

**B**reakthrough, a collection of twenty-three Hindi and Urdu short stories translated into English, is supposed to be a companion volume of Dr. Sukrita Paul Kumar's other works in the field of short story, *The New Story* and *Conversations on Modernism*. However, as I have not read these two works, I shall consider *Breakthrough* independently. The editor claims that the stories "selected for this volume are creative manifestations of the post-Independence India..." and hence ambitiously calls the volume "Breakthrough." After going through the anthology, my response to the editor's tall claim is "Yes, a 'breakthrough' - but not quite."

In her introduction, Dr. Kumar attempts to define and identify certain characteristics of 'literary modernism.' Unfortunately, 'modernism' is so loose and vague a term that every major writer/critic in every age/language stakes his claim to it! Not many can assert as confidently as Dr. Kumar does, that "that is what modernity is all about." According to her, a writer's "upright and courageous confrontation with the 'moment' which is 'now' is what modernity is all about. True, 'acute contemporaneity' is a major aspect of 'modernity'; but the real problem lies in defining and understanding 'contemporaneity.' Dr. Kumar constitutes 'modernism' as post-Prem Chand (loosely) anti-naturalistic literary sensibility. This position is highly debatable, to say the least. In fact I would go so far as to maintain that Prem Chand's stories like

"Kafan" and "Shatranj ke Khiladi" are more 'modern' in their understanding of Indian history and society than most of the stories 'selected' for this volume. Also, one does not understand Dr. Kumar's rationale in first putting up (by implication) and later triumphantly pulling down a straw-man: "The distinctive divergence from tradition both in form and temper in the new Indian short story cannot be dismissed as being derivative of Western modernism."

However, since 'modernism,' essentially, may only be a relative concept, one can as well accept Dr. Kumar's theoretical framework of modernism (set up in her introduction) and examine the stories within that framework. Dr. Kumar identifies the following strains of modernism:

- Contemporary consciousness ("... confrontation with the 'moment'...");
- a newer understanding/interpretation of the past ("... reanimation of myths in newer contexts...");

## Creative Manifestations of Post-Independence India

C.N. Ramachandran\*

### BREAKTHROUGH:

*A Collection of Short Stories in Hindi and Urdu*

Edited by Sukrita Paul Kumar

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1993, pp xii + 335, Rs 300

- constant questioning of traditional premises regarding the nature and value of human experience;
- and concern for the repressed and marginalised in Indian society.

The four stories of the collection ("The Boat", "Abhimanyu's Suicide", "The Demon" and "The Curse of Cassandra") ambitiously attempt to "reanimate" old myths. The first story, "The Boat", brings together many Eastern and Western 'Creation Myths' (such as the myths of Noah's Ark, prajapathi Manu, Gilgamesh and Trivikrama incarnation) to dramatise the experience of 'being adrift and lost' in the modern world. Narrated in first person, the story drives home the point that today, in times of moral and spiritual deluge, man has neither the Ark of Noah nor Manu's Fish to help him navigate to safe shores. However, the story appears to be only a clever exercise in virtuosity.

What is true of "The Boat" — that it is at best an exercise in virtuosity — is true of the other stories as well in this group. They are characterised more by their aspect of novelty, than by any significant human experience. "Abhimanyu's Suicide" also, like "The Boat", attempts to harmonise strands of diverse myths and legends — the Mahabharata story of Abhimanyu and the Arabian tales of Hatim Tai and Sindbad, the Sailor. The protagonist-narrator, the modern Abhimanyu, suffers from a death-wish, being totally unable to establish any enduring human relationships in this mercenary world. But, when he witnesses the woman he is in love with (married to his friend) pleading with the doctors to save her for the sake of her children,

he realises the value of life, and conquers his death-wish. The story ends with a new 'birthday' for the protagonist.

The third story, ironically, pictures the annual ritual of the death of Ravana (the Demon), while the real demon — that of greed, lust, and the theory of demand and supply — continues to live within us.

The last story in this group, "The Curse of Cassandra," set against the backdrop of a revolutionary uprising in Cuba, attempts to analyse the nature and point of revolutions. The story is marred by its explicitness and melodrama. What can generally be said of these stories is that they are too consciously woven, too ambitious, and too cerebral.

"Rani Mehto" and "Raja Nirbansia" are modern fables. While the first fable successfully contrasts acquisitive passion and spiritual happiness, the second cleverly juxtaposes the past and the present. In the first story, the king and Rani Mehto live happily and have access to 'spiritual waters' as long as they lead a simple life of hard work and penury. But once the queen develops greed for material possessions, the well-water dries up, and both meet unfortunate end. We have in "Raja Nirbansia," the old story of Raja Nirbansia and that of his modern counterpart, alternately narrated to culminate in touching irony. As in the past, divine intervention is not possible today to prove a woman's marital fidelity. Consequently, modern stories of jealous husbands and aggrieved wives can end only tragically.

With the next set of woman-centred stories, we leave behind clever authorial manipulations and enter a world of complex experience authentically explored. There are five

stories in this group, and all of them effectively plumb women's social and moral mores in a transitional society.

The first story in this group, "The Sound of Falling Leaves," (arguably one of the finest in the anthology), is remarkable from many points of view. It unfolds the tale of Tanvir Fatima (who herself narrates her story), who, owing to her western education, consciously rejects conservatism and moves from one man to another, until she ends up as a placid wife, consumed by manual chores during day and haunted by her love during nights. What adds poignancy to the story is the use of an unreliable narrator (Tanvir projects all her unconscious weak-

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nesses on others), thus balancing the readers' response to the protagonist between sympathy and judgement. The protagonist represents the typical upper-class Indian woman caught in the vortex of traditional conservatism that refuses to die and Western liberalism that is yet to strike roots on Indian soil. Above all, the story is narrated against the backdrop of the traumatic partition of the sub-continent and the geographical dislocation of the protagonist serves as an effective analogue for her cultural dislocation.

"Such is the Truth", the next story, also ably documents a woman's struggle to understand and come to terms with her own true passions. The protagonist alternates, in her unconscious drives, between a prosaic husband and a romantic former lover. Each time she is sure that she is in love with one, only to realise later that it is only an illusion. First person narration on the part of the protagonist makes the readers privy



to her innermost fears and desires, and thus authenticates the woman's experience of grappling with her own passions.

"Kalyani," the third story in this group, though weakened here and there with direct authorial comments, ironically registers the physical as well as intellectual bondage of woman in a male-dominated society. Kalyani, the protagonist of the story, is a prostitute whose body gets horribly bruised every day by brutal and insensitive men. Still, she undergoes all this battering for the sake of her child. When one of the customers enquires of her about the child's sex, Kalyani, triumphantly, "lifting the baby up, demonstrated the symbol of the masculinity..." Living in a society of patriarchal values, even the woman comes to accept those values and by inference, is happy to be 'the second sex.' Battered and exploited by men, Kalyani is still proud of the fact that her child belongs to the male sex.

"You and He and They," the last in this group, dramatises the story of a woman, slowly 'fading out.' The protagonist (from whose point of view the story is narrated, though in second person, giving a sort of immediacy to the narration), loves one but gets married to another. One day, when unexpectedly her former lover — now married, visits her with his wife, she becomes conscious of the passage of time and what it has done to her. The story ends with the protagonist's realization that there is nothing in this world that lasts — not love, not youth, nothing except accursed sleep!

Next, we have a group of stories which can, loosely, be called 'partition' stories. The partition of the sub-continent and the consequent violence and suffering being a traumatic experience for millions of people for generations together, it is but natural that we have scores of great novels and stories, in most Indian languages, set against the backdrop of the partition. *Breakthrough* contains three such stories.

What saves "The Shepherd" from being a melodrama is its narrative focus — it is narrated through the consciousness of a Muslim boy, who doesn't always understand the significance of what happens around him as he grows up. Once, when he fails in his school examination, Dauji, an old Hindu scholar, takes it upon himself to tutor him. Though the boy is often irritated by Dauji's attempts to teach him in and out of time, he develops a sort of grudging respect for the old scholar. During the partition riots, when Dauji, being a Hindu, is about to be lynched by a mob, the boy intervenes and

saves his teacher. Very unobtrusively, the story registers the ethos of a pre-Independent India, when Hindus and Muslims studied, played and lived together as one community. Dauji, a Hindu, teaches the Muslim boy-narrator the different sections of the *Holy Koran*. Translation assignments for all boys consist of translating from Urdu or Hindi to Persian. The only medical practitioner in the narrator's locality is a Hakim, who has a greater store of Persian literature than of medicine. Bit by bit, the authentic details build up the picture of a rich composite culture, which, even when it is destroyed, lingers forever in tragic nostalgia. The title carries both literal and ironic connotations. Dauji, the shepherd, is one whose sole objective in life is shepherding wayward or weak sheep into the field of knowledge. Ironically, it is the shepherd that is attacked in the end by rioters, connoting a total state of anarchy and unreason.

The other two partition stories, even more explicit and melodramatic, poignantly communicate the atmosphere of utter madness that engulfed all the communities during the dark days of partition and the consequent waste — in terms of human life and property. "Toba Tek Singh" is centred on one Bishan Singh, who is shut up in a lunatic asylum in Lahore. After partition, both the countries enter into an agreement to exchange the madmen in their custody, whose families are in the other country. But, to these madmen, neither Hindustan nor Pakistan means anything; and Bishan Singh, called Toba Tek Singh by his fellow inmates, wants to know where his "Toba Tek Singh" (his village) lies. When partition lines cut through villages, farms and even houses in the middle, nobody can locate whether Bishan Singh's village is, in one country or the other. At the moment of exchange of prisoners, Bishan Singh collapses. "In the middle on the strip of no man's land lay Toba Tek Singh," thus symbolising thousands of innocent men and women who happened to be caught in a whirling of history that they could neither understand nor control.

In "His Heap of Rubble," one Ghani Miyan, having migrated to Pakistan during the partition, returns to Amritsar to meet his old friends and see his old house. His nostalgic memories of familiar places and people build up a tragic crescendo when he stands in front of a heap of rubble that was once his home, where he used to live happily with his wife and children. He confronts the goonda, Rakkho the wrestler, who was responsible for wrecking his

house; but now, having neither his son nor wife with him, he can only bless the wrestler and return. The shame and embarrassment that the wrestler experiences, the story implies, are the shame and embarrassment that are going to haunt generations on both sides of the border.

Of the remaining stories, which are all competently told, at least two need a special mention: "Bliss" and "My Self". "Bliss" could be read both as an allegory and an existential story. Its protagonist, Bhola Babu, an ordinary nondescript person, one evening, all of a sudden, witnesses a glorious vision. The setting sun, bathing the landscape with mysterious hues, fills Bhola with an indescribable sense of bliss. But, when he tries to communicate his experience to others, he utterly fails. Everyone, including his wife and best friend, nonchalantly ignores him. Bhola's is the real 'Cassandra's Curse' — the curse of a poet, a seer, a visionary — who are condemned to live in a world of nonbelievers. The story can also be read as a dramatisation of an individual's inevitable loneliness in a matter-of-fact world, and his failure of communication.

"My Self", narrated in a playful tone from a boy's point of view, is centred on the ordeal of growing up. Eric Promm and others have pointed out that 'individuation,' which, every child, while growing up, has to acquire, involves differentiating oneself from the rest and thus building up one's individuality. The boy-narrator of "My Self" agonises for a long time as to whether he is what he is supposed to be by his parents or somebody else, the 'real' he growing up in a different place. Finally, having undertaken a symbolic journey, he realises that he is 'he', different from all the others. The 'absurd' atmosphere of the story, with repeated motifs of 'journey,' ably registers the fears and torments that are inevitable in one's process of individuation.

On the whole, if the editor's ambition is to display the range, variety, and formal innovations of modern Hindi and Urdu short stories, she succeeds, to a very great extent in *Breakthrough*. The thematic concerns range from a reassessment of the past — through changed man-woman relationships and the partition trauma — to metaphysical issues. Also, in terms of generic variety, we find in the anthology myths and legends, fables, allegories, and naturalistic slices of life. Even from the point of view of narration, the narrators range from omniscient narrators to dramatised and ironic, unreliable narrators.

Still, if one feels that one's admiration for the anthology needs a few qualifications, it is in the context of the editor's claim that the stories in this anthology are "creative manifestations of the post-Independence India." The emphasis on the editor's part in the process of selection seems to have been primarily on formal experimentation. Also, one significant aspect of modern Indian sensibility, "concern for the repressed, the marginalised or even the silenced" (as the editor herself expresses), does not get adequate representation in this anthology. Except for "The Scent of the Primitive Night," the voice of protest or the frozen anger of the repressed hardly finds a place in *Breakthrough*. One looks in vain for stories like those of Devanuru Mahadeva and Poornachandra Tejaswi (stories like "Amasa," and "Mari Kondavaru" of Mahadeva, or "Abachurina Post Office" and "Kubi Mattu Iyala" of Tejaswi — available in English translations in *Indian Literature*, Vol. 2), marked by understatement, connotative richness and tragic irony. I am sure similar stories in Hindi and Urdu could have been found, had the editor shifted her preoccupation from technical virtuosity.

Lastly, a few words regarding the quality of the translations. Though most of the stories are competently translated, there do remain many embarrassing slips (I would not call them errors), which an alert editor could have (or should have) caught. For instance: "How many times I became pregnant!" (p. 18), "all right" (p. 55 and often), "opponence" (p. 61, should be 'opponency'), "beautiful as an Apsara" (p. 86), "They loved each other from the bottom of their hearts" (p. 86 awkward), "Wears even a stone away" (p. 87 — wears out?), "... had been touched by the gentle touch of humanity" (p. 96), "The pain on Jagpati's face was chequered by a touch of idealism..." (p. 98), "The oppressive darkness of ... were like ..." (p. 101), "There is something that seemed to be bothering me" (p. 145, an awful mix of the present and the past), "Yours" (p. 148), "What it's birth has done..." (p. 173), "How you take airs ..." (p. 195) ... the list can go on and on. The only point I want to make, by such a list is that such slips have no place in an ambitious and prestigious work like *Breakthrough*.

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India is a 'Comparative Literature' (CL) area. The very term Indian literature is comparative in its outlook. Any study of Indian literature is an inter-lingual study of literature written in twenty-two Indian languages. No single Indian literature is complete in itself and hence no study of Indian literature within a single language context can do justice to the study or even to the writers who grow in a common cultural ambience. Each writer can, therefore, be properly understood only within the widest context of India's socio-cultural, economic, political and literary processes. In this respect, the book *Comparative Literature: Theory and Practice*, edited by Amiya Dev and Sisir Kumar Das is a welcome addition to the study of Comparative Indian Literature (CIL). The book, mostly a collection of papers of a seminar held at the IIAS, deals with the bigger issues like defining the area of operation of CL and identifying the basic concerns of the discipline, including its theoretical aspects. While discussing the prime rationale of CL, i.e., literary relations concerning theory, themes, genres, reception and movements, these seminar papers constantly focus on the Indian situation and on the relevance of CL to India.

The keynote address of Sisir Kumar Das, in fact, examines the ways and means through which our teaching of literature can be reorganised and CL can be related to the whole exercise to help the process of interrelation among the literary faculties and an enlargement of taste. It is very true that classical literature, like Sanskrit, should not be translated only into modern languages, but the modern languages should be made the exclusive medium of the critical analysis of the ancient texts. This search for the relevance of the ancient to the modern, and discovering the modernity of the ancient, can help in our understanding of the continuity of a literary tradition. It will then be possible to judge its value within a longer literary universe, and by the canons deriving out of a more diverse literary experience. Das is justified to criticize the existing monolingual character of single literature departments — including the English departments. He urges to remove isolationism in literature by introducing CL in different language departments as a study of literatures, in relations to one another. Das in another paper, rightly argues in favour of CIL on the basis of the idea of IL, which recognizes the relationship between different literatures, each having its own peculiar character and temperament and identifies certain features cutting across the limitations of ethnic,

religious and linguistic boundaries. The idea of an IL does not undermine the uniqueness of individual literature, but aims to look at the creative urges and achievements of the Indian people in their multiple linguistic manifestations. But, in our third world situation, it is essential to create our own tools of criticism and methodology to analyse how our literature grew in a certain socio-cultural context. It is true that first we must understand our literature, do our CIL and then turn to CL.

In this respect papers related to the case studies like Bholabhai Patel's 'The Emergence of Modernity in Gujarati and Bengali Poetry', Sukrita Paul Kumar's 'The Cognition of the Self: A Critical review of some post-independence Hindi and Urdu short stories', or Jayanti Chattopadhyay's 'The Rise and Fall of Chandragupta: The Hindi response to Dwijendralal Roy', or Satendra R. Singh's 'Towards a Concept of the Indian Novel: A Thematic Construct', focus on the Indian situation and on the relevance of CL to India. The paper on modernity by Bholabhai Patel relates to a crucial discussion whether modernity in Indian Literature emerged as a result of the Western impact, or the tradition and the regional factors contributed a lot. The question of modernity in IL cannot be settled entirely as an outcome of the Indian exposure of Westernization. It needs to be defined as an experience rooted to the soil. Indian modernity emerged out of the Indian writer's changing attitude towards the past and the present and their inter-relationship, which was formed under a colonial dispensation.

The papers dealing with literary history, literary theory and translation are concerned with fundamentals of CIL. Amiya Dev, in his seminal paper, rightly points out that literary history is not a mere narrative. As 'history', its aim is to understand the literary processes as laid out in time. The most remarkable aspect of literary history is that unlike most other histories, it is temporally syntactic, that is, the past and the present are simultaneous in it, and hence literary history is to be accepted as centripetal historiography where the emphasis is not on the neatness of the design, but on the

inclusiveness of the material. The whole argument is a little loaded. It has to become such because the paper is not so much concerned with the question of literary history, as with its critique of Douwe Fokkema's paper on 'literary history, modernism and post modernism.'

Sisir Kumar Das in his 'History of Indian literature: 1800-1910' has made it clear that history of IL is not merely a chronological account of a series of past events, but also an exercise in

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understanding the nature of the literary activities of a community, their traditions, ramifications, their recessions and revival, dominance and decline. A comparative study of the history of literature is to move in three main directions: (i) Direct pan-Indian relations among literary works, (ii) parallel literary phenomenon and, (iii) the characteristic feature of the pan-Indian and the *Bhasa* literatures. The dichotomy of the pan-Indian and the *Bhasa* literatures may be as useful a critical category of differentiation or identification as categories such as 'elite' and 'folk'. All inter-lingual enquires in this context in the Indian situation operate within a set of opposition that can be called the unity-diversity set of oppositions that is complementary to each other. After all, any history of IL is a story of a multilingual literature, a plurality of linguistic expressions and cultural experience, and of the remarkable unity underlying them.

For a proper aesthetic and critical assessment of CIL, the Indian Comparatists are making an effort to develop their own comparative criticism and form their own 'meta language.' In this respect, the papers by N.D. Mirajkar on 'The Relevance of Indian Literary Theory' or by K. Chellappan on 'Comparative Literary Theory' are important. Both the authors have made an effort to comparatively explore the Sanskrit and Western poetics because that can only contribute to the development of a

fruitful pan-Indian critical idiom for evaluating historically, sociologically and aesthetically many dimensions of CIL. Evaluation, with the help of a 'meta language' developed by accommodating Sanskrit with Western poetics having an inter-disciplinary approach is what is needed for a study of CIL.

A decisive requirement for the study of CL is a broad knowledge of the several literatures available in different languages. This is an accidental fact that Indian civilization is polyglot, and has been so for centuries. The knowledge of two or more Indian languages may be an asset for a student of literature, but how many of them can one learn, particularly when we have 22 major languages? Eventually, one will have to go in for translations. The discipline of CL has to a large extent depend on the availability, and for that matter, the possibility of translation of works of literature. The paper on 'A Reflection on the Translatability of Poetry and the Odyssey of a Song' by Pabitra Kumar Roy deals at length with the question of the translatability of poetry. He raises the question of rhythm and sound in poetry that is untranslatable. Then, he clarifies, the translation is to be done in terms of the 'ratio intentio'. Not equivalence but transposition of an alien aesthetic structure and personality into the key of the translator's own personality and culture is what Pabitra Kumar Roy thinks is the right job to be done. In fact, translators often lose sight of the fact that translation itself is an interpretation, a creative process by which the translator has to re-live the author's world. The role of a translator is to turn strangeness into likeness and in the process the strangeness of the original becomes more vivid — and this vividness liberates us from the cultural prison and gives us the taste of another culture, another universe.

The second section of the book is devoted to what is still considered the prime rationale of CL, inter-literariness or literary relations. Swapan Majumdar, in his thought provoking essay, analyses the whole question of influence studies in CL, which is distinct from reception studies and based on independent methodology. However, as explained by Subha Dasgupta in her paper on 'The French School of CL', the word 'influence' has gradually given way to the word 'reception' — the emphasis turning from the emitter to the receptor. However in both influence and reception studies, the object ought to be the creative authors themselves, and their texts should be the principal medium of exploration.

One important question related to the study of CL is the question of the universalist theory raised by



Gurbhagat Singh in his paper on 'Comparative Literature: Towards a Non-Logocentric Paradigm.' It is true that there is a common feature in all art or literary invariables occurring in all literature as explained by two famous comparative critics, Rene Wellek and Rene Etiemble. This does not mean that one would be happy and contented only with locating points of identities while studying CL. But, to think of universalist theory springing up from the hegemonic needs of the rising industrial-capitalist class of Europe, will be a little far-fetched and, at the same time, it is not true that only a transcultural non-logocentric methodology will help to understand the uniqueness of literature. Literatures

have both their identities as well as diversities. Surely, we must not deceive ourselves by ignoring the departures under the pretext of the unity of experience. Nonetheless, we should not allow ourselves to be victims of regionalism either. The methodology of CL ensures that all literatures have their own specificities and yet each individual literature is linked with the other to prove the existence of the paradigm of universality. However, the universalist argument does not hold where the variability rate is high. But, in the Indian context in spite of the multiplicity of ideas, multilingualism and multi-level meaningfulness of existence literature in different Indian languages creates

visions that transcend the barriers of diversities and bring us nearer to one another to point out our basic unity. This can be equally true in respect of world literature.

In sum, this collection of essays on the theory and practice of CL will provide fresh insights into the study of CIL in respect of commonality and difference. These papers truly convince us that through CL alone can Indian literary pedagogy be modernized. The time has come to create our own methodology to study CIL. We must realise that no method comes out of an empty laboratory: its making must be fed with existent data. Initially, the data were French plus, and accordingly a methodology was devised for the study of CL.

But it cannot be used in Asia and Africa. A methodology is to be created on the basis of a text which depends upon the socio-cultural context in which it has grown and hence methodological variability is to be kept in mind because of the variation in data. This book, like a few others in the field of CIL, has initiated successfully the exercise for developing a valid theoretical framework to study CIL and realise that our sky is big enough to allow diversity and our earth small enough to guarantee the underlying unity of myth and experience.

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## Ethnic Identity and Regional Movements

Ramashray Roy\*

### REGIONAL MOVEMENTS: POLITICS OF LANGUAGE, ETHNICITY IDENTITY

By Sajal Basu

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1992, pp. xi + 240,  
Rs. 250

How does one view regional movements that are based on linguistic, ethnic and other socio-cultural differences? Are they symptomatic of separatist and secessionist tendencies? Or, do they also contribute positively to the process of cooption and incorporation of peripheral socio-economic groups into the mainstream political arena and promote their integration? And, if regional movements have differential impact on the course of political development, what are the factors that make for such differential impacts? These are some of the theoretically important questions that the book under review seeks to explore and answer. In exploring these questions, Basu covers a wide range of movements in order to come to the correct answers.

The point of departure for Basu is the prevalence of Eurocentrism in social sciences and its spillover in the political realm too. He quotes favourably G. Cheverese *et al*, who feel that Eurocentrism has "damaged the Non-European societies through colonisation of their intellectuals, impoverished academic disciplines which remain unaware of alternative sources of knowledge outside the mainstream development" (p. 129). Basu feels that even

political leaders consider the problems impinging on the process of nation formation in the European frame of analysis. As an evidence of this, Basu refers to the tendency of the leaders at the helm of national affairs to consider regional socio-cultural demands as inimical to unity and harmful for nation building.

Basu finds faults with both liberal and Marxist perspectives on the nature and role of regional movements vis-a-vis national integration. Apart from the fact that Western scholars see an inherent contradiction between primordial loyalties and civil responsibilities leading to turbulence and disintegration (p. 25), both Marxists and Liberals have failed in making a proper assessment of ethnic behaviour. They firmly believe that regional and parochial loyalties would be gradually replaced by class loyalty (p. 105), despite persistent evidence to the contrary. Most importantly, Western perspectives on the development of the sense of nationality suffer a fundamental drawback in that they lose sight of the fact that, as Rabindranath Tagore has pointed out, Samaj, not politics in India, has been the dominant element in regulating public order. Ignoring this, they talk of common memories and shared past or shared

amnesia. Basu aims at providing a corrective to the inadequate Western perspectives on nation building and regional movements from Tagore's vantage point.

Space prevents a detailed discussion of the way Basu conducts his exploration or adduces his evidences or attempts even a summary of the points he makes. However, it is necessary to ask whether he makes his point effectively. There is no doubt that Tagore's insight pertaining to two distinctive constitutive principles of organizing society is profound. There is also no doubt that Indian society, since ages, fitted the Samaj model. However, the point is

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whether this model is any more operative in Indian society. For the last fifty years, at least, India has been experimenting with the model of development, at the centre of which is the self-defining subject who makes the pursuit of self-interest the hub of his life activities.

In this view, society loses its traditionally attributed significance and is reduced simply to a mechanical aggregate of self-defining subjects who use (or abuse) it for realizing their own purposes. If it is this perspective on society that is the dominant framework, not only for theoretical but also for pragmatic purposes, then, it is not clear as to what extent Tagore's insight helps us in understanding the phenomena of nation-formation and regional movements. As a theoretical model, Tagore's insight, no doubt retains its attraction; however, as an operation category of constructing reality, it

loses much of its relevance.

Also, the emergence of self-defining subjects means the central importance of the phenomenon of self-determination of the individual in modern times. And, since self-determination and the pursuit of self-interest are organically linked, relations among individuals come to be characterized by conflict and collaboration. Every collaboration forms a group - a combination of "I's" into a "we" counter-balanced by a "they". But every such formation, as Duv Ronen points out, is tentative, temporary and shifting. In the competition for the good things of life, individuals form groups to press for their demands. These groups change their nature and could be constituted on different bases, depending on the stakes involved in the conflict for access to societal resources. It is in this context that any single factor explanation of a movement or, alternatively, rejection of any factor as being insignificant is erroneous. It is also in this context that it is difficult to maintain that "ethnic assertions" symbolise attempts to escape the homogenising influences of the political arrangement of nation state and that they are expressions of the quest for a human identity, invoking complex and solid linkages that nurture a sense of human belonging and providing possibilities of recapturing all the rich diversity of human culture (p. 121).

Despite these blemishes, the book is laboriously researched, clearly written, well argued and tastefully brought out. Appendices spread over ninety pages enhance the value of the book.

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The last quarter of the twentieth century has experienced an unprecedented upsurge of regional and ethnic identities, India finding her place quite high on the list of the affected countries. Social scientists have mainly approached the phenomenon from the angles of history, cultural specificity, economic disparity and geographical diversity. But identity formation is essentially a psychological phenomenon and there have been very few attempts at delving into this complex process. The present volume partly fills the gap.

The theoretical problem involved in the exercise is that psychology, a fairly developed discipline, is concerned with the individual while social psychology is a border-line discipline and has developed tools for studying only transient phenomena like crowd behaviour and mob violence. As Margaret Chatterji, Director, IIAS, who also provides a useful summing up of the papers at the end, notes in the Introduction, the theme of the contributions in the volume has strong psychological overtones and 'perhaps extrapolates from what we are familiar with in individual psychology, carrying this over into the life of the communities' (p. x).

The dilemma is reflected in some of the pieces at the beginning which, nevertheless, provide valuable insights. Ashis Nandy (Self as a Political Concept) perceives the construction of the 'self' of a community in counter position with others. He notes two of its features: (i) status-ranking in terms of criteria which are not quite consistent over time and space, and (ii) appropriation of the other's self in the name of 'progress'. Nandy thinks that India's self-estimation is measured in terms of a 'mythical' West. Nandy is thus embroiled in a stimulus-response paradigm. How will he explain the recent discovery of the Vedic heritage of the Hindus and the reduction of the Indian Muslims to the 'Mohammadi Hindus'?

In 'Self-Images: Societies and Individuals under Stress' Dr Prakash Desai goes back to the Upanishadic mystique in search of the roots of the modern psychological theory. In the early Upanishads Desai holds, 'prana' is synonymous with self. The later Upanishads add consciousness to it. Desai's assertion that the early philosophers were also physicians is an interesting point stressed also by the materialist Indologists. But when he proposes that the Sanskrit word *atman* is cognate with the Greek word *atmos* (meaning air) one stumbles. Desai's entire effort, based on doubtful philological data, seems to be aimed at regeneration and regulation of the Hindus' self-esteem.

G.C. Gupta defines Self-Image Man-

## Regional and Ethnic Identities

S.K. Chaube\*

### SELF-IMAGES, IDENTITY AND NATIONALITY

Edited by P.C. Chatterji

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1989, pp. xii + 264, Rs. 150

gement as 'behavioural strategies that people use to create desired social images or identities'. But which image does an Indian like to impress upon others? Management is a behavioural, not constitutive, strategy. P.C. Chatterjee, who makes up for the absence of a substantive introduction from the editor by a paper (Identity: Personal and Group), sees ethnicity as a phenomenon in flux. The analysis, however, is sociological. At the level of psychology, his concern is the relation of the individual with his groups.

There are three articles on violence and aggression in the Indian society. Rajendra Singh traces the roots of violence to structural inequality. He is disturbed by the intellectual cult of violence in the writings of people like Sartre and Fanon and the increasing technological facilities for violence.

The second article (Group Identity and Aggressiveness) by Sunil Dutt Gaur is, incidentally, the most systematic exposition of group identity. "Group identity can be said to occur when an individual adopts behaviour derived from a group because this behaviour is associated with a satisfying self-defining relationship to this group. Such a desirable relationship is maintained because it supports the self-definition that is part of this relationship. Gaur accords principal importance to religion. "In its institutional form, religion is divisive, for the existing divisions make it easy to contaminate the universalistic creeds of religion with irrelevant considerations of caste, social class, national origin, cultural difference and race. Bigotry enters only when religion becomes the apologist for in-group superiority and overextends itself by disparaging out-groups for reasons that extend beyond deviation in creed."

Shridhar Sharma (Violence: A Manifestation of Social Pathology) provides a text bookish summary of causes of the social violence.

From a historian (Shahid Amin, *The Muslim as the Other: Image, Belief, History*) comes an insight into the psychology of communal violence. For Amin, the major problem is: How can difference be represented without stereotyping the group concerned? The critical question, according to Amin, is how communities remember, understand and represent pasts and presents to themselves. Such memories, real or imag-

ined, constitute the basis of the Ram Janambhoomi dispute.

The theme of imagined history is pursued by Sudipto Kaviraj (*Imaginary History: Narrativising of the Nation in Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay*) with special reference to *Anandamath*. Kaviraj sees in the writing of historical novels in Bengal of the nineteenth century an effort to construct the future rather than narrate the past—the historic beginning of an imagined integration. Such an effort reflects, on the one hand, the Bengali's desire to appropriate India and, on the other, an admission of his inability to cope with British colonialism single-handed.

Besides the first paper of the volume (K.D. Gangrade, 'Our Present Malaise'), summarising the agony and the hopes of our times, there are two papers that deal with the problem of secularism and nation building. M.M. Agarwal (*National Unity and Secularism*) regards India's 'religious secularism' as fallacious. He defines secular as 'independent of religious accretions.' Amar Kumar Singh (*Developing India's National Identity*) proposes that 'by eliminating all the possible bonds of human groups, the constitution of India emerges as the only common basis of Indianness and Indian national identity.' Iqbal Masud (*TV. Image is Everything*) comes down heavily upon the medium's inability to present the complexities of communal relations. Ashis Banerjee (*Plural Identities and the State in India*) reflects the problems of bringing about territorial unity in a multi-ethnic/multi-cultural state.

The other papers are case studies. Mukul Kesavan (*Invoking a Majority: The Congress and the Muslims of the United Provinces, 1945-47*) shows the extent of alimentation between the Congress Party and the Muslims in UP around the time of partition of India. Kesavan is apparently surprised that the Muslims in UP risked a probable transfer of population to vote for the Muslim League in the 1945-46 election to the provincial assembly. He misses the simple fact that the idea of partition was not in the air at the time and "Pakistan" meant different things to different people.

There are three papers on Jharkhand. Arvind N. Das (*Jharkhand's Roots: Tribal Identities in Indian History*) approaches the problem from a historical angle 'for a creative application of class analysis to change in tribal

societies. Although tribal resistance to domination is legendary, it is the emergence of an enlightened middle class that has altered the Jharkhand situation. His diagnosis on Bihar is that its sustained stagnation can be broken only by a reduction of its size.

Jyoti Sen (*Tribal Identity: A Case Study of Chhotanagpur*) has also adopted the theoretical approach of modernity, though she is somewhat sceptical of its leadership. Javed Alam, on the other hand, in his 'Tribal Identity in Jharkhand' seeks to link up the movement with the general theoretical concern of the volume. His theoretical position is that the sustained strain people are subjected to gives it a sense of community as 'an inversion of the sense of a loss of community.' He seems to strike a compromise between tradition and modernity when he notes that tribal specificities have been overtaken by the Christian/non-Christian divide but the 'other' image is owned by the diku occupying the low lying fertile lands.

There are four papers on Punjab. According to Khubchandani (*Self-images and Identities of the Punjabi People: Ethnic and Linguistic Realities*), the Punjabi culture is composite spreading over the Indo-Pakistan border. The Punjabis' numerical insignificance in India, compared to their numerical dominance in Pakistan, creates an identity problem for them.

Mulk Raj Anand (*Changing Self-Image of Sikhs*), and J.S. Grewal (*Making of Sikh Self-Image before Independence*), tread on common territory, being historical. But whereas Anand sounds a bit patronizing, Grewal stresses numerous ideological divisions in the Sikh society.

Hindu consciousness in Punjab, according to Indu Banga (*The Emergence of Hindu Consciousness in Colonial Punjab*) arose, first, in response to Christian missionary activities and, then, by the Government's gradually increasing interest in the welfare of the Muslim and the Sikh communities. Its seminal representation by an Arya Samajist, Lala Lal Chand, in a series of letters published in *The Punjabee*, called for Hindus' reconciliation with the Raj. Later, Bhai Paramananda commended these letters. The Hindu Maha Sabha, of which he was a leader, had grown out of the Punjab Provincial Hindu Conference. The bivalence of the Hindu middle class was reflected best by Lala Lajpat Rai who was an Arya Samajist and a Hindu first and an Indian later.

Sudhir Chandra [Nation(s) in Making] furnishes instances of Assam and Gujarat where linguistic consciousness of the regions grew into national consciousness.

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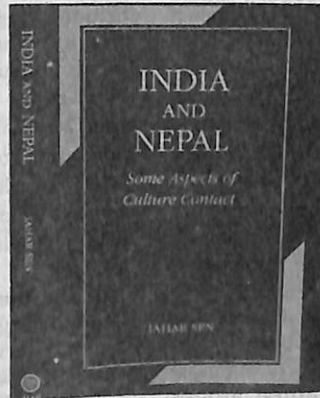
## Cultural Unity or Hegemony

Anirudha Gupta\*

### INDIA AND NEPAL: SOME ASPECTS OF CULTURE CONTACT

By Jahar Sen

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1992, pp. ix + 108, Rs. 120



India, too, is well known" (p. 14). Accordingly, the story of India-Nepal cultural contact is also the story of the triumph of 'civilizing' Hinduism over non-Aryan races.

This is a singularly one-sided reading. It fails to tell us how interaction with Buddhism, or whatever forms it took in later years, also influenced Hindu practices in Nepal. In particular, how Buddhism became the dominant religion of the Newars in the Kathmandu valley, whereas it faced total extinction in the fertile plains of north-east India? Besides, Professor Sen does not see how the incorporation of Indo-Tibetan tribes made Hinduism in Nepal more relaxed in social outlook, especially in food habits.<sup>5</sup>

The point is that Nepal's cultural links with India remained more or less confined to the ruling families, thus leaving 'subaltern cultures' enough autonomy to adapt or reject Hinduism the way they liked. Prof. Ray himself notes that in medieval times, the ruling class of Kathmandu 'was the upholder of the Brahmanical system, but the common people were generally Buddhist' (p. 16). This perhaps explains why the mutual accommodation of classes necessitated peaceful co-existence between Buddhism and Hinduism.

"Subaltern cultures" held on to their autonomy even in the later days. Thus, despite the *Mulki Ains* promulgated by the Rana rulers on the basis of Hindu religious law, community laws and rulers were shaped by experiences and pragmatic observations. Therefore, says a Nepali sociologist, "the interface between the 'civilizing' Hindu principles and the indigenous, spontaneous, pragmatic community customs and laws have to be explored if we want to understand the nature of the structure of Nepali society today"<sup>6</sup>. My

complaint is that, instead of exploring this 'interface', the author seeks Nepal merely as an extension — an outer pocket — of *Pax Hinduana*.

This approach also vitiates the author's discussion of trans-Himalayan trade routes in his chapter on 'Pedlars and Pilgrims.' In both ancient and medieval times, the bulk of overland trade across Central Asia followed the traditional 'Silk Road'; linking China in the East with the Volga region and Europe in the West. In contrast, the Himalayan route to Tibet through Nepal was practically intractable. Hence, this route attracted more pilgrims than pedlars. The British tried to use this route for commercial intercourse with Tibet and Central Asia. But the attempt was motivated more by strategic than commercial reasons.

Hence, the author rightly points out that "on account of rigid facts of geography and variable facts of politics, India's trade with Central Asia did not pick up" (p. 13).

The problem with the monograph is its ambiguity. It does not quite tell us if the author wants to present (i) a new thesis on India-Nepal cultural contact' or (ii) a critique of existing literature, or (iii) a catalogue of information pertaining to religion, scripts, languages, literature and vernacular drama as common heritage of India and Nepal.

Obviously, the aim is not to present a new thesis, nor even new insights into areas traversed by others which Professor Sen could have done, had he so wanted. For instance, he makes the interesting point that the Newars in the Kathmandu valley "do not form a separate ethnic group, but their distinct cultural identity is clearly discernible" (p. 16). What does he really mean? His only observation in this regard is that Newars might have been drawn from Abhiras, Kirats,

Licchavis, the Vysa Thakuris and the Karnatakas "though it is very difficult to ascertain who were their forerunners". However, it is not in their forerunners that we are interested; what we want to know is how, in the co-mingling of many races and peoples, a particular community could establish a "distinct cultural identity" with separate language, religion and social customs? Unfortunately, the author does not even raise this question.

Similarly, he presents an interesting chart on page 27 showing that, beginning from a single script, Maithili, Newari, Bengali and Assamese developed separate scripts around the same time i.e., c1000-1200 AD. Since comparative literature is his forte, one expected him to elaborate this theme a little further.

Again, at another point, he makes the observation that "the march of Sanskrit across the Himalayas is a thrilling chapter in the history of Asia". And then leaves the "chapter" entirely to our imagination!

From his copious citation of authorities, it does not appear that Professor Sen intends any serious critique of existing literature. Indeed, he seldom hazards a critical comment let alone criticism of any scholarly work.

Finally, what is offered in between the covers is just a catalogue of information — sometime useful, sometimes not. His chapters on literature, drama and contemporary scenarios compromise a store-house of tit-bits akin to what one gets while visiting a museum or cultural symposium. Such a catalogue may help a beginner; but from a scholar of Professor Sen's eminence, one would have expected some more.

1. See David G. Mandelbaum, *Society in India*, Vol II, Bombay, 1972, pp. 585-92.
2. Quoted in M N Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, New Delhi, 1992, p. 32.
3. K M Panikkar, *Hindu Society at Cross Roads*, Bombay, 1955, p. 9.
4. See McKim Marriott, ed., *Village India: Studies in the Little Community*, Chicago, 1955.
5. See Anirudha Gupta, 'Cultural Dimensions' in Bimal Prasad ed., *Regional Co-operation in South Asia: Problems and Prospects*, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 137-48.
6. Dor Bahadur Bista, 'The Structure of Nepali Society,' in Kamal P Malla ed., *Nepal: Perspectives on Continuity and Change*, pp. 169-91.

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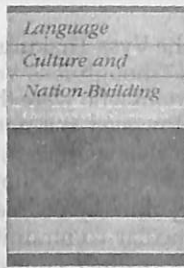
Sanskritic Hinduism employed three important methods to establish its hegemony over the Indian sub-continent. First, it was absorption and transformation of tribal peoples into castes.<sup>1</sup> Second, incorporation of tribal gods and goddesses into the Hindu pantheon. And third, promotion of the actual rulers — often men of very low birth — to 'clean', Kshatriya castes. This, notes Burton Stein, "provides one of the explanations for the durability and longevity of the unique civilization of India."<sup>2</sup> Hence, also, why the Shudras could produce, according to historian K.M. Panikkar, "an unusually large number of royal families even in more recent times."<sup>3</sup>

In its attempt to gain sub-continental allegiance, *Pax-Hinduana* however had to make innumerable compromises to adjust to the local situations. This gave diversity in Hinduism as much a prominence as the over-arching homogeneity claimed by the Brahminic order. In other words, the induction of 'little traditions' diluted the internal discipline of a 'great tradition.'<sup>4</sup>

This diversity, or deviations from 'great tradition', calls for a closer examination of the roles of 'sub-altern cultures' within the fold of Hinduism. For, whereas the ruling or dominant strata of Hindu society tended to rigidly practise Sanskritised rules and rituals, the 'sub-altern cultures' below this strata continued to follow their individual beliefs and customs. In Nepal, partly because of geographical isolation and the influence of the Indo-Tibetan races, 'subaltern cultures' retained considerable autonomy in the religious and social spheres. This explains why Hinduism in Nepal strayed too far from its original version in the Indo-Gangetic valley.

Unfortunately, the author does not care to examine what is unique about Hinduism in the Nepali environment. He grows ecstatic over the cultural unity of India and Nepal, which holds for him "the rhythm of poetry, the depth of philosophy and the sanction of history." (p.7) He, thus, overdraws Nepal's cultural affiliation with Indian, i.e., how its animist races came under the influence of Hinduism; how the Tibetans accepted Hindu customs, and how, as a result of interaction, 'Buddhism was being gradually modified by many of the Hindu doctrines and practices' (p. 6). He quotes, with approval, a Nepal Government publication which names Nepal's national heroes, with Janaka, Sita and Buddha heading the list. "The first two mythological figures," he says, represent the ideals of kingship and womanhood, respectively. Their place in the national heritage of





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*Triennial Social Sciences  
Research Journal*  
Panjab University, Chandigarh  
vol. 1:1-2, 1992

By S.L. Sharma\*

Long known for its cognitive, communicative and cultural functions, language has taken on some new socio-political functions in modern times. One such function is its role in identity formation.

Language plays one kind of role in a unilingual society and of another kind in a multilingual society. It works to foster a sense of common identity and close affinity in the former while it serves as a basis of differentiation, stratification and secession in the latter...

The project of modernity works in the third world countries more in the manner of replacement, or better still displacement, than in the manner of accretion or increment in the existing order.... In effect, it offends the accommodative sensibility of ethnic groups including linguistic identities and sets them on war path against forced nationalism. Ironically, this is the paradox of nation-building in India, as in other South Asian countries, which are currently involved in the process of modernisation.

The book under review is addressed to this paradox of nation building in India, particularly from the vantage point of language and culture, a paradox of coercive homogenisation of cultural pluralism under the spell of modernisation. The central idea of the book is that India is fast turning away from an organically "accommodative" plurilingual nation into an institutionally "assertive" multilingual nation under the pressure of modernisation.

To advance the above idea, the book is organised into two parts, aptly christened "parameters of diversity" and "case studies". The thrust of part one is on illustrating the wide spectrum of cultural and linguistic variation in Indian life. Seven major cultural zones are identified which encompass smaller cultural regions, traditionally called *kshetras*, numbering thirty to forty....

Part two presents profiles of a few speech communities and illustrates the enormous diversity of speech behaviour and the intricacies of verbal interaction on the Indian sub-continent. Mainly it

## Nation as Tower of Babel

### LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND NATION BUILDING: CHALLENGES OF MODERNISATION

Lachman M. Khubchandani

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla 1991, pp. xv + 125, Rs. 100

deals with the following: Hindi-Urdu-Hindustani, Punjabi Diaspora, "transplanted" Sindhi and English as a contact language. Providing a vivid account of the split between Hindi and Urdu, their speech styles and their levels of elegance, it sheds light on the recent semantic acrobatics in census tabulations over the issue of Hindi-Urdu-Hindustani and the casualty of Hindustani in this demographic game. About Punjabi diaspora three main points are made. First, that it is assuming increasing significance for the development of Punjabi identity, popularly called Punjabiati. Second, that it constitutes a unique case of diglossia where three religion-cultural groups namely Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus respond to different patterns of complementation. And third, that the recent rise of script controversy which deterred some Hindus in the Punjab from entering Punjabi as their mother tongue shows the polarising potential of language. Unlike Punjabi, Sindhi language is viewed as a transplanted entity in India and its role is examined in the pluralistic context of Indian culture. The case study of English appraises on on-going debate about the role of English in India and underlines the need for a constructive partnership between English and Indian languages in the process of nation building.

The book makes a valuable contribution in several ways. On the substantive side, it provides an authentic account of the linguistic cultural variations and their implications for nationalism as well as for the emergence of irredentic movements. On the theoretic front, it raises certain issues of fundamental nature such as: how does language structure reality? How does modern nation state can turn language from a source of cohesion into a source of friction? On the policy front, the book disapproves of the idea of making language or any other primordial entity basis of reorganisation of states. Similarly, it provides support to the idea of bi-lingual or tri-lingual formula. Instead, it holds a brief for plural linguistic and for a policy of equity and fairness in promoting creative faculties of all languages in the cultural realm.

On the face of it, these views appear to be too innocuous to join issue with. But appearances are sometimes deceptive. Take, for instance, the refrain that the state should not exploit the "primordial card" of religion or language for purposes of public policy. Fair enough. But what should the state do when the poli-

tics and language elites exploit the primordial card, or when ethnic identities, including linguistic identities, agitate for a right to cultural self-determination? The issue is not quite raised, let alone resolved. Not that the author, a sensitive analyst, could be unaware of it. Instead, it seems that the author is interested more in examining the role of the state than of other agencies in analysing the problem of language chauvinism in the context of nation-building.

All told, the book is as enlightening as it is stimulating. It is useful particularly for the social scientists, men of letters and policy planners.

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Extracts Reprinted from  
*The Hindu*  
11 January 1994  
By Murkot Ramunny

The author in his preface comments on the ethnicity based movements in different parts of the world which have challenged the cohesion of the state as such. "The upsurge about the concerns of ethnicity at least in the initial stages, usually gets manifested through religion, language and other cultural identities. If concern of ethnicity are being manifested through the various aspects narrated above, the question arises why should the problem of ethnicity arise at all? Is it not economic disparity exploitation of land, denial of elementary rights enshrined in our constitution (at least as far as India is concerned)? While we are discussing the manifestations of ethnicity, we have to go deep into the causes and then prescribe the remedies...."

The first chapter had identified "major cultural ranges in the country parallel with the inter flow of colours in a rainbow". The author feels that "many efforts in developing human resources in the contemporary world are unwittingly marred by the obsessive concern with 'standardising' societies and streamlining their activities which jeopardise the maintenance of variation as a vital reality in every day life". He continues: "The new nations seem to suffer from another serious constraint, namely their un-mindful internationalisation of crucial concepts like the quality of life, human development, socio-cultural planning on the lines prescribed by affluent western societies".... The author's assertion that the dominant issue of conflict between tradition and modernity is

that in most of our planning efforts we have by and large continued change as the replacement of values, instead of as an increment in the existing order...

while discussing linguistic provinces in India the author has this to say "such pressures of bringing about coercive homogeneity in communications in favour of the language identity of dominant groups generates insular tendencies among plural societies "whether we had formed linguistic provinces or not we are attached to each other through language. Insular tendencies arise when another language is imposed in the name of national integration..."

One of the striking examples of how a dominant language while being imposed on minority language groups breaks up unity of pluralistic society is Assam. It is Assam's language policy of declaring Assamese as the only official language to be used in the State that ended up in cutting the State into bits... The author gives three distinct functions of a language (a) Expression of creativity in literature etc. (b) Cultural identity (c) Medium of communication. There is one more which is very important and will cut across all loyalties, that is for economic progress, in fact to get a job, to sell a produce, to get raw materials etc. etc. While Tamil Nadu officially has not accepted the three language formula it is found that large number of young people attend private institutions to learn Hindi would enable them to obtain jobs in the Hindi belt... The languages problem of India has developed due to the feeling that Hindi is being imposed. It should be remembered that it was during Rajaji's regime that Hindusthani was made popular in the then Madras Presidency. If left alone Hindi without interference from Hindi speaking people would have caught on without anybody being aware of it...

The author has concluded aptly by saying "the language needs for literacy, general education and for occupational skills and specialisation may be at variance in a plurilingual society and may require different strategies to cope with the challenge..."

The last chapter on 'English as a contact language' should interest policy makers, administrators, authors, and teachers of languages. The author says "There has been a glaring



proliferation of English medium school among the upper crust of society to the middle class and further down to the grassroot level, particularly in Urban settings" ...

... What we need is the acceptance of the words that are being used by the common man into the language instead of artificially translated words from Sanskrit or Hindi...

The book has fulfilled what it has attempted "highlighting the characteristics signifying vital reality of cultural and linguistic variation in India life" as well as "the constructive partnership between English and Indian languages in the process of nation building". The book should form the focus for a think-tank to produce a plan for language policy for the country.

Extracts Reprinted from  
*Journal of Pragmatics*  
North-Holland, 1993

By Hartmut Haberland\*

Europe is travelling towards greater political unity, and the role of European languages in this process has be-

come a major topic of discussion among Europeans. Questions asked pertain mostly to the role, and relative hierarchy, of the 'big' languages (English, French, German) to the survival chances of minority and lesser used languages at the other end and to the fate of the small national and regional languages (Danish, Catalan, even Dutch): will they side with the lesser used languages or stay at par with the big languages?

In a European context, the concepts of national language and mother tongue have acquired a central place in the discussion of linguistic development. Personal as well as group identity, is closely tied to language loyalty. Lesser used languages (and recently, small national languages) seeing their chances of survival in the acquisition of a legally protected position (or at least niche) in which they can enjoy formal equality with their 'big' competitors, have modelled their role on the pattern provided by the big national languages.

In this discussion the recent book by the Indian sociolinguist L.M. Khubchandani could provide some challenging new insights also for Europeans since it looks at the questions of language, iden-

tity and nation from a completely different angle and on the basis of a completely different experience, viz. that of the Indian subcontinent. There Khubchandani finds what he terms organic pluralism, as opposed to structural pluralism as found in European multilingual states, e.g. Belgium. Organic pluralism is not characterized by a system of checks and balances between formally (but not necessarily substantially) equal, and mutually exclusive ethnic-linguistic groups. Rather, it is a system of constant redefinition of relationships between vaguely defined non-mutually exclusive groups. Language typically does not enter the picture as a definitional criterion for these groups (nor does religion): "Often those groups operate across religion or language boundaries as delineated by the dictates of clergy or of grammarians and other custodians of these traditions" (p. 15). What is decisive for group membership is a core of common experience and a pattern of interaction which can include forms of diglossia and multilingualism.

In such societies a kind of over-

identity can emerge relative to regions (*kshetra*). Maybe this is a model for a future European development. In some areas like Sonderjylland, the border area between Denmark and Germany, we may already be experiencing something similar in Europe: there two ethnic groups (Danes and Germans) share a vernacular (South Jutish) but not all their cultural values; they are also different linguistically because they enter into different diglossic situations (South Jutish/Standard Danish, South Jutish/German).

Khubchandani's book addresses a number of question (like the impact of decolonialization in India) which do not lend themselves to any immediate application for most parts of Europe; but all the same it is a very thought-provoking book for European readers. Such views from outside (akin to what Brecht called the *Verfremdungseffekt*) are often valuable eye-openers.

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## Response to the Reviews

Lachman M. Khubchandani\*

The Reviews presented above have largely commended the work. While supporting the main thrust of the study, i.e. the use of language in a plural milieu such as India leads to a perpetual redefinition of relationship between vaguely defined, non- (such as speakers claiming Hindi/Urdu/Hindustani or Marathi/Konkani), reviewers suggest various possibilities of extending the enquiry to probe into socio-cultural and political paradoxes developed in the "traditional" order so as to meet the challenges of modernisation.

Trends towards the *standardisation* of values in communications on a global scale are being matched by vigorous assertion of cultural and regional *particularities*. The study brings under a close scrutiny the role of State and of language-elites which tends to make language identity, hitherto a cultural trait, more political. Sharma (Panjab University) points out to the phenomenon of ethnic groups agitating for "a right to cultural self-determination through language". The struggle over Kurdish identity in Central Asia (across Turkey, Iraq and Iran) is a glaring case in point.

Haberland (Roskilde University, Denmark) draws a meaningful cor-

South Asian plurality to the newly-emergent European reality in resolving the issues of "relative hierarchy" of big, minority, national, regional and lesser-used languages by arriving at a kind of "over identity", as found in the Indian concept of *kshetra* (called "communication ethos"). The success of cultural pluralism as a planning strategy in the European context will depend upon assuring respect for all cultures, big or small. The study cautions against treating language identities as frozen legacies; these are to be regarded as living synthesis perpetually changing and thriving on inner differences adjusting to everyday life situations.

The obsession with crystallising a language within a *tradition* (a characteristic of literature) and its appropriation within the bounds of a specific territory can give rise to a sort of "sociolinguistic fundamentalism" in framing communication policies for the plurilingual milieu; such policies, instead of fostering political unity, can lead to insulation and tension, with a high risk of culminating in political division. The study attempts to probe into the dynamics of Indian plurilingual scene and initiates a dialogue for considering measures to safeguard against the spread of technological modernisation to be a "social curse".

inevitability and despair, expressed by Ramunny (*The Hindu*), in the face of economic and political exploitation of weaker groups, can be tackled through the positive interpretation of ethnicity.

Many agencies concerned with social planning have been treating linguistic heterogeneity as a serious problem of human adjustment. In this dilemma, many language development programmes, characterised by Western norms and values, subscribe to the paradigm of the survival of the fittest (as in free market economy) or of the best (as perceived through different ideologies, such as the values of purism, precision, uniformity placed on a high pedestal in everyday communications), not taking into account the composite character of Indian ethos. The study argues in favour of making a room for *fairplay* in communications through the flowering of cultural diversity (as environmentalist's respect for biodiversity). It will require a substantive shift in the concerns of social scientists to take seriously the fuzzy and transactive domains of language(s) as a "live force" in the contemporary milieu, recognising the fact that language remains in perpetual flux along with

Language boundaries in plurilingual settings merely serve as markers to construct the fuzzy reality, as manifested through relexicalisation, code switching, and so on.

Such breakthrough is possible only by stressing autonomy in defining time and space-bound reality as a manner of conviviality so that Oriental societies are not reduced to mere objects to be studied in "terms of Western concepts and categories which are treated not as culture-bound but as universals". (Recent debates over human rights are a good example of this malady).

The author would consider himself sufficiently rewarded if this exercise succeeds in promoting a dialogue among those who are wedded to treating language as an instrument of *power*, and those who can transcend beyond its narrow pulls and regard language as a synergetic network inspiring *trust* in cross-cultural settings.

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The volume under review is a collection of sixteen papers presented at a seminar held at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, in the 1970s. Though inexplicably late in its publication, the volume is a welcome and interesting addition to the literature on the subject, for it helps us to gauge how much, or how little, distance we have traversed in the last two decades. The papers cover a wide range of philosophical problems related to the study of man. Identity, freedom, ethical knowledge and intentionality are some of the major issues among these. There are some propositions on which almost all contributors agree. One of them, for example, is that what distinguishes man from other living beings is his linguistic capacity and that it is because of language that man's comprehension transforms imitation into production. But such consensus notwithstanding, the essays can be easily divided into three categories. These follow from the perspectives which they adopt — the analytical, the phenomenological and the traditional Indian. These indeed are the three traditions prevalent in the Indian philosophical circles even today. Not many in this volume have succeeded in blending or transcending them; not many have done so ever since.

The importance of a philosophical study of man is self-evident. As D.P. Chattopadhyaya puts it, "un-

The title of this book would have been more apt, had it been "Whither land reforms in Haryana: money, muscle, and men in politics." The author has studied the land reforms in three districts of Haryana, namely, Hissar, Sirsa and Karnal. He has described how the spirit of land reforms has been defeated by the politicians, bureaucracy, men of religion and muscle-men.

Having admitted that the land reforms had died a natural death in Haryana, without a whimper, the author has not given us the reasons why it happened. For him the failure of land reforms has been very natural, since he makes a sweeping statement—"the very idea of land reforms came up in India more as political gimmickry rather than as a means to achieve an egalitarian society by distributing the land among the tenants and rural landless labourers" (p. 30). The author has also dealt with the evasion of the ceiling legislation by collusive decrees between landlords and their buyers who file their claims as tenants. The author has brought out the case where surplus land was

less we have a rational and critical view about our own nature, it will be an idle exercise to speculate about the future of mankind, the elements of a just society and the other equally important issues". And yet what the essays in this volume seem to demonstrate is the unfortunate fact that this kind of critical attitude is not easy to acquire, particularly so since the world has shrunk into the proverbial global village, but a village in which hierarchies have become only further accentuated and where the traffic of ideas flows by and large in only one direction. The impact of the western intellectual traditions is no less overbearing in post-colonial times than it was in the colonial period. In countries like India, intellectual autonomy has not been easy to gain or maintain. The conventional argument that the philosophical enterprise is 'universal', that it is impervious to historic-cultural specificities, has become in-

creasingly harder to maintain. More than the universal and perennial dimensions of philosophy, it is the historico-cultural dimension which needs emphasis, because it is this which lends each philosophical tradition its uniqueness. For the latter half of this century, we in the Indian philosophical scene are barely beginning the struggle to realise our identity as philosophers. Only some of us are acutely conscious of the fact that a mere repetition of what is happening in the Western philosophical world is not enough, that no matter how well we may understand the issues that the white man has raised in this century, these issues are not our 'problems'. The majority however continues to swim with the Western mainstream. Raman is referring precisely to this fascination for the latest trends in the West when he remarks that "Philosophers are too easily taken in on the trend of thought in vogue during particular

period and become fond of thrashing out the same familiar issues *ad nauseum*, from the point of view of that trend".

A greater misfortune is that even those of us who are all too conscious of the emptiness of such intellectual ventures are unable to find a way out of the impasse. An easy escape route has been the 'return' to our 'glorious past'. The sad irony is that most of us have no vital links with our heritage. While undoubtedly the only way to rejuvenate our intellectual life is to open channels of communication with our past, this cannot be achieved merely by embellishing our writings with reverend citations from our classical texts but by delving deeper into them, playing with them and critically examining what is relevant in them.

Happily, some interesting exercises have taken place in that direction in the past decade. But since the papers included in this volume were written in the 1970s they do not adequately focus on these researches. However I do not wish to denigrate this volume. Anyone interested in acquainting himself with the trends in the philosophy of man in the West will greatly benefit reading it. But we are still far removed from *Swaraj in Ideas*.

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## The Study of Man

Rekha Jhanji\*

### CONCEPT OF MAN IN PHILOSOPHY

Edited by Ramakant Sinari

Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla,  
1991, pp. x + 164, Rs. 140

## Land Reforms Defeated

P.B. Mahishi\*

### WHITHER LAND REFORMS

By Manjit Singh

Indian Institute of Advanced Study  
Shimla, 1992, pp. xi + 51, Rs. 50

allotted to socially weaker sections, and they were so weak that they sold all the land back to landlords. The theme of the book seems to indicate that it is not possible for a tenant to get occupancy rights for the land he cultivates, and that he is sure to be expelled — either by muscle power or through litigation or by

various methods of harassment.

The author has not said anything about the quality of the political will to enforce land reforms and make a success of it. He seems to take it for granted that this political will does not exist, and that the tenant is like sheep coming up for slaughter. The author would

*The title of this book would have been more apt, had it been "Whither land reforms in Haryana: money, muscle, and men in politics."*

have done well to study the states where land reforms have been successful, such as Kerala, but, he seems to accept the defeat of the legislation, and even seems to tacitly approve of it. In the later portion of the book, he has dealt with the leasing of the land by those who have surplus mainly for economic reasons, like leasing out after sowing the seed, which is a sort of contract labour since the landlord provides the inputs himself.

The author seems to have totally ignored the social intention of land reforms, its relation with agrarian peace, the conflict between landlords and the tenants at the time of the emergence of the new ownership, and other sociological patterns. Since he belongs to this system he has not been able to stand out of this system and see it dispassionately. However, his analysis of the relations between the various castes and the extent of their holdings under the lease, and the quality of the lands and indebtedness is interesting.

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