

J. M. BARON VAN BOETZELAER

OPENING OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOUTH ASIAN
ARCHAEOLOGY IN WESTERN EUROPE

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity of opening this Second International Conference of the Association for the Promotion of South Asian Archaeology in Western Europe as the representative of the Director General of Research of the Ministry of Education and Research. I consider it a great honour to the Dutch government, to the city of Amsterdam and to its university, that so many distinguished scholars have come from all over Europe, to devote their knowledge, their genius, their energy and their time to the consideration of a number of topics of South Asian archaeology. The importance of this conference will be marked by the exchange and accumulation of knowledge. And I trust that seeds of inspiration will be disseminated at this meeting, to be implanted in your minds and nurtured all over the places where you work, to blossom in a great flowering of new ideas at your next meeting. Before entering more deeply into the subject of the study of Indology I would like to make some general remarks on higher education.

Not only in the Netherlands but also in other countries in Europe, higher education has expanded immensely. We are all convinced that this growth is necessary in order to meet the future demands of society, individually as well as collectively. On the other hand, I am aware, that this development also has its drawbacks; I need only to remind you of the commotion within the universities, the problems connected with an enormous student population, especially with regard to the shortage of resources.

It is not my intention to bore you with problems which have been discussed for years at conferences on the problems of the massification of education. I only want to touch briefly upon some outlines against the background of which I should like to make some statements on the task and future of the study of Indology.

One of the most impressive and also alarming features of science today is the enormous speed at which the amount of knowledge increases. However, though one is inclined to attribute this feature above all to the natural sciences, in my opinion it is not confined to these. The arts too are already beginning to suffer under the burden of compiled

knowledge. The time when one scholar was able to survey the whole field of scientific investigation which we call Indology seems to have passed though there still are a few exceptional cases. Gradually this field of knowledge has been split up into a great number of disciplines and specializations: linguistics, philology, religion, history, philosophy, musicology. Besides, the Indians themselves, fond as they are of dividing and subdividing *ad infinitum*, have preceded us in this respect. In more than a few cases it is difficult for an Indologist belonging to one specialization to judge the research of a colleague working in another field. On the other hand, the progress which has been made in other branches of knowledge, sociology and psychology for instance, provides us with tools we can use fruitfully, though it demands even more of the scholar.

So the specialization, though not always desired, has also clearly its advantages; while by confining oneself to a certain limited field of inquiry, one is bound, at the same time, to keep in touch with scholars working in connected disciplines. All said and done I must admit that I still cannot offer a solution to this problem of diversification from which Indology also could not escape. Thinking aloud, the only thing I can do is to try to give a piece of advice, though I am well aware of the fact that it is easier to give an advice than to work it out.

The end of colonialism in Asia after the second world-war, forced the Europeans to build up a new system of relationships with the Asiatic countries. In this connection I am sorry to say that I feel that not all European nations have managed to do this equally well. As a matter of fact, I should like to draw your attention to the regrettable circumstance that India which is, in fact, the largest democracy in the world, has received per capita of its population the smallest amount of money to assist it in its development. On the other hand, with the passing of time, new opportunities have arisen and new ways have been found to maintain and renew these relations. In this connection the question as to the task of Indology may be brought up.

Of course, Indology should offer us the tools we need to maintain our contacts with a fairly large part of the "third world". But can Indology, as we know it, do such ? To meet these demands, it should establish close connections with for instance sociology, economy and psychology.

Up to this moment, the progress in this respect is relatively poor, at least in the Netherlands. As far as I can see, this may be due to a certain traditionalism and conservatism among orientalists, which to some extent seem to be inherent in a field of research with as long a history as that of Indology. On the other hand we should make it clear that the more traditional branches of Indology, Vedic for instance, have a

raison d'être of their own. Moreover, much work has still to be done and can be done without falling into repetitions or merely discussing the opinions of other or earlier scholars. After all, in my opinion Indology has, like other branches of the humanities, a right to exist also, even though its results are not directly applicable in practical life. For it is a major feature of culture that certain things are done, which are of no direct use, be it the painting of a pot, the translating of a Pāli text, or the collecting and classifying of, for instance, potsherds.

For the future of Indology it is therefore important that on the one hand contacts with other disciplines are established and that on the other hand the continuation of a long tradition which yields an essential base for new activities, is maintained. From this point of view it is also important that scholars from several European countries can meet and discuss topics of common interest. I therefore welcome the initiative of your Association of organizing a second conference, this time in Amsterdam. The first as you know took place in Cambridge in 1971.

Moreover, I want to make my due compliments to Professor van Lohuizen, who has founded the Institute of South Asian Archaeology of the University of Amsterdam and brought it to prosperity.

I do not hesitate to say that by her assiduity and devotion this institute has become a worthy representative of the oriental tradition of the University of Amsterdam, which can boast of scholars such as the late lamented Faddegon.

Ladies and gentlemen, with these words I open this Second International Conference of the Association for the Promotion of South Asian Archaeology in Western Europe.