

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF THE 46TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE INDIAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY AND INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR AT THE COURT HALL, MANIPUR UNIVERSITY, CANCHIPUR ON NOVEMBER 8, 2016.

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Hon'ble Minister, Commerce and Industries,
Dr. Kh. Ratankumar Singh ji,
Hon'ble Minister, Education and Transport,
Prof. Adya Prasad Pandey ji,
Vice-Chancellor, Manipur University,
Prof. Rajat K Das ji,
President, The Indian Anthropological Society,
Delegates and Participants,
Friends from the Media,
Distinguished Invitees,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me, at the outset, extend a hearty welcome to all the foreign delegates and also to the participants from other parts of India who have come to this beautiful state to take part in the 46th Annual Conference of Indian Anthropological Society and International Seminar on Anthropological Research in North East India.

I am a student of Science. Zoology was my subject of specialization and as both Anthropology and Zoology are quite related subjects, one deals with history and development of animals, their evolutionary movement and migrations and the other deals with human beings, the highly developed living form. I was always fond of study of Anthropology, the movement of people and philology, relating to languages. Anthropology fascinated me always.

As a part of my career when I was elected as President, Inter-Parliamentary Union, an organization of Parliaments of more than 150 countries, I visited many countries specially archaeological sites, the Nile valley Civilization in Egypt, the Inca & Mayan Civilization of South America, Mexico and indigenous people of Canada. I have seen the Terricota

warriors in China and archaeological sites in Cambodia and Borobodo in Indonesia.

Indeed, I feel happy in the company of so many experts and dynamic persons who are engaged in anthropological research and pursuit of knowledge coming from different parts of the world and our country. I am also happy to know that this international seminar is on the theme “Anthropological Research in North East India: Retrospect and Prospect” in which many foreign delegates are participating apart from more than 90 delegates from different parts of India and North East. I m sure, I will learn about the State and the region where I am posted now.

We are fortunate to live in an era of scientific and technological advancements which are unprecedented in human history. The knowledge of such advancements should not be limited to being subject matter only for the scientific journals. It should percolate down to the society at large for improving the quality of life of the people as a whole and ignite the young minds to dream for a developed India. Each and every discipline of study has a role to play in the realisation of this vision and the story of the march of human advancement can best be presented by the discipline of anthropology – the science of man tracing the biological and cultural changes that have set across the human surface. The Indian Anthropological Society’s effort to present the advancements in scientific knowledge in the field of anthropology to the people of this country is commendable.

As you are well aware, North East India is often considered a Mini India because of its social, cultural and linguistic diversity. The region, with 70% hilly area, has been home to as many as 220 different diverse ethnic communities which are more than one third of the total number of tribes in India, having different socio-cultural and ethno-linguistic characters. The communities, mostly tribal groups, have their own socio-cultural characteristics which make them unique in their own ways. These societies have rich cultural traditions which are more or less embedded in their habitat.

The present day scenario, however, is that these small communities have undergone drastic changes in respect of their lifestyles, both tangible and intangible, owing to the deep impact of multidimensional factors. One fall out is that various smaller communities of this region are facing the dilemma of ethnic identity. It further gives birth to both inter and intra-community conflicts as well as movements that centre around their ethnic

interests against the authority. On top of this, lack of skills and infrastructure development, unemployment, particularly among the educated youth also breed various social problems. Social scientists, especially social Anthropologists are keen in understanding such problems and seek remedial strategies. Under such socio-cultural circumstances, North East India remained, still remains and will remain a fertile field for social research.

Apart from the social perspectives of the people, the region is also archaeologically rich. It is often considered the meeting point of two great cultural traditions: Sub Indian archaic and East Asian cultural traditions. Archaeological remains of the early human civilizations somehow suggest the possibility of culture contact between the peoples of these two parts of the continent and further throw light on the consequent diffusion of the cultures leading to the evolution of a unique culture in the region. Not only do these artefacts illustrate the type of settlement, social organization of these early human civilizations, they also suggest human survival in this region in the early course of human migration and settlement. In biological sense, it may also be interpreted that the adaptive response of humans towards the harsh environment might have determined the physical and physiological variation of those primitive humans. At the same time, changing lifestyle and physical activities also enhance the health problems resulting in the rise of various complex disorders. Such a condition attracts the academic attention of various health scientists including anthropologists who are very much concerned for the health promotion and management in this region.

In fact, the region can be considered a hotspot for understanding human issues and diversity. Considering this diversity and rich human-environment relationship reflected in different cultural traditions and morphological characteristics, there are prospects for academic deliberation from different perspectives. The findings of these deliberations will be of great value to planning and policy making for the region. Based on this concept, it can be said with conviction that the future prospect of anthropological research in the region is of paramount importance and need of the hour. I am confident that the Seminar will provide an academic platform for Anthropologists, Social Scientists, Health Scientists, policy makers and practitioners of allied disciplines to analyse, discuss and disseminate different anthropogenic issues.

I have been given to understand that 134 abstracts have been enlisted for presentation in the Seminar and various sub-themes under the main theme for deliberation. I am also confident that pragmatic recommendations will be adopted during the Conference as well as the Seminar so that appropriate intervention can be initiated by the concerned authorities and organizations on issues relating to the NE in particular.

Before I conclude, I may also suggest to the delegates from overseas and from other parts of India to visit and enjoy the scenic areas of Manipur to take back happy and pleasant memories.

I wish the Conference a grand success.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.