



Department of Anthropology, Cotton University

Cordially invites you all to World Anthropology Day, 2022

On the occasion a lecture will be delivered

by Prof. Deepak Kumar Behera on the topic '*Anthropology of Children and Childhood: An Emerging Field of Research and Teaching*'

on 17th February, 2022, Thursday at 6.30 pm.



About the speaker: Professor Deepak Kumar Behera is currently serving as the Vice Chancellor of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, Deemed-to be-University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha. He had served as the Vice Chancellor of Sambalpur University (2018 to 2021), Berhampur University (2013 to 2016), Rajendra University, Balangir, Odisha. He was a former Professor and the Head of the Department of Anthropology, Sambalpur University, India for long 16 years. He was a Fulbright Visiting Professor at California State University during 2007-2008. He was a recipient of DAAD fellowship, and a Guest Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Karl Ebrahd University, Tubingen, Germany (2013). He was also a Visiting Professor in the Dept. of History and Area Studies, Aarhus University, Denmark (2011), Dept. of Anthropology, University of Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa (2001, 2003), Dept. of Anthropology, University of Durban-Westville, Durban, South Africa (2001), Institute of Psychology, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2004) and Maison des Sciences de L'Homme, Paris and CNRS-EHESS, Toulouse, France (2006). He was the recipients of Carlos Chaga Foundation Fellowship, Brazil, National Research Foundation Fellowship, Republic of South Africa, German Research Council Fellowship, Germany, Indo-French Academic Exchange Fellowship, India/France, Indo-Israel Academic and Cultural Exchange Fellowship, India/Israel. Professor Behera was the recipient of the prestigious Sarat Chandra Roy Memorial Gold Medal by the Asiatic Society, Kolkata (the oldest educational institution in Asia) for his outstanding contribution in the field of cultural anthropology in India for the year 2016 (Award received in 2017).

Anthropology of Children and Childhood: An Emerging Field of Research and Teaching

My lecture will primarily focus on an emerging area of research and teaching in anthropology. In recent years, a distinct "anthropology of childhood" has emerged as a subfield within the discipline anthropology. Herskovit (1948) defines 'cultural anthropology' as a scientific study of man and his works. The subject matters of social/cultural anthropology are social structure and network of social relationships. Children constitute roughly 35% of a given human population. Are children then NOT "human beings"? Are they NOT part and parcel of social structure and network of social relationships? Then, how can we ignore "children and their childhood" from the subject matters of anthropology? Barring few, children are almost invisible in classic ethnographies. Hardly any anthropology departments in India offer a course on "anthropology of children and childhood".

It is important for all of us to realize that childhood is no more the domain of developmental psychologists. The stance of developmental psychologists is increasingly questioned by cultural/social anthropologists. Children are held by developmental psychologists to be initially immature, irrational, asocial, and in need of a long developmental journey towards becoming mature, rational, and social adults. Developmental psychologists still see children as incomplete adults and have endorsed a strong separation between childhood and adulthood. Scholars of anthropology see children as rational human beings with their own rights. They also highlight the heterogeneous nature of childhood and the impact that gender, age, birth order, and ethnicity have on children's experiences and daily lives. This subfield suggests a great diversity in definitions of, and ideas about childhood and the different roles and expectations placed on children according to their cultural backgrounds. Children create their own social structure which is part of the larger social structure. Children just have their own rules for doing/acting.

Against the backdrop, my presentation will raise some critical questions relating to 'anthropology of children and childhood'. Some of those are: Should there be a separate sub-discipline 'anthropology of childhood'? How then childhood has to be defined within the proposed sub-discipline 'anthropology of childhood'? Why don't anthropologists like children? Why children have not been taken seriously by anthropologists? Why children are less visible in anthropology? What are the wrong perceptions of adults on children and their childhood? What is children's agency? How is that viewed within anthropology? What are the major anthropological literatures focusing exclusively on children? Has the nature of childhood changed, and if so, how is childhood placed in changing social and cultural contexts? What are the methodological issues working on and with children?