



21- DAY NATIONAL WORKSHOP-CUM-TRAINING COURSE ON EPIGRAPHY

WORKSHOP REPORT

DATE: JULY 4-24, 2016

Organised by: Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR)

(An Autonomous Organization under the Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India)

35, Ferozshah Road, New Delhi-110001

Introduction

Keeping into consideration the fact that about Tens of thousands of inscriptions in India remain unread or unpublished, depriving the academic world especially the young minds of the nation from a substantial authentic source for the country's glorious history, the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), New Delhi took an initiative to revive the important discipline of Epigraphy. In this connection, proposal for conducting yearly three-week **Training Workshop-cum-Course on Epigraphy** was drafted and approved in which it was also decided that the country's best experts in the field will train students, scholars and young professionals in all aspects i.e., India's many ancient scripts, issues of decipherment and interpretation, the historical content and context of inscriptions, some recent finds etc.

At the very outset it was planned to start from the head quarter of the Council wherein 18 eminent epigraphists, historians and archaeologists from various parts of the country will take daily sessions with about 30 students selected from all over India out of 120 applicants. Among the well-known scholars were Prof. K.K. Thaplyal, Dr. R. Nagaswamy, Prof. Y. Subbarayalu, Prof. Himanshu Prabha Ray, Dr. B.R. Mani, Prof. Shrinivas Padigar, Prof. K. Rajan, Dr. T.S. Ravishankar, Prof. Suchandra Ghosh, Prof. R.C. Agrawal and many more.

ICHR intends to follow up on the workshop with a series of recommendations to the Government on steps needed to revive epigraphical studies in the country and make this fascinating field attractive to some of our bright students.

Objectives

India has a great tradition of knowledge of scripts and languages. As a result, lakhs of epigraphical records were produced across the country from ancient times. Although scholars and institutions have endeavored to collect and publish these records, numerous inscriptions have remained unpublished.

1. To revive and encourage the discipline of epigraphy among young scholars.
2. To give training in fundamentals in the discipline of epigraphy, numismatics, archaeology, ancient history and indo logy.
3. To train the young generation in reading the actual inscriptions.
4. To morally boost the confidence of the young scholars to opt this filed as a career opportunity.

Nature of Participation

The participants were from all over the Country having research interest and expertise in the field of epigraphy, archaeology and ancient history.

Methodology

During this Training programme following methods were adopted:

1. Lectures
2. Power Point Presentation
3. Group Discussion and other related activities
4. Brain Storming;
5. Participatory sharing with question answer sessions; and
6. Feedback sessions.

Participatory methods were woven into the training sessions to ensure the use of experiential learning model, for maintaining motivation and interest levels of the participants.

Materials and Training aids used during the workshop

Following materials were used during the training:

1. Laptop/Desktop; LCD; Whiteboard with markers
2. Training kit (including folder/ pad/ pen)
3. Reference and Research Material including on all sessions through soft and hard copies.

Detailed Proceedings

The **21-day National Workshop-cum-Training Course** started with the warm reception and welcome of the Chief Guest **Prof. B.B. Lal**, Eminent Archaeologist and Former Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, Guest of Honors **Dr. Rakesh Tiwari**, Director, Archaeological Survey of India and **Dr. B.R. Mani**, Former Additional Director General of India followed by the lightening of traditional lamp-which officially marked the beginning of the event as in Indian culture much importance has been accorded to the lightening before beginning any noble work. Also, as a token of acknowledgement and respect boutiques and memento and traditional shawl were presented to the guests. The proceedings further progressed with their visionary addresses to the participants with special focus on strengthening and re-structuring the discipline of epigraphy in India, providing career opportunities and placements to the young interested scholars.

Prof. Y. Sudershan Rao, the Chairman of the Council in his presidential remarks informed that this event will be made annual feature and shall be hosted in different parts of India in rotation. For the execution of the same the proposal shall be submitted to the Government of India so that the event shall become a national landmark in the world of epigraphy and allied disciplines. Earlier the theme of the event was presented by **Prof. Michel Danino**, Coordinator of the Workshop while the formal vote of thanks was delivered by **Dr. S.K. Aruni**, Member Secretary. It is to be mentioned here that the Inaugural function was held at India International Centre, Max Muller Marg, New Delhi.

In the opening lecture **Prof. R.C. Agarwal** speaking on **early medieval Remains and Epigraphical Findings** made a power point presentation on general introduction on Epigraphy so that the participating students may get acquainted with the early findings vis-à-vis the light was also thrown on the latest findings. Besides, early medieval remains and epigraphic findings were also the part of the lecture. Prof. Agrawal also highlighted the chronological history of various inscriptions in a successive manner.

Interacting with the participants **Prof. Himanshu Prabha Ray** during her deliberation entitled: **Inscribed Pottery: Tracing Indian Ocean Connections in the Early Historic Period** talked on historiography in the study of inscription and contextual importance of inscriptions.

She also shared her views on the Tracing Indian Ocean connection from inscribed pottery and inscriptions. The proceedings of the deliberation were followed by interactive question answer session.

New information regarding artifacts at Port sites on Red Sea was also discussed thereby providing and creating interest among students in Overseas/maritime.

On the 3rd day of the workshop a Field Trip to **Kutub Minar** and **Srinivaspuri** under the esteemed guidance of Coordinator of the Workshop **Prof. Michel Danino** was held wherein the participants were get acquainted with the historicity of these much important places in context to epigraphy and archaeology. The trip was also assisted by **Dr. Suresh Kumar** and **Dr. Vinod Kumar**.

Prof. K.K. Thaplyal talked on **Ashokan Inscriptions — an Introduction** in a well organized manner. Through the help of power point presentation he threw light on the new sides of the existing findings vis-à-vis also apprised the students about the different viewpoints held by the scholars of the field of literary, archaeology and history. The presentation followed by an impressive session of brain storming wherein number of queries sought by the participants.

Prof. R. Nagaswamy with the theme **Judicial Nature of Epigraphy** delivered his detailed explanation and interpretations about the Paleographic changes. Besides, also talking on Epigraphy in India and Abroad he laid stress on the evolution of Brahmi script and its characteristics. Prof. Nagaswamy's interpretations, references and research material were highly appreciated by the participants as they were of the view that it will open new ideas for them.

Dr. Selvakumar through his research findings talked on the epigraphy, literature and archaeology in the context of the early historic Tamil regions as well as carried the discussion towards Rod measurement, diversions, units and on others related dimensions with his research lecture entitled: **Tamil Inscriptions and Literature; Measurement Units in Tamil Inscriptions**. The post lunch session proceeded with practical demonstration and feedback from the participants by the resource person.

As the pictorial representation has a great impact on human mind so in order to give a practicality utility to the aims and objectives of the Workshop a field trip to **National Museum** under the guidance of Former Director, Epigraphy Branch, Archaeological Survey of India **Dr T.S. Ravishankar** was held. Continuously for 2nd day Dr. T.S. Ravishankar interacted with the participant. Where on the first day he showed the pictorial demonstration, on the next day he

gave a theoretical shape to his talk entitled: **An Overview of Scripts and Languages in Inscriptions** with much emphasis on Epigraphical Studies and its Multidimensional Approach. He also gave explanatory overview of Scripts and Languages in Inscriptions Epigraphical Studies.

Prof. D.P. Dubey through power point presentation on the topic **Nagari Script and Inscriptions from 9th century onwards** expressed his views and research findings on the characteristics of Brahmi and Nagri scripts and on the uniformity of the alphabets. Giving primary information about the letters used in Brahmi and Nagri scripts he shifted focus towards modern research by the present day scholars. The main focus was on the following:

1. Ambla Varanasi plate of Harsha.
2. Plate of Nagbhata-II
3. Tari Ghat Seal of late 2nd century CE.

Prof. Y. Subbarayalu and **Prof. M.R. Raghava Varier** sharing the academic proceedings for two consecutive days spoke on **Chola and Vijaynagara period Inscriptions** and **Inscriptions of the Cheera Period: An Overview** respectively. In their communication with the participants both these learned scholars at the very outset highlighting the contribution of the veteran scholars and epigraphists such as T.A. Gopinath Rao, K.V. Subramania Iyer and A.S. Ramanatha Iyer talked on number of inscriptions published by the Cochin and madras Department of Archaeology. They also apprised that the inscriptions of the period of the Permulas supplies interesting information about the institution of Salai-the high seat of learning. They also very systematically linked the Sanskrit and Tamil terminologies. The sessions concluded with highly remarkable question-answer series.

Dr. Subrat Kumar Acharya very emphatically stressed on the major paleographical peculiarities of the Hathigumpha Inscriptions as well as inscriptions of Odisha especially from middle Ganga valley. During the question answer session with the participants on **Evolution of Modern Oriya Script** he also drew the chronological development of scripts along with political development of the region.

With the help of Power point presentations, handouts, practical writings and cross questioning **Prof. Shrinivas V. Padigar** speaking on **Scripts used in Inscriptions of Karnataka and their Development** gave detailed description of area of impact of Prakrit under the Mauryas and Sathavanas in South India. He also talked in length on the Brahmagiri Minor

Rock Edict of Chitradurga district of Karnataka, Western Indian Brahmi of 2nd century BCE to 1st century CE, Kushana Brahmi Inscriptions, Inscriptions on Durga temple Pedestal, Inscriptions of Vikramaditya II, on his memorial temple and many more. A brain storming test of the participants was also conducted which every participant passed successfully and with satisfactory remarks.

Dr. B. M. Pande while interacting with the students discussed about **Indus Scripts** and its interpretation. The main concern remained confined to the beginning and later development. The session ended with question answer and feedback information from the participants.

Dr. Suchandra Ghosh in a very highly organized way had engaged the participants in one to one conversation on **Epigraphy of Bengal and Assam and on the Siddhamatrika script**. The lecture was highly remarkable with the use of power point presentation, images and maps and supplying of related material to the participants. In the post lunch session she again engaged the students over the detailed analyses of **Copper-plate charters of Kamarupa (Assam)** and on **Format and genres of *prasastis* inscriptions in Bengal**

On next day the morning session of the day was taken by **Prof. Michel Danino**- the Coordinator of the Workshop. During the one to one interaction with all the participants he cleared their primary doubts on the research related epigraphical findings. Prof. Danino also drew the attention of the young participants towards the field so that more research is carried in this field.

In the post lunch session all the participants were taken on field trip to Firozshah Kotla and Purana Qila under the guidance of **Prof. Michel Danino** assisted by **Dr. Suresh Kumar**.

Dr. Abhijit Dandekar with his highly pitched presentation gave very beautiful, enlightening and explanatory views on the Nasik Cave Inscription of Gautamiputra Satakarni and few others in the light of his lecture entitled: **Rome, Religion and Rivals – Their Reflections in Early Western India Inscriptions**. The lecture aimed at explaining the phenomenon through inscriptions of the period around the beginning of Common Era which witnessed hectic activities in the cultural life of Western India. This was also the peak period of monastic religion. Many monasteries were established in the Western Ghats.

In her lecture on **Inscriptions of the Early Historic Phase and a few Gupta Records: New Discovery and Reassessment**, **Prof. Susmita Basu Majumdar** talked on Kharavela's Hathigumpha inscription besides focus was also on varied other inscriptions too. She also had an

interaction with the participants on the Mathura pillar inscription of the time of Chandragupta II. A few copper plate of Vinayagupta along with Asokan inscriptions from Barabar and Dasaratha's records from Nagarjuni caves also found space in her knowledge sharing deliberation.

Through pictorial presentation **Prof. K. Rajan** spoke on **Early Writing System: Some Issues and Interpretation**. He informed the students with new findings dealing with ongoing excavations in Tamil Nadu region. He also apprised them that the available material evidences suggest that there are three major early writing systems in India namely Indus writing system, Graffiti writing system and Brahmi writing system.

Dr. B. R. Mani- a renowned scholar of early Indian history, epigraphy and archaeology particularly in the Buddhist era and culture and the Kushana Civilization held his discussion in a well organized manner on Rishik Tushara which is mentioned in Puranas and can be identified with Yue Chi Kushans. Dr. Mani informed that they were also called Tutushkas in the 12th century as evidenced from **Kalhana's Rajatarangini**. He also gave details on the references of the early and recent excavations in this area of research besides throwing light on the **Politico-Cultural Interpretation of Inscriptions from Sarnath**. The session ended with a healthy discussion in the form of question answer.

On the last day of the academic interaction sessions after the visit to **Red Fort** for practical session, the feedback of the participants was sought. In response to feedback over the academic proceedings the participants expressed the views that the course structure turned out to fruitful to their expectations as the interactive sessions provoked their thought process and opened new dimensions. The participants showing their satisfaction has requested to hold more training workshops especially in the remote areas of the country so that the students who have not access to technology may also be benefited.

The way the speakers carried their lectures and question answer session were highly appreciated by the participant and hoped that ICHR will again provide them opportunity to meet with these stalwarts of the academic world.

The 21-day event ended with grand Valedictory function held India International Centre, New Delhi under the supreme blessings of Hon'ble Chairman **Prof. Y. Sudershan Rao**. On the occasion **Prof. Susmita Pande**, Chairperson, National Monuments Authority was the Chief Guest whereas **Dr. Sanjay Kumar Manjul**, Director, Institute of Archaeology, Archaeological

Survey of India, New Delhi acted as the Guest of Honour. **Prof. Michel Danino**- the Coordinator of the Workshop and Member Secretary **Dr. S. K. Aruni** in their addresses showed their satisfaction of the successful conclusion of the event. The event was presented by Research Consultant **Dr. Suresh Kumar** wherein he thanked the participants on behalf of ICHR and opined that this event could not be possible in a practical shape without the involvement of young intellectual mind who came across the Country to participate by passing many stages. The ICHR also extended its sincere regards to all the learned scholars who shared their valuable research findings and knowledge with the participants during the training course.

The Workshop ended with Vote of thanks to all the guests and participants by the Dy. Director (Research) **Dr. Rajesh Kumar**. Prominent among those who made their valuable presence were Dy. Director (Administration & Documentation) **Sh. Ramesh Yernagula**, Consultant (Research) **Dr. Noopur Singh**, **Prof. B. Labh**, **Prof. K. Ratnam**, **Prof. R. C. Agrawal**, **Dr. Niharika Labh**, **Dr. Vinod Kumar** and other staff members of ICHR. The proceedings of the programme were conducted by **Dr. Jyostna Arora**, Dy. Director (Library), ICHR.