

## FOREWORD

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Sanskrit studies in Kerala have a long history going back to several centuries. Education in earlier days was synonymous with the learning of Sanskrit. Different kinds of institutions fostered the tradition at different levels in their own peculiar ways. The innumerable village-schools (*pallikootam*) formed the foundation for the preliminary level of learning. The teachers there were known as *Asan*, a variant of *acarya*. *Asans* imparted the basic knowledge in the practical subjects like Ayurveda and Jyotisha which helped the student to earn a livelihood. The Vedic line of learning was carried out in the *sabhamathams* and *salas* attached to the temples. A third stream along with the *pallikkootams* and *salas* were the *gurukulams* like the one we see in Kutalloor or Kotungalloor which flourished till the first half of the last century. All the three streams of learning promoted Sanskrit studies cutting across the barriers created by caste and community. Sanskrit studies in Kerala thus, had spread into different layers of the social structure. This unique feature of Sanskrit in Kerala has to be well understood before going deep into the details.

The torch-bearers of this hoary tradition of Sanskrit studies in Kerala were the *acaryas* who dedicated their life to the cause of Sanskrit, in all the ages. They practised all the four phases of *adhiti*, *bodha*, *acara* and *pracara*. Kerala was fortunate to have a galaxy of eminent scholars as *acaryas* who carried forward this tradition. They followed the *gurukula* system of teaching which maintained intimate relation between the teacher and the taught. Not only did they teach their students, but wrote explanatory and interpretative texts for the benefit of the larger sections of the society. Their scholarship was not confined to a particular branch of study. They had cultivated thorough knowledge in all the disciplines of ancient wisdom.

It will not be possible to give a list of these great *acaryas* even of the recent time. Killimangalam Narayanan Nambuthiri and Kotungalloor Bhattan Thampuran were two

great *acaryas* of the 20<sup>th</sup> century whom the British Government honoured conferring the title of *Mahamahopadhyaya*. Punnasseril Nilakanthasarma who was known as *gurunathan* was a legend in his own time. Parikshit Maharaja of Govt. Sanskrit College patronised a band of eminent scholars and recognised their scholarship by awarding the title of *Panditaraja*. Among them were the great Manthitta Kunchu Nambudiri, Ayya Sastrikal and Achyuta Poduval, to name a few. In Thiruvananthapuram also we have great names like Balarama Panickar, M.H. Sastrikal. These are only a few names that come to our mind. This tradition of the *acarays* is slowly vanishing. Two great *acaryas* in this line who are with us today are Prof. R. Vasudevan Potti and Prof. V. Venkitaraja Sarma. Traditional and modern scholarship are harmoniously blended in them. This monograph giving their brief Profiles is a humble tribute submitted to them by their students.



I had the good fortune to be a student of Prof. R.V. Potti in post-graduate classes in the Govt. Sanskrit College at Thiruvananthapuram. He taught us the *Mudrarakshasanataka*. His powerful words reverberate in my ears even after five decades. The images of Rakshasa, Chanakya and Chandragupta are strongly imprinted in our minds that time cannot erase it from our memory. His classes were so persuasive that no one can be idle or half-minded in those hours. Needless to repeat that he was a commanding teacher and that all his students will cherish their experiences in their memory. What I would like to give here is not of his contribution in class-rooms, but the services he has rendered to the larger sections of society and to the posterity by his writings.

It gives me great satisfaction to mention here that his *Balahitaishini* commentary of *Laghusidhantakaumudi* in three volumes was published in the Ravivarma Samskrta Granthavali Series when I was the Principal of Sanskrit College, Tripunithura. The manuscript was lying idle for a long time for want of a publisher. It was a good start. Later, we got many *vyakarana* works from his mature experience.

Sanskrit scholars were generally reluctant to extend their intellectual pursuits to regional languages, not to say of expressing through that medium. It was Rajarajavarma who tried to write grammar for Malayalam in Manidipika. It did not seem to have received the attention of the scholars it deserved. The next serious attempt in this direction came from Kaikkulangara Rama Varier who wrote a commentary in Malayalam for Siddhantakaumudi by name Padasamskarachandrika. P.K. Narayana Pillai wrote Prayogadipika depending mainly on Laghukaumudi. The Panineeyapradya of I.C. Chacko was another serious attempt in this direction. The author gives two reasons for writing a commentary in Malayalam for Paniniyam.

1. Malayalam is a language fast developing. It has been necessary to equip the language with technical and scientific terms to meet the needs of the time. This is possible only by coining new words on the principle of new formulations explained by Panini. So his primary object in writing a Malayalam commentary was to enrich the Malayalam vocabulary. Therefore, the author has taken only those portions which are helpful for creating new words in Malayalam language.
2. Paniniyam is accessible only to those who have the opportunity to study it directly from a teacher. All those who want to create new vocabulary for Malayalam will not be able to get a teacher to learn Malayalam. So, in order to help those who intend for self-study, a Malayalam commentary is essential.

This was the situation when Prof. Potti started writing Commentaries for Paniniyam in Malayalam. His aim was not the same of his predecessors. Of course, enrichment of Malayalam language and extending a helping hand to those who attempt for self-study are objectives which he too appreciates. But his immediate concern was the regular students studying Sanskrit in Kerala. He started to write the commentaries from his long experience of teaching in the class-rooms. Panini's aphorisms are crisp and precise. Ordinary students will not be able to comprehend the intricacies of the *sutras* simply by attending the classes. He needs to get further elaborations. The original texts will not satisfy him. So, these Commentaries are intended as tools for 'extended class-room studies' for regular

students. To put it differently, they are the print records of his class-room teachings which the student can bring back to their memory at home. Those who go for self-study also will be benefitted, but the main beneficiaries are regular students following a prescribed syllabus.

The popularity of the commentaries among students proves that such tools were essential for the students for the proper understanding of the *sastra*. The three volumes of Laghusidhantakaumudi have gone to several prints. Karakaprakarana, Lakarthaprakarana, Samsaraprakarana and Streepratyayaprakarana of Siddhantakaumudi (all the four published by Sukrteendra Oriental Research Institute) are now the precious treasures of Sanskrit students. It is our experience that these texts have created a qualitative change among students in understanding Paniniyam. What they mechanically brought to heart without understanding properly earlier is now understood clearly and reproduced after fully knowing what it is all about. The old generation demanded memorisation, the present understanding too. These Commentaries are testimonials of these shifts in focus of different generations.

The principal beneficiaries of these commentaries are the regular students; but they also satisfy the intellectual pursuit of the elders by providing a stepping stone to the higher levels of learning and research. This is more clear in the publications in other branches of *sastras* and *darsanas*. Let us take the Sastravadavali as a test-case. It operates in a wider range. It contains the main concepts of all the branches of ancient wisdom in a nutshell. The word *sastra* denotes, in this context, all the *darsanas* also. Astikadarsanas accept the authority of Vedas, nastikadarsanas deny it. Each of these systems has many sub-divisions. The world-view and approach of one system differs from that of the other. For example, the ancient seers were not unanimous in their opinion about the origin of the universe. The Vaiseshikas expounded the theory of *arambha*, the Buddhists that of *sanghata*, *sankhyas* that of *parinamas* and the *vedantins* that of *vivarta*. The entire philosophy revolves around these principles and there is no scope for compromise in these concepts. The understanding of these concepts is a pre-requisite to enter into any of the branches of

ancient wisdom. This is what this text does for a student of philosophy. It has selected sixty important basic concepts of all the *darsanas* and explains in a lucid way the details of the arguments in all their subtleties. This, I would say, is a golden key to open the ancient treasure-house of Indian wisdom both for students and researchers.

I need not go into the details of all his publications. Suffice to say that they have helped us to enrich our understanding of the classical texts.

I will be failing if I do not make a reference to one more thing. The famous *sastrasadas* at Tripunithura, as everybody knows, was started in 1926. Parikshit Maharaja was its patron and also the *adhyakasa* of the *sadas*. His demise in 1964 caused a great vacuum to these activities. The *sadas* was revived in 1986 with Prof. T.K. Ramachandra Iyer as its president. He was followed by Prof. V. Venkitakrishnan. Prof. Potti became the *adhyaksa* following him. He continues to preside over the *sastrasadas* nearly for two decades. His erudition in all the systems of knowledge, liberal approach and kind words of love and affection have been a source of inspiration to all those who participate in the *vakyarthavichara*. This has inspired many young scholars to present *vakyartha* in the assembly.

To be brief, I can say with confidence that Prof. Potti's lead and guidance in different capacities to the world of Sanskrit learning have no parallel, at least in Kerala, today.



The other *acarya* to whom tributes are paid by disciples on this occasion is Prof. V. Venkataraja Sarma. Luckily for me, I had the opportunity to be his student in my degree classes at the Govt. Sanskrit College, Tripunithura. As a teacher Prof. Sarma is loving and affectionate to his students. He is strict in his class and as his subject *vyakarana* demands is brief and precise. The same brevity can be seen in his writings, speeches and in the presentation of *vakyarthavichara* in the *sastrasadas*.

I had also the fortune to work under him. He was my professor and Head of the department at Pattambi in my early years of collegiate service. His advices were of good use to me in preparing for the classes and conducting them. He moved to Thiruvananthapuram as the principal of Sanskrit College. He retired as principal from the Sanskrit College in 1986. His long years of service as teacher and principal have earned him the love and goodwill of many students who still keep in memory their class-room experiences.

From the intellectual and academic point of view, he spent his post-retirement period more fruitfully indulging in his academic pursuits without restraint from Government or any other authority. The French Institute of Indology, immediately after his retirement, invited him to lead a challenging project, which it had conceived. He accepted the invitation and moved to Pondicherry where he spent 25 years with his research in the higher texts of *vyakarana*.

The French Institute was planning a mega project of making the dictionary of the examples used in Paniniyam grammar. Prof. Sarma was invited to be the principal collaborator of the project. He worked from the beginning of the project relentlessly with his colleagues and achieved what seems unattainable in a life time. The work has now been completed in nine volumes of thousand pages for each volume.

Paniniyam texts of grammar have three aspects: the *sutra*, *vrtti* and *udaharana*. The former two formulate and expand the basic principles and the last illustrates them with proper examples. Many studies have been undertaken by scholars in India and abroad regarding the *sutra* part along with *vrttis*, but the third part remained untouched. The project of the Institute was intended to fill this vacuum.

The Paniniyam examples are spread in Astadhyayi and its many commentaries. The examples furnished in four major commentaries of Mahabhashya of Patanjali, Kasikavrtti of Vamana and Jadaditya, the Bhashavrtti of Purushottamadeva and Siddhantakaumudi of

Bhattojidikshita are collected in this dictionary. The number of these examples so collected comes to 40,000.

'An article has been prepared for each example, and the examples itself serves as an entry. This article furnishes the *prakriya* accompanied by translation of the example and by remarks. One may access this article in three ways: i. directly (the entries are arranged in Sanskrit alphabetical order), ii. by searching for a particular rule of Astadhyayi and iii. or by searching for an Indian grammatical term, Paniniyam as well as traditional.

This dictionary should thus be seen as complementing the works on *Sutra* and *Vrtti*. More over it can be of interest for the study of Sanskrit vocabulary.'

- (From Introduction to *Paniniyam Grammar Through its Examples*)

The importance of the project needs no more elaboration. It is the work of a team of scholars and Prof. Sarma was the principal collaborator from the start.

Prof. Sarma, though active in academic circles through participation in seminars and leading *vakyarthavicara* in *sadas*, is not a prolific writer. His greatest contribution in this field is his association with the project of preparing the Paniniyavyakaranodaharanakosa. This gave great satisfaction to him as it remains a milestone in the study of Paniniyan grammar in India and abroad.

I pay my respectful *pranams* to both of my *acaryas* along with many other disciples.