



“KNOWING ONLY COMES FROM EXPERIENCES”

shares Dr Yogendra Pratap Singh in conversation with All About Book Publishing.

In a quest for knowledge and to share knowledge Dr Yogendra Pratap Singh, Director, Ayodhya Shodh Sansthan, Ayodhya, shares his passion on publishing 250 researched books based on tracing the legacy of Ram and his presence in different cultures.

“I have published 250 researched books, that have been published in 18 languages. Also as the Director of Ayodhya Shodh Sansthan, we are tracing Lord Ram’s footprints across the world and are in the process of documenting the tangible and intangible legacy of *Ramayana* for which we have planned 200 volumes of the encyclopaedia,” tells Dr Yogendra Pratap Singh, Director, Ayodhya Shodh Sansthan.

My journey...

“I was a Higher Education teacher in Madhya Pradesh, from there I got transferred to Department of Culture with the Government of India and was in deputation in Lucknow from 1999-2001, this is where I gained insight into the presence of Ram all across India. It gave me a great opportunity to travel to various states in India and I was fascinated when I saw the paintings depicting “Ram Katha”, a different depiction in every state. The literary aspect I was well aware but these beautiful

paintings captivated me. I gained more insight after I got posted to Ayodhya in 2001 and experienced the cultural aspect of Ram in diverse forms via my travels both in India and globally. Thus, I started my journey to do research on the cultural aspects related to Ram. I realised the global presence and felt enriched,” he shares.

Crossing cultures, boundaries and religion...

“I noticed the impression and journey of Ram through various regions, religions and cultures – Kerala, Kamataka, Tamil Nadu, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Korea etc. Ram has crossed the boundaries of culture and religion. The *Ramcharitmanas* by Goswami Tulsidas (1532–



Dr Yogendra Pratap Singh

1623) is one of the greatest works of Hindi literature and is known to be the living sum of Indian culture. The depiction is based on strength of character, which is the magic potion which unites us in our diversity,” tells Dr Yogendra.

Ramlila and its reach...

UNESCO declared Ramlila festivities as the “Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” in 2008. “Apart from being important cultural activity in various cities in India, it has its importance in various South East Asian countries and also a cultural celebration in many parts of the world. The spectacular aspect about Ramlila in South East Asian countries is that the paintings are based on the Ramayana literature and that these paintings are the inspiration for the traditional depiction of Ramlila – the masks, costumes etc. It is all related and not isolated,” he adds as a matter of fact.





Encyclopaedia by the Ayodhya Shodh Sansthan

“The encyclopaedia will document the presence of Ram in art, literature, paintings, music, dance, sculptures, idols, traditions etc. It has a 5-year plan, the Foreign Ministry has written to 205 countries and the cultural department has involved 28 states. The curtain raiser will be in Lucknow on 5th of March. The first volume is expected to be printed in April by Indian Institute of Technology, meeting the objectives of Ayodhya Shodh Sansthan, which is to encourage and complete research work in Indian learning, art, culture and history of Awadh, especially in relation to the literature and philosophy of Ayodhya, Ramayana and Tulsidas,” shares Dr Yogendra.

Publishing & languages

“In the past we have not worked for our languages. We need to realise our languages are crucial and critical for survival of our culture. I have published about 100 books with Vani Prakashan Group. A very important thing about Arun Maheshwari, Publisher

& Managing Director, is that his literary approach is very aesthetic and their knowledge of the literary circles has generated a lot of work for me. We have published in a number of Indian languages,” he shares.

It's just the beginning

“My books are not only for professors in a university but for the common man to learn and gain knowledge about our rich and ancient heritage which we should be very proud of. I hope to promote our ancient heritage to our new generation. This can be done if they are exposed to our ancient sites via travel to raise their interest as knowing only comes from experiences,” he tells.

“My work is based on facts and every day for me is new learning. My experience of research and publishing of last 20 years makes me feel I have only unravelled 0.1% only and there is so much more to know, learn and discover,” tells Dr Yogendra.

“Some days I feel so restless with the kind of work which is remaining... I truly wish I had lived for 600 years!” concludes Dr Yogendra. ■