P R E F A C E

The present dissertation embodies the results of an investigation carried on for the last five years on the materials concerned with the intelligent speculations on the various aspects of one of the most useful and queer animals viz. the elephant, as found scattered over the vast expanse of the technical and non-technical literature in the Sanskrit language. The evidences of human knowledge regarding this animal and references to it in various pieces of creative literature, and the total information, so to say, regarding various aspects of it have been summed up as the elephant lore. The immediate concern in course of this investigation has been to explore the various facets and to gauge the extent of this elephant lore only so far as the Sanskrit literature is concerned. Thus it was found suitable to divide the present dissertation into six chapters so as to cover the field of the investigation with a critical analysis of the materials as well as some amount of survey work done with a view to presenting some samples of the traditional writings in Sanskrit on this majestically queer animal.

It will be seen that the first chapter which deals with the source materials presents more or less a critical history of the technical Sanskrit literature on elephantology. The following four chapters, viz. Classification of elephants (chapt. II), Capturing and training of elephants (chapt. III),
Anatomy, diseases and their treatment (chap. IV) and General care of the elephant and mada (chap. V) are intended to present a systematic summery of the contents of the entire technical literature on the elephant as surveyed in the first chapter of this dissertation. The last chapter (i.e., chap. VI) on Elephant in folklore and literature, again, is a purely critical account of the intelligent and significant references to the elephant as found in the folklore and the Sanskrit literature.

The subject undertaken here for a programme of research had been suggested to me by my supervisor Professor Dr. Sharma, but I had been prompted to develop a fascination for it by certain other factors as well. It is often wrongly believed even by some educated persons also that Sanskrit literature is concerned only with religious scriptures and philosophical themes, or at best, with technical works on grammar or rhetoric or prosody, while it is in fact a repository also of a highly scientific wisdom on matters of very great significance for the economic and practical life of the human community. The treatises on the nature, capturing, training, treatment, care and use of the elephant may serve as a highly convincing evidence in respect of the enormity of the wealth of practical wisdom preserved in the Sanskrit literature. I had the conviction that it was high time for sincere and serious students.
of Sanskrit to take up the task of exploring this scientific aspect of the Sanskrit literature, not only for upholding its position but also for advancement of scientific knowledge in general. Incidentally, I happened to be a student of Economics also while studying at the degree level, offering honours in it, and that fact also might be responsible to some extent for my being inclined to pursue a line of investigation in a subject which has been treated in a very practical and mater-of-fact way by different authors and authorities in the Sanskrit language.

As shown in the context of the discussion on the authorship of the Hastyāyurveda and the location of the place of birth of sage Pālakāpya the elephant enjoys a very important position in Assam from the days of hoary antiquity. This makes it a matter of moral obligation, as I feel, on the part of a student of Sanskrit belonging to Assam to undertake a programme of investigation on the elephant lore. It was perhaps yet another reason for my inclination towards the theme of the present dissertation.

It has been a usual style in the Indian tradition to associate a spiritual significance also with almost anything, and so, with the science of Āyurveda as well, be it concerned with human beings or animals or even plants. Ancient literatures all over the world contain innumerable stories and
anecdotes handed down from generation to generation, which are replete with unnatural or super-natural elements that rely solely on popular belief or religious superstitions of the people. In the present case of the study also such mythical elements have been cited in course of elaborations just as they have been found in different source materials so that the reader may be able to grasp a complete view of the picture of the elephant as depicted in the following pages on a specific background and within the scope of the theme.

With these prefatory words I now humbly present this piece of work for an assessment although I cannot be sure of its merits as long as it is not endorsed by the authorities concerned.

"ā paritoṣād viduṣām na sādhū manye prayogavijñānam."