

UIAF WAC2023 – KISS: A Brief Round-Up



The World Anthropology Congress 2023, organised by the United Indian Anthropology Forum (UIAF), in collaboration with the Utkal and Sambalpur Universities and the University of Delhi, and hosted by the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences Deemed to be University (KISS-DU) has come to a successful end.

It is a matter of Pride that the WAC2023 has been organised in India, after a gap of 45 years when the earlier version of the Congress, though not of this magnitude, was organised in 1978, under the Presidentship of the World renowned Indian Anthropologist Prof LP Vidyarti and under the Chairmanship of Prof A.Aiyappan, with Prof IP Singh as the Secretary-General, and was inaugurated by the then Prime Minister Shri Morarji Desai.

The WAC2023, with about 1100 delegates, has been the largest-ever gathering of Anthropologists and the anthropologically-inclined Academic fraternity with multi-disciplinary backgrounds, affiliated to scores of universities, and Academic

and Research Institutes across India and abroad, hailing from every region and state of India, and representing more than 50 countries. It is a matter of recognition for the Congress that it was received by the Indian anthropologists across generations and from every department and Institute of Anthropology across all regions of India and was well attended by a good number of non-anthropologists having disciplinary interest in Anthropology.

The National Academic Advisory Committee of the WAC2023 under the chairmanship of Prof PC Joshi comprising of fifty senior and young anthropologists with fair representation of all sections across regions is good enough to stand as a symbolic representation



of the emerging and vibrant Indian anthropology in the context of the WAC2023. All these truly reflected the overwhelming response of all those who believe in anthropological approaches and of the Indian anthropological fraternity to any sort of attempts by any kind of forces that are bereft of the basic anthropological principles and disciplinary ethics to reinstate any sort of colonial hegemony, subjugating the Indigenous and the Indian pride and cultural heritage.

The significance and the authenticity of the WAC2023 could be evidenced from the fact that it was supported by almost all major government organisations such as the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI), the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the Indira Gandhi National Culture and Arts (IGNCA), Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sanghralay (IGRMS) and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) associated with the discipline of Anthropology. It had also been supported by the UNICEF mission in India and the Sri Lanka-India Foundation.

The WAC2023 has spanned over six days with a series of academic and cultural events providing a fabulous feast to satisfy the Intellectual and



emotional appetite of the delegates, with an excellent welcome from KISS.

The WAC2023 started on 9 August 2023, with the celebration of the International Day of World's Indigenous Peoples, in the presence of the Dignitaries, Professors of

Practice and 30000 and odd indigenous children studying in the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences from Primary Schooling to PG and PhD Programmes, with their mesmerising cultural performances (<https://youtu.be/8z4T5EyYjes>) (<https://www.youtube.com/live/RsZAQK8vhhc?feature=share>)



(<https://www.youtube.com/live/RsZAQK8vhhc?feature=share>). The Academic events of the Congress started from the afternoon of 9 August 2023 and lasted till the forenoon of 14 August 2023.

There were Parallel Sessions in the Forenoon and in the Afternoon on all the days of the Congress, during which all the Panel Discussions, Symposiums and Round Tables were conducted. There were in total, 118 Panels, with nearly 1080 papers, spread over about 270 Parallel sessions. The total number of Round Tables are 29, with about 210 presentations, and spread over nearly 50 parallel sessions. There were 18 Symposia with nearly 110 presentations and spread over about 30 Parallel sessions

In all, there were about 165 academic events in terms of Panel discussions, Round Tables and Symposia, with about 1400 academic presentations and deliberations through about 350 parallel academic sessions across 19 Technical Sessions, two of which, with eight parallel sessions each, were held at Utkal University on the Second day of the WAC2023.

This was followed by the Inaugural ceremony of the Congress and subsequently the Key Note Address on the Theme of the Congress, "Anthropology in the Public Sphere: Indigeneity, Social Justice, Sustainability and Global Peace





The Special Round Table on Holistic Education for the Indigenous Children provided the apt platform for many of the senior and veteran Anthropologists to deliberate and discourse on the all-important subject fitting to the context. There was also a special symposium organised by the

UNICEF to deliberate on the issues related to children.



Apart from these, there were many Special Academic events. One such event is the Audio-Visual programme co-ordinated by IGRMS, which included screening of nearly 20 Ethnographic films and Documentaries, presentation of

academic papers and organisation of Photo Exhibition on varied themes of anthropological interest.

Special Plenary Panel Session on the topic “Climate Change and the Indigenous Communities” was organised in the evening on the first day of the WAC2023 and six Plenary Lectures were delivered by renowned Anthropologists and Academic experts across Nations, in the evenings on all other days and in the morning on the last day of the WAC2023.

There was one Special Panel by International Scholars on “Plurality and Diversity: Nations Speak”. There was also a Special Interactive Session between the Research Scholars and the Senior and Veteran Anthropologists.

Mention should also be made of the Sponsored Sessions including the Best Paper Presentation, Best poster Presentation and the special Panel Session on ‘Young Anthropologists Look at the World Anthropology’, all aimed to connect to the Young and Budding Anthropology fraternities.

There were 16 Book Releases apart from Book Exhibitions, Live Demonstrations of indigenous crafts and culture, UNICEF Expo, FRI Corner, and ASI Exhibits.



The variety Cultural Programmes staged in the evenings of all days of the WAC2023 including the indigenous dance programmes and

Puppetry show by the KISSians, the cultural performances by the international scholars and the representatives of the delegates and by the professional performers enthralled the participants of the WAC2023 with its perfection and brilliance

(<https://www.youtube.com/live/opSp3agkQp8?feature=share>

<https://www.youtube.com/live/opSp3agkQp8?feature=share>



<https://www.youtube.com/live/O17D5f8c100?feature=share>

<https://www.youtube.com/live/UIFM6sZa2bA?feature=share>

The valedictory function was honoured by the presence of Shri Arjun Munda, the



Hon. Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, and Dr Achyutha Samanta, the Founder of the KISS-KIIT Foundations and the Member of Parliament.

(<https://www.youtube.com/live/3-H-YRIyQvs?feature=share>)

More than 65 veteran and Senior Anthropologists of the country were honoured with Life-Time Achievement Award while nearly 40 young Anthropologists with good track record were also recognised for their promising contribution to the field. The unwavering commitment of Dr Samanta in the service of the Indigenous children and his steadfast interest in upholding the indigenous cultures and identities in the process of their true empowerment and his keen and constant interest to learn more from the Anthropological insights towards evolving a viable approach for unfolding the light of knowledge inherent among the indigenous children to become worthy citizens of the country has been evidently seen by every WAC delegate who had witnessed the kind of work being underway in the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences. It is the desire of every delegate to see that the department of Anthropology in the KISS-DU develops into a Premier Global Anthropological Institute, and emerges into a training ground and a beacon of anthropological knowledge in addressing some of the contemporary challenges that are faced by the humanity today.

The WAC2023 was the culmination of a series of Pre-Congress Academic events that preceded the WAC2023, organised at various levels. Noted among them were the various Pre-Congresses organised this year in different Universities which included the one at the University of Delhi in January, at Harsingh Gour Viswavidyalay, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh in February, at the Savitribai Phule Pune University in collaboration with the Symbiosis University in July, and in Amity University and in Punjab University in August 2023. The three-day International Conference organised by the Department of Anthropology of the BJB Autonomous College, Bhubaneswar just prior to the WAC2023, marked as a Curtain Raiser for the WAC2023. Apart from these, there were 12 Pre-WAC Distinguished Invited Online Lecture Series (PDIOLS) delivered by world renowned anthropologists and academicians on various themes spread out through one whole year between 2022 and 2023.

There are also several Post Congresses planned on various anthropological themes in different premier Universities, including Utkal University, Sambalpur and GM Universities, Vidyasagar and Calcutta Universities, Lucknow University, Cotton University, Manipur University, and Mysore and Chamrajnagar Universities, the first two of which had already been over. All these have created a historical momentum and helped in shaking up the Indian Anthropological fraternity to unitedly strive for realising the real potentiality of Anthropology and marked an indelible imprint and provided an impetus for Indian Anthropology to march ahead with new vigour and enthusiasm.

Prof S Gregory
Member Secretary, UIAF

Prof Deepak Kumar Behera
Vice-Chancellor, KISS-DU &
General President, UIAF