



Rajiv Malhotra's previous books include *Breaking India: Western Interventions in Dravidian and Dalit Faultlines*; *Being Different: An Indian Response to Western Universalism* and *Indra's Net: Defending Hinduism's Philosophical Unity*. In addition, some of Rajiv's debates are showcased as the central topic of *Invading the Sacred*. After studying physics and computer science, he worked as a senior executive in the software and telecom industries before becoming a management consultant and then launching his own ventures in twenty countries. He took early retirement in the mid-1990s at the age of forty-four and established Infinity Foundation, a non-profit organization based in Princeton, New Jersey.

[www.RajivMalhotra.com](http://www.RajivMalhotra.com)

📧 @RajivMessage

📺 BreakingIndia

Online Satsang:

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/RajivMalhotraDiscussion/info>

Front cover: A marble frieze located in the chapel of University College, Oxford, showing Sir William Jones sitting on a chair, writing at a desk while three learned pandits are seated at his feet, wearing traditional clothing. Two are gazing down, and one is looking upward as if a bit lost. The inscription below hails Jones as the man who 'formed a digest of Hindu and Mohammedan Laws'. Source: Rajiv Malhotra

'I have always been an avid reader of Rajiv Malhotra's columns and books. This is a book which will long be cherished by the rational elements among the Indian and Western Indologists.'

– DILIP K. CHAKRABARTI

emeritus professor of South Asian Archaeology, Cambridge University

'I welcome this debate that Rajiv Malhotra has brought out into the open about the status of Sanskrit studies in the world, including in particular its homeland, India. This book should trigger a discussion on the scientific qualities of Sanskrit, in particular the tradition's emphasis on empiricism, and on the similarities and differences between Indian and Western approaches to knowledge.'

– RODDAM NARASIMHA

eminent aerospace scientist and recipient of the Padma Vibhushan

'This book rips through the fortress of American Indology and exposes the prevailing hegemonic discourse of the West.'

– KAPIL KAPOOR

former rector and professor of English and Sanskrit Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University; chief editor, *Encyclopaedia of Hinduism*; chief editor, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Poetics*

'This book makes excellent reading and uses an analytical method to compare the rival positions of Western and traditional Indian camps. The author has done a yeoman's service by providing a critique of the scholars who have hijacked the contemporary discourse on Sanskrit language, literature and culture.'

– PANKAJ CHANDE

member of the Central Advisory Board of Education, Government of India;

former president, Association of Indian Universities;

former vice-chancellor, Kavi Kulaguru Kalidas Sanskrit University, Maharashtra

[www.TheBattleForSanskrit.com](http://www.TheBattleForSanskrit.com)



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RAJIV MALHOTRA



THE BATTLE FOR SANSKRIT

# THE BATTLE FOR SANSKRIT

IS SANSKRIT POLITICAL OR SACRED?  
OPPRESSIVE OR LIBERATING?  
DEAD OR ALIVE?

RAJIV MALHOTRA

'This is a bold book, daring to take up some of the basic but unexamined assumptions of modern Western Indology.'

– Arvind Sharma, Birks Professor of Comparative Religion, McGill University



There is a new awakening in India that is challenging the ongoing westernization of the discourse about India. *The Battle for Sanskrit* seeks to alert traditional scholars of Sanskrit and sanskriti — Indian civilization — concerning an important school of thought that has its base in the US and that has started to dominate the discourse on the cultural, social and political aspects of India. This academic field is called Indology or Sanskrit studies. As the author avers, from their analysis of Sanskrit texts, the scholars of this field are intervening in modern Indian society with the explicitly stated purpose of removing 'poisons' allegedly built into these texts. They hold that many Sanskrit texts are socially oppressive and serve as political weapons in the hands of the ruling elite; that the sacred aspects need to be refuted; and that Sanskrit has long been dead. The traditional Indian experts would outright reject or at least question these positions, he says.

The start of Rajiv Malhotra's exploration of where the new thrust in Western Indology goes wrong, and his defence of what he considers the traditional, Indian approach, began with a project related to the Sringeri Sharada Peetham in Karnataka, one of the most sacred institutions for Hindus. There was, as he saw it, a serious risk of distortion of the teachings of the peetham, and of sanatana dharma more broadly.

Whichever side of the fence one may be on, *The Battle for Sanskrit* offers a spirited debate marshalling new insights and research. It is a valuable addition to an important subject and, in a larger context, on two ways of looking. Is each view exclusive of the other, or can there be a bridge between them? Readers can judge for themselves.