



Sanskrit
and
Development
of
World Thought

Edited by
Vempaty Kutumba Sastry

Sanskrit and Development of World Thought

(Proceedings of “The International Seminar on the
Contribution of Sanskrit to Development of World Thought”)

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Preface

I AM glad and feel honoured to place the proceedings of the International Seminar on “The Contribution of Sanskrit to the Development of World Thought” held in the Śṛṅgerī Campus of Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Karnataka, India, in January 2012.

Sanskrit is the language of the first available text of not only of India but of entire human race. Decidedly, the earliest text available to human race today is *R̥gveda* and its language is Sanskrit. As the text-writing tradition in Sanskrit continued till today, with ups and downs in different periods, there should have been considerable amount of thought content generated by it which can be considered as its contribution to the world thought. With this premise in mind we decided on the topic of the international seminar. It is also felt that international scholars working in various disciplines of Sanskrit can present the paper on the topic given from their respective discipline. Looking into the logistics of reaching a very remote place like Śṛṅgerī, a very small village in the hilly region of Western Ghāṭs, it was felt whether we shall be able to get good response from the scholars both quantitatively and qualitatively. But, we have experienced great amount of enthusiasm of international scholars especially regarding the topic and the place as well. We were able to get the presence of most eminent international scholars in the field of Sanskrit studies. I must say that we were fortunate enough to get world number one, two, three of international scholars present in Śṛṅgerī during the seminar. Just concluded 15th World Sanskrit

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The Rāmāyaṇa in World Literature

*John Brockington*¹

WHATEVER one's views about how the *Rāmāyaṇa* ascribed to Vālmīki originated, the story of Rāma is undoubtedly one of the most widely spread and popular not only within India but throughout the rest of Asia. Indeed, of all the epics composed in various parts of the world, it is the *Rāmāyaṇa* which has spread most widely, throughout India, Central Asia and South-East Asia, and been current over the longest time-span. In this paper I shall only be able to cover a little of what my title suggests but I hope to do so in a way that illustrates the significance of the story and, in order to give my remarks more cohesion, I shall focus on the impact of religion and sovereignty on the *Rāmāyaṇa* tradition and concentrate on its spread in South-East Asia, even so discussing only a few selected texts.

The general outlines of the story have remained largely unchanged since it was first told around the fifth century BCE, but its popularity has ensured that it was re-told with an ever-increasing number of narrative additions. Within India, many tellers made the story a religious epic, identifying Rāma as

¹ An earlier version was delivered as a joint paper by Mary Brockington and myself at the conference "Ramayana: Reinterpretation in Asia", organized by the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore, 17-18 July 2010; I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness to Mary Brockington's major input to all this work.



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