

**Proceedings of the Golden Jubilee Annual Conference**  
**On**  
**100 Years of Indian Anthropology: History, Progress and Challenges**  
**(December 26-30, 2020)**

The Indian Anthropological Society held its 'Golden Jubilee Annual Conference' in the form of a national seminar on '100 Years of Indian Anthropology: History, Progress and Challenges' successfully during 26-30 December 2020 through zoom platform following COVID-19 pandemic protocol. The four themes of the conference were: (i) Trajectories of development of Anthropology in India: Concepts, actors and institutions, (ii) Trends and emerging areas of research in Anthropology in the last one hundred years, (iii) Anthropological approaches in contemporary development' interventions in India, and (iv) Problems and challenges of anthropological study in contemporary India.

The main purpose of the conference was to maximize participation of young faculties/ scientists/ scholars by presenting papers or by giving invited lectures. Side by side, an effort was made to ensure an all India representation as far as possible. It is heartening to note the active interest taken by the young anthropologists in the conference and support given by them in seeing the Conference come to a successful end. The organizing committee constituted by the Executive Council with Prof. Rajat Kanti Das as Chairperson, Prof. Barun Mukhopadhyay, as Convener, Professor Subir Biswas as Organizing Secretary, Dr. Sumahan Bandyopadhyay and Dr. Sankha Priya Guha as Joint Organizing Secretaries, and Prof. Subho Roy, Dr. Bidhan Kanti Das, Dr. Nabakumar Duary, Dr. Chakraverti Mahajan, Dr. Rashmi Pramanik, Dr. Chandana Sharma, Dr. Rajesh Kundargi, Dr. Shailendra Mishra, Dr. Rabi Ranjan Biswas as other members served as the main plank on which rested the tasks of formulating programmes and successful implementation of the same.

The committee invited abstracts (structured) of papers exclusively from young faculties/ scientists/ scholars. After receiving those, the members of the committee critically examined them and immediately sent their observations to the authors, who submitted the modified or revised abstracts after thorough overhaul in line suggested by the committee. A total of 47 such abstracts ( from different parts of India as well as from Russia and Bangladesh) were selected by the committee through its online meetings held regularly. The committee also selected the keynote speaker, three lead speakers from three main branches of Anthropology and the speaker for the valedictory session beside five chairpersons for technical sessions.

Altogether five technical sessions beside the Inaugural and the Valedictory sessions were organized. One member from the organizing committee was assigned the task of summing up of all the technical sessions (those are also included separately as a part of full report of the conference).

The inaugural session was chaired by Prof. Rajat Kanti Das, the President of the Society. The Organizing Secretary of the conference delivered the Welcome Address and Prof. Subho Roy, Managing Editor of The Journal of Indian Anthropological Society, elaborated upon the theme of the conference. Dr. Sumahan Bandyopadhyay, the Joint Organizing Secretary of the conference, introduced the key note speaker Prof. Abhik Ghosh of the Department of Anthropology, Punjab University, Chandigarh.

Prof. Ghosh in his keynote lecture entitled “The Next Hundred Years: The Future of Anthropology in India”, dwelt at length on the future of Anthropology in India after analyzing its records during the past hundred years. He culminated his discussion by referring to the present trend of development. He was of the opinion that during the last one hundred years anthropology has grown slowly but surely into a discipline leaving its own indelible mark among other disciplines taught in universities, in spite of the negative criticism of some people that anthropology has been losing its ‘edge’, its methodological uniqueness and purpose, and as such appeal to the greater world. Many areas covered by anthropologists earlier have now been taken up with renewed interest, sometimes in a much better way, because of their knowledge about and exposure to the methodologies of other allied disciplines, the suitability of which have been tested and established by anthropologists themselves. However, he also pointed out that anthropologist’s excursions to the field have become much less like ‘field visits’ into a fixed location and much more like a ‘stay’ at different locations, to which a researcher is getting increasingly exposed. But this would be reduced to a mechanical exercise unless it has an ideal of its own. In his words, “this paper is a sort of a critique as well as an exposition of how Anthropology would be making its own future in times to come. Without an ideal, we would be in danger of ‘being the thing of shreds and patches’ that we have criticized so much in our own past”.

The session ended with a vote of thanks by Dr. Sankha Priya Guha, the Joint Organizing Secretary of the conference.

The Valedictory Address was given by Prof. Arup Ratan Bandyopadhyay of the Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta, who discussed at length about the necessity of such a conference. He covered several aspects of anthropological applications covering social problems and public policies. Prof Bandyopadhyay focused on topics like reunification of anthropology, shaping of organization through the application of anthropology, pragmatic engagement of anthropological theories, evolution of application of anthropology, locating colonial legacies in anthropological works. He took the link between theory, method and practice of anthropology into his consideration. Last but not the

least, he laid stress on the importance of comparative method in anthropological research in the context of contemporary developments.

The conference came to an end with a vote of thanks offered by Prof. Barun Mukhopadhyay, the General Secretary of the Society.

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*Day to Day Proceedings*

Day 1

*26 December 2020*  
*Session summary*

The first technical session started just after the inaugural session, which was chaired by Prof. Jibon Kumar Singh from Manipur University. This session had four papers, out of which three presentations basically dealt with the adverse health outcomes for the mother as well as for the new born child. It further discussed of how to combat such challenges. There was one review paper which discussed on the micro-evolutionary history of high altitude populations and their adaptation. Dr. Maitreyee Sharma spoke about the Adi-Minyong tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, North East India, where she tried to make a comparison between the perinatal outcomes and the risk of pregnancy complications among the adolescent mothers and post-adolescent mothers. She basically focused on the community knowledge posing as danger signs of the new birth complications. The results of the paper revealed that the risk of preterm births was higher in the adolescent mothers. Hence she concluded by saying that increasing the age at marriage and childbirth to above 20 years would reduce not only delivery complications but would also adversely affect the prenatal and neonatal outcomes. Young women who had no schooling were found to have begun childbearing at the adolescent age. Dr. Sudipta Ghosh presented a basically review paper depicting a broad perspective of research trends in Indian Anthropology with reference to high-altitude studies of human populations permanently living at high-altitude and their contributions to the improved understanding of evolution and adaptation. By and large, the speaker tried to focus on the biological researches that were conducted in the past 50 years based particularly on anthropological fieldworks on the Himalayan region, from west to east. It was generally found that high-altitude studies in Indian Anthropology have come a long way from anthropometric to genetic approaches to understanding the micro-evolutionary history of populations. Ummay Ayesha's paper discussed how to

identify the risk factors associated with exclusive breastfeeding among the mothers. The study was carried out in Rajshahi district of Bangladesh. Results obtained by the multiple logistic regression analysis demonstrated that mode of delivery, place of delivery, monthly family income, husbands' education level, mother's education level, mother's age at first birth and mothers' nutritional status were the predictors of exclusive breastfeeding among mothers of the study area. The researcher stressed on the need for breastfeeding support provided by the health services and suggested that government authorities should give special attention to take interventions that motivate mothers to use their milk to breastfeed the infants. A sustained campaign on EBF should accordingly be carried out. Md. Ismail Hossain's paper aimed at determining the prevalence and risk factors of under nutrition among under-five children through systematic review and meta-analysis. Prevalence rates of stunting and wasting vary across countries and regions of the world, which may be attributed to climatic, racial and temporal features. According to the researcher, no formal education in mother was the most important predictor for stunting of children. He further laid emphasis on fetal growth restriction as an influential risk factor of effective size for wasting of children.

It was indeed quite an experience listening to the young scholars, who though not belonging to anthropology, quickly acknowledged the importance of the history of it in the context of their own research areas. It is of course all about how to recognize and engage with the past and present, how to become more demographically and theoretically inclusive and how to move toward a more integrative and integrated future as well. It is noteworthy to have papers from diverse geographical locations across countries covering a wide academic landscape.

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Day 2

*27 December 2020*  
*Session summary*

The Organizing Secretary of the seminar welcomed the participants and provided a brief introduction of the lead speaker. The Session began with the deliberation of lead speaker Dr P. K. Patra, Department of Anthropology, Utkal University who focused on premises of science and technology studies (STS) and its interface with the anthropology in India. He had made special reference to common challenges in anthropology, of which the dilemma between

modernity and traditionalism, impacts of globalization on harmonizing cultures and also promoting apprehensions about localism deserved attention. Citing theoretical contributions of anthropologists from Japan and United States he stressed upon democratization of science, i.e., to make it every man's science and to develop vocabulary of local languages which can be used in science. He opined that STS in Asia manifests variegated configurations; in Korea, Taiwan and Japan, STS is more politicized, whereas in India and China it is more development oriented. Methodological advances such as skills of ethnographic detection, use of deep and broad historical networks would be required to analyze and to develop understanding on interrelation between STS and anthropology in India. He also pointed towards existing technological divide between northern and southern hemisphere of the globe and concerns of ethics while using technology. Based on his own experience of stem cell research, he focused on how to develop collaborations to create knowledge, for example, through bionetworks that resonate across local, national and global constellation to address knowledge concerns across various parts of the globe. Apart from the lead speaker the session was constituted of thirteen other presentations covering various aspects of biological anthropology such as reproductive health, cardiovascular diseases, nutritional status, and body composition based on different age groups including children, adults and elderly of different parts of India.

A study based on elderly people of Gond tribe of Madhya Pradesh by Ajay Kumar Ahirwar demonstrated a high prevalence of under nutrition among them. The presentation by Solanki Joarder on body composition of dance learners in Kolkata highlighted that compared to the control groups, dancers fall under the normal range of body mass index and waist hip ratio exhibiting better physical fitness. Debasmita Kar tried to unfold cardiovascular risk factors at different stages of menopause based on a comprehensive observation considering number of variables and their interrelationships. The study was based on systematic analyses, meticulously compiled results and sound interpretations. A study comparing anthropometric somatotypes with *prakriti* body type by Henery Konjengbam attracted attention of participants as number of queries was raised by them. The study was based on correlation between Heath Carter method and *prakriti* body type. Review study on anthropological dimensions of polycystic ovary syndrome by Kusum Gosh aimed to describe etiology, physiology and pathways of development of such syndrome. Another review work on metabolic syndrome by Maitrayee Mitra signified the importance of bio-cultural approach to study this problem at community level. A study on health of seven occupational groups by Pampa Das tried to relate it to socioeconomic characteristics with anthropometric variables to decipher variations among the groups. Manjari Gupte while discussing on childhood obesity and overweight concluded that they were surrounded by an obesogenic environment with changing food culture of the society. Further,

this study also emphasized about the lack of standard procedure and unanimously agreed cut-offs to evaluated prevalence of obesity and overweight among children. Findings of the studies presented during the session were also based on similar issues such as contribution of anthropology in development of somatometry during last hundred years in relation to nutritional status and population health.

The Chairperson of the session, while conducting it efficiently, enriched the presentations with his insightful comments. He expressed his apprehension about the tendency to present review works in such a conference of anthropology and advised that anthropologists should focus on fieldwork based primary data to do justice to their discipline. He appreciated findings of the studies presented during the session and hoped that young scholars would come up with well designed and more methodologically rigorous studies. The session was concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by the Organizing Secretary of the conference.

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Day 3

*December 28, 2020*  
*Session Summary*

The third technical session was chaired by Sm Ranjana Ray, former Professor of Calcutta University. The invited speaker for the session was Professor Veena Mushriff Tripathy of the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology of the Deccan College Post Graduate and Research Institute, Pune. Her talk was on Bio-archaeology in India from a historical perspective with an outline for future development. She traced the development of the discipline from the time it was carved out of zoo -archaeology to its present status. She outlined the significant contributions of early scholars starting from Irvate Karve to S.R Walimbe. Since the later part of the twentieth century, she pointed out that the discipline has undergone a shift towards understanding of bio-archaeology from a cultural context as well. The approach has now become more interdisciplinary with use of new technologies, collaboration and incorporation of new subject matter like sub adult population, paleo-pathology. She also elaborated upon some of her significant contributions in the field and presented some of the newer probable areas of research.

Eleven papers were presented in the session. These were on various aspects like festivals, visual anthropology, sexuality, human rights, geomorphology and development of specific subject matter of anthropology.



Anthropological analysis of festivals was undertaken by Ryzhakova Svetlana and Subhankar Dutta. Ms. Svetlana in her study on Daivardhane in the Tulunadu region of South India looked into the functional aspect of the festival. The festival helps to foster inter caste commitments serving as an instrument of socialization and preserving local and personal historical memories. In this context she raised a very pertinent question as to who were actually the authors of ethnographic anthropological knowledge. Mr. Dutta examined the Hook Swinging pre-harvest festival of Gajan in Bengal and the evolving system of management and an ever-growing literature surrounding the festival. He also brought up the issue of newer nomenclature in Anthropology to suit the changing aspects of culture.

Avick Biswas presented a paper on the geo-archaeology of the Kharla river. On the basis of the geomorphology, he identified three terraces which differed with respect to their soil composition and lithic findings. Abundance of raw materials and suitable raw materials might have attracted prehistoric people to inhabit the site. Soumi Dey, Tanushree Shaw and Anwasha Das through their study evaluated victimization of the medical professionals in rural Bengal due to the Covid-19 pandemic from a human rights perspective. Case studies were used to portray the plight of the affected people and violation of human rights on them perpetrated by the society for fear of being infected.

Visual Anthropology can be a tool for documenting folklores and the need for this was emphasized by Bamonkiri Rongpi in his paper with reference to the Karbis of Karbi Anglong. He identified some of the ways for doing it. On the other hand, Anil Gopi in his study pointed out how a new community of visual enthusiasts during the Kaliyattam ceremony of Kerala hurt the sentiments of the devotees and ritual specialists. Due to such happenings there has been a change in the identity of a ritual from the point of its religious efficacy to pure entertainment.

Rangiya Gachui brought about a significant aspect of the search for alternate occupation by the Longpi potters due to the constraints this traditional occupation had been facing as a result of changing socio-economic conditions. Gladis S Mathew tried to look at sexuality among the Kothis, a heterosexual community of Bilaspur, from an anthropological perspective. He tried to identify some of their social, economic and health issues prevalent in the life of the Kothis. He also put forward some suggestions to bring them to the mainstream.

Kiran Jyoti Kaur and A.K. Sinha in their paper traced the evolution of migration studies in socio-cultural anthropology, exploring into their position in the existing developmental phases of anthropology. They tried to see the growth of migration studies from studying mobility of tribal and rural to urban regions extended to international migration. Doyel Dasgupta traced the development of menopausal studies through the disease model, through the feminist model to the biological model.

Sonal Pandey in her study dealt with the rehabilitation and reintegration process of sex traffickers and pointed out the significant gaps in it. Such issues like undermining the right's perspective, infantilization of the survivors and negation of the brothel experience should be done away with, as the researcher argued. Such programmes according to her should have a capacity building, tailor made approach.

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Day 4

*29 December 2020*  
*Session Summary*

The fourth technical session was chaired by Prof. S. R. Mondal who was formerly at the North Bengal University. Prof. Geetika Ranjan from the Department of Anthropology, North-Eastern Hill University was the invited speaker. The session also featured ten presentations by scholars from various institutions spread all over India. In her insightful talk, *Anthropology for Welfare: Contribution of Some Pioneering Anthropologists of India*, Prof. Ranjan traced the journey of social and cultural anthropology in India which has traversed a long way. Revisiting the efforts taken by the pioneering anthropologists of India in carving out a niche of 'Anthropology of India' per se, the presentation discussed how Anthropology in India was highly influenced by the works of western anthropologists. Prof. Ranjan further described how the Indian pioneers made anthropology their own; how the ideas of western anthropology were Indianized. The stalwarts including S.C.Roy, N.K.Bose, D.N. Majumdar and L.P. Vidyarthi strove to give Anthropology its much needed Indian face. Through their untiring efforts in establishing the relevance of ethnographic study, rigorously training students in doing fieldwork and establishing Anthropology as a discipline of empathy for the vulnerable and the marginalized, they took Anthropology of India to another level. As Anthropology in India is bringing more and more areas under the ambit of its study, it is even more important to remember the contribution of these pioneering anthropologists as they were the first to bridge the gap between academic anthropology and practice of anthropological knowledge.

The session included two papers on digital life and methodology. Joly Puthussery's paper was about the use of digital ethnography to study the practice of Kaliyattam in northern Kerala. The paper talked about the idea of knowledge production and its continuities in the digital sphere along with



memories of the place, performance, deities and devotees through communicative practices based on the Kaliyattam narratives, visuals and events. Madhvi Tripathi's paper was about growing up in the digital age where the use of digital devices by younger children was studied. The study examined the extent of exposure and usage of digital technology by younger children in their daily activities along with parental control and policy implementations to restrict the usage of the technology.

Three papers on tribal issues were presented. Rimi Dutta presented her postdoctoral work on the Lodhas of West Medinipur which is a particularly vulnerable tribal group. The paper described the process of socio-cultural transformation in the tribe and their perception about change. She used the concepts of acculturation and syncretism to understand social transformation of the tribe. Mohd Rafi Paray discussed the occupational conditions of a tribal society in the form of a semi-nomadic community in Jammu and Kashmir. The paper elaborated on the diversification of livelihoods brought about by migration and other alternative means among the Bakerwals and Gujjar communities. Sasmita Sahoo's paper brought to light the maternal health status of the Juang women of Keonjhar District, Odisha. She discussed pregnancy and post-pregnancy food taboos and antenatal practices.

There were four review papers in the session. Priyanka Paul observed the continuity and change in man-water relationship over time in different aspects and the impact of 21<sup>st</sup> century water problems, especially in case of equity and accessibility. Through her review paper Paramita Das examined the impact of maternal health during prenatal, perinatal, and neonatal periods as one of the important risk factors of Autism spectrum disorder. Prem Pawar presented the paper on caste diversity with reference to social inclusion in the corporate sector in India. He discussed how the participation of Dalit communities was far lower than their upper caste counterparts in the corporate sector. The paper was based upon secondary data and reviewed available published materials on caste diversity in the corporate sector in India. Barik Madhushree's paper on design anthropology was very insightful as she discussed how design anthropology allows anthropologists to engage the world in a new and powerful manner.

The papers presented ranged from newly emerging areas such as design ethnography and virtual/digital ethnography to traditional issues of caste and tribe in Indian anthropology. The papers also brought to the fore rich geographical diversity and conceptual terrain of Anthropology in India. The session concluded successfully and it was heartening to see young scholars bringing a fresh outlook to the discipline.

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Day 5

*30 December, 2020*

*Session Summary*

The fifth technical session of the conference was chaired by Prof. Buddhadeb Chaudhuri, formerly of the Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta. There were altogether four papers presented during this session. All the four papers concentrated on the domain of health, illness and treatment seeking behaviour. The papers presented during this session represented a variety of methodological as well as conceptual orientations.

The first paper in this session was presented by Ashok Pandey was on “Indigenous People, Health and Development in Globalization: Some Anthropological Reflections”. This paper primarily focused on the socio-economic correlates of health status of the people in a tribal setting. The presentation was based on analysis of secondary literature relating to healthcare practices among the tribes of Dudhi Tehsil of Sonabhadra District, Uttar Pradesh. The paper presenter basically dealt with the three aspects-indigenous perceptions, healthcare and the development process both at local and global contexts.

The second paper of the session was presented by Lata Lal Mahata entitled, “Healthcare Practices among the Santhals of Purulia District, West Bengal”. The explored the health seeking practices which essentially form an integral part of their social systems. These tribal groups make use of herbal based treatments for various kinds of ailments. The paper brings out the discourse among the Santhal of West Bengal, which has developed between modern allopathic system and the traditionally based folk system. The methodology used for the study is basically quantitative in nature, which according to the presenter will be applicable in ascertaining the efficacy of the existing treatment systems from a scientific perspective.

The third paper of the session was presented by Ramandeep Kaur was on “Persistent Stigma over the Years: An Account of Experiences of Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus Patients”. The presentation was based on a review article that brought out the issue of cultural stigma among the people affected with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (T1DM). The paper discusses the psycho-social problems faced by the patients suffering from T1DM and their care givers. These problems included difficulty in finding spouse, discrimination at work place and educational institutions. management of the disease, being misjudged as a drug addict and so on.

The fourth and the final paper of the session was presented by Suman Ghosh on “Healthcare Management through Cultural Beliefs and Practices among the Santhal Community over Time and Space: A Comparative Anthropological Study between Text and Context”. The study was based on

both primary and secondary data. It was very much evident from the presentation that cultural beliefs do change, both within and outside the group, across geographical landscapes due to factors like conflict, acculturation, pluralism, assimilation and convergence. The paper presenter attempted to highlight the text-context interface in a time space determined by diverse ecological conditions.

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