

Report on the Twelfth World Sanskrit Conference

The Twelfth World Sanskrit Conference took place in Helsinki, Finland, from 14th to 19th July, 2003. It was attended by around 270 participants from more countries than ever before (31 in all: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Nepal, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Ukraine, U.K., U.S.A.), with the largest single contingent coming from India itself, followed by the United States and Japan. The conference was most efficiently organised by Professor Asko Parpola and the conference secretary, Petteri Koskikallio, with the help of an able and helpful staff of volunteers from the Institute for Asian and African Studies, University of Helsinki. After an opening get-together party in the courtyard of the Institute for Asian and African Studies on Sunday evening 13th July, the conference itself took place in the handsome main building of the University of Helsinki right in the heart of the city.

The conference was organised into fourteen sections (covering Veda, Epics, Purāṇas, Āgamas and Tantras, Vyākaraṇa, Linguistics, Poetry and Drama and Aesthetics, Scientific Literature, Buddhist Studies, Jaina Studies, Philosophy, History and Epigraphy, Law and Society, Art and Archaeology), with four each being held concurrently from Monday to Friday. The opening plenary session included an excellent keynote address by Professor Stephanie Jamison, "On Animals and (Wo)men" and a fascinating film on the Anyonyam festival of Veda recitation in Kerala, together setting the high standard maintained in general by the other papers presented throughout the rest of the week, with some outstanding papers being delivered in all sections. Throughout the conference, the displays by various booksellers were well frequented especially during the coffee breaks and proved a useful adjunct to the conference. There were also receptions for the participants on three evenings, hosted by the incoming Rector of the University of Helsinki, by the Mayor of the City and by the Indian Ambassador.

At the closing plenary session well merited thanks were offered to the organisers for all their hard work in making the conference such a success. In addition, thanks were again offered to Professor Botto for the organising of the Turin conference, two resolutions were passed (the first deploring the current state of the materials of the Deccan College Sanskrit Dictionary project and urging their preservation by digital archiving and the second congratulating Professor M. B. Emeneau on his approaching 100th birthday on 28th February 2004), the venue of the next conference in July 2006 was announced as Edinburgh, U.K., and participants were reminded that the Treasurer would be happy to receive subscriptions to the International Association of Sanskrit Studies. The whole proceedings were rounded off by several presentations of books to

the University of Helsinki and the reading of their own Sanskrit compositions by Professors Ram Karan Sharma, P. C. Muraleemadhavan and Ashok Aklujkar.

The conference ended as it began with a social event – an excursion from the middle of the Friday afternoon to Suomenlinna Island and a farewell dinner in the Restaurant Walhalla – as a fitting climax to a friendly and intellectually stimulating conference.

John Brockington
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