This work is an attempt of an anthropologist's inquiry into the problems of the mentally sick. Mental illness represents one of the darkest phenomena on the Indian social scene. Over the past few decades psychiatry may be said to have come of age but as yet, numerous questions still remain unanswered. Mental illness, as we understand it today, is essentially a result of the influence of multiple dynamic forces. To comprehend the effects of such forces, a multidisciplinary approach is required.

Thus, a purposeful diversion from the traditional anthropological areas of research like the study on tribes, caste, village communities, social organization and social change to a problem oriented, applied field has been ventured.

Health and disease are measures of the effectiveness with which human groups, combining biological and cultural resources, adapt to their environments. The fact that health and disease are related to cultural as well as biological factors underlies the convergence of medical and cultural anthropological interests.

The presently developing close and formal relationship between anthropology and the mental health
field has its antecedents in the considerably long history of anthropological interest in psychological concomitants of culture and in the somewhat more recent psychiatric interest in the cultural stimulus events of human behaviour.

The chapterization in this work is briefly outlined here to present the major vistas under consideration.

Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

This is an introductory chapter which presents in a systematic manner the growing problem of mental disorder and the various views of its causation including the lacunae. This chapter also presents the main focus of the present study, its significance, definitions, concepts, aims and limitations in the Indian context.

Chapter II
THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Deals chiefly with the theoretical perspective. It relates the problem of mental disorders to: cross-cultural studies, child-rearing practices, cultural-relativity, culture-specific disorders, socio-cultural stresses, culture change, culture conflict and the disintegration of culture.
Chapter III
METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the sampling procedure followed in the present study. It also presents the coverage and selection of variables, the instruments and techniques of data collection and the processing and analysis of data.

Chapter IV
THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PATIENTS

The chapter begins with a general survey followed by a closer look at the study of the 1168 mental patients giving plausible explanations for their outstanding characteristics with the aid of cyclograms and tables.

Chapter V
THE PATTERNS OF CULTURE

The most important findings and discussion concentrating on predisposing and precipitating cultural factors in the case histories of 200 cured mental patients is presented in this chapter. The analysis and comments presented are not only at a qualitative level, but with great care, the cultural factors have been isolated and quantified to present a more precise and
objective interpretation of the cultural etiology of mental disorders in rural Maharashtra.

Chapter VI.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This last chapter on the summary and conclusions of the thesis explains in a more vivid manner the research problem and its implications which are not only of theoretical interest but also of practical value to the better understanding of the rapidly growing problem of mental disorder and of the ways of coping with it.

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