

Seminar News

INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS,2023, SECTION ON ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES

The Indian Science Congress Association was founded by two British chemists, Prof. J. L. Simonsen and Prof. P.S. MacMahon. They considered organising a yearly research worker's meeting, influenced by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, to enhance scientific research in India. The first Congress meeting was held in January 1914 at the Asiatic Society in Calcutta. Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, the then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, presided over the assembly. Six sections were classified by their respective study fields: Botany, Chemistry, Ethnography, Geology, Physics, and Zoology. Each section had its own President.

Anthropological deliberations began with the section on Ethnography, which later became a section on Anthropology and Archaeology. After 2000, it was renamed as the section on Anthropological and Behavioural Sciences (Including Archaeology, Psychology, Education, and Military Sciences). The 108th Indian Science Congress occurred at Rashtrasant Tukdoji Maharaj Nagpur University in Nagpur, Maharashtra, from January 3-7, 2023, following a two-year hiatus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The event featured fourteen sections with the theme "*Science and Technology for Sustainable Development with Women Empowerment.*"

Anthropological and Behavioural Sciences in 2023:

The section was presided over by Prof. Manoj Kumar Singh, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi. 260 papers were presented in this section, including 35 symposia, 52 invited speaker presentations, and 173 oral/poster presentations on sustainable development, women's empowerment, and the role of Anthropology, Psychology, Education, and Military Sciences, focusing on the opportunities for anthropology and behavioural sciences in science and technology.

The section began with the presidential address: "*Understanding Sustainability, Sustainable Development, and Women's Empowerment: Insights from Anthropology*". He talked about how ethnographic studies could reshape the understanding of sustainability and sustainable development practices, which were important in pre-industrial societies and are still relevant today.

The speaker focused on the vital role of women in sustainable development and their contributions to anthropology and gender studies. He emphasised anthropology's pivotal role in shaping domestic and global sustainability discussions.

The Platinum Jubilee Lecture was delivered by Prof. Avanish Kumar from the School of Public Policy and Governance, Management Development Institute, Gurgaon. He spoke on Anthropology of Sustainable Development, specifically examining the practice and potential outcomes of overlapping consensus within shared social spaces to empower marginalised communities. He emphasised the significance of anthropology and behavioural sciences in achieving a mutually agreed upon path towards an environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable future. The invited lecture was delivered by Prof. Claire Smith, Flinders University, Australia. Prof. Smith discussed the use of archaeology and heritage in sustainable and holistic development amongst indigenous communities. The case highlighted archaeological research on Australian Aborigines to build trust, address trauma, and promote resilience, well-being, and social cohesion.

Anthropology

Debates in anthropology focused on women's empowerment through sustainability. Empowering women requires a shift in mindset to eliminate gender disparities. This transformation is crucial for leading the nation forward. An anthropological re-investigation of sustainability is, thus, deemed necessary. This involved analysing societal customs from various perspectives and considering diverse cultures' unique interests and needs instead of following a universal agenda based on a single ideology or historical tradition. The talk focused on technological advancements empowering women against patriarchal oppression. The discussions also focused on tribal development, marginalised issues, and development through anthropology. The Indian tribes have been facing displacement and ecosystem disruption. Social science experts, therefore, recommended minor adjustments to the concept of conventional development. Critics of tribal development suggested a holistic anthropological study to improve our way of life without sacrificing our prospects.

Development issues for marginalised and vulnerable groups, including indigenous populations, Dalits, and religious as well as sexual minorities, must be carefully considered in development policy. Promoting sustainability and achieving equitable social outcomes for individuals with disabilities is essential. Empowering women and their health was a significant topic of deliberation. development requires strengthening women with well-being and resources, as their health has been crucial for humanity's progress. Reproductive processes like menarche, conception, childbirth, and menopause are influenced by societal, cultural, and physiological factors, making them inevitable factors in women's empowerment.

The debate over the mistreatment of pregnant women in the poorest social class emerged. Using a data-driven methodology is crucial in these scenarios. Researchers and social scientists can provide the tools for individuals to take control of their own lives. Pregnant women face a higher risk of domestic violence, impacting their physical, sexual, and emotional well-being. A framework is needed to enhance access to information, resources, and leadership during emergencies. The section also discussed archaeological studies in the Narmada Valley of Central India and the origins of the Indus Valley civilisation in Haryana.

Psychology and Education

The section covered the role of psychological well-being in empowering women and how psychology can contribute to gender equity for global sustainability and scientific advancement. Empowering women requires building their mental strength. This assertion applies to various areas of female empowerment, such as social, economic, and educational advancement. Developing gender awareness significantly impacts knowledge, motivation, skills and changing societal attitudes. Science and women are fundamental to sustainable development and empowering women. Science education empowers women across cross-cultural and geographic boundaries and plays a pivotal role in development. It encourages critical thinking and analysis of surroundings for well-being.

An interesting paradigm of the domains in psychology in tribal development programs was discussed. The government discernibly made relatively less progress in several tribal development measures due to their insufficient incorporation of psychological perspectives. Therefore, the importance of psychology in facilitating tribal development must be thoroughly examined. Achieving the Government's aims and objectives necessitates a cognisance of tribal communities' psychological traits.

The last section was on Education and Military Sciences. Education is critical for achieving gender parity, tribal development, and social equity. It highlighted the drawbacks of the current education system in India. The Indian education system has the world's largest higher education sector. Challenges in Indian higher education, therefore, need significant attention. This section discussed difficulties in teaching standards, employability, skills gaps in graduates, weak public-private partnerships, low research quality, funding problems, ineffective governance, and burdensome regulations.

It was further deliberated that the NGOs were vital in advancement of tribal students. Indian NGOs employ innovative techniques to educate the less privileged children and enhance primary schooling quality. Numerous NGOs also focus on bettering the health of the impoverished. There were discussions on the influence of socio-economic and behavioural factors on rural

women workers and their issues with financial inclusion. Behavioural factors influence women's engagement with banking services more than socio-economic factors. This section discussed the impact of women's psychological health on physical well-being, digital advancement, scientific literacy, and sustainability.

Concluding the section

Anthropology and Behavioural Sciences have the tools and aptitudes to advance the boundaries of human knowledge through scientific inquiry. They also have the prospect of collaborating synergistically with other scientific disciplines to foster innovation and technology that prioritises human welfare. If done well, these efforts could help India take a leading role in promoting sustainable development and gender equity globally through science and technology. In the wake of COVID-19 and increasing public health concerns, it is crucial to understand these concerns and their underlying causes and implications. The discipline can help our executives, legislatures, and judiciaries create human-centric laws, policies, and effective adjudication.

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