

The Battle for Sanskrit book launch

During the months of January and early February, Sri Rajiv Malhotra conducted various lectures across India on his new book – “The Battle for Sanskrit”. The venues include Bangalore: Karnataka Samskrit University, Yuvabrigade, Bharati Vidya Bhavan, Samskrita Bharati, Indian Institute of Science, Amrita College of Engineering and the Art of Living.

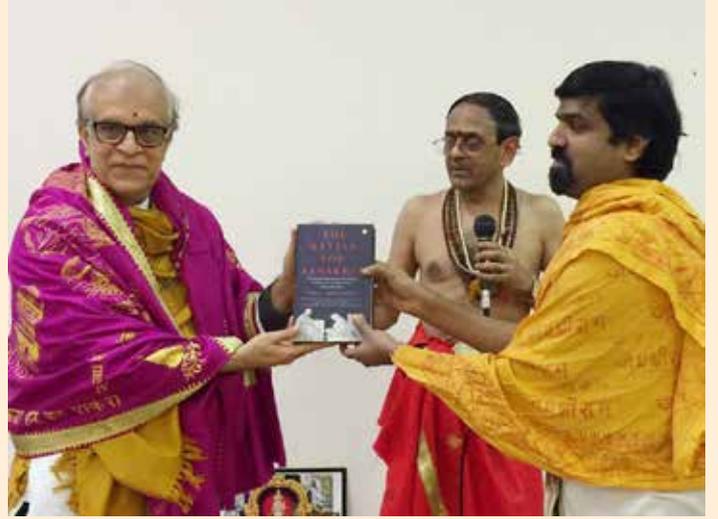
Mumbai: Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, Samskrita Bharati, Tata Institute of Social Sciences and Chinmaya Mission.

Chennai: Kuppaswami Sastri Research Institute, Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Bharati Vidya Bhavan, Samskrita Bharati and Ramakrishna Mutt.

Ahmedabad: Indus University.

Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University, Samskrita Bharati.

Apart from the tour in India, Shri Rajiv Malhotra has conducted a lecture at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and another at Columbia University.



Release of The Battle for Sanskrit at Sri Krishna Vrundavana, New Jersey

Response to “The Battle for Sanskrit”:-

The Battle for Sanskrit has drawn the admiration of several scholars and intellectuals. It has received strong endorsements from such luminaries as Prof Kapil Kapoor, Prof Dilip Chakrabarti, Prof Roddam Narasimha, Prof Arvind Sharma, Prof Pankaj Chande, Prof K Ramasubramanian, Prof R Vaidyanathan, Prof Dayananda Bhargava, Prof S.R. Bhatt, Prof K.S. Kannan, Prof Koenraad Elst, Prof Sampadananda Mishra, Prof Upendra Rao, H.H. Devamitra Swami, Hrishikesh Mafatlal etc.

The book has also been reviewed by Dr. Bibek Debroy, R Jagannathan, Rajeev Srinivasan, Shrinivas Tilak, Aditi Banerjee and others. Links to the online reviews are added at the end for reference.

Petition to Mr. N.R. Narayana Murthy and Mr. Rohan Murty:-

A petition was floated by Professor Ganesh Ramakrishnan, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, IIT Bombay, and jointly signed by

132 scholars and intellectuals from premier Sanskrit universities, institutes of technology, institutes of science, management institutes, universities of arts and traditional learning centres for the removal of Sheldon Pollock as Chief Editor of the Murty Classical Library. The Murty Classical Library is a project to translate 500 Indian literary texts into English funded by Mr. Rohan Murty with a commitment of \$5.6 million. The petition cited Mr. Pollock’s positions with respect to some of the cherished values of Indian civilizations which are often diametrically opposite to the views of the practitioners of the tradition. The petition cited that Pollock finds that shastras as flawed because he finds them frozen in Vedic metaphysics, which he considers irrational and a source of oppression. The petition also cited that Mr. Pollock has openly taken political stances in matters related to the political autonomy of India and has shown disrespect for the unity and integrity of India. Thus they submit that such an individual cannot be considered objective and neutral enough to be in charge of the translation project.



Reaction from the media to the petition:-

It must be noted that almost the entire spectrum of the media establishment has responded in support of Mr. Pollock. The eminent media organisations that have published articles sympathetic towards Mr. Pollock include the Hindu, the Economic Times, The Times of India, The Hindu Business Line, the International Business Times, Outlook, the Business Standard, the Hindustan Times, the Huffington Post etc. The concerted defense of Mr. Pollock by the media stands as a testament to his clout. There has hardly been any article in the mainstream media giving voice to the opposing view that has properly cited the intent of the petitioners. More often than not, the opinion pieces have distorted the petitioners' point of view by either wrongly or selectively quoting them or indulging in outright falsehood. There has been just one space provided to a counter view in the Indian Express by prof. Makarand Paranjape of Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Professor Makarand Paranjape responds:-

Professor Paranjape takes his stand on anti-colonialism. He observes that in the heyday of imperialism, the West's study of the rest was not benevolent or impartial. It was involved with the agenda to conquer, subdue, exploit and even exterminate nations and cultures. He observes Bernard Cohn's view that "the conquest of India was a conquest of knowledge." He also observes that the battle to regain India's civilizational poise, equilibrium, and self-confidence is far from over. He says that in matters of culture, education and thought, we are largely colonized and subservient. The Indian mentality especially of the elite, remains a prisoner of Western categories. He observes that Rohan Murty is not alone and that several business leaders have chosen to endow foreign universities rather than Indian ones. He notes that Pollock damns the whole shastric tradition as co-extensive with Sanskrit culture which is authoritarian. From such a perspective the whole of India's past becomes an object of modern rectification and we did nothing for a thousand years except oppress one another. He makes the connection between such a demonization of India's past to neo-Orientalism. He observes the alignment of Pollock towards Hindu-phobic causes that involve pressurizing chairs endowed by diaspora Indians in universities in the United States. He shows how his political stances smack of hegemonic practices which are bound to influence the contents and output of the Murty Classical Library of India.

Endorsement by the Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad:-

The Parishad stated that after reading the book, the Battle for Sanskrit, the Akhada Parishad realizes the importance of training their Sadhus in the modern academic discourse concerning our Sanskriti. Shri Mahant Narendra Giri, president of the ABAP, observed that it was clear to him that the academic interpretation of our sacred texts have been taken over by scholars who are not properly experienced in the Vedic tradition. The Akhadas being true insiders of the tradition must not lose adhikara to the views of outsiders especially those living a non-Vedic lifestyle. He categorically stated that they respect the freedom of speech of everyone including the outsiders and that it is up to the traditional adhikaris to rise to the challenge being posed by the outsiders. He goes on to say, "I am calling upon our scholars to properly study the writings of the Westerners, to have open and fair debates with them on key issues, and to take back the study of Hindu Dharma for the wellbeing of our samaj." He also says, "Shri Rajiv Malhotra rightfully provokes us to start our own university of Indology, where we will teach how to do purva-paksha and Uttara-paksha on Western indologists. We cannot necessarily change the thinking of outsiders, but we must protect our samaj from becoming intellectually hijacked and infiltrated by harmful lifestyles and values." This was an unprecedented endorsement of the Battle for Sanskrit by the apex body of Hindu Sadhus.

Conference series on Purva-Paksha of Western Indology:-

Professor K.S. Kannan, former director of Karnataka Samskrit University, has announced a conference series on Purva-Paksha of Western Indology, citing that it is important to consider the issues raised by the West one by one, and study their merits and demerits in a series of conferences dealing with the major contributors to the field. He also states that, "in order to nourish an indigenous Indology that naturally cares for the protection of its own cherished and valued inheritance, a movement has to be started, albeit with humble beginnings." For the first conference Sheldon Pollock will be selected as the scholar to be studied and abstracts will be accepted on four major topics:-

1. Pollock's thesis on Shastras being a problem of India's intellectual history and as a source of oppression.
2. Pollock's paper that Sanskrit influenced the Nazi ideology leading to the holocaust.
3. Pollock's thesis of the death of Sanskrit.

4. Pollock's thesis on the Ramayana as a political device.

The conference as of now has received sufficient response from scholars willing to carry out purva-paksha on the four topics. It is now at the stage where the scholars are provided with the essential thesis of Mr. Pollock on the four topics and the abstracts for the purva-paksha are being awaited.

Vande Mataram Library:-

Dr. Sampadananda Mishra, director of the Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture at the Sri Aurobindo Society in Puducherry, is planning to set up a new library to translate Sanskrit scriptures into English. The concept of the new library is said to be a challenge to Murty Library. They are planning to produce 500 volumes of religious and non-religious Sanskrit work. The library will be concentrating on Sanskrit texts, even scientific texts and unpublished manuscripts. It will also consider secular texts. They are also planning to translate Sanskrit works into other languages like Hindi.

Links to book reviews:-

- 1) **Dr. Bibek Debroy -**
<http://www.openthemagazine.com/article/books/home-alone>
- 2) **R. Jagannathan -**
<http://swarajyamag.com/culture/american-orientalism-as-the-new-macaulayism-and-what-we-need-to-do-about-it>
- 3) **Rajeev Srinivasan -**
<http://www.rediff.com/news/column/column-why-the-battle-for-sanskrit-needs-to-be-joined/20160120.htm>
- 4) **Shrinivas Tilak –**
<http://thebattleforsanskrit.com/shrinivas-tilak-review/>
- 5) **Aditi Banerjee -**
<http://indiafacts.org/the-battle-for-sanskrit-a-battle-we-cannot-afford-to-lose/>