

Kerala Council for Historical Research

Indian Institute of Archaeology (IIA /IndIA), Pattanam, India

IIA Vision statement (Draft)

IIA is an academy (an international learning centre) committed to ‘scientific learning with human face’.

Engaging material culture studies through multi, inter and trans-disciplinary modes would be the primary focus of the curriculum.

Early written sources, myths, epics, pre-historic religions, anthropology, archaeo-sciences and environmental sciences would be the major areas of studies as part of its multi-disciplinary orientation.

Rooted in material evidence, the IIA programmes would foster the journey from prehistory to pre 10th c CE cultures to explore the continuously reconstituting human relationships and their interface with socio-cultural/bio-physical environment.

Transcending disciplinary boundaries, the IndIAns would engage in learning the sublime values of imagination and virtues of physical work through mandatory participation in excavations, field studies, green archaeology activities and community service.

IndIAns would learn to practice the art of restraint combined with intelligence, to view things afresh and listen with patience. Emphasis will be given to hone analytical and critical thinking so that IndIAns are trained not just in seeking answers, but also in asking challenging questions. They may take clue from pre/proto historic cultural phases when humanity was probably inseparable from nature and less articulate.

The new self- awareness would sensitise IndIAns on the damage inflicted on humanity and nature by the “worldly knowledge”, which could often be higher ignorance in disguise. The “unlearning” involved might enable IndIAns to enriching careers and more balanced living.

IndIAns shall be motivated and mentored to be ‘empirical philosophers’ with subversive potential to change the world around.

Outgoing IndIAns would dutifully join the great journey of humanity, with modesty and passion wherever they are.

A report on the Post-Graduate Diploma in Archaeology: An Inter-Disciplinary Programme in Material Culture Studies

With the establishment of the Indian Institute of Archaeology (IIA/IndIA) under Kerala Council for Historical Research, Post-Graduate Diploma in Archaeology: An Inter-Disciplinary Programme in Material Culture Studies has been initiated.

The advanced diploma programme seeks to train students in the theories, methods and practices in archaeology. The multi-disciplinary nature of the discipline is blended into the curriculum by linking relevant methods and approaches of social sciences, humanities and physical sciences. Field studies including excavation, geo-archaeo- ethno – green archaeology and community archaeology surveys are essential components of the programme. Library assignments, seminar/discussion sessions, reviews of videos and educational films on archaeological, anthropological and historical themes are other features of the curriculum.

In January 2015, applications for the PGDA were invited. On 28th January 2015, and 1st February 2015 selection interviews were conducted in KCHR, Thiruvananthapuram and Pattanam camp office, Pattanam, North Paravur, Ernakulam . Six students with aptitude for archaeology were shortlisted out of 25



applicants. The programme started on 2nd March 2015.

The modules in the curriculum aim to introduce archaeology as the study of material culture, cultural and environmental archaeology, trade, exchange and maritime history, exploration, excavation and documentation methods, archaeosciences, site conservation, heritage and museum studies. Hands-on training and on-the-job training on various aspects of archaeology knowledge domain are provided through various modalities of field work including surface surveys and excavation. The critical interpretation of various evidences is emphasized by deliberating on them from different perspectives.

Apart from a full time faculty, specialists and young researchers are invited from time to time for guest lectures. Senior professors, great doyens of the discipline are invited as distinguished speakers. The faculty is encouraged to stay at Pattanam and spent time with students to have reciprocal academic discussions. IndIA also has plans to conduct workshops on geographic information systems (GIS) and conservation.

At present, the 'Oxford House' in the main plot owned by the KCHR is being used as classroom which would be later shifted to the IndIA 'learning centre' upon completion of its construction. At IndIA, a beginning has been also been made to set up a library to encourage students to explore and develop interest in the frontier domains of archaeology. The library subscribes to all reputed national and international academic journals. IndIA aspires to develop a repository of online and digital resources in Archaeology and allied disciplines.

Apart from the regular class room lectures on various sub-modules, audio-visual like educational instructive videos and documentaries are also employed for

teaching. It is also complemented by field and museum visits. Learning is further facilitated by discussions, tests and assignments.

During the current excavation season which lasted for over two months, students were exposed in field archaeology. The activities ranged from laying out the trench, excavation and documentation of the evidence. They were also exposed to on-site classification of ceramics. Students worked as a team and held responsibilities in activities such as operation of PXRF device, documentation and photography of artefactual evidence. They also actively took part in the daily presentations on the progress of excavation by summarizing the daily finds in



ceramics, artefacts, tiles and bricks and in the discussion on the strategies of excavation and interpretation during digging.



After the excavation, the IndIA team assisted in the post-excavation work that included documentation of excavated finds for the interim report. During this time a small workshop on pottery drawing was also organized in which all the students were made familiar with basic techniques of pottery drawing followed by

practice sessions. After completing the post-excavation work the course resumed in the second half of June 2015.

The IndIA also provides internship opportunities from 3 weeks to six months for undergraduate students to researchers irrespective of disciplinary backgrounds. During their stay at Pattanam they will have to follow the regular schedule of IndIA students, attend lectures, use the library and foster a learning ambience. After this excavation season, three students have successfully completed the internship.



This programme is residential in nature (24x6) and students and interns have to stay at the Pattanam archaeological site. Thus the programme hopes to ensure an organic relationship between the site, local community and the students. Students

are supposed to be the ambassadors of



the philosophy of site protection with community participation.

Green archaeology project aims to transform the Pattanam site into an organic garden of spices and medicinal plants. By implementing this programme with sensitivity towards the empowerment of local community and with ecological concerns, KCHR hopes to conserve the site scientifically and ensure that the soil is not disturbed below 1 meter depth in the Pattanam mound.

The daily schedule of the programme starts with meditation and is followed by the reading of select texts and poetry directly or indirectly connected with the early historic period. The classical *sangam* texts are read- for example, *Manimekalai* -that are pertinent in understanding the historical context of people who lived during the times represented in the Pattanam archaeological record i.e. from 3rd c BCE to 5th c CE . The reading session is followed by cycling in the village. Rest of the day is packed with academic activities—lectures, discussions, self study in the library, screening of documentaries, filing of daily reports etc.

On the whole, the programme aims to provide the ambience to invigorate the archaeological studies, nurture the relationship between the organization and the local community. IndIA believes that local community should become stake holders in the enterprise of building bridges between human cultural past and the present.

Daily Schedule

6:30 AM – Meditation/ Yoga

7:00 AM- Cycling

8:30-9:00 AM- Breakfast

9:00-11:00 AM- Class

11.00 11.15 - Break

11:15-1:00 PM- Class (in case only one lecturer the 2nd half can be for discussion etc)

1:00-2:00 PM- Lunch

2:00-4:00 PM- Discussion, Self-Study, Screening Documentaries and Educational Films

4:00-4:30 PM- Tea and Snacks

4:30-5:00 PM- Activities related to Green Archaeology

5:00-6:00 PM- Sports, Exercise, Cycling etc.

8:30 PM- Dinner

9.00 PM- Preparation and posting of daily reports