

mood, time, and seasonal setting. Miller also provides a clear discussion of the ways that Jayadeva's lyric presentation manipulates the *rasas*, the dramatic moods, of the reader/audience "to make potentially pornographic subject matter the material of esthetic and religious experience" (15). Sanskrit poetry is marked by the use of descriptive metaphors for even common items and every scene and Miller's translation very effectively captures Jayadeva's descriptive metaphors.

The emotional lyricism of the *Gītagovinda* describes the erotic relationship between Krishna and one of the *gopi* cowherdess maidens, the proud and passionate Radha. In the course of the poem, Radha experiences a whole range of emotions when Krishna goes off to flirt with the other *gopis* following Radha's night of love-making with Krishna. Radha becomes the embodiment of emotions such as envy, jealousy, pride, anger, remorse, and intense longing before she is reunited with her lover. The over-all theme of this relationship is a powerful metaphor for the longing of the human lover for the human or divine beloved. According to Miller, "Jayadeva created the religiously potent atmosphere of the *Gītagovinda* by exploring the poignant mood of separation within the broader play of divine passion in consummation" (14).

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RAMASWAMY, SUMATHI. *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891–1970*. Studies on the History of Society and Culture 29. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. xxiii + 303 pages. B/w photographs, references, index. Cloth US\$50.00; ISBN 0-520-20804-8. Paper US\$20.00; ISBN 0-520-20805-6.

Muttersprache, Mutterlaut,
wie so wonnesam, so traut,
erster Ton, der mir erschallet,
süßes erstes Liebeswort,
klinget ewig in mir fort.

Mother tongue, Mother's sound,
how blissful, how dear,
the first tone I heard,
the first word of love,
Will resonate in me forever,

Max von Schenkendorf

The total absence of any polemic note in this early nineteenth-century German poem strikingly contrasts with the passions of the tongue Sumathi Ramaswamy examines in her book, which is partly based on her doctoral dissertation in history. As a Tamil Brahmin who grew up in multilingual surroundings and who formally learned Tamil only as an adult, she is in an ideal position to study her subject with the degree of detachment necessary for a scientific enterprise.

The book is woven around the two concepts of *tamilpparru* (Tamil devotion) and *Tamilūy* (Mother Tamil). Although the first meaning of *parru* is attachment—for instance

in *parr(u)arra* (unattached), the Hindu's ideal state of mind—she rightly translates it as devotion because of its strong ties to religious sentiments.

She stresses the different and even contradictory interpretations of *tamilpparru* and *Tamiltāy*. Neo-Shaivites trying to return to the pristine purity of Tamil religion, classicists praising ancient Tamil literature, Indianists considering the Tamils indispensable members of an independent state, and Dravidianists stressing Tamil glory only, have all fought against enemies variously identified as Sanskrit, English, Hindi, Brahmins and colonials. While the followers of these four ideological currents agree on the need to defend Tamil, they markedly differ on other points. The Neo-Shaivites' religiosity contrasts with the Dravidianists' militant atheism. The latter's violent anti-Brahmanism and hostility to Sanskrit has not been shared by all classicists. These also comprise a number of Brahmins like Swaminatha Aiyar and missionaries like Caldwell, who considered Tamil culture a synthesis of Aryan and Dravidian elements, and appreciated both Sanskrit and Tamil. Besides the lack of uniformity, devotees of Tamil frequently changed their attitudes and policies. For instance, in order to oppose the British, the Indianist Rajagopalachari made the study of Hindi mandatory, but twenty years later he became a fierce enemy of the Indo-Aryan language. The atheist Ramasami, who cared nothing about literary Tamil, wanted to make Tamil the liturgical language instead of Sanskrit.

The author does call the "glorious past," stressed by almost all devotees of Tamil "imagined history" but refrains from pointing out specific glaring incongruities. For instance, the Tamils are said to have been originally monotheists who worshiped only Śiva, even though in the most ancient stratum of Tamil literature (Caṅkam) the five zones of human geography (*tinai*) are under the sway of five different deities who do not comprise Śiva.

Sumathi Ramaswamy points out the great sacrifices devotees made for their language and the partial success their labor obtained, such as eliminating Hindi from the list of compulsory subjects in Tamil Government schools and increasing the use of pure Tamil words in place of Sanskrit derivatives. She painstakingly documents the historical conditions under which *tamilpparru* arose. However, by doing so she has not rescued "the men and women from charges of 'frenzy' and 'fanaticism,'" as she hoped to do. How else could one call the willingness to fast to death or die under a train just to rechristen the Tamil country or change the name of a railway station? How else could one describe Chinnasami's suicide by burning himself to death in protest against Hindi? Contingent historical facts have certainly played a role, but age-old pan-Indian traditions have also to be taken into account to explain such phenomena. They could not occur in a culture where suicide is viewed negatively, where people do not believe that self-directed violence can coerce the gods and by extension men, or where people and things are not readily deified and devotion is not highly emotional.

The feminization of language is not unusual and the metaphor of mother tongue is not limited to European languages and Tamil, but to consider one's language a goddess, a queen or a desirable maiden, as Tamil devotees do, far exceeds the common meaning of the metaphor. Particularly striking is the representation of *Tamiltāy* as a four-armed figure resembling Sarasvatī, the Hindu goddess of learning, to whom even a temple has been built.

In accordance with some native critics, the reviewer does not hold that deifying the language and constantly praising the indubitable greatness of ancient Tamil literature increase the prestige of Tamil in the world. In her opinion a better way might be to arrange for translations of great *modern* works into English or other European languages. One reason why L. S. Ramamirtham did not progress beyond the status of candidate for last year's Nobel prize in literature was certainly the almost total lack of translations of his short stories and novels.

Passions of the Tongue is an excellent study of a little known facet of Tamil culture, adorned by photographs of posters and statues of *Tamiltāy* and cartoons showing her suffering

at the hands of Hindi. This unique version of the problematic relationship between language and nationalism, existing in different forms elsewhere, will interest a wide range of scholars.

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VARGHESE, E. *Applied Ethnobotany: A Case Study among the Kharias of Central India*. New Delhi: Deep Publications, 1996. Hardcover Rs. 400; US\$70.00.

Though ethnobotanical studies in India have been done for quite some time, it is only during the last three decades that these studies have come into their own. India has a rich ethnic heritage with more than 400 distinct tribal groups living in different regions of the country. These ethnic communities possess rich traditional knowledge of indigenous plants and how they can be used for various needs. Natural forests are an indispensable component in traditional agro-ecosystems. They are of special relevance to the mountain environment in the northeastern region of the country. This book is an ethnobotanical case study of a tribe in central India called "Kharias" that deals with various aspects of ethnobotany, ecobotany, pharmacology, and anthropology in a given environment. The study is concentrated on the areas inhabited by aboriginal rural people who are in a state of transition vis-à-vis a fast developing world. As a result, their age-old culture and traditions are quickly disappearing.

The main bulk of the text deals with 280 plant species. The first chapter discusses the origin, emergence, and the prospects of ethnobotany. The second chapter gives a description of the indigenous communities of tribes and their environments, and also gives some delightful insights into the various social aspects of tribal life. Chapter four deals with ethnobotanically important plants arranged in alphabetical order. Each entry consists of eight sub-headings giving detailed information about the particular plants with brief descriptions and their vernacular names. A significant feature that makes this book an important work is the application of a reliable quantification formula for verifying the effectiveness of a particular plant remedy. It is a comprehensive inventory of useful plants in central India inhabited by the Kharias. The readers of the book will be delighted to find that information on this little known area has been exhaustively documented and published. Given the rapid rate of acculturation among native peoples, it is possible that much of the information presented in this book will be lost in the next few decades. Similar studies on other ethnic groups need to be carried out in the country among the hundreds of well defined tribal groups that survive today.

This publication is of tremendous importance, particularly since such native knowledge is rapidly eroding with the diffusion of culture, liberalization of social strata, and agricultural and scientific advancement. This is one of the first books in the country which deals with the subject with so much details. It is highly recommended as a reference and as reading material for ethnobotanists, economic botanists, plant collectors, anthropologists, sociologists, and environmentalists. The reviewer believes that this will not only be a source of useful information but will also stimulate readers to appreciate more and more the plants that fulfill the diverse needs of mankind and sustain life on earth. It is felt that apart from its use as a reference or text in India and abroad, it will also generate further interest in the field of ethnobotany so