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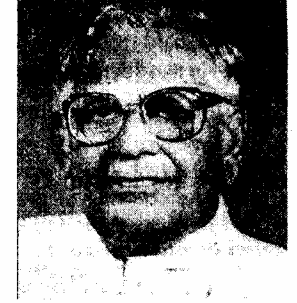
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A Symbol of our Culture

R. Venkataraman



In spite of its variety, the thrust of all literary production in Sanskrit lay in character-building; the upholding the basic values of life and defining a code of conduct for every citizen.

Sanskrit is rightly regarded as the symbol of our culture, our *Sanskriti*. This is so because Sanskrit is perhaps the oldest language of the world and yet continues to be ever young and fresh in spirit, throbbing with a self-renewing vitality. Creative literary activity still goes on through the medium of Sanskrit. Poems, stories and essays are being written in Sanskrit throughout the length and breadth of the country.

Sanskrit has been responsible for the whole world looking

upon India as a fount of wisdom and which can teach the rest of the world.

Sanskrit in its traditional form has two distinct streams of thought. One is purely secular, artistic and literary. The second is metaphysical and spiritual. Though these two very often interacted, they were, by means of their many-splendoured nature, able to cater to the needs of the masses and the classes; of children as well as elders; intellectuals as well as laymen, believers as well as elders;

intellectuals as well as nonbelievers. Therefore, Sanskrit literature has attracted the attention of scholars all over the world who are striving to unravel the mysteries of life in all its manifestations, scientific, secular and spiritual.

But in spite of its variety, the thrust of all literary production in Sanskrit lay in character-building; the upholding the basic values of life and defining a code of conduct for every citizen.

Our ancient sages had realised the vital role played by the natural forces in shaping human existence. Today we are concerned over the environmental pollution caused by various human and extra-human agencies.

Vedic man was fully conscious of the importance of ecology. For him the canopy of the sky and the earth under his feet were vital to existence. The twin-Gods *Dyava Prithivi* (the sky and the earth) are symbolic of the environment. The study of Sanskrit and the windows it

opens will be of immense value of an understanding of the ecological issues of our time.

It will also serve to remind us in India of the essential oneness of our national heritage.

The *rishis* were full of reverence for the mountains and oceans as also to the life-giving rivers. The ancient tradition pays equal respect to the Ganga in the North and the Kaveri in the South.

*Gange cha Yamune chaiva
Godavari, Saraswati,
Narmada, Sindhu, Kaveri,
Jalesmin Sannidhim Kuru.*

In all sacred ceremonies the purificatory rites are not complete without invoking these rivers flowing in different parts of this holy land. The Sanskrit Stotras also remember in the same breath the ancient cities of different parts of the country—Ayodhya, Mathura, etc.

*Ayodhya Mathura Maya
Kasi Kanchi Avantika
Puri Dwaravathi Chaiva
Saptaita Moksha Dayika*

The coronation of a king was not complete without consecrating the crown with the holy waters of all the principal rivers of the country and all important *tirthas* situated in the North, South, East and West. Adi Sankara started his pilgrimage of cultural renaissance from Kerala, attained fulfillment at Kashi and consecrated all the corners of the country by founding *mutts* in the farthest places of this land.

It is the bond of cultural unity which has been holding together this ancient land of ours for numerous centuries. Sanskrit has been the perennial and powerful medium which has given voice to this integrating inspiration. It was indeed the link language that bound together people talking different languages in several parts of the country.

Our ancients were not only concerned with the welfare of our countrymen, they were committed to welfare of all the peoples of the world. Ours has

been the eternal prayer:

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः

Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah

We seek welfare, prosperity and salvation for all mankind irrespective of the geographical divisions of land. Ours has been an integrated approach in all the affairs of life. It is necessary that this theme of unity and this catholicity of outlook be given proper emphasis in educational curricula.

Immortal poets like Kalidasa have won a unique place for India in world literature. Who can surpass our Banabhatta in prose-writing whose work *Kadambari* has no parallel even today?

I believe that every child of this country should get an opportunity to learn Sanskrit because the learning of this language will on the one hand strengthen the cultural unity of this country and on the other, will also embellish the regional languages. There is no doubt about it.

In this context, I should like to repeat a suggestion I have been making from time to time. What makes the study of Sanskrit difficult is the *sandhi* or the combination of several words together. In all modern languages each word is written separately thus making the study easier. In early Tamil language several words were linked together though not to the same extent as in Sanskrit. Modern Tamil prose has adopted the system of writing each word separately as in every modern language and, thus

learning the language has been rendered easier. If all our ancient lore is rewritten in this manner, studying Sanskrit literature will become very much easier. It is for the experts in Sanskrit language to examine the merits of the suggestion.

Let me conclude this Note with the universal prayer that is the hallmark of Sanskrit learning:

लोकाः समस्ताः सुखिनो भवन्तु ।

Lokaha Samastaha Sukhino Bhavantu.

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JULY 31, 2003

Editorial

Immortal, Body And Soul

Were Shri S. Ramakrishnan be alive now, he would have been 81 years old on the 22nd of this month. More than 60 of those 81 years he had spent in the service of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. He would have been the last person to allow his birthday to be announced in any media let alone in the Journal of which he was the editor. He would have been more thrilled to publicize the fact that this issue of Bhavan's Journal marks the completion of 50 years of a unique medium of cultural journalism that abjured all trappings of successful commercial media.

Bringing out a high quality fortnightly can be a gruelling, full-time occupation. But like life itself, Shri Ramakrishnan wore his onerous duties lightly on his sleeves. He carried the

burden of editorship with the same effortless ease and grace as he performed several other full time occupations that made ceaseless demands on his time. He was never pressed for time because he made the most of the sixty minutes that comprised "each unforgiving hour", (to use Rudyard Kipling's memorable phrase) of every day stretching into weeks, months and years. Only idle men cannot find time to complete their jobs. As was pointed out in the memorial issue on him in March this year, Shri Ramakrishnan had cleared material for two issues before he died on February 14, 2003.

A few alert readers had pointed out that Shri Ramakrishnan's name appeared as editor of Bhavan's Journal in issues published almost two months after his death. The legality of death and the

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