PREFACE

It is gratifying to see research in classical Indian poetry and Sanskrit poetics settle down and prosper again in Poland where so much significant work on Indian literature has been achieved in the past. I have much pleasure in prefacing this book containing contributions dealing predominantly with kāvya, one of the most important branches of Indian culture.

Sanskrit authors on poetry are fond of referring to the difference that is clearly appreciable between didactic writing (śāstra) and poetry (kāvya) and are thus in perfect agreement with modern European literary criticism. We observe that both sorts of writing exist in Western literature, too. Not unlike the Sanskrit śāstra, European handbooks in, for example, natural sciences or newspapers, are purely informative and monosemic in style. The latter, however, that is, poetic writing, is - in our countries as well as in India - a linguistically complex, organic whole which, although built up on the same linguistic foundations, loaded with meaning down to the least detail and is frequently polysemic and full of surprises both in content and expression.

It is striking to notice that, as a matter of fact, there are numerous agreements in the essence, the forms and the ways of producing poetry in diverse parts of our planet. But, of course, as Andrzej Gawroński has put in so aptly, "Indian poetry has to be judged according to Indian standards of taste. It can reveal its surpassing beauty only when it ceases to appear exotic" and "it is unfair to pass
judgement upon the civilisation of foreign people before we have made our effort to identify ourselves with it”.¹

The articles collected in this volume focus on essential aspects of Indian poetry. Halina Marlewicz deals with definitions of kāvya in Sanskrit poetics, while Lidia Sudyka compares Sanskrit kāvya with European baroque literature. Anna Trynkowska discusses Mallinātha and classical theories on descriptions to be contained in the major form of poetry, the mahākāvya. Renata Czekalska studies the famous Hindi poem Kāmāyanī composed by Jayśaṅkar Prasād, a brilliant example of the continuity of the Sanskrit literary tradition up to modern times. whereas Bożena Śliwczyńska gives us interesting information on the role of Jayadeva’s Gītagovinda in the stage performances of South Indian temples. Finally, Cezary Galewicz, while not dealing with kāvya proper, discusses the idea of the 'novel' in the Ṛgveda. which, interestingly, occupied an important place in kāvya, too, since also the Indian classical poet was careful always to find something "new' (apūrva) and thereby delight his audience.

As libraries of universities and other academic institutions in Poland are still badly, if not to say poorly, equipped, the readers of volume 2 of the Cracow Indological Studies will hopefully exercise forbearance with the fact that, due to this circumstance, bibliographical references are not always complete.

Siegfried Lienhard

¹See L. Sudyka’s contribution on Sanskrit Kavya Literature and European Baroque Literature, p. 19, and the references given in note 5.