

left little evidence of what they thought or felt, in short to accomplish a phenomenology of Indian secularity is hardly going to be easy but this has not deterred him from venturing into this relatively uncharted territory.

This would be more 'Indian' than anything he has ever done before and will require relearning languages learnt in school and the honing of different scholarly skills. More than anything else it means a deliberate, and possibly somewhat risky journey into a wholly unknown rainforest.

Rajeev Bhargava is loved and admired for his inspirational teaching at Jawaharlal Nehru University and the University of Delhi. As a tribute to his students, Rajeev conceived and with Ashok Acharya edited a text book on Political Theory.

He has to his credit over ten books including edited volumes. The major titles are: *Individualism in Social Science*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992,) *Secularism And its Critics ed.* (OUP, New Delhi, 1998), *Multiculturalism, Liberalism and Democracy*, (ed. with A. Bagchi and R. Sudarshan, OUP 1999) and *Transforming India*, (ed. With Francine Frankel et al, OUP 2000), *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship* (ed. with Helmut Reifeld), Sage, 2005; *Politics and Ethics of the Indian Constitution* (ed.) OUP, 2008, *What is Political Theory and Why do we need it?* OUP, Delhi, 2010, *The Promise of India's Secular Democracy* OUP, Delhi, 2010. *Understanding Contemporary India* (ed. with Achin Vanaik) Orient Black Swan, Delhi, 2010. Among his forthcoming publications are *Living Together and Living Together Well* (OUP) and *A Very Short Introduction to Secularism* (OUP).

He has contributed to several international books and journals including the Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy and the Oxford Handbook of Political Theory, the Sage Encyclopaedia of Global Studies, International Encyclopaedia of Political Science, Brill's Encyclopaedia on Hinduism and the Handbook of Communication Ethics. His articles have been translated into Urdu, Telugu, Hindi, French, German, Hungarian, Indonesian Bhasa, and Italian. For a while he was the South Asia editor of the renowned, UK-based web journal, Open Democracy.

Bhargava is on the advisory board of several institutions and programmes such as the Max Planck Institute, Berlin, and is Senior Academic Expert, Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion in Europe, Chair of the Review Mission, Sephis Programme and was a consultant to the UNDP report on cultural liberty. He was also on the two-member Committee constituted by the Government of India to review the work of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research

Recognising the significance of Rajeev Bhargava's multifaceted work the jury comprising Professor Suresh Tendulkar, Professor M.N.Panini and Professor Gopal Guru unanimously recommended him for the Malcolm Adiseshiah Award for Distinguished Contributions to Development Studies for 2011.

### ***Malcolm & Elizabeth Adiseshiah Trust***

No. 103, (Old No. 42-45), Luz Church Road, Mylapore, Chennai - 600 004.  
Phone : 044 2445 6225 • Email : meatrust@dataone.in



## **Prof. Rajeev Bhargava**

Director  
Centre for Study of Developing Societies  
New Delhi

# *A Profile*

# A Profile

Rajeev Bhargava is among the foremost political theorists of India. Nationally and internationally acclaimed for his work on secularism, he is currently the Director of one of the most prominent research centres of the country, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. Before joining CSDS in 2005, he taught for 25 years at the Jawaharlal Nehru University where he was Professor of Political Theory. He was also Professor of Political Theory at the University of Delhi from 2001-2005 and the head of its Department of Political Science.

He has held fellowships at Harvard, London, Bristol, Belfast and Jerusalem. He has been a Distinguished Resident Scholar, Institute of Religion, Public life and Toleration, Columbia University, New York and held the Asia Chair at Science Po, Paris in 2006. More recently, he was a Visiting Fellow, Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin and at the Institute of Human Sciences, Vienna.

Rajeev Bhargava read for a B.A. in Economics at St. Stephen's College, Delhi after which he left for Oxford where he read first for his M.Phil. and then a D.Phil. His doctoral thesis on Methodological Individualism was published by Clarendon Press, Oxford in 1992. It was widely reviewed in international journals which it hailed 'as the best recent treatment of the dispute about individualism versus holism in social science'. The Philosophical

Quarterly wrote that it was 'the most sophisticated and thorough work written from an anti-individualist point of view.' and the Canadian Journal of Philosophy found it '...carefully argued, well-organized, with a firm mastery of the relevant literature and breathtaking from cover to cover.'

On returning from Oxford, Bhargava found himself in the midst of an ever deepening scepticism over secularism and in a climate of a thoroughly instrumental attitude towards constitutional values. Discussions were marked by platitude rather than substance, prejudice rather than open enquiry and polemic rather than normative reasoning. Moreover, there were signs of conceptual confusion. There was a pressing need for public-minded political theory rather than academic discussions on abstract issues concerning explanations in social science.

Both the defenders of Indian secularism and its opponents worked with mainstream American or French conceptions. All appeared to believe firmly that those who had drafted the Indian Constitution had simply transplanted western models to India. Over the years, Rajeev Bhargava established that the conception of secularism in the anti-colonial struggle and subsequently in the Indian Constitution was quite different from standard western conceptions. Unlike the French model with its marked anti-religious flavour or the American model with its 'hands off' approach to religion, the Indian model grants positive recognition and active respect to all religions. Yet, it is not afraid to intervene against degrading social practices that have come to be associated with religions. Indian secularism helps or hinders religion as and when the situation demands, always guided by

normative concerns of freedom and equality and to remove injustice both within and between religious groups. This constitutive feature of Indian secularism, Bhargava calls 'principled distance'.

His complex, nuanced articulation of secularism is now widely acknowledged as pioneering in the field. For his peers, Rajeev Bhargava is one of the 'most perceptive and analytically rigorous thinkers on Indian politics'. His essays are 'full of interesting and important insights, some of which have already helped shape the international discussion on such key issues as the nature of secularism.' His book *Secularism And its Critics* published in 1998, was the first of a kind and sparked off a continuing, contentious debate on political secularism that becomes ever more contemporary. His work on secularism, minority rights, truth commissions, multiculturalism, federalism, the political philosophy of the Indian Constitution and methodological individualism is widely cited by scholars

Work on the distinctiveness of an Indian concept, such as secularism, demands a deeper awareness of tradition and a better understanding of Indian intellectual history and social imaginaries than is normally evident even in scholarly studies. In this respect, Bhargava finds his education abysmally inadequate and is, therefore, engaged in re-educating himself. His new project requires him to delve into ancient pasts with an examination of texts and social practices. It requires him to retrieve the patterns of co-existence of multiple religious communities in the past. He attempts to evoke the radically differing worlds of not only Ashoka and Akbar, but also their *praja* and *awaam*. To retrieve beliefs and feelings of persons long dead and who