



National Seminar

on

Kāshī : Past & Present / काशी : अतीत और वर्तमान

(08-09 August, 2022)

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About the Department of AIHC & Archaeology

The Banaras Hindu University is one of the pioneering institutions in the country to initiate teaching and research in Ancient Indian History and Culture. There were stalwarts like Prof. R.D. Banerji, Prof. A.S. Altekar, Prof. R.C. Majumdar, Prof. Rajbali Pandey, Prof. Viswambhar Sharan Pathak, Prof. Awadh Kishor Narain just to name a few who once adorned the Department. For a comprehensive understanding of ancient period, the discipline of Archaeology was introduced in 1957. The Department has earned international reputation in the field of indological studies. The multi faceted nature of the Department is reflected in the activities that expand in disciplines like religion, palaeography, economic history, prehistoric and early historical archaeology, archaeometallurgy, science and technology of archaeological materials *etc.* A number of field studies in terms of painstaking archaeological explorations and excavations, which were conducted by the department, cover a vast historical canvas – from Prehistoric times to the Historical period. The Department has made a few landmark discoveries, which are very significant for Indian History.

Needless to mention that on account of these contributions, the department was in receipt of some minor and major projects at individual and departmental level. Our centre has received some significant financial support in the last four decades which includes the 'Ford Foundation Project' for strengthening scientific archaeology, UGC's for 'Narhan Excavations', and 'Horizontal Excavations at Pre-NBP and NBPW levels at Agiabir, District Mirzapur, DST's for 'Remote Sensing and Archaeological Settlements', UKIERI's Collaborative Programme for 'Harappan Studies', The British Academy, London, European Research Council, Cambridge, DST-UKIERI, Cambridge, INSA's project on 'Ethno-archaeological Studies on Ancient Iron Metallurgy' and DST-FIST Programme for the Development of Archaeo-metallurgical Studies. In addition to the above, a few minor research projects have been awarded to the faculty members of the Department by the INSA, ICHR, Ministry of Culture, Government of India and other funding agencies. Further, the University Grants Commission selected this department for its Special Assistance Programme for three continuous phases, CAS Programme, UGC'S ASIHSS Programme and also for UPE Programme (2013-2020). In addition, Ministry of Culture, Government of India has given grant for the development of the Departmental Museum. As a result, a good infrastructure for research in diverse branches of Indological studies including archaeological laboratory and equipments, networking of the Department, computation of library etc. have been developed.

Concept Note of the Seminar

Kāshī, Varanasi, Banaras, Avimukta, Ānandavana, Rudravāsa, Mokshdā or Mahāsmaśāna as it is popularly called, is one of the most unique cities in the world to be seen and to be believed in its myriad expressions of religious faith, rituals and festivals, traditional and ancient forms of worship and belief that are being practiced since time

immemorial. It is reflected in the varied expressions of asceticism, spiritual and meditative exercises; in the inimitable rhythm and living style of the local people, in traditional education, music, dance and art forms, craftsmanship that still continue to be transmitted through generations. Kāshī is the most ancient name of this eternal city. It was used nearly three thousand years ago to refer to the kingdom of which this city became the capital. Over the time, the name came to refer the capital city as well. It was to the outskirts of Kāshī that Buddha came to preach his first sermon in the sixth century BCE. The somewhat later *Jātaka* tales of the Buddhist tradition speak of the “town of Kāshī.” As for its etymology, it has been suggested that the name Kāshī comes from Kāsha, the name of an ancient king, whose dynasty later produced the famous legendary King Divodāsa of Kāshī, or that it comes from *kāśa*, the name of the tall silver-flowering grass which grows wild along the riverbank. Most commonly, however, it is said to derive from the Sanskrit root *kāśa*, “to shine, to look brilliant or beautiful.” Kāshī, sometimes called Kāśikā, is the shining one, the luminous one, the illumining one. Its most famous *māhātmya*, the *Kāshī Khanda* explains: “Because that light, which is the unspeakable Shiva, shines [*kāshate*] here, let its other name be called Kāshī.” The wordplay of Sanskrit continually underlines the relation of the City of Light to the light of enlightenment. For example, the city is called “City of Light, which illumines liberation”—*moksha-prakāshikā Kāshī*. As Mark Twain said in 1898 “*Banaras is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend and looks as twice as old as all of them put together.*” The living cultural traditions of this city that so matchlessly and magically symbolise Indian culture in all its manifestations express themselves in an equally exceptional architectural ambience.

The river Ganga, that is the source and culmination of the spiritual and life energy of Kāshī, enhances and adorns the city. The riverfront and the long uninterrupted stretch of more than 84 *ghats* is the façade of the architectural zone of present Kāshī. These *ghats* have been witness, through the centuries, to great saints like Buddha and Mahavira, to poets like Kabir and Tulsidas, to religious philosophers like Sankracharya and to millions of pilgrims who still carry the light of faith through generations making Kāshī so special. For over 2,500 years this city has attracted pilgrims and seekers from all over India.

From its commanding position on the River Ganges, Banaras has witnessed the entire history of Indian civilization as it evolved mostly in North India. From the ancient Aryan kingdoms and their rivalries, through the golden Mauryan and Gupta empires, to the thousand years of Muslim and British domination, the historical currents of the times have passed through Banaras. Previously it was generally accepted that the antiquity of Kāshī, reconstructed on the basis of archaeological evidence, cannot be pushed beyond 800 BCE, but with the excavation at sites such as Sarāi Mohānā, Akathā, Rājghāt *etc.* it seems that the antiquity may go back further to 1500 BCE. The recent evidence of flourishing settlements found by our department along the ancient *Pañchkrośī Parikramā* such as Mahāvan, Babhaniyāon, Oudhé, Khusihārī, Kāśipurā, Délhanā, Kursāto, Rasūlpur *etc.* has also challenged the validity of the previous notion through archaeological and scientific studies. It is noteworthy that hundreds of ancient settlements have blossomed in the areas around

Varanasi. They flourished especially along the rivers such as Gaṅgā, Varuṇā, Gomati, Chandraprabhā, Karamnāśā and its tributaries. These settlements, some of them excavated recently such as Latif Śāh, Malhar, Rājā Nal-Kā-Tilā, Raipurā *etc.* served as the centre of various craft activities that not only catered to the need of Varanasi city but also played an important role in its socio-economic and cultural life. There are several smaller tributaries of these rivers flowing down the Vindhyan ranges which have facilitated the transportation of different kinds of stones, ore and other raw materials to the settlements surrounding the capital city of Kāshī *Mahājanapada*. The excavations at Rājghāt, Agiābir, Dwārkāpur, Anai, Akthā, Rāmnagar, Prahlādpur, Raipurā, Latif Śāh, Babhaniyav *etc.* conducted by our department have brought to light interesting evidence of fine craft objects. There are exquisite pieces of ivory, bone, beads, semi-precious and precious stones and metal objects dating back to c.1500-600 BCE.

Varanasi has been revered by both the Brāhmiṇic and Śramaṇic streams of Indian culture due to its strong association with Śaivism as well as with two major Śramaṇic religions i.e. Buddhism and Jainism. *Tipitaka* mentions *Isipattan* (literally meaning the abode of sages, presently identified as Sārnāth) as the most preferred place for ascetics to do penance and meditation. Thus this place was popular for interfaith interaction among spiritual persons since the ancient time. The Jain literature refers Kāshī as a Jain *Tirtha* (holy place) because here were born four of the Jain *Tirthankaras*. In the 8th century BCE Pārśvanātha was born around Bhelupur in Varanasi who established the principles of *Satya* (truthfulness), *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Asteya* (non-stealing) and *Aparigraha* (non-accumulation). The main Jain images excavated at this site belong to the 9th-11th centuries. In the 6th century BCE, Mahāvīra also visited Varanasi during his 42nd year of itinerant teaching. The spiritual magnetism of Varanasi had attracted Gautam Buddha here in the 6th century BCE to 'Turn the Wheel of Law'. By the turn of 3rd century BCE, the great Buddhist king Aśoka had built a monastery township in Sārnāth that flourished till 11th century CE. Presently, Sārnāth has become a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists, and a place of spiritual tourism for others.

Kāshī was established and recognised as a great sacred place (*tirtha*). During the first half of the 7th century the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Hsuan-tsang arrived in the city and described it as thickly populated, prospering and an important seat of learning. He mentions twenty important temples, and one of the *Śivalingas* was about 30m high which was covered with copper plate. The arrival and preaching of Adi Śankarāchārya in 8th century mark the revival of the Brahmanical thought, which finally uprooted Buddhism from this soil. During the reign of Akbar's grandson Shah Jahan (1628-1657), the imperial policy changed and a few temples under construction were destroyed. By the order of his successor, Aurangzeb (1658-1707), in 1669-1673 many temples including the city's greatest temples like Viśveśvara, Krittivāsa and Vindu Mādhava were razed and their sites were forever sealed from Hindu access by the construction of mosques. In 1665 the French Traveler Jean Baptiste Tavernier, a dealer in jewels paid a visit to Varanasi and described

the grand temple of Vindu Mādhava at the riverside, which he called a “*great pagoda*”. His account is notable because the temple was demolished in 1673 by the armies of Aurangzeb. Despite its reputation as stronghold of Hindu orthodoxy and conservatism, Kāshī participated in the vibrant devotional resurgence during 14th to early 17th centuries. Among the active poets and reformers the most notable were Ballabha, Rāmānanda, Kabir, Raidās, Tulasī, Chaitanya and Guru Nānak. Kabīr, indeed, was one of the greatest in all of Indian literature, whose colloquial songs are still sung today.

British rule brought a major change in the ancient *batuk* student pattern of learning of Kāshī that had predominated here for 2,500 years. By the approval of the British Governor General Warren Hastings in 1791, Jonathan Duncan, a British resident in Varanasi, founded a Sanskrit College and in 1853 the buildings of the college were built in Gothic style. On similar lines in 1898, Annie Besant, the founder of the Theosophical Society in India, started a Central Hindu College whose campus proved to be the nucleus of a growing university. In 1916, the Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge, laid the foundation stone of what would become one of the largest and most beautiful universities in Asia, the Banaras Hindu University. Another aspect of the British period was the expansion of the activities of Christian missionaries. In 1816, the Baptist Society became the first Christian body to introduce a mission in the holy city. The Church Missionary Society of the Church of England had started to work in Varanasi beginning in 1817 and opened one church at Sagra and another at the centre of the city at Godaulia crossing.

To unravel the different aspects of Kāshī a two-day National Seminar on **Kāshī : Past & Present** is being organized by the Department from **08-09 August, 2022**. The following sub-themes will be the focal points of the present seminar:

1. Archaeology of Kāshī / काशी का पुरातत्त्व
2. Kāshī in *Puranas* / पुराणों में काशी
3. Kāshī in religious and folk literature / धार्मिक एवं लौकिक साहित्य में काशी
4. Art and architecture of Kāshī / काशी की कला एवं स्थापत्य
5. Shaivism in Kāshī: with special reference to Kāshī Vishwanath / शैव परम्परा में काशी : काशी विश्वनाथ के विशेष सन्दर्भ में
6. Contribution of Kāshī in Science and Technology/ ज्ञान-विज्ञान में काशी का योगदान
7. *Tirtha* and Tourism in Kāshī / काशी : तीर्थ परम्परा एवं पर्यटन
8. Kāshī in Śramana Tradition / श्रमण परम्परा में काशी
9. Kāshī in the Changing scenario / बदलते परिदृश्य में काशी
10. Intangible Cultural heritage of Kāshī / काशी की अमूर्त विरासत

Call for Papers and Guidelines for Paper Submission

The abstract of the paper should not be more than 300 words and full paper not more than 6000 words. . The submission should be in Microsoft Word format only, written in A4 single format, 1.5 line spacing and using font: 'Times New Roman' in font size 12 / 'Krutidev-010' in font size 14. Please keep the layout of the text as simple as possible.

1. The paper should be original, unpublished and plagiarism-free.
2. The abstract (in Hindi/English) should have the author's name, designation, affiliation, email ID and mobile number.
3. The abstract/full paper must be submitted through email only on:
4. No. of figures/plates should not be more than 8.
5. Reference of the paper should be in APA style (7th edition).

Seminar email: aihc.bhuseminar22@gmail.com

Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/P4Dt6G5tYcLckSC97>

Last date for abstract submission: 23.07.2022

Last date for Full paper submission: 30.7.2022

Registration Fee

1250/- per participant

Registration Fee Payment Details

A/C Name : KASHI: PAST AND PRESENT

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Note : Please follow the Covid-19 Protocol.



Prof. Onkar Nath Singh
Convener of the seminar