

## **Tantric Studies in Varanasi**

### **A Brief Account of (late) Pt. H.N. Chakravarty Memorial Seminar**

(Jointly organized by I.G.N.C.A., ERC, Varanasi and Samvidalaya)

**24<sup>th</sup> February, 2014**

Last 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2014 at Vedanidhi Trust, Assi, Varanasi, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Eastern Regional Centre, Varanasi in collaboration with Samvidayala, Varanasi, organized a day-long colloquium on ‘**Tantric Studies in Varanasi**’ in the memory of (late) Pt. H.N. Chakravarty who remained a part and parcel of IGNCA, Varanasi from the day of its inception. In this seminar, total seven lectures were delivered on the life and works of the stalwarts of Ancient Kashi who contributed a lot in the field of Kashmir Shaivism. On this occasion, Mahaswami Sri Chandrasekhar Sivacarya adorned the seat of Chief Guest and Prof. K.D. Tripathi chaired over the programme. The members present in the lecture were as follows:

1. Dr. Bettina Baumer
2. Dr. Mark Dyczkowski
3. Dr. Rama Ghose
4. Dr. Shitala Prasad Upadhyay
5. Dr. Smt. Manju Sundaram
6. Ms. Patricia Obermeen
7. Ms. Veronica Benjamin
8. Mr. Raman Mann
9. Mr. Lubomir Ondracua
10. Mr. Michael Lannzielo
11. Mr. Karotik Szwedek
12. Dr. Urmila Sharma
13. Dr. Advaitavadini Kaul
14. Dr. Sadananda Das
15. Dr. Rajanikant Tripathi
16. Dr. Trilochan Pradhan
17. Sri Sanjai Singh
18. Sri Gautam Kumar Chatterjee
19. Smt. Kanak Dwivedi and
20. Dr. Pranati Ghosal

The programme inaugurated at 10.30 a.m. in the lecture hall of the Vedanidhi Trust on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2014 with a beautiful benedictory verse rendered by Dr. Smt. Manju Sundaram. After the formal rituals of lamp-lighting and floral tributes were over, Smt. Kanak Dwivedi delivered welcome address to the audience on behalf of Vedanichi Trust.

Prof. K.D. Tripathi in his 'Introductory' lecture remarked since the Vedic age Kashi has its antiquity as a seat of learning. It is one of the seven cities of the world which bestows Liberation instantly. As Kashmir is one of the vital centre of Kashmir Shaivism, similarly Kashi is very famous as a centre of cultivating Sakta, Saivite, Buddhist, Jaina and Vaisnavite philosophy also. Here culture and practice of the studies and *upasana* of specific schools has been preserved throughout ages even upto modern times.

Next to it, Dr. B. Baumer expressed in brief the necessity of present Seminar. In this context she recollected some reminiscences with late Panditji.

The first session started with an illuminating lecture of Mahasvami Sri Chandrasekhar Sivacarya in which he discussed the historical background of evolving Virasaiva School of Advaita Philosophy. In his speech Svamiji presented a detailed survey of Virasaiva Research, different division and subdivisions of Agamic Literature and many other aspects. He also gave an account of the foundation of Saiva Bharati Sodha Pratisthana in Varanasi and its publications.

Second speaker was Dr. Rama Ghose, who delivered a detailed speech on M.M.P. Gopinath Kaviraj, his life, and contribution in the realm of Kashmir Shaivism. With a special reference to Kavirajji's "Tantrika Sadhana" Dr. Ghose discussed antiquity of Tantra and salient features of Tantra as provided by Pt. G.N. Kaviraj. In course of her lecture, she discussed two stages of *susupti*, different levels of *sadhana*, *prakasa* and *vimarsa*. She also discussed how knowledge is manifest through the course of *sadhana*.

Next session was Dr. Shitala Prasad Upadhyaya who delivered his speech in two parts: (i) Contribution of Pt. Batuknath Shastri Khiste in the continuity of Bhaskararaya, and (2) Pt. Vraj Vallabh Dwivedi and Textual Tradition of Saivagamas. In the first phase he concentrated on the life of MM. Batuknath Shastri Khiste, his academic career and his works on Saivite Philosophy. In course of his lecture, Dr. Upadhyay discussed the long

continuity of Great Savants starting from Adinath to Bhaskarananda Raya and focused on the procedure of their worship (*upasana paddhati*). In the second lecture, he discussed the life and works of Pt. Vraj Vallabh Dwivedi, another luminous scholar in the field of Saivite Philosophy.

Dr. Mark Dyczkowski narrated his long journey in the world of Tantras with some reminiscences of his own experiences with the stalwart teachers and their famous works.

Prof. Kamalesh Datta Tripathi in his abridged lecture gave an account of Acarya Rameshwar Jha's life, his illuminating career and contribution in the field of Agamic Research.

The last speaker of the session was Dr. Bettina Baumer. She gave a lecture on Thakur Jideva Singh's life, his multi-dimensional talent and presented an account of his works on Kashmir Shaivism.

Next to it a small session took place for general discussion. The scholars assembled in the lecture hall raised questions on the papers presented and offered illuminating comments. The programme ended with a vote of thanks rendered by Prof. K.D. Tripathi.

(Pranati Ghosal)