

THE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF INDIAN CULTURE

Director: Prof. Dr. Raghu Vira
Secretary: Dr. Lokesh Chandra

1
Old Assembly Rest House,
NAGPUR (India)
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My dear Dr. Roerich,

You will be pleased to learn that I am working on an ancient Indonesian text entitled Wrhaspatitattwa. It is one of the earliest works written in Indonesia on Saivism. It is in the form of a detailed Comm. on 73 Sanskrit stanzas, which are more or less of the nature of guiding quotations and employed to lend gravity and authority to the Indonesian text, which is ⁱⁿ an excellent state of preservation. Unfortunately the Sanskrit ślokas have become corrupt, in a number of cases to such an extent as to become unrecognizable. One of such stanzas relates to the wellknown parable of the elephant and the blind men. I am enclosing a Cyclostyled sheet giving a free rendering of the Comm. I believe that you will be able to help me by sending referances to some Tibetan works where this parable occurs. If there is a Tibetan stanza where this is given in a nut-shell that will be more useful for the reconstruction of the Sanskrit śloka of my text, as Tibetan affords an invaluable guide for the textual studies of Sanskrit works.

With thanks in advance,

Yours Very Sincerely,

Sudarshana Devi

Sudarshana Devi,
D: o Dr. Raghu Vira,
Old Assembly Rest House,
N A G P U R

2

Dear Professor,

I am working on an ancient Indonesian text on Śaiva philosophy. There occurs the following story of the elephant and the blind men.

Once there were blind people who were full of ignorance and they wanted to get knowledge about the elephant. Due to their strong desire for knowledge they requested that those who could see should allow them to touch it. Each one of them, however, touched it at a different place. The one touched its head and said; The elephant is like a pot. Another touched its ear and said; The elephant is like a fan. Another touched the tusk and said; The elephant is like a turned wood. Another touched the trunk and said; The elephant is like a snake. Another touched the belly and said; The elephant is like the slope of a hill. Another touched the tail and said; The elephant is like a flute. Each part was touched by them, still they could not find out what the elephant looks like; nothing to say about its height and size or its sense and species. Just as it was the case with the blind people that they did not know what the elephant looked like, so it is with human beings; this is called andha-tattva. This is like darkness for them. Blindness is the term for that. The internal content of the truth is denoted as the body of the elephant. The text-books and the teachings are compared with the head, the tusk, the trunk, the belly, the foot and the tail. There are many of them and they are full of the highest holy truth; therefore they cause confusion.

I shall feel highly grateful if you can send me the references to Sanskrit works where this story occurs.

Hoping to hear from you soon and with regards,

Yours Sincerely,

Sudarshana Devi

Sudarshana Devi

daughter of Prof. Dr. Raghu Vira,

Old Assembly Rest House,

NAGPUR