

## Report

### **Pandit Motilal Shastri Memorial Lecture Series 2017 and Release of *Bharatavarsha-The India Narrative***

September 28, 2017

How far did Bharatavarsha extend up to? How did the unique culture of Bharatavarsha evolve? Why has this culture survived? What were the languages and scripts prevalent in Bharatavarsha? What was Pandit Madhusudan Ojha's contribution in making us aware of the reality of Bharatavarsha with his deep and path-breaking presentation of wisdom and knowledge contained in the Vedas and Puranas?

These were some of the points raised by well-known linguist and Sanskrit scholar, Prof. Kapil Kapoor, in his thought-provoking and interesting evocation of the profound knowledge presented by Pandit Madhusudan Ojha in his treatise, *Indravijayah*. Prof. Kapoor has translated this magnificent work into English, published by Shri Shankar Shikshayatan in collaboration with Rupa & Co., New Delhi, as *Bharatavarsha-The India Narrative*.



Prof Kapoor, Chancellor, Mahatma Gandhi Hindi Antar-rashtriya Vishvavidyalaya, Wardha (Gujarat), was delivering the Pandit Motilal Shastri Memorial Lecture 2017 organised by Shri Shankar Shikshayatan at the India International Centre Annexe on September 28, 2017.

The annual lecture coincided with the formal release of Shri Shankar Shikshayatan's first publication, *Bharatavarsha-The India Narrative*. The book was released by renowned art historian and author, Dr Kapila Vatsyayan.



Welcoming the guests, Dr Santosh Kumar Shukla, Associate Professor of Sanskrit at Jawahar Lal Nehru University, New Delhi, and Convener, Shri Shankar Shikshayatan, said the book was an important step towards reaching out to a larger world of seekers of Vedic wisdom. He said the Pandit Ojha, in his book, has given a detailed account of Bharatavarsha, its boundaries, life and culture of its people and the scientific temper of its seer-scientists (*rishis*).

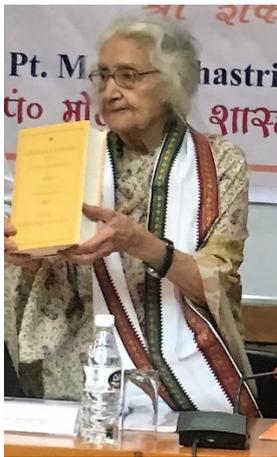
Delivering the Pandit Motilal Shastri Lecture, Prof. Kapil Kapoor touched upon many facets of the book to highlight the extensive knowledge of Bharatavarsha and its people discovered by Pandit Ojha in the Vedic texts. One of the significant findings in the book, as Prof Kapoor pointed out, was

the clear enunciation of the borders of Bharatavarsha—from the China Sea in the west to the Red Sea in the east. The book contains references to specific regions and cities by their names and locations associated with Bharatavarsha, most of which can easily be corroborated today.

Refuting claims of modern historians about the Vedas not being historical references, Prof. Kapoor pointed out that contemporary historical research demanded validation from found materials and records whereas the Vedic knowledge could only be learnt from *itihasa* (which broadly means `as it was`) and pauranic texts. This distinction between *itihasa* and history is to be understood to fathom what Pandit Ojha has presented in his monumental work on Bharatavarsha and its people.

Besides the geographical contours and topographical features, the book presents several other fascinating nuggets. One is the meaning of several Veda mantras, which, Prof. Kapoor said, could invite debate but are no less relevant today. ``*Agar vaad na hota tho ved na hota*`, he quipped. (if there were no debates, there would have been no Veda either).

Prof. Kapoor said five types of knowledge systems or *vidya* existed in Bharatavarsha. This is detailed in the book. He said there were two sources of knowledge—*prakriti* or nature and applied knowledge. Material wealth, he pointed out, can only be gained from knowledge, and not the other way round.



Making a brief intervention, Dr Kapila Vatsyayan, former founding chairperson of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi, said there was an urgent need to promote Vedic scholarship like that of Pandit Madhusudan Ojha, especially because much of the debate on the subject was monopolised by ``orientalists`` in the west. Scholars like Pandit Ojha have not received due credit for the remarkable work they have done in making the Vedas known to a wider world. The translation of Pandit Ojha's work by Prof. Kapil Kapoor was a significant work and the younger generation must take the initiative forward, Dr Vatsyayan said.



Prof. Ramesh Kumar Pandey, Vice Chancellor, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, New Delhi, in his address, dwelt on the sources of knowledge and credited Pandit Ojha with illuminating the `rahasya` (secret) of the Vedas.

Dr Shukla, during a short intervention, highlighted the importance of the book in the present context and said the organisation was grateful to Prof Kapoor for accepting the challenge of translating the work of Pandit Madhusudan Ojha. He pointed out that it was a cherished desire of the founder of Shikshayatan, Rishi Kumar Mishra, himself an ardent seeker and author of five illuminating works inspired by Pandit Ojha and Pandit Motilal Shastri, to have Indravijayah translated into English for wider dissemination. Pandit Shastri had chosen him as his disciple to promote the works of Pandit Ojha.



Mr Anand Bordia, Trustee, Shri Shankar Shikshayatan, thanked the speakers and members of the audience. Recalling the long association he and his family had with Dr Kapila Vatsyayan, he said it was indeed a privilege to have the gracious presence of such an eminent person during the day's proceedings.



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