coal mines of Meghalaya. This project was in collaboration with the Universities of Aarhus, Copenhagen in Denmark and Kathmandu University, Nepal and brought out the challenges and risks undertaken by the migrant labourers, their take on

remitting their earnings from the coal mines back home, and how their life is situated on their return to Nepal. Another dimension related to migrant labourers was my research on the girl child domestic workers working in the city of Lucknow. The study explores the lives of these girls whose parents migrated from the villages towards the urban centres. This study underscores the relevance of looking at rural-urban migration for livelihoods from various dimensions – to make ends meet, raising the children of the migrated people in the slums of the city, the process of women working as domestic labourers with their daughters following suit. How themes of poverty, gender and human dignity get manifested in the situation of the girl child domestic workers, is what I have tried to understand through this research which is still work in progress. Although these studies differ in terms of population like tribal communities in Uttarakhand, migrant coal miners in Meghalaya, and girl child laborers in Lucknow, they share a common theme which is applying anthropological understanding to grassroots-level problems. I've tried to focus on the applied side of research and to see how anthropology can contribute to the larger good.

**Anthropology remains a lesser-known subject compared to other social sciences. Given your extensive academic and research experience, what steps do you think should be taken to promote anthropology, especially among young students and the general public?**

You're absolutely right! Despite anthropology's vast contributions, it remains a lesser-known discipline. Many other fields have borrowed from anthropology, particularly its research methods and in their approach to understanding human beings. This is fine, in today's academic landscape of interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary for the larger goal of knowledge dissemination. It's ironic that Anthropology, a subject from which other disciplines have heavily borrowed, continues to be less heard of and because it is lesser known, it is erroneously believed to have a limited reach. Answering your question : what can be done to change this? A crucial step is introducing anthropology in more colleges and universities across India. Currently, as per my information, India has over 1,000 universities under the University Grants Commission (UGC), yet only about 60 or so have anthropology departments. Given the subject's immense relevance to human lives, its inclusion in more institutions should be a priority. Expanding anthropology's presence requires a concerted effort, starting with teaching the subject in more institutions. While anthropologists have made past and ongoing efforts, much more needs to be done. Establishing a new academic discipline requires collaboration among academics, administrators, and policymakers. Success in this endeavor depends on their collective efforts. While past attempts to expand anthropology's reach have met with mixed success,

the struggle must continue. Once anthropology is more widely taught, students will become more aware of its significance.

Even today, outside academic circles, people often ask, “What is anthropology?” when I mention my profession. This highlights the urgent need to increase its visibility. Apart from expanding its presence in universities, anthropology must also become more vocationally oriented. With the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizing employability, it is essential to align anthropology with career opportunities. While the field already offers strong prospects, many of its job roles fall under the broader umbrella of humanities and social sciences. To enhance its appeal, anthropology must be positioned as a market-friendly discipline. This does not mean altering the essence of anthropology but rather fine-tuning how it is presented to students and employers. We know that anthropology has immense applicability across various sectors, yet it must be structured in a way that makes career paths clearer for students. By making anthropology more accessible, vocationally relevant, and widely recognized, we can ensure that its contributions to society receive the attention they deserve. A key factor in this transformation is the curriculum itself as it serves as the written word that carries the message of anthropology forward. No matter how effectively we teach in classrooms, the way the curriculum presents the subject’s advantages and employment opportunities plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions. This is where significant revisions are needed. Ensuring that the curriculum clearly spells out anthropology’s relevance and career potential will be instrumental in strengthening its place within academia and beyond.

**As someone who has mentored students and worked extensively in academia, what advice would you give to young anthropologists who are just beginning their careers in research and fieldwork?**

Anthropology is a subject which is mainly taught after the 10+2 standard, unlike most other disciplines which are taught at the school level. While there are a few institutions in India that introduce anthropology at the 10+2 level, it largely remains a subject which students encounter only when they take admission at the graduation level. The scenario has been like this for a long time now. However, today, with the rise of social media and digital platforms, awareness about anthropology has increased significantly compared to the earlier decades.

Many students who take up anthropology do so by chance rather than intent. Some initially aim for other subjects, but for one reason or the other end up taking up anthropology. However, what stands out is that once they begin studying the subject, they tend to stay with it and many even go on to build careers in anthropology. This speaks of the richness of the discipline and the dedication of those teaching it.



One crucial stage in an anthropology student’s journey is choosing a specialization. At the master’s level, students need to decide between biological, sociocultural, or archaeological anthropology. I have observed that this leaves many of them rather confused and unsure of the choice that they make, grappling with thoughts like which specialization has more scope, which is more easy to score in terms of marks, etc. I believe that these can be rather misleading criteria. Every branch of anthropology has scope and avenues, and it is up to the individual to explore and create opportunities within it. My advice to students is simple: follow your heart, your interest. After a year of studying anthropology, you have a fair idea of what excites you. If you like biological anthropology, pursue it. If you enjoy cultural anthropology more, go for it. Passion, interest, the desire to know the field better, should be the first and most important deciding factor because where there is interest, opportunities will naturally emerge. There is no point in choosing a specialization based on hearsay about one specialization being better than some other. A student pursuing Anthropology should first acquaint oneself well with the subject and then make an informed choice. Anthropology, like any other discipline, should ultimately empower you to find meaningful work. Today, career opportunities are expanding, but many students are not fully aware and alert regarding the avenues of employability with respect to Anthropology. Government and non- Government organizations, conventional and unconventional career openings look for employees trained in Anthropology. With abundant information available online, there is no excuse for a lack of awareness. Some professions may not seem directly linked to anthropology at first glance, but upon deeper exploration, they often align with its principles and research methods.

Ultimately, curiosity, sincerity and perseverance are essential. There are no shortcuts. Additionally we need to keep the seeking spirit alive to follow what Kenneth Boulding writes, “*The whole vast perspective of man, is what anthropologists scan. So the net that they take, is as big as the lake, let the fish get away if they can*”.

Developing a strong foundation, deepening one’s understanding, and remaining open to knowledge will lead to confidence and career pathways. If you love the subject, opportunities will follow, and you will enjoy doing anthropology out of desire and not by duress.

## The Dodgang: A Symbolic Continuation Of Liberal Perspective Of The Mising Society



By Dreeti Hazarika

Many tribal societies regard the post-death performances as sacred either to appease the deities or to show the right path to the ancestral soul to its next abode and therefore these ceremonies attract significant participation from the village community. Dodgang is the final death ritual of the *Mising* community in Assam. I had the opportunity to attend Dodgang, the final death rites of the *Misings* during my fieldwork in the month of January to March in 2023. It was the season for preparation for *Dodgang*. The present writeup is an excerpt from my field notes on the death rituals of the *Misings*.

### From the field note

While roaming into the village, I was invited to attend a *dodgang* on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2023. In the afternoon around 1PM that day, I reached the venue. I got to know that it was the *Dodgang* of two siblings i.e a brother and a sister. Among the attendees, there were relatives and neighbouring villagers of the deceased persons. In the entrance there was a blue and white colour temporary *toran* (archway) with the names of the deceased persons. Once I entered, in the inside the entrance, on the left side the worshipping was being performed where the guests were paying their due respect in front of the priests. After that, they were served *apong* (the traditional rice beer of the *Misings*). In a separate part of the house, cooking arrangement were made, where several women were cutting vegetables and cooking food. In another part of the premise, a tent was erected for serving food to the guests. A group of young adults were volunteered to cater foods to the guests. For the feast, large quantity of *apin* (cooked rice), meat, especially *gahori* (pork) and fish for *oing* (gravy/curry) and *apong* were served.

After having my food, I was sitting in a *murha* (wooden stool), *Mr. Dighola Kutum* (an elderly man), approached me with a smiling face. After asking about my details, he began to explain about the death rites and rituals of the *Misings*. He started, "Like in Assamese you have your distinct rituals for the death, we also have. The third day of the death is called, like you have '*tiloni*' (third day of death) we observe *Pri:de* (third to fifth day of death). During those days, the family use to avoid fried, sour or tangy foods and oily foods. Only after the performance of *Pri:de*, the family overcome the taboo related to death in the family and resume their normal daily activities excluding travelling and marriage. The utensils and other things kept aside

used during the day of death is taken out after the performing of *pri:de*. *Pri:de*, followed by '*Urom Apin*' which is usually conducted within a month following the *pri:de* ritual. During the *Urom apin* ritual, misfortunes that may affect the deceased's family are dispelled. This ritual is conducted by the *bhakats* (Priest), who recite *mantras* (hymns). After each *mantras*, family members bow down to receive blessings from the *bhakat*. The purpose of this ritual is to assist the spirit of the deceased in crossing the seven oceans to reach the heavenly abode. This belief is held by the community, as they understand that a spirit must traverse seven oceans to reach its final destination. It is only after the completion of *urom apin*, the members of the deceased family are permitted to participate in activities such as marriage or travel." I asked him, "Before the *dodgang* how the family and relatives pay regards?" He answered by drawing something on land and tried to make me understand, "see, when we (the living members) pay tribute, we present our offerings to the deceased family members whose *dodgang* has been performed separately with those who are waiting for their *dodgang* or whose has not been performed yet."



1) Entrance of the venue of Dodgang; 2) Paying tribute to the deceased person(s); 3) A jar full of apong (rice beer) is used for serving.



He continued, “The *Dodgang* ceremony regarded as the final ritual for honouring the departed individual(s). It is a communal feast held in memory of the deceased, with the entire village coming together along with the relatives to ensure that all attendees are well-fed. One pig for each deceased individuals need to be offered in *dodgang* and every relatives and villagers present that day need to offer a portion of every dish cooked for *dodgang* in the name of the deceased as a form of ancestor worship.

Mr. Kutum continued, “It is believed that the soul of the deceased(s) remains with the livings until the *dodgang* is performed and only after their *dodgang* is performed, they started to live with the ancestors. There is no specific day for the *Dodgang*, it is arranged on the basis of the convenience of the family members of the deceased person(s) as there are.” I asked him why it is about convenience of the family members, for which he answered, “organizing a *dodgang* is an expensive matter, the family members begins to prepare for the event for long.” “How they prepare?” I asked,

He replied, “Storing rice, arrangement of *apong*, pig, fish there is a need of huge amount of foods and money. Thus it is of convenient. For example, if a family is unable to arrange the *dodgang* of their deceased member, they can discuss with their relatives to arrange together with another person (who should be their relatives) whose *dodgang* is also pending ”

I would like to conclude by stating that, after attending the *dodgang*, I came to realize that the *Mising* tribe of Assam exemplifies a well-structured procedure that effectively upholds the continuity of their traditional practice, *dodgang*. Although the performances of the rituals are characterized by their intricate and financially demanding nature, it is being dealt very well by the ‘collective consciousness’ of the community .



1) Preparing the Oing (curry); 2) Serving of Oing (curry)

## BOOK REVIEW

### Missing: HALF THE STORY – Journalism as if Gender Matters (2010)



Book reviewed by Dr Tukaram Khandade

**Edited by** Kalpana Sharma; ISBN – 9788189884833

**Publisher:** ZUBAAN Publication, New Delhi, India

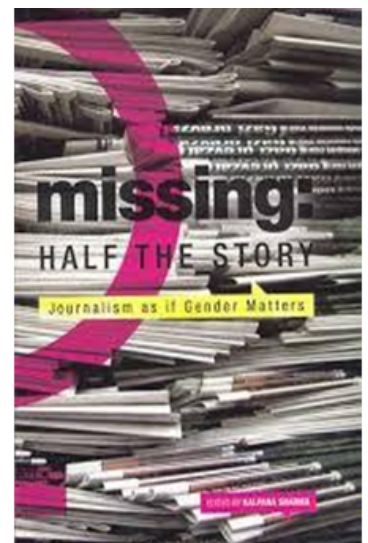
The title suggests that 50% of the story is missing from life, and raises a pertinent question on the journalism as if they care about gender. It outlines the broad theme of the book around gender and journalism. But tactfully evades the push on the profession for neglecting the gender angle.

The author clearly puts the events which led to writing this book. According to her, whenever the subject of “Gender Sensitivity” was broached up, they received stock responses such as “We cannot write from a gender perspective considering the time, space and editorial policy constraint,” “We are here to report and not to support any ideology or perspective”. Authors also found that there was not much focus on gender in the curriculum of journalism and media studies. Hence this book was conceptualised to create gender-sensitive journalism.

The book is written to ignite the discussion among journalist fraternity on the gender lens to reporting. The author delicately informs the audience about the greater and deeper severity of impact on women in stated (e.g. flood) incidents, due to her lack of access, certain rituals, societal norms, lack of education and lack of self-confidence.

The author states the facts on gender and journalism in a formal manner. The intended audience of the book is present and future journalist. The book tries to convince them through sensitizing them on the gendered lens brought about by life experience put through each of the chapters of the book. The book makes an excellent reference book on how to integrate gender and

journalism without comprising on quality and maintain the editing policies intact. The book is written as a third person narrating the story. Each chapter is written by individual authors bringing their life experiences to the table. The book reaches the acme of gender by touching all aspects of life through a gender lens. It covers the continuum of life of women and their underprivileged status right from birth to death.



The information used by the authors to write the chapters comes from very rich sources of conference reports, scientific journals, field experiences and expert views in the field of gender. The books are arranged in the chapter on unconnected topics and thus do not include a concluding chapter. The book uses endnote and are very rich in information. It also provides a brief description of topics of interest to readers. This non-fiction book is paperback, the cover page features a photo on a stack of newspapers. There are no figures, tables and graphs used in the book. Index of the book is accurate and clearly provides the numbers for each chapter.

This is a unique book and will rarely find a comparison because it is written by a journalist for a journalist on sensitising them on gendered reporting of the incident in the news article. This raises very pertinent issue of gender in reporting by journalist and can bring the issue to centre stage for discussion and deliberation on it.

## FORTHCOMING EVENT

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

## PAST EVENT

For our Distinguished Guest lecture series, an online lecture was organised on **"ANTHROPOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT : REACHING OUT IN LETTER AND SPIRIT"** delivered by **Prof. Geetika Ranjan** on March 26th 2025, 6:30pm onwards.



For details about the lecture please visit- [Click here](#)

YouTube live Link - [Click here](#)

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