

'modern' discourse always show a lack of de-synonymising between 'Brahmin' as caste and 'Brahmin' as *sampradaya*, a school of philosophy (in disputation through India's intellectual history with Buddhist and Jaina *sampradayas*) and we must remember that Buddha, contrary to the popular impression, had deep respect for Brahmins (as caste) – read the *Jatakas*. Equation of *varna* and *jati* (they are not the same) belong here.

(ii) expressions such as 'Brahmin dominated Hindu society' (p.32), a notion deliberately cultivated by the British in 19th century as 'state policy' and continued in free/partitioned India by the present dispensation, need to be expounded and debated.

(iii) the reading of India's intellectual history on page 49, is highly contestable in the matter of ideational relationship between Vedas, Upanishads, 'early Brahmanical cults' (?), Jain and Buddhist systems, 'classical Brahmanism' (?) – the quick summary on page 49 does no justice either to the rich textual tradition or the density of thought therein. Many intellectuals are prone to summarizing what will take decades to read and understand.

(iv) one wishes that Nemade had not made statements such as ". . . even the purely Kshatriya documents such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* . . . began to flaunt *Ahimsa*. Rama after killing Ravana, says, *Ahimsa paramo dharmah*: and another warrior hero Yuddhisthira at the end of mass destruction of life, deliberates with the *Rishis* in *Shantiparva* on *shanti*. . . Then in the second millennium, numerous *Bhakti* cults . . . rebelliously continue to re-inforce Jain, Buddhist and several other *Nastika* ways of life suppressed by Brahmanism." Well! This is swashbuckling opinion-making—every verb and noun is contestable in this and there is a hint of lack of intimacy with major intellectual texts. Shows that even in Nemade, a modernist lurks.

To cut the story short. Bi-polarities are the bane of western humanist-sociological mind – their modern science has successfully gone beyond that (*More Are Different* is a celebrated book by a scientist). The Indian mind nurtured in, what has always been since ancient days, a multiple, pluralistic, pluri-theistic, multi-linguistic and multi-belief system has never functioned in either-or mode or in the linear mode – cyclicity and configuration are basic drivers of the Hindu mind. One who wants to contest the other paradigm must operate with his own categories as was the rule in Indian *vada parampara*. It isn't India or West even now – it is *more* and *different*. And what would you say to the TV, a western invention that is perfect fit for India's *shravya-preksha* orality.

Let us wait. Oral cultures have in built mechanisms of recovery. And as it is, strong cultures resist both kinds of

loss – that due to the text-internal factors and that due to the text-external, contextual factors - to preserve culturally central systems of ideas.

NOTES

1. Recent and contemporary Western Theory is in fact *conflict centered*. Post-Renaissance, it successively substituted for the Pre-Renaissance God-Man adversarial relationship, first the adversarial Man-Nature relationship (witness Descartes in *On Method*: "The goal of knowledge is to bend nature to man's purpose"), then the adversarial Man-Man relationship (witness Marx's class war) and now of late the adversarial Man-Woman relationship. *Conflict* of course has been sanctified post- Karl Marx as the necessary condition of progress, again something debatable.

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Shreesh Chaudhary, *Foreigners and Foreign Languages in India – a Sociolinguistic History*, New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2009. pp. 586. Rs. 950

Foreigners and Foreign Languages in India by Shreesh Chaudhary deals with the sociolinguistic history of the Indian subcontinent from the earliest encounters with Sanskrit and Greek to the English of the British colonizers. Within this long linguistic and cultural interaction is about one thousand years of Arabic, Turkish but mainly Persian period followed by the development of Urdu. Shreesh Chaudhary has done a highly commendable job in recounting this linguistic narrative with profusely documented situations where the native speakers assimilated the foreign idioms. It is also very interesting to note that the native elite never took long to adapt itself to the emerging circumstances of new political realities. It was almost with great enthusiasm that they learnt, practiced and communicated in the language of the colonizer.

The present day linguistic situation is very well described by Chaudhary when he talks about his grandson's sociolinguistic interactions :

My son's son, Rishabh, born in 1998, attends an English school in Hyderabad. He speaks Maithili with his father, me and my wife; Bengali with his mother and her parents; English, Hindi and Telugu with his friends. He watches English, Hindi and Telugu programmes on the television and plays computer games in English.

This sociolinguistic interaction, with some local

variations, is true of all children in the Indian subcontinent. Unfortunately, its political and cultural implications have never been properly understood by those who pretend to be the guardians of our socio-political organizations. For them, for all those who fought for the freedom of the country and later became its rulers, consciously or unconsciously, the European model with one language, one culture, one nation remained the ideal model of a political city state. Instead of dividing the Indian subcontinent into a few hundred administrative units with English as its administrative language, the language of one region was elevated to the status of the official and national language of the entire subcontinent. This political blunder resulted in disastrous consequences. Other linguistic regions reacted violently and the country was divided into several linguistic states with enormous political power. As all administrative work was supposed to be conducted in the regional languages, the states became hermetically sealed for all outsiders, the citizens of the same country.

In the ancient times, the Indian subcontinent was divided into several thousand princely states or political units. Whenever a foreign power invaded India, it imposed a unitary form of administration and language on the area conquered by it. As a result, the number of states was gradually reduced and more uniform administrative units came into being. With the British, it extended from Afghanistan to Burma with Ceylon and Nepal also a part of the same set up. If the narrow sectarian interests had not played havoc with the political aspirations of our people, this whole region would have been today one federal republic of the Indian subcontinent.

In this context, Afghanistan is extremely important. In ancient India, this region was the cultural centre of our people. Afghanistan was the preeminent centre of Sanskrit language and culture in Paninian times. It was also the greatest centre of Buddhist art and culture. Subsequently, the cultural and religious colours changed. But the history of a people is not just the history of one community or religion or language. The Indian subcontinent, very different from the European homogenous linguistic and ethnic states, has always been a multilingual, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious region. No micro regional language or culture ever dominated its entire political space. It was always due to a given foreign administration that larger and larger units were formed. The normal course would have been to inherit this politico-historical legacy. Unfortunately, this was not to be. None of our great leaders had the intellectual and political vision of a Bharat that could extend from Afghanistan to Burma with

Ceylon and Nepal as its integral parts. And, yet, it was all there to take it if we had not been mentally stuck with our extremely narrow sectarian interests. There was one administrative language, one administrative block, fashioned by the vicissitudes of history over a thousand years of political upheavals. From the very beginning of the freedom struggle, this historical evolution was ignored. Our leaders dreamt only of a Paninian India of 500 BC with uniform language and culture.

This excellent book of Shreesh Chaudhary traces the history of these linguistic transformations during the last two thousand years but maybe it is too late to have any impact on modern India. His grandson may speak several languages with his friends in a fluid colloquial register, but for all that matters, for official work as an administrator or the one who has to deal with him, he has no choice but to have a very high level of proficiency of discourse in one regional language, only to throw it in the cultural dustbin when he moves to another region-state. This multi-ethnic, multi-cultural entity that is India is now a linguistically highly compartmentalized country with hermetically sealed communicative channels.

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Pradeep Trikha, *Multiple Celebrations, Celebrating Multiplicity: Girish Karnad*, Ajmer: A.R.A.W.LII. Publications, 2009. pp.92. pb. Rs.400

When Girish Karnad wrote *Tughlaq* in 1964 to mitigate the lack of plays on a historical theme on the Kannada stage, he was bringing a consciousness which was extremely attuned to the realities of his times. Though written during his stint at Oxford as a Rhodes scholar, Karnad's *Tughlaq* is not merely a faithful portrayal of the times and experiments of a troubled ruler in the pre-Mughal subcontinent. He brought into the script the dilemmas of modern India – clashes between the ideals of the then Prime Minister Nehru and the powerful classes who were suspicious of his motives, the desire to build a secular polity in a society which was deeply divided by the scars of partition. When Karnad wrote the play he was utterly unsure of it being staged. So he let his creative energies loose, conceiving scenes of epic proportions, requiring a large cast. Yet *Tughlaq* has been performed regularly through the decades traversing the changing political climate of independent India – the