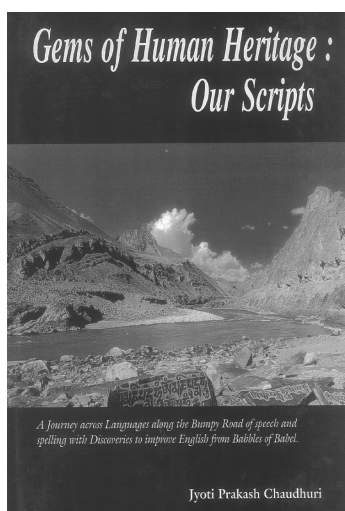


Book Review

Gems of Human Heritage: Our Scripts

Reviewed by

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It is a pleasure to read this book dealing with the thoughts of Jyoti Chaudhuri on gems of human culture: scripts to register words and ideas in different languages. A widely traveled man who has lived and worked in India, Germany and the United States and interacted with people from still more countries and cultures, the author describes his experiences with different languages and their representation in scripts in a very lively, personal manner.

Having been brought up with Bengali and Hindi, Sanskrit-derived languages, which have very systematic, phonetically well-defined alphabets, the various uses of the Latin alphabet in different languages leave him unsatisfied. In addition as a scientist (with very original work in the field of genetics), he feels compelled to apply systematic to this problem which has puzzled him throughout his life. In his view our cultural heritage should be clearly presented in words and script

minimizing confusion and misunderstanding. Especially the English language which has the advantage of a relatively simple grammar and which has been adopted widely as a “world language” has the well-known problem of inconsistencies between spelling and pronunciation. Can this discordance be rectified scientifically? The attempt to develop a phonetic alphabet for the English language, with a view to application even to other languages, may not meet with approval by all readers. But the lively way how of Chaudhuri presents his philosophical views and his interesting life story, mixing essays, anecdotes, and stories from the bible as well as from Indian mythology, makes fascinating and rewarding reading for everyone interested in languages and communication in a global world.