

Report on the Fourteenth World Sanskrit Conference

The Fourteenth World Sanskrit Conference took place in Kyoto, Japan, from 1st to 5th September, 2009. It was attended by over 500 participants from 34 different countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, Mexico, Poland, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Taiwan, U.K., U.S.A. and Vietnam. The largest single contingent – nearly a third of the total – came from the host country, Japan, with the next largest numbers coming from India and from the United States. The conference was organised with great dedication and efficiency by Muneo Tokunaga, Akihiko Akamatsu, Masato Fujii and Yuko Yokochi, ably helped by a large band of student volunteers from universities in Kyoto and Osaka, who were unfailingly courteous and helpful to all participants. The conference itself took place in Kyoto University Clock Tower and the main building of the Graduate School of Letters.

The conference was organised into fifteen sections (Veda; Linguistics; Epics and Purānas; Āgamas and Tantras; Vyākaraṇa; Poetry, Drama and Aesthetics; Sanskrit and Regional Languages and Literatures; Scientific Literature; Buddhist Studies; Jaina Studies; Philosophy; History of Religion' Ritual Studies; History, Epigraphy and the Arts; Law and Society). two special panels (Manuscripts; Sanskrit Studies in Thailand), a Śāstracarcāsada (on Thursday afternoon, which attracted around 50 speakers and audience in total) and a Kavisa melana (on Friday afternoon, at which no less than 25 poets presented their work), with seven sessions being held concurrently throughout Tuesday afternoon to Saturday morning. The main features of the opening plenary session in the Centennial Hall of the Clock Tower on the Tuesday morning were keynote speeches by Professor Romila Thapar, "Historical traditions from the early Indian past" and Professor Masaaki Hattori. "Kyoto and Sanskrit Studies". Throughout the conference, the displays by booksellers in various rooms of the Graduate School of Letters were well frequented, especially during the coffee breaks, and proved a useful adjunct to the conference.

Other events commenced with a reception party at the Kyoto Royal Hotel & Spa on Tuesday evening, and continued with a presentation of Sanskrit Theatre by the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan on Wednesday afternoon (attended by around 30 participants), “Echoes of Utkala: classical and folk dances in Orissa” by students of Otani University on Thursday evening, and Hindi Theatre “A Crane’s Love” by students of Osaka University on Friday evening. On Saturday afternoon there were the various sightseeing excursions in and around Kyoto, which were greatly enjoyed by all who went on them (the majority of participants and accompanying persons). The final event was the excellent Conference Dinner, again at the Kyoto Royal Hotel & Spa.

The General Meeting of the International Association of Sanskrit Studies preceding the closing plenary session on Saturday morning, 5th September, ratified the decision approved by the Board that the next conference would be hosted by the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan in New Delhi, 5th-10th January 2012; it also ratified the Board’s acceptance of the offer by the Sanskrit Studies Centre, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, to host the 16th WSC in 2015. Participants were reminded that the Treasurer would be happy to receive subscriptions to the International Association of Sanskrit Studies.

The efforts of the organising committee and the student volunteers, which ensured that the conference ran smoothly from beginning to end, were greatly appreciated by all its participants. The scope and quality of the large number of papers presented in the various sections – 367 papers were presented in total – also contributed to the outstanding success of the conference.

John Brockington
Secretary General, International Association of Sanskrit Studies