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Conjuring up the Contours of Śukra's Science of Politics: The Problem of Method and Substance

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Ever since the publication of Lallanji Gopal's article on Śukranīti in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* in 1962 declaring it a nineteenth century text;¹ scholarly interest in its textual analysis has considerably declined. This is so because besides contributing to the on-going debate about the date of its composition, which was set in motion by Gustav Oppert while publishing the English version of Śukranīti in 1882; Gopal has by his 'nineteenth century' thesis questioned the very authenticity of the available text. Although Oppert assigned it to the period of *Smritis*, most of the Indologists considered it to be a work of post-*Smṛti* period ranging between fourth century AD and sixteenth century AD²; K A N Sastri and V Raghavan preceded Gopal in putting forth the view that the available text of Śukranīti was a work of nineteenth century.³ However, their argument was not as forceful, rigorous and wide-ranging as that of

Gopal who has accumulated massive evidence from diverse sources in order to 'prove' his point.

For one thing, Gopal's suspicion about the authenticity of the available text⁴ emanates from the fact that there is not much in it which could qualify to be called *nīti* (policy) or *rājanīti* (science of politics) for which Śukra has been profusely and most reverentially quoted in several ancient Indian literary sources either by this popular name (which in fact, was given to him by Lord Siva after he adopted him as his own son) or by other names like Usana, Kāvya, Bhārgava or Bhṛgu. Apart from this general argument, Gopal's doubts rest on very convincing and well articulated internal evidence culled from the available text itself. It is not intended to reproduce Gopal's whole argument here. Therefore only some aspects of it are being mentioned.

Gopal finds, what may be called, some degree of

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anachronism in the text, for, it describes guns and cannons which imply the knowledge of gun-powder. Gopal's argument is that Indians did not have any such knowledge before the sixteenth century. He further argues that guns were introduced in India, for the first time by the Portuguese in 1510 AD. He clarifies that any reference in ancient Indian literary works to *fire-weapons* should not be taken to refer to *fire-arms* because these weapons did not contain anything like gun-powder. Moreover, in the extant *Śukranīti* text there is a mention of large and small *nalikas* (barrels) and *agniurna* with *sunarci* salt (nitre) and balls made of iron, lead and other metals which makes it obvious that the text does not belong to the remote antiquity because the Indians at that time had no knowledge of some of these things and they were not familiar with fire-arms.⁵

Secondly, in the extant *Śukranīti* text there is a reference to *yavanas* and *Mlecchas*, terms which are used to refer to Greeks and Muslims respectively. The *Mlecchas* are described in detail as a people living in the north-west, (*pascimottara*) who do not accept the authority of the *Vedas*, who are different from the four Hindu castes and whose religious philosophy considers God as the invisible creator. They are projected in very contemptuous terms as envious and foolish people which seem to be the views of some fanatic Brahmin. Killing of a cow or a woman or a Brahmin is mentioned in *Śukranīti* as a legitimate ground to go to war against those who resort to such killings. According to Gopal any such injunction would make no sense in an exclusively Hindu India. All this has prompted him to infer that the *Śukranīti* text belongs to a period when the Muslims had spread over most parts of India.⁶

Thirdly, and most significantly, Gopal has shown that the available text of *Śukranīti* contains numerous provisions which seem to have been lifted almost verbatim from the policies and regulations of the East India Company, particularly from the *Ordinances/Regulations* and *Rules* of Bombay, Madras and Bengal Presidencies.⁷ Gopal has also quoted several stipulations regarding state administration and conduct of war in the *Śukranīti* which are exactly similar to the administration of the Peshwa rulers, particularly that of Shivaji. In Gopal's view it is reasonable to infer that the author of *Śukranīti* has borrowed these provisions from there. The organizational structure of army mentioned in *Śukranīti* seems to have been borrowed from organization of armies in Europe, especially from the army of Napoleon.⁸ The society depicted in the *Śukranīti* has many features of modern capitalist societies and the rules of investment etc. are quite similar to the principles of present-day economics.⁹

On the basis of this whole evidence Gopal has concluded that the available text of *Śukranīti* cannot be the work of Śukracarya; rather it seems to have been authored by some clever person who lived during the nineteenth century, who had thorough knowledge of policies and Regulations of the East India Company, who was also well-informed about Maratha history and who had also good knowledge of all Sanskrit texts on the subject. Gopal has further surmised that probably this person had in his possession a copy of the original *Śukranīti* in some form though such a work seems to have receded from public study and attention long back. Taking advantages of this fact, this person transformed the original text beyond recognition. Thus, Gopal has not only asserted that the available text of *Śukranīti* is a nineteenth century composition, he has also indicated that it is not the work of Śukra at all.

II

Given this suspect character of the available text of *Śukranīti*, it does not seem worthwhile to try to identify Śukra's science of politics on the basis of textual analysis of this work. But merely on the plea that authentic work of Śukra is not available, one cannot, and indeed one should not, abdicate the very responsibility of studying the politics of Śukra. After all, there is a lot of supportive evidence in the *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, *Smṛtis*, *Nītis* and epics to show that Śukra was the earliest and the most brilliant political thinker of India for whom there was one and only one *Vidya* (branch of knowledge) which needed to be studied and taught and it was *Dandanīti* (the science of politics or the science about the use of coercive power of the state). This view of Śukra, about the centrality of politics was quite at variance with all other viewpoints including that of Manu, Brahaspati, Kautilya and Kamandaka etc. who variously held that in addition to *Dandanīti* there were two or three other *Vidyas* which needed to be studied. These were: *Anuvikshki* (Logic and Philosophy); *Trayi* (theology or the study of three *Vedas*—*Ṛg*, *Yajur* and *Sam*); and *Varatta* (Economics).¹⁰ For Śukra, however, *Dandanīti* was a master science and all other branches of knowledge could exist and prosper only with the support and patronage of state power.

Not only this, there are numerous laudatory references to Śukra and his *nīti* in *Mahābhārata*, particularly in *Śantiparva*, *Anuśāsna Parva*, *Ādi Parva*, *Salya Parva* and *Udyog Parva*. References to Śukra as the expounder of *Dandanīti* and *Rājanīti* are also found in several other literary sources including Hemadri's *Chaturvarga Chintamani*, Dandin's *Dasakumara Charita*, Kalidasa's *Kumarasambhava*, Ashvaghosa's *Buddh Charita*

Chandesvara's *Rājanīti-ratnakara*, Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, Kamandaka's *Kaṇḍakiya-nītiśāra* and Janamejaya's *Nīti-prakāśika*. In *Srimad Bhagavada Gita*, Lord Krishna reverentially addresses Śukra as a great thinker and seer (X,37). On the basis of careful analysis of these references one finds that Śukra was the *Purohit* (priest) of the non-Aryan aboriginal communities and a preceptor and advisor of various non-Aryan kings starting from Hiranyakasipu to Prahlāda to Andhaka to Virochana to Vali and to Vrishparva.¹¹ It was in his capacity as the preceptor of these non-Aryans that he expounded his profound *nīti*, which, however, is not available today in its authentic form. Probably it became extinct at an early date or became unpopular with the powers that be. The problem gets further complicated because despite numerous references to him as a profound political thinker there has been no comprehensive study of his political ideas. Consequently, his science of politics remains largely unexplored even to this day.

III

This poses a major problem for the researchers. Confronted with a situation where the available text of *Śukranīti* has been relegated almost to the level of a forgery how can Sukra's science of politics be conjured? Is there any valid and reliable way to study his politics in the absence of an authentic text? One way could be to rely on archaeological evidence but unfortunately no such evidence is available and it is quite unlikely that it would be available in the near future. In fact, this problem is part of a larger problem. Given the dismal and disappointing situation where neither any reliable textual nor any archeological evidence is available how can the history of pre-Aryan India be studied? Are there any other historiographic research models available? Probably there are none because there is hardly any proper documentations of events of the remote antiquity. There is only a vague folk tradition with very little documentation above the level of myth and legend, which is so nebulous that virtually no dates can be determined, sometimes a work survives but its author is not known, sometimes only this much is known that an author with a certain names existed and expounded a certain policy (*a la* Śukra) but no authentic text is available.

The question, therefore, is: there being no reliable text of Sukra's science of politics, there being no archaeological evidence about him, there being no historical records of that period but there being numerous references to him and his celebrated *nīti* is there any scientific way to study him? For instance, can one toy with the idea of creating a *non-textual* Śukra? To what extent can this be done by

relying on some of the episodes, myths and legends about him which are found scattered all over the place in almost all the *Purāṇas* and other anecdotal literature?¹² To what extent can these episodes which are constitutive of *folk-culture of remote antiquity* provide a peep, howsoever limited, into Sukra's role as preceptor and advisor of pre-Aryan aboriginals during their intermittent encounters with the Aryans? To what extent can these Purāṇic accounts be helpful in drawing reasonably acceptable inferences about his political doctrines as a thinker and about his political acumen as a strategist in *war* and *peace*?

A careful analysis of encounters of various pre-Aryan tribal communities with the expansionist Aryans would show that the latter's onslaughts against the former had three broad objectives: (a) either to physically liquidate them; or (b) to convert them into *dāsas* (slaves) and (c) to deny them any cultural autonomy. In essence, the Aryan attempt was to establish their political and cultural hegemony over the non-Aryans. In this scenario Sukra's two-pronged strategy was as much to provide them physical security as to defend their political autonomy and cultural identity and thereby to ensure them a life of freedom, honour and dignity.

To appreciate this dimension of Sukra's politics one must realize that the attitude of the Aryans towards their adversaries was highly contemptuous. While for themselves they used the honorific title of '*Devas*' (gods) and addressed their allies with respectable titles like *Gandharvas* (royal musicians), *yakshas* (royal guards), and *Kinnars* (royal attendants), they addressed their adversaries by various derogatory names like *Dasas* (slaves), *Dasyus* (thieves), *Danavas*, *Daityas* and *Rakshasas* (demons) and those who supported them were likewise pejoratively called *Bhutas* (ghosts or evil spirits), *Pretas* (fiends) and *Pisachas* (goblins).

This would show that the Aryan attack on the non-Aryans was as much physical as it was cultural. They were projected as having been born at an evil hour under evil stars and inauspicious lunations. They were ridiculed for having clumsy bodies with beastly strength, for having hideously repulsive facial geometry, as being 'broad-jawed', 'goat-nosed', 'flat-nosed', 'noseless with sound in breath'. They were not only ridiculed for being dark complexioned but were also depicted as 'powers of darkness' and 'ignorance'. On the other hand, the Aryans took a lot of pride in being 'fair complexioned' and used the colour of their skin to project themselves as the 'powers of light' and 'knowledge'. How difficult and humiliating it must have been for the non-Aryans to live with all these derogatory epithets is any body's guess. And it was this humiliation of the non-Aryans at the hands of Aryans which Sukra tried to resist.

However, more than their repulsive physical traits, the non-Aryans were ridiculed for their values, beliefs and cultural practices which were termed as simply 'savage'. While the Aryans projected themselves as followers of *Dharma* (righteous social and moral code); the non-Aryans were not only projected as violators of *Dharma* but were also associated with all possible negative cultural and attitudinal traits; of being cunning and crooked, of being diabolical in nature, always seeking to harm others. They were despised for having no sacred fires, for performing no *yajanas* and for offering no sacrifices. Aryans, on the other hand did not only regularly do so but even ascribed their victories over the non-Aryans to these practices.

Further, the Aryans took a lot of pride in being the worshippers of various nature-gods—*Indra* (the god of rain), *Varuṇa* (the god of Oceans) and *Sūrya* and *Agni* (the gods of light and warmth respectively); the non-Aryans were criticized for worshiping mad gods and for being phallus worshippers. While the Aryans claimed that they were wedded to spiritual and 'other-worldly' pursuits, philosophic speculation, flair for finer arts like music and poetry; the non-Aryans were projected as superstitious, with faith in charms, incantations, exorcism and ceremonies to raise spirits through magic formulas. In short, the non-Aryan cultural practices were projected as not only peculiar but even devilish. All pejorative traits like deceit, falsehood, wildness and bruteness were associated with them. They were accused of being thieves, guilty of cattle stealing and women lifting. They were branded as intellectually bankrupt, morally degraded and culturally backward who needed to be not only disciplined and punished but also to be subjugated and enslaved. They were repeatedly described as cannibals, man-eaters, devouring human flesh, brutal in nature, hardened criminals, savages living in caves and jungle. It is no surprise, therefore, that *Ṛgveda*, the major Aryan store-house of knowledge, described them as demons, sorcerers and fiends.

The Aryans also held their adversaries guilty of arrogance, self-conceit, anger, rudeness and ignorance. On the other hand, they projected themselves as the embodiment of all conceivable noble traits like serenity, self-control, austerity, purity, forbearance, unrighteousness, fountains of knowledge and justice, symbols of heroism, bravery, valour, firmness, dexterity and generosity. In short, while the Aryans projected themselves as paragons of all virtues; they painted their adversaries as bundles of all possible vices. Thus, the Aryans and non-Aryans were not only different physically and racially but even culturally and temperamentally. The conflict between the two was projected as conflict between *Dharma* and *Adharma*, truth

and falsehood, light and darkness, good and evil, noble and ignoble, reason and superstition, priesthood and witchcraft. Thus the clash between the two was a clash between two sets of values and between two cultures: 'native' and 'non-native'; 'traditional' and 'modern'; 'savage' and 'civil'; 'irrational' and 'rational'; and 'temporal' and 'spiritual'. In doing so the whole attempt of the Aryans was, to use Frantz Fanon's term, to confine the non-Aryans within a 'circle of guilt'. It is amazing that except Śukra all the other preceptors—Brahṣpati, Vaśishtha, Gautama, Parāśara, Angirās, Atri and Agasteya etc. were instrumental in pushing the non-Aryans into this, 'circle of guilt' rather than rescuing them. It was left to Śukra, as the sole preceptor of the non-Aryans, to try to release them from this 'circle of guilt' and ensure them a life of honour and dignity.

IV

It is not difficult to see that the way history of Vedic epoch unfolded itself Śukra succeeded to a considerable degree in not only defending the non-Aryans' culture, values and beliefs but also in making the Aryans to, willy-nilly, adopt some of them. This can be demonstrated with any amount of evidence. However, in any such demonstration there can be no one-to-one correspondence, rather this correspondence will have to be inferred but in that sense virtually all knowledge is inference.

Let us consider some instances. The Aryans criticized the non-Aryans for their faith in charms and incantations. However, when they learnt that Śukra was engaged in severe penance to obtain from Mahādeva a boon of invincibility for the non-Aryans in their wars with them they got terribly worried at the very prospect of success of his mission and set about evolving counter-strategies in order to distract Śukra from his mission. So much so that Indra, the chief warrior of the Aryans, despatched his daughter, Jayanti, to lure him and thereby scuttle his whole plan. The obvious implication of Aryan response is that tacitly they did recognize the power of esoteric knowledge—*Sanjīvani Vidya* (the art of reviving those who fell on the battleground) which Śukra was trying to obtain through penance.

Further, when the Aryans learnt that despite Jayanti's best efforts to the contrary, Śukra had obtained the required esoteric knowledge that virtually made the non-Aryans invincible on a battleground they were quick to realize that with this master stroke Śukra had decidedly tilted the balance of power in favour of their adversaries. They desperately tried to hit upon a plan to neutralize this advantage. After hurried consultations among themselves they decided to appeal to their preceptor,

Brahaspati, to send his son, Kacha, to the hermitage of Śukra in the guise of a pupil. His sole mission was to obtain, by fair means or foul, this unique knowledge.¹³ The Aryan response clearly illustrates that even though they ridiculed the non-Aryans for their faith in the art of harlequins, they were themselves quite keen to obtain it, if they could.

Likewise the Aryans criticized their adversaries for being phallus worshippers but with the passage of time *linga* worship became a popular mode of worship in the whole of *Aryavarta* (a racial name given to the Indian subcontinent by the Aryans). On a closer scrutiny one will realize that, in essence, *linga* is nothing but phallus and hence the practice of *linga* worship is nothing short of phallus worship.¹⁴ There is another related aspect of this phenomenon. One finds that initially the Aryans were worshipers of Viṣṇu; while the non-Aryans like Hiranyakasipu and Andhaka were the worshippers of Śiva, whom the Aryans pejoratively called *paśupati* (the lord of beasts). In fact in the *Trayi* the principal deity is Viṣṇu and the reference to Śiva is more as *Rudra* (god the destroyer); but in the post-Vedic period Śiva began to be worshipped as the principal deity. Initially, it was only Śukra, the preceptor of the non-Aryans, who was an unparalleled devotee of Śiva even during the *Vedic era* and it was indeed in recognition of this devotion that Śiva adopted him as his own son. So also, the non-Aryan king Andhaka who, after initial hostility, became a follower of Śiva and was accepted by him as his son and was appointed *Ganapati* (lord of his *ganās*). Later, the Aryans also came round to the non-Aryan view and started worshipping Śiva along with Visnu. This would show that Śukra through his subtle ways did bring about some sort of cultural reconciliation between the Aryans and the non-Aryans.

To top it all, one must recognize that there are two different *Vedic Samhitas* (collections): the first consisting of *trayi* (the study of three *Vedas*—*Rg*, *Sām*, *Yajur*); and the second consisting of *Atharva Veda*. In essence, they represent two alternative *epistemological* and *cultural paradigms*. Culturally, the three *Vedas* constituting the *Trayi* form a compact organic whole in so far as the *Ṛg Veda* is a compendium of hymns meant to be recited, in *Sam Veda* these are meant to be chanted and the *Yajur Veda* contains formulas and procedures relating to hymns and chants of the sacrifice to be followed by the priests. Thus, these three *Vedas* together represent one and the same socio-cultural *gestalt* or form-complex.¹⁵ But they do not exhaust the whole range of beliefs of all the groups. The *vis* people (race, tribe, folk-groups) definitely cherished other cultural traits and created other compendiums of hymns through other *visis* (sages). The

Atharva Veda emanated in this process. The name *Atharva Veda* is explained variously. The *Gopatha Brahmana* and *Aitareya Brahmana* state that Vata advised sage Bhrigu (sometimes Śukra is also called by this name being the son or grandson of Bhrigu) to look (*Atha arvan*) into the waters to seek for *Brahman* (the absolute). For doing so he (Bhrigu) is also called Atharvan which would indicate that Śukra may probably be the author of the *Atharva veda*.¹⁶ Initially, the Aryans recognized only *Trayi* as the source of all theological knowledge. They did not accept the authority of *Atharva Veda* nor did they accord legitimacy to any of the institutions represented in the *Atharva Veda* nor did they practice any of its rituals; rather they criticized the non-Aryans for believing in charms, incantations, exorcism, imprecations, amulets, witchcraft, and sorcery all of which constitute the *core* of *Atharva Veda*. While the *Ṛg veda* hymns are in the nature of invocation to various Aryan war heroes (Agni, Indra and Varuṇa etc.) to destroy their non-Aryan enemies, the whole thrust of *Atharva Veda* is different. It is closely associated with *tantra* (rites and formula connected with adoration of *Prakṛti* (nature) or *Sakti* (the goddess)). In fact, *tantra* is the *up-veda* (sub *Veda*) of *Atharva Veda* which describes six uses of the various *mantras* (incantations) to the adored beings as well as the various means of negating/combating the effects of the *mantras* through counter *mantras*. Thus, the *Atharva Veda mantras* are aimed at removing some evils from oneself and throwing it on the enemy. These were the practices which were not only negated but even condemned by the Aryans for quite sometime.

Looking at it from another perspective one finds that the core of *trayi* consisting of sacred fires, *yajanas*, sacrifices and hymns represent the canonical core of culture; while the *Atharva Veda* which is a specialized collection of certain popular items and incidents represent the *folklore* of age. Among other things, it consists of art of hypnotizing and mesmerizing (associated particularly with the *Nāgas*), the art of harlequins and magical tricks (a speciality of the *Raksasas*) and witchcraft and unfair war methods (which were the traits of *Pisachas*). Thus the *canonical core* has hardly anything in common with the *folklore*.

In fact these two represent two different cultural streams—*mass* and *elite*. The *Atharva Veda* represents, by and large, the values, beliefs, manners and customs of the marginalized groups who constituted the mass but did not find any place, except contempt, in the three *Vedas*. In this sense *Atharva Veda* represents the lifeworlds of the non-Aryan aboriginals who could be likened to the present-day *dalits* (oppressed). Although the folk culture that *Atharva Veda* represents is as old as *Trayi*, if

not older, yet it got co-opted into the dominant paradigm consisting of the Vedic world view much later. While Brahaspati, Vasistha, Gautama and other preceptors of the Aryans patronized the three *Vedas* to the exclusion of *Atharva Veda*; it was Śukra, who was the lone preceptor of the aboriginals and the sole defender and practitioner of their folk culture.¹⁷ His signal success in the cultural domain is reflected in finally getting the *folklore of Atharva Veda* incorporated into the corpus of the Aryan world view. Thereby the number of *Vedas* rose to four. Of course, this incorporation fell far short of amalgamation and the two cultural streams continue to exist side by side right upto this day. The climax of Śukra's success came when in addition to the *Atharva Veda* five other branches of knowledge were also accorded the status of *Vedas*: *Sarpa (Naga) Veda*, *Asura Veda*, *Pisacha Veda*, *Itihāsa Veda* and the *Purāna Veda* (old tales). Thus, many of the non-Aryan systems of knowledge also got elevated to the level of *Vedas of Trayi*. Undoubtedly, it was resistance organized by Śukra against the physical and cultural assault of the Aryans that ultimately succeeded in raising the *Atharva Veda* to the level of Aryan source of knowledge, even if as a small tradition only.

This whole process of acculturation was by no means a one-way process only; rather it was two-way process in so far as the Aryans agreed to admit *Atharva Veda* to the level of *Trayi*; while the non-Aryans adopted and imbibed several Aryan cultural practices like offering sacrifices and organizing *yajanas* (*a la Vali*). Thus, there was some degree of give and take between the followers of two cultural streams and credit for this must go, more than any one else, to Śukra. Evidently it was Śukra's political acumen, steadfastness and sagacity which brought about some form of cultural reconciliation between the warring Aryans and non-Aryans.¹⁸

In this whole endeavour of Śukra there is a message, loud and clear, which is relevant in the present-day social context where ethnic conflicts and clash of cultures is threatening to tear asunder the social fabric by destroying peace and harmony any where and every where. In fact, in order to redeem India and several other similarly placed countries of the world from the quagmire of severe ethnic tensions and clash of cultures in which they are caught today Śukra's herculean effort to bring about some degree of *modus-Vivendi* and cultural synthesis between the Aryans and non-Aryans needs to be emulated and put to good use.

NOTES

1. Lallanji Gopal, "The Śukranīti—A Nineteenth Century Text", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol XXV (part 3), 1962, pp. 524-556. All references to Gopal in this note

refer to this article. A summary of the SOAS *Bulletin* article also appeared in *Modern Review*, May 1963 pp. 404-08 and June 1963, pp. 473-83 as also in Maha-Pandita Rahula Sankrtyayana Memorial Volume of the *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, vol. XLVII, Parts I-IV (January-December, 1961), pp. 214-33. A slightly modified version of Gopal's article was later published in the form of a booklet. See, his *The Śukranīti: A Nineteenth century Text*, (Varanasi, Bharti Prakashan, 1978).

2. While V.S. Agrawala and Syamlal Pandya expressed the view that *Sukranītisara* was the work of Gupta period (fourth and fifth centuries A.D.), A.S. Altekar, U.N. Ghoshal, B.P. Mazumdar, Jogesh Chandra Ray, R.C. Majumdar and K.P. Jayaswal placed it variously between eighth and twelfth centuries; Keith opined that it was a work of post-Hindu Period; Beni Prasad expressed the view that it was composed probably about the thirteenth century; P.V. Kane and J.D.M. Derrett referred to it as work of fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; Rajender Lal Mitra placed it around sixteenth century. See, Beni Prasad, *The State in Ancient India*, (Allahabad, The Indian Press, 1928), p. 486; Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology* (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1985); A.S. Altekar *State and Government in Ancient India*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1958), p. 196; U.N. Ghoshal, *A History of Hindu Political Theories* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 494; B.P. Mazumdar, *Socio-Economic History of Northern India*, (1030-1194 A.D.); R.C. Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1922); P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, vol. I (Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1968); J.D.M. Derrett, *International and comparative Law Quarterly*, vol. XI, No. 1 (1962), p. 267, n. 3.
3. See, K.A.N. Sastri's review of B.P. Mazumdar's *Socio-Economic History of India* in *Journal of Indian History*, vol. XXXIX, No. 1, (1961), p. 197; and V. Raghavan, *The Twenty-first All India Oriental Conference*, Srinagar, 1961, *Address of the General President, Dr. Raghavan* (1961), pp. 15-16, quoted in Gopal, p. 524.
4. Gopal seems to have used the *Śukranīti* text translated by Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *The Śukranīti*, (New Delhi, Oriental Books, 1975). There are numerous texts of *Śukranīti* in Sanskrit alongwith Hindi commentary. See, Jagdiswarnande Saraswati, *Sukranītisara* (Sonapat, Ramlal Kapur Trust, 1967); Jagdish Chandra Misra, *Śukranīti* (Varanasi, Chowkhamba Surbharti Prakashan, 1998); and Rama Nand Saraswati, *Śukranīti*, (Delhi, Manoj Pocket Books, n.d.). All these versions are broadly identical even though there is a marginal difference in the total number of verses.
5. See, Gopal, pp. 524 ff.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid*, p. 527 ff.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. According to the Manavas (followers of Manu) there are three *Vidyas*—*Trayi*, *Varatta*, and *Dandanīti* but according to Brehaspatyas (followers of Brehaspati) *varatta* and *Dandanīti* are the only two *vidyas*. *Trayi* according to them is a pious fraud. According to Kautilya there are four *Vidyas* (including Annvikshki—philosophy and logic), Kamandaka also endorses this view.

11. For a while he was also the *purohit* (priest) of at least two Aryan kings: Danda of the solar dynasty and Yayati of the lunar dynasty; the latter was also his son-in-law having married his daughter—Devayani.
12. In fact, among the eighteen *upa-puranas* (sub or minor *Puranas*) there is a mention of *Ausanasa Purana*, as one of them but not a single *smriti* or *non-smriti* source has drawn on it. It is difficult to explain this total black out except its unpopularity among the rulers.
13. This strategy of Aryans bears a close resemblance to the present-day attempts by some countries to send their scientists to steal nuclear secrets.
14. In fact, *Siva-linga* is always shown with *Sakti* (symbolized as *yonis*, female organ), which makes the *linga* worship the worship of *phallus* and *yonis*.
15. This point has been very convincingly made by B.K Sarkar. See his, *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology*, (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1985), p. 120.
16. See, B.R. Modak, *The Ancillary Literature of the Atharva-Veda* (New Delhi: Rashtriya Vidya Pratishthan, 1993), p. 26.
17. Of course, *Ṛg, Veda* does have some elements of mass culture and *Atharva Veda* has some elements of elite culture.
18. There is a view that the aboriginals of yesterday constitute the depressed classes or dalits of today. See, for example, Sarkar, *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology*, p. 113.

The Ageism Discourse: Reflections on Some Missing Aspects

SHERRY SABBARWAL

Introduction

Everyone ages, the process of ageing being accompanied by changes in the body and cognitive capacities. However, along with being a biological category, age is also a social and cultural category and its meaning and value vary historically and cross-culturally. In other words, despite the inevitability and universality of ageing, there are cultural variations in the diverse aspects of ageing. For instance, different societies have different life expectancies. While in advanced societies like Japan, Australia, the United States of America, and most of western Europe, an average person's life can go up to the age of almost 80 years, the average life expectancy in India is approximately 64 years, not very high but not entirely disgraceful since longevity has increased in the last several decades due to improvements in sanitation and health care. Contrarily, in most of the less developed societies, especially those falling in Africa the average life expectancy is quite low, ranging between 33 to 50 years (Dowling, 2006). Differences in disease profiles, dietary habits, amount of climatic and chemical pollution, and mental and physical stress, all tend to determine the inter-societal variations in life expectancy.

Similarly, since cultures possess different values, these tend to affect the way in which the elderly are perceived and treated in particular societies. Understandably, societies that attach importance to individualism, would usually give emphasis to independence among persons of all age groups. This orientation, however, can cause complications. For example, 'independent' older persons often find it difficult to ask for help for the fear of being considered weak and needy. On the other hand, cultures that value the collective aspect, e.g., India, Japan, or the Latin American nations, underline inter-reliance, a value that is manifested in the patterns of perception and behaviour towards the elderly. But more often than not, the view of the aged, as well as, the treatment meted out to them is undergoing a transformation even in the so-called traditional societies.

Ageism

Ageism may be defined as any attitude, action, or institutional structure, which subordinates a person or group because of age, or any assignment of roles in society purely on the basis of age. As an 'ism', ageism implies holding of irrational and prejudicial views about

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