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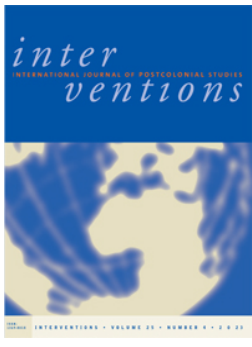
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# Language, Caste and the Brahmanical framing of European Indology: Aleksei Barannikov's "Some Positions in the Field of Indology" (1941)

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# LANGUAGE, CASTE AND THE BRAHMANICAL FRAMING OF EUROPEAN INDOLOGY: ALEKSEI BARANNIKOV'S "SOME POSITIONS IN THE FIELD OF INDOLOGY" (1941)

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..... A translation of the named article by the early Soviet Indologist A. P. Barannikov (1890–1952) is introduced. The topicality of the article in relation to current trends in scholarship is discussed, and a brief consideration of the historical context of the publication of the original article is provided. This includes reflections on the specificities of pre-Revolutionary Indology in Russia, especially as represented in the work of S. F. Ol'denburg (1863–1934) and F. I. Shcherbatskoi (aka Theodor Stcherbatsky, 1866–1942), and the development of a new form of Indology as represented by the translated article. Information is provided about the intellectual sources of the article, highlighting the development of sociological approaches to language in the early USSR, and comparisons with the ideas of Antonio Gramsci. It is suggested that Barannikov's work, with its discussion of the centrality of conflictual relations between

..... Sanskrit and vernacular traditions, anticipates some recent works on the anti-caste movement, and it suggests a more complex relationship between

**Caste**

**European indology**

**Indian history**

**Indian languages**

**language**

**language ideology**

*colonial philology and oriental studies more generally, and the intellectual traditions of the indigenous elite.*

The rise of Dalit intellectual currents over the last thirty years has left an important mark on studies of India. No longer can colonial domination be viewed, in “hard Foucauldian” fashion, as the imposition of European rationality onto an organic, pre-colonial society: the reality is clearly much more complex. Ideologies of colonial domination were built upon already existing structures of social, economic and cultural power, with agents of colonialism recruiting indigenous intellectuals who had their own agendas and conditionally assimilating their perspectives. The work by the Soviet Indologist Aleksei Petrovich Barannikov (1890–1952), presented here for the first time in English translation, shows a sophisticated awareness about how this encounter shaped the role and conceptions of European Indology at least from the 1930s.

While Brahmanical intellectuals dominated the Indian national liberation movement, the leadership of the Indian Communist Parties, and have even shaped what has come to be known as “subaltern studies”, alternative currents that foregrounded the perspectives of anti-caste intellectuals have become more widely acknowledged in recent years.<sup>1</sup> While such currents were long marginalized, they were nevertheless present from the late nineteenth century, and had much earlier precursors. The work of Jottirao Phule (1827–1890), Iyothee Thass (1845–1914) and Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891–1956) in particular has begun to achieve the recognition it was long denied, but the wider international sphere of debate and discussion in which these perspectives developed has remained opaque.<sup>2</sup> The cross-fertilization of ideas between Marxists and the anti-caste movement has been similarly obscured, for a number of reasons including the Stalinist domination of the Communist movement in India, which regarded caste as a “feudal survival” that would disappear with the capitalist development of India, and the responses of the anti-caste movement to this crude relegation of their oppression to secondary importance. This has been compounded more recently by the anti-Marxist agenda and caricatures of some within postcolonial studies. There were, nevertheless, some crucial points of engagement between anti-caste intellectuals and Marxist thinkers, and this involved Indologists in the USSR well into the Stalin period. Barannikov’s reflections on Indian history and the development of European Indology provide a fascinating insight into the grounds of such engagements, and may contribute to their resumption today.

Already in the pre-Revolutionary period, Russian Indologists had provided some insightful critiques of the entanglement of European, especially British and French, oriental studies with the colonial

1 Among the many valuable works see Aloysius (1998), Omvedt (2008) and Mani (2015).

2 One important work that begins to establish these wider connections is Ober (2016).

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3 This began with the important work of Vasilii Pavlovich Vasil'ev (1818–1900) and Ivan Pavlovich Minaev (1840–1890), but a consideration of their work lies beyond the scope of the current introduction.

project.<sup>3</sup> Two Indologists who were active both sides of 1917, Sergei F. Ol'denburg (1863–1934) and Fedor I. Shcherbatskoi (aka Theodor Stcherbatsky, 1866–1942), challenged the Eurocentric agendas of European Indology, demonstrating the intellectual sophistication of Indian thinkers, with particular reference to Buddhist scholiasts whose influence had spread through Central Asia, Tibet, and Mongolia into Siberia. In shifting the focus of Indology from Vedic mythology to the later period, and accentuating the living traditions of Buddhists in the wider region, these thinkers made an important contribution to the establishment of a rigorous approach to Buddhist thought. Though they concentrated on the heritage of Sanskritized, essentially Brahmanized, Buddhism, they celebrated the intellectual achievements of indigenous scholiasts and Shcherbatskoi in particular insisted Buddhist philosophy stood alongside Greek philosophy as some of the most important intellectual achievements of world culture. Shcherbatskoi published much of his work in English, culminating in his magnum opus *Buddhist Logic* (Stcherbatsky 1930–1932), and came to the attention of scholars across the world, including in India, and in 1921 he was invited by Rabindranath Tagore to teach at newly established Visva-Bharati university in Shantiniketan (Vigasin 2008, 346).

The resonance of the ideas of Ol'denburg and Shcherbatskoi in India was, however, varied. Two figures who would play important roles in the development of Indian Marxism, the anti-caste movement and the Indian Buddhist revival were so impressed by Shcherbatskoi's work that they travelled to the USSR to work with him in the later 1920s and 1930s. One was the Goan scholar and monk Dharmanand Kosambi, a close associate of Ambedkar and father of the founder of Marxist history in India, D. D. Kosambi; the other was the Bihari scholar, author, and activist Rahul Sankrityayan, who remained in the USSR for a number of years before returning to India (Vasil'kov 1998; Kosambi 2010; Ober 2013). Both likely had connections with Barannikov while in Leningrad and brought their experiences to bear on the national liberation, Communist, and anti-caste movements.<sup>4</sup> Later, one of the most influential Indian Marxist intellectuals of the post-independence period, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (1969), was to bring Shcherbatskoi's work to the attention of a wide range of Indian scholars. On the other hand, such work converged with the "Greater India" ideology, according to which "Hindu" (which controversially included Buddhist) culture had exerted a "civilizing influence" on neighbouring regions, that was rising among Brahmanical intellectuals in India. This trend became an important intellectual resource for the Brahmanical supremacism that has established itself as the dominant ideology in India today. As Zabarskaitė notes (2023, 143), a number of figures within the movement instrumentalized Tagore and his Visva-Bharati project, and one of Shcherbatskoi's most prominent students, Evgenii Obermiller (1901–1935), became an honorary member of

4 There is evidence of contacts between Barannikov and Sankrityayan in Gavriushina (2018, 227).

5 In a letter from founding member, Honorary Secretary, and editor of the *Journal of the Greater India Society* Upendra Nath Ghoshal (1886–1969) on 6 June 1935, Obermiller’s formal election as an honorary member of the Society is acknowledged and he is thanked for his “warm and sustained interest in our Society” (AV 100/1/74/1–8). Obermiller may well have been influenced by the French Indologist Sylvain Lévi (1863–1935), who was the supervisor of the Society’s founder Kalidas Nag (1892–1966), contributed to its publications, and who was a close associate of both Ol’denburg and Shcherbatskoi.

the Greater India Society and contributed to its journal. The extent to which Obermiller accepted the Brahmanical ideology of the movement remains unclear.<sup>5</sup>

Barannikov was an upcoming figure in Leningrad Indology at the time, and his approach differed considerably from his older colleagues. Born in Cherkasy, Ukraine, he studied ancient Indian languages and cultures in Kiev (Kyiv) *inter alia* under the German Sanskritist Friedrich Knauer (1849–1917), but developed a keen interest in, and an unusually close relationship with, the Roma communities of the area. This interest began before his university years and persisted, with Barannikov becoming one of the leading authorities on the Soviet Roma. This stimulated his interest in the language and cultures of the lower castes in India, from which the Roma had arisen, and he was an early convert to the sociological approaches to language that was being pioneered in revolutionary Russia. This led him to author one of the earliest articles on the changes in the Russian language as a result of the War and Revolution (1919), pathbreaking work on the language of Soviet Roma (1931a, 1931b, 1934), and he was later to bring this expertise to bear on the history of Indian languages and literature. In the early stage of his career, however, Barannikov combined this with more traditional work on Sanskrit, which he taught (along with comparative linguistics) in Samara and Saratov universities during the Civil War. He moved to Petrograd (from 1924 Leningrad) after the war to study under Ol’denburg and Shcherbatskoi, and, as scholar at the ethnology section of the Russian Museum in Leningrad (1921–1928), wrote about the Soviet Roma and about Buddhist communities in Russia (1927). Thereafter Barannikov combined his work on the Roma with developing resources for the study of modern Indian philology at the Institute of Living Oriental Languages, and at Leningrad University. In 1934 he began working at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences and, in 1936, created a Modern Indian section of the Institute, staffed with researchers, some of whom had previously worked under Shcherbatskoi in the Indo-Tibetan section (several others, it should be noted, perished in the great purge). Barannikov’s modern Indian philology now appeared as a “new”, “Soviet” Indology in contradistinction to the “old” version, and in 1938 he became head of the Institute. It was in this capacity that he wrote the text translated here, on the eve of his evacuation from Leningrad during the siege of the city.

The date of the article is significant. After the Revolution there was a reconsideration of all academic disciplines, some profound thinking on the national and colonial questions and the development of new Marxist and wider sociological approaches to questions of language and culture. While many areas that were of direct political relevance degenerated into mouthing of Party dogmas with the birth of the Stalin dictatorship at the end of the 1920s, areas such as the history of Indian languages were much less directly

affected. Stalin's repression of Siberian Buddhists and the vulnerability of orientalists who had spent time abroad during the purges of the mid- to late 1930s nevertheless had a significant effect on the types of work that was carried out and for a time this favoured Barannikov. Things began to change with the outbreak of war with Germany and, with the formation of the alliance with Britain and the United States, a sharply critical approach towards the colonial rulers of India was not encouraged. Following the War, the beginning of the Cold War, India's achievement of independence in 1947, and the beginning of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign led to the promotion of a dichotomy between Soviet and "bourgeois" science.<sup>6</sup> "Bourgeois orientalism" became a persistent object of critique, and this for a time enhanced Barannikov's authority. The situation changed in June 1950 when Stalin denounced Nikolai Marr's ideas about Indo-European philology as a "scientific ideology" justifying colonialism and his conception of the "class-nature" (*klassovost'*) of language.<sup>7</sup> This marked a reversion to strictly normative approaches to language and the promotion of conservative orthodoxies in linguistics and other associated disciplines. Barannikov died in 1952, and such perspectives as those developed in the article soon fell out of favour. The USSR now moved to establish friendly relations with India and Sanskrit was once more presented as the common stock of Indian culture, in accordance with the Brahmanical ideology that Barannikov had critiqued. As such, the article provides a useful summary of the development of his new Indian philology on the eve of its decline and demise.

In many respects Barannikov's 1941 article (1941a) draws upon and summarizes themes developed in his earlier work. In the 1930s he published some important work on the history of Indian language and literature, particularly notable being his translation of Lallu Lal's landmark vernacular retelling of the Krishna legend *Prem Sagar (The Ocean of Love)* in 1937 (Barannikov 1937). This work is often regarded as the first prose work in modern literary Hindi. The publication included an extensive and information-rich introduction explaining its significance in relation to the rise both of vernacular literature and of the literary language. Throughout, Barannikov stresses the history of Indian language and literature in relation to the question of caste, pointing out the Brahmanical promotion of Sanskrit narratives and hostility to vernacular works that were regarded as the bearers of heretical ideas. Barannikov particularly stresses the importance of non-Brahmanical sects in the Bhakti movement and the ways in which the folkloric tales of Krishna were alternatively Brahmanized and de-Brahmanized in various Sanskrit and vernacular retellings. He detects these various semantic layers in *Prem Sagar*, and relates them to the role of *Vaiṣṇavism*, the cult of Vishnu, and the reorganization of Brahmanical hegemony under the Moghuls and then in conditions of British colonial domination. This was a radical departure from the dominant trend in European Indology that prioritized the

6 Via the work of Arab Marxists like Anouar Abdel Malek (1984–2012), this characterization exerted a formative influence on Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism*. On this see Tolz (2006).

7 On the relevance of Marr's work in this context see Brandist (2022a).



search for *Ur*-texts over all such historical readings. This theme was to be particularly well developed in the work of Suvira Jaiswal in the late 1960s and subsequently (Jaiswal [1967] 1982, 2016), seemingly in the absence of any knowledge of Barannikov’s pioneering analyses. Certain of Barannikov’s perspectives in this area were, however, developed by his student Evgenii Chelyshev (1967, 2004), who controversially argued the Bhakti movement and rise of vernacular literature was fundamental in the development of a “Renaissance epoch” in India.<sup>8</sup>

8 This was part of a general trend, probably launched by the Soviet Japanologist and Sinologist Nikolai Konrad, to consider the category of the Renaissance as a general movement in Asian cultures. This intellectual trend was controversial, but did yield some interesting studies. Konrad’s 1965 article on the question did appear in a somewhat flawed and abridged English translation ([1965] 1967). For a discussion see Petrov (1989).

The other major translation that Barannikov published in his lifetime was of Tulsi Das’s vernacular retelling of the *Ramayana*, the *Ramcharitmanas*, which he completed in Borovoe, Kazakhstan, where he, along with a number of prominent Soviet scholars, had been evacuated from Leningrad during the blockade (1941–1944). It was published in 1948, again accompanied by a lengthy and informative introduction (1948a) which explores the same themes, with more detail about the earlier stage of vernacular literature and the hostility of Brahmans towards it. He particularly contests the Brahmanical contention, accepted by most European Indologists, including the older generation of Russian Indologists like Ol’denburg, that vernacular retellings were merely inferior versions of works in classical Sanskrit. Barannikov insists the vernacular retellings should be appreciated on their own terms as independent works of literature. Indeed, despite the conservative orientation of its author, he regards the *Ramcharitmanas* as the greatest work of the period. Although written by an orthodox Brahman and seeking to legitimize Brahman authority, Tulsi Das wrote for the “people” (*narod*) rather than Brahmans. In this later work we already see traces of a more obvious appeal to the terms of the official discourse around “socialist realism”, but also there is a persistent appeal to the primacy of the Indian nation, concerns about which he projects back into the period of Moghul rule.

These reflections on literature are present in the 1941 article, but are subordinated to a discussion of the linguistic history of India and of the assumptions of European Indology that flow from this. Much of the article deals with the long history of relations between Sanskrit, as regularized and codified by Brahman grammarians in the Middle Ages, and the coexistence of various Prakrits and the rise of modern Indian languages. Here we see the extent to which early Soviet sociolinguistics enabled the development of perspectives decades ahead of anything similar in the West or indeed in India. It is perhaps not until the late 1970s that such perspectives filtered through from Labov’s work on African American speech to considerations on Indian history in the work of Madhav Deshpande (1979, 1993; see also Krishnaswamy 2005).

What comes to the fore in Barannikov’s work, and in these later excursions into the same question, is the centrality of the history of language in India, the



way in which that history has been manipulated by Brahmins for a protracted period and how this determined the development of European Indology. The Brahmanical conception that Sanskrit is the original language, not of human origin, and the source of all others, was accepted by Indologists for some time. Even when it was rejected by comparative linguists, the idea of Indo-European languages descending from a common ancestor remained. As Harris (2006, 55) notes, this is one of the fundamental assumptions that are constitutive of comparative philology: other “languages” allegedly appeared when one or more “subpopulation of an originally monolingual community” for some reason (here through error) adopted forms which distinguish them collectively from other subpopulations. Another fundamental assumption similarly followed the work of the great grammarian Pāṇini, who presented Sanskrit, the *Ur*-language, as a “decontextualised set of forms” (Harris 2006, 55). The status of Brahman pandits among early British philologists, along with the impressive achievements and sophistication of Brahmanical grammarians, thus left an indelible mark on both comparative linguistics and European Indology. In his final article, written after Stalin’s 1950 intervention in linguistics, Barannikov (1952) details, perhaps for the first time in a systematic form, the extensive correspondences between the work of the Brahmanical grammarians and comparative linguistics. In the 1941 article, however, he concentrates on the ideological convergence, shrewdly drawing out the connections between the Brahmanical ideology of Aryan superiority with the development of what Trautmann (1997, 28ff.) calls the “Mosaic ethnology” that served to justify the British domination of India.

This ideology critique undoubtedly chimed with Marr’s perspective on “Indo-Europeanism”, but there was no clear dependence on Marr’s more questionable ideas about linguistics. Where Marr was a rather eclectic thinker who fundamentally operated within the framework of traditional philology, inverting some of its core ideas and evaluating some of its most influential ideas in a diametrically opposed fashion, Barannikov was far more rigorous in his approach, drawing upon the work of nascent structuralist linguistics. This was clear in his early work on the language of the Soviet Roma (1934), in which he traced the ways in which settled Roma communities had adopted linguistic elements from the language of the “host” communities and, conversely, how forms from the Roma language had permeated Soviet thieves’ cant, or argot (1931b). It was also clear in his early article on changes in the Russian language as a result of the War and Revolution (1919), which was prefaced with some methodological considerations on the need for a more thoroughly sociological approach to linguistic phenomena. It is still very clear in his article on colonial languages (1935) in which he examines the language of the Indian nationalist press, drawing out

the ways in which linguistic elements from Sanskrit, Persian, and English entered articles in Hindi and Urdu.

Without stating this explicitly, he is exploring the dynamics of hegemony in India through the question of language, first in relation to pre-colonial society and then under the colonial system. This has some striking resemblances with the work of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, which also bears the unmistakable marks of debates in Russian Marxism at the time (Brandist 2015). Language, as Gramsci reminds us, is an “element of culture, and thus of general history, a key manifestation of the ‘nationality’ and ‘popularity’ of the intellectuals” (Gramsci 1985, 170). Whenever the “question of language” surfaces, Gramsci argued, it indicates the coming to the fore of other key issues: “the formation and enlargement of the governing class, the need to establish more intimate and secure relationships between the governing groups and the national-popular mass, in other words to reorganize the cultural hegemony” (Gramsci 1985, 183–184). The bulk of Barannikov’s 1941 article might be said to be dedicated to analyzing this question in relation to India.

While it is clear that Barannikov’s work has many facets that remain valuable for researchers interested in India from a postcolonial perspective, it is important to note that some of its potential is compromised by the Stalinist context in which it appeared. The 1941 article has a couple of instances of geneflection to Stalin that are largely superfluous to the argument, but were *de rigueur* at the time. Moreover, the extremely bland title, along with its pedestrian style, hardly reflects the article’s radical and provocative contents. In the wake of the great purge, in which scholars working in oriental studies proved particularly vulnerable to accusations from belligerent ideological hatchet men, it was undoubtedly safer to present ideas in a form that would attract the attention of only a relatively narrow circle of specialists.

Moreover, Soviet Indology had become rather excessively polarized between the sphere of interests of the “old” specialists led by Ol’denburg (who died in 1934) and Shcherbatskoi (who died in 1942) and the “new” field concentrating on modern Indian languages. The institutional and (in the late 1920s and early 1930s) polemical nature of this dichotomy entrenched an arbitrary separation that discouraged attention from being paid to important elements of continuity, which Barannikov does acknowledge in the 1941 article at least, but often downplays elsewhere. Of central importance here is the role of Buddhism, which challenged the ideology of Brahmanism before partially succumbing to it, and which played an important role in stimulating critical approaches to language. Shcherbatskoi had done some important work in this area, and Barannikov (1927) had written on Buddhist university monasteries, *datsans*, in Siberia, but the repression of Soviet Buddhism at the end of the 1920s made it safer to treat Buddhism as a question of the past. Barannikov turned away from such work, announcing the Buddhist challenge to Brahmanism had been superseded by that of Bhakti sects. It should be noted,

nevertheless, that in a survey of the state of affairs in Soviet Indology, Barannikov (1948b) bemoaned the “weakened state of the study of ancient Indian cultures”, which had resulted from the extensive purges of many leading orientologists, as a “serious inadequacy” (1948b, 11).

The disciplinary split was particularly damaging when it came to considering the Buddhist revival among anti-caste intellectuals at the time and the clear interest some intellectuals from that movement paid to Soviet Indology. The Communist Party of India was unable to engage in a productive discussion with the movement, and subjected it to crude overgeneralizations, accusations, and caricatures. One clear example of how this spanned both India and the USSR is the incomplete manuscript of an unpublished book on the “depressed classes” that was being prepared by one of the leaders of the Indian Communists in Leningrad, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya (1880–1937), during the ultra-sectarian “Third Period” in 1932. Here the belief that the “‘untouchables’ ... constitute a separate, socially homogenous community” was presented as a colonial ploy, and the “‘untouchable’ bourgeois and intelligentsia” simply as “agents of imperial policy” seeking to “hinder the vast mass of ‘untouchable’ proletarians from finding the solution of their problem in the revolutionary labour movement” (AV 138/1/4/1–2). In recent years there have been some notable attempts to revisit this problem and establish grounds for a more productive approach (see, *inter alia*, Rao 2013; Teltumbde 2017; Raja and Muthumohan 2018; Shepherd 2018). It is notable that not a single work published in the USSR was dedicated to the ideas of the movement nor the Buddhist revival, until 1990, save occasional, dogmatic and bluntly negative references to Ambedkar and his conflicts with the Communist Party in India.

The topicality of the questions raised by early Soviet Indologists, and the approaches they pioneered, is also clear from some recent work in the field. One might mention Johannes Bronkhorst’s recent major work (2011, 2013), which has brought the question of the status of Sanskrit and competing languages in the history of Indian society to prominence once more. Bronkhorst interestingly combines an attention to the politics of language with an insistence that Buddhism should not be considered a derivation from Brahmanism but a separate body of thought originating in a different part of India, which we also find anticipated in some of the works of Shcherbatskoi. Jaiswal’s work on *Vaiṣṇavism* ([1967] 1982, 2016) provides a considerable amount of evidence about the socio-ideological struggles behind the formation of Brahmanical hegemony, while Pillai (2013) has explored the dual role of the Bhakti movement that Barannikov regarded as crucial for understanding the formation of vernacular Indian literature. The late Gail Omvedt (2008) sketched out important points of continuity between early Buddhism, the Bhakti movement and the Buddhist revival among anti-caste intellectuals in the early twentieth century. Bringing the work of Barannikov

into these debates would help to historicize the questions further and provide some valuable insights.

Unfortunately, however, Barannikov’s work is thinly represented in English, or indeed any language other than Russian. There is a book on Roma dialects in English that was published in Leningrad (Barannikov 1934), but this has become a bibliographical rarity. There are a few articles in English on the Roma (Barannikov 1930, 1941b) and on the formation of Hindi (Barannikov 1936), but his wider perspectives on literature and the discipline of Indology remain generally untranslated, which makes the current publication so much more significant. There are, again, few discussions of Barannikov’s work in English (but see Chelyshev 2002), while general and balanced discussions in Russian remain scarce (Beskrovnyi and Kal’ianov 1953; Chelyshev 1990). Most Russian discussions in recent years tend to mention Barannikov in negative tones as a representative of Stalinist Indology arising from the demise of the older school, which is often presented in a rather one-sidedly nostalgic fashion. I have begun to address some of these problems in some recent articles (Brandist 2022a, 2022b, 2023), but a broader reassessment of early Soviet oriental studies remains work in progress. One hopes the publication of the following translation will stimulate interest in the area.

## Disclosure statement

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## SOME POSITIONS IN THE FIELD OF INDOLOGY (1941)

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The history of any scholarly discipline provides many examples of the great importance of the ideas that guide scientific thought.

Studying the history of any discipline, we are convinced of the profound correctness of comrade Stalin's proposition that there are two kinds of ideas.

There are different kinds of social ideas and theories. There are old ideas and theories which have outlived their day and which serve the interests of the moribund forces of society. Their significance lies in the fact that they hamper the development, the progress of society. Then there are new and advanced ideas and theories which serve the interests of the advanced forces of society. Their significance lies in the fact that they facilitate the development, the progress of society ...<sup>1</sup>

1 Stalin (1939, 546)  
[Stalin (1976, 851)].

Supported by the authority of tradition, old ideas very often continue to exist in various scholarly disciplines for many years, despite their obvious absurdity, and they hinder the development of the corresponding scientific discipline for a long time.

Old ideas do not outwardly remain unchanged throughout their existence. New arguments are often found to justify them, giving the old ideas and concepts a scientific appearance. However, if we look into these arguments and justifications, then their tendentious, deliberate nature is easily revealed, and the old idea, often centuries old, appears in its undisguised form and reveals the corruption of its roots.

This position can be illustrated with special clarity by some data from the history of Indology.

Indology is one of the most important philological disciplines. This is explained not only by the length of the period of development of Indian culture, which can be seen in literary monuments, and in the long philological tradition in India, but also by the fact that Indology exerted a great influence on the development of European linguistics. Familiarity with Old Indian language in particular contributed to the development of comparative grammar.

The literary tradition that is available to us in Indian languages stretches over a huge period, spanning at least four millennia.

During this period, a rich literature was created in India, in many languages and dialects that differ from one another very sharply, and belong to different morphological types.

Languages belonging to different systems have been represented in India since ancient times. The degree to which the languages of different systems have been studied currently varies. Until recently the languages of the Mon-Khmer, Munda, and Tibetan-Chinese systems remained largely untouched by study.<sup>2</sup> Only the publication of G. Grierson's major work, *The Linguistic Survey of India*,<sup>3</sup> with samples of texts of these languages,



2 550,000 people speak Mon-Khmer; 3,974,000 speak Muna; 12,885,000 speak Tibeto-Chinese.

3 [Grierson (1903–1928)].

4 64,128,000 speak Dravidian languages.

5 In India some 232,847,000 people speak Indo-Aryan languages.

laid a solid foundation for studying the languages of these systems. The Dravidian languages have been studied much better, but still completely insufficiently.<sup>4</sup> Indologist-linguists have paid most attention to the languages of the Indo-Aryan system, the most important of which have already passed through the initial stage of study: grammars and dictionaries have been created for them and the main points of their complex history have been established.<sup>5</sup>

The Indian linguistic tradition, followed by European Indology, establishes three stages in the development of Indo-Aryan languages, namely:

1. **Old Indian languages**, the development of which as literary languages, more or less accessible to the understanding of relatively wide circles of the population, covers the entire II millennium BCE and the first centuries of the I millennium BCE.
2. **Middle Indian languages**, which came into literary use in the V–VI centuries BCE (as spoken languages, of course, they existed much earlier) and in various forms were employed in literature up to the end of the I millennium CE.
3. **Modern Indian languages**, the most important of which attained wide literary usage at the beginning of the II millennium CE and, having passed along a very complex path of development, remain in literary use today.

The establishment of the three stages in the chronological framework noted above has very serious reasons behind it, as shown by a number of important facts. The most important of these facts are as follows:

1. The penetration of the Middle Indian languages into literary usage (V–VI centuries BCE), and the penetration of the Modern Indian languages into literary usage one and a half thousand years later (i.e. at the beginning of the II millennium CE), marks the entry of the middle and lower castes into the broad social arena, entering into an open ideological struggle with Brahmanism. Both in the middle of the I millennium BCE and at the beginning of the II millennium BCE, the middle and lower castes came out to fight against the higher castes, mainly Brahmanism, with democratic slogans of social equality, denial of caste and of the privileges of Brahmanism. To popularize their ideas, the leaders of these democratic movements (Buddhism before the common era, *Vaiṣṇavism* at the beginning of the II millennium CE) turned to the spoken languages of the masses, who did not understand the literary languages of the previous era.
2. Even the oldest Middle Indian languages provide an image of the complete collapse of the old phonetic system, which led to the gradual decomposition of the old inflectional system.

3. The formation of a new phonetic system and the transition from the inflectional to the analytical, agglutinative system are observed in the Modern Indian languages.

Vedic language and Vedic literature represent the oldest linguistic and literary facts in India that are available to us. There are various, often very contradictory, hypotheses regarding the time of the appearance of the Vedas, but based on an open-minded analysis of historical facts, it seems most likely to attribute the period of the emergence of the Vedas to the beginning of the II millennium BCE. Since that time, we have observed an ever-expanding and deepening image of linguistic and literary facts.

6 Wackernagel  
(1896, xix ff.).

The works of a number of researchers have established that the Vedic language appears in the form of several dialects.<sup>6</sup> The uniqueness of each of them is to a very large extent smoothed over thanks to the activities of numerous editors in the period following the unification of the Vedic hymns into the collections, or *Sambhita*, known to us (*R̥g-Veda*, *Sāma-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda* and *Atharva-Veda*). They were guided by the desire for the greatest possible uniformity of language, by the convergence of the language of the Vedas as a whole with the standard norms of the later literary language, which acquired the name “Sanskrit”. However, despite all the efforts of several generations of editors who directed their efforts towards this goal, a very significant number of dialectal phenomena can still be seen in the Vedic language at the present time.

Some of these dialectisms represent phonetic phenomena known as prakritisms, i.e. such phenomena that logically converge or coincide with the forms of Middle Indian languages or “Prakrits”. A number of dialectal phenomena in the field of morphology have been preserved due to the requirement of metre. Some dialectisms appear in the form of doublets, fully or partially differentiated in their semantics, which provided these doublets with the right to exist.

The most striking examples of dialectisms that can be seen in the *Sambhitas*, i.e. in collections of poetic hymns, which are the oldest parts of Vedic literature, are prakritisms, manifested either in the form of simplification of aspirated consonants by eliminating their closing elements, or in the form of simplification of groups of consonants. Both of these phenomena are widely developed in the late Middle Indian and Modern Indian languages.

The most striking examples of simplification of the aspirate is the form *gr̥hya* “taking” with *gr̥bhya* and the forms of the perfective from the same root: *jagraha* and *jagrabha*. An example of simplifying a group of consonants is the form *dyotis* “light” with the older form *dyotis*.

A very interesting dialectal phenomenon is represented by the forms of the *R̥g-Veda* with the sound *l*, which in Sanskrit corresponds to the sound *ḍ*, e.g.

*mṛlaya* “have mercy” with another version of this root *marḍ* with the same meaning.

Dialectisms in the field of morphology are very numerous.

The multi-dialect nature of the Vedic language is especially evident in the formation of a number of verb forms. So, for example, there are five different endings for expressing infinitive forms, namely: *-tave*, *-tavai*, *-tos*, *-dhyai* and *-se*:

etave “to go”  
etavai “  
hantavai “to kill”  
jivase “to live”  
cakṣase “to see”  
bhartave “to carry”  
bhartavai “  
bhartos “  
bharadhyai “

A very large group of verbs in the Vedic language builds the forms of the present tense according to the principles of different classes. The dialect forms of the verb *kar* “to do” are particularly numerous.

In the 2nd person singular, in addition to the form normal for Sanskrit, i.e. the form *karoṣi* “you do”, a number of dialectal forms appear in the Vedic language with the same meaning, namely: *karasi*, *karṣi*, *kr̥ṣi*.

Similarly, in the 2nd person singular of the imperative, in addition to the standard for the later Sanskrit form of *kuru* “do”, in the Vedic language, the following forms appear with the same meaning: *kara*, *kṛdhi*, *kr̥nu*, *kr̥nuhi*.

In the later literary language, or Sanskrit, these possibilities for the overwhelming majority of verb roots were either completely lost, as we observe with the example of the verb *kar* “to do”, or to a significant extent they narrowed, which can be seen with the example of many other verbs.

Chronologically, following *Sambhita*, the later part of the Vedic literature, commenting on and developing the ideas presented in the hymns, gives a picture of the gradual partial elimination of these and similar dialectal phenomena. The Old Indian language gradually takes the form of a standard literary language, which later became known as Sanskrit. The gradual standardization of the literary language seems to be explained by its orientation on a certain local dialect, namely the dialect of the central part of northern India, later called “*madhyadeṣa*”. As is known, in the later era, this locality was considered an area where the purity of this literary language, i.e. Sanskrit, which gained great importance in the last

centuries of the ancient period and especially in the Middle Ages, was preserved most strictly.

The standardization of Sanskrit, as well as the preservation of its standard form, was greatly facilitated by the working out of its grammar. In the first half of the first millennium BCE, several generations of grammarians had already devoted works to the development of Sanskrit grammar. The norms of Sanskrit were established in their final form by the famous grammarian of ancient India, Panini (V century BCE), whose grammar became an indisputable authority in subsequent centuries.

Panini's authority and knowledge of the norms of his grammar were especially high in the period from the IV to the VIII century CE, the so-called classical period of the development of Sanskrit literature, when the most technically perfect works of Sanskrit literature were created. The native Indian tradition considers Kalidasa's works to be an unmatchably high example of Sanskrit classical literature. In the following centuries, the culture of Sanskrit gradually declined and, although it was used in Indian literature up to the XIX century, the circle of scholars who knew Sanskrit narrowed. The living forces of the country increasingly switched to national literary languages, which in European literature are known as Modern Indian languages, in their literary work.

Chronologically and functionally speaking, classical Sanskrit, and the comparatively less perfect forms of Sanskrit used throughout the Middle Ages, correspond to medieval Latin.

This comparison in relation to the classical affiliation of Latin and Sanskrit turns out to be correct. Just as medieval Latin was mainly the language of the clergy, so classical Sanskrit and medieval scholastic Sanskrit literature in general was Brahmin literature.

As noted above, the norms of Sanskrit grammar enjoyed their greatest authority during the classical period of the development of Sanskrit classical literature, i.e. about a millennium after the composition of Panini's grammar. Afterwards, typologically later forms of Indian languages, known as Prakrit and *Apabhramśa*,<sup>7</sup> lived on in literary use for a whole millennium, i.e. Middle Indian languages.

Panini's norms of grammar were not considered indisputable during the period when his grammar was composed, nor in subsequent centuries of antiquity. A number of major authors of ancient Sanskrit literature did not regard it obligatory to follow them. The grandiose poems of ancient India, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, which were written in Sanskrit and received their final revision in the period between the IV century BCE and the IV century CE, are written in a language that deviates significantly from Panini's grammatical norms.

J. Wackernagel and a number of other major Sanskrit scholars believe that the norms of classical Sanskrit established by Panini were fully observed only

7 [The Sanskrit term *Apabhramśa* literally meant "corrupt" or "non-grammatical language"].

8 Wackernagel  
 (1896, xlv ff.).

by learned Brahmins.<sup>8</sup> Epic Sanskrit, i.e. the Sanskrit in which the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are written, in their opinion, is the language of circles that, although belonging to the highest castes, mainly to the military caste (*kshatriya*), had not undergone the long-term training, which was available only to relatively few Brahmanical circles.

The middle and lower castes during this period spoke and used the so-called Middle Indian languages in literature, according to the Indian terminology, Prakrits.

Prakrits attained widespread literary use thanks to the representatives of Buddhism and Jainism.

In the first half of the first millennium BCE, Brahmanism subordinated all other castes to its control, raising their exploitation to an extreme limit. To a certain extent, it shared its power over the people only with the nobility, the kshatriyas. To substantiate the supremacy of the Brahmins over other castes ideologically, a well-known legend was created about the origin of all castes from the highest deity – Brahma.<sup>9</sup> According to this legend, the Brahmins came from Brahma's head, the kshatriyas from his hands, the vaishyas (merchants, artisans) from his abdomen and the shudras (lower caste) from his feet. As a result, the Brahmins were supposedly called upon to manage the destinies of all castes, the kshatriyas – to protect the country, i.e. mainly the Brahmins. Vaishyas are obliged to nourish everyone, and shudras are obliged to serve all the higher castes. In accordance with numerous "laws", which were formulated in their final form much later, the life of every Hindu from conception to death was subject to the constant control of Brahmanism, which imposed unbearably heavy levies on the population at the slightest provocation.

Strong opposition arose among the middle and lower castes against the Brahmanical oppression that preserved the mortifying caste system. It led to the rise of large social movements which, having adopted a religious colouring in the VI–V centuries BCE, took the form of Buddhism and Jainism. The core of these movements was undoubtedly democratic. The democratic character of these socio-religious movements is manifested both in philosophical ideas (the denial of the soul, the reduction of all life processes, including mental phenomena, to the movement of atoms (*dharmā*), etc.), and in social ideas (denial of the authority of the Vedas and Brahmanism, denial of the caste system and the principle of social equality).

This movement, like any democratic movement, had to appeal, and indeed at first did appeal, to a wide range of the population, mainly the urban population. And it is very significant that the founders of Buddhism and Jainism chose Prakrit, i.e. the spoken languages of the broad masses, as the instrument of their preaching.

It is also very significant that after Buddhism became the state religion in the Maurya Empire and lost its former demotic character, its literature was

9 [Barannikov is here referring to the *Purusha sukta*, hymn 10.90 of the *Rigveda*, and also found in the *Shukla Yajurveda Sambhita* 31.1–16 and *Atharva Veda Sambhita* 19.6].

translated from Prakrit into Sanskrit, which later became the only language of the canon of northern Buddhism. In the south, Ceylon, Burma, etc., where Buddhism to a certain extent retained its democratic character, one of the Middle Indian languages, Pali, remained the language of Buddhist canonical literature. Throughout its entire history Jainism, which never rose to the status of a state religion and was widespread among the merchant and artisan castes, used only Middle Indian (Prakrit, Apabhraṃśa) and Modern Indian languages in literature.

It is possible that as early as the fifth century, i.e. during the period of the activity of Buddha and Jin (the founder of Jainism), or even a little earlier, some of the Prakrits penetrated into literary use. In any case, the preaching of Buddhism in Ceylon, which is usually dated back to the era of Emperor Ashoka (III century BCE), was undoubtedly conducted in one of the Middle Indian languages, most likely in Pali. The appearance of this emperor's Prakrit inscriptions also testifies to the firmly established written tradition in the Middle Indian languages in the III century BCE. It is quite clear that these Prakrit inscriptions, which are the oldest Indian inscriptions known to us in general, could not be the first monuments written in these languages since Sanskrit inscriptions appear later than Prakrit ones.

The Vedic language and Sanskrit are classical inflectional languages. The inflectional structure of these languages is distinguished by an exceptional transparency. The morphological structure of each lexical element, each grammatical form, regardless of its belonging to a particular grammatical category, stands out with complete clarity.

The Middle Indian languages continue to preserve the inflectional structure in a sufficiently clear form, but the full transparency of the morphological structure in Prakrit, even in the earliest of them, is largely lost. The late forms of the Middle Indian languages, i.e. Apabhraṃśa, have almost completely lost the inflectional structure.

The great shifts that characterize and define the transition from Old Indian languages to Middle Indian are especially pronounced in the field of phonetics, where we observe great upheavals that determined the entire subsequent development of Indo-Aryan languages. They acquire a catastrophic character in the field of consonantism. The most striking and important processes in this area are the loss of a number of single closed consonants that in Old Indian stood between vowels, and the simplification, or rather assimilation, of groups of consonants. In the field of vocalism, the transition to the Middle Indian stage is characterized by the disappearance of a number of vowels and the appearance of new vowels formed on the basis of various sound combinations.

There are very large differences both in terms of phonetics and morphology between the oldest known Prakrit, i.e. Pali, the Prakrit inscriptions of Emperor Ashoka and the later Middle Indian languages, that were called

Apabhraṃśa in the VI century CE, and which penetrated into literary use at the beginning of the Middle Ages. The late forms of Apabhraṃśa are very close to the early forms of the Modern Indian languages, and in some cases, the difference between them is largely conditional.

Modern Indian, i.e. modern national languages, entered literary use at the beginning of the II millennium, and partially earlier. Their wide penetration into literature is associated with great social shifts at the end of the I and the beginning of the II millennium CE, with large popular movements, which, having taken on a religious colouration, became known as various forms of *Vaiṣṇavism*.<sup>10</sup> *Vaiṣṇavism* entered the broad public arena with essentially the same democratic slogans that had contributed to the wide spread of Buddhism a millennium and a half before. Large social movements, led by radical Vaiṣṇavas, took place during the period of Muslim incursions into India. As is known, the Muslim conquests that came to India with democratic slogans at that time dealt a very heavy blow to the Brahmin caste system and the privileges of the higher castes – Brahmanism and kshatriyas.

10 [Also termed Vishnuism, i.e. devotion to Vishnu and his incarnations. Devotees are termed Vaiṣṇavas or Vishnuites].

This circumstance could not but affect the fate of Sanskrit, the literature which was cultivated and maintained exclusively by the named higher castes, because Sanskrit was the language of high court poetry, the language of traditional religious forms, orthodox philosophy, and scholastic scholarship, a language whose study for many centuries was forbidden to the lower castes.

For a proper understanding of the history of the Indian literary tradition, it is very important to remember that classical Sanskrit, which is typologically an Old Indian language, is a medieval language by the time of its use. This is because the heyday of the so-called classical Sanskrit poetry belongs to the period from the IV to the VIII century CE, i.e. to the period when the late Middle Indian languages were most widely used in literature, and Modern Indian languages had begun to enter into literature. In the next millennium, the artistic tradition in Sanskrit gradually weakens, and from that time we have only a relatively small number of monuments of any serious artistic value. The creative forces that produce vivid examples of Indian poetry were switching to the Modern Indian languages. Throughout the Middle Ages, Sanskrit, like medieval Latin, continues to be the language of orthodox Brahmin religion, philosophy, and scholastic scholarship.

The development of classical Sanskrit literature was preceded by an almost one-thousand-year literary tradition in Prakrit, which is thus much older.

In the Middle Ages, Sanskrit was used in literature in parallel with the literary tradition developing in various national languages – Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Urdu, etc. The difference between the Sanskrit and Modern Indian literary tradition, in addition to linguistic differences, consists in the difference in the social affiliation of the audience that medieval authors addressed. We are talking about the audience, and not about the authors,



because although initially only representatives of the lower castes (weavers, tanners, barbers, etc.) wrote in the Modern Indian languages, with the consolidation of the literary tradition in various Modern Indian languages, representatives of Brahmanism sporadically write exclusively in one or another of the Modern Indian languages in those cases when they address a wide audience, rather than a closed circle of the upper castes. Almost always in such cases, the choice of language, and consequently of the audience, is also accompanied by the selection of certain social ideas. As a rule, authors writing in Sanskrit are bearers of the orthodox ideology, and authors writing in one or another of the national Indian languages up to the XIX century, are usually the exponents of democratic and very often heretical ideas.

The parallel use in literature of, on the one hand, Sanskrit, and of Middle Indian and later Modern Indian languages on the other, has never been a peaceful coexistence. Their bearers, representatives of different castes, and the literary languages named above, were in constant struggle. Brahmanism sought to expel or at least to restrict the literary use of other literary languages by all means available, since, from the point of view of Brahmanism, they were a means of expressing the heretical ideas of the lower castes, ideas directed against the caste system and the privileges of the higher castes.

The struggle against “vernacular” languages (this is the original meaning of the term “Prakrit” (“*prākṛta*”)), began already in the last centuries BCE. During this era, Brahmanism largely managed to regain its position in Indian society, which had been significantly shaken during the initial spread of Buddhism. With the conquest of political positions, Brahmanism takes vigorous measures to restore Sanskrit as a literary language. Prakrits continue to maintain their existence in literature, but gradually more and more sanskritisms are introduced into literary works in Prakrits. By the beginning of the common era, the line between Sanskrit and literary Prakrit was lost.

Prakrits (Maharashtri, Shavraseni, Magadhi, etc.) were to a large extent local languages. Sanskrit, as the language of Brahmanism, gradually became a kind of “international” language of northern India. This circumstance contributed to the fact that, by means of Brahmanical harassment, Prakrit was banished from official use and for some time Sanskrit became the official language of the central state power.

The social essence of the various literary languages used during the early Middle Ages is especially pronounced in Sanskrit drama, where various characters speak different languages: “high” characters – gods, brahmins, kings, and heroes – speak Sanskrit, while the rest of the characters use different Prakrits: women of higher castes speak in Shavraseni Prakrit, they sing in Maharashtri Prakrit; representatives of the lower castes use Magadhi Prakrit and other Prakrits.

It is very significant that the brahmins – the authors of Sanskrit dramas – do not take into account the locality in whose language this or that character was supposed to speak, but only consider his/her social position. Even taking into account the conventionality of this kind of “realism”, we still cannot but recognize the absolutely clear tendency of Brahmanism – to consider Sanskrit as the interprovincial language of the dominant modern castes.

The entry of the Modern Indian, i.e. modern national Indian, languages into literary use was not accomplished without hindrance. The rebellious, heretical nature of literature in the Modern Indian languages, written mainly by people from the lower castes, who severely criticized the foundations of the modern social system and advocated for the rights of the oppressed castes, was the reason that Brahmanism increased the persecution of Modern Indian literatures and languages and sought by all means, if not to expel them from literary use, then at least limit their use in literature.

As a result of these persecutions, the use of Modern Indian languages was restricted for almost a millennium. They find application only in the field of poetry, in the field of verse. Up to the beginning of the XIX century, unlimited dominance in the field of prose belongs to Sanskrit: with the penetration of Islam into India, Indian Muslims used Persian as a literary language. The obstacles that Brahmanism placed before the representatives of the lower castes in order to prevent or limit their penetration into literature, science and philology in every possible way affected the fate of the Modern Indian literatures and national languages. Up to the beginning of the XIX century, not a single significant prose work was created in these languages.

However, despite the various obstacles placed on the development of national literatures, poetry in various Modern Indian languages reaches an exceptionally high level of development, since all the vital forces of the Indian peoples during the whole Middle Ages switched to Modern Indian languages in their creative activity. Literature in these languages shines with a boldness and originality of ideas, novelty of poetic images and very often exceptionally high artistic and technical skill. It is in these languages, starting from the XI–XII centuries CE, that poetic works of great artistic value are published.

The Modern Indian languages retain their one-sided character, i.e. their use exclusively in the field of poetry, in the field of verse, until the end of the XVIII century. Only at the beginning of the XIX century, when India’s own bourgeoisie, which developed under the influence of British capital, had sufficiently strengthened, and the foundations of the traditional caste system were undermined, did artistic prose begin to develop in all the most important Modern Indian languages. During the XIX century and the first decades of the XX century they reached a brilliant level of development and completely replaced the Sanskrit and Persian languages.

According to their morphological structure, the Modern Indian languages fundamentally differ from the Vedic language, Sanskrit and Prakrits. While all the above-mentioned languages, as we have seen, are inflectional languages, the Modern Indian languages have an analytical structure.

The vivid facts of the development of Indian languages make it possible to observe how, due to the action of a wide variety of factors, Indo-Aryan languages move from an inflectional system to an agglutinative one. This fact has great historical and theoretical significance, since we thus have the opportunity to make a very serious correction to the widespread scheme according to which the development of languages goes from the root system to the agglutinative and from this latter to the inflectional system. Taking the example of the development of Indian languages, we see the phenomenon of the reverse order: they moved from the inflectional system to the agglutinative system. This agglutinative system, however, does not seem to be something completely monolithic. Along with forms constructed on the principle of agglutination, inflectional forms are observed in a number of languages. According to their history, these inflectional forms are phenomena of a completely different order: some inflectional forms only continue to retain their inflectional character, despite the large perturbations that have occurred in the area of their background structure; other inflectional forms, such as, for example, some verbal and nominal forms of the Marathi and Bengali languages, have taken a more complex path of development: the former inflectional forms first passed into agglutinative forms and only as a result of further complex development made the transition from agglutinative to a new inflectional character.

The Modern Indian languages appear to be a new phenomenon in the history of Indo-Aryan languages, and not only in their morphological structure. They are also a new phenomenon from a social point of view. Whereas the literary languages used before them in Indian literature had either a caste (like Sanskrit) or a confessional character (like some Prakrits), in the Modern Indian languages we see national literary languages for the first time in the history of Indo-Aryan literary languages.

Each of the named Modern Indian languages has been used for several centuries in the form of literary dialects that are more or less close. This lack of a standard, due to the insufficiency of cultural centralization of the corresponding people, does not constitute a special feature of the Modern Indian languages, since similar phenomena are observed in the history of any European language, including Russian. The peculiarity of the development of Modern Indian literary languages is only in the greater persistence and longer use of dialectal forms, which is explained by the feudal fragmentation of India.

Modern Indian literary languages achieved their standard forms only from the beginning of the XIX century. This was greatly facilitated by the

development of prose, the appearance of print and of the press, and a number of other circumstances.

In the development of all the most important Modern Indian languages over the past few decades, the desire of the feudal and bourgeois elite of the corresponding Indian nationality to push these languages off the path of national development is very pronounced. The concept of a nation, and therefore a national language, has until recently been alien to the peoples of India, where, due to long-standing traditions, the population is grouped according to confessional and caste principles. This circumstance, especially the desire to isolate the oppressed castes from culture and science, which has characterized the activity of Brahmanism for several thousand years, guides the representatives of the Indian feudal and bourgeois elite in their desire to turn the Modern Indian literary languages onto the path of “interethnic” development.

This is pursued through the introduction of a large number of borrowings from Sanskrit into each of the modern languages. According to the apologists of this trend, each of the national literary languages in this way has ample opportunities for its dissemination, since it becomes accessible to the understanding of speakers of other languages. It is quite clear that such tendencies, i.e. the desire to expel national lexical elements from national literary languages and replace them with lexical elements borrowed from the medieval interethnic caste language – Sanskrit – are deeply reactionary and anti-democratic.

From the history of Prakrits and Prakrit literature, we know that by introducing more and more Sanskrit elements into each of the Prakrits, Prakrit lost its original character and subsequently ceased to exist in literature. Modern guardians of the Modern Indian languages are also calling for this path to be taken. One must say, however, that the conditions for the development of these latter languages are fundamentally different from those in which Prakrits developed. The Indian working class and the Indian peasantry themselves take care of their own interests and will not allow their national languages, which for many centuries have been a means of expressing their best aspirations and aspirations, to be destroyed.

Moreover, we have every reason to think that in the future the number of national languages in India will not decrease, but will increase.

... But there can scarcely be any doubt that, in the event of a revolutionary upheaval in India, scores of hitherto unknown nationalities, having their own separate languages and separate cultures, will appear on the scene. And as regards implanting proletarian culture among the various nationalities, there can scarcely be any doubt that this will proceed in forms corresponding to the languages and manner of life of these nationalities.<sup>11</sup>

11 Stalin (1931, 194). [Stalin ([1925] 1954, 141)].

The brief information about the history of Indian languages presented above should give some idea of the scale and forms of development of these languages, about the variety of linguistic idioms and the shifts that have occurred in them over the course of four millennia.

It is quite clear that the scale and the variety of linguistic idioms and processes observed in their development place Indian languages in a special position. They provide the basis for the potential development of various theoretical positions, for drawing conclusions that can be tested against the infinite richness and diversity of linguistic facts.

However, it should be said that the above-mentioned potentials of the history of Indian languages have been insufficiently employed until recently.

The reason for this is rooted in the introduction of backward, reactionary or clearly tendentious ideas and concepts into Indology, with the aim of protecting the interests of the ruling classes.

This fact stands out especially vividly in the light of the history of Indology.

European Indology owes a great deal to the works of local Indian grammarians.

Linguistic works in India date back to a very ancient period, the beginning of which cannot be precisely determined. The Old Indian grammatical tradition even now impresses with its subtlety of discerning linguistic facts, the depth of its analysis and the breadth of its generalizations. After the work of many generations of grammarians, this classical grammatical tradition reached its completion in the grammar of Panini (V century BCE), who managed to synthesize all the most important facts of Sanskrit grammar in several thousand formulas constructed with algebraic rigour and clarity, with amazing scholarly definition and lawfulness. In terms of the depth of analysis and boldness of synthesis, the grammar of Panini is a completely exceptional phenomenon that has no parallels in world scholarship.

The grammatical tradition in India continues to develop after Panini, although we do not find in it the amazing originality that is characteristic of Panini's classic work. Subsequent authors composed works containing a number of very valuable additions to Panini's grammar, mainly in the form of commentaries on Panini's work, which is clothed in a form that is very difficult to understand.

The grammatical tradition in India began with the analysis of Vedic texts, the language of which over time became very little accessible to understanding. In the most remote era, the attention of the scholars of the time was directed towards the decomposition of the unitary text of the Vedas into separate lexical elements. Taking into account that the final syllables of words in the Old Indian language appear in various forms depending on the nature of the initial sound of the subsequent word, it must be admitted that this task was very difficult for that time. After the decomposition of the text of the

Vedas into separate lexical elements, the study of the Vedas was reduced mainly to commenting on difficult-to-understand places and compiling dictionaries of obscure words.

The main attention of the Old Indian grammarians was drawn to a literary language other than the ancient one, i.e. to the language that was given the name *sanskṛta* by grammarians, which means “decorated”, “ornamented”, “literary”. The works of grammarians, especially Panini’s famous grammar, played a decisive role in the standardization of Sanskrit. Brahmanism of that era (VII–IV centuries BCE) was acutely aware of the urgent need for a standard literary language, since at that time the Old Indian language, which had long been torn away from the national language and was incomprehensible to the general population of India, was in great danger, because Prakrits, which were close to the vernacular spoken languages, sought to take its place in Indian literature. In the face of such danger, it was very important for the Brahmins to give as clear, complete, and detailed a description of the norms of the literary language as possible, especially the phonetic and morphological norms, which were in particular danger following the radical breakdown that characterizes the transition from the Old Indian to the Middle Indian stage of the development of Indian languages. Panini and his predecessors performed their task – to create a standard literary language – brilliantly.

The creation of the first standard literary language in the history of India caused something that is very often observed in the history of science. The result of long labour was turned into a fetish. Sanskrit was deified. It was proclaimed and recognized by brahmanism as the language of the gods, which could arise all the easier because by that time brahmanism proclaimed itself to be earthly gods, who in some respects are higher than the heavenly gods. Sanskrit was finally recognized as the primary source of all Indian languages: *sanskṛtam prakṛtānām mātā* – “Sanskrit is the mother of Prakrits”.

Thus, in complete contradiction with historical facts, a relatively late language, which, unlike the older, multi-dialectal Vedic language, achieved its standard form due to an orientation on one narrow local dialect and as a result of the long work of many grammarians, was placed in a completely exceptional position. All the attention of the Indian grammarians was directed towards Sanskrit. The phenomena of the older, Vedic language, which did not fit into the norms of the standard that was created by Sanskrit grammarians, attracted little attention from Old Indian linguists. Only in very rare cases does Panini note that in one or another point the Vedic language differs from Sanskrit. Subsequent Indian grammarians, who worshipped Panini’s classic work and decided only to comment on his grammar, occupied the same principled positions, and did not pay attention either to the Vedic language or to contemporaneous forms of literary Prakrit.

Only two relatively late grammarians, who were active in the Middle Ages, namely Vararuci (Vararuci, VI century CE) and Hemachandra (Hemachandra, XII century CE), paid attention to Middle Indian languages in their writings. Both of these authors did so in the era when Prakrits had already ceased to exist as independent literary languages accessible to the understanding of the broad masses of the population, and they derive most facts characterizing the structure of the Middle Indian languages from literary monuments, rather than from living speech.

In the works of these grammarians who provided a description of the Prakrit, the usual form of presentation in Sanskrit grammar is adopted, but the presentation of the facts of the Middle Indian languages can in no way be compared with the depth of analysis and breadth of synthesis that are observed in Sanskrit grammars. It is very schematic and gives only a very weak representation of Prakrits and Apabhraṃśa.

Both of these authors proceeded from the generally accepted position in their era, according to which Sanskrit is the proto-language of all subsequent languages of India, and Vararuchi's and Hemachandra's main goal was to provide formulas or recipes by which Prakrit forms can be derived from Sanskrit. This had a certain practical significance, since Prakrit in its conventional schematic form continued to be used in literature, especially in Sanskrit drama, as the conventional language of characters of the lower castes. With the help of formulae provided by Vararuchi and other authors, any Sanskrit word was mechanically "prakritized", while the question of whether this or that word was actually used in the corresponding Prakrit was generally not raised at all.

After declaring Sanskrit the primary source of all other languages and recognizing it as the language of the gods, the brahmins declared Sanskrit the only "pure" language, the original language of India. All other idioms, including the Vedic language, that were used in literature for fifteen hundred years before the establishment of the norms of Sanskrit grammar, and numerous Prakrits were recognized as distorted forms of Sanskrit, the result of the "corruption" of Sanskrit in the mouths of the uneducated masses represented by the lower castes.

Such a view of the Prakrits, which undoubtedly arose due to the fact that they were a means of expressing anti-Brahmin ideas, draw attention to the Prakrits and could not arouse interest in their study among the Brahmins, at that time monopolists in the field of linguistics. As a result of this attitude to Prakrits, they remained very little studied for almost one and a half thousand years. The disregard for the Prakrits was an expression of contempt for the lower castes, so characteristic of Brahmanism for several thousand years.

The Modern Indian, i.e. modern national languages aroused even greater disdain and hatred among the Brahmanical mass.



Such an attitude towards national languages on the part of Brahmanism was completely natural, since the Modern Indian languages penetrate into literary use as a means of expressing ideas that are clearly anti-Brahman, as a tool for spreading “heretical” ideas about social equality among the masses. Thus, the struggle of Brahmanism against national languages and literatures was essentially all the time a struggle against the lower oppressed castes who sought liberation from the oppression of the higher castes and fought for the ideals of social justice.

The struggle against the Modern Indian literatures and languages was expressed not only in the form of contempt and disregard for these languages and literatures, but often took very harsh forms. There is much evidence of frequent and cruel persecution for “rebellious” works in Modern Indian languages.

Thus, the famous poet Kabir the weaver (1440–1518), who wrote in Hindi, was expelled from Benares for his songs directed against Brahmanism and the authorities.<sup>12</sup> In addition to his democratic ideas, Kabir aroused the hatred of Brahmanism by his denial of the significance of Sanskrit. Kabir says in one of his works:

12 Keay (1920, 23–24).

The Pandits speak only Sanskrit and call all those who use the vernacular ignorant fools (*bhākhā*). All over the world, pandits praise only Sanskrit. But *bhakti* gives strength and leads to salvation only through the medium of the popular language. Sanskrit is well water. The popular language is a beating key. *Bhakhā* (popular language) is loved by a true teacher and shows the true path!<sup>13</sup>

13 Munshi (1935, 115).

And Kabir was not the only author who was clearly aware of the deep social significance of popular languages.

No less interesting is the figure of the greatest poet of Gujarati literature, Narasinha Mehta (1500–1558), who turned to the lower castes with his poetry, preaching social equality to them. For his ideas and for his association with the lower castes and the untouchables, Narasinha Mehta was declared a fool and a madman by the higher castes.

The Marathi poet Tukaram (born in 1608), who created works of unsurpassed beauty about the labour and suffering of the lower castes oppressed by Brahmanism and the nobility, is very similar. For their “rebellious” nature, Tukaram’s works were thrown into the river, and he himself was expelled from his native village.<sup>14</sup>

14 Tukaram (1909, 1).

One of the greatest works not only of Hindi literature, but of all Indian literature in general, Tulsi Das’s *Ramayana* (1532–1624), written by a brahmin, in Hindi, caused an explosion of indignation on the part of orthodox Brahmanism, which saw in this fact the desecration of the gods themselves. So, a certain Shyama Shukla told Tulsi Das: “Everything above does not want such things to be written other than in Sanskrit!”

Another brahmin indignantly asked Tulsi Das: “Why did you, being an expert in Sanskrit, write your book in the peasant language?” In response, Tulsi Das stated that he was not writing for the brahmins, but for the people.

Not confining itself to disdain and hatred of the Modern Indian languages and literatures and the brutal persecution of the most radical authors of national literatures, Brahmanism indiscriminately declares all national literatures to consist only of weak and illiterate imitations of high Sanskrit literature. It should be noted that Sanskrit literature throughout the Middle Ages could exist only with the support of various sovereign courts. The cessation of this support has always caused the complete decline of Sanskrit literature in the respective province. By contrast, the Modern Indian literatures enjoyed the widest popularity among the broad masses of the population and were strengthened by their ever-present support.

The hostile attitude of Brahmanism towards national languages and literatures was inherited by the British authorities. This is what the British themselves say. For example, Growse,<sup>15</sup> in the preface to his translation of an episode from Tulsi Das’s *Ramayana*, says:

15 Tulsi Das (1876, 213).

... Here in India, the English government has always treated the Hindu form of the vernacular with a certain degree of dislike, and this has had such a discouraging effect on employees in India that, as a rule, the only Europeans in this country who have acquired a proper knowledge of Hindi are Protestant missionaries who considered it necessary for preaching at the bazaar.

Thus, unlike Sanskrit and Sanskrit literature, which for many centuries found support in the person of various sovereign princes, national literatures and languages, as a means of expressing democratic or even rebellious ideas, were deprived of such support. The British government continues the traditional Brahmin policy with regard to these languages and literatures. It has long supported the study of Sanskrit and Sanskrit literature and refused to support the study of national languages and literatures.

It was only in the post-war period, with the rise of the national liberation movement, under the pressure of the masses, that Modern Indian languages and literatures found access to higher schools in India and became the subject of university teaching.

The clearly biased traditional Brahmin point of view on Indian national languages and literatures, supported by the British government in India, which for very understandable reasons was not at all interested in the development of Indian national languages, had a great influence on the views of European Indologists. At the same time, European Indologists found a new

justification, which provided the Brahmanical conception with a fairly protracted existence in a number of European countries.

Until recently, in some European countries, especially in Germany, it was widely held that Sanskrit, the “literary language of India”, is the only Indian language worthy of being the subject of scholarly study. All other languages of India, including its modern national languages, are declared mere dialects unworthy of being the subject of such study. This point of view on the relationship between Sanskrit and national Indian languages in Europe is not the original one. Before the final submission of India to British rule and the emergence of Indo-European theory, Europeans paid serious attention to Indian national languages. At the first stages of acquaintance with India, Europeans became acquainted with and studied various national languages of India. In the south they studied Dravidian languages, in the north – Indo-Aryan. Of the latter, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, and Marathi were primarily studied. Urdu grammars that were written by Europeans date back to as early a time as the first grammars of Sanskrit. So, G. A. Grierson,<sup>16</sup> and after him Suniti Kumar Chatterji, report on a grammar of Hindustani, which was compiled by the Dutchman Ketelaar at the end of the XVII century and was printed in Leiden in 1743. J. Gilchrist’s grammar of Hindustani stands at a higher theoretical height in its construction and excellent analysis of the facts of this language than the contemporary Sanskrit grammars written by Europeans.

16 Grierson (1903–1928, Vol. 9, Part 1, 6–8).

A number of factors contributed to the shift of the attention of most European scholars from national Indian languages to the Old Indian language and especially to Sanskrit. Firstly, the prevailing attitude in Europe towards the study of classical languages and literatures; secondly, the discovery of kinship between Old Indian and other Indo-European languages; thirdly, familiarity with the Brahman concept of the relationship between Sanskrit and Sanskrit literature, on the one hand, and Indian national languages and their literatures, on the other. The assimilation of this concept was all the easier because in the XIX century the pandits enjoyed great authority among European Indologists. The last, but perhaps the most decisive reason for the weakening of attention to Indian national languages and literatures, was the loss of India’s political independence and its subordination to British power.

By this time, a “theory” was being created, according to which the great Indian culture in all its richness and diversity was created by the Indian Aryans. True Aryans were only the upper castes, mainly Brahmanism. The invasion of India by Muslims, who destroyed or at least bled the upper castes, led the creative forces of India to dry up.

This “theory”, which was supported by a number of European, mainly German and English, scientists, led to two very important conclusions.

Firstly, this “theory” provided an ideological justification for British domination in India. The British are Aryans, and by depriving the Moguls of

power, they only restored the trampled historical justice, since power over the ancient Aryan heritage passed into the hands of Aryans, though not the former Indian Aryans, but western Aryans, close to them by blood and therefore having the moral right to inherit power over India.

Secondly, since, according to this “theory”, after the conquest of India by the Moguls, the creative part of the Indian population, i.e. the Aryan Brahmins, was drained of blood, then in India a mass of incomplete value remained from its former population, incapable of either independent governance of the country or the creation of cultural values. According to this “theory”, the British should rule India until this country reaches “maturity”.

It followed from this “theory” that neither the national languages of India nor its national literatures could be of interest to a scholar, could not be the subject of scholarly study. Very often “orthodox Indologists”, especially the Indologists of the German school, consider the Modern Indian languages to be some kind of jargon, which only in the most recent years make an attempt to adopt a literary formulation.

This leads to the until recently widespread opposition of Sanskrit – the “literary language of India” – to various dialects, which are supposedly the Modern Indian languages, i.e. the national languages of modern India among some circles of European Indologists.

In order to make the essence of such statements clearer, it should be noted that it corresponds to the statement that “the literary language of Europe is currently Latin, and all modern European languages are only dialects”.

Despite the utter absurdity of this statement, which appears with exceptional clarity when translated into European concepts, it has great vitality in the circles of “orthodox” Indologists. To illustrate this point, it is enough to cite the fact that “the history of the Indian language” or “the history of Indian literature” are courses that cover the Old Indian language or Old Indian and medieval scholastic Sanskrit literature and do not at all touch upon the facts of the Modern Indian languages and literatures or pay absolutely negligible attention to them.<sup>17</sup>

In particular, Winterlinz dismisses many literatures that have a rich literary tradition that has been developing for many centuries with two or three words. Thus, for example, about the literature of Indian Moslems, he says only that it is “folgt ganz persischen Mustern”, about Sindhi literature: “Auch die Sindhi-Litteratur ist mehr mohammedanisch und persisch als indisch”.<sup>18</sup>

All Modern Indian literatures are considered to consist of translations and imitations of Old Indian literature or medieval Sanskrit. This view, widely spread in Germany before the World War, dominated Russian academic Indology. So, for example, academician S. F. Ol’denburg, in his article on Indian literature, says:<sup>19</sup>

17 As an example one might take Winterlinz’s course (1909–1920), where of some 1,609 pages, literature in all the Modern Indian languages (including all Dravidian languages) is given 27 pages.

18 Winterlinz (1909–1920, Bd. III, 5, 578).

19 Ol’denburg (1919, 8–9).

We are talking about Indian literature, but, more precisely, we should talk about Sanskrit literature, because, despite the abundance of languages spoken and written for a long time in India, exactly what is written in the language of the entire Indian culture – Sanskrit – is the basis and essence of Indian literature in general.

... Next to it [i.e. medieval Sanskrit. A. B.] there were Prakrits and literature in Prakrit dialects, and then in other languages of India, Aryan and non-Aryan roots, but all this literature arose on the basis of the imitation of Sanskrit. Finally, already in the XIX century, when European influence began, we see the beginnings of literatures not based on Sanskrit.

From this comes the conclusion that the Modern Indian literatures are only “pale reflections of ancient Indian beauty”.

Thus, the narrowly tendentious Brahminical concept, which arose more than two thousand years ago with the explicit purpose of discrediting the languages and literatures of the lower castes who dared to speak out against the hegemony of Brahmanism in Indian life, has survived to the present day.

At the same time, the overwhelming majority of European authors, making such peremptory statements about Modern Indian literatures, did not know any of the Modern Indian languages. Hence it follows that they only repeat the judgments of Brahmanism.

We read completely different statements from authors who know the Indian national literatures or are at least partially familiar with them. Thus, one of the greatest Indologists of the last century, N. Wilson (1786–1860), says: “The Hindi dialects have a literature and one of very great interest”.<sup>20</sup>

20 Wilson (1828, 32).

21 Grierson (1888, xii).

The greatest Indologist of the XX century, G. Grierson,<sup>21</sup> in his history of Hindi literature, writes about the relationship of Sanskrit and Modern Indian literature as follows:

... the later Sanskrit and Prakrit poems are but artificial productions, written in the closet by learned men for learned men; but the Neo-Gaudian [i.e. Modern Indian] poets wrote for unsparing critics, the people. Many of them studied nature and wrote what they saw.

Transferred to European Indology the traditional Brahminical view of Indian national languages and literatures exerted a great influence on the development of this discipline in Europe. Due to the dominance of Indo-European theory in Europe and a narrow understanding of the tasks of the comparative grammar of Indo-European languages, only the Old Indian language and Sanskrit is the subject of scholarly study. Modern Indian languages, in this situation, can only be the subject of practical study. As a result, in the XIX

century the Modern Indian languages and literatures attracted very little attention in Europe, and the development of Modern Indian philology is mainly due to the works of Indian scientists. In some European countries, including pre-revolutionary Russia, Modern Indian languages and literatures were not studied at all. It was only after the Great October Socialist Revolution in the USSR that Modern Indian languages and literatures were introduced into university teaching.

In India itself, the intensive development of Modern Indian philology was only observed after the World War, with the rise of the national liberation movement. It is in the last two decades that courses in literary history, the history of language, grammar, and dictionaries have been created for all the most important languages of India. Indian national languages have ceased to be the subject of only practical study. They are currently recognized as the object of scholarly study. However, not enough has been done for the history of Indian languages as a whole.

Summing up the facts from the history of Indology, we can draw the following conclusions.

1. Indian languages and literatures have been available to study for a huge period – at least four thousand years. At the same time, for the study of the history of the language, it is very important that the Indian languages throughout their history have used a phonetic script, that is highly adapted to convey the phonetic composition of words.
2. The long and complex development of Indian languages places Indology in a special position, since the duration of the development of the literary tradition, its richness, and diversity open up the widest possibilities for Indology, because Indological material makes it possible to pose, verify and resolve various theoretical issues.
3. These opportunities have not been taken. Indian languages and literatures were divided into two groups. The first included the Old Indian language and medieval Sanskrit, the second – the Middle and Modern Indian languages. The first were recognized as subjects worthy of scholarly study, the second were considered an object not worth the attention of scholars, not capable of being a subject of scholarship.
4. For the first time, this position was taken and widely popularized in India itself, where the Brahmans, protecting their caste interests and seeking to block representatives of the lower castes from accessing culture, first proclaimed Middle Indian languages (Prakrits), and later the Modern Indian languages, as simple distortions of the “only literary language of India”, i.e. Sanskrit.
5. This Brahmanical conception found acceptance in Europe among the circles of a number of English and especially German scholars, who

- supported it with racist conclusions from the Indo-European theory, which was done in the objective interests of British capital.
6. Due to the influence of the German Indological school, the Brahmanical conception was also adopted in Russian pre-revolutionary Indology.
  7. The dominance of this conception led the Modern Indian languages and literatures to be studied very poorly and to remain almost unknown even to a wide circle of specialists.
  8. As a result, neither a literary history built on proper scholarly foundations and covering all the development of the Indian literary tradition, nor the history of Indian languages has been created in Europe.
  9. Only after the World War, with India's increasing share of the world economy and politics, did interest in Indian national languages and literatures increase in Europe, which found real expression in the creation of a number of works on the history of Indian languages.
  10. A very important and promising moment in the history of the study of Indian languages and literatures is the requirement to study the Indian linguistic and literary tradition as a whole. Only such a truly scholarly, historical study of these languages and literatures can make Indology into a discipline of indisputably great importance for the development of various theoretical problems.

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