

## International Symposium on “Ācārya Abhinavagupta: Legacy and Significance” (21-22 June 2021)

Theme Note:

*Ācārya* Abhinavagupta, the 10<sup>th</sup> century Kashmir *Śaiva* sage, scholar, aesthete, spiritual master, and visionary thinker shaped Trika *Śaiva* philosophy and religion into a perfected system of thought and realisation. He is remembered as an extraordinary human being, with prodigious and multifarious gifts and accomplishments. The world knows him as a philosopher, exegete, and aesthete but in Kashmir and within the Trika lineage, he is a Siddha and Guru, a spiritual master par excellence.

*Ācārya* Abhinavagupta, in addition to composing dozens of extraordinarily original and innovative texts, also preserved, edited and documented a prolific corpus of ancient *Tantras*. His best-known work, the *Tantrāloka*, is a unique masterpiece, whose breadth, scope, profundity, intellectual rigour, and wisdom, make it unparalleled global philosophical and spiritual literature. We are only now beginning to understand the magnitude of its magnificence.

In the *Tantrāloka*, Abhinavagupta not only preserves his inherited tradition in accordance to *Guru-Śishyaparampara* and develop the philosophy of *Trika* into *Anuttaratrika*, but he also refines the discursive and practical field of spiritual experience. *Tantrāloka*, in that sense, is as much a philosophical exegesis as a practitioner’s guide to the realms of higher consciousness. In order to accomplish this feat, Abhinavagupta developed a language to express the spiritual experience and helps to bring it to the access of human intellect without compromising the esoteric element that marks all spiritual experience.

His purely experience-based logical expositions in philosophical works like *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* and *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛttivimarśinī* on the Kashmir *Śaiva* theory of *Pratyabhijñā* firmly establish the idea of the Supreme Reality as the non-dual consciousness that we call *Śiva*. His *Paratrimśikāvivaraṇā* is a profound exposition of creation of the universal phenomena as an offshoot of *Shakti* as Supreme Speech, *Parāvāk*, that relates to the scientific origin of Sanskrit language and grammar. In his devotional compositions such as his *Bhairava Stava*, *Anuttarāṣṭikā*, *Krama Stotra* and *Anubhavanivedana*, Abhinavagupta preserves the esoteric and emotional elements of the *Bhairavāgamas*.

Abhinavagupta’s contribution to the field of aesthetics is world famous. His *Abhinavabhāratī*, the extraordinary commentary on Bharata’s classic text of poetics and dramaturgy, *Natyasāstra*, conjoins aesthetic experience to the experience of non-dual perception of reality, which conforms with the non-dual Trika philosophy that is fundamental to his oeuvre. Similarly, his commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, the *Geetārthasangraha* shows this *Vedānta* text in the light of *Śivādvyavāda*.

On the occasion of *Ācārya* Abhinavagupta’s birth anniversary An International Symposium on ‘*Ācārya Abhinavagupta: Legacy and Significance*’ was organized by IAS during 21-22, June 2021 online on Cisco Webex. Dr. Alka Tyagi, Fellow, IAS was the Convener of the conference. Mangalacharan performed by Ms. Sanya Tyagi on ‘*Odissi Dance Performance*’ and Ms. Shalini Mathur on ‘*Krama Stotra in classical composition*’. The welcome address was given by Professor Makarand R. Paranjape, Director, IAS. An Introductory remarks was given by Dr. Alka Tyagi, Convener of the conference. Keynote address was delivered by Dr. Mark Dyczkowski on ‘The Taste of Delight: The Ritual, Art, Yoga, Gnosis and Daily Life’.

Concluding Reflections was delivered by Professor Sunthar Visuvalingam on '*Notes on Contemporaneity of Abhinavgupta*'. Vote of Thanks was proposed by Dr. Alka Tyagi, Fellow, IAS.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Dr. Sachidanand Joshi, Member Secretary, IGNCA
- Dr. Motilal Pandit, Researcher for Aeropagus Foundation, Oslo, Norway
- Professor Ramakant Pandey, Professor of *Sahitya* at Central Sanskrit University, Jaipur
- Professor Bharat Gupt, retired Professor from the University of Delhi
- Professor Radhavallabh Tripathi, Former Vice Chancellor, Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan (Deemed University)
- Professor Madhav Hada , Fellow, IAS
- Dr. Sunil Raina, an independent researcher, writer and a sadhaka
- Dr. Meera Rastogi, retired from Lucknow University, Department of Sanskrit and Prakrit Languages
- Dr. Nihar Purohit, Member of Academic council for Muktabodha Indological Research Institute and Faculty at Kashmir Shaiva Institute, Ishwar Ashram Trust
- Professor Pankaj Basotia, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Rajiv Gandhi Government Degree College, Shimla
- Padma Shri Prof. Bettina Baumer, Director of the Abhinavagupta Research Library, Varanasi
- Professor K D Tripathi, Associate Professor, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi
- Dr. Balram Shukla, Fellow, IAS
- Dr. Advaitavadini Kaul, scholar in the field of Inter Disciplinary Study of the Arts within Indian traditions
- Shri Swastik Bannerjee, pursuing his Doctoral in Philosophy from University of Calcutta.
- Professor S R Bhatt, Chairman, Indian Philosophy Congress
- Professor Wagish Shukla, Retd. Professor, IIT, Delhi