

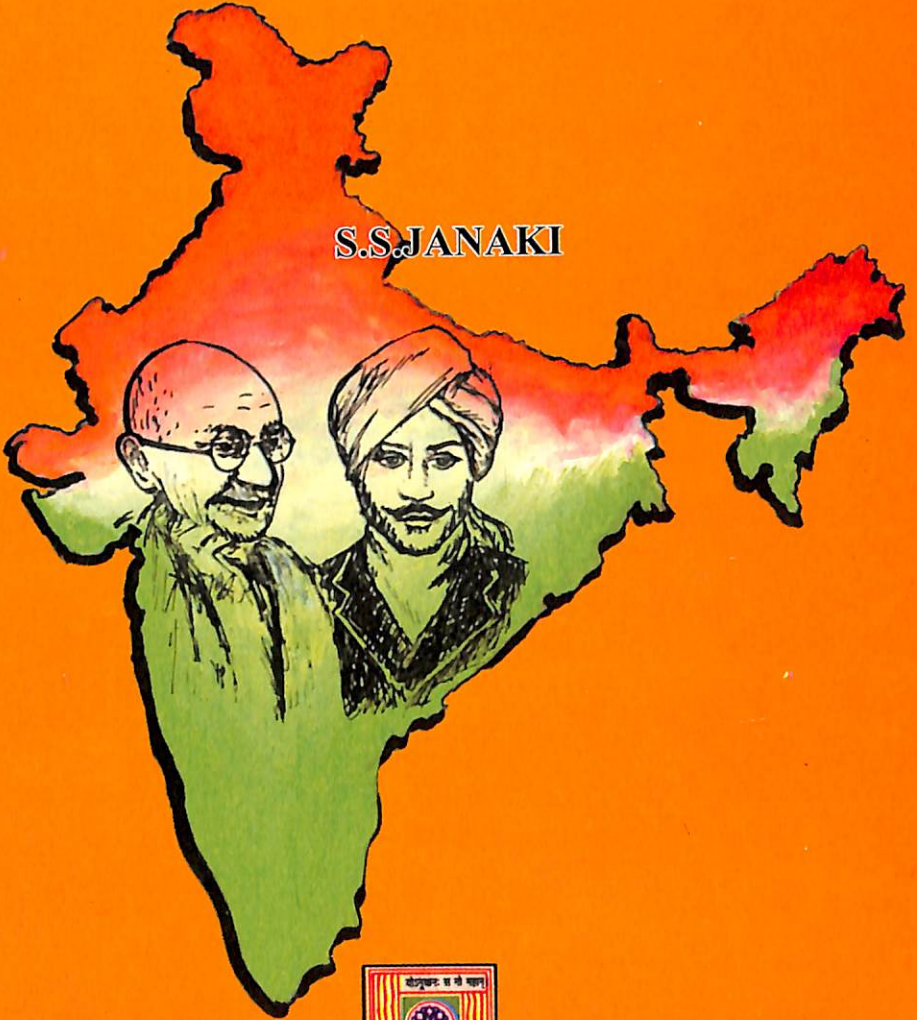
Golden Jubilee of India's Independence Series-13



FREEDOM FIGHTERS AND SANSKRIT LITERATURE

With Special Reference to
MAHATMA GANDHI AND SUBRAHMANYA BHARATI

S.S.JANAKI



RASHTRIYA SANSKRIT SANSTHAN

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INTRODUCTION

Continuity and change have together been a hallmark in all areas of Indian culture. The adaptation or revitalisation of older concepts has been a regular process by which Indian culture has ensured its continuity. This is truly and significantly applicable to the growth and development of Sanskrit language and literature, both in India and outside during the last four thousand years or more. The antiquity of Sanskrit literature and the universal concepts embedded in its varied branches are well known. In addition, its continuity from Vedic to present times as a vehicle of expression for all types of contemporary life and thought is truly remarkable and needs to be brought out to a wider audience. So are the crucial ideas and concepts that are embodied in its vast range. This particularly rich Sanskrit material, with special reference to the 19th-20th century Indian freedom struggle and its main participants from different regions, was highlighted in the three seminars organised by the Rashtriya Sanskrit Samsthan at Guruvayur, Calcutta and New Delhi in March 1998.

In the course of its long history, Sanskrit has put forth variegated, comprehensive and intense activity in almost all fields—literature and philosophy, art and science. Whatever the branch of literature, the Sanskrit authors and thinkers never lived in isolation. Rather, they moved with different nationalities at different times and interacted with them positively, while retaining their own individuality. Thus was initiated the varied influence on Indians of the Greeks and Roman in the early phase, followed by the Muslims and Europeans, especially the British.

The Indian National Movement was truly a reawakening and fresh search for the spirit of India. With modern education and the intense cultivation of the critical spirit and study of Indian history, there was a fresh realisation of the value of India's heritage. The patriots and the Sanskritists especially turned to the glory that was ancient India with a fervour which impelled them towards a renaissance. The higher spiritual values of Indian culture and the material nature of modern civilisation, the growth of new fashions and foibles, the imitation of the West—all these produced a reversion and reassertion of the Indian spirit.

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A second illustration of *Prāyopaveśā* in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is Rāma himself taking recourse to it so that the sea would provide a way for him and his army to go to Laṅkā. Rāma obviously failed because, as the king of the seas said, it is against the nature of waters, as created by the Almighty, to solidify or otherwise give up their nature and give passage to Rāma and the monkey-army.

Dr. Raghavan points out that as against these two illustrations from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Gandhi was correct according to the conditions governing *Prāyopaveśā*, because the suffering party was powerless or had no other way open, and the other party was in the wrong, being the oppressor and exploiter.

In *Philosophies of India* (pp. 169-72), after tracing the history of *Satya* (Truth) from Vedic times, Dr. H. Zimmer, a contemporary of Gandhi, briefly deals with the Gandhian application of the principle of *Satyāgraha* (holding to the truth) in the field and problems of international politics. According to Zimmer, *This is an attempt to carry this ancient Indo-Aryan idea into play against what would seem to the eye to be the vastly superior powers of the highly mechanised, industrially supported, military and political equipment of the Anglo-Saxon's victorious machine of universal empire.* Zimmer agrees that Great Britain, at the opening of the first World War, promised freedom to India in exchange for co-operation in the European battle against Germany and Austria. But when the hour of



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