

## Preface

This Special Issue of **The Anthropologist** covers a wider arena, and truly reflects the nature of anthropology as an integrated discipline. This Issue has been divided into five sections, consisting in total twenty-one research papers.

The first section is devoted to the aspects of ecology, demography, and health. The opening contribution, by M.K. Bhasin and Veena Bhasin, is a positional paper that sets the stage for further discussion. It examines the relationship between environment and health at the macro-level. The authors observe that India is multi-linguistic, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic, therefore variability is bound to occur at all levels, including those pertaining to health. Certain populations are disadvantageously placed because of poor nutrition and stress-filled environment, and require special care.

The second paper in this section offers the case study of a high altitude area, and examines the prospects of adaptation to the environment. This area known as Ladakh is characterized by low atmospheric pressure, severe cold, strong winds, and solar radiations. The authors of this paper, Veena Bhasin and Shampa Nag, show that in such ecological contexts, the relationship between human beings and environment is influenced by genetic makeup, eco-sensitivity, and socio-cultural factors. The next paper in this section, by S.P. Singh, is on anthropometric perspective on nutritional status. It is well known that anthropometry is an important indicator of physical status of individuals and populations. It also provides information about the nutritional status of populations and their place in the ladder of economic development. Singh shows in his article that the people of present generation are growing taller and bigger because of modernization and economic progress, but there are several communities that are lagging behind and for them special programmes of development are needed. Today, the importance of anthropometry has been realized not only by biological scientists but also by social researchers. The last paper in this section is on the prawn-seed collectors, the people called Meendharas, of West Bengal. Ranjana Ray and her collaborators submit in this paper that the problems of these people can be solved once we know about their way of life.

The second section of this Special Issue includes articles that deal with human biology. S.K. Verma and Ajita in their paper examine the increasing prevalence of obesity and the role of exercise. They also detail out the health problems that are associated with obesity. Finally, they look at the role of physical exercises in reducing obesity. On the basis of a review of several studies they find that exercise has a little role to play in weight loss in obese persons. In the second paper, by Sharda Sidhu and Harleen Kaur Tatla, one thousand adult urban females of Panjab were studied for prevalence of overweight and obesity. The authors calculated the body mass index of each subject and found that 20 per cent women were overweight and 23.5 per cent had obesity. The third paper in this section by a group of researchers from Kolkata is on hemoglobin-E in tribal populations of Tripura, where it has been found to be quite high.

The next article in this section is on the reconstruction of stature from long bone lengths. Based on the research by Surinder Nath and Prabha Badkur, this article attempts to formulate regression formulae for reconstruction of stature using all the six long bones. The data for the present study were collected from the skeletal materials from Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. Inuka Gakhar and S.L. Malik have contributed the next paper which is on somatotypes. The data for their study was collected on boys and girls of the community of Jats in Delhi. The authors found that Jat girls were more endomorphic and less ectomorphic than Jat boys, however the physique undergoes changes with the advancement of age. The next paper is on alloalbuminaemia by Harsurinder Kaur and Neeraj Mehta. By alloalbuminaemia is meant the presence in human serum of a form of albumin distinguishable from normal serum albumin mainly by charge induced alterations in its electrophoretic mobility. The authors show the anthropological significance of this character. The last paper in this section is by M.K. Bhasin and Shampa Nag and it examines the effect of consanguinity on the family and child survival among the Muslim populations of Ladakh. The authors found that the incidence of consanguinity was relatively low among them. The Muslims also show increased fertility and decreased proportion of surviving children in consanguineous than in non-consanguineous marriages.

The papers dealing with medical anthropology constitute the third section. The first paper, by R.S. Balgir, is on the field of biomedical anthropology. The author argues that biomedical anthropology is

a new discipline, which combines the concepts and techniques of physical anthropology with medical anthropology, and it can be eminently used for solving several health problems of people. In the next paper, V.K. Srivastava discusses the social and cultural aspects of mental health and illness in India.

It is now that anthropologists have started looking at the issues that at one time were mainly discussed in the field of political science and international relations. One such issue is of human rights, and the next section is devoted to this. The first paper in this section is by Richard Harvey Brown and Laure Bjawi-Levine. Here, the authors, basing themselves on data from the Middle East, argue that cultural relativism and universal human rights clash in the practice of international human rights in these countries. They point out the weaknesses of anthropologists, sociologists, and economists in understanding these concepts. In the second article here, Klaus Kuhnekath and Hans Sünker analyze the relationship between sociology and the general process of consciousness and awareness of society. The authors examine the main structures of modern complex society and the structural changes that occur in the world system. They also focus on the relationship of pedagogy with politics, and the possibility of a system of universal education. The final paper in this section, by Brian Milne, is on the contribution that the modern anthropologist can make to the delivery of human rights. The author takes up the issue of 'what is and what is not science', and submits that the 'scientific' anthropology has to contribute to the understanding and delivery of human rights.

The last section of the Special Issue is on the aspects of development, society and its future. The first contribution in this section is by B.G. Banerjee and A.K. Sinha. Divided into three sections, the paper examines the concept of development critically, and what it should be in the case of the nations of the third world. The authors also delineate a paradigm of development that can be used cross-culturally. The paper to follow this is by Shalina Mehta, which is a review of the studies dealing with development, displacement, and rehabilitation of tribal populations in India. Mehta shows that since India's independence, almost eight million people have been subjected to several episodes of displacement, and their habitats have been despoliated. The author exposes the hollowness of the modern aspects of technological development.

Mohammad Taghi Sheykhi in his paper, next in this section, shows that science and technology are the key factors of production in the twenty-first century. The author argues that the evolution of human beings is dependent upon the development of science and technology. He also notes that the production of knowledge counts much in the development of humankind, and this could be made possible through the development and increase of the university system and research centers. In the next paper, Nikos Gousgounis says that technology has not proved itself to be the panacea for all human needs and passions. Technology alone cannot create alternatives for existential demands in human beings. The author argues that technology can falsify reality and literally transform humans into robots by the use of simulating symbols and by an apathetic and indifferent educational system that cooperates with the system as its obedient serf. In the last paper of this section, Peter J.M. Nas submits that in course of time, anthropologists will direct their attention to the mega-urban structures that are increasingly dominating societies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. With all these changes that are occurring, the society is becoming more and more urbanized and informational. He says that anthropologists should focus on the study of mega-urban structures and study them holistically.

An overview of the Special Issue shows that today anthropology is not just concerned with the study of primitive and peasant societies, but has included in its scope urban and industrial societies. It is equally concerned with the issues of human development and progress and has become far more integrated.