

## BOOK REVIEWS

RATNA GHOSH *Redefining Multicultural Education*.

Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996.

\$16.95. 126 pp. ISBN 7747-32768.

Ratna Ghosh has redefined multiculturalism in ways that will please most of the “oppressed communities” of Canada. These include persons of colour, of minority languages – both nonofficial and (for most provinces) French. She does not claim the Quebec anglophones (her own language group) as oppressed or disadvantaged, for in most ways they are not. Ghosh also associates typical oppression with men, especially older, richer, unilingual anglophones of British origin. In short, some members from these groups set most of the policies for society. There are other less traditional markers of privilege. Much of this argument has been made before in connection with multiculturalism and social class and is now emerging as a major argument in human rights. Ghosh is more trenchant and scholarly than the usual writer of the genre and shifts the field of discourse to emphasize Quebec and racial minorities.

Ghosh does not emphasize the language dimension of multiculturalism – in my view, unfortunately. She virtually ignores religion. Her emphasis obscures the origins of multiculturalism, which owes much to the nonofficial language champions from the West during the official languages entrenchment. Some of these shortcomings were identified and analyzed by Quebec sociologists Guy Rocher. Ghosh chose not to redebate the field.

Her book interprets modern multiculturalism rather than imprisoning it in “the historical framework.” Her brevity prevents a detailed reasoned “challenge” or even a substantial discussion of standard setting scholars of “conventional multiculturalism” like Jean Burnet, Sonia

Morris, Vandra Masemann, Karen Mock, and Glenda Redden. Her new vision has a human rights and/or antiracist interpretation which takes Ghosh into lands already explored by Frances Henry, Rosalie Abella, Evelyn Kallen, Freda Hawkins, Enid Lee, Mavis Burke, Sybil Wilson, and Marie McAndrew. The differences she offers are in the examples rather than a completely new interpretation.

Few scholars would grant Ghosh the claim that men have dominated this field in research, policy development, or the philosophical questions that set the Canadian educational agenda, although they have shared many of the debates. Also, much of the curricula stems from the women scholars and teachers that are mentioned above. Ghosh includes sexism in virtually every chapter but still fails to tie it clearly to multiculturalism. Instead, she demonstrates it to be an important dimension of human rights. Maybe the theme of her book is *human rights* rather than multiculturalism?

Ghosh has been misled in some of her statistical interpretations. The British influences have not virtually disappeared (except perhaps in Quebec) despite the voluntary claim of multiple ethnic allegiances. The question associated with ethnic identity was changed for the 1986 Census, leading to a *drop* of 4,000,000 in those claiming only British origins. But the interpretation of Canadian social preferences and cultural allegiances has become more complicated and more believable as a result of the new census construction. The change in sources of immigration to various parts of Canada, the general decline in birthrate, and the difference of fertility for different ethnic groups and immigrant communities will make a difference if sustained over several generations.

Ghosh builds her most compelling argument through lucid writing and brevity. *Redefining Multiculturalism* is the best sociological interpretation for a quick read. It has a wealth of terminology that is easily accessible. It identifies most of the arguments in understandable terms. It will become a widely used handy reference for students and teachers. It can be used with examples to be supplied in almost any community. It carries a respectable concordance to the best of international sociological and pedagogical literature. And this fine book is inexpensive enough to be widely accessible.

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