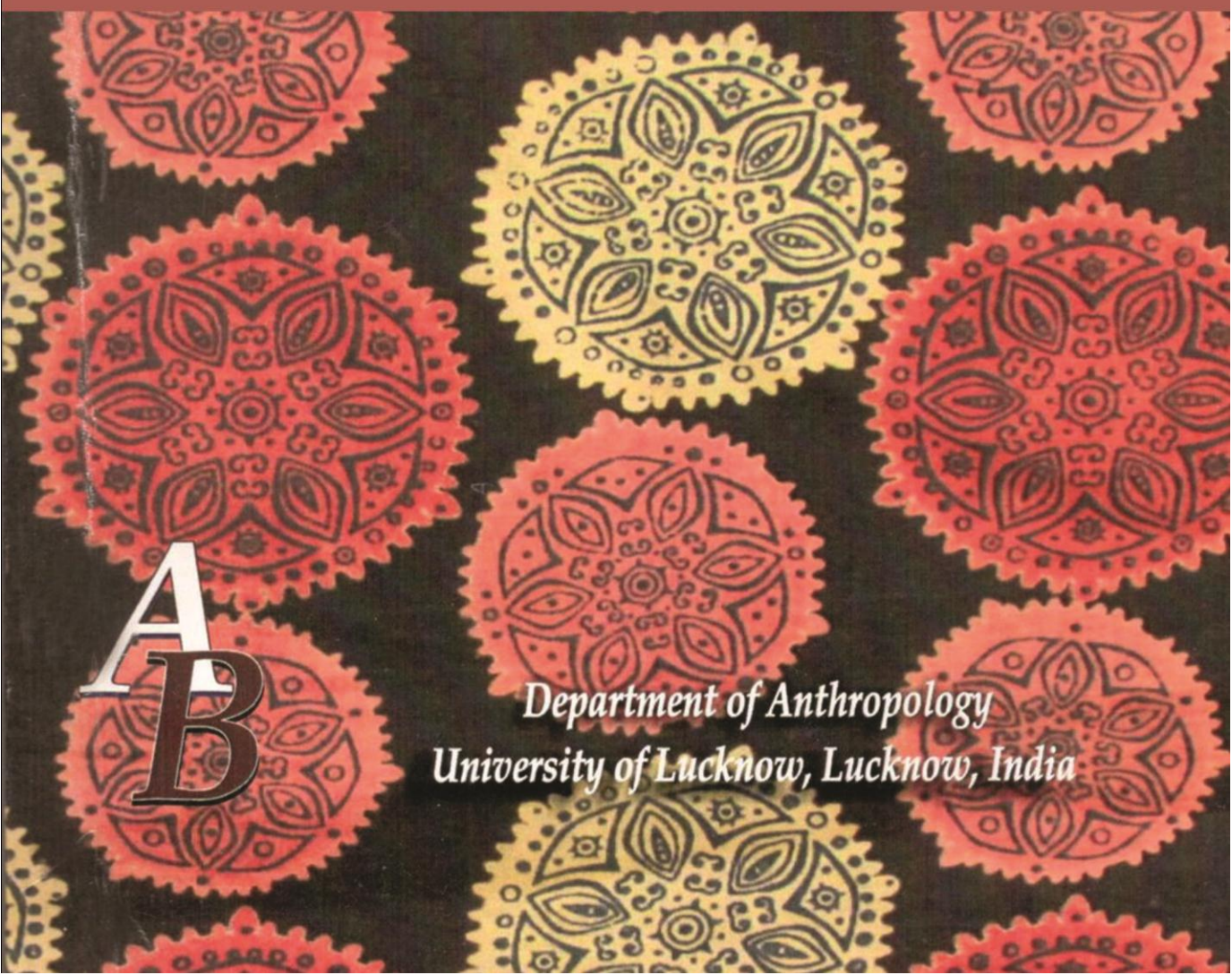


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Places, Identities, Homesickness and Happiness: Looking Through the Savanna Prism

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ABSTRACT

People's intentions and behaviours toward specific locations are influenced by their connections to such locations. These goals and actions may have a significant impact on the vitality, growth, and existence of human settlements, particularly those that are comparatively newer. Humanistic geographers and environmental psychologists have long investigated and supported the psychological connections that humans have to locations. Researchers explained this phenomenon in terms of human experiences. Several models were put forth and refined in an effort to learn more about how people relate to their environments. Consequently, place attachment has undergone a great deal of research and has grown into a multifaceted idea that represents people's social, emotional, cognitive, and functional relationships with places. This research paper made use of available literature regarding emotional impact of places on human psyche with special reference to savanna theory of happiness. Observations suggest that there is a significant relationship between happiness invoked by visiting and revisiting places and genetic evolution of human beings. Findings indicate that emotions about places could very well be inherited through ancestry.

Keywords: Place Perception, Homesickness, Identity, Savanna, Happiness

Prelude

Nostalgia encompassing cities, monuments, landforms and habitats leave people with a trail of memories and lived experiences that have been sitting in their minds subconsciously. The very idea of places need not be set in terms of time or space while it can be used at any of the designated scales. Furthermore, as a result of globalization, a place's physical environment and cultural norms can alter over time as a result of new introduced concepts or technological advancements. With time, places become identities and an integral part of personalities of individuals. The joy that is brought by rediscovering the familiarity of a place is beyond comprehension. Some people simply explain it in terms of '*déjà vu*', while refer to it

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as nostalgia. Psychology aims to understand behaviours and changes in it, therefore the ideas of places, identities, homesickness and happiness collectively sail towards the nascent domain of psychogenetics. It is comparatively a newer branch of behavioural sciences that enshrines a multidimensional approach towards psychological research. This research paper aims to examine the intersections of places, identities and happiness with respect to the savanna theory of happiness.

Genesis

People frequently assign specific meanings to a place in order to comprehend sense of place; for instance, they may know a person's house or place of employment. They know where it is, what it looks like, and how far it is from where they are right now, this explains the very feeling of location. The basic idea of a sense of place serves as an explanation for how people conceptualize and classify different places. When a place has any meaning for someone, that individual perceives it as a place. Positive psychologists working on personal meaning have not drawn on significantly, insights from evolutionary psychology, the sub-discipline of psychology that deals with ultimate causations of psychological phenomena (Heintzelman & King, 2014).

People do not give much thought to every location they have ever heard of or seen because the world is so vast. Gradually, the place becomes a person bearing a discrete and discerning identity which in due course amalgamates with the identity of individuals in order to invoke emotional expressions about the place at every mention. The concept of place is among geography's most ancient concepts. Thus, place can mean many different things, such as a space or location with meaning or an area having unique physical and human characteristics interconnected with other places. Place is made up of three essential elements: location, locality, and feeling of place. A point's location on Earth's surface is its specific position. Locale, which includes places like the Smoky Mountains and the South of France, is the actual environment in which connections take place. Ultimately, a person's feelings about a location are a reflection of their experiences and their sense of place. Location is not always set in time or scale and can be used at any scale. Contrary to urban dwellers and those who grew up in the urban areas, an fMRI study has revealed that the brains of those who grew up in the rural areas and those who currently live in cities respond to stress with greater activities (Lederbogen et al., 2011). These studies, however, simply raise another question: Why does the human brain perceive urban life as stressful, alienating, and depressing, but not rural life?

Perception and Places

People's perception of places describes how our understanding of geography shapes our identities and what makes us the person that we are. The two areas of geography that most effectively contribute to the development of these ideas are behavioral and humanistic geography. Humanistic geography is concerned with how individuals relate to their surroundings and how they feel and think about space and place. A contrast between an objective observation of places and perceived places is made by behavioral geography.

Schroeder (1991) has differentiated preferences from meaning by maintaining that meaning refers to the thoughts, feelings, memories, and interpretations evoked by a landscape, while preference sums up as the degree of innate liking for one landscape as compared to another. A similar method to describe the link between individuals and spatial environments is place attachment, which is the emotional bond that exists between a person and a place. It is greatly impacted by the person and his or her unique experiences. Determining what constitutes a place meaningful enough for place attachment to arise is a topic of much investigation.

The affective bond between people and place or setting is called *topophilia*. It may also be expressed as a strong sense of place, which often blends with the sense of cultural identity for certain groups, but may simply termed as an individual's affinity of certain aspects of a particular place. A person-place bond that evolves from specifiable conditions of place and characteristics of people is called *place attachment*. Place identification is attachment in the sense of personal, symbolic, or affective implications. An individual's self-identity is shaped by the physical surroundings or location. Place attachment and sense of place are terms that can be used interchangeably to describe an emotional connection that an individual or group has with a particular location or landscape. Place meaning is an association between a physical environment and importance, purpose, symbolic role, or value that is founded on cognitive processes. A function-based attachment is called *place dependence*. The ability of a particular location to meet the demands or behavioral objectives of a person or group determines its worth in comparison to other possible locations.

Identities and Crises

Since identification is one significant process in our culture, individuals have a strong sense of identity with their cities. Because their cities, towns, or neighborhoods become essential extensions of who they are, people frequently feel superior to the locations they live in. Similar to any other type of connection, a person's bond with their home might go wrong. If the place attachment has to be taken at face value, then, it's just an emotional bond people make with their surroundings. A contemporary explanation for the lower level of life satisfaction in different cities is that urban life brings with itself a number of 'social ills', such as anomie, alienation, social disorganization, and depression (Wirth, 1938).

A person's identity and their place of residence are intrinsically intertwined. Where we live is very much tied to our identity, but where we grow up can be a matter of choice or chance. Places can have a greater impact on a person's identity than everything else, including their relationships, career, and religion. As a result, people develop strong bonds with their cities made up of lived experiences and memory. Briefly, place attachment is this idea that people become attached to places in the same ways they become attached to people. Those attachments become significant components of the structures people make in their lives. People's resistance to moving to the suburbs or even to a different area within their metropolis can also be explained by place attachment. It clarifies the basic idea of homesickness as well, with reference to behavioural sciences. Studies have shown that rural dwellers in economically developed nations tend to be happier than their urban counterparts (Berry & Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2009).

Psychology of Homesickness

The emotional anguish that comes from being away from home and in a strange and new place is known as homesickness. It has an impact on those who have relocated, both permanently and temporarily, including students, immigrants, refugees, police and members of the armed forces.

Slootman & Duyvendak (2015) have concluded in their recent study of foreign residents in the Netherlands, that workers between the ages of 30 and 39 who had lived there for six to eight years were more likely to experience homesickness. Even though the surroundings were now familiar, the foreigners may still have felt like outsiders after a few years, which could account for the heightened level of homesickness.

Between 50% and 75% of people in general are thought to have experienced homesickness at some point in their lives. When people are away from their homes, they miss something about their lived experiences. However, some people may experience learned helplessness in terms of homesickness more intensely than others. The quality of

social relationships, particularly friendships has emerged as the most important determinants of happiness attached with places (Dolan, Peasgood & White, 2008).

Researchers have discovered that the more civilizations and cultural norms diverge, the harder it is to adjust and the higher the likelihood of experiencing homesickness, therefore contrasting culture might lead to situations of conflict. Adjusting to a new environment calls for flexibility, but not everyone finds it simple. A study of recent military recruits revealed that homesickness was more common among those who behaved more rigidly. They stayed in their comfort zones and shied away from circumstances that called for change.

Methodology

The present research study has aimed to examine the effects of attachment with places on people. It has looked into the dynamics of emotions as against the lived experiences of individuals. Considering homesickness and homecoming a dyad of emotional responses of individuals, the paper has aimed to understand if these emotional responses invoked by places are inherited through ancestry as suggested by the savanna theory of happiness. Data was collected through a total of 50 relevant research papers. Research articles were consulted and relevant studies were incorporated in the study. Research databases taken into consideration included Google Scholar, CrossRef, OpenAccess and Road.

The Subconscious Happiness

The Savanna theory is the belief that the human brain is not so much adapted to the present era as it is to the circumstances under which our ancestors formerly lived. The phrase was first used in a 2004 scholarly paper by American evolutionary psychologist Satoshi Kanazawa, who suggested that the human brain might have evolved during the period when our ancestors roamed the African savannas (Kanazawa, 2004b).

Many modern human behaviors seem illogical, and this has been explained by the Savanna principle. In terms of evolution, the modern era is relatively new, thus it's possible that the human brain hasn't evolved far enough to cope with the current surroundings.

The theory emphasizes upon the evolutionary history of the human brain and makes the claim that the world in which humans evolved was very different from the one in which natural selection shaped the human brain. The idea states that there is a wide range of societal issues that result from this gap between what men were meant to do and what they are currently capable of doing. For example, in a time when such items were comparatively uncommon, our ancestors who liked sugary and considerably fatty foods lived longer and were healthier than those who didn't. These days, there are a lot of these temptations, which causes obesity and heart disease. Television, sex, and jealousy are examples of similar situations.

It goes on to suggest that people's happiness might not only be influenced by the outcomes of a particular circumstance in their current surroundings, but also by what those outcomes would have been in their ancestral surroundings. According to the conviction, those who are less clever are more likely to experience the negative effects of such ancestral repercussions on happiness than those who are more brilliant. Those residing in an urban region, associating with friends less frequently, and belonging to an ethnic minority all have a negative impact on happiness; however, the consequences of these variables are substantially stronger in less clever people than in more intelligent people. The idea can also clarify why some people experience Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and why there exist gender differences when it comes to emotions (Partonen & Lönnqvist, 1998).

Eplilogue

The Savanna theory although suggests that happiness has a genetic base which strengthens the notion that human brains are not absolutely independent, yet there are

observations which could also be attributed to it. Such observations include the feelings of uneasiness experienced by individuals in certain places; this could coincide with their respective ancestral impressions and experiences. Human brain is the most complex structure in this world and newer observations and discoveries only prove Freud's proposition of the unconscious. This study was just an endeavour to search base for empirical researches in the subject matter of savanna theory and develop a fundamental understanding of emotions attached to places. Future researches could focus on the cause-effect relationships of places and emotions through empirical approaches.

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