

Indian Anthropological Congress: 2010
Indian National Confederation and Academy of Anthropologists (INCAA)
In collaboration with
Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal
on the Focal theme
‘State, Development and Communities’
incaa
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‘Development’ is one of the most debated words in contemporary social science discourse as there could be endless levels, goals, and means and therefore, meanings of development. The perceptions of development thus vary as scholars and interest groups take varied standpoints which could be located within and without the liberal democratic order. Discourses on development vary because some view that well being of the citizens is the responsibility of the State while others view it to be the responsibility of the ‘agency’, the collectivity or the society, which enjoy autonomous existence.

World anthropology and Indian anthropology have never tried to free themselves from the concerns of development and well being of the people and at the same time have never tried to evolve a monolithic definition of development. Anthropology has always upheld : ‘let peoples and communities decide their courses of development’. But peoples and communities can choose their development paths only when they have the freedom of choice and adequate control over human and material resources.

Both globally and nationally anthropology had to confront the liberal orders and liberal paths of development, particularly the adverse impacts of development on the tribal and ethnic communities. Apparently the liberal democratic order is ‘inclusive’ and integrationist but in practice it is ‘exclusionist’ and alienating of the weaker sections of the population.

Unquestionably, there are many positive outcomes of India’s development efforts many of which have been documented in the administrative and scientific accounts. Anthropological and other social science accounts are also replete with the adverse fall-outs of development initiatives of the State in India and in other countries which follow the liberal or neo-liberal models. The critics of this model of development often argue that the nature (or the natural environment), the poor, the women and children, and other vulnerable sections are the direct victims of the course of development we follow. The ‘Welfare’ State steps in the name of ‘social responsibility to give some relief to the ‘victims’ of development but such efforts often fail to arrest the exclusion and marginalization.

The main task of Anthropology, under the circumstances, has been that of an ever alert and critical ‘watch-dog’. If we define Anthropology as ‘peoples’ science’ then the mission of enlightenment and modernism is still alive; a science (or art) is to promote

‘critical consciousness’ and ‘liberation of mankind’ from all forces of subjugation and oppression. Anthropology, in its research and action strives to secure the rights that the socio-political order promises to its citizens and communities and classes.

Anthropology can pursue this mission despite the onslaught of post-modernism and automation. It can pursue its mission without going for a definition of development.

In a democratic order people use their constitutional rights to protest and launch movements particularly when they have to take the burn of the development process spearheaded by the market (the private players) and the State (which often takes the role of the facilitator). The movements sometimes assume unconstitutional and undemocratic means as is done by the Naxalites and many secessionist groups.

There are different modes of documentation of the development processes and their fall outs (both positive and negative) on the peoples and communities, particularly the vulnerable section, the tribals, dalits, the minority communities, the communities that pursue their traditional crafts and occupations. The National Museum of Mankind at Bhopal and other Museums in the country have been documenting the visual forms of folk art and technology which tell the tales of development and its pitfalls in so many ways. The Indian Anthropological Congress: 2010 of INCAA, besides other Symposia, propose to devote a couple of Plenary Sessions on the commendable role that the National Museums have been playing in documenting peoples ‘efforts to development and peoples’ movements for livelihood, better life, and dignity.

Keeping this resume on the Congress theme in mind, we would invite scholars to frame sub-themes and take the responsibility of inviting the established scholars working on those areas. Some of the sub-themes could be as follows:

1. **State, market and agency: the agents of development in a liberal democratic order**
2. **Development and its impact on the communities with traditional occupation (such as the fishing community in Kerala or the Mahalis in West Bengal)**
3. **Development and its impact on the tribes, Dalits and other vulnerable sections**
4. **Mega development projects and their impact on the directly affected communities**
5. **Development and displacement**
6. **Development and protest movements**
7. **People’s initiatives in development**
8. **People’s definition of development**
9. **State and the resettlement colonies**
10. **NGOs and development**
11. **Museum, visual media, and documentation of development**
12. **Development and environment**