

# **“The Pagan Sunday which comes once in a fortnight and the Muslim Sunday that falls on Friday” – North Indian “ways of life” through the eyes of a curious young Prussian (Ketelaar 1698).**

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The vocabulary attached to the main body of grammar of the *Instruction, or teaching of Hindustani and Persian Grammar* (1698) by Joan Josua Ketelaar presents copious cultural information. Customs and “ways of life” from North India are meticulously noted in the form of lists of words, from household utensils, to tailoring terms, to religious traditions and concepts.

It is curious to observe that *karma*, *asana*, *tikka*, *roti*, *kebab*, *halal*, all nowadays common words, were already introduced to Dutch readers in the late 17th century.

Perhaps even more interesting is the way Ketelaar translated his Hindustani terms into “European”. And so, a possibly straightforward list of nationalities features here “Pagans” (Hindus), “white people”, “Europeans, even Portuguese”, and “Giants”. A curious mix of “sameness-and-difference” follows, where exotic religious and cultural concepts are explained with the help of more familiar ones. As a result, we have Sundays falling on Fridays, January in October, Islamic prayer beads becoming “paternoster”, etc.

Ketelaar’s linguistic description also reveals traces of a guessing strategy, not unusual in the early colonial encounters: *if you use a word in a sense you understand it and it seems to work, it must mean what you think*. Therefore Ketelaar misinterprets the respect marker -jī [dsjie] as the equivalent of the Dutch diminutive suffix -je [tje], and miscategorizes a few other forms in his dictionary.

A detailed analysis of the above mentioned elements will give a solid base for more general conclusions on transcultural manifestations in Ketelaar’s linguistic descriptions of Hindustani.

## **References**

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