

# JÑĀNA - PRAVĀHA

## CENTRE FOR CULTURAL STUDIES

### A GLIMPSE

The grace of Lord *Viśvanātha*, sanctity of the holy stream of *Uttaravāhinī Gaṅgā* (flowing in the northern direction) and the magnetic lustre of the city of knowledge Kashi, motivated Smt. Bimla Poddar and Neotia family to prefer *Śreya* over *Preya*. Searach for solace, thirst for learning and an urge for philanthropic deeds ultimately resulted in founding the Institution - *Jñāna-Pravāha*. After all the stream of Indian culture flows uninterruptedly on the Ghats of Varanasi, beside the sanctifying waves of the holy river. Seers, saints, scholars and devotees from distant quarters throng and add spiritual grandeur to the academic eminence of the city.

The seed sown in 1996 sprouted well and the plant is steadily growing into a tree and *Jñāna-Pravāha* is ushering into a centre for cultural studies which is set in a pleasing environment. One feels elated to have a glimpse of the golden glow of *Gaṅgā* after dawn and before twilight, symbolising the radiance of cultural and spiritual ethos of India.

The Institution aims at promoting the message and identity of Indian culture, preserving and disseminating varied and scintillating forms of visual and performing arts of the country furthering of study, research in and publication of classic literature and creating awareness to feel proud of Indian traditions and culture.



Lectures, discourses, workshops, seminars, symposia, demonstrations, and performances have become a regular feature. Courses in art, architecture, religion, rituals, traditions, folklores of India and particularly of Kashi's ceremonies and conventions are being planned. A seminar on *Samskāras* and yet a more elaborate national conference on *Dhvani* (sound) vouchsafed the serious academic commitments of the Institute. Documentation on these aspects has already commenced. There is a provision for instituting research fellowships in Indology. A library of good reference books is taking shape and it is being strengthened by the audio-visual aids. Some donors have graciously gifted their collection of books. Those who donate more than one hundred publications receive special recognition. A mini art gallery is to open soon and a collection of musical instruments has been a good beginning.

Collaboration and co-ordination with institutions, engaged in the similar activities is an objective of *Jñāna-Pravāha*. It was a rare opportunity to host a session of a national seminar on the 'Facets of Indian Miniatures' organised by Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras Hindu University. Similarly, The Institute hosted a day long session of *Didṛkṣā*, an International Congress on Culture and Tourism on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1999. It was attended by eminent scholars and executives in the field of cultural management and tourism in India and abroad. The plans are drawn to infuse virtuous instincts - *Samskāras* - among children and younger generation.

A special orientation course in culture during winter is commencing for infuseing rich cultural instincts among the younger generation. Suitable hostel facilities have also been



arranged to make the course a desired success. Sacred spiritual folios with audio cassettes in Sanskrit with Roman transcription are being prepared. Those which are available include *Udgīti*, *Śiva-Śakti* and *Stuti-Mañjarī*.

Within a short span of three years *Jñāna-Pravāha* has been able to bring out the Annual Bulletin and its second issue is in the hands of our esteemed readers and well-wisher. Dr. I. Panduranga Rao's book 'The Universe That Is God' is an important milestone.

The surprise visit of Hon'ble Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, Union Minister for Human Resource Development, on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1999 drew much appreciation for the aims and ideals and the commendable efforts of the Institute in achieving them.

Situated in the lap of the *Uttaravāhinī Gaṅgā*, *Jñāna-Pravāha* provides a conducive forum for academic pursuits and spiritual opening. The gem like building and beautifully laid out lawn and garden further enhance its grace. The atmosphere is charged with the sanctifying vibrations of sound (*Dhvani*) of bells and conch at the time of *Gaṅgā Āratī* in the evening. After all it is Lord *Viśvanātha*'s grace and *Gaṅgā Mā*'s blessings that *Jñāna-Pravāha* ventures to add a few drops in the perennial stream of Indian culture.

The encouragement, guidance and co-operation received from the saints, scholars, and local citizens are the sources of inspiration.

प्रसादाद् विश्वनाथस्य काश्यां भागीरथी तटे ।  
ज्ञान प्रवाहो वहति संस्कृतेश्चाभिवर्धनम् ॥



The Bulletin of *Jñāna-Pravāha* steps into the second year, reporting the activities of the Institute for the period from June 1998 to May 1999. We have rather mixed sentiments to express while bringing this issue to our esteemed readers. On one hand the Institute had the privilege to organise a good number of academic activities and cultural performances but on the other hand we lost a great well-wisher, guide, scholar of repute and supporter, Prof. Prem Lata Sharma, a member of the Governing Council. We paid our tributes in dedicating the National Seminar on *Dhvani* to her sacred memory as it was actually conceptualised by her. She was one of the Editors of the first issue of the Bulletin [1997-98] and we pay our homage to our senior brilliant colleague.

**First Lecture Series:** The Academic Year 1998-99 commenced on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1998 with a four day lecture series which was initiated by Dr. Bhanu Shankar Mehta on *Rāmalīlā*. The scholar who has devoted several decades on this subject came out with several interesting facts and anecdotes on *Rāmalīlā* which is the most popular public play of the country. It was just a coincidence that last year's academic session also began with discourse on *Rāmāyaṇa* by Dr. I. Panduranga Rao.

Acharya Sita Ram Kaviraj an exponent of esoteric knowledge spoke on *Nādatattva evaṁ Śrī Vidyā Mantrayoga kī Vivecanā* on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1998.

Prof. V. Venkatachalam, Former Vice Chancellor,



Sanskrit University, Varanasi, delivered the third lecture on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1998 on the life style of two incarnations i.e. *Rāma* and *Kṛiṣṇa*.

The lecture series terminated on 19.8.98 with the talk of Prof. K. P. Singh, who spoke on *Mahābhārata kā Bhārata par Prabhāva*. The scholar dealt with the influence of the Great Epic on the Indian culture.

**Demonstration and Documentation:** The other important activity of the year was the Performance and Documentation by Smt. Uma Maheshwari and Sri. Kalakrishna of Hyderabad. The gifted couple stayed for a week from October 5<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>, 1998 for demonstration and recording. Smt. Maheshwari performed and recited from *Kumāra Sambhavam*, *Abhijñāna Śākuntalam*, *Ādi Śaṅkarācārya*, *Bhakta Jaideva* (all in Sanskrit) and *Sugrīva Vijayam*, *Rukmiṇī Kalyāṇam*, *Bhakta Mārkaṇḍeya* and *Sītā Kalyāṇam* in Telugu. Shri Kalakrishna performed *Bhāmākalāpam* and *Navajanārdanam* in Kuchipudi style. The programme was sponsored by the Sangeet Natak Akademy, New Delhi, through the courtesy of late Prof. Prem Lata Sharma.

Swami Rajeshwaranand Sarasvati's gracious visit on *Gurupūrṇimā* culminated in performance of *Gurupūjā* of Smt. Girija Devi. He also delivered a discourse on *Bharata Caritra*. During Durgapuja *Basantapūjā* (vedic recitation) and *Devīpūjā* were performed and on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 98 *Rudrābhiṣeka* was a notable ceremony. Twelve *Brahmacārīs* from 'Sri Jayendra Sarasvati Veda Vedanga Vidyalaya', Chitrakuta collectively recited *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* and performed *Sandhyā* and other rituals.



**Second Lecture Series:** Acharya Shrivatsa Goswami, a noted scholar from Vrindavan delivered an interesting and thought provoking series of three lectures from October 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>, 1998. The topics of deliberations were :-

1. God : Are we not tired of it ?
2. Who is a Hindu ?
3. Religion and Environment.

Dr. I. Panduranga Rao, an erudite scholar and Member of the Governing Council of *Jñāna-Pravāha* lectured on the 'Two Facets of Excellence' on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1998. This was followed by the five day discourse on the *Aranya Kāṇḍa* of *Vālmīkīya Rāmāyaṇa*.

Prof. Pramod Chandra of the Harvard University, U.S.A. spoke on 'The Painter in Indian Painting' on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1999. The lecture with rich academic contents was profusely illustrated with slides.

Smt. Sunayana Hazarilal from Mumbai, an awardee of Sangit Natak Akademi, New Delhi gave a Kathak dance recital on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1999.

The Institute had a nice opportunity to have two special lectures on Indian art by the scholars from Vadodara on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1999. Prof. Ratan Parimoo a renowned artist and art historian spoke on the 'Perceptions on Studies of Indian Paintings' and Dr. Shailendra Kushwaha delivered an illustrated lecture on 'Some Aspects of the 17<sup>th</sup> cent. Mewar Paintings'.

**Seminars:** The most remarkable event of the period



under review was the four day National Seminar on *Dhvani* (Sound) from March 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, 1999. As reported above, it was conceptualised by Prof. Prem Lata Sharma and after her sad demise on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1998, the conference was dedicated to her sacred memory. Eminent scholars, musicologists and musicians representing different quarters of the country participated. The sessions were devoted to Vedic sounds, *Vyāhṛti*, *Nāda*, Grammar, Literature, Theatre, Music, Visual Arts and *Kīrtana*. The Keynote Address was delivered by Dr. Kapila Vatsyayana, an academician par-excellence and Academic Director, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi. The inaugural session was presided over by the well known literary figure Padmabhushan Prof. Vidya Niwas Misra.

The occasion was marked by the release of the book 'The Universe That Is God' by Dr. I. Panduranga Rao.

A prayer book with cassettes viz. *Stuti- Mañjarī* also saw the light of the day.

Yet another remarkable event was the hosting of one day session of *DIDṚKṢĀ*, an International Congress on Culture, Travel and Tourism, organised jointly by the *Prajñā Foundation*, New Delhi and the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras Hindu University. The V<sup>th</sup>, VI<sup>th</sup> and Valedictory sessions were held at *Jñāna-Pravāha* on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1999 which dealt with Travel and Cultural Dissemination for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Tourism and Culture: A synergic Duo.



The deliberations proceeded as under:

Sri Savinder Anand spoke on 'A Proposal for Sonic Tourism in India'.

Ms. Nicole Vaugeois of Malaspiana University, Vancouver, Canada, presented her paper on 'Development of Aboroginal Tourism - The Canadian Experience.'

Ms. Adriana Estrada of University of Mexico highlighted: 'Evolution of Tourism Trends in the Latin American Region and future Projection'

Prof. R.C.Sharma, Director, Bharat Kala Bhawan, Banaras Hindu University, and Member, Governing Council, *Jñāna Pravāha*, presented his paper on 'Culture and Tourism - A Reciprocal Commitment'

Dr.T. J. Kamphorst, Director, W.I.C.E., Netherlands and Dr. Ishwar Modi of the University of Rajasthan, Udaipur, moderated the sessions.

Since food is also an important component of Culture and Tourism, the Institution hosted a lunch - *Jīmaṇa* to the delegates of the Congress in the typical Rajasthani (Shekhawati) style. The menu chart highlighting the features of the food delicacies and their regional significance was circulated on the occasion. The Rajasthani folk songs and the Oriental style of sitting on ground while eating, were highly appreciated. The Chief Host, Smt. Bimla Poddar, Managing Trustee, played a key role in organising this novelty.

The Valedictory Session was chaired by Prof. Y. C.



Simhadri, Vice Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University. The resolutions adopted, included the creation of awareness for clean environment for tourists and visitors, efforts for getting rid of pollution from the Ghats of Varanasi, which should be given the status of heritage, provision of tourist facilities in consoance with the character of the place, retention of the spiritual significance of the pilgrim spots, utilisation of youth for guide service, encouragement to Home Stay Facility, revival of role of priests. The text of resolution is being reproduced separately under the 'Reportings'. Dr. Veena Sharma, Chairperson, Prajñā Foundation, New Delhi, moderated the session.

**Opening of Library:** On this grand occasion the Library of the Institute was also inaugurated by Prof. Y. C. Simhadri, Vice Chancellor B.H.U., by lighting the lamp before the picture of goddess *Sarasvatī*. The Library will be known as *Sarasvatī Bhaṇḍāra*. The collection of books of late Sri Janki Prasad Poddar served as the foundation of Library and it has further been enriched by the donation of good number of books by Sri Suresh Kumar Neotia, Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Sita Ram Shastri, Smt. Santosh and Pallavi Sharma. Smt. Bimla Poddar, Managing Trustee, gave a brief introduction, Prof. K. D. Tripathi appreciating the academic pursuits of *Jñāna-Pravāha* proposed a vote of thanks.

**Visits:** The Institution had the privilege to receive the following important guests and delegations:

1. His Holiness Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Kanchivaram.



2. Prof. Murlimanohar Joshi, Hon'ble Minister of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India.
3. Delegation from Museum Society of Philadelphia Museum, U.S.A. The occasion was marked by the *Vīṇā-vādana* by Dr. Gopal Krishna Misra of Banaras Hindu University.
4. Delegation from Richmond University, U.S.A.
5. The other important visitors were Pt. Jasaraj celebrated vocalist, Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra famous Odissi dance exponent and Prof. Mandan Misra Vice Chancellor Sanskrit University, Varanasi.

Some new plans and projects for next year 1999 -2000 have been worked out and are recorded separately in this issue.