



VASUDEVA SARAN AGRAWALA

Litterateur born on the August 7, 1904 at Pilakhua, a village in the Meerut district, in a respectable family, and died on the July 27, 1966 in the Private Ward of the S.S. Hospital of the Banaras Hindu University. He was one of the great scholar of the present century who specialized in several disciplines and areas of Indology including Ancient and Mediaeval indian literature, History, Culture, Art and archaeology. Dr. Agrawala received his early education up to High School at Lucknow, studied in I.A. and B.A. classes in the Banaras Hindu University, did his M.A. from the Lucknow University in 1929 and obtained the Ph.D. and D.Litt. degrees of the same University respectively in 1941 and 1946. For his research degrees hemade a Cultural study of Panini's Astadhyayi under Dr. R. K. Mookerji. His research eson the Astadhyayi are contained in 'India as Known to Panini' which he dedicated to his teacher, Dr. R. K. Mookerji, for whom he bad deep devotion.He was also a graduate of Law.

Dr. Agrawala started his career as a Curator at the Mathura Museum in 1931, about two years after passing his M.A., and he worked there for about nine years. In1940 he came to Lucknow as Director of the State Museum. In 1946 he took charge of the Central Asian Antiquities Museum at Delhi as Superintendent for Museums in the Archaeological Survey of India and worked there for five years. In 1951 he joined the Banaras Hindu University as Professor and Head of the Department of Artand Architecture.

As Curator of the Mathura Museum Dr. Agrawala was very much struck with aesthetic and historical significance of Mathura sculptures and terracottas of the Kusana and Gupta periods. His research papers on Mathura sculpture and terracottas remain invaluable even to-day.

Dr. Agrawala was deeply involved with ancient literature, philosophy, culture and art antiquities both as source material and as the best manifestation of Indian culture. He may be regarded as one of the architects of the Mathura Museum and his contribution to its all-sided development is considerable. He not only collected artobject antiquities for the museum, but also properly classified and catalogued them, studied them and published them suitably. His efforts enriched the Museum, and acquainted the people with the museum and the art of Mathura. (In his studies of the

Mathura art he included the proceeding and integrated vision to past terracottas through which the art was democratised). His catalogue of the Mathura Museum bears witness to his laborious and scientific study of the Museum antiquities. The State Museum at Lucknow also developed under his experienced and able supervision. Besides general systematisation, addition of a terracotta gallery in the Museum goes to his credit. His experience, studies and vision made him realise the need of a National Museum at Delhi. He also studied terracottas figurines found at Ahichchhatra and Rajghat and interpreted them in proper historical contest. While at the capital he suggested and supervised an exhibition of select India antiquities from different museums of the country which finally proved to be the nucleus of the present National Museum at New Delhi. That he was a creative organiser is attested to by the fact that a number of institutions substantially owe their origin or growth to him, some of them being Braja Sahitya Parishad, Museums Association of India, Hindi Janapadiya Parishad, Rajasthan Vaidika Shodha Samsthana, Parshvanatha Vidyashram Shodha Samsthana, Prakrit Text Society, etc. Of these the Prakrit Text Society was founded and registered in 1953 with a view to undertaking the publication of the rich Prakrit literature on the lines of the Pali Text Society of London. Up to 1966 the Society brought out nine works, the first and last being Angavijja and Nandisutta respectively.

Dr. Agrawala was a profound scholar of Sanskrit and associated languages including Prakrit, Apabhramsa and Hindi. His thorough knowledge of Indian archaeology, history and culture prompted him to make cultural interpretations of literary works. His studies on Indian literature present a resemble visualisation of

Indian culture and society within a proper context. This is well reflected in all his works on culture and literature, whatever it may be Panini, Harsacarita or Padmavata. His cultural study of the Harsacarita is followed by those on the Kadambari, the Mahabharata (entitled Bharata Savitri), Meghaduta, Caturbhani (with Dr. Moti Chandra), Markandeya Purana, Vamana Purana, Matsya Purana, and Linga Purana (incomplete). Besides these, he has also written a commentary on the Padmavata of Jayasi and Kirtilata of Vidyapati. His contributions in the field of Indian Archaeology, Architecture, sculpture, Paintings and Coins are of everlasting value. His knowledge of ancient Indian literature and various modern dialects made him a great practical etymologist and an equally great cultural commentator. The last decade of his life was mostly dedicated to Vedic studies. He wrote on the Vedas both in Hindi and English and his studies in the field are available in the form of collections of papers and original works. He aimed at reinterpreting the four Vedas but he had completed only the first mandala of the Rigveda. However, he has left a few works such as 'Rigvedic Mythology', 'An Introduction to the Rigveda', 'An Indian Window on the Cosmos' etc. which are more or less complete.

Besides his own contributions he also ably edited a number of journals such as Journals of the U.P. Historical Society, Lucknow, Journal of the Numismatic Society of India, Puranam - Bulletin of the All India Kashiraj Trust, Ramnagar, Varanasi, Bharati - Bulletin of the College of Indology, Banaras Hindu University, Journal of the Museums Association of India, Janapada, Nagari Pracarini Patrika, etc. He was also editor of the Prakrit Text Society Series, Nepal Endowment Sanskrit Series, Hindu Vishvavidyalaya Sanskrit Publications Board Series, and Indian Civilisation Series. A few commemorative volumes also go to his credit which amply speak of his great abilities and organising capabilities as an editor. He has also written scholarly introductions to a number of works on various subjects which are remarkable for their analytical clarity and wealth of information e.g. those preceding Angavijja, Prakrit Text Society Series No.1 and Sarthvaha by Moti Chandra. He was associated with the scheme of 'A New History of the Indian People' and contributed the section on the 'Art of the Gupta Period' in 'The Vakataka Gupta Age'. He was also to contribute sections on art in other volumes of this scheme some of which he wrote and are now available in his 'Studies in Indian Art'. Due to his profound knowledge of various aspects of Indian culture he could authoritatively review works pertaining to different branches of Indological

studies. His reviews are frank yet polite, and full of constructive discussions and original suggestions. His reviews like those of 'Catalogue of the Gupta Gold Coins in the Bayana Hoard' by Dr. A. S. Altekar (JNSI, Vol. XVII, Part I, pp. 114-123), Apte's enlarged Sanskrit-English Dictionary (Bharati, No. 3, pp.22-28), Franklin Edgerton's Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary (Bharati, No.1, pp.113-119), Priyabala Shah's Visnudharmottara Purana (Bharati, No.6, Part I, pp. i-iii), Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute's Mahabharata (Bharati, No.6, Part I, pp.v-vii), etc. evince his stature as a scholar and are of great value.

He could write with equal ease both in English and Hindi. In his Hindi writings he has used with great advantage most appropriate words from different local dialects. He has also translated into Hindi R. K. Mookerji's 'Hindu Civilization', in addition to two other works, which shows his command over the language and the subject. His immense work gave him due recognition. He was elected President of the All India Museums Association at Patna (1946) and Ahmedabad (1954), of the Bharatiya Braja Sahitya Mandala at Saharanpur (1949), of the Numismatic Society of India at Nagpur (1950), of the Veda Sammelana (1959), of the Ancient Section of the Indian Historical Congress at Cuttack (1959), of the Fine Arts and Archaeology Section of the All India Oriental Conference at Bombay and of the All India Oriental Conference at Gauhati (1964), of the Bihar Hindi Sammelan etc. He also delivered Convocation Address at the Bombay Hindi Vidyapitha (1947)