

**Invited Session and Round Table organised by Jain Vishva Bharati Institute in  
Collaboration with Florida International University and Jain Education and Research  
Foundation in XXIII World Congress of Philosophy, Athens, Greece**

World Congress of Philosophy is the biggest conference in the field of philosophy. Thousands of scholars, societies, institutions and universities working in the field of philosophy participate in it. It is held once in every five year by International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP) in different countries through one of its



member societies. Jain Vishva Bharati Institute started organising roundtable for the first time in the XXII WCP which was held in Seoul, South Korea in 2008. In the XXIII WCP which was recently held in Athens, Greece from August 4 -10, 2013, JVBI, in collaboration with FIU and JERF, has organised the second round table and first invited session. Prof. Samani Chaitanya Prajna accompanied by Samani Rohit Prajna was the co-ordinator of the sessions. To have an inter-disciplinary approach to look for the solutions to the problems of

the present day world the eminent scholars of different fields, such as, management and business, science, philosophy and religion were invited as the speakers of the sessions. Among the speakers were Prof. Narendra Bhandari, Space Scientist, Indian National Science Academy, India, Prof. Dipak Jain, Former Dean, INSEAD, Business School for the World, Prof. Kusum Jain, Dean of Arts, University of Rajasthan, Prof. Jaffery D. Long, Elizabethtown College, USA, Prof. Samani Chaitanya Prajna and Samani Rohit Pragya, Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, India.



The Invited Session was organised on ***Jain Philosophy of Anekant: A Panacea to the Problems of Present Day World*** on August 6, 2013. The invited session was presided by Prof. William McBride, President of FISP, who not only proposed the session but also sponsored for the session. Prof. McBride expressed his view about the Jain philosophy and its contribution to develop a harmonious and peaceful way of living. Prof. Dipak Jain was the Chair of the session.

In the session, Prof. Narendra Bhandari spoke on *Scientific Foundation of Anekant: The Philosophy of Multifacetedness of Nature*. Prof. Kusum Jain presented a talk on *Anekant: A Befitting Response to Religious Fundamentalism*. Paper on *Anekant as a Metaphysical Foundation of Religious Pluralism* written by Prof. Jaffery D. Long , USA was read by Dr Nirmal Baid, USA. Prof. Samani Chaitanya Prajna presented her views on *Anekant: A Philosophy of Non-absolutism and Peaceful Co-existence*.

The Round Table was held on August 8, 2013 and chaired by Prof. Samani Chaitanya Prajna. Theme of the Round Table was ***Jain View towards Philosophical Inquiry and Harmonious Ways of Living***. In the Round Table, talks on *Jain Approach to Living in Harmony, Jain Principles and Values: A Moral Compass, Economics*

of *Nonviolence and Sustainable Development, Anekant: A Way to Peace-building* were presented by Prof. Narendra Bhandari, Prof. Dipak Jain, Prof. Kusum Jain, Asst. Prof. Samani Rohit Pragya respectively.

Both the sessions were interactive and interesting. The participants who were present in the sessions came to know about the application of the Jain principle of Anekant and other in social sciences. How Anekant, Ahimsa and Aparigraha can help present solution to the problems of cultural conflicts, pluralism, fundamentalism, ecological imbalance and social conflicts. In brief, the points of the papers presented in the sessions are as follows:

Prof. Narendra Bhandari introduced Anekant as a scientific theory and said that the Jain concept of Anekant describes the true nature of the universe and states that its fundamental constituents have multiple properties or facets which exist simultaneously but manifest at different times. It is not due to limitations of the observer that all the aspects cannot be seen at once, but it is due to very nature of things that all of them cannot be observed at once.

In her paper Prof. Kusum Jain discussed religious fundamentalism as one of the biggest causes of misery and restlessness. She said that in this scenario of religious fundamentalism, which is unfortunately gaining wider acceptance day by day, we have a religion which bases itself on Anekant. Jainism encourages religious generosity, openness for possibility of new perspectives, tolerance for differences of opinion and respect for other religions.



The paper on “Anekant as a Mataphysical Foundation for Religious Pluralism” written by Prof. Jeffery D. Long was read by Dr Nirmal Baid, one of the Directors of JERF.

In the paper, Prof. Long said that *Anekāntavāda*, the Jain doctrine of the complexity of existence, together with its respective epistemic and hermeneutic corollaries—*nayavāda*, the doctrine of perspectives, and *syādvāda*, the doctrine of conditional predication—provides an excellent metaphysical foundation for religious pluralism, defined here as the idea that there is at least a kernel of truth in the worldviews of many religions and philosophies.

He writes that the understanding of truth that is operating in religious pluralism is a vast field of possibility. This field of possibility unfolds and is revealed to one gradually, through a process of dialogue, study, and a deep and serious engagement with multiple worldviews and perspectives. The thesis of this essay is that *anekāntavāda* (with its correlative doctrines) is especially conducive to this understanding of truth and to the (minimal) goal of cultivating peaceful coexistence among adherents of varied worldviews and the (maximal) goal of achieving their mutual enrichment and transformation.



Prof. Samani Chaitanya Pragya put the philosophical aspect of Anekant by sharing the views of Jain scholars like Acharya Siddhasen (6<sup>th</sup> c. CE) and Acharya Mahaprajna (21<sup>st</sup> c. CE). She emphasised on the need of the non-absolutistic approach to know the

truth of any phenomena and the application of Anekant in every walk of life to have a peaceful co-existence. She said that the principle of Anekant offers a palpable explanation as well as plausible and pragmatic solution to manage cultural conflicts. It can prevent cultural conflicts by propelling as well as asserting the equal importance of identity and difference of all the realities whether it is metaphysical, social or cultural. Lastly, the paper explored how Anekānta provides an intellectual framework to develop mutual understanding and dialogue, which is essential for the peaceful co-existence of world cultures and civilizations.

Samani Rohit Pragya, in her speech emphasised that if one accepts the principle of co-existence, understands the principle of relativity and apply the principle of reconciliation can develop the self spiritually as well as enjoys the peace in pragmatic life.

Prof. Dipak Jain summarised all the views of speakers and threw light on having moral and ethical life by accepting the principle of nonviolence, non-possessiveness and non-absolutism. He discussed three quotients: IQ, EQ and MQ. MQ means moral quotient which relates to soul. Morality or ethical values are necessary outcomes of the spiritual understanding of a man. The moral or ethical values make one's life significant. In his talk Prof. Jain motivated to move ahead from success to significance of life.

Organising such sessions on the land of Greece was a great opportunity to explore Jain ideas amongst eminent



scholars of philosophy. At the end of Round-Table, a document of declaration, signed by all the speakers was read by Prof. Dipak Jain. It was also presented by him to Prof. William McBride, the President of FISP.



Participation in the World Congress of Philosophy, Invited Session presided by the President of FISP, Declaration made by speakers of Invited Session and Round-Table, Discussion made by the scholars of Jainology, Science and Western Philosophy regarding the future plans and projects of JVBI made the whole event successful.

The whole program could be held with the generous support of Jain Vishva Bharati, Bhagwan Mahavir Professorship, FIU and Jain Education Research Foundation. Apart from these organizations there were some esteemed donors behind the curtain of the program. Among them the names of Shashi-Kusum Baid, Lalit-Gunamala Mehta, Miami and Kirit Shah, Westpalmbeeach, USA can be mentioned. JVBI is thankful to all the sponsors and organisers of WCP for their support.

Reported by Samani Rohit Pragya