

FOREWORD

I feel flattered and consider it to be great privilege to have been asked by Shri Vettam Mani to contribute a foreword to his Purāṇic Encyclopaedia, a really magnificent literary production, massive in size and rich and invaluable in contents. This is the first attempt in Malayalam and for the matter of that in any Indian or foreign language, so far as I know, to produce a comprehensive and well-nigh exhaustive book of study and reference with regard to episodes, incidents, characters etc. occurring in the many Purāṇas and such other works in Sanskrit. In the field of mythology, with regard to variety and contents as also sheer bulk, Greece stands first. Egypt comes only next. But Indian mythology—the epics and the purāṇas—far exceeds and excels both Greek and Egyptian mythologies put together in merit and size. Even the preparation of a complete list of characters mentioned in our epics, purāṇas etc. will be a stupendous and well-nigh impossible task calling for the combined efforts of a number of scholars. But, fortunately for us, each and every such name, one need not necessarily know or be acquainted with. At the same time there are great names which compel attention and should not escape a proper study. And, such names are legion, and Shri Mani has not omitted mention of even one such name in his great work. I looked up the encyclopaedia for a few such random names, and was really surprised to find detailed treatment of the same in the book. Moreover, with reference to really important names, incidents and episodes connected with them and the whole genealogy are given. Everything is fully documented and quite authoritative. And, deep, extensive and exhaustive study, patient and untiring research and above all absolute dedication to the cause are so very patent on every page of the book. Literally and in effect Shri Mani's is a unique contribution, the first and foremost book, in the magnificent spheres of religion, culture, scholarship and history all put together. As the pioneer in the field he can justly feel happy and proud about his rare achievement, and he deserves in ample measure the unstinted praise and appreciation of all lovers of learning and culture.

Shri Mani has already earned well-deserved reputation as a teacher, especially in Malayalam, and also as a diligent student of literature and author of talent. He evidently possesses a flair for research. All such distinguished talents and attainments of his have been fully and quite successfully commissioned in the preparation of this marvellous encyclopaedia. He has put every lover of learning and knowledge everywhere, under an eternal debt of gratitude by the publication of this noble work.

P. R. MENON

Retired Judge, Chief Court, Cochin and
Ex-President Keral Sahitya Academy.