



# Region-Specific Research Projects



## Anthropological Survey of India 2023-2024



**Anthropological Survey of India  
North East Regional Centre, Shillong  
Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India**



## **Anthropological Survey of India**

*The Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) is a government organization under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. It is the only research organization to pursue Anthropological research in all branches of Anthropology in a Governmental setup in India. Initially, there was an Anthropology section along with the Zoology section in Indian Museum, Kolkata. Later in 1916, Zoology section was bifurcated from Indian Museum to establish the Zoological Survey of India and Anthropology section became part of the ZSI. Finally, the Anthropology section became a separate entity as Anthropological Survey of India in 1945.*

*Besides the Head Office at Kolkata, there are seven regional centers and a sub-regional center under AnSI. North-East Regional Centre was established in 1953 in Shillong. This regional centre contributes for understanding the people of North-East India by conducting a number of research projects during last few decades. Over the past few decades, this regional centre has actively conducted numerous research activities aimed at comprehending the tribal communities of North East India. This centre has a valuable Zonal Anthropological Museum dedicated for preservation of ethnic objects and material culture, a DNA Lab for human blood analysis and an Art Gallery showcasing a variety of beautiful and challenging images from different corners of North East India.*

## Current Project by Physical Anthropology Section

### “Assessment of Health, Hygiene and Sanitation of the Khasi in North-East India, with Special Reference to Women and Children”

#### *Introduction:*

The intricate nature of health is influenced by a web of interconnected factors that collectively shape an individual's overall well-being, aligning with the World Health Organization's (1948) definition: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and merely the absence of disease and infirmity”.

Adequate nutrition and healthcare services for women during pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal period are pivotal for both maternal and child well-being. However, child and maternal malnutrition persist as significant challenges, especially in North-East India, which comprises seven states. Malnutrition in children under five years old (stunting, wasting, underweight, and even overweight/obesity) hampers physical growth and cognitive development, contributing to increased child mortality, morbidity and perpetuating societal inequality and poverty across generations.



Additionally, sanitation and hygiene are critical in preventing diseases and enhancing overall quality of life. Despite the importance, the hygiene cultures are poorer in many tribal communities in India. Efforts to improve sanitation and hygiene persist, but challenges impact public health and well-being. In the case of North East India, various geographical and cultural factors further could also affect hygiene and preventive behaviours besides the supply-side factors.

The current project aims to examine the health status of the women and children of the Khasi through using the indicators of nutritional status, mortality and morbidity. The standards of hygiene and sanitation among women and children of the Khasi in Meghalaya will also be studied for their impact on health status. The expected outcome of the study is developing a comprehensive model for improving the health status of women and children tailored to the cultural, social, and geographical specifics of Meghalaya's diverse ethnic groups.



## *Rationale of the study:*

Through its several programmes, the government of India has performed admirably in reducing the percentage of malnourished children from 38.4% to 35.5%, as per the last press release of the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2021. The Indian Health of Nation's State report (2017) highlighted that in the north-east of India, malnutrition is more severe than the national average. Assam and Meghalaya are still considered at the lowest epidemiological transition level. There are no comprehensive studies on health status taking into consideration the burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases among women and also neonatal and child morbidity.



Hence, the study aims to comprehensively understand the health status of women and children of the Khasi tribal community in terms of mortality, morbidity and nutritional status and then account for the observed health status by examining the relationships between the socio-cultural, geographical and other factors and the health and illness behaviours.

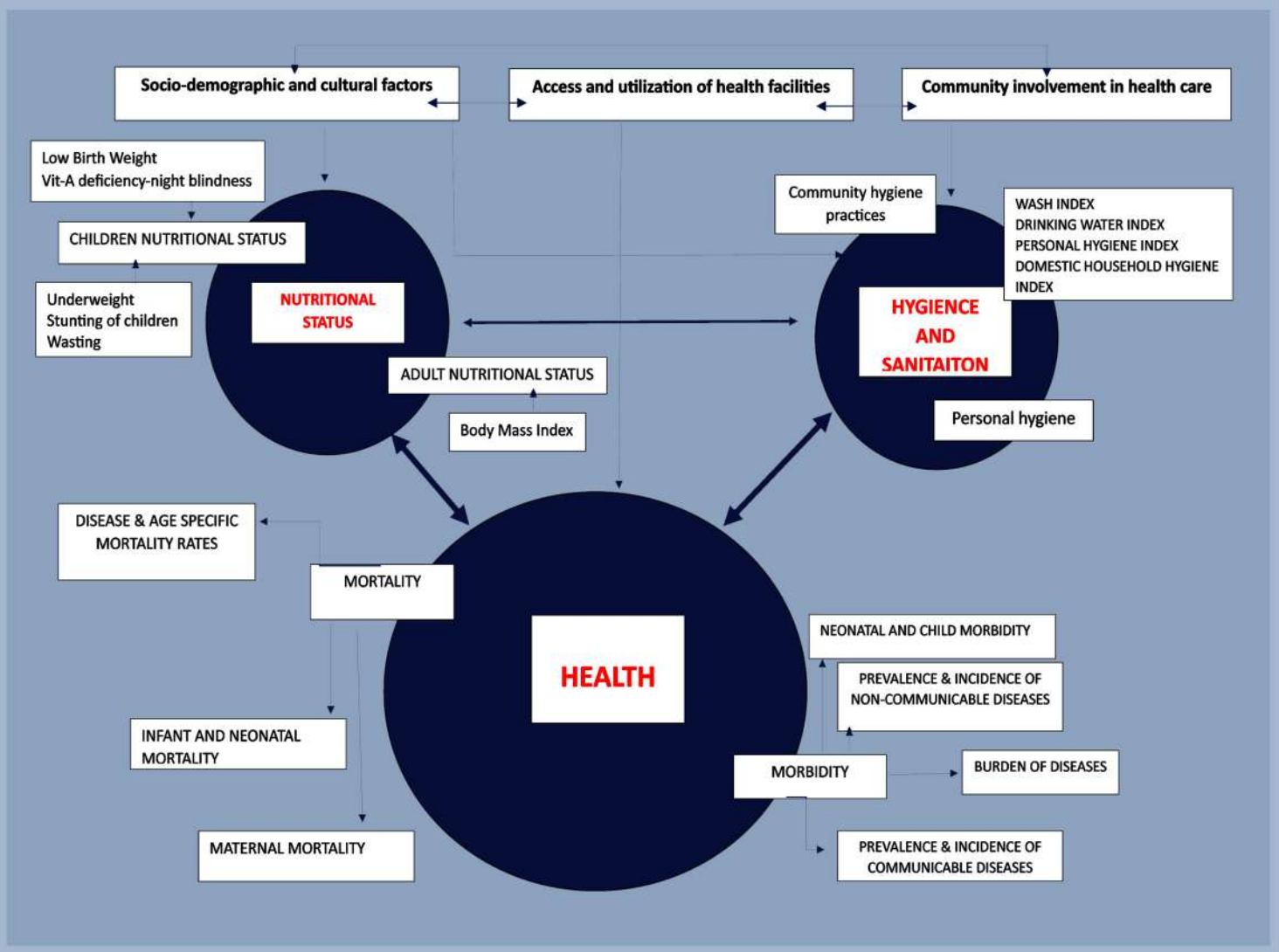


## Specific Research Objectives:

- 1) Undertake a survey of the morbidity and mortality of the community with special reference to the health of women and children.
- 2) Assess the anthropometric parameters of the children and mothers of the Khasi community.
- 3) Understand the existing facilities and practices for community and personal hygiene to know the role of cultural, social, economic and other factors in the hygiene, behaviors of Khasi women and children.
- 4) Identify the extent of community involvement in health care and also the factors that promote and inhibit community involvement.

## Study Area:

The proposed study will be cross-sectional among women (15-49 yrs) and children (0-5 yrs) from the Khasi community of Meghalaya. The study is proposed to be conducted in two districts, namely East Khasi Hills and West Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, based on the criteria of access to public health care institutions.



# **RESEARCH TEAM FOR PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY SECTION**

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## Current Project by Cultural Anthropology Section

### *“Digital Literacy and its Impact on Cultural Heritage Preservation”*

#### *Introduction:*

In the era of modernization, every community is progressing through many changes with time. Tribal communities are no exception to those changes. Though significant changes may not be observed in the social organization and social institutions like marriage, family, kinship and religion of any community in a short span of time, rapid changes in many aspects like dance, music, food culture, traditional dress, and ornaments etc. which are taken as distinct cultural markers of the community do occur. Increased digital literacy leads to greater exposure to global cultures, resulting in rapid changes in many expressive cultures.

Owing to these changes and the loss of social heritage, there have been efforts for the revival of traditional cultural practices in recent years amongst many communities in India.





Digital education in India is paving the way for knowledge acquisition and learning through the use of technology and digital tools. The government of India has already launched digital literacy programmes such as the “National Digital Literacy Mission” (NDLM) and “Digital Saksharta Abhiyan” (DISHA).

The use of digital technologies helps to record, archive, and preserve cultural objects,

documents, and traditions. Of late, the availability and increased use of digital devices have enabled many tribal communities to effectively utilize digital tools and utilize a wide range of opportunities provided by digital platforms to strengthen their initiatives to preserve their cultural heritage. There is an urgent need to understand community initiatives for the preservation of cultural heritage, focusing on the use of digital technologies in this regard.

### *Rationale of the Study:*

The north-eastern tribal areas are rich in cultures that need to be preserved. The culture of the Garo is one of the most vibrant cultures in this region, and the Garo community is the only Tibeto-Burman population in India, still following the matrilineal social structure, which makes them unique. The current research investigates the emerging digital culture among the Garo, especially the community initiatives for cultural heritage conservation, and thereby to understand the impact of digital literacy among the Garo.



## *Study Area:*

Meghalaya is a North-eastern state of India, inhabiting major communities like Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia and some minor communities like the Hajong, Kacharis, Bodos, Rabhas, and many more. The proposed study will be conducted in the Garo community of the state. The Garo community of Meghalaya is mostly concentrated in the Garo Hills districts, which are divided into two districts, viz the West Garo Hills district and the East Garo Hills district. Therefore, these two districts are chosen for the study. Villages from two select blocks from each district will be selected randomly for the present study.



## *Research Objectives:*

- 1) To know the current status of digital literacy in the Garo community of Meghalaya.
- 2) To know the initiatives taken at community and individual levels for digital preservation of the culture, including the motives and processes involved in this.
- 3) To know the impact of the digital initiatives through a survey for individual preferences, practices and roles taken in disseminating content.
- 4) To understand the effects of digital initiatives on cultural preservation and revival of past cultural practices.



# **RESEARCH TEAM FOR CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY SECTION**

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