

Webinar Report

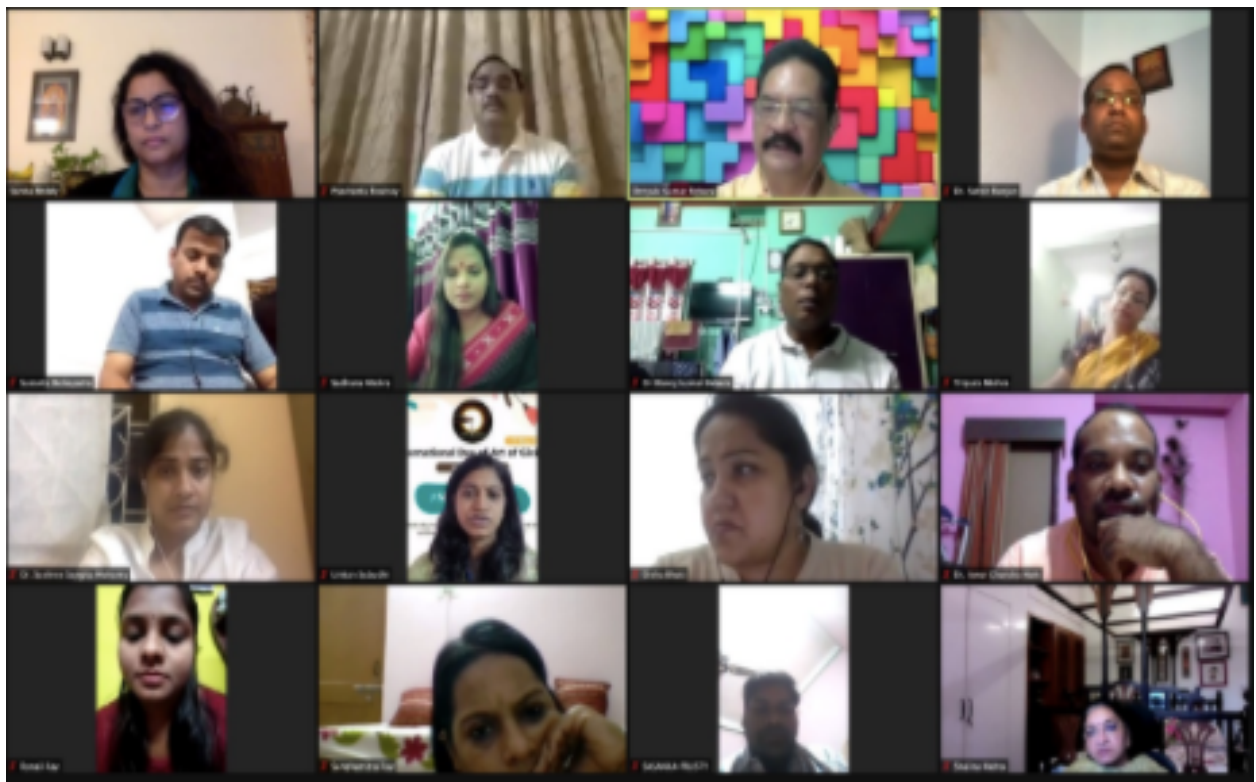
HUMANITY AT PERIL- ANTHROPOCENE TO CORONACENE

Health Care Management

Webinar- 25th May

6.30 pm to 9.30pm IST

Organized by UIAF and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences in
collaboration with Anthropos India Foundation



A web panel discussion on **“Humanity at Peril? Anthropocene to Coronacene: Health Care Management”** was jointly organized by the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) and the United India Anthropology Forum (UIAF) in collaboration with the Anthropos India Foundation (AIF) on 25th May 2021, 6.30pm- 9.30 pm. The recently coined term “Anthropocene” connotes that our species, homo sapiens sapiens are responsible for increased carbon emissions, rise in global temperatures destruction of habitat and elimination of many species of flora and fauna. Humans have dominated the earth with its might powers of science, technology and garnered disproportionate control over other species. Observing COVID- 19 pandemic, over the past one and a half years, we the humans are perplexed with the scale, scope and complexities of the spread of virus and the havoc it has caused to humans, making us powerless. No money, power or individual contacts and networks are helping to save lives. Looks like there is a shift in the balance of power As Rylan Higgins and other puts it, the “Coronacene” might well be as worthy of attention as the “Anthropocene.”

This web-panel discussion was an attempt to take into consideration various health care management challenges that India is facing.

It was graced by eminent persons from institutions of national and international repute. The target group of this web panel discussion were anthropologists, members of the teaching fraternity, and researchers across the globe. It was aimed not only to find a tentative solution to the existing

crisis but also to undertake in-depth discussion in order to comprehend the relationship between disaster and development along with analyzing the epidemiological, public health care management, psycho-social care, and scientific aspects of vaccines. The core committee members and senior functionaries, faculty members, project staff, students, and alumni of KISS and KISS-DU also attended the web panel discussion.

Professor Deepak Kumar Behera, Vice-Chancellor, KISS, General President, UIAF, Former Professor and Head, Dept. of Anthropology, Sambalpur University, Former Member of Governing Council, Association of Indian Universities, DAAD Visiting Guest Professor, University of Tubingen, Germany, National Research Foundation Fellow, South Africa, Carlos Chagas National Research Foundation Fellow, Brazil gave the opening remarks.



Prof. Behera in his welcoming speech presented a brief profile of the organizing (KISS and UAIF) and collaborating (AIF) institutions and gave a preface to the prestigious World Anthropology Congress to be jointly organized by KISS, Delhi University, Sambalpur University, Utkal

University, and Government of Odisha in 2023. Speaking on the relevance of the topic, he said: “KISS is fulfilling its social responsibility in creating awareness on COVID-19” He connected the dots between the topic of the web-panel, cyclone ‘yaas’, and the pandemic.



Dr. Sunita Reddy, Associate Professor, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, School of Social Sciences, Adjunct Faculty, Special Centre for Disaster Research, Founder Chairperson, Anthropos India Foundation, and author of several peer reviewed papers and three books moderated the whole session and introduced all the panelists. She initiated the discussion by highlighting how the pandemic has brought structural changes through reversing the power relation that existed between humans and nature by reducing humans to powerless entities both currently and in the foreseeable future. She focused her talk on the public health care service systems in India. The existing inequities in provisioning health care in normal times got further heightened in the pandemic. The health care policies since independence and more so post health sector reform, led to dichotomous health care services in the mixed economy set up. On one hand, the resource crunched public

health care systems, which lacks basic health infrastructure, PPE, medicines, beds, got overwhelmed and some of the private and corporate hospitals stooped down to unethical means of overcharging, the desperate COVID patients, referred as disaster capitalism by Naomi Klein. Government institutions have also displayed their bias towards the upper class of the society by ignoring the genuine needs of the mass of middle and lower class and not undertaking necessary step in order to fulfill the basic requirements essential for their survival and well-being. Issues of migrant labour, owners of small-scale businesses, women and other marginalized communities have been sidelined leading to chaos and feeling of discontent. She even raised some of the moot questions to be answered by the panelist in their deliberation.



Professor Ritu Priya, MBBS Doctor and Ph.D., Community Medicine and Epidemiologist, currently Professor, Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Advisor, Public Health Planning, National Health Systems Resource Centre, engaged in greater depth on the epidemiology of Covid, highlighting what she understood as missing dialogue that could be overcome through adoption of an

interdisciplinary approach. Prof. Ritu Priya emphasized the immediate importance of a holistic approach based on modeling with contextual detailed knowledge.

Prof. Ritu Priya pointed that the need for undertaking more research on the issue SARS-COV2 particularly based on the Indian context in order to identify the unique aspect of pandemic along with understanding the specific structure to formulate policy more effective. She also brought out the difference between the rates of infections and deaths, which is lower compared to other developed countries and the absolute number, which becomes startling due to the population size.



Dr. Jayakumar C, Associate Professor, Centre for Psycho-social support, Disaster Management, NIMHANS, trained in NIMHANS on community-based psychosocial care and disaster management, having more than 19 years of experience, worked as Senior Consultant, NDMA and Former Director Technical and Operations, American Red Cross, India highlighted the various psychological symptoms individuals are exposed to during this ongoing pandemic ranging from uncertainty, imaginary bodily symptoms to suicidal ideations. He referred to this as a Mental Health Pandemic, which affected every section of

the society and had a significant impact on the family structure and leads to the loss of humanitarian values. Emphasizing the importance of developing and sustaining a strong community-based/ family-based support system embedded in the Indian traditional system of social organization.

Dr. Jayakumar C shared the important techniques of stress management that could be beneficial in the current situation along with sharing the details of Covid Helpline NIMHANS which is pan India and available in 13 different languages for anyone who wishes to seek support on psycho-social issues related to pandemic.



Dr. Jayaprakash Ravan, Professor of Psychiatry, Kalinga Institute of Medical Sciences, completed his MBBS from SCB Medical College Cuttack, Odisha, recipient of prestigious Prof. Bimbardhar Dash Memorial Award and Prof. G C Borel Award from IPS Odisha/state branch, Co-founder of BIIPbSAR, who has 30 national and international publications to his credit, mentioned that during the 1st wave, mothers and children were bit safe but senior citizens were adversely affected. The blame game continued which brought another aspect of mental health in the country. On the other hand, 2nd wave brought new challenges of queries related

to virus and its effects, testing techniques, new strains and many more. The grief of loss came into being. The death numbers became names now. The virus started mutating fast and become more lethal and virulent, no one is safe until everyone is safe.

Dr. Ravan shared the dilemmas the doctors faced in treating the patients, where were fixed between the family, who asked them to quit job, while their moral responsibility made them to carry on treating the patients as frontline warriors.



Dr. Vipin Gupta, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, published more than 70 research articles in reputed national and international journals with more than 12,000 citations and h-index of 20, received a research grant of INR 8 crores from agencies like DBT, ICMR, UGC, SERB and Wellcome Trust, UK, awarded the most prestigious Wellcome Trust-DBT India Alliance “Intermediate Fellowship” for conducting research on maternal and child health in India, talked about the existing variant of the virus and its testing estimations in India with the current rate of testing. Vaccine efficacy was the point of discussion, intake of both doses is important. 1st dose primes immunological

memory while 2nd dose provides solidification. He described vaccine hesitancy, its acceptance and its uptake as human behaviour.

The Indian context of this viral infection also brought challenges because of the large diversity in the population. To cope with these factors, we need proper approaches. Through statistical data, he underscored on dynamics of Viral Analyte, RNA, Protein, Antibody and immunogenicity of Covid 19 mRNA vaccines in pregnant and lactating mothers.

Dr. Satish Ranjan, Molecular Immunologist, Germany, Covid-19 Consultant, Scientific Advisor, Government of Nagaland, India, having 18 peer-reviewed articles published in international journals, and his Ph.D. work on Graft-versus-Host Disease was awarded Innovative Scientist Award and published various articles on Covid-19 in National Newspaper (Hindu Business Line) from India, started with the general classification of mild, moderate, and severe Covid-19 symptoms.



Coming to the pathophysiology of Covid-19, he explained the virus and its entry to

the host body with its multiplication and target organs. Lung dysfunction is one of the prime symptoms of the virus. Treatment of Covid-19 is a wide area of discussion where the Allopathy, Ayurveda and other practices came together. He also highlighted the longevity of immunity post-natural viral infections, different vaccines in India, consequences of mixing two different vaccines, side effects, and who are not recommended to take it. He clarified lot of doubts which were there in the minds of the participants.



The event came to an end with a formal vote of thanks presented on behalf of the organizers by Professor S. Gregory, Member Secretary, United India Anthropology Forum (UIAF).

The web panel discussion was conducted through an online zoom platform where more than 450 participants attended coming from more than 50 institutions.

It provided a significant platform for all the experts and audiences to connect during this ongoing pandemic and understand the issues from scientific perspectives, facts and figures.