



# Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad

## Colloquium 18-05

**Speaker :** Dr. Shanti Pappu

Professor, Sharma Centre for Heritage Education, Chennai, Tamilnadu

**Title :** "Tools, Time and Transitions: New Perspectives on Early Prehistoric Populations in South Asia"

**Time :** Wednesday, 23 May 2018, 16.00 hrs.

**Venue :** K. R. Ramanathan Auditorium, PRL

### Abstract

In the history of scientific thought, the story of our origins, has been one of the endless fascination and heated debates. The study of human evolution has been approached in recent years through interdisciplinary research including archaeology, palaeoanthropology and genetics, situated within a geochronological and palaeoenvironmental framework. Much of the early fossil and archaeological evidence for the story of human evolution arises from discoveries in Africa. Debates range around the timing and nature of dispersals of differing species out of Africa, with alternate theories being periodically proposed. In this context, the geographical position of South Asia, and its rich and diverse prehistoric archaeological record, critically informs our understanding of cultural aspects of human evolution, behavioral changes and adaptation of populations to past environmental variability. Here, we first situate the South Asian prehistoric record in a global context. We then move to our specific research project comprising excavations at the site of Attirampakkam, Tamil Nadu and other sites along the SE coast of India. Archaeological, geomorphological and geochronological studies here have led to paradigm shifts in our understanding of the prehistoric record of India, reframing current concepts of the age and nature of the early Palaeolithic (Stone Age) occupation of India. In particular age estimates for different cultural phases at Attirampakkam ranging from around 1.7 million years ago to around 172,000 years ago have stimulated global debates on existing theories of the timing and nature of population dispersals out of Africa and across Asia. Implications of these studies in terms of paradigm shifts in viewing trajectories of cultural evolution and population dispersals across Eurasia are discussed here. We conclude by emphasising the crucial importance of Indian archaeology and associated sciences in contributing towards a global perspective of human origins.

### The Speaker

Dr. Shanti Pappu completed her M.A degree and Ph.D. from the Deccan College Post-graduate and Research Institute, Pune (1996), on the prehistoric archaeology of Tamil Nadu, and was subsequently a Homi Bhabha Fellow. In addition, she holds a law degree with a dissertation on cultural heritage laws of India and is a registered advocate. Her research interests are in the study of prehistory, palaeoenvironments, ethnoarchaeology, history of archaeology and in public archaeology, especially for children and teachers. She is a former Professor of Prehistory at the Deccan College Postgraduate & Research Institute. She was a Charles Wallace Fellow at the Ancient India and Iran Trust, U.K. She is currently director of the research project on prehistory and palaeoenvironments in Tamil Nadu, including excavations at the site of Attirampakkam. She is affiliated with several academic bodies and societies, and is Member, Global Library Committee, World Archaeology Congress, the Joint-Secretary of the Indian Society for Prehistoric and Quaternary Studies and former joint editor of the journal Man and Environment. She is on the Board of Management of the Children's Garden School Society and affiliated schools in Chennai and is involved in educational programs for children and teachers. She has coauthored 2 scientific books, 30+ research papers in journals including Science and Nature, a book for children on archaeology and numerous popular articles.

Dr. Shanti Pappu has been the recipient of several awards including the Prof. H.D. Sankalia gold medal from the Deccan College, and Young Scientist award from the Earth watch Institute, USA amongst others. She has been invited to deliver the Professor Khatre Memorial Lecture, and the Professor Dharani Sen Memorial Lecture, as and has presented research papers in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, U.K., Germany, U.S.A, France, Israel and Korea.

Tea at 15:30 hrs.

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

