

Jainism

Before 650 BCE



Editors

Shugan C. Jain
Shrinetra Pandey

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International School for Jain Studies
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Introduction

Shugan C. Jain

ŚRAMAṆA means one who labours or exerts himself for some higher religious purpose or one who performs acts of austerity. Therefore, śramaṇas are those who practise an ascetic, or strict and self-denying lifestyle in pursuit of spiritual purification. They are also known as recluse/vrātyas/yatis/munis/samaṇa. The Śramaṇa tradition includes Jainism, Buddhism, Ājīvikas and many more smaller groups.

Jains claim their religion as one of the oldest living religions of India. It is a religious faith of strictly human origin and is preached and practised by one who achieved complete knowledge of his existence, *nirvāṇa* (total absence of pain) by his own individual efforts in his life and liberation from the *saṃsāra* (cycle of births and deaths of corporal existence) on death.

Jain's claim of Ṛṣabhadeva, as their first *tīrthaṃkara* in a series of twenty-four *tīrthaṃkaras* is well established in Vedic literature and by many renowned scholars. For example, Dr S. Radhakrishnan, in his book *Indian Philosophy*, has observed:

Jain tradition ascribes the origin of the system to Ṛṣabhadeva, who lived many centuries back. There is evidence to show that as far back as the first century BCE there were people, who were worshipping Ṛṣabhadeva, the first *tīrthaṃkara*. The *Yajurveda* mentions the name of three *tīrthaṃkaras* Ṛṣabha, Ajitanātha

and Ariṣṭanemi. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* endorses the view that Ṛṣabhadeva was the founder of Jainism.¹

Vedic texts [*R̥gveda* (X.136.17); *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (1.3); *Atharvaveda* (15.2.1-4); *Lātyāyana Śrautasūtra* (8.6)] 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 practised the pre-Vedic traditions and rejected the validity of the Vedas and their rituals. Such persons were referred as *niggantha/nirgrantha*, *vrātya*, *keśin*, *vātarasana* and *śramaṇa*.

Both Vedic literature and Jain literature have common illustrious persons like Lord Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, belonging to their traditions.

Archaeological Evidences of Antiquity of Jainism and Its 1st Tīrthaṃkara Ṛṣabhadeva

The excavations made at Moheñjo-Daṛo and Harappā show that Jainism existed 5,000 years ago. Terracotta seals and other evidences obtained from the excavation of Harappā and Moheñjo-Daṛo provide a link between Ṛṣabhadeva and Indus Valley Civilization. Professor Ramprasad Chandra, who supervised the Indus Valley Civilization excavations, states:

Not only the seated deities on some of the Indus seals are in *yoga* posture and bear witness to the prevalence of *yoga* in the Indus Valley Civilization in that remote age, the standing deities on the seals also show *kāyotsarga* position. The *kāyotsarga* posture is peculiarly Jain.

The Indus Valley Civilization was an ancient civilization that thrived in the Indus and Ghaggar-Hakra River valleys, now in Pakistan, along with the north-western parts of India, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. The civilization, which is also known as Harappan

¹ *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 287, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923.

Civilization, lasted from 3300 BCE to 1700 BCE. The archaeological excavations in the past fifty years have changed the understanding of India's past and, by extension, world history. The continuous excavations between 1974 and 1986 and again between 1997 and 2000 at Mehrgarh provide a link to prove Indian civilization as a precursor to the Indus Valley Civilization, displaying the whole sequence from earliest settlement and the start of agriculture, to the mature Harappan Civilization. Mehrgarh is one of the most significant sites belonging to the Neolithic Age. Situated on the Kachi plain of Baluchistan (Pakistan), it lies to the west of the Indus River Valley. The site of Mehrgarh, spread over an area of 495-acre, was a small farming village which was inhabited from c.6500 BCE. At the same time, it is one of the oldest sites that indicate the introduction of the concept of farming and herding and later on use of much evidence of manufacturing activity has been found and more advanced technologies like the use of stone and copper drills, updraft kilns, large pit kilns and copper melting crucibles. There is further evidence of long-distance trade in this period.²

Rākhigārhī is another Harappan site in Hissar district of Haryana, excavated by the archaeologists from Deccan College. Excavations by a team of archaeologist from Kutch University and Kerala University at a site near Nani Khatia village in Lakhpat taluka, around 102 km from Bhuj are throwing more light on the development of trades and skills and lifestyle changes.

Similarly, the earliest proof of human activity in Bihar is Mesolithic habitation remains at Munger. Prehistoric rock paintings have been discovered in the hills of Kaimūra, Nawādā and Jamui. It was the first time that a Neolithic settlement (about 2500–1345 BCE) was discovered in the thick of the alluvium, over the bank of the Ganges at Chirand (2500–1345 BCE, in Sāran district

² Sharif, M. and B.K. Thapar, 1999, "Food-producing Communities in Pakistan and Northern India", in *History of Civilization of Central Asia*, vol. I, ed. A.H. Dani and V.M. Masson, pp. 128-37, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

now Chhaprā, has an archaeological record from the Neolithic Age). The “rock paintings” depict a pre-historic lifestyle and natural environment. They depict the sun, the moon, stars, animals, plants, trees and rivers, and it is speculated that they represent love for nature and simple life. The paintings also highlight the daily life of the early humans in Bihar, which are not only identical to those in central and southern India but are also akin to those in Europe and Africa.

Further, historicity of 24th and latest *tīrthaṃkara* Mahāvīra has well established him as a senior contemporary of the Buddha in sixth century BCE. Both of them hailed from the present state of Bihar and practised almost similar beliefs, barring a few like existence of soul. However, there are different opinions prevailing about his exact date of birth and *nirvāṇa* during the sixth century BCE.

Pārśvanātha, the 23rd *tīrthaṃkara*, is now being acknowledged as a historical figure by a number of scholars. Jain sources place him between ninth and eighth century BCE while historians state that he may have lived in the eighth or seventh century BCE. The existence of Pārśva's order in Mahāvīra's time is recorded as a discussion between the followers of Pārśva (*cāturyāma*) and those of Mahāvīra (*pañcayāma*) in the *Uttarādhyayanasūtra*. In the Buddhist scriptures, there is a reference to the four vows (*cāturyāma dharma*) of Pārśva in contradiction to the five vows of Mahāvīra. The Buddhist could not have used the term *cāturyāma dharma* for the *nirgranthas* unless they had heard it from the followers of Pārśva. In the Buddhist scripture *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha himself tells us about his ascetic life and its ordinances which are in conformity with the Jain monk's code of conduct. He says:

Thus far, Sāriputta did I go in my penance. I went without clothes. I licked my food from my hands. I took no food that was brought or meant especially for me. I accepted no invitation to a meal.³

³ Diwakar, S.C., 1964, *Glimpses of Jainism*, p. 1, Delhi: Jain Mitra Mandal.

Neminātha is mentioned as the 22nd *tīrthaṃkara* in Jain canonical and historical literature. He is said to be the son of Samudravijaya, elder brother of Vasudeva and father of Kṛṣṇa, the hero of the *Mahābhārata*. He is also mentioned as the grandson of Andhakavṛṣṇi. Dr Kailash Chand Jain, in his paper on “Antiquity of Jainism”⁴ points out the likely relationship between Andhakavṛṣṇi of Dwārakā in Kāṭhiāwār with Andhakavṛṣṇi as the real person, and his grandson Neminātha; Ghora Aṅgīrasa in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* is same as Neminātha. Further, King Nebuchadnezzar (940 BCE) who was also the lord of Revānagara (in Kāṭhiāwār) and who belonged to Sumer tribe, has come to the place (Dwārakā) of the Yadurāja and built a temple and paid homage and made the grant perpetual in favour of Lord Neminātha. He later came there to worship Lord Neminātha. Lord Neminātha is mentioned as Ariṣṭanemi in *Yajurveda Samhitā* 25.19 and Kṛṣṇa’s name and family in the *Antaḥkṛtdasā* canon of Jains as well as in Jain Purāṇas.

The archaeological excavation in the past fifty years, particularly at Rākhīgarhī in Haryana and at Kutch are changing the understanding of India’s past and, by extension, world history. Similarly, historical and cultural studies in Bihar, Kutch and elsewhere are throwing more light on various philosophical systems prevailing before Mahāvīra’s time.

Keeping these facts in mind, International School for Jain Studies (ISJS), in association with Bhandarakar Oriental Research Institute (BORI), organized a two-day international seminar on “Traces of Śramaṇa Tradition (With Special Reference to Jainism): Prior to 650 BCE” on 5-6 October 2019 at the picturesque hilltop training-cum-meditation centre of Amar Prerana Trust (APT) at Navalveerayatan, Pune. The seminar was sponsored by Shri Firodia Trust (SFT), Pune.

Objective of the seminar was to explore from the available archaeological, cultural, social and literary evidences to substantiate

⁴ <https://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralism/affiliates/jainism/article/ant-iquity.html>

the existence of Jain tradition before 650 BCE. The organizers invited scholars to focus their research and presentations with particular reference to 22nd and 23rd *tīrthaṃkaras* about whom significant literary and other evidences are emerging, thereby promote further research to establish their historicity. Accordingly, sub-themes of the seminar as agreed upon were:

- Archaeological, literary, sociological and cultural evidences of India's religious traditions prior to 650 BCE.
- Archaeological, literary, sociological and cultural evidences of Śramaṇa tradition prior to 650 BCE.
- Iconographical evidences of Jainism before 650 BCE.
- Archaeological, literary and cultural evidences of Jainism before and during Indus Valley Civilization.
- Historicity of 22nd *tīrthaṃkara* Neminātha.
- Historicity of 23rd *tīrthaṃkara* Pārśvanātha.
- Jainism in early Vedic period (1700 BCE to 1000 BCE).
- Other historical persons of Jain tradition prior to 650 BCE.

Distinguished scholars, known for their contribution in this area, from India, China, Sri Lanka, Thailand and USA were invited to present their papers in a predefined format. ISJS received an overwhelming response from reputed research institutes in Buddhism and Tibetology, Buddhist monastery, Sri Lanka, Bangkok and USA. However, due to changing work requirements twenty-four scholars and distinguished Jain community leaders from these countries and India sent their papers and presentations for the seminar. The two-day programme was organized in five technical sessions, three special sessions along with inaugural and valedictory sessions.

Inaugural Session

Chaired by Dr Abhay Firodia, Chairman, BORI, SFT and APT; Ven. Shi Guaguan, a renowned scholar of Mahāyāna Buddhism and an

abbot of Lingyin Temple in Hangzhou, China as the Chief Guest and Professor Arvind Jamkhedkar, a renowned historian, Chairman of Indian Council of Historical Research and Chancellor of Deccan College, Pune delivered the Keynote Address.

Special Session I

Dr Abhay Firodia presented a conceptual introduction of the upcoming digital Jain museum in Pune being built under the aegis of Amar Prerana Trust. The museum will showcase antiquity, philosophy, culture and material and non-material culture and the way of life as propounded in Jainism.

Technical Session I (Theme: Art and Archaeology)

Five papers by Professor Maruti Nandan Prasad Tiwari, Dr Manju Nahata, Dr Sneh Rani Jain, Dr Renuka Porwal and Professor Deo Prakash Sharma were presented.

Technical Session II (Theme: Śramaṇa Tradition Abroad)

Four papers by Shri Nirmal Jain Sethi, Ven. Shi Guagquan (China), Dr Volkmar Ensslin (Thailand) and Ms Kanchana Dehigama (Sri Lanka) were presented.

Special Session II (Evening)

Dr Lata Bothra showed a video on “Aṣṭapāda as Fundamental Source of Human Culture”.

Technical Session III (Theme: Art and Archaeology)

Four papers were presented by Dr Gautam Sengupta, Dr Shanti Swaroop Sinha, Dr Vinay Kumar and Dr Umesh Kumar Singh.

Technical Session IV (Theme: History and Culture)

Five papers by Dr Shailendra Raj Mehta, Professor Bhagchandra Jain, Dr Shugan C. Jain, Dr Lata Bothra and Mr Megh Kalyanasundaram were presented.

Special Session III

In this special session Dr Shrikant Ganvir talked about the recent findings of Jainism in the western Deccan during the early historic period.

Technical Session V (Theme: History and Literature)

Five papers by Dr Maitreyee Deshpande, Professor Ganesh Thite, Dr Vijaykumar Jain, Dr Amruta Natu and Mr Jinesh R. Sheth were presented.

Valedictory Session

Dr Abhay Firodia chaired the session. Professor Vasant Shinde (former Vice-Chancellor of Deccan College) was the Chief Guest who made a detailed presentation of his findings of the latest archaeological survey along with scientific analysis of the deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) of human skeletons found in Rākhigarhī, Haryana. In his Presidential Remark Dr Firodia reviewed the entire seminar. Dr Shugan C. Jain presented a brief report of the seminar. Professor Ganesh Thite and Dr Shrinetra Pandey gave the vote of thanks.

The two days were filled with exceptional hospitality of Shri Firodia Trust, lively discussions amongst scholars present during the sessions and after hours, and exchange of notes amongst visitors. A brief on presentations by the scholars is given in Appendix I (see p. 205). A total of thirteen papers were selected by the editorial board after receiving their responses to the comments from them which are published in this book. More than sixty scholars and invited experts, and Jain community leaders attended the two-days seminar.

I express my heartfelt thanks to Dr Abhay Firodia for his guidance in different phases of organizing the seminar; financial, technical and facility support to make this seminar academically rewarding and promote fraternity amongst scholars participating in the seminar. I also thank Smt. Shribala ji and Shri Pradeep

Dhadiwal of Shri Firodia Trust for their outstanding contribution in organizing facilities and schedules at Navalveerayatan, the rejuvenating venue of the seminar. My special thanks to Professor Thite and all faculty and facilities management members of BORI in making this seminar academically rewarding. Finally, I thank my colleague at ISJS, Dr Shrinetra Pandey who worked tirelessly before, during and after the seminar and ensured rewarding experience to all who attended the seminar and preparation of this transactions report.