

THE STUDY OF INDIA BY RUSSIAN SCIENTISTS IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

[Extracts of a message received by Sir C. V. Raman, Kt., F.R.S., N.L., President, Indian Academy of Sciences, from the Soviet Scientists Committee, U.S.S.R.]

PRE-REVOLUTIONARY Russian indology is the indology of the Nineteenth and the beginning of Twentieth century and has many a brilliant page recorded in its history.

In the Nineteenth century, the Russian Academy of Sciences completed a number of important scientific investigations in this respect, and published the well-known unabridged St. Petersburg edition of Samskrit dictionary and the no less important abridged edition. It also issued a number of scientifically important ancient Indian manuscripts in original and in translations.

Professor Minayev's ideas were more or less consistently developed by his pupils and followers like Professor D. Kudryavsky and academicians Oldenburg and Scherbatsky.

Professor Kudryavsky was a linguist and specially compiled a Samskrit grammar and conducted a number of valuable investigations in ancient Indian Philosophy. Of particular importance was his research relating to ancient Indian rituals.

The scientific endeavours of academician Oldenburg (1934) embraced a wide and varied range of topics. It involved the publication of a number of Samskrit manuscripts in the field of ancient Indian and mediæval Samskrit literature, folklore, history, archæology and culture of India. His main endeavours relate to the study of Buddhism and influence Indian culture on the culture of the peoples of Central Asia and the Far East. Of great value is his description of the Buddhist collections of Hara Hoto gathered by P. K. Kozlov.

Continuing the traditions of the eminent scholar of Buddhism academician Vasilyev, Scherbatsky (1866-1942) devoted himself wholly to the study of Buddhism, particularly Buddhist logic on basis of Samskrit and Tibetan sources. Scherbatsky's voluminous research in the field of Buddhist logic was published in Russian and English languages and represents a valuable contribution to the history of Indian Philosophy. An addition to the theoretical works and

translations from Samskrit and Tibetan languages, academician Scherbatsky published a number of important monumental works of philosophy in Samskrit and Tibetan tongues.

Academicians Oldenburg and Scherbatsky edited *Bibliotheca Buddhica* series published by the Academy of Sciences. This series includes contributions from a number of Eastern and European scientists.

Thus, immediate pupils and successors of Professor Minayev in St. Petersburg University, did not succeed in fulfilling his wish of extending scientific studies to modern Indian languages and literature and create a basis for an extensive study of India's history. This was done after the October revolution which has given a new spur to developments in every field of science. Russian public has been manifesting profound sympathy for the Indian people, evincing great interest in Indian culture and literature.

Indicative of this is the tremendous popularity among broad sections of public of the works of Indian authors, particularly Rabindranath Tagore. Scores of his works have been translated into Russian.

This exercised important influence on the development of Soviet Indology. While the older generation of Russian indologists as academicians Oldenburg and Scherbatsky and their pupils successfully continued their study of Samskrit and Buddhist culture, the younger generation concentrated its attention on the study of modern Indian languages and literature as well as a study of India's history.

In this way Soviet scientists began to draw upon a greater number of sources and laid the foundation for a truly historical study of the Indian languages and literature in U.S.S.R. Soviet scientists raised indology to equal importance with other branches of philology.

From the early days of its development, modern Indian philology has manifested a tendency to consolidate this development

by creating independent traditions. Grammars and text-books for studying modern Indian languages appeared and a number of works of contemporary authors published. Leningrad Eastern Institute published grammars and other handbooks for study of Hindi and Urdu by Barannikov, for Marathi language by Barannikov and Krasnodembsky and for Bengali language by Zimin and others.

Since dictionaries of modern Indian languages become quite out of date and poorly reflected the present state of the various new Indian languages whose vocabulary is getting tremendously enriched, Eastern Institute of Academy Sciences set itself the task of compiling new dictionaries of the most important contemporary Indian languages, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali and Marathi. Along with compilation and publication of dictionaries, Eastern Institute conducts theoretical work in linguistics relating to complex verbs (Barannikov, Zimin, Krasnodembsky) to science structure of modern Indian languages (Krasnodembsky and Beskrovny) to principles formation and terminology in modern Indian languages (Beskrovny and others) and to complex word formations (Kalyanov).

Great number of European scholars and even some Indian scientists who do not specially engage themselves in a study of the history of modern Indian literature consider it an axiom that contemporary Indian literature is merely a "reflection of Samskrit literature". This is an alleged admission that, since India's subordination to Moslems from beginning of second century, our Era, Indian peoples have not produced any major original works which could be considered as a contribution to world literature.

Closer acquaintance with the monumental works of modern Indian literature shows this view to be entirely incorrect, for although Samskrit literature and modern Indian folklore are frequently identical as regards names, topics and plots, the works and characters created in modern Indian languages quite frequently differ from the works and characters of Samskrit literature. Similarly they differ as regards form and poetic expressions. Russian scientists have proved this by concrete facts. For example, Barannikov's book "Legends about Krishna" shows that even works closely similar in contents as for example ten volumes of "Bhagavata Purana" and "Prem Sagar Lallu

Ji Lalha" (latter ordinarily considered translation of former) present entirely different characters of Krishna who is the hero of scores of works in Indian literature.

With even greater conviction, the original and unique character of new Indian literary traditions is revealed in the work of the same author based on research on Ramayana by Tulasidas, translation of which into Russian is nearly completed. Works of Russian scientists in the field of the history of India and history of Indian literature are closely connected with major endeavours initiated by the Academy of Sciences: "World History" and "History of World Literature".

Great impetus is lent to study of India's history and history of Indian literature by inclusion of modern history of East in the curricula of the history departments at all Universities and pedagogical schools. In addition to the most important modern Indian dialects and their respective literatures, Russian Indologists are studying one of the languages of the Indian system, viz., Gypsy Language.

In pre-revolutionary Russia, just as in other countries study of Gypsies was frequently left to amateurs. During Soviet period Russian Indologists produced a number of scientific works which shed light on the history of these people in our country, their language and creative endeavours.

Mass work accomplished in U.S.S.R. in creating alphabets for small nationalities in our country which lacked their own written language in the past, also resulted in producing written language for Gypsies. Gypsy schools were supplied with text-books for all elementary subjects. Grammar of Gypsy language compiled by Professor M. Scrgievsky is based on dialect of Moscow Gypsies. Considerable attention has also been paid to a study of other Gypsy dialects, particularly that of Gypsies residing in Ukraine fields, formerly considered completely outside the realm of science. As a result of this study, a number of works have been produced in Russian, Ukrainian and English languages, as for example, Barannikov's "Ukrainian and South Russia Gypsy Dialects". In addition to research in dialectology, these works contain considerable number of records of Gypsy texts and translations into respective languages. Number of Gypsy songs and their translations into English are published in British Magazine *Gypsy Lore Society*.