

Vision for Indian Anthropology and Role of INCAA

This Declaration adopted at Second INCAA Congress at Pune on 23rd February 2007 on the Vision for Indian Anthropology, provides the direction for INCAA and through INCAA, to the professional World of Anthropology in India, about using and further developing theory and methodology, in all aspects of Anthropology, towards policy planning and implementation for human welfare development and dignity.

Anthropology as the only holistic science of Man, studies human origins, human variation, human nature and human creations as evolved historically, blending the biological and cultural facts and perspectives. The holistic perspectives of mankind at all periods of time encompassing the dynamic triological relationship of Man-Environment-Supernatural is the heritage of Anthropology which anchors the civil society for peace and harmony.

Anthropology contributed to the body of knowledge by studying the cultural and biological variability which got enshrined in UN Charter of Human Rights respecting the principle of cultural relativism. Studies also led to policies abolishing racial discrimination. It is not recognized that Human Genetics, Ethnography and Qualitative research methods and many other methods, concepts, tools and techniques are the gift of anthropology which are being used and marketed by other disciplines.

The post-colonial era has shifted the focus of humanity to egalitarian order, poverty elimination and development issues encompassing health and education. Human Development is the key term used for measurement, as well as an approach, which is essentially anthropological, since it signals comprehensive and sustainable development flowing from culture theories. New dimensions are added due to desegregation of culture and life style, and due to global technological effects.

Indian Anthropology is broadly visible in the University Departments, Tribal Research Institutes, Anthropological Survey of India, Research Institutes of ICMR, ICSSR etc. committees and commissions dealing with backward communities and in the NGO sector undertaking health and development action research. Responding to the local requirement, anthropologists have tried to constitute academic associations. INCAA has evolved as a national platform to confederate networking of these regional bodies. As an Academy, it has a vision to address national issues without interfering or jeopardising the local interest organisations. On the other hand the regional associations would gain strength from national linkage and by participating in national endeavour.

While Anthropology is the only discipline which primarily focuses on the people, describing the cultural, social and economic frame work that leads to the poverty and deprivation, including debilitation, due to development of the “mainstream”, it has not addressed these issues at policy level. INCAA has to play the facilitator role at the micro (such as microplanning) as also at the macro policy planning level, by using the network of anthropologists.

While other disciplines including bio-medical applied disciplines, form their attention on the outcomes, labeling them as problems, and use curative symptomatic methods to solve them, Anthropology is equipped to study the processes resulting in the outcome problems, providing preventive solutions; such as farmers' suicides, infant mortality, health and disease issues, intergroup disparities, increasing gap between the rich and poor, displacement etc.

Applied Anthropology would not only provide professional employment to students trained in Anthropology, but would develop new theories about the dynamics of change. A new paradigm of Holism has to be developed analyzing the micro-macro interaction or by incorporating the perspectives of various actors and stakeholders.

Briefly, some of the activities for INCAA could be as under:

1. Research Programs: Multi-centric research projects in collaboration with Universities, research institutes, NGOs.
2. Issue based seminars: Tribal Policy, forest policy, Health Policy, Science and technology, Environment, Archaeology and Linguistics, Molecular biology and genetic epidemiology etc.
3. Prepare approach papers on policy issues from anthropological perspectives as advocacy initiatives.
4. Preparing monographs, manuals for governments and NGOs
5. Continuing education programs for anthropologists in collaboration with the universities.
6. Training and orientation of civil servants at the Central and State levels.
7. Suggest curriculum development including Foundation courses, networking with Universities and UGC.
8. Offering consultancy by providing resource persons.
9. Aim at starting an Apex Research and Training Institutes in Anthropology, may be by Anthropological Survey of India.
10. Help establishment of Museums or improve the quality of museums.

This would be logistically possible by establishing various study groups/committees on an all Indian basis pooling and networking human resources in Anthropology.

“Anthropology holds up a great mirror to man and lets him look at himself in his infinite variety” (Clyde Kluckhohn)

“Anthropology is a most humanist of all sciences and most scientific of all humanities” (Eric R. Wolf).

“Anthropology has a potential to develop its identity as Queen of all Sciences since it is sitting on the gold mine of rich data, created and being created by dynamic human endeavour” (UGC Model Curriculum on Anthropology, 2001).