

Arise Bharat

Rousing National Consciousness

Impact of Kalidasa on the West

IMPACT OF KALIDASA ON THE WEST

(Based on *Light From the Orient* by Swami Tathagatananda, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, 2005 adapted by Khandavalli Satya Deva Prasad).

India's spiritual values and high moral tone expressed through her immortal Sanskrit literature was to make a great impact on the minds of creative writers in the West. The famous Abhijnana Shakuntalam of the fourth-century poet Kalidasa was in demand in the West for India's eternal values as they are reflected in her immortal literature touched the very core of the Western mind. Prof. Sylvan Levi wrote:

The name of Kalidasa dominates Indian poetry and epitomizes it brilliantly. The drama, a grand and scholarly epic, a truly classical master piece, which India admires and humanity recognizes. The praise which is saluting the birth of Shakuntala at Ujjayini, has existed over long centuries, bringing illumination from one world to the other since William Jones revealed it to the West. (Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Calcutta 1946, 175).

Arthur W. Ryder, one of Kalidasa's translators, also paid his homage:

The best proof of a poet's greatness is the inability of men to live without him; in other words, his power to win and hold through centuries the love and admiration of his own people, especially when that people has shown itself capable of high intellectual and spiritual achievement. □ (Arthur W. Ryder, *Kalidasa: Translations of Shakuntala and other works*, Everyman's Library Series, Poetry and The Drama, Ernst Rhys ed., London and New York, 1912, xvii).

Swami Vivekananda described some of India's gifts to the world:

In literature, our epics and poems and drama rank as high as those of any language; our Shaguntala (Shakuntala) was summarized by Germany's greatest poet as heaven and earth united □ (Complete Works, II, 511-12).

In *The Discovery of India*, Nehru pointed out that Indian philosophy was felt by Europeans- characteristically ambivalent about the tremendous stimulus of Indian thought on western civilization- to fulfill a need that their own culture has failed to meet (174-5).

The German naturalist, traveler and statesman Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) wrote about Indian poetry and observed that Kalidasa, the celebrated author of the Sakoontala, is a masterly describer of the influence which Nature exercises upon the minds of lovers. This great poet flourished at the splendid court of Vikramaditya, and was, therefore, contemporary with Virgil and Horace. Tenderness in the expression of feeling, and richness of creative fancy,

have assigned to him his lofty place among the poets of all nations.□(quoted in the Introduction, Monier Williams, *Sakuntala: or the Lost Ring*, Hertford, 1855, x).

Will Durant highlighted the impact of Sakuntala when he addressed the need for a deeper study of India's culture in *The Story of Civilization: Our Oriental Heritage*:

In 1789 Sir William Jones opened his career as one of the greatest Indologist by translating Kalidasa's Shakuntala; this translation, re-rendered into German in 1791, profoundly affected Herder and Goethe, and through the Schlegels- the entire Romantic movement.□(The Story of Civilization, 391-2).

Jones's Shakuntala inspires other English scholars: Kalidasa's *Abhijnana Shakuntala* was the first Sanskrit drama ever to be translated into a European language by Sir William Jones in 1789 to display an example of India's treasures of Hindu drama to an admiring Europe. Jones actually completed his first translation of Kalidasa's drama in Latin then rendered it word for word into English, without suppressing any material sentence and disengaged it from the stiffness of a foreign idiom and prepared the faithful translation.□ (Dorothy Matilda Figueira, *Translating the Orient, The Reception of Sakuntala in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Albany, 1991, 26). Jones translated Shakuntalam into English as Shakuntala or the Fatal Ring, it took only a decade for him to achieve international fame as the translator of Shakuntala, incomparable□ in Goethe's estimation(quoted in Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance:Europe's Discovery of India and the East, 1680-1880*, New York, 1984, 63). In Goethe's correspondence and diaries it is revealed that it held a special place in Goethe's heart.(J.W. von Goethe, *Werke*, Weimar ed.(W.A), Weimar, 1887-1912, cited from *Translating the Orient*, 215, n 5).

From Jones's translation, others sprang up in German, French, Danish and Italian. Shakuntala became one of the most circulated Indian masterpieces- it was reprinted five times in England between 1790 and 1807 and it was retranslated and published many times throughout Europe.(*Oriental Renaissance*, 51,53). The century after Jones translated it, Shakuntala appeared in forty-six translations in twelve different languages in Europe.(*Translating the Orient*, 12).

Jones went on to translate another of Kalidasa's poems, *Ritusamhara*, in 1792. He published it in Calcutta as *The Seasons, A Descriptive Poem*. (*Oriental Renaissance*, 31). His English translation of *Shakuntala*, together with his *Hymns to Narayana*, were studied with fond devotion by Percy Bysshe Shelly(1792-1822), Robert Southey(1774-1843), Thomas Moore(1779-1857), Alfred Tennyson(1850-1892) and other nineteenth-century English poets.(Marie E.D.Meester, *Oriental Influence in the English Literature of the Early Nineteenth Century*, 10). They read his works with admiration and quoted him. Thanks to the influence of Jones' *Shakuntala* and *Hymns to Narayana*, Shelly was able to overcome his atheistic and materialistic tendencies(P.V. De Sola, *Sir William Jones and English Literature*, 694).

English Indologist Sir Charles Wilkins(1750-1836), whose translation of the Bhagavad Gita had the greatest impact in Europe, returned to England in 1786 after sixteen years in India. Wilkins fitted a printing press in Bath, England, with Devanagari characters and from this press, he printed his *Story of Shakuntala* from the *Mahabharata* in 1793. Around the nineteenth century, a new cultural and literary currency was being wrought in Europe, with India playing a significant role in England's Romantic period. Jones' work, particularly *Shakuntala*, pervaded England through her thinkers and poets.

In 1853, the Sanskrit-English lexicographer, Sir Monier Monier-Williams(1819-1899) came under the eternal charm of Sanskrit. In his *Sakuntala or The Lost Ring: An Indian Drama, Translated into Prose and Verse from the Sanskrit of Kalidasa*, Monier Williams presented the English public with a free translation of *Shakuntala*. It was published in 1855 followed by a second edition in 1876. In his Introduction he wrote:

The most celebrated drama of the great Indian Shakespere. The need felt by the British public for such a translation as I have here offered the most popular of the Indian dramas, in which the customs of the Hindus, their opinions, prejudices, and fables; their religious rites, daily occupations, and amusements are reflected as in a mirror.(Sakoontala, xi-xii).

Monier Williams highly appreciated Kalidasa's use of eleven different varieties of meter in the first thirty-four verses of the poem. He chose to employ in his translation both blank verse and rhyming stanzas. (But) He felt his own meters to be prosaic and was aware that he might not have expressed in language as musical as his(Kalidasa's) own. (Sakoontala, xiii). He humbly acknowledged, I have done all in my power to avoid substituting a fictitious and meager poem of my own and that æno metrical system in English could give any idea of the almost infinite resources(of Sanskrit) (Sakoontala, xii). Moniar Williams Sakoontala was included in Sir John Lubbock's(1824-1913) list of world's one hundred best titles under the name Abigyan Sakuntala. (G.G.Sengupta, Indology and Its Eminent Western Savants, Calcutta, 1996, 84-5).

Impact of Sakuntala in Germany: During 1790s, Oriental research in Jena, Weimar and Heidelberg and then at Bonn, Berlin and Tübingen was established. German translations and re-translations of *Sakuntala*, along with the *Laws of Manu* and the *Gita Govinda* were studied in depth and ignited a fervid intensity in receptive German minds.(cited from Oriental Renaissance, 53). Their contact with India's original and universal religion through these works gave them a sense of exaltation. Shakuntala was the first work to attract Johann Gottfried von Herder(1744-1803) with far reaching effects.

George Forster(1754-1794) published his very popular English translation of Shakuntala from Jones' English version in 1791. He sent it to Herder on May 17th, 1791(Oriental Renaissance, 57-8). Herder wrote to Forster that Shakuntala was a masterpiece that appears once every two thousand years (Translating the Orient, 13). He also wrote the preface to Forster's second edition. Herder was enchanted by Shakuntala and wanted others to experience his recognition of it as a new model in dramatic theory. He wrote a lengthy essay about Shakuntala, challenging the Aristotelian dramatic theory by which all dramatic works were evaluated upto that time. Herder also reevaluated his conceptions about Indian art in light of Shakuntala and concluded that the Greek model was not the absolute model in art.(*Samtliche Werke*, cited from *Translating the Orient*, 13-14). Significantly Herder joined the historic Enlightenment and Romantic Movements in Germany.

Herder, Goethe(1749-1832) and Schiller(1759-1805)- all ardent admirers of Kalidasa- shared Forster's great fervor for Shakuntala. Bhimsen Gupta's *The Glassy Essence: A Study of E.M. Forster, L.H.Meyers and Aldous Huxley in Relation to Indian Thought*(Kurukshetra, 1976, 3) gives interesting details. Goethe's adaptation of *Shakuntala* for the German stage was also the source for his prologue in the Theatre in *Faust*. This detail was revealed by the poet Heinrich Heine(1797-1856) (Oriental Renaissance, 60). Heine's spiritual home was on the banks of the Ganges according to Danish literary critic George Brandes. He was inspired by his passionate interest in Indian literature and modeled three sonnets after Shakuntala and sent them to Ernst Friedrich Ludwig Robert.(Oriental Renaissance, 60).

E.B.Eastwick translated Goethe's lines into English: Wouldst thou the young years blossoms and the fruits of its decline, And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed, Wouldst thou the earth and Heaven itself in one sole name combine? I name thee, O Sakuntala! And all at once is said. (cited from *Glassy Essence*, 3).

Swamy Vivekananda in his *Memoirs of European Travel* noted the inspiration Gothe and other Europeans derived from India's sacred scriptures:

He is a good poet(Jules Du Bois, the famed French writer), and is an advocate of Indian Vedantic ideas that have crept into the great French poets, such as Victor Hugo and Lamartine and others, and the great German poets such as Goethe, Schiller and the rest. The influence of Vedanta on European poetry and philosophy is very great. Only some of them do not care to admit this indebtedness, and want to establish their complete originality, as Herbert Spencer and others, for instance. But the majority do openly acknowledge.□ (Complete Works, VII, 375-76).

Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829), German Indologist, was also greatly inspired by George Forster's translation of Shakuntala. Schlegel's work in 1808 established the contributions in antiquity of the language and wisdom of India (*Über die Sprache Und Weisheit der Indier: Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Altertumskunde*). It was a primary publication of nineteenth-century European Indology influenced by the Romantic Movement its scholarly translations of extracts from the sacred Sanskrit texts forever inspired Germans who refer to the Wisdom of India□.(Influence, 20).

A close friend of Friedrich Schlegel, the poet Novalis was inspired by *Shakuntala*. The death in her early youth of his fiancée Sophie von Kuhn, became merged in his mind with the German perception of India as the childhood of humanity□ and occasioned his romantic mystery poem about her. In this work, he united the values of the departed young soul of Sophie with the values of Hinduism, reflecting Maier's definition of Sanskrit poetry as *Morgentraume unseres Geschlechtes*, the childhood dream of our species. (Oriental Renaissance, 207).

The German creative mind was strongly attracted to the Upanishadic ideals. A flow of novels and poems was inspired from Asian streams as German scholars read and translated India's most important classical poems and dramas. During the 1830s, the dissemination of the works of Kalidasa and Bhartrihari were greatly assisted through the translations of Peter von Bohlen(1796-1840) in Germany(Oriental Renaissance, 119). *Shakuntala* was translated more than ten times, *Vikramorvasi* five times and produced as an opera in Munich in 1886. *Mricchhakatika*(The Little Clay Cart)was translated four times and staged in Western theatres. *Dasa Kumara Charitra* was translated three times.(*Art, Culture and Spirituality: A Prabuddha Bharata Centenary Perspective 1896-1996*, Calcutta, 1996, 362). *Shakuntala* was adapted to the German theatre and the Parisian ballet and produced on the English stage in 1899, 1912, and 1913. The banal taste of the theatre-goers was elevated by the productions of *Shakuntala*- in Russia, Alexander Tairov deliberately staged the play at Moscow's Kamerny Theatre in 1914 expressly for that reason. He adapted it to the aesthetics of the prevailing Symbolist School, which emphasized the visual, poetic and contemplative descriptions of nature. (Translating the Orient, 186-7).

Appreciation for Shakuntala in France: By the late eighteenth century, French writers had also acquired intimate knowledge of Indian literature. **Jean-Jacques Ampere(the scientist)predicted that Indian thought would introduce another Renaissance in his own time.**(Vivekananda Kendra Patrika, Aug,1977, 314). Alphonse de Lamartine(1790-1869) was penning reliable prose about the original Hindu epics along with translations of Indian poetry and drama. According to the Sanskrit scholar, Louis Renou, the three principal poets of the Romantic period in France, Lamartine, Alfred-Victor de Vigny(1797-1863) and Victor Hugo(1802-1885) were all greatly influenced by the Upanishads and other Indian lore. Their enthusiasm and wonder increased when they became acquainted with translations of the great Sanskrit works, such as Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, which captivated so many writers of significance. Lamartine, who studied the rules of Sanskrit dramaturgy available at the time as well as the moral goals of the play, lauded it variously. He wrote that *Shakuntala* had within it the threefold genius of Homer, Theocritus, and Tasso combined in a single poem□ (Alphonse de Lamartine, *Cours familier de litterature*, cited in Oriental Renaissance, 61).

Shakuntala's significant inspiration was not only direct- it was also subtle and indirect. Louis Matthieu Langles, curator of Oriental manuscripts at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* documented Indic research and included it in the third volume of *Magasin Encyclopedique*(Oriental Renaissance, 55). Langles was also aware of the pleasing novelist Pougen's excellent

analysis of Jones' *Shakuntala* in the *Journal des theatres*. (Oriental Renaissance, 56). It is a significant indication that Jones translation had passed beyond the realm of the specialists and reached the public domain.

In 1800 the accumulated Indian manuscripts languishing in the Bibliotheque Nationale began to be prepared for inventory. The journal *Decade Philosophique* published extracts from Jones translation of *Abhijnana Shakuntalam*. (Francois Joseph Picavet, *Les ideologues*, cited from Oriental Renaissance, 55). In 1818, Bruguere de Sorsum, characterized by Baldensperger as a well-read administrator and former adviser to Jerome in Westphalia (Oriental Renaissance, 79) changed his career and became a writer. His love for poetry earlier brought him in contact with *Shakuntala*, which he had translated from Jones English version in 1803. He also gathered together ideas from Forster's German translation of *Shakuntala* that he had discovered in Anquetil-Duperron's French edition of Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo's travels and added them to his work. **In 1825, the French scholar Joseph Daniel Guigniaut exclaimed, who has not read the Shakuntala? and wrote about Hindu poetry that the small portion of it with which we are familiar has surprised and impressed all Europe.** (quoted in Oriental Renaissance, 59, 54).

Antoine-Leonard de Chezy (1774-1832), French Sanskrit scholar, had read Jones version of *Shakuntala* which made him exclaim, I shall never forget the impression it made on me (Oriental Renaissance, 299). Chezy was the first to fully and directly translate *Shakuntala* from a Bengali version into French. He published it in 1830 with ample notes that included an explanation of the meaning of the term Vedas, that proved useful to many writers after him. (Oriental Renaissance, 93, 299). One of them was the novelist Theophile Gautier, who conveyed and diffused the oriental presence through his poetry which had influenced Mallarme and Victor Hugo. His numerous tales made ample use of Chezy's notes. (Oriental Renaissance, 413). Chezy also included Goethe's famous lines as an epigraph to the work, which prompted Goethe to write to Chezy that *Shakuntala* was a star that makes the night more agreeable than the day. (Oriental Renaissance, 61). Chezy's love for *Shakuntala* also made him exclaim, Oh most happy Forster! How I envy him (Oriental Renaissance, 59). Chezy's *Shakuntala* singularly nourished all France, which had a strong infatuation for Hindu literature in the early 19th century.

Chezy and Jean Perrre Guillaume Pauthier (1801-1873) noted excerpts from the Mahabharata text- *Shakuntala*, *Nala*, *The Flood*, and *The Abduction of Draupadi*- in the *Revue de Paris* in September 1832.

Victor Hugo (1802-1885), as pointed out above, received inspiration from the work of Theophile Gautier. Hugo gave a definite metaphysical and literary form to India in the Romantic period in Europe.

In 1853, the first volume of the Ramayana appeared in translation, published by scholar and linguist Valentin Parisot. Hippolite Fauche (1797-1869) was inspired after reading it and he immediately began to produce a flood of Hindu translations, including his notable one of Kalidasa's complete works in two volumes published in 1859-60 (Oriental Renaissance, 118). The French poet and satirist, Joseph Mery (1798-1865) earned legendary repute among his peers for his love for the works of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti. His contemporaries claimed that There is not one line from Kalidasa or Bhavabhuti that he cannot complete when someone says the first word of it. (Oriental Renaissance, 348). Mery could quote lengthy passages from Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti from memory.

A century later in the critical period of the 1940s, writers such as Rene Guenon appealed to the masses to seek their way out of the world's mortal crisis through Oriental sources of contemplation. The popular French stage inspired audiences with presentations of *Shakuntala* and *Mricchhakatika*. The poet Rimbaud wrote that the French were inclined to continue returning to the Orient and to the first and eternal wisdom. (Oriental Renaissance, 477).

The Literary Miracle and Charm of Shakuntala: Kalidasa's *Abhijnana Shakuntala* directly influenced the entire world literature of the nineteenth century. The renaissance of literature began with Rene Chateaubriand(1768-1848). The renaissance of literature began with Rene Chateaubriand(1768-1848). He provided firsthand evidence of the impact of translated Indian literature on London in his *Essai sur les Revolutions*, which was published in 1796.(Oriental Renaissance, 61). One of his chapter headings read, *Kreeshna frangment du poeme Mahabharat, tire du Sanskritâ Sacontala*.

Chateaubriand published an updated edition of *Essai* in 1826, in which he included the progress in Sanskrit studies over the intervening thirty years. In 1802 he listed *Sakuntala* under the heading Sanskrit poetry in his *Gene du Christianisme* and referred to Robertson's India. In 1791 Robertson treated *Shakuntala* in his widely read work, *An Historical Disquisition Concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India*, which had been translated into German as well as into French (*Recherches historiques sur l'Inde*)(Oriental Renaissance, 61). He

Compared *Shakuntala* to one of the oldest epic works, the work of Ossian (Oriental Renaissance, 55,61,227). Chateaubriand's book produced a great impact on the mind of August Wilhelm Schlegel. August and his brother Friedrich learnt Sanskrit with that inspiration.

In America, the transcendentalist Thoreau(1817-1862) was living in self-imposed retreat by his sacred Ganges(Walden Pond). He nourished his intellect with Jones translation of *Shakuntala* along with other sacred Indian lore. The transforming message of *Shakuntala* and India's sacred teachings purified his mind. By a conscious effort of the mind we can stand aloof from actions and their consequences; and all things, good and bad, go by us like a torrent,□ he wrote.(Sachin N.Pradhan, *India in the United States, Contributions of India and Indians in the United States of America*, Bethesda, MD, 1996,17).

The Everyman's Library edition of Arthur W.Ryder's *Kalidasa:Translations of Shakuntala and Other Works* was published in New York and London in 1912. In his introduction, Ryder wrote that, from the time of Jones' translation of *Shakuntala*, **as it is testified by new translations and by reprints of the old, there have been many thousands who have read at least one of Kalidasa's works; other thousands have seen it on the stage in Europe and America(it has) a reputation that maintains itself indefinitely and that conquers a new continent** (Everyman's Kalidasa, xviii).

(NOTE:This is how Hindus conquered other continents while the West conquered through military might, intrigue and what not).

These gleanings demonstrate that the revelation of Sanskrit was universal: it touched widely creative minds both immediately and generally. Each receptive, scholarly mind presented here was occupied solely to extract the essence of Hinduism the Sanskrit language offered. *Shakuntala* was the ideal footbridge to the new field of Sanskrit studies in the eighteenth century, over which liberal minds such as those of Goethe and Herder were able to cross into India. In 1991, a scholarly work of great devotion was published by Dorothy Matilda Figueira that indicates the enduring and profound interest on the subject of *Shakuntala*, *Translating the Orient, The Reception of Shakuntala in Nineteenth Century Europe* documents the author's painstaking comparative study of the major European translations of *Abhijnana Shakuntalam*.

Her critical analysis of the text fulfills the objective of addressing the specific problems encountered in cross-cultural translation to serve the nobler purpose of greater understanding between all the cultures of the world. Figueira affirms that the literary event of the discovery and translation of *Shakuntala* "opened up not only the boundaries of

humanism, but also fostered a widespread reevaluation of national literaturesâ€¦ in the ability of all ethnic groups to produce great art.â€œ(Translating the Orient, 16).

Misuses: (Discovery of Sanskrit by the west is not without its seamy side. Starting with the translation of Veda by Max Muller, establishment of Boden Chair at Oxford for Sanskrit studies, there have been many attempts to hijack Veda and Sanskrit from their roots and press them in the service of christian evangelism and western imperialism. There were also some pedantic Germans who used Shakuntala to promote their parochial agenda. Gobineau's attempts to extract support for his race theory from Sanskrit literature is an example. Max Muller's shortsighted pronouncements on the time of Vedas and his Arya-Dasa racial categorization without any internal or external support whatsoever, left a dangerous legacy in the form of the nefarious Aryan Invasion Theory with its inspiration to Dravidian-Dalit politics and various other separatist movements presently aided and abetted by the Western Churches, governments, academia and other agencies(for details see *Breaking India* by Rajiv Malhotra and Aravindan Neelakandan)).

Further Observations on the Universal Influence of Sanskrit Through Shakuntala:

The universal impact of the Sanskrit language through the ages is twofold. It helps the individual to go beyond a finite concept of self and worldly personality with which he has solely identified and develop a divine personality. Sanskrit accomplishes this through the medium of the Indian sacred and classical literature. Sanskrit conveys through India's literature the eternal, the universal and the spiritual in man, urging people to discover their spiritual consciousness. The Upanishads and other sacred Hindu texts introduced to the west are the great conveyors of spiritual enlightenment to the world. Sanskrit is also uniquely suited to have an eternal and boundless relationship with the world due to its continuity in Indian tradition and culture.

As one of the most circulated Sanskrit translations, Kalidasa's Abhijnana Shakuntalam provides a radiant example of the continuous attraction for the immortal Sanskrit works in the modern West. Jones' Shakuntala was reprinted five times in England between 1790 and 1807 and retranslated and published many times throughout Europe. Figueira sheds new light on the far reaching influence in the West of Kalidasa's masterpiece.

Beyond the tribute of so many translations, Europeans embraced Shakuntala in their own fashion. Her story was adopted, parodied, sung and danced. In 1895, Andre Ferdinand Herold's adaptation, *L'Anneau de Sakuntala*, was performed and well received at the Theatre de l Oeuvre in Paris.(Translating the Orient, 185,230). Herder proceeded to base his construction of the Indian origin of the human race on Shakuntala. His *Indeen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*(Ideas on the Philosophy of History) laid foundation to the philosophy of history. He introduced Shakuntala as a new model in dramaturgy.(Herder, Samtliche Werke, B.Suphan, ed. (Berlin,1877-1913) cited from Translating the Orient, 13-14).

Shakuntala uniquely led the many European operas that were set in India in the 18th and 19th century. It was the only Sanskrit text adapted to music, though few of the Shakuntala operas are left to posterity. Those composed by Schubert, Tomaschek, Hopffer, Flotow and Perfall are gone for ever, as are others that were performed in Germany Balduin Zimmermann(Erfurt, 1905), Ferdinand Hummel(Berlin, 1903) and Antonin Modharelli(Augsburg, 1930) (Translating the Orient, 189, 233). Some of the opera versions that passed into musical melodramas, including those of Felix Weingartner(Weimar, 1884) and L.P.Scharwenka(1885)(Translating the Orient, 189). They are evidence of the fascination and function of Shakuntala in the collective mind of the West. Shakuntala continues to fascinate. In 1962,

M.B.Emeneau published a new translation in California.(Shakuntala, Kanitkar trans.). An adaptation of Franco Alfano's opera, *La Leffenda di Sakuntala* originally performed in Italy in 1921, was presented at Ireland's Wexford Festival in 1982.(Translating the Orient, 233).

This broad appeal of Shakuntala demonstrates the universal appeal of Sanskrit to diversely creative minds that concentrate on extracting the essence of Hinduism from Sanskrit works. We offer Figueira's poignant illustration of the profound and far-reaching capacity of Sanskrit scripture to inspire and transform. Theodor Springmann, a German officer during WW I, translated the *Bhagavad Gita* and carried the sacred scripture into the trenches with him. Just months before his death while performing his duty as a Commander of mine throwing, he wrote the preface to his translation:

One can never find anything right in life without abstraction and metaphysical knowledge, thoroughness and piety. What is needed is an educated overview of the whole, the fervour of the faith and feeling, which inspires action and which gives them real value; also needed is the self-discipline acquired through long effort, the ability to concentrate instantly all the powers on one single point. Thus, the various systems and ways of salvation are mobilized in the Bhagavad Gita to show the necessity to fight against the enemies of justice and to give moral strength to those fighting in this battle. The very brahmanic cult of sacrifice can teach us to look at the entire life as a sacrifice. The greatest sacrifice is the sacrifice of the warrior's life upon the altar of the battle. (Translating the Orient, 210-11, translation of the German citation).

Springmann's opinion and feeling highlight the human potential for transcending the pessimistic thought that is typically grounded in action of the will in the West, from which Western philosophers (like Schopenhauer?) sought release in the inspired Sanskrit works of the East.

(Note: a typical Hindu example of the spirit of sacrifice inspired by the Gita is that of Major Somnath Sharma (1923-47), who succeeded in resisting the attack of Pakistan tribals on the Kashmir front during 1947 insurgency. He was killed in action at the battle of Badgam(31st oct, 1947) but saved Kashmir valley. He led his soldiers in the battle with a copy of the Gita in his breast pocket. Major Sharma was posthumously awarded the Param Veer Chakra for his bravery and supreme sacrifice. Major Sharma set an example of courage and qualities seldom equaled in the history of the Indian Army. Three days later, Sharma's body was recovered. Though mutilated beyond recognition, a few pages of the Gita that he always kept in his breast pocket and the empty leather holster of his pistol helped to identify the body. The pistol was gone.).
