

Report on the National Seminar on

‘Antiquity, Continuity and Development of Civilization and Culture in Bharat (India) up to 1st Millennium BC’ held at New Delhi
(27th – 29th March, 2017)

The Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) organised a national seminar on the ‘Antiquity, Continuity and Development of Civilization and Culture in Bharat (India) up to 1st Millennium BC’ held at India International Centre, New Delhi from 27th – 29th March, 2017. The main objective of the seminar was to present the results of recent researches in history and archaeology and to discuss their relevance to update the present understanding on the origin and development of civilization. The seminar was also aimed at providing a platform for serious debate on the following major issues: the theoretical perspectives in understanding India’s ancient past; geological and climatological researches with special reference to Saraswati River; linguistic, literature and philosophy; chronology and sequencing of Vedic text; searching for connection between literature and archaeology; archaeo-astronomy, chronology and dating methods.

Professor B.B. Lal (a Padma Bhushan awardee and former Director General of Archaeological Survey of India) blessed the occasion with his venerated presence as Chief Guest and Dr. David Frawley (a Padma Bhushan awardee and Director, American Institute of Vedic Studies, USA) was the Guest of Honour. Prof. Y. Sudershan Rao, Chairman, ICHR, gave the opening remarks and delivered the welcome address. After Felicitating the Gurus: Prof. B.B. Lal and Dr. R. Nagaswami with Gurukul fellowship to maintain the Guru-Shishya Parampara, Prof. Rao introduced the theme of the conference. A book was also released by Prof B.B. Lal on ‘Inscriptions of the Vijayanagara Rulers, vol. vi (Sanskrit inscriptions) edited by Professor Srinivas Ritti.

The first academic session was started with keynote lectures delivered by five eminent scholars. The first keynote speaker, Prof. B.B. Lal delivered his lecture on ‘Testing Ancient Indian Literary Traditions on the Touchstone of Archaeology: Manu’s Flood-A Case Study’. He stated that Indian literary traditions are generally treated with suspicion and relegated to the realm of ‘Myths’. In this context he has categorically narrated about Manu’s Flood, one of the traditions which have been referred in the Matsya Purana, Bhagvat Purana, Mahabharata and Satapatha Brahmana. Considering the more or less the same narration in these texts, he has taken up Satapatha Brahmna to examine the facts in the light of archaeological evidence. To substantiate it, he has further integrated the evidence of geology, hydrology, archaeology and C-14 dating methods.

The second keynote lecture delivered by Dr. David Frawley on ‘Vedic Thought and Yoga Tradition’, in which he has highlighted that Vedas are the largest and oldest literary record surviving from the ancient world overall. He has suggested that the examination of the Vedic literature for its connection with Harappan civilization is an important topic of research for understanding the origin and continuity of Indian civilization. He has further proposes that core of Yoga and Vedanta can be found in older Vedic Mantras back to the oldest Rigveda and begins

at a much earlier level of literature, meaning that the Vedic Rishis or seers could also be described as yogis.

The third keynote address delivered by Prof. K. S. Valdia, former Vice-Chancellor, Kumaon University, Uttarakhand, on 'Saraswati: The River that nurtured human settlements of Harappan Civilization'. He has delineated the palaeo-river Saraswati on the basis of geological studies and has shown its existence which has been testified by considerably thick and extensive deposits of sediments characterised by silicate and high-density minerals derived from the great Himalayas, by the occurrence of palaeo-channels of fresh water in the heart of Thar desert, and by clustering of archaeological sites on the banks of dry water courses. He has also highlighted the significant role played by the river Saraswati in the development of Harappan Civilization.

The fourth keynote speaker, Prof. Shivaji Singh, former Head of Department, Department of Ancient History, Archaeology and Culture, Gorakhpur University, talked on 'Knowledge of Indian Psyche, A must for understanding Indian History', in which he has discussed about two coordinates of history i.e. Time and Space. He has further proposed that Psyche should be treated as the third coordinate of the history. While discussing the space and time in detail he has mentioned that history is also a sense of the past, hence the past may die but the sense of the past never dies because of its indestructible nature and continues with our psyche.

Prof. S.R. Bhatt, Chairman, Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi, has delivered his keynote lecture on 'Vedic Wisdom, Cultural Inheritance and Modern Relevance', in which he has discussed about ideas and ideals, moral and spiritual values, beliefs and practices and patterns of behaviour-individual and social on the basis of deep insight into the nature of reality.

On day-2, 28th March, the first session on 'Archaeological Findings-Saraswati and Gangetic Civilization, Linguistic and Foreign Contacts', was chaired by Dr. B. R. Mani, Director General, National Museum and Vice-Chancellor, National Museum Institute. In this session, the first presentation was made by Prof. Vasant Shinde, Vice-Chancellor, Deccan College, Pune, on 'Harappan Influence on the Chalcolithic Cultures of Central India and Deccan', in which he has discussed about the origin and development of chalcolithic cultures in these regions which could develop into semi-urban society mainly due to Harappan support and influence, whereas Shri K. N. Dikshit, General Secretary, Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi, presented his paper on 'Material Culture of the Late Harappan Age', in which he has elucidated the salient features of the late Harappan phase and its extent. Next talk was given by Prof. Vibha Tripathi, Emeritus Professor, Department of AIHC & Archaeology, Banaras Hindu University, on 'Impact of Metallurgy in development of Agriculture and Crafts in India', in which she has examined the various issues of the advent of iron in India and its impact on socio-cultural life based on archaeological testaments. Dr. Rajiv Nigam, Former Scientist, National Institute of Goa, Goa, talked on 'Role of Sea Level Fluctuations in Shaping the Destiny of the Ancient Indian Coastal Cities', and interestingly he has shown a sea level curve to explain that how the sea level fluctuations have occurred in the past which played a crucial role in the emergence and submergence of the ancient cities along the coast line.

In the afternoon session, chaired by Prof. R.C. Agrawal (Former Joint Director General, Archaeological Survey of India), total three papers were presented. The first presentation was

made by Dr. B.R. Mani, DG, National Museum, on 'Emergence of Historical Urbanisation: Chronological Sequence', in which he has elucidated about the recent archaeological investigations at the city sites in northern South Asia which indicate the early settlements going back to the second millennium BC and these early settlements become urban centres in the beginning of 1st millennium BC. He has further explained about cultural continuity based on archaeological evidence and suggested that there was no 'Dark Age' in Indian History during the time span of 2nd and early 1st millennium BC. Prof. Maruti Nandan Tiwari, Emeritus Professor, Department of History of Art & Tourism Administration, BHU, spoke on 'Indian Art before 600 BCE in respect of Antiquity, Continuity and Concept', whereas Prof. D.N. Tripathi, Former Chairman, ICHR, intensively discussed about various aspects of Language and Archaeology.

The next session on 'Ancient Literature and Philosophy', was chaired by Dr. Bhagwan Singh, eminent Historian, and in this session four papers were presented. The first presentation was given by Prof. S.R. Bhatt, Chairman, Indian Council of Philosophical Research, on the 'Origin and Development of Buddhism in India', in which he has discussed about various facets of Buddhism in India, whereas Dr. S. Rammohan, Deputy Director, Saraswati Research Centre, Chennai, talked on 'Ancient Bharat: A Treasure-Trove of Culture', and discussed the significance of the culture and its intrinsic nature by quoting our former President of India Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and taking the inferences from literature and archaeology. Another paper was presented by Prof. Bhagchandra Jain, Emeritus Professor, Jain Viswa Bharti, Deemed University, Ladnu, on 'Historic Position of Jainism up to 1st Millennium BC.

On 29th March, the morning session on 'Geological Changes-Land and Rivers', was chaired by Prof. Narayan Rao and in this session total four papers were presented. The first paper was presented by Prof. Rajiv Sinha, IIT, Kanpur, on 'Lost River in the NW Indo-Gangetic plains: Testing river culture hypothesis', in which he has elucidated about the original source of Saraswati River from higher Himalaya by integrating the data with dates and sedimentological studies. The next Paper was presented by Dr. Anil Kumar Pokharia on 'Agriculture and Agricultural Systems in Prehistory of India, in which he has discussed about ancient crop economy in relation to climate change. The next paper was presented by Dr. Santosh K. Rai, Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Dehradun on the cessation of the course of River Saraswati (Haryana) in which he has discussed the course of the buried fluvial channels and its linkage with river Saraswati. The next presentation was delivered on 'Stratification of Rigveda', by Shivaji Singh in absence of Srikant G. Talagiri in which he narrated about various theories propagated about antiquity and continuity of the civilization and he further suggested that civilization is a continuous process from long before fourth millennium BC.

In the last session on 'Continuity of Civilization and Culture', chaired by Prof. D.N. Tripathi, former Chairman, ICHR, four papers were presented. The first presentation was made by Prof. T.P. Verma on 'Geology in Support of Archaeology and Traditions', in which he has attempted to link several scientific aspects of geology with archaeology and traditions. Next paper was made by Dr. S. Kalyanaraman, Director, Saraswati Research Centre, Chennai, on 'Saraswati Script', in which he has emphasized on deciphering Saraswati Script, whereas Prof. Bhagwan Singh, Vedic Scholar, made his presentation on 'Bhasha Itihas aur Bhartiya Chintan', in which he has emphasized on linguistics and Palaeo-linguistics without which it is difficult to understand the Vedic tradition in totality.

Last presentation was made by Dr. Saroj Bala, former Member, CBDT and Director, Institute of Scientific Research on Vedas, on 'Scientific determination of cultural continuity since Vedic and epic eras', in which she has discussed on the important role of multidisciplinary research in understanding the history of Indian sub-continent since time immemorial. She has further shown the Astronomical determination of Rigveda and Epics with application of Planetarium Software.

The seminar was attended by scholars from the various disciplines such as archaeology, history, geology, oceanography, Sanskrit, space science and academicians as well as other persons from the public and media were invited to participate.

In the valedictory function on 29th March, 2017, Prof. Lokesh Chandra, President, Indian Council of Cultural Relations and former Member of Rajya Sabha, graced the occasion as Chief Guest and delivered the valedictory address. Dr. Balmukund Pande, General Secretary, Bhartiya Itihas Sankalan Yojana Samiti and Prof. Sushmita Pandey, Chairman, National Monument Authority, also graced the occasion as a Guests of Honour and gave their addresses. Prof. Y. Sudershan Rao, Chairman ICHR, delivered the concluding remarks. Prof. Rao specially mentioned that proceedings of the seminar will be published very soon. The seminar concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Anand Shankar Singh, Member Secretary, ICHR.

Photo Gallery of the Seminar

Introducing to Guests of the Seminar by Dr.S.K.Aruni, Dy. Director(Research)



Annual report being reported by the Member Secretary, ICHR



Chief Guest Message by Prof. Lokesh Chandra



Felicitation to Prof. Lokesh Chandra By Hon. Chairman, ICHR



Felicitation to Staff by Hon. Chairman, ICHR



Vote of thanks By Dr. Ananad Shanker Singh, Member Secretary, ICHR

