



Annual Report for the year 1999-2005

Introduction

Samskriti - Heritage India Research Foundation as it was originally known was registered a Public Educational and Cultural Charitable Trust in the year 1999. The principle aim of the Foundation was to undertake various activities to preserve and propagate the Cultural Heritage of India. In this direction, the following programmes were successfully undertaken by the Foundation during the years 1999-2005.

1. Multimedia Presentation on the Life and works of Bhagavan Ramanuja

Acharya Ramanuja, the saint-philosopher who incarnated in the eleventh century was principally responsible for the establishment and propagation of the Bhakti movement in India. By the time Sri Ramanuja appeared in this world India had seen many philosophers and mystics. It was Sri Ramanuja who could bridge between mysticism and philosophy and arrive at a religion that was appealing both to the head and the heart. Thus, Sri Ramanuja is unique in the aspect that he was the first mystic-philosopher that appeared in the land of India.

Sri Ramanuja was also a great social reformer and by his relentless efforts established that every human being irrespective of caste, creed or sex was fully eligible to attain salvation.



The foundation felt that it was in the fitness of things to develop a comprehensive interactive multimedia presentation on this great saint of yore as a first step in achieving its objectives accordingly the same was developed with help from philanthropists and distributed free of cost to those who were interested in the topic.

The interactive CD covered the following aspects:

1. The brief life history of Sri Ramanuja covered in six stories.
2. A brief description about the nine works of Sri Ramanuja along with the audio samples of the same.
3. Anecdotes from the life of Sri Ramanuja depicting his greatness.
4. Procedure of worshipping as prescribed by Sri Ramanuja and his successor- disciples.
5. Videos connected to the topic.
6. Detailed quiz on the above aspect.

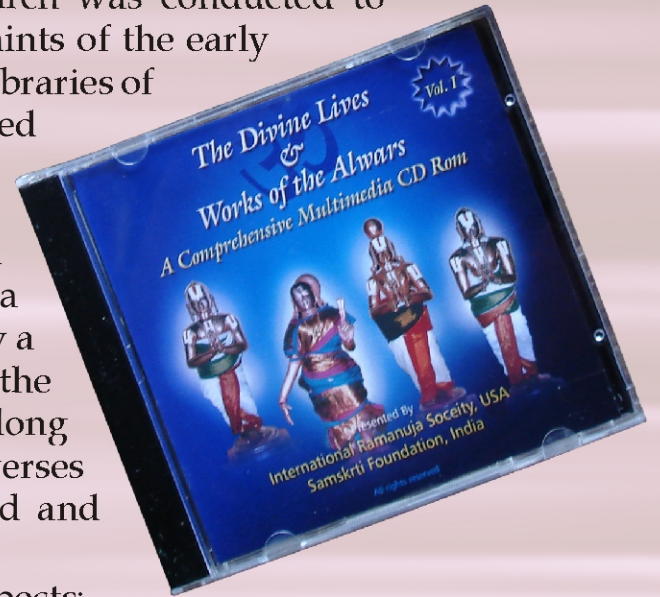
The multimedia CD was distributed in many parts of the world and received great acclaim and encouraged the personnel of the foundation to take up many more works in future also. More details about this CD are available on the website of the foundation 'www.samskriti.org'.



2. Multimedia Presentation and Audio Cassettes on the Lives and works of the Alwars :

In the early centuries of the Christian era, there lived many mystic saints who, overcome by divine experiences sung the glories of the Almighty Lord, which were in the form of spontaneous outpourings. The saints who belonged to the Sri-Vaishnavite tradition were popularly known as the "Alwar-s". They are twelve in number and include a woman-mystic known as 'Andal' as well as 'Kodai'. The compositions of the Alwar-s , that form the four thousand songs known as the "Divya-Prabandham" (lit. Divine compositions), are very popular for their mystic content and the nature of divine enjoyment and bliss they speak about. The Alwars in the course of their singing the divine psalms visited the different exalted locations of the Lord and sung His divine glories. These divine locations are popularly known as 'Divya-Desam-s' and are 108 in number. The divine psalms composed by these saints are sung in different Vaishnavite temples throughout India, especially South India.

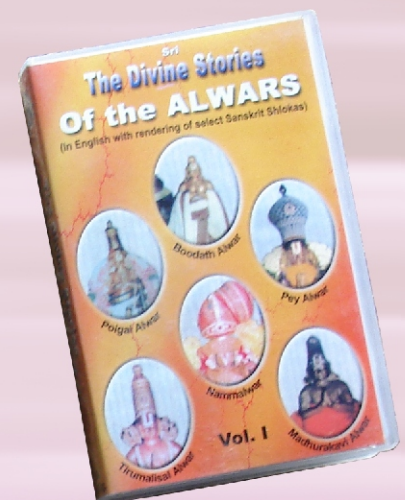
The second project undertaken by the Foundation was to create awareness about these divine Saints. Extensive research was conducted to extract the authentic life-histories of these saints of the early Christian era. Source material from various libraries of different parts of the country was assembled and data was collected. In depth research was conducted and the authentic aspects of the life-histories were collected. Based on these facts, the interactive Multi-media presentation was developed. Simultaneously a series of 2 Audio cassettes containing the narration of the stories of these Divine saints along with the musical renderings of the Sanskrit verses depicting their greatness was also produced and released.



The Multi-media CD covered the following aspects:

1. Brief life histories of the Alwars in the form of animated stories.
2. A brief description about the works of the Alwars along with the audio rendering of the same.
3. The Divine Places worshiped by the Alwars.
4. Videos connected to the topic.

The multimedia CD as well as the Audio cassettes were distributed in many parts of the world and were well received with great acclaim.





3. Sanskrit Courses:

Sanskrit language is the bed rock on which the great towers of Indian cultural heritage are based. Therefore it has been one of the main aims of the foundation to preserve and propagate the knowledge of Sanskrit. In this direction Sanskrit classes were conducted at various levels depending upon the levels and requirements of the students. Many students both from within India and abroad attended these informal courses and have greatly benefited from the same. The subjects covered under these courses are as follows:

1. Shabda Roopavali
2. Dhatu Roopavali
3. Sangraha Ramayana
4. First Book of Sanskrit by R.G.Bhandarkar
5. Second Book of Sanskrit by R.G.Bhandarkar
6. Other important works of Sanskrit literature.

4. Collection of Manuscripts and Library

From time immemorial Indians were experts not only in the oral tradition but also in the tradition of preserving their knowledge in the form of writings. These writings used different media like palm leaf, birch bark etc. However palm leaves are the predominant media that was used from long ago to house valuable information about the wide range of topics including medicine, indigenous science and technology, philosophy et al. The Foundation is actively involved in not only creating awareness about the invaluable worth of the palm leaf manuscripts that house our ancient knowledge system but also collect them and preserve them for posterity. It is also intended to further decipher the information available in the manuscripts that are in various scripts and in due course publish the same. Development of teaching packages for these different scripts to help train scholars to read the manuscripts is on the anvil.

A small library containing important books about the different aspects of Indian culture dealing with Sanskrit literature, Indian philosophy, devotional lyrics etc. has also been developed during this period.

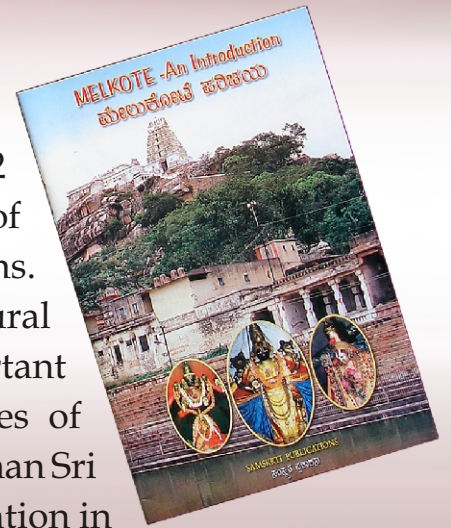
5. Publications

During the period the this report, the Foundation has also brought many important publications. Authenticity of information, correct readings (in the case of Sanskrit texts having varied readings), easy-to-read layouts, attractive cover pages are some of the salient features of the publications brought out by the Foundation. During the period of the present report, the following publications have been brought out by the Foundation:



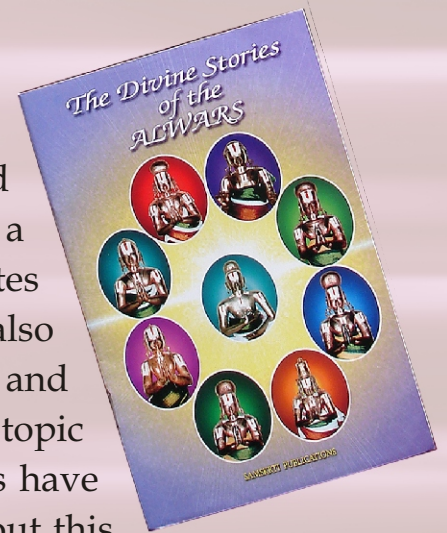
i. Book on Melkote (in Kannada)

Melkote, a holy temple-town near Mysore in Karnataka is a unique place of learning and religious fervor. It was here that Sri Ramanuja the saint-philosopher spent 12 years during the 11th Century and propagated the path of Bhakti (devotion) and brought about many social reforms. Melkote is also an ancient seat of learning. It is also a cultural and religious centre with many archeologically important structures dotting its landscape. The ancient temples of Melkote were renovated and consecrated by none other than Sri Ramanuja himself. The book brought out by the Foundation in Kannada gives an elucidate and detailed introduction into various aspects of Melkote.



ii. Divine Stories of the Alwars (in English)

As mentioned earlier, the Alwars command an exalted place in the religious renaissance of India. As a continuation of the Multimedia CD and Audio cassettes produced by the Foundation, a separate book was also published on the same topic. The book was well received and has been instrumental in creating awareness about this topic among the informed laymen in society. Many persons have commended the efforts of the Foundation in bringing out this authentic and crisp version of the stories of the Alwars.



iii. Narasimha Sahasra Nama and other Narasimha Stotras (in Kannada)

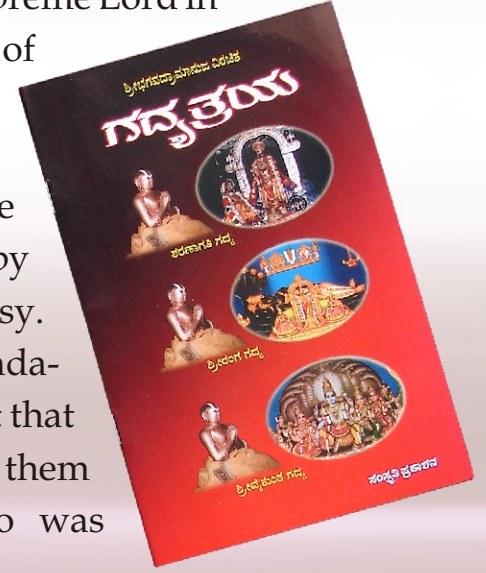
Lord Narasimha is the fourth and very popular incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Many devotional verses have been composed in praise of this Lord. The Narasimha Sahasra Nama or the verses having the thousand names of the Lord is also another important lyric that is chanted with great devotional fervor in South India. Devotees were facing great hardship since the verses were not available in Kannada script. To overcome this void, the Foundation brought out a book with the present title that was well-received and helped the devotees who knew only Kannada script to chant the devotional verses.





iv. Gadya Traya

Among the nine works authored by Sri Ramanuja, 'Gadya Traya' or 'a Compendium of three Proses' is an important work. In the first two prose's, a dialogue takes place between Sri Ramanuja and the Supreme Lord in the form of Sri Ranganatha, the presiding deity of Srirangam in Trichy, Tamil Nadu. The third prose known as 'Vaikuntha Gadya' contains a versatile and vivid description of the divine and eternal abode of the Lord known as 'Vaikuntha'. This prose was authored by Sri Ramanuja when he was in a mood of divine ecstasy. This book too was not easily available to the Kannada-people at large in Kannada script. The Foundation felt that it would be of great benefit to Kannada devotees to help them chant the Gadya Traya and hence this work too was published.



Conclusion

To sum up, it may be mentioned that the Foundation has only been partially active in the years 1998 2005 and though it has the potential to attain great heights, it has not been able to realize its potential due to the shortage of funds and also due to demands of time of the Trustees who are very busy persons and are in acclaimed positions in society. However it can be said with a fair amount of confidence that the projects that have been taken up by the Foundation have been completed in a very satisfactory and professional manner and have earned acclaim from different parts of the world. It is envisaged that in the coming years the Trustees will devote more time and energy and give the activities of the Trust a great fillip and facilitate the Trust to realize all its objectives and help it attain greater heights.

