

Two Days International Seminar on  
**TRACES OF SHRAMAN TRADITION (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
JAINISM): PRIOR TO 650 BCE**

**Organised by**

International School for Jain Studies, New Delhi  
in association with  
Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune

**Sponsored by**

Shri Firodia Trust, Pune

**Venue**

Navalveerayatan, Pune

**REPORT**

The Shraman tradition includes Jainism, Buddhism, and other such as the Ajivakas, Ajnanas etc. Jains claims their religion as one of the oldest living religions of India. Vedic texts repeatedly refer to the composite character of their society and its pluralistic population. They mention the presence of several religions, cults and languages including individuals and groups who practiced the pre-Vedic traditions, and rejected the validity of the Vedas and its rituals. Such persons were referred as *niggantha/nirgrantha, vratya, kesin, shraman* etc.

The archaeological excavation in the past fifty years have changed the understanding of India's past and, by extension world history. If we go through the history, the Jain records mention the names of twenty three Tirthankaras prior to Mahavira. Parshwanatha is the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and he is now acknowledged as a historical figure by a number of scholars. Jain sources place him between 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE while historian state that he may have lived in 8<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The existence of Parshwa order in Mahavira's time is recorded as a discussion between the followers of Parshwa (*Chaturyam*) and those of Mahavira (*Panchayam*) in Uttaradhyayan Sutra. In the Buddhist scripture, there is a reference to the four vows (*Chaturyam Dharm*) of Parshwanatha in contradiction to the five vows of Mahavira. The Buddhist could not have used the term *Chaturyam Charm* for Nirgrantha unless they had heard it from the followers of Parshwanatha.

Keeping these facts in mind ISJS, in association with BORI, organised a two days international seminar on "Traces of Shraman Tradition (with special reference to Jainism) Prior to 650 BCE" on October 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> 2019 at Navalveerayatan, Pune. Objective of the seminar was to explore the availability of archaeological, cultural, social and literary evidences to substantiate the existence of Jain tradition before 650 BCE and build a database to promote further research and work on these lines.

Ven. Shi Guangquan, a renowned scholar of Mahayan Buddhism and an abbot of Lingyin Temple in Hangzhou, China was the Chief- Guest and Dr. Prof. Arvind Jamkhedkar, a renowned historian, Chairman of Indian Council of Historical Research and Chancellor of Deccan College, Pune delivered the Key Note address. The Inaugural Function was chaired by Dr. Abhay Firodia, Chairman Force Motors Ltd and group companies, BORI, Veerayatan, and Shri Firodia Trsut. Welcome address and theme of the Seminar was presented by Dr. Shugan C Jain, Chairman, International School for Jain Studies, New Delhi and vote of thanks was casted by Dr. Shrinetra Pandey, Joint Director, International School for Jain Studies, New Delhi.

Ven. Shi Guangquan said that Shramana tradition came to be known by the Chinese people through the Silk Road when Buddhism was introduced into China. At that time, Sramana referred to a person who practiced Buddhism. The Shramana tradition continuously adapted to the social background of

China and gradually integrated with the Chinese politics, economy, culture and ideology. Although changes have been seen in the ways of practicing Buddhism and the lifestyles of monks today, the nature of Buddhism to seek truth remains the same.

Prof. Arvind Jamkhedkar presented an overall view of archaeological and religious developments since Indus Valley civilisation. Dr. Abhay Firodia, Chairman of the Inaugural Function, presented the importance of Jain view of archaeological findings which have been so far either ignored or diluted.

After Inaugural Session, five technical sessions and three special sessions were organized in these two days (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2019).

In the first special session Dr. Firodia gave a brief introduction to proposed Jain museum at Pune on the basis of philosophy, culture and history. In the second special session, Dr. Lata Bothra showed a video on *Ashtapad as fundamental source of human culture*. In the third special session Dr. Shrikant Ganvir talked about the recent findings of Jainism in the western Deccan during the early historic period. List of the speakers with their details and topics of the presented research papers is given below:

Five papers on **Art and Archaeology** were presented in the first technical session. First paper on “*Antiquity and Co-existence of Shraman and Vedic Tradition*” was presented by **Prof. Maruti Nandan Prasad Tiwari**. In his presentation he made a case for tracing Shraman tradition to Sindhu-Saraswati age. The co-existence and the commonality of nudity, long lock of hair and *mahayogi* postures in the case of Adinatha/ Rishabhdev calls for careful investigation, he said. He also cited the historicity of Jivit Swami. He attempted to prove the co-existence of Brahmanic and Shramanic temples and image carvings in each other’s premises calling it a harmonious co-existence. Second paper of the session was presented by **Dr. Manju Nahata** on “*Antiquity of Jainism through Art and Architecture*.” In her presentation she cited similarities in Jain iconography, tree-worship, animal-faced Gods particularly between the Shramanic and the Babylonian as well as Neolithic findings in Mesopotamia. She also highlighted the importance and similarity of protruding eyes and map of the universe between the two ancient civilizations. Third paper of the session was presented by **Dr. Sneh Rani Jain** on “*Shraman Tradition Prior to 650 BC*.” Through her research given in her own three published works, she diligently interpreted the ancient Jain carvings, seals particularly from the point of existing Jain Karma Theory. Forth paper was presented by **Dr. Renuka Porwal** on “*The Archaeological Findings at Kankali Tila, Mathura: Preceding Parshwanath*.” She researched on the pictures and sculptures clearly or even circumstantially evident in reflecting the characteristics of Jainism particularly preceding Parshwanath. She concluded that the Stupa described as Dev Nirmita in inscription dated 79 of Kushan Year is the same as constructed by deity Kuber. Fifth and last paper of the session was presented by **Prof. D.P. Sharma** on “*Roots Symbols and Jain Art in South Asia*.” He highlighted the roots of Jain Yakshini in images considered as Parvati. His attempted to draw similarities of Jain/Shramanic traces in the images found at Gonur Depe in Turkmenistan. The session was chaired by **Dr. Gautam Sengupta** and coordinated by **Dr. Amruta Natu**.

Four papers on **Shraman Tradition Abroad** were presented in the second technical session. First paper on “*Jainism in South East Asia*” was presented by **Mr. Nirmal Jain Sethi**. He shared his insights on the findings related to Shramanic/ Jain heritage at Cambodia and Vietnam. He forcefully called for government support for expediting Research Initiatives related to Jain religion within and outside India. Second paper of this session was presented by **Ven. Shi Guangquan** on “*The Inheritance of the Shraman Tradition in China*.” He explained how Buddhism was known as Shraman tradition in China. He touched upon the origin, spread of Shraman tradition in China and delved into the cultural evolution of Chinese culture into the Buddhist Shramanic tradition. Third paper was presented by **Dr. Volkmar Ensslin** on “*An Analysis about the development of Jainism and Buddhism along the Silk Route*.” He made out a clear point on why and how the ancient silk route (about 6400

km long) saw development of both Shramanic Traditions. He rhetorically pointed out that the traders belonged to both Shramanic traditions. Traders preferred Jainism and Buddhism over societal limiting Brahmanical caste system. Fourth and last paper of the session was presented by **Ms. Kanchana Dehigama** on “**Jainism in Ancient Sri Lanka: Documentation of Literary, Art and Architectural Evidence.**” In a literary and architectural backed paper she cited Mahavamsa for tracing the presence of Jainism in Sri Lanka. However, she pointed out that it is difficult to distinguish Jain and Buddhist architectural remains because the characteristics are very similar. The session was chaired by **Dr. Shugan C Jain** and coordinated by **Dr. Shrinetra Pandey**.

Four papers on **Art and Archaeology** were presented in third technical session of the seminar. The first of the session was presented by **Dr. Gautam Sengupta** on “*Jainism in Ancient Bengal: Evidences of Survival of a Tradition.*” In his paper he dwelled mainly on the Chandraketurgh, Paharpur etc. to trace Jainism in Bengal. He pointed out that Bengal is an example of rediscovering Jainism particularly so through the ancient Sarak community. The second paper was presented by **Dr. Shanti Swaroop Sinha** on “*Historicity of Tirthankar Neminath in the context of Kinship with Vasudev Krishna and its Continuity: Study in the light of Texts and Archaeological Findings.*” He emphasised on the Historicity and Continuity of the Vaishnav and Jain traditions by discussing the antiquity of Neminath on the basis of kinship and contemporaneity with Krishna. The third paper on “*Origin and Development of Jain Shramanic Culture in India: Evidences from Literature and Arts*” was presented by **Dr. Vinay Kumar**. In his presentation he made a case for co-existence of Pre-Vedic and Shramanic traditions by citing cross-literary and art and seal findings. Fourth and last paper of the session was presented by **Dr. Umesh Kr. Singh** on “*Antiquity and Historicity of Jainism with Special Reference to Shraman Tradition.*” He made a case for traces of Jainism to be found in Indus-Saraswati civilisation by citing non-findings of any weapons or war-fare related instruments. He was sure that this was a result of existence of Shraman culture as *ahimsa* values can be found in the non-existence of weapons. The session was chaired by **Prof. Maruti Nandan Prasad Tiwari** and coordinated by **Dr. Shrinetra Pandey**.

Five papers on **History and Culture** were presented in the fourth technical session of the seminar. First paper of the session was presented by **Dr. Shailendra Raj Mehta** on “*Valabhi: A Thriving City and University.*” He focussed on the existence and relevance of the historically earsed Vallabhi University. He carefully backed his arguments by inscriptional, textual and archaeological evidences to draw out the key aspects of Vallabhi’s functioning. Second paper on “*Antiquity of Jainism*” was presented by **Prof. Bhagchandra Jain**. His most important discussion was about the accompaniment and arrival of Muni Kalyan along with Alexander to Athens. He touched upon the existing ruins in the regard and the Jain teachings that survived in certain sections of the society. Third paper was presented by **Dr. Shugan C. Jain** on “*Tracing Existence of 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Tirthankaras.*” Through his paper he strongly made a case for research in the geographical area of Bihar in India considering historical proofs and traditional beliefs about Jainism that connects almost all the 24 Tirthankaras in one way or the other. Fourth paper was presented by **Dr. Lata Bothra** on “*Antiquity of Jainism: Prior to 600 BC.*” She made a refreshing comparison between the similarity in idol at Grand Canyon besides tracing the importance of the ancient Naag Jati and its connection with the Jain Tirthankaras. Fifth and last paper of this session was presented by **Mr. Megh Kalyansundaram** on “*The Notions of Contemporaneity of Vardhaman Mahavira, Siddhartha Gautama Buddha and the Chronological Epoch of the Vardhaman Mahavira in 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE: A Synoptic Exploration of their original underpinnings and an examination of their validity in 2019.*” While raising questions about the authenticity of the western scholars’ fixation of time period of Mahavir’s existence based on Buddhist literature, he called for clarification or further research on the portrayal of Mahavir as given in the Buddhist literature. The session was chaired by **Prof. Arvind Jamkhedkar** and coordinated by **Dr. Navin Srivastav**.

Theme of the fifth and last technical session was **History and Literature** and five papers were presented in this session. First paper of this was presented by **Dr. Maitreyee Deshpande** on “*Monkhood in Jataka Stories.*” She attempted to express the views of Buddha about Asceticism as seen in Jataka stories. She emphasised on the Bhikshunis, their existence and monastic practices as against any such female ascetics in other Indic religions. Second paper on “*Vratya: A Representative of Shraman-Tradition*” was presented by **Prof. Ganesh Thite**. He called for re-visiting the etymological meaning of Rishis and Munis and the traditions that followed by them. He discussed the emergence and fall of Vratya and its similarity to the Shraman tradition. Third paper of this session was presented by **Dr. Vijaykumar Jain** on “*Jain Sanskruti ko Tirthankar Parshwanath ka Avadaan.*” In his presentation he tried to trace the importance of tirthankar Parshwanath by citing Chaturyam Dharma in not only Jain works but more prominently in Buddhist Pali literature references such as Anguttar and other Nikaya. Fourth paper was presented by **Dr. Amruta Natu** on “*Crisis of Separate identity in Early Indology: Jainism vis-à-vis Buddhism.*” She took us through a journey on how Western scholars considered Jainism and Buddhism as offshoots of each other and finally how the later western Indologists converged in assigning these two Shraman traditions as Distinct from each other having independent existence. Fifth and last paper of the seminar was presented by **Mr. Jinesh R. Sheth** on “*Jain Historicity: A Survey of Classical and Contemporary Literature.*” While discussing historicity of Jainism, he pointed out the non-existence of Chaturyama concept of Parshwanath in Digambar literature. He drew out the stark similarity between the philosophical and cosmological topics discussed in Plato’s dialogues and Jain doctrines. The session was chaired by **Prof. Vasant Shinde** and coordinated by **Dr. Navin Srivastav**.

After these five technical sessions and three special sessions, Valedictory Function was organised on 6<sup>th</sup> October evening. A renowned archaeologist and former Vice Chancellor of Deccan College, Pune Prof. Vasant Shinde was the Chief Guest and Dr. Abhay Firodia chaired the session. Dr. Shugan C Jain, Chairman International School for Jain Studies presented a brief report of the seminar. In his valedictory speech Prof. Shinde presented the findings of the latest archaeological survey along with scientific analysis of the DNA of human skeletons found in Rakhigarhi, Haryana. In his Presidential Remark Dr. Firodia reviewed the entire seminar. Program was conducted by Dr. Shrinetra Pandey and Prof. G. U. Thite gave the vote of thanks. This seminar was appreciated by all the scholars for its depth of the content, thoughtful research presentation and discussions.



Participants of the Seminar at Navalveerayatan, Pune