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Editor-in-chief: Mihaela Gligor

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BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
Cluj Center for Indian Studies
Romanian Journal of Indian Studies
Correspondence/Submissions:
mihaela.gligor@ubbcluj.ro
http://indian.centre.ubbcluj.ro/

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EDITORIAL

Mihaela GLIGOR
Cluj Center for Indian Studies
Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

> India is seen as a country of immense diversity, of distinct hopes, of vast and disparate beliefs, of extraordinary customs and a genuine feast of opinions.
> The cultural heritage of contemporary India combines the Islamic influences with the Hindu ones, as well as those pertaining to other traditions, and the outcome of the interaction among different religious communities can be fully seen in literature, music, painting, architecture and many other fields.
>
> (Amartya Sen, Nobel prize laureate).

India is a mixture of emotions, colours, feelings, music, happiness, sorrow, life and death, gods and people. India is an endless puzzle which each soul that meets its mystery tries to solve. India is infinite, just as untrammelled as the fascination that it produces in the others

India is an incredibly rich culture, with a history of thousands of years. It saw the rise of various civilizations, religions, dynasties, human groups, cultures and arts. India has been presented and represented in many forms in literary discourses, arts and heritage

symbols. But the country is so vast that there always remains an area to be explored. Moreover, there are many new things to be interpreted and established. Any discussion on anything belonging to India and its culture is incomplete without interdisciplinary dialogue between various cultural aspects and elements.

Through its stories, India has always attracted people of distant places from archeologists, travelers, merchants, artists to scientists and academic researchers. Its rich diversity and its myths, legends, arts or music fascinated and allured many minds. The languages of India, from Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tamil, the regional languages from the ancient times, to Persian and Urdu from the medieval times and English from the modern period, were and still are fascinating for linguists and researchers.

The *Romanian Journal of Indian Studies* encourages interdisciplinary approaches in linguistics, literature and literary studies, Indian philosophy, history of religions, political philosophy, history of ideas, science, anthropology, sociology, education, communications theory and performing arts. One of its primary aims is the integration of the results of the several disciplines of the humanities so that its articles will have a synthetic character in order to acquaint the reader with the progress being made in the general area of Indian Studies.

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The Concept of Truth (Satya) in the Philosophy of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi[1]

Dezső SZENKOVICS
Sapientia Hungarian University of Cluj-Napoca

"Our life is a long and arduous quest after Truth."
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

"My religion is based on truth and non-violence. Truth is my God. Non-violence is the means of realising Him."
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Abstract: Nevertheless, he never considered himself a philosopher, in my vision Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi – as regards his oeuvre – can be considered one of the most important Indian thinkers of the 20th century. Being a symbol of non-violent resistance and an iconic figure of India's independence struggle, we tend to look on him as a hero of the anticolonial struggle, as father of the modern India, forgetting that all these appellations are deeply rooted in his special way of thinking and acting, which could be characterised through words like simplicity, truth (*satya*), non-violence (*ahimsa*), love etc.

In my paper, I will try to synthetize the philosophical thought of Gandhi, so that from the three core concepts of the Gandhian

[1] This paper was presented at the *Knowledge, Reality, Transcendence. A Dialogue between East and West* international conference held in Constanţa – Sinaia – Vatra Dornei, Romania, between October 31 – November 6, 2016.

philosophy (satya, ahimsa and satyagraha) at this time the accent to be put on the truth (satya), which constitute in fact the corner stone of the Gandhian philosophy. Analysing these concepts is very important because of two reasons: first of all because these concepts either are rooted in the Indian religious traditions (Jainism, Hinduism or Buddhism), and semantically redesigned by Gandhi, or concepts created by himself, but being based on categories provided by India's philosophical-religious traditions. On the other hand, the concept of truth – by the other two core concepts – had a very important role both in awakening nationalist sentiment and shaping the Indian nation in the early decades of the twentieth century, and in the anti-colonial fight characterized by nonviolent resistance.

Therefore, it will be analysed in brief the etymology of satya (truth), highlighting the changes made by Gandhi in the semantic content of the concept. It is worth noting that in the Gandhian thought and discourse the old notions taken from the Hindu religious tradition acquires new semantic layers that make possible their interpretation in a new, socio-political context and not a religious one.

Keywords: Gandhi, satya, ahimsa, satyagraha, truth.

Introduction

The 30th of January 1948: a day of mourning in India and the whole world. The man known as Mahatma, meaning "Great Soul" in Sanskrit, an honorific name bestowed upon him by the great Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, departed from life. On his way to the place of his usual common prayer in front of tens of thousands of people, an extremist by the name of Nathuram Vinayak Godse took the life of Mahatma Gandhi with three gunshots. Those were the last moments of Gandhi's life, but this did not stop him to give evidence once more of his creed and way of thinking: "Hey Ram", or "Oh, God" – these were the last words uttered by the great Indian freedom fighter, the

uncontested spiritual leader, the great political and religious thinker of modern India. The Great Gandhi thus blessed his own assassin.

Gandhi's death put an end to a chapter of the modern history of India, but at the same time, it also meant a new beginning in the contemporary history of mankind. The fact that the death of the man called Mahatma entailed the end of the most important period in the history of modern-day India may seem like a coincidence. Here I refer to the period marked on the one hand by the euphoria caused by the end of the colonial domination and the achievement of sovereignty, and on the other by the emotional, psychical load caused by the division of India. The 14th of August, respectively the 15th of August 1947; two important dates in the modern history of India: the coming into existence of the Muslim state of Pakistan, respectively the achievement of sovereignty of India from the British Empire. And shortly after these historic dates, the whole world was shocked to learn about the ironic death of Mahatma Gandhi: "the Apostle of Nonviolence"[2] fell victim to violence; the forces of evil, of darkness became triumphant over good and truth.

Despite all that, in my vision, the death of Gandhi opened a new era in the history of mankind. This unfortunate moment meant the beginning of a new period about which we can say that it is still persisting today, and can be described, characterised by the research, interpretation and systematisation process of his spiritual legacy, of Gandhian thought. In parallel with this process we can also be the witnesses of another phenomenon, closely linked to the thinking and principles of Mahatma Gandhi. Here I refer to the fact that nonviolent resistance, this fighting technique against social/political injustice also appeared outside the borders of India, like for instance the movement

[2] Nanda, Bal Ram, *Three Statesmen. Gokhale, Gandhi, and Nehru* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2004), 264.

for the equality in rights of the Afro-American community lead by Martin Luther King jr. in the United States of America, the anti-apartheid fight carried out by the indigenous population of South-Africa, or in a way even the case of the Solidarity movement in Poland, which had a single aim: to put an end to the communist regime by nonviolent means.[3]

Gandhi, the Man

Although he did not see himself as a philosopher, in my vision Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi – through the prism of the Gandhian oeuvre – can be considered as one of the most important Indian thinkers of the 20th century. A symbol of nonviolent resistance and an icon of the fight for Indian independence, we are inclined to classify him as a hero of the anti-colonialist fight, the founding father of modern-day India and forget in the meantime that all these titles are based on a particular way of thinking and living, which can be described by terms like simpleness, truth (*Satya*), nonviolence (*Ahimsa*), love etc.

In this presentation, I will try to synthesise the philosophical thinking of Gandhi in a way so that of the three basic concepts of Gandhian philosophy (*Satya*, *Ahimsa,* and *Satyagraha*) the accent will be laid this time upon *Satya*, i.e. on Truth, a concept that in fact is the cornerstone of Gandhian philosophy. The analysis of the concepts is extremely important for two reasons: firstly, because they are either

[3] Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi's Religion and Its Relation to Politics", in Judith M. Brown – Anthony Parell (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 93-116; David Hardiman, "Gandhi's Global Legacy", in Judith M. Brown – Anthony Parell (eds.): *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 239–257; M. V. Naidu, "The Anatomy of Nonviolent Revolution: A Comparative Analysis" in Douglas Allen (ed.): *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi for the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), 223–248.

concepts drawn from the religious traditions of India (Jainism, Hinduism or even Buddhism) and semantically developed by Gandhi, or categories created by Gandhi himself, but based again on concepts originating in the philosophical-religious traditions of India. On the other hand, the concept of Truth – alongside with the two other basic concepts – has had a significant role both in the awakening of the feelings of nationalism and the formation of the Indian nation in the first decades of the 20th century, as well as in the anti-colonialist fight characterised by nonviolence.

The Concept of Truth (Satya)

In order to understand the importance of the notion of truth for Gandhi, it is enough to cast a glance on the subtitle that he chose for his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. And if we plunge ourselves into the Gandhian oeuvre, we will quickly discover truth as a subject almost at all times and in all places. In one of his letters addressed to his cousin, Narandas Gandhi, he speaks about the importance of truth in his life, recognising that for him the concept of Truth means much more than just telling the truth. In Gandhi's interpretation Truth must not only be present only in our speech, but also in our thoughts and actions[4]. Only like this can we live a full, true and harmonious life.

[4] "Generally speaking, [observance of the law of] Truth is understood merely to mean that we must speak the truth. But we in the Ashram should understand the word satya or Truth in a much wider sense. There should be Truth in thought, Truth in speech and Truth in action. To the man who has realized this Truth in its fullness, nothing else remains to be known, because, as we have seen above, all knowledge is necessarily included in it. What is not included in it is not Truth, and so not true knowledge; and there can be no real bliss without true knowledge. If we once learn how to apply this neverfailing test of Truth, we will at once be able to find out what is worth doing, what is worth seeing, what is worth reading." Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Letter to Narandas Gandhi. In *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (vol. 1–98), vol. 49, 383.

This concept so significant for Mahatma originates in the philosophic-religious tradition of India and – as we could see – it strongly and deeply regulates all aspects of everyday life. Consequently, in order to understand Gandhi's philosophy, thinking, actions and messages, it is inevitable to create an idea about this basic concept of Gandhian thought.

Satyan nasti paro dharmah, i.e. 'There is no religion higher than truth'. This enunciation is one of the most significant and oldest postulates of Hinduism, appearing and reappearing under various forms in the different periods of Hinduism[5] and not only. Not having enough time now to analyse in detail the importance of the concept of Satya in Indian religious literature, I will have to limit myself to enumerate those religious and philosophical works that from this point of view had a significant influence on the thinking of Gandhi. And the list cannot be complete without the *Upanishads* (especially the *Chandogya*, *Brihadaranyaka*, *Taittiriya* and the *Prasna Upanishads*), the epics *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavad Gita*[6], the *Laws of Manu*[7], and last, but not the least, the Jain tradition.

But before venturing into understanding the Gandhian concept of Truth, we will have to spend a little bit of time discussing the various semantic layers of the term *Satya* (Truth). It is important to underline that in the terminology of religious texts this expression does not only

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[5] In my understading, the different periods of Hinduism in this case are the Vedic religions, Brahmanism and modern Hinduism.

[6] *Bhagavad Gita* is an old Sanskrit epic text of 700 verses that is part of the epic *Mahabharata*.

[7] The legal treatise *Laws of Manu* is one of the most important legal codes of India, which in its actual form is dated from between 200 BC and 200 AD. The treatise should be seen as a complete collection of rules to be followed in life. For that reason, besides its strictly legal part, the *Laws of Manu* also includes principles of theology, metaphysics, morality, economy, politics and even of philosophy.

denote veracity, but can have the meaning of reality, existing, real, right.[8]

Even the root of the expression, *sat*, has got a primary meaning (existent) and countless secondary meanings: constant, true, wise, reality existing by itself. In Hindu religious tradition, the expression of sat – in the most important and profound sense – denotes Absolute Existence, Absolute Truth, i.e. God.[9] This metaphysical and transcendental perception of the truth in fact calls our attention to the transitory character of untruth and at the same time to the durable and eternal nature of the Absolute Truth[10]. Thus however, the expression Satya can be considered the source of universal and eternal values such as truth, fairness and justice[11]. When we are talking about truth, we refer to true knowledge and true attainment, fairness can be found in the field of administration, and justice is relevant in the sphere of social relations and connections. As it can be deduced, the general use of the expression Satya in a strictly epistemological sense only covers a small part of the semantic layers of the word[12].

As it results from the above, the concept of Truth in Indian religious literature and tradition can be considered a central category, one having a key role. We find it as a divine attribute, like Dharma[13], or simply as synonym of God (Brahman), and from this perspective I do

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[8] For details, see Rhagavan N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 150–155.

[9] About this we can read in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "The Absolute Truth is the objective of devotional sacrifice, and it is indicated by the word sat […]", *Bhagavad Gita* [http://www.vedabase.com/en/bg/17/26-27]

[10] See Rhagavan N. Iyer, 1973, 149-176.

[11] Ibid. 151.

[12] Ibid. 149–176, Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence. The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1965), 16–23.

[13] As it is a polysemous expression, it is good to specify that in this context *Dharma* denotes the cosmic order.

not think we should wonder why it becomes a central concept for a profoundly religious man like Gandhi, pervading and defining his entire life. For it must be remarked that apart from the years of his youth, Gandhi can be considered a profoundly religious human being. In his autobiography, he confesses that "What I want to achieve - what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years - is self-realisation, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha"[14].

In another letter, he acknowledges that religion can be found at the basis of all his actions, which confirms the fact that for the Mahatma, religion constitutes an important and decisive factor, something that is quite natural in 19th century India. Yet this faith was not restricted solely to following Hindu religious traditions. As it is widely known, Gandhi was very well familiar with the great religions of his time. The philosopher Bhikhu Parekh affirms that although Hinduism, Christianity and Jainism influenced him equally profoundly, his religious thinking was capable to synthesise, becoming an original creed based on his belief in God[15]. Even Mahatma admits that his own religion does not only make him capable of absorbing everything that is good in great religions, but obliges him to do so.

Influenced by all these religious traditions, Gandhi arrives at the conclusion that truth cannot be considered a simple value or moral category, but should rather be understood just like God. "My religion is based on truth and non-violence. Truth is my God. Non-violence is the

[14] Móhandász Karamcsand Gándhí, *Önéletrajz, avagy kíséreleteim az Igazsággal* (Budapest: Etalon kiadó, 2009), 8.
[15] Bikhu Parekh, *Gandhi (Past Masters Series)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 26.

means of realising Him."[16] All these testimonies made by Mahatma leave us to understand that in Gandhi's early thinking the concept of Truth is conceived as one of God's attributes/properties and at the same time they also denote the fact that the concept of God enjoys a logical priority over Truth, because Truth in fact describes, or in other words, characterises God. (We have to presuppose that God exists in order to be able to talk about truth as one of His properties).

Still, a few years later, Gandhi realises that it is much more correct to say that "Truth is God", rather than sustain that "God is Truth". About this moment of elucidation, he writes:

> "I would say with those who say God is Love, God is Love. But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be Love, God is Truth, above all. If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, I have come to the conclusion that, for myself, God is Truth. But two years ago, I went a step further and said that Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz., that God is Truth and Truth is God. And I came to the conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth which began nearly fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to Truth was through love. But I also found that love has many meanings in the English language at least and that human love in the sense of passion could become a degrading thing also. I found too that love in the sense of ahimsa had only a limited number of votaries in the world. But I never found a double meaning in connection with truth and not even atheists had demurred to the necessity or power of truth. But, in their passion for discovering

[16] Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Presidential Address at Kathiawar Political Conference. In. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (vol. 1–98), vol. 30 (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1968), 61–62.

> truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God – from their own point of view, rightly. And it was because of this reasoning that I saw that, rather than say that God is Truth, I should say that Truth is God."[17]

This reformulation of the definition *(Truth is God)* does not only reflect his own position much better, but also refers to the fact that in Gandhi's thinking the concept of God is in fact a possible denomination of Truth, and Truth cannot be considered an attribute, a quality of God. Truth and God (*Satya* and *Sat*) are in fact two denominations of the same thing; they are synonyms of the same notion. At the same time, this reformulation of the original definition suggests us that for Gandhi God means an impersonal and indeterminable entity, a Being without attributes that cannot be described with the help of various properties. He is in fact the anonymous and unknown Being, a cosmic force penetrating the existing world, and all its creatures/beings.

On the other hand, – although I haven't found a concrete reference to that in the works of Gandhi so far – I tend to believe that this division of Truth made by him possibly had the most practical reasons, too. Most likely, the Mahatma must have realised that the key for the success of his announced *satyagraha*[18] and consequently for the liberation of India, is the unity of all the people living in India, irrespective of their religions. And in order to gain the Muslims for this noble cause, the whole movement of independence had to be organised not around certain Hindu traditions, but rather around possibly a most neutral concept like the Truth (*Satya*). Some kind of a reference to that

[17] Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, 'Nature of God', in *Young India*, 31-12-1931, 427–428.

[18] The word *satyagraha* is an expression created by Gandhi himself to describe in a proprer way his method of non-violent resistance.

can be found in one of his reflections in which he speaks about the fact that if the acceptance of the existence of God is not possible for some people (Gandhi alluding at atheists), the existence of Truth cannot be denied by anybody, whether a believing person or not. The negation of the Truth means giving up the spiritual and moral development of mankind. The argument formulated by Mahatma sounds like this: "It is difficult to define God. The definition of truth is enshrined in everyone's heart. Whatever you believe at present to be true is truth and that is your God." [19]

In another letter, addressed to an acquaintance, P. G. Mathew, Gandhi argues why in the statement "God is Truth" truth should not be understood as an attribute of God. The sense of this enunciation is exactly that Truth in itself is God, because in Sanskrit the term truth translates into *sat*, and this *sat* has also got another meaning, precisely designating existence, therefore it can be ascertained that truth is part of existence. However, at the same time God is the only existing one, and apart from Him, nothing exists. Thus, if we, people, strive to relate to Truth as faithfully and as devoutly as we can, we will get closer and closer to God. Consequently, in fact the measure of our existence is given by the degree we live our lives under the auspices of truth.[20]

As it can be observed from the above, in the case of Gandhi the concept of Truth – besides its ethic dimension – is also enriched by an

[19] Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Letter to Prabhudas Gandhi. In *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (vol. 1–98), vol. 56, (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1973), 240–241.

[20] The original text: "In 'God is Truth', is certainly does not mean 'equal to' nor does it merely mean, 'is truthful'. Truth is not a mere attribute of God, but He is That. He is nothing if He is not That. Truth in Sanskrit means *Sat. Sat* means *Is.* Therefore, Truth is implied in *Is.* God is, nothing else is. Therefore, the more truthful we are, the nearer we are to God. We *are* only to the extent that we are truthful." Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Letter to P. G. Mathew. In *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (vol. 1–98), vol. 56, (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1973), 128.

ontological dimension, it gains a new semantic in the sense that Truth precisely denotes Existence, i.e. the totality of the existing beings, including those that we are aware of, but also the ones that we are not aware of. In the Gandhian conception Truth acquires a transcendental meaning and takes over the role of the Divine Being. Due to the concept based on the Absolute Truth, Gandhi considered that human society is based on S*atya* (Truth) and Man is nothing else but a tireless seeker of this Truth. From this perspective, Man can consider himself a moral being only insofar as he is constantly seeking Truth, the latter being considered the substratum of morality, which cannot be reduced to the articulated/spoken/uttered truth or to abstaining from falsehood. Our whole existence must be subordinated to Truth at all cost. And abstract Truth will only gain value when it is embodied in human beings and it becomes true that we are ready to accept even death in the name of Truth – affirms Gandhi.

As we have seen, Gandhi's concept of God is an abstract one; God in his view is considered the Supreme Being, which transcends the entire universe. Yet this fact does not mean that he considers those religions or traditions that pray to a personified God inferior, or that he would not recognise as equally important and legitimate those religious pretensions or necessities, which feeling the need of physical contact with the Supreme Being, incarnate it or embody it.

By this concept, Gandhi's position is very close to those expressed by the two schools of the *Monotheistic Vedanta* philosophical system[21]:

[21] This notion can be translated as "the end of the Vedas" in the sense of conclusions, the essence of the Vedas. In a first stage the notion was a synonym of the Upanishads, but in time it became the designation of an important and influential philosophical tradition. Today, by this notion we understand one of the six orthodox philosophical schools. This school is based on the teachings of the Upanishads. Given the fact that these text interpretations were carried out in different eras, several hundreds of years

the *Dvaita* School[22] and the *Vishishtadvaita* School[23], even if he declared that he was the follower of the *Advaita* School[24], which belongs to another philosophical system, called *Non-dualist Vedanta*. His affiliation to the Advaita doctrine is testified directly and proven indirectly by Gandhi himself. In an article written for *Young India*, Gandhi declared that he was a follower of the Advaita School, saying that he believes the doctrines of this school.[25] Another proof of his

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between them, the relationship between the *atman* and the *Brahman*, between the individual soul and the Universal Supreme Spirit, the Supreme Self changes considerably. Over time three great and important schools appeared, the *advaita* current (monist) linked to tha name of Sankara, the one connected to Ramanuja and called *vishishtadvaita* (theist), and a dualist current developed by Madhva and named *dvaita* (dualist).

[22] The founder of the *dvaita* school is Madhva. According to his teachings there are fundamental qualitative differences between the *atman* and the *Brahman*. He denies the fact that only the immaterial can be eternal and that all things are temporary, affirming that the existence of something cannot be questioned solely for the simple reason of that something being in a permanent process of changing. As a consequence, there are two realities, of which the godly reality, that of Brahman is independent, while the reality of beings and matter is a distinct one, but which totally depend on the omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient *Brahman.* The individual soul (*atman*) is the prisoner of the material world because of its karma, and the price for its liberation is its total devotion to God (*bhakti*).

[23] The *vishishtadvaita* current is linked to the name of Ramanuja, the one that propagated the philosophy of qualified monism. Just like in the case of the *dvaita* school, Ramanuja affirms that between the *Brahman* and the *atman* there is a major qualitative difference, but unlike Madha, who asserts that there are major differences between the individual souls in what their capacities for salvation are concerned, Ramanuja considers that the individual souls are universally identical from the point of view of the quality of their salvation.

[24] The (monist) *advaita* school was established by Sankara. According to his teachings, the individual soul (*atman*), at the moment when it is capable of liberating from the cycle of life and death/ the cycle of rebirths and attains the *moksha* (the state of liberation of the soul from the sufferings of rebirths), is reunited with *Brahman*, which is a moment when it is discharged of all sins and earthly suffering.

[25] The original text: "I believe in *advaita*, I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives." Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Not even a half-mast. In

affiliation to this school can be observed when he speaks about the unity of mankind and about the single individual soul (*atman*), saying that he has a profound belief in the absolute unity of God, and consequently also in the unity of mankind.[26] The relationship between *Brahman-atman* is described by a comparison with sunrays, which although originate from the same source, seem to be many and different due to refraction. It is the same with the individual soul, which although is derived from one and the same Brahman, every *atman* may seem many and different, due to the human bodies that they put on.

If we accept the unity between the *atman* and the *Brahman* as the sole reality existing in itself, we can say that the external world loses its right to exist; consequently, this external world cannot be anything else but a perceptible image of *Brahman.* Therefore, we can say that there is a *Brahman* as a reality existing in itself; and there is a visible aspect of the *Brahman*, or the empirical reality, for we cannot affirm about the perceptible, empirical reality that it would inexistent or illusory. It cannot be considered illusory, because we are dealing with collective experience, the collective consciousness of the individuals. According to the teachings of Sankara, even human devotion/attachment toward

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The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (vol. 1–98), vol. 29, (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1968), 408.

[26] Gandhi talks about these countless times in various writings. For example: "I believe in the absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source." Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, All About the Fast. In *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (vol. 1–98), vol. 29 (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1968), 209–210. "God is certainly One. He has no second. He is unfathomable, unknowable and unknown to the vast majority of mankind." Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, God is One. In *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (vol. 1–98), vol. 29 (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1968), 188.

the *samsara*[27] is due to the non-recognition/non-identification of these two levels of reality. Sankara sustains that there is a *Nirguna Brahman*, respectively a *Saguna Brahman*. If the first of the two is the Supreme Soul, the omniscient and omnipotent Divine Being, the one without attributes, the second one is the personified God, the one with the properties, capable to manifest in an anthropomorphic form, the *Trimurti*[28], about which we can declare what it is not. And if we accept the existence of these two realities, we in fact make an important step towards accepting the existence of two layers of truth. For in order to decide about something whether it is veridical or false, one must inevitably take into account the sphere of reality in question – sustains Sankara. The enunciation that the empirical world exists can indeed be considered veridical if we make that statement in relation with the world of dreams and hallucinations as a point of reference, but the same statement is false when we choose the Supreme Being, the Supreme Soul as our point of reference. All this mean, however, that we are dealing with two types of truths: an inferior level truth (the relative truth) and a superior level truth (the absolute truth). If we refer to the inferior level of the truth, then *Brahman* can be interpreted as *Isvara*[29], and the empirical world can be understood as the result of the process of creation of *Isvara.* And if the reference is made to the superior level

[27] *Samsara* is an important element of the *karma* theory, which describes the potentially endless cycle of rebirths and suffering.
[28] *Trimurti* means "three forms", in fact the expression to designate the Hindu trinity, the "denomination of the trinity" of *Brahma* (the Creator), *Vishnu* (the Preserver) and *Shiva* (the Destroyer/Regenerator). The appearance of the Trinity can be linked to the time of the formation of Hinduism and its early depictions, descriptions do not denote three different gods but rather represent the three outward forms of the one Absolute God (*Brahman*).
[29] Sankara calls Saguna Brahman Isvara.

of the truth, then the sole existing reality is *Brahman,* while *Isvara* and the world created by him are only apparent, illusory.[30]

A follower of Sankara, Gandhi draws the attention in his philosophy to the fact that a distinction has to be made between the relative truth and the Absolute Truth. To illustrate the difference between the two truths, Mahatma uses the example of the elephant and the seven blind men that try to make an idea about the animal by touching and fingering its body parts. Gandhi thinks that the truth is just like the mental image of the elephant in the minds of the seven-blind people: if the reference is made to the empirical knowledge obtained by touching the elephant, then each blind man is right, yet these individual truths become false through the prism of the other six. The seven blind men are only in the possession of partial truths, while the truth itself is beyond them. This is exactly why we find cases when certain observations may seem true for some people and false for others.

If we take the above analogy and try to adapt it to the Absolute Truth and the relative truth, then the elephant is to be understood as the Absolute Truth and its images created by the seven-blind people symbolise the relative truth. In one of his writings, Gandhi says:

> "Beyond these limited truths, however, there is one absolute Truth which is total and all embracing. But it is indescribable, because it is God. Or say, rather, God is Truth. All else is unreal and false. Other things, therefore, can be true only in a relative sense. He, therefore, who understands truth, follows nothing but truth in thought, speech and action, comes to know God and

[30] Klostermaier, Kalus K, *Bevezetés a hinduizmusba* (Budapest: Akkord Kiadó, 2001) 138–148 and Zimmer, Heinrich, *Filozofiile Indiei* [*Philosophies of India*] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997), 283–295.

> gains the seer's vision of the past, the present and the future. He attains moksha though still encased in the physical frame."[31]

If in the case of relative truths veridicality or falsity cannot be pronounced definitely, the Absolute Truth is in fact the ultimate, unknowable reality. The majority of people do not possess the capacities and aptitudes necessary to observe or recognise the Absolute Truth, or God, in other words. Still, in spite of all these, in harmony with Hindu tradition, Gandhi permanently underlines the need to constantly keep making efforts to detect and understand the Absolute Truth.

The importance of differentiation between the Absolute Truth and the relative one resides in the fact that by it Gandhi can call the attention on the various processes going on within all of us during our experiences with truth: self-control and the desire to change for the better, the measuring of the achieved results, which infer the recognition and the analysis of our mistakes, so that the conclusions can be used in the pursuit of the Absolute Truth. All these contemplations are described by the Mahatma in his autobiography in the following way:

> "Far be it from me to claim any degree of perfection for these experiments. I claim for them nothing more than does a scientist who, though he conducts his experiments with the utmost accuracy, forethought and minuteness, never claims any finality about his con-clusions, but keeps an open mind regarding them. I have gone through deep self-introspection, searched myself through and through, and examined and analysed every psychological situation. Yet I am far from claiming any finality or infallibility about my conclusions. One claim I do indeed

[31] Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, What is Truth? In *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (vol. 1–98), vol. 25 (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1968), 136.

> make and it is this. For me they appear to be absolutely correct, and seem for the time being to be final. For if they were not, I should base no action on them. But at every step I have carried out the process of acceptance or rejection and acted accordingly. And so long as my acts satisfy my reason and my heart, I must firmly adhere to my original conclusions." [32]

In fact by this quote I reached the point where the connection can be made between Gandhi's conception on truth and his acts, respectively its consequences, in other words with Gandhi's political and social activity, as in conformity with the above we can establish that all of his actions are based on a relative truth, without giving the impression for a single moment that he would be having the knowledge of the Absolute Truth. And among others this is also due to the fact that the Mahatma does not restrict the "sphere of action" of the truth to speaking only (telling the truth, abstaining from the untruth), but also assigns a special significance to truth in human thinking and action. It is not enough if our thinking is based on the truth. This truth must also be reflected and expressed by every social or political manifestation – affirms Gandhi. Society, just like the entire universe, must be based on the Absolute Truth, which can only be achieved if the members of society, i.e. the individuals will become seekers and worshippers of truth, and live their lives in the spirit of truth. Only the truth is capable of transforming individuals into groups and society. This is exactly the reason why during his entire "career" as a leader of the independence movement and "politician" of the Indian National Congress, Gandhi propagated the necessity of credible parties and an honest, authentic

[32] Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story Of My Experiments With Truth* In *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (vol. 1–98), vol. 44, (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1968), 90–91.

programme, veridic for the achievement of the supreme goal, the liberation of India and the development of the country. He kept exhorting people to participate only in programmes and projects, with which they could identify completely, ones that they trust to the maximum, because this was the only way to stay loyal with the aim of the programme or its host institution. If participation, involvement had represented a means of subsistence or had been done for reasons related to subordination, in other words, because of fear, and not out of conviction, then this could not have been considered total, true involvement or participation. He was firmly convinced that the safeguard for the ascension of India is unconditional trust in the old mantra of *satyam-eva jayate*[33].

According to Gandhian philosophy, contradictory and incompatible relative truths, as well as the certitude of the parties involved, that they are aware and in the possession of the absolute truth, are at the basis of social injustice and political conflicts. In order for human society to remain on the path of truth it is essential that people live an active and courageous life, subordinated to the truth. Human greatness can be expressed through the modality by which people dare to oppose the truthlessness and hypocrisy accepted by the society. Gandhi repeated insistently and countless times that something does not become true simply because it is old. A thought, a word, a deed can only be veridic if that thought, word or deed is expressed or done in the name of the Absolute Truth. And if we accept that the entire life of Gandhi passed in the spirit of permanent and tireless search for Truth, we will immediately understand where the Mahatma took the courage from to pronounce in certain cases things that were in contradiction with the teachings of several thousand years of Hinduism, like e.g. in the case of

[33] "Truth alone triumphs", Mundaka Upanishad 3.1.6.

the pariah, the equality in rights of women, underage marriages or the campaigns against the injustices of the caste system. Due to this conviction he had the courage to declare that if the untouchability of the *harijans* could be a part of the Hindu religion, then it could not be else but "*a rotten part or an excrescence*".[34]

The fact that all his deeds and actions were based on Truth, almost instantly conferred success to his. Due to this success he managed in a very short time to make his constructive programme not only well-known, but also accepted by the large masses. Gandhi was on the one hand aware of the fact that religion was very strongly present in the everyday life of each and every Hindu, and on the other hand he knew very well how to address and manage the concepts and the language by which his messages could be understood by even the profoundly religious, yet half illiterate masses. This, completed with his own profound religiousness, was sufficient to convince millions of people to join his ideas and the Gandhian objectives. The fact that in the life of the Mahatma – almost uniquely – there is no contradiction or divergence between theory and practice, the fact that his everyday discourse, his deeds and actions – and as a consequence, all his life – are nothing but the expression of his thoughts in words and deeds, their manifestation in time and space, their exteriorisation, have significantly contributed to the success of the Bapu.

The ideas of Gandhi, his perception of the Truth and his "teachings" about this very complex reality that we are living in, are not unique. We find them at other Western philosophers, in the Western cultural hemisphere. What in my view is unique is in fact that way of

[34] Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (vol. 1–98), vol. 44 (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1968), 192.

living that characterises the entire existence of the great Gandhi. And when I say way of living, I am thinking of all those complex and permanent "experiments" that he carried out during his entire lifetime and which only had a single aim: getting to know the Truth, or in other words, the Divinity, as profoundly and as closely as possible. Another unique aspect of his life consists in the manner in which he lived his life: a poor man, without fortune, living in and for the community (something that was neither usual, nor generally accepted in the India of Gandhi's time), wandering all over India, talking to, and listening to the problems and desires of every human being he met, without taking into account their religion, caste, social status, ethnicity or gender. At the same time, he was an individual without secrets before anyone, neither before his friends, but nor before those who considered him an enemy. All his actions meant to bring about the independence and the sovereignty of India were organised with utmost sincerity and openness, were announced publicly, and none could be conceived as a plot or conspiracy against the colonial power or anybody representing the British Kingdom.

These characteristics, these rare human features, as well as the impact of his thinking and his deeds on Indian society and the entire world, make him unique in a way and provide him as an example to be followed, making him become one of the personalities that positively marked the 20th century.

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About the Author:

Dezső Szenkovics (born in 1975 at Szováta/Sovata, Romania) is an Assistant Professor at the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Faculty of Sciences and Arts from Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca/Klausenburg, Department of International Relations and European Studies.

He is the author of a book written in Hungarian and entitled *Móhandász Karamcsand Gándhí filozófiai gondolkodásának központi fogalmai* [*The Core Concepts of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's Philosophical Thought*]. The book is a revised and improved version of his PhD thesis and was published in 2014.

His fields of interest include: Asian religions, the Gandhian political philosophy, economic thought and non-violence theory, security studies and geopolitics.

He is external member of the public body of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, member of several professional organizations and NGO-s.

He is married and father of three boys, Dávid (15), Bence (13) and Tamás (10). His hobbies are travelling, reading and football.

E-mail: szenkovics@kv.sapientia.ro

Rāma as Kṛṣṇa, Rāma-Kṛṣṇa

R.K.K. RAJARAJAN
School of Tamil, Indian Languages and Rural Arts,
Gandhigram Rural University, Gandhigram

Abstract: How many are the Rāmas? *Rāmaṉ ettaṉai Rāmaṉaṭi* is a popular movie song. Kṛṣṇa is here (Kurukṣetra), yonder (Bṛndāvana) and everywhere (minds of devotees). The two are the principal characters in the hymns of the Āḻvārs that lead to meditate on Kṛṣṇaism and Rāmaism. They are one with the *avatāra*s of Viṣṇu, and at the same time on either polarity from the feminine point of view; Rāma is *ekapatnīvratin* and Kṛṣṇa's *anekapatnī*. The Āḻvārs, cf. hymns bearing on *divyadeśa*-Pullāṇi (Tirumaṅkai in *Periya Tirumoḻi*), and some north Indian folk songs view Rāma, the beloved of several lovesick maidens. The article proposes to discover Rāma in the Bṛndāvana (cf. Fig. 5), not Aśoka-*vanaṃ*. In either case, philosophically the several lively women are *paśu*s committed to *ātmanivedana* due to *virahabhakti*.

Keywords: Kṛṣṇa; Rāma; Rāma-Kṛṣṇa; the *Rāmāyaṇa*s; Āḻvārs; love (*paśu*); *viraha*.

Matsya Kūrmo Varāhaś-cha Nārasiṃhaś-cha Vāmana[ḥ]
Rāma Rāmaś-cha Rāmai-cha Buddhaḥ Kalkī-cha te daśa[n][1]

[1] Cf. ARE 1922, no. 663; SII, XII, no. 116. K.R. Srinivasan (1964), K.V. Soundararajan (1981) and H. Sarkar (1978) are the trio that published scientific reports on the cave temples of South India. The Pāṇḍyan caves are reported in M.W. Mester and M.A. Dhaky (1999) by K.V. Soundararajan. V. Latha (2005) of

This is an inscription in the *Ādi-Varāha-mahā*-Viṣṇu-*gṛha* at Māmallapuram that accommodates a cult image of Bhūvarāhamūrti in its rock-cut cella[2]. The ten incarnations of Viṣṇu listed in the cited inscriptions are *Matsya*, *Kūrma*, *Varāha*, Nṛsiṃha, Vāmana, the three Rāmas, the Buddha[3] and Kalki. Kṛṣṇa is replaced by the Buddha in this 7th century record. The visual presentation of the idea may be found in the Pāpanāseśvara temple of the early Eastern Cālukyas at Alampūr in which the ceiling presents the *daśavatāra*s in a *maṇḍala* form with Buddha in the center[4]. Among the ten, three are zoomorphic; one is theriomorphic, one dwarf and the other five anthropomorphic. Interestingly, three *avatāra*s take the name 'Rāma', belonging to different *varṇa*s. The senior among them is Paraśurāma (Rāma with the battle-axe) who belonged to the family of Bhārgavas (forerunner Bhṛgu) on father's side and Kauśikas on mother's side (forerunner Viśvāmitra). He annihilated the race of *kṣatriya*s twenty-one times and was finally overcome by *kṣatriya*-

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the Tamil University has published her doctoral thesis on cave temples of the Pāṇḍyas with special reference to the Putukkōṭṭai region.

[2] This image is reported in Champakalakshmi (2001: fig. p. 80). For a recent review of the Pallava-Pāṇḍya rock-cut temples see R.K.K. Rajarajan (2015a: 101-26, 2015b: 164-85).

[3] The Āḻvārs and Nāyanmār talk low of the Buddhists and Jains, and do not accord recognition to these heterodoxical sects (Kalidos 2006: II, 61). The Jains are called Camaṇar (*Tēvāram* 3.368.11), Tērar (*ibid*. 1.2.10) and Amaṇar/Digambara (*ibid*. 1.113.10). The Buddhists are known as Puttar/Buddha (*ibid*. 1.1.10), Cākkiyar/Śākya (*ibid*. 1.2.10) and Pōyitar/Bodhi (*ibid*. 1.184.10). For the false way of life lead by the Buddhists see the *Mattavilāsa* (Barnett, 1929-30) of Mahendravarman Pallava (610-30 CE). The *Cilappatikāram*, *Maṇimēkalai* (c. 150-500 CE) and other Tamil epcis were inspired by Buddhist-Jain ideologies (Rajarajan 2016: chap. V).

[4] For a brief enumeration see Kalidos 2006: I, 189-91).

Dāśarathi-Rāma. The third or the middle one is Balarāma or Balabhadra, elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, and an *avatāra* of Ādiśeṣa[5]. He belonged to the Candravaṃśa beginning with Yadu and was brought up by *yādava*-Nandagopāla.

Rāma belongs to the Sūryavaṃśa, elaborated in the magnum opus of sage-Vālmīki, and the nutshell presented in *mahākavi*-Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* (4th century CE). These are the basic sources which proliferated in course of time in several Asian languages, including Persian and Chinese.

Each of the three-Rāmas is noted for their characteristic ethos. Paraśurāma was all the time furious [*ugrāṃśa*], killing the *kṣatriya*s[6] employing the *paraśu* (battle-axe), and carrying the Viṣṇu-*dhanus* that finally reached the hand of *dhanurdhara*-Rāma. Balarāma was equally irate. Dāśarathi was the most compassionate, an ideal *puruṣa*, *ekapatni-vratin* (wedded to one-wife) and *maryādā puruṣottam* (exemplar of social propriety), while Kṛṣṇa is *līlā-puruṣottam* (exemplar of playfulness)[7]. Unlike Rāma, Kṛṣṇa was the opposite gifted with several thousands of consorts' chief among them being Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā[8]. The Āḻvārs make a note of the several thousands of the wives of Kṛṣṇa that were at least

[5] For a visual representation of the three-Rāmas in a row see Kalidos: 1989: pl. 43. This work has recorded forty-seven *daśāvatāra* panels (Kalidos 1989: 338-40).
[6] For visuals see Boner et al. 1994: fig. 581, Fischer et al. 1994: fig. p. 10.
[7] This idea is elaborated in Lutgendorf (1992: 217-34).
[8] Mythologies in verncular would add several more spouses that are Nappiṉṉai and Āṇṭāḷ also Nīlādevī (Tamil), Rādha (*Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva) and Mīrabāī (Rājasthāna).

16,000[9]. Periyāḻvār and Āṇṭāḷ (8th century CE) are unanimous in saying the spouses of Kṛṣṇa were countless[10]; cf.

Pallāyiram peruntēvimār "several thousands of great mistresses" (Periyāḻvār *Tirumoḻi* 4.1.6)

Patiṉāyiṟamavar Tēvimār "the mistresses are 16,000" (*ibidem* 4.9.4, *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* 7.9)

Patiṉāyiramavar Tēvimār "the mistresses are 16,000" (*Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* 7.9)

Rāma was the opposite of Kṛṣṇa, and his beloved was Sītā (*Nācciyār Tirumoḻi* 2.10 says the Lord tasted the mouth-nectar [*vāy amutam*] of Sītā) or Maithilī (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 4.1.8). The same was the case with Lakṣmaṇa who never thought of women other than his wife Ūrmilā, the sister of Sītā. When lascivious women tried to lure Rāma or Lakṣmaṇa, the latter was furious and cut the nose, ears and breasts of these demonic creatures, e.g. Śūrpaṇakhā and Ayomukhī[11]. This is to suggest the main current of the *Rāmāyaṇa* considers Dāśarathi-Rāma (hereinafter DR) as *ekapatni-vratin*. However, in some folk versions DR is treated dallying with several women.

Recently, I happened to go through an unpublished MS of Raju Kalidos on the '*Rāmāyaṇa* in Literature and Art' in which some Jain versions of the *Rāmakathā* are cited. These works say several women fell in love with DR that he reciprocated. The summary of these ideas is collated hereunder. The noteworthy feature of the

[9] It is a matter for stage-joke if Kṛṣṇa visits a mistress one day each, it will take him five more years to return to the same mistress for the second time.

[10] These citations are from R.K.K. Rajarajan, R.K. Parthiban & Raju Kalidos 2017; see also the same authors 2017a.

[11] See R.K.K. Rajarajan 2015: 9; see also the same author 2000: 783-97.

Jain-*Rāmāyaṇa* is that the characters are either Jain or become Jain monks and nuns eventually; cf. the father of Kōvalaṉ, hero of *Cilappatikāram* embraces the Ājīvika order. The Jain works include *Padma Purāṇa* of Ravisena (7th century CE), the two *Uttara Purāṇa*s of Guṇabhadrācārya (8th century CE), and Hemacandra (12th century CE) and so on. A number of *kathākośa* (mono-acting and recital) were composed by the Jain scholars. Noted among them are *Satruñjayamāhātmya* of Dhaneśvara (12th century CE), and *Rāmāyaṇa-kathānaka* and *Sītākathānaka* of Harisena (10th century CE). Apart from these works the *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Adbhuta-Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Ānanda-Rāmāyaṇa* were recast by Jain authors (cf. Rajarajan 2014: 3-4).

The Jain-*Rāmāyaṇa*s are specific in telling Sītā was Janaka's daughter, not an adopted one. Janaka sent the *Rudradhanus* to Daśarathā's palace to be broken by Rāma. It was Rāvaṇa, not Mārīca, who transformed himself as a gazelle. Khara was Śūrpaṇakhā's husband. Śūrpaṇakhā was not mutilated but humiliated. According to the Jain *Cavuṇḍarāya Purāṇa*, Sītā was Maṇḍoharī's daughter. Mantharā is omitted. Rāvaṇa kidnapped Sītā in an aerial car in the guise of Rāma. *Agnipraveśa* of Sītā is omitted. Sītā at last embraced asceticism. Hemachandra's work is in praise of Rāvaṇa[12] and his brothers who by *yoga* (penance) had attained supernatural powers. Dealing with the *Sītāvanavāsa* (Excommunication of Sītā) episode, it is said Sītā's rival queens (*infra*) insisted on her drawing Rāvaṇa's figure. Sītā did so but drew only the feet of Rāvaṇa saying she never saw the face. The other queens completed the figure and spread rumor among the people to

[12] For an elaborate account, see Zvelebil 1988: 126-134.

the effect that Sītā had immoral relations with Rāvaṇa. It was this public opinion which forced Rāma to banish Sītā.

The main currents of the Rāma-story, presented in the *Uttara-Puraṇa*, read as follows. Daśarathā was the King of Banaras. Rāvaṇa was the father of Sītā. Mārīca took the baby, Sītā, in a box and buried it in Mithilā. Janaka invited Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to defend a sacrifice. Rāma and Sītā went to Citrakūṭa on a pleasure trip. Rāvaṇa came disguised as Rāma and requested Sītā to step into a *palaki* (*puṣpaka-vimāna* "aerial car"). He did not touch Sītā (cf. Rajarajan 2000) as that would be the end of his levitation art. Daśarathā informed Rāma of Sītā's abduction in a dream. Rāma recovered Sītā with the help of Hanumat and others. It is added Lakṣmaṇa had 16,000 queens and Rāma 8,000 in marked contrast to the original *Rāmāyaṇa* in which Rāma is *ekapatnivratin*[13]. Sītā had eight sons.

Arvind Kumar (pp. 6-9) has proved with some evidences DR was indulging with several women. In support of his thesis he cites folk songs popular among a group of people called Sanatanists, which is a pointer of DR's indiscriminate indulgences with women. The verse runs as follows:

> "My lover is standing on the banks of Sarayu river/ Putting aside my sense of hesitation and shame, I went/ Where the elder brother of Lakṣmaṇa was standing/ He smiled sweetly, caught hold of my hand/And gave a pull at the cloth I was

[13] Cf. Kumar 1975: 36 and Mangaram 2009: pp. 75-78, 80-86, 98-104.

wearing/ He took me behind a bush of the *jhau* trees and started indulging in the sex act[14]".

It is not clear to which timescale the above cited folk songs belong. From a reading of the hymns of Āḻvārs we have traced similar motifs that might suggest these are based on folk versions known to the Indian religious tradition relating to Viṣṇuism by about the 8th-9th century CE. It also confirms the Āḻvārs borrowed ideas not only from Vyāsa and Vālmīki but also the Jain authors of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Kaṇṇaḍa (cf. the Jain version dated in the 7th-8th century CE *supra*). This is precisely the aim of the present article. I would like to highlight some of the Āḻvārs' hymns in which DR is shown a replica of Kṛṣṇa in as far as his love-affair is concerned. It may be against the ethics of Vālmīki but the folk are free thinkers. They view DR in their own image that had persisted to such an extent that these folk thoughts could have an impact on the devotional cult adumbrated by the Āḻvārs.

Nandivarman̲ II Pallavamalla (731-796 CE) is said to have interacted with Vikramāditya II Western Calukya (733-45 CE)[15]. This is to naïvely suggest the inflow of religious ideas from Kāñci to Badāmī and vice versa; cf. Kadamba Mayūraśarma visiting the *ghaṭika* of Kāñci[16] and later Rāmānujācārya migrating to the court of Hoysaḷa Bhiṭṭideva. An idea not found in the earlier eleven Āḻvārs is present in Tirumaṅkai (i.e. Rāma *aur/und* Kṛṣṇa, Rāma-

[14] For an illustration from the collections of Museum Rietberg Zürich; see Rajarajan (2015c: fig. 1).

[15] The hymns of Tirumaṅkai form the whole volume IV in Rajarajan et al. 2016.

[16] Vikramāditya II conquered Kāñci, and was magnanimous enough not to confiscate the properties of Rājasiṃheśvara (Kailāsanātha) temple (ARE 1888, no. 8; EI, III, no. 48, pp. 359-60), and perhaps added his own donations.

Kṛṣṇa), which means it, is based on some folk Rāma-*kathā* or is due to Jain impact. It means the Āḻvārs took into account not only the itihāsic material but also the oral legends in circulation. Few hymns from the *Periya Tirumoḻi* are cited here in support of the thesis[17].

Several hymns of Nammāḻvār and Tirumaṅkai treat masculine personalities as young maidens aspiring to take the hand of the Lord (e.g. *Periya Tirumoḻi* 4.4.6) or unite (*kūṭu*, *puṇar* "congress") with Viṣṇu, and herald birds and natural forces (e.g. *meghadūta*) to convey their love. They are called Parāṅkuśa-nāyaki or Parakala-nāyaki/*nāyikā*[18] (virgins); cf. Āṇṭāḷ in *Tiruppāvai* and outspokenly in *Nācciyār Tirumoḻi*[19]. It is not clear whether these virgins may be treated as *devadāsi*s[20]. A *nāyikā* (*nāyaka*-Viṣṇu, 'Nāyakanāy-niṉṟa-Nantakōpan' *Tiruppāvai* 16) in desperation conveys her mental agony to DR as following (the hymn is worth citing in original format):

> Nilaiyāḷa niṉ vaṇaṅka vēṇṭāyē yākilum eṉ/ mulaiyāḷa vorunāḷ uṉṉakalattāl āḷāyē/ cilaiyāḷa marameyta tiṟalāḷā Tirumeyya/ malaiyāḷa nīyāḷa vaḷaiyāḷa māṭṭōmē

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[17] Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār is credited with the following hymnal works that form part of the 'Nālāyiram': *Tirukkuṟuntāṇṭakam* (20 hymns), *Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam* (30 hymns), *Tiruveḻukūṟṟirukkai* (long poem 40 lines), *Ciṟiya Tirumaṭal* (long poem 154 lines), *Periya Tirumaṭal* (long poem 297 lines) and *Periya Tirumoḻi* (1080 hymns).

[18] Tirumaṅkai's nickname was Parakālaṉ "unearthly Yama" (*Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam* 30, *Periya Tirumoḻi* 3.4.10, 3.9.10 cf. also *Ciṟiya* and *Periya Tirumaṭal*s). See Pauwels (2016: 1-2) makes an interesting note from the Rāma-Rasikas tradition of the sixteenth century, that Male authors taking a feminine pen name suffixing as *alī* or *sakhī* in the mythic play.

[19] For an analysis of this work from the erotic point of view see Kalidos (1997: 117-38).

[20] For a detailed study of the *devadāsī* system see Sadasivan (1993: 32-35, 195-202). This author fails to note these terminologies.

> "Lord, Thou are lifting the bow [*dhanus*] in a hand [*dhanurdhara*]; Thou are the victor that shot at the seven *śālā* trees [Kiṣkindha-*parākrama*]; Thou are the governor of the Tirumeyyam hills [a *divyadeśa* close to Putukkōṭṭai]; even if you do not like me, I wish my breasts/nipples are rubbed on Thy broad shoulder; if my will is satisfied I am not worried even if my golden bangles are lost" (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 3.6.9).

The same story is repeated in another hymn where the mother says the maiden in love with the victor over the seven trees is nude not covering her genitalia with any garment (*ibidem* 5.5.2). The maiden frankly admits the Lord, called Saundararāja (the handsome) looks at her breasts and vagina intensively (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 9.2.1). This is exactly picture in *gopīvastrapaharaṇa* theme where the milkmaids are standing below the tree that Kṛṣṇa had climbed when the *gopī*s beg for their garments. Even if one-way love the enchanting loveliness of DR was responsible for the infatuation of the maiden; *kātal-nōy* "love fever" (cf. *Tiruvāymoḻi* 2.1.9, 5.4.6). Twenty hymns in the *Periya Tirumoḻi* (9.3.1-10, 9.4.1-10) bearing on the *divyadeśa*-Pullāṇi is on this subject. Rāma in this venue is supposed to be reclining on a couch provided by the reed (Saccharum cylindricum), known as *darbha-śayana*. Enamored of the reclining Lord, the maiden is infatuated and blabbers frantically inviting Rāma for union.

Vālmīki's ethics is the girl is at fault and not Rāma. Common sense is that the man is the root-cause because he was responsible for the mental sickness of the maiden. Law is always on the woman's side, and so Rāma is the mischief-player.

Another hymn portrays the sad plight of a Parakala-*nāyaki* who is in love with DR. The mother goes on lamenting "my daughter is not behaving in the manner expected of our family lineage[21]. She is always thinking of Rāma who had destroyed Laṅkā, killed its king and routed the family of *rākṣasa*s. The love for Rāma has caused her love-sickness. My daughter's breasts (mammalian glands) are dotted with beauty spots due to lust-dirty thoughts. What did you do with her, Thou the presiding God of Iṭaventai [a *divyadeśa* in Toṇṭaināṭu]." To quote:

> Taṉkuṭi kētum takkvā niṉaiyāḷ taṭaṅ kaṭal nuṭaṅkeyil Ilaṅkai
> Vaṉkuṭi maṭaṅka vāḷamar tolaitta vārttai kēṭṭiṉpuṟum mayaṅkum
> Minkoṭi maruṅkul curuṅka mēl nēruṅki meṉmulai poṉpayat tirunta
> Eṉkoṭi yivaḷuk kenninait tiruntāy Iṭaventai entai pirānē (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 2.7.6)

Another hymn portrays the lamentation of a mother who says her daughter had gone beyond the modest limits of frailty and femininity dreaming of Rāma who erected the Setu to cross over to Laṅkā (*ibidem* 4.8.4). Interestingly, Rāma is called Māya[ṉ], an epithet applicable to Kṛṣṇa; *Ilaṅkai kaṭṭaḻitta Māyaṉ* "the Māya that thoroughly routed Laṅkā". He is the king of monkeys and holder of a handsome bow (*sundaradhanus*), *dhanurdhara*-Rāma; *kurak karacaṉ kōla villi* (*ibidem* 4.8.5).

The love-sick maiden talks to song-birds (Tamil *kuyil*, Indian cuckoo), peacocks, beetles, bees, storks, herons, and waves and

[21] It is indirectly suggested a girl born in a higher *varṇa* (maybe *brāhmaṇa*) is willing to be recruited a *devadāsi*.

clouds to tell her burning love to DR. The Lord is holding the frightening bow [*prayoga-dhanus*] in a hand that consternates enemies. She heralds the dotted little beetles to tell Rāma, holder of the bow her mind steeped in love.

> Porivariya ciṟuvaṇṭē … Ēvariveñcilaiyāṉuk keṉṉilaimai yuraiyāyē
> "Ye dotted little beetle … fly toward the Lord Rāma and tell him I am suffering due to love-sickness" (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 3.6.1)

Tirumaṅkai finally adds the result is *kātal-veḷḷam* "inundation of love" (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 3.8.8) that is an accepted *mārga* of the devotional cult, *viraha-bhakti* (bridal mysticism) that was the subject-matter for investigation of Friedhelm Hardy (1983/2014).

In several hymns Kṛṣṇa and Rāma appear alternatively as enticers of young women (e.g. *Periya Tirumoḻi* 4.3.5, 5.5.2, cf. 3.4, 3.6, 3.7). It is to suggest Tirumaṅkai does not differentiate between Rāma and Kṛṣṇa under certain circumstances, and together they make up Rāma-Kṛṣṇa. Viewed in another perspective these could have been the in-play of feminism behind the story of Rāma's indulgence with women. If Rāma could find fault with Sītā (the banishment of Sītā in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*), considered the pinnacle of chastity why not the feminist finds Rāma doing injustice to women? Scholarly debates and assessment on the personalities of Rāma and Sītā are not modern. Whether ethics or historicism; what we deliberate in seminar halls and lectures today were discussed by scholars writing *purāṇa*s time and again following Vyāsa and Vālmīki.

Left to me a Rāma-*bhāgavata* may not find fault with DR because He is *uttamottama* (cf. 'uttamarkaṭ-uttamar' *Periya*

Tirumoḻi 3.10.10; the *divyadeśa*-Vaṇpuruṭottamam *ibidem* 4.2.1-10 in the Kāviri delta gives the meaning "the enchanting holy land of the Lord Puruṣottama") in a retrospective analysis (see Rajarajan 2015: note 11). A king taking several queens or dancing girls as concubines is not unethical in Indian tradition as one may cite examples from Bindusāra of the Mauryas (3rd century BCE) going through our medieval great emperors such as Rājarāja I (985-1014 CE) to our modern politicians. It was on the issue of a queen in the history of the Tudors in Great Britain under Henry VIII that the schism in Christianity took place; Catholicism vs. Anglicanism, cf. Bloody Mary.

Vulgarization of mythical characters during later times was a common trend in religious history. I am told the black magic in Europe includes the artificial phallus of Jesus of Nazareth and vagina of Virgin Mary that are tantalized in ritual performances. The same is the case with Bodhidharma[22], a Buddhist saint in Chinese (Ch'an) and Japanese (Zen) calendar-art basing on which no character-judgment on the personality of a noble-saint could be passed. Therefore, it is no wonder if the uneducated and illiterate folk think of Rāma from their own standard, and these are repeated by classical scholars, e.g. Tirumaṅkai, just to inform the society such an idea also prevails.

Another issue is that if the Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas treat the Jain with repugnance (see note 3), and employ acrimonious words; e.g. *camaṇ-kuṇṭar* "Jain ruffians" (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 2.6.5, *Tēvāram* 1.103.10) will the insulted and infuriated party remain quite?

[22] For more information on monks and Bodhidharma, see Rajarajan 2015d and McFarland 1986.

Naturally they resort to the war-path and throw slander on Rāma treating him a libidinous personality. It is mutual brawling in religious history and continues to this day in India or Israel-Palestine, including Syria. However, these are debates, *tarka-śāstra* and no holy war of the Crusades type is known to Indian history. Indian believes in amicable settlement of problem and not through "war".

Let it be concluded saying the Rāma-s are countless; Rāghava, Raghu-Rāma, Dāśarathi-Rāma, Śrī-Rāma, Ananta-Rāma (the Endless Rāma), and Rāma-Kṛṣṇa. John Brockington's (1998) work on this subject is indeed an encyclopaedic contribution. It will have to be verified whether this authority has anything to say on Rāma-Kṛṣṇa (not found in index). It is not known how many millions of Indians took the name Rāma and Kṛṣṇa from the ithihāsic time to the present day. Among the Vijayanagara emperors of the four dynasties five took names after Rāma, and five after Śrīraṅga. The latest example is that of a former Chief Minister of Tamilnāḍu, Rāmacandran [MGR], mixture of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa; I mean Rāma-*rājya* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and Viṣṇu-*dharma* told in the *Gītā*. It is to protect the peace-makers and annihilate the terror-mongers with a view to institute *sanātana-dharma*.

Visuals

1. Rāma with Sītā after coronation followed by admirers, Rājasthāni miniature (Bikaner) 1678 CE © Museum Rietberg Zürich.
2. Kṛṣṇa-Govardhadhāri with *gopī*s, Moghul miniature (in Bikaner) 1660 CE © Museum Rietberg Zürich.

The two visuals noted above are reported in *Museum Rietberg Zürich Museumsführer* ("Rietberg Zürich Museum Guide" Zürich 1998) Abb. 140-141, p. 151 (Legat Lucy Rudolph). Text on 'Indische Malerei (Indian Painting)' is by Eberhard Fischer.

Figure 1 is labeled "Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī (Vishnu mit Lakshmi)". It could as well be Rāma and Sītā after coronation. No label inscription is found on the printed MS. The main reason for identification with Rāma and Sītā (cf. Fig. 2) is that if Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī must have been followed by Bhūdevī. Canonically speaking, Śrīdevī/Lakṣmī is to the right (cf. *Tirumaṭantai Maṇmaṭantai yirupālum tikaḻa* … "Śrīdevi and Bhūdevī to appear on both sides…" *Periya Tirumoḻi* 3.10.1). The emblematic *caturbhuja* is applicable to Rāma also[23]. I may exaggerate; excluding the *cauri*-bearers all other feminine characters may represent favourites in love with Rāma.

The Museum authorities (Eberhard Fischer) have identified figure 2 with Govardhanadhāri-Kṛṣṇa. It is to be noted Kṛṣṇa is surrounded by *gopī*s alone and not *gopa*s (cf. the Māmallapuram 'Kṛṣṇa-*maṇḍapa*' relief in which *gopa*s and *gopī*s appear; Kalidos 2006: I, pl. LXV). Therefore, the miniature seems to mix Govardhanadhāri with *rāsakrīḍa* (Kṛṣṇa's dalliances with *gopī*s).

Figures 1-2 representing Rāma and Kṛṣṇa make up Rāma-Kṛṣṇa (Fig. 4) as I have conceptualized in the present article. Rāma may be Kṛṣṇa but Kṛṣṇa could not be considered Rāma because He is totally a different *puruṣa* from the most ancient to the modern movie-land.

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[23] See Kalidos 1991, fig. 3. In the cited image Rāma is *caturbhuja*, the *parahasta*s endowed with *cakra* and *śaṅkha* in *parahasta*s. The Lord seated on the shoulder of Hanumat (cf. Hanumat in Fig. 2) in *pralambapāda-mahārājalīlāsana* mode.

A stone image in the pillar section of the *kalyāṇamṇḍapa*, at Ekamranātha Temple, Kāñcīpuram finds Rāma love-making with Sītā (Fig. 3). The clue for identification is the *dhanus* that the Lord carries. The setting may pertain to the *Uttarakāṇḍa* event when the royal couple had enough time for erotic *līlā*s.

Figure 4 is important because it present a syncretistic version of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa in the mould of Harihara.

The present study traces three channels in the iconographic mould of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa resulting in Rāma-Kṛṣṇa. Originating in folk thought that is a fluid mechanism, the erotic motif in Rāma on the models inspired by Kṛṣṇa gets solidified in literature (e.g. the hymns of Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār). The process of concretization is further supported by the visuals when a rigid form is given to stray thoughts canonized in literature. The folk thoughts identified in this article, supported by the canonical mandate (the 'Nālāyiram' is the Drāviḍa-*Veda*) result in rigid religious thoughts. This rigidity is also melting as the solid snow in course of time coming down to contemporary thought imprinted in the minds of the Bhāratas, I mean the Hindus. Rāma is *ekapatnivratin* beyond thought, literature and art. None is willing to see Rāma as Kṛṣṇa. No believer in Rāmaism will accept Kṛṣṇaism as far as erotica is concerned. They represent two streams of the same religion, *yoga* and *bhoga*. Though the Indian Penal Code says the Hindu should have only one wife (the case of Muslims in the same Code is different), I may just pose a free-lance question: how many Hindus (e.g. politicians, movie land heroes and heroines or even a *rikṣāvāla* in the Mumbai red-light zone) follow this mandate assiduously. The same question could also be reversed in case of women; how many of them are

faithful to their husband as was Sītā. Rāma and Sītā are legendary figures. History (Helen and Cleopatra) may repeat but legends (Sītā and Kaṇṇaki) never repeat.

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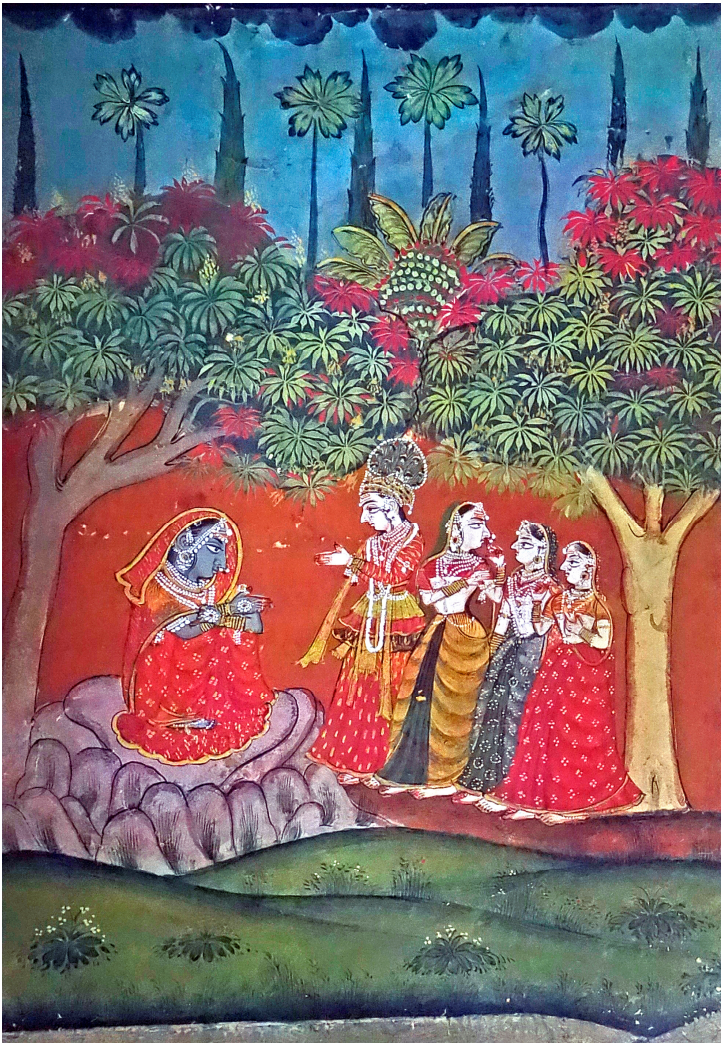
Figures

1. Rāma with Sītā after coronation followed by admirers, Rājasthāni miniature, Museum Rietberg Zürich.

2. Rāma and Sītā, Museum Rietberg Zürich

3. Rāma with Sītā, Ekamranātha Temple, Kāñcīpuram

4. Caitanya, as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, ca. 1885, Kolkatta, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O432480/chaitanya-as-rama-and-krishna-painting-unknown/



5. Rāma (Sītā in Aśoka-*vanaṃ*) or Kṛṣṇa "*gopījanapriya* (*paśu*)"
(Yaldiz et al. 1992: 96, fig. p. 97)

About the Author:

R.K.K. Rajarajan is working in Gandhigram Rural University, Gandhigram. He was in deputation for two years at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and he has worked in the Eritrean Institute of Technology, Asmara. He was an Alexander von Humboldt Post-Doctoral Fellow, in the Institut für Indische Philologie und Kunstgeschichte, Freie Universität, Berlin, Germany.

R.K.K. Rajarajan is a prolific contributor to international journals and published works from *Acta Orientalia* (Norway), *Annali* (Naples), *Berliner Indologische Studien* (Berlin), *East and West* (Rome), *Indologica Taurinensia* (Torino), *Nidān* (Durban), *Pandanus* (Prague), *Religions of South Asia* (Equinox, Sheffield), *South Asian Studies* (Oxford & IBH, Routledge) and several more in India. His works on *Samāpti-Suprabhātam – Reflections on South Indian Bhakti Tradition in Literature and Art* (with R.K. Parthiban and Raju Kalidos, 2017), *Masterpieces of Indian Literature and Art - Tears of Kaṇṇaki: Annals and Iconology of the 'Cilappatikāram'* (2016), *Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara: Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṯ Purāṇam in Letters, Design and Art* (with Jeyapriya Rajarajan 2013), *Rock-cut Model Shrines in Early Medieval Indian Art* (2012), *Studies in Art History of India* (eds. with S. GANESHRAM), and *Art of the Vijayanagara Nāyakas: Architecture and Iconography* 2 vols. (2006) are norm-setting.

Contact: rkkrajarajan@yahoo.com.

Vaṭapatraśāyī and Brahmā Interlaced: Hints from Early Cōḻa Temples

Rajukalidoss PARTHIBAN
Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad

Abstract: Vaṭapartraśayī is an iconographic form of Viṣṇu, representing the child - Kṛṣṇa (Kaṇha in Prākrit or Kaṇṇaṉ in Tamil) reposing on banyan-leaf conversing with the eternally youthful sage, Mārkaṇḍeya. Sculptural evidences of this form are traceable in the art of Tamilnāḍu since the Early Cōḻa period, early half of the 9th century CE (Desai 2013, 2016 and Gail 2014). Śeṣaśāyī finds the Lord reposing on the eternal serpent, Ananta, also known as Śeṣa, an "emblem of eternity". R.K.K. Rajarajan (2018: 14, 23) is uncertain whether Brahmā is affiliated with a child. The present article affirms Brahmā in early samples is somehow associated with of Vaṭapatraśāyī, the child-God. Brahmā originates from the lotus emanating from the umbilicus of *padmanābha*-Śeṣaśāyī. Neither Śeṣaśāyī nor Brahmā are viewed in child-form in this case. The Tamil mystics, the Āḻvārs, have bequeathed a rich literature bearing on Vaṭapatraśāyī, called Ālilaimēvumāyaṉ (the Māya pervading over the banyan leaf). Interestingly, the Child God reposing on the *āl/vaṭa* leaf even if not canonized in the Sanskrit *śilpaśāstra*s. The score point of the present article is that Brahmā is linked with the child, Vaṭapatraśāyī. He is the presiding God of the Viṣṇu temple at Villiputtūr, better known as Śrīvilliputtūr, one among the 108 Vaiṣṇava *divyadeśa*s. The present author's doctoral thesis is on the tangible and intangible heritage of the temple as evidenced by the

rituals and architectural vestiges. The *mūlabera* in the Villiputtūr temple is Śeṣaśāyī within the composition of which form Brahmā and the *vaṭa*-tree amalgamate. I mean to say Brahmā is connected with the *bālaka*, Kaṇṇaṉ.

Keywords: Vaṭapatraśāyī; Śeṣaśāyī; Brahmā; child-God, Puḷḷamaṅkai; *devakoṣṭha*; *āl*/*vaṭa*

Brahmā among the Trimūrti, the Hindu Triad, is the God of *sṛṣṭi* "creation". The Vaiṣṇava iconography finds Brahmā seated on the *padma* "lotus" emanating from the umbilicus of Śeṣaśāyī[1], Viṣṇu-Padmanābha (VSN 48, 196, 346, cf. Padmagarbhaḥ-348) that suggests Nārāyaṇa is father the God of Creation[2]. Śeṣaśāyī is popular in pan-Indian art, Nepāḷ and Southeast Asia. Viṣṇu-Śeṣaśāyī is reposing on the serpent Śeṣa or Ananta, and known as Anantaśāyī (Soundararajan 1967). The composition of the anthropomorphic figure presents a mature or grown up personality, *sarvalakṣaṇalakṣaṇyaḥ* (VSN 360). The reclining Viṣṇu is Raṅganātha or Raṅgaśāyī in Śrīraṅgam. Vaṭapatraśāyī reposing on the *vaṭa* (Tamil *āl*) leaf, is a corollary to Anantaśāyi, *ananta* = *vaṭapatra*, cf. Anantaḥ-886, Anantajit-307, Anantarūpaḥ-932, Anantaśrīḥ-933 and Anantātmā-518 (VSN, Rajarajan & Jeyapriya 2018: 85). The Lord's figure resting on the leaf is a child identified

[1] Śeṣa is an "emblem of eternity" (Monier-Williams 2005: 1088). Ratan Parimoo (1983) has copiously illustrated the theme. For an illustration from Kabal Spean in Cambodia see Rajarajan et al. (2017b: figs. 117-119). For early medieval mega-images see Kalidos (2006: I, pls. I-IV, V-2).

[2] See *Nāṉmukaṉ Tiruvantāti* 1: nāṉmukaṉai nārāyaṇaṉ paṭaittāṉ nāṉmukaṉum/ tāṉ mukamāyc caṅkaraṉaittāṉ paṭaittāṉ "Nārāyaṇa created *caturmukha*-Brahmā […] the four-faced in his own image ordained Śaṅkara-Śiva".

with Kṛṣṇa (Rajarajan 2018: fig. 2b). Some thirty Vaṭapatraśāyī[3] images have been reported from the wood-carved temple cars, *tēr*, of Tamilnāḍu (Kalidos 1989: 358-59, pl. 34, cf. pls. 32-33).

The specific problem for the present investigation is a question raised by Rajarajan (2018: 23-24). Crisply, to inquire, do we find Brahmā associated with a child? The cited author is rather uncertain, and gives an example of Brahmī or Brāhmanī, feminine of Brahmā, carrying a baby in the Ellora Caves (no. XIV). I have an evidence to link Brahmā with the child-God Vaṭapatraśāyī from the early Cōḻa temple at Puḷḷamaṅkai, close to Tañcāvūr at about a distance of fifteen kms on the way to Kuṃbhakoṇam. This temple (for inscriptions see Annexure II), dated during the time of Parāṇṭaka I (907-955) of the Vijayālaya dynasty (Kalidos 1976: 122-23, 172) has been earlier reported in S.R. Balasurahmanyam (1971), and subsequently reinvestigated in the doctoral thesis of Sita-Narasimhan (2005)[4]. The pioneer J.C. Harle (1958: 96-108) wrote an article sixty years ago, followed by another brief report by Raju Kalidos (1996). The *devakoṣṭha* image of Brahmā appears on the northern sector of the Puḷḷamaṅkai temple (Kalidos 1996: fig. 3). Devangana Desai (2013, 2016) and Adalbert J. Gail (2014) have pinpointed the *vaṭapatraśayana* in the Puḷḷamaṅkai[5] and Nāgeśvara, Kumpakōṇam/ Kuṃbhakoṇam temple in an effort to trace the

[3] For thorough Sanskrit literary roots of *vaṭapatraśayana* see Desai (2013, 2016).

[4] Earlier a Master of Philosophy scholar (Venkatanathan 1990) did his dissertation on this temple that may be found in the Tamil University Professor Va. Ai. Subrahmoniam Library ('moniam' and linga > 'lingom' in Nākarkōyil Tamil).

[5] Puḷḷamaṅkai is a celebrated Śaiva *sthala* (*Tēvāram* 1.1.1-11). For Romanization and summary of the hymns, see Annexure I. Desai (2016: 297) dates for Puḷḷamaṅkai (910 CE) and Nāgeśvara is 886 CE.

origins of the iconographic form. Raju Kalidos (2006: I, 15) has detailed the literary bearing on the theme from a study of the Āḻvārs' hymns, the 'Nālāyiram', followed by a comprehensive survey of literature in Rajarajan et alii (2017a: 52, 1573)[6].

Scholars working on Cōḻa art have neglected the significance of Vaiṣṇava images found in Śaiva temples (cf. Rajendran 2013). The Cōḻas were staunch Śaivas, and some anti-Vaiṣṇava, e.g. Kṛmikaṇṭhacōḻa in *Guruparampara* hagiography (*Āṟāyirappaṭi* p. 239, 246-47, 256). Therefore, the appearance of Vaṭapatraśāyī in Cōḻa art is of considerable importance in the visual art of south India, especially when he is associated with Brahmā, the Lord of Creation. The Āḻvārs say Nārāyaṇa created Brahmā who to his turn

[6] The Āḻvārs have contributed comprehensive literature on the subject (Rajarajan et al. 2017a). The *vaṭavṛkṣa* is *āl*, *ālamaram* (*Tiruvantāti* I 4, *Nāṉmukaṉ Tiruvantāti* 3; *Tiruvāymoḻi* 2.2.7, 9.10.1, 10.3.1; *ālilai* (*Tiruvāymoḻi* 4.2.1, 7.1.4) is the leaf of the tree (Boner et al. 1994: *Tafel* 20); *ālantaḷir* is sprout of the banyan leaf (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 1.10.3), *āliṉilai…kiṭanta* "reposing on the leaf of *āl*" having devoured the seven worlds (*Tiruvāymoḻi* 6.2.4). *Āl* appears in *Paripāṭal* (4.67) juxtaposed with *kaṭampu* (Indian seaside oak) as a divinity residing in natural resorts such as *āṟṟiṭainaṭu* (middle of rivers, e.g., Araṅkam) "rivers", *kuṉṟam* "hills" (Māliruṅkuṉṟam, Aḻakar hills). Commentators suggest *āl* in the present case denotes Ālamarcelavaṉ, Śiva-Dakṣiṇāmūrti, it could as well be *ālilaiyāṉ* (cf. 'Ālilaippālakaṉ' *Perumāḷ Tirumoḻi* 8.7). *Āliṉmēl-āl-amarntāṉ* "upon water resting on *āl* leaf" (*Tiruvāymoḻi* 9.10.1), the leaf floating on waters of the Ocean of Milk, the Lord resting on the leaf. *Āl* also denotes "water" (*Tiruvāymoḻi* 9.10.1). *Ālilai* is *vaṭapatra* (not less than twenty-three references in Rajarajan et al. (2017a: 69). Ālilaic-cērntavaṉ (*Tiruvantāti* I 19, 34, 69, *Tiruvāymoḻi* 1.9.4) is the Lord who reaches to rest on the *āl* leaf, Āliṉilaittuyiṉṟavaṉ; *ālilaic-cērnta… peru*-Māyaṉ "the great Māya sheltering in a leaf of *āl*" (*Tiruvāciriyam* 7). Ālilai-mēvu-Māyaṉ (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 5.4.2) is the Māya on leaf of the banyan tree. Ālilaippālakaṉ (*Perumāḷ Tirumoḻi* 8.7) is the Child on the banyan leaf, *ālilaip-paḷḷi* (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 7.10.2) is the leaf-couch, denoting *vaṭapatra-śayana*. The *Tēvāram* employs *āl* (1.41.7, 1.48.1, cf. Ālavāyaṉ 1.94.3 *ālam* denoting "snake") or *vaṭa* (cf. 2.221.4, Kalidos 2006: II, 44-47), see *vaṭataḷam* (TL VI, 3473).

ordained Śiva (see note 2). The Trimūrtis are allies usually, and at loggerheads sometime.

Vimāna and *devakoṣṭha*

The structure and programme of sculptures in Early Cōḻa temples are tune with what we call *drāviḍa-ṣaṭaṅga-vimāna* (e.g. Sastri 1984: chap. XXVII, Harle 1958, Dehejia 1990, Kalidos 1996: fig. 1, Lorenzetti 2008: fig. 3). Structural stone temples, called *karṟaḷi* in the Tamil region, are rooted in Pallava art of which examples are from Māmallapuram, Kāñcīpuram, Takkōlam, Tiruttaṇi, Kaḻukkuṉṟam and so on (Srinivasan 1999: chap. 4). The later Pallava temples and early Cōḻa are of the same design as far as the sculptures are programmed in *devakoṣṭha*s. Specific examples are Takkōlam-Jalānadīśvara and Puḷḷamaṅkai-Brahmapurīśvara. Supposing the *vimāna*[7] faces the east, e.g. Puḷḷamaṅkai and Nāgeśvara, the images on the southern, western and northern *devakoṣṭha*s[8] are Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Liṅgodbhavamūrti[9] and Brahmā[10]

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[7] *Vimāna* is the holy of holies of the Hindu temple (Fig. 4) that consists of three vertical main parts, viz., the plinth - *adhiṣṭhāna*, wall - *bhiṭṭi* and superstructure - *śikhara*. Indian temples are broadly brought under three types, called *nāgara*, *veśara* and *drāviḍa* stipulated in *vāstuśāstra* (canon on architecture and sculpture) such as *Mānasāra* and *Mayamata* (Kalidos 1989: chap. II). Other regional typologies such as *kaliṅgaka* (Orissa - Rajarajan 2012: pl. 56) and *rekhanāgara* (good examples in Paṭṭadakkal and Aihole - Kalidos 2006: II, pl. LVIII.2, IV-I, pl. VII.1, Rajarajan 2012: fig. 50) are reported (cf. Hardy 1998, 2012: figures). The *bhiṭṭi* in *drāviḍa-vimāna*s is fitted with *kuḍyastambha*s (half pillar, pilaster of a pier), *kuṃbhapañjara*s and *koṣṭhapañjara*s or *devakoṣṭha*s.

[8] *Devakoṣṭha* is a mini-temple ("model shrine" Rajarajan 2012: figs. 42-44), temple-relief or niche that houses an image (Fig. 5 and 8), and later gave up the enshrined image (Fig. 12 and 13). The images in these niches or aedicule are called *parivāradevatā* that receive *pūjā-bali* (worship and food) during offerings in the main temple for the *mūlabera* (presiding God/Goddess) of the temple.

uniformly (Pichard 1995, Kalidos 1996: figs. 2-4, Dhaky 1999: figs. 77-78, Lorenzetti 2008: fig. 1). The *devakoṣṭha*s of the *antarāḷa* accommodate Gaṇapati-south and Durgā/Mahiṣamardinī-north (Kalidos 1993: LD 4)[11]. The type of programme persisted down to the Vijayanagara-Nāyaka time (Kalidos 1989a: fig. 15, Kalidos 2019), and some post-Nāyaka temples deviated from the earlier tradition giving up the *koṣṭhadevatā*s (Figs. 12, 13), otherwise known as *parivāradevatā*.

Brahmā in early Cōḻa *devakoṣṭha*s

Puḷḷamaṅkai-Brahmā housed in the *devakoṣṭha* (north) is a unique image because the flamboyant *makaratoraṇa* (literally "fish-arch" Fig. 4, 5, 6) accommodates a child reclining on the *āl* leaf. Nāgeśvara-Brahmā similarly appears in the north *devakoṣṭha* and in this case (Figs. 7, 8, 9) the child reclining on the *āl* leaf is in the *adhiṣṭhāna*. Brahmā in both cases is guardian of the north below his

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[9] Liṅgodbhavamūrti may be replaced with *sthānaka*-Viṣṇu (e.g. Paṉakuṭi) or Ardhanārīśvara (e.g. Karantai and Aiyāṟu). For more examples see Sita-Narasimhan (2006: chap. 3).

[10] No separate temple for Brahmā is traceable in Tamilnāḍu. However, all Śiva and Viṣṇu temples house Brahmā in the northern *devakoṣṭha*, and up above the *vimāna*, including the *grīvakoṣṭha* (space below the *śikhara* where Garuḍa-*puruṣa* flanked by squatting lions appears). Brahmā mostly appears all alone in *sthānaka* (standing) mode or with Devīs. *Trikūṭācala* (triangular form for Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā are popular in Karnāṭaka (Suresh 2003: II, figs. 47, 50) and Āndhradeśa, e.g. Vāraṅgal-Kākatiya (Kamalakar 2004: fig. 15). I have reported all such types in my doctoral dissertation on the Śrīvilliputtūr Āṇṭāḷ-Vaṭapatraśāyī temple.

[11] A standard setting model, the *devakoṣṭha*s go on multiplying, e.g. the Kailāsanātha (Rajarajan 2015-16: figs. 18-19) and Vaikuṇṭha Perumāḷ (Srinivasan 1999: fig. 45) temples of Kāñci. The tradition was taken up by the Cōḻas in the Rajarājeśvarams of Tañcāvūr, Kaṅkaikoṇṭacōḻapuram and Tārācuram (Sivaramamurti 1984, Pichard 1995), including Tiripuvaṉam.

feet is the waterspout leading out of the sanctum sanctorum. In the case of Puḷḷamaṅkai, the naked child is accompanied by a figure in *añjalibandha* and in Nāgeśvara the child is alone suckling its left leg thumb. In both cases, the leaf resembles round tipped *āl* leaf (Ficus bengalensis), it could as well be the *aracu* (Ficus religiosa), and both seem to be on a par with each other in Tamil tradition.

The Buddha attained *jñāna* under the Bodhi-*aracu* tree, and Dakṣiṇāmūrti preaches wisdom to the *mahaṛṣi*s seated under the *āl* tree. Gaṇapati, popularly God of Learning, in Tamil lore is usually found on the riverbed accommodated in a hypaethal temple below the *aracu* tree[12]; 'araca marattaṭi Piḷḷaiyār' is a popular saying. The Little Lord, *patraśāyī*'s[13] playground for *līlā* is *vaṭa*, and so called Vaṭapatraśāyī. The oval leaf-bed with a pointed head and stumpy stem earmarks the *ālilai* or *vaṭapatra* (see figures 1-3). The *devakoṣṭha* is juxtaposed with *kuḍyastambha* and *kuṃbhapañjara* (decorative pilaster motifs). Brahmā appears in *samapāda-sthānaka* mode above the *praṇāḷa* (sacred chute, gargoyle) through which the aromatic water, sacred milk and *pañcāmṛta* (five celestial nectars) anointed during *abhiṣeka* on the Liṅga[14] come out, symbolic of

[12] The Paliyaṉ hill tribes of Villiputtūr region consider *tāttā/pāṭṭaṉ* (grandfather/ancestor), Ālattiammā (banyan tree + mother or female honorific), Ālavīrutcam/Vaṭavṛkṣa (banyan tree + great one) and the benign Pēci(ammā)/Vana Pēci as their ancestral deities (Gardner 1991).

[13] He is the *kuṭṭaṉ* "Little Master" in the hymns of Periyāḻvār (*Tirumoḻi* 1.2.13, 1.5.2, 1.7.1, 1.8.5, 1.10.1, 2.9.6, 3.6.3, 5.1.10), the *ciṟu-kuṭṭaṉ* "Little darling" (ibidem 3.3.4), *cēṭṭa* in Malaiyāḷam, *lāla* in Hindi (Rajarajan et al. 2017a: 688).

[14] The aniconic Liṅga is the *mūlabera* (idol for worship) in Śiva temples since the early Cōḻa period. It consists of three vertical members in octagonal base Viṣṇuvāṃśam rooted in earth, square middle Brahmāṃśam hidden by *āvuṭai* or *yoṇi*, circular top Śivāṃśam (Kalidos 2001: I, 173-74, Lorenzetti 2008: fig. 12). In

çīvanīr (*Tirumantiram* 3.20.2-3), the creative matter. Brahmā is *caturbhuja*, graced with the *akṣamālā* (broken) and *kamaṇḍalu* in rear arms. The right *pūrvahasta* is in *abhayamundrā* and the left *ūruhasta*. Two Devī, maybe Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī, are kneeling in worshipful attitude, in Nāgeśvara two male deities attend on Brahmā. The attending deities are outside the main *koṣṭha* falling in between the *kuḍyastmabha*s[15].

A frieze of *haṃsa*s, known as *haṃsavari*, runs horizontally below the *padmapīṭha* up on which Brahmā stands. Haṃsavari is a decorative motif, and *haṃsa* is the vehicle of Brahmā (see note 21), symbolic of wisdom. One of the *aṃśāvatāra*s of Viṣṇu, Haṃsamūrti recovered the *Veda*s when lost during a *mahāpraḷaya* (Rajarajan et al. 2017b: 171-72). Nāgeśvara misses the *haṃsa* (Figs. 4, 5, 7, 8).

The Puḷḷamaṅkai *makaratoraṇa* accommodates the reclining Lord at its base. Three miniature reliefs constitute a triangle (Fig. 6, cf. "The *Agni Marga*" in Álvarez 2015-16: fig. p. 7, Lorenzetti 2008: fig. 12), *caturatāṇḍava*-Śiva at the apex, and two flying divinities or demons on either side hastily moving to assault the reposing baby. I am not sure whether the two could be Madhu and Kaiṭabha (see note 21). Dancing Śiva and the reclining *bāla*-Kṛṣṇa are suggestive of Takkiṇaṉ (infra) and Ālamarcelvaṉ. The Nāgeśvara *makaratoraṇa* hosts Nṛsiṃha's Hiraṇya-*vadham*.

Pallava temples, Somāskanda appears on the rear wall of the *garbhagṛha* along with the Liṅga (Rajarajan 2018: fig. 4a).

[15] The *Śrītattvanidhi* in Section IV on 'Brahmatattvanidhi' associates Sarasvatī (4.2) and Sāvitrī (4.5 on Prajāpati) with Brahmā. Normally four-armed, Vidhi-Brahmā (4.6) is supposed to be ten or twelve handed, and Viśvakarma-Brahmā is *catuspāda* (4.7). Seven *haṃsa*s attend on Ātya-Brahmā (4.5).

Vaṭapatraśāyī

The child gods in Hindu tradition are Murukaṉ and Kṛṣṇa, Cēy "redness, son, child" (TL III, 1632) or Cēyōṉ (Kumāra)[16] (e.g. Rajarajan 2018: figs. 2a-b, 3a-b, 4a-b) including Dāśarathi-Rāma. The iconography of Vaṭapatraśāyī is not stipulated in *śāstra*s (see Fig. 2). Devī is *kumari* or *kaṉṉi* (Virgin), not a toe-sucking child (*Marg* 69:4, fig. 5.18)[17]. Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār in *Periya Tirumoḻi* (2.10.1) beautifully says, "The seven mountain ranges, the seven seas, the extensive ether (Milky Way), the earth-world and all other celestial bodies lay gulped in the sacred stomach of the Īśvara that reposes on springing sprout of the banyan leaf, *ālilai* (see figure above). Nothing exists in the cosmos…"

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[16] Denoting Murukaṉ in the Tamil grammatical work, *Tolkāppiyam* ('Poruḷatikāram' 3.1.5), Cēyavaṉ is Kṛṣṇa in the 'Nālāyiram' (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 3.10.6, *Tiruvantāti* I 65, *Periya Tiruvantāti* 56, Rajarajan et al. 2017a: 263). Krishna Sastri (1916: 37) refers to the paintings of Vaṭapatraśāyī (may be contemporary calendar art, popular in Marāṭha paintings, cf. *Marg* 69:4, fig. 5.18). Gopinatha Rao (1999: fig. 3, facing p. 215) illustrates an ivory from Tiruvaṉantapuram, may be contemporary when the book was published in the early 20th century. Rao (1999: 264) compares the child reposing on the leaf with Jalaśāyī (cf. Jeyapriya 2018: 19-21) that floats on the primal water of deluge contemplating a new era of Genesis. In fact, Śeṣaśāyī and Vaṭapatraśāyī are Jalaśāyī. Raju Kalidos (1989: 175-76) in his brief note cites P. Thomas 1961, Daniel Smith & Venkatachari 1969, Veronica Ions 1975, and C. Sivaramamūrti 1976. *Bāla-Rāmāyaṇa* (c. 900 CE) is a work in which the dramatis personae are children, cf. the *Rāmāyaṇa* paintings (modern) in the *Rāmacaritamanas* (Hindi work by Tulasīdas) temple at Vārāṇasī.

[17] East or west, some babies sucking the thumb or toe are common. It is a metaphor for an innocent man devoid of cunningness. Insane mature persons may do so. However, there is a folk child Goddess named Toṭṭicci-ammaṉ. The term *toṭṭicci* is obscure; root *toṭṭi* (baby's swing or cradle, Telugu *uyyāla*) denoting a child, *tōṭṭi* is a lavatory cleaner (man or woman), Toṭṭiya-*nāyaka*, a sub-group of the *nāyaka*s such as *kampalam* (blanket holders), *gavara* (born of Gaurī) or *kammā* (*pañca-kammāḷa* "smiths"). *Toṭṭicci* is possibly one on the *toṭṭi* (swing) or one who guards the *toṭṭi* ("swing" symbolic of children).

mañcāṭu varaiyēl̲um kaṭalkal̲el̲um vāṉamum maṇṇakamum mar̲r̲um ellām eñcāmal vayir̲r̲aṭakki yāliṉmēlōr iḷantaḷiril kaṇvaḷarntav icaṉ

Sculptures and paintings on Vaṭapatraśāyī are reported (Boner et al. 1994: Tafel 20, figs. 206, 387, 478). The child-Lord is mostly in the company of the eternally youthful *ṛṣi*, Mārkaṇḍeya (Desai 2017). Mythologies say he was son of sage, Mṛkaṇḍu, the ever sixteen or *dīrghāyus* (long-lived). Tafel 20 in Boner et alii finds the child-God and Mārkaṇḍeya on two separate leaves. In other models, Mārkaṇḍeya is missing (Boner et al. 1994: fig. 206). The cited specimens are from the collection of Alice Boner on north Indian miniatures, dated during the 17th century and after. Mārkaṇḍeya[18] is missing in the early Cōl̲a imageries from the Puḷḷamaṅkai and Kuṃbhakoṇam-Nāgeśvara (Desai 2013 and Gail 2014). Desai (2013, 2016) and Gail (2014) review Sanskrit literary sources and address the issue of a child or a boy (adolescent) or an adult reclining on a banyan leaf or its branch. Desai (2017: fig 3 and 4) presents an adult reclining on an *aracu* tree branch from the Kalāpustaka manuscript, Nepāḷ. Curiously our search for Vaṭapatraśāyī has yielded painting of adult reclining on *āl* leaf (Fig. 25 and 26) the *Nāyaka* painting is in Attikiri, Kāñcīpuram. Raju Kalidos (1989: 358-59) finds the child reclining either on Śeṣa-*nāga* or *vaṭapatra*[19].

[18] Desai (2016: 297) suggests that the image worshiping the child on the banyan leaf could very well be an Āl̲vār.

[19] The viśvarūpa-Śeṣaśāyī *mūlabera* in the Villiputtūr temple is actually reposing on Ananta. A tree motif is carved close to the Lord's head on Śeṣa to confirm the Vaṭapatraśāyī idea. Here, the snake and tree are identical.

This is to suggest *vaṭapatra* and Śeṣa are on the same philosophical plane suggesting the primitive notation of tree and serpent worship (Fergusson 1971), the archaic memories. One may come across *āl* (Fig. 1) or *aracu* (Fig. 3) tree linked with *nāga* worship in South Asia, particularly South India. The tree-Goddess is Polerammā in Āndhradeśa[20]. Several living tree-temples for Aracammā or Naracammā (*nīr*, *nāra* "water" are under worship in Tamilnāḍu (Figs. 18, 23, 24). In several cases, the folk clearly recognize the tree as the temple, for example Caṅkili-*pāṟai*[21] and Caṅkili-*kuṟaṭu* temples in Añkuḷippaṭṭi (Tiṇṭukkal) and Kāmayakavuṇṭaṉpaṭṭi (Tēṉi). Canopy of the tree shelters terracotta sculptures (Figs. 11, 22) the primitive of all *vimāna*s (Figs. 14, 15, 19). *Pāṟai* and *kuṟaṭu* are naturally elevated stages like a pedestal (*araṅkam*) (Figs. 16, 21 compare with 17, 20). Caṅkili denotes the village God, the Kaṟuppu "Black" tied with chain to restrain his virulence, cf. Māḷ (Viṣṇu), the Black.

The location of Vaṭapatraśāyī in Puḷḷamaṅkai and Nāgeśvara, Tamil Nākēcuvaram, is conspicuous. Puḷḷamaṅkai finds the Little Lord up above the *śikhara* of Brahmā, the *makaratoraṇa*. Nākēcuvaram finds *bāla*-Kṛṣṇa below the feet of Brahmā, *galapāda* plinth moulding. The Lord's presence above the head and below the feet is of sociological significance. One suggests Viṣṇu is superior to Brahmā as his creator (see note 2). According to some versions of the mythologies, Brahmā challenges the omnipotence of Viṣṇu, and

[20] Associated with Toṭṭiya-*nāyaka* caste see footnote 16.

[21] Human habitation and sacred worship are attested in Caṅkili-*pāṟai* and Caṅkili-*kuṟaṭu* by presence of rock shelter with cave art and the region is noted for Tamil mystics (*cittaṉ*) associated with *yoga*. For difference between Tamil *cittaṉ* and pan-Indian *siddhācārya* movement see Zvelebil (1973: 220).

poses himself the *karta* "creator" Superior[22]. The location of the images ingeniously suggests, the great Brahmā emerges from tiny Vaṭapatraśāyī in Puḷḷamaṅkai, and the superiority of Viṣṇu is questioned in Nāgeśvara. Theoretically, the design is more important than petty superiority or inferiority issues. Irrespective of the fact, all Hindu gods like the human beings are subject to these psychological abnormalities depending on circumstances. One who overcomes pride and prejudice is the God Superior that the Liṅgodbhava mythology proves.

Ālamar-*kaṭavuḷ*

The God associated with the *āl* tree (see notes 5, 22) is as old as Tamil literary tradition (c. 3rd century BCE to 250 CE). Śiva in course of time came to be identified with Dakṣiṇāmūrti (Fig. 17, 20), Tamil Takkiṇaṉ (*Cilappatikāram* 13.95), Takkaṇaṉ (*Tēvāram* 6.29.10) and Teṉṉāṉ (ibidem 7.38.8), housed in the southern *devakoṣṭha*; *dakṣiṇa* means "fee", "south" or "left". He is the Master of *yoga* and gnosis, invoked Paramayōki (*Tēvāram* 1,119.3), Mātavaṉ (ibidem 3.371.5), Ñāṉamūrtti (ibidem 3.3.85.8). Śeṣaśāyī in Tamil tradition is engaged in *yōkanittirai*/*yoganidrā* (*Tiruvāymoḻi* 2.6.5, cf. Maxwell 1984). Images of Viṣṇu in mould of Dakṣiṇa (Fig. 10) are from the Navatiruppati *divyadeśa*s in the Tāmiraparaṇi basin (Rajarajan 2011: figs. 1, 5, 9) and in Vaṭapatraśāyī *vimāna* Śrīvilliputtūr (Fig. 10). In both cases, the design and material are the same. The God is posted below a tree, and reposing on snake or leaf crystallizes tree and serpent cult. Śiva or Viṣṇu is immaterial

[22] Cf. the Liṅgodbhava mythology (Kalidos 2003: 77-79) leading to Brahmaśirasccheda ka (Kalidos 2006: II, pl. LXXXIII.1).

because in a composite form, both make up Harihara or the trio unites in Dattātreya. In iconographic models, the trio constitutes the Trimūrti (Gillet 2015: 370-71). All three come to the picture in Somāskanda or Liṅgodbhava. They ally during the *tripuradahana* expedition. The Trimūrti is responsible for *sṛṣṭi*, *sthiti* and *saṃhāra*, one leading to the other, and ultimately resulting in cosmic peace and prosperity. The fundamental thought in religions is to see humanity with blooming face. The composition of Trimūrti may merge the three in one (Kalidos 1994: figs. 3-5) or find Śiva-core (Trimūrti-*maṇḍapa*, Māmallapuram[23]), Viṣṇu-crux (Cave XXVII, Ellora) or Brahmā-center (Tiruccirāppaḷḷi lower cave) isolated within a bigger frame (ibidem fig. 6), the nodal zone (cf. Vaṭapatraśāyī at the summit of Brahmā in Fig. 1) that is the visualization of the respective sectarians. Iconography of Dakṣiṇāmūrti seated below *āl* tree is the outcome of tree worship (Figs. 16 to 21).

To conclude, I would like to say *āl* is symbolic of longevity[24], and the recurring *sṛṣṭi-praḷaya-sthiti*. The Tamil *mūturai* (old saying) is *ālum vēlum pallukuruti* the pīpal and babul (Gens acacia), neem or margosa, add strength for the teeth[25]. The villagers'

[23] This pattern is followed in the Trimūrti temple, Prambanan (Indonesia), accommodating cult images in *garbhagṛha*s.

[24] Vaṭapatraśāyi is a child, young (the *mūlabera* of Villiputtūr, see figure above) and old (*tāttā* "grandfather" in the Villiputtūr tradition), the "seven ages" (Shakespeare, 'As You Like It', II, vii, 139) frozen (cf. *uṟai* in *Tēvāram*, Annexure I) in the Lord.

[25] In Hindu iconography, the invisible part of the body is teeth. We have some ferocious forms of Śiva and Viṣṇu that exhibit the wrathful teeth (Kalidos 2006: II, pl. XXIX.2, cf. Jeyapriya 2009: pls. 10-11) or the protruding canine teeth (Jeyapriya 2009: pl. 4).

toothbrush to this day is the stick of *āl* or *vēmpu* that assures long-lived teeth. Ananta, *āl*, *aracu* and *padma* are metaphors for *garbha*. Returning to Rajarajan's question, I would like to say Viśvakarma-Brahmā (old fifty-one years of gods) is the child Viśvakarma (VSN-50) in another garb. The *Viṣṇusahasranāma* lists several epithets of the genre, e.g. Viśvabāhūḥ-316, Viśvadakṣiṇāḥ-425, Viśvadhṛk-238, Viśvamūrti-717, Viśvayoniḥ-117, 149 and Viśvam-1 (Rajarajan & Jeyapriya 2018: 151-52), the Viśvarūpa (Maxwell 1983, 1984).

A few words regarding Puḷḷamaṅkai gleaned from the *bhakti* literature (Annexure I) and inscriptions (Annexure II) deserves note here. The *Tēvāram* in all hymns refers to Puḷamaṅkai in Ālanturai (seventh century CE). Inscriptions by about the time of Kulottuṅga III (later half of the twelfth century) locate Puḷḷamaṅkalam (cf. *maṅkai*-Alliyaṅkōtai and *maṅkalam* or *caturvedimaṅkalam*) in the Ālanturai subdivision of Kiḻār-*kōṭṭam* in the Nityaviṉōta-*vaḷanāṭu*. The presiding God was Śiva-mahādeva, later Brahmapurīśvara, symbolically the Triad, Brahmā and Īśvara/Īcaṉ common to Śiva (*Tēvāram* 5.204.1) and Viṣṇu (*Tiruccantaviruttam* 4, 35, 90, 107), or Kāpāli-Īśvara-Kṛṣṇa (ibidem 42; Rajarajan et al. 2017: I, 201, 2017a: 395-96). The name of a temple servant is *paḷḷi*-Poṉṉi-*nāṭāḻvāṉ* (governor of the land of Kāviri that belongs to the reposing Lord, Raṅganātha of Araṅkam). He is likely to be a Vaiṣṇava serving in a Śiva temple. This is quite natural because the nearby Kuṃbhakoṇam, including Nāgeśvara, was a meeting place of Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava mystics (see the mythology of Tirumaḻicai Āḻvār, a Śaiva turned Vaiṣṇava - *Āṟāyirappaṭi* pp. 16-17), e.g. Nāgeśvara and the reposing Śārṅgapāṇisvāmi, Tillai-Cittirakūṭam and Meyyam Satyagirīśvara-Satyamūrti. As meeting place of Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava

philosophers, these venues offer ample scope to view Dakṣiṇa as a common designation of Śiva and Viṣṇu, rooted in florid flora-culture. The unity of Brahmā with Vaṭapatraśayī in the Ālanturai-mahādeva (ARE 1921: 555, *Tēvāram* 1.16.1) Brahmapurīśvara temple is an eloquent archetypal cultural idiom.

Annexe I
Puḷḷamaṅkai in the *Tēvāram* (1.16)

The *talam*/*sthala* known as Puḷamaṅkai in Ālanturai[26] is on the southern bank of Kāviri amidst an enchanting "sea of rice" as J.C. Harle would say; today's Vedānta is whirlwind of gas. The venue is linked with the mythology of Śiva consuming the *hālahāla* poison that emerged from the Ocean of Milk when churned. Brahmā had to worship the Lord soliciting grace, cf. the Liṅgodbhava myth. The Lord is Ālanturainātar. The Mother is Alliyaṅkōtai, *alli*/*nilotpala* "blue lotus or water lily", *kōtai* "garland (of flowers or pearls)", nickname of Āṇṭāḷ, the Vaiṣṇava she-mystic. The *sthalavṛkṣa* is *āḷ*. The text for the following transcription is the Kaḻakam ed. (1973: 31-32).

1. pāluntuṟu tiralāyiṉa paramaṉ piramaṉṟāṉ
poluntiṟa lavarvāḻtaru poḻilcūḻpuḷamaṅkaik
kālaṉṟiṟa laṟaccāṭiya kaṭavuḷḷiṭaṅkarutil
ālanturai toḻuvārtamai yaṭaiyāviṉaitāṉē

[26] The venue in all hymns is uniformly Puḷamaṅkai (*pūḷa*[*kitam*] denotes "rapture" (TL V, 2798), bliss giving place, and *puḷ* "bird" (TL V, 2795) resort of birds in Ālanturai (bathing ghat full of *āl* trees, for *poḻil* see Rajarajan 2016: 85). Ālanturai could also be split, *āl* + *uṟai* (live, frozen), the Lord residing in a grove of *āl* trees, cf. Ālamar-*kaṭavuḷ* (*Puṟaṇānūṟu* 198), Ālamar-*celvaṉ* (*Maṇimēkalai* 3.144), see note 5. Puḷamaṅkai is the Goddess who assures rapture or trance, i.e. Nidrādevī who keeps Śeṣaśāyī under the spell of *nidrā* "sleep". When threatened by the demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha, Brahmā was alarmed, and solicited the help of Nidrādevī to relieve the Lord from sleep. Puḷḷamaṅkai may also link with "bird" (cf. *Tiruppāvai* 6 puḷḷum cilampiṉakāṉ puḷḷaraiyaṉ kōyil "birds are screaming, it is the temple of admonisher of the bird-demon" Rajarajan 2017: III, 1377-78). Parrot is the *vāhana* of Ratī, which Mīnākṣī and Āṇṭāl hold in their hands, other bird-vehicles are *haṃsa* "swan" for Brahmā/Brahmī, *śikhi* "peacock" for Murukaṉ/Kaumārī, and *garuḍa* "kite" for Viṣṇu/Vaiṣṇavī, *kākaḥ* "crow" for Śani (see note 24).

"Paramaṉ/Brahman[27] is a sweet personality as milk lush. The Lord rendered invalid the powers of Kāla, the God of Death (Kālasaṃhāramūrti). The venue for his abode is Ālanturai where the *brāhmaṇa* experts in scriptures of the likeness of Brahmā are living. No evil haunts one who offers worship at the venue."

2. malaiyāṉmakaḷ kaṇavaṉmali kaṭalcūḻtarutaṉmaip
pulaiyāyiṉa kaḷaivāṉiṭam poḻilcūḻpuḷamaṅkaik
kalaiyāṉmali maṟaiyōravar karutittoḻutētta
alaiyārpuṉal varukāviri yālanturaiyatuvē
"The Lord Kalyāṇasundara is the spouse of the daughter (Umā, Umāsahitamūrti) of the hill (Himavān). The experts in the *Vedas* and arts of Puḷamaṅkai, *maṟaiyōr* (*brāhmaṇa*), are busy offering services to the Lord. The aroma (of Vedic *yajña*s) serves to put out the stench of the *mlecchas* working in the (paddy) fields. The waves of Kāviri (cf. Ponni in ARE 1921, no. 554) dash on shores of the venue at Ālanturai."

3. kaṟaiyārmiṭa ṟuṭaiyāṉkamaḻ koṉṟaiccaṭaimuṭimēl
poṟaiyārtaru kaṅkaip puṉaluṭaiyāṉ puḷamaṅkaic
ciṟaiyārtaru kaḷivaṇṭaṟai poḻilcūḻtiruvālant
tuṟaiyāṉava ṉaṟaiyārkaḻa ṟeḻumiṉ ṟuticeytē
"The Lord's throat is smeared with fatal rust, the *hālahāla* (Nīlakaṇṭha). The tiara is decked with the flowers of Indian Laburnum (Cassia fistula) and the Gaṅgā (Gaṅgādhara). The Lord fondly resorts to Puḷamaṅkai in the Ālanturai. Let us offer worship at the Lord's fragrant flowery feet."

4. taṇiyārmati yaraviṉṉōṭu vaittāṉiṭa moyttem
paṇiyāyava ṉaṭiyārtoḻu tēttumpūlamaṅkai

[27] Brahman (the Ultimate Cosmic Reality, Puruṣa), Brahmā (God of Creation) and *brāhmaṇa* (temple priests) are different personalities.

maṇiyārtaru kaṉakammavai vayirattiraḷōṭum
aṇiyārmaṇa laṇaikāviri yālanturaiyatuvē
"The Lord's crown is fitted with the cold moon (Candraśekhara), and the cobra (*nagabhūṣaṇa*). Puḷamaṅkai is teeming with devotees, *aṭiyār* "slaves", for offering *añjali* (worship). Ālanturai is the venue of inundating Kāviri flowing with rubies, diamonds and gold sediments (see note 29)."

5. moyttaṉṉurum viṉaitīrvakai toḻumiṉceḻumalariṉ
kottiṉṉoṭu cantārakil koṇarkāvirikkaraimēl
pottiṉṉiṭai yāntaipala pāṭumpuḷamaṅkai
attaṉṉamai yāḷvāṉiṭa yālanturaiyatuvē
"Worship the Lord if the evils (*viṉai*, the *mummalam* of *karma*, *āṇava* and *māyā*) haunting you are to be annulled. The River Kāviri is bringing sweet-smelling sandalwood and flowers. Owls[28] living in burrows of trees in groves are singing at Puḷamaṅkai (cf. Rajarajan 2018a: 79-85). The Lord is our king, stationed in the *sthala* at Ālanturai."

6. maṉṉāṉava ṉulakiṟkoru maḻaiyāṉavaṉpiḻaiyil
poṉṉāṉavaṉ mutalāṉavaṉ poḻilcūḻpuḷamaṅkai
eṉṉāṉava ṉicaiyāṉava ṉiḷañāyiṟiṉcōti
aṉṉāṉava ṉuraiyumiṭa mālanturaiyatuvē
"The Lord is the earth. He is rain for the worlds. He is shining as molten gold. The Primary Principle, He is the Lord of Puḷamaṅkai. He is the melody of notes, cf. *saptasvaramaya*[29] ('ēḻicaiyōṉ' *Tēvāram* 1.128 *l.* 38). He is the Light. The Lord's abode is Ālanturai."

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[28] *Ulūkaḥ* "owl" is the *vāhana* of Cāmuṇḍā (Panikkar 1997: figs. 105, 109, 132); cf. all the Mātṛkas graced with bird-faces (Panikkar 1997: fig. 6).

[29] C. Sivaramamurti (1976: fig. 58) identifies the Parel (Mumbai) image (Kalidos 2006: II, pl. XVI) with 'Saptasvaramaya'. However, *iṉṉicaiyāṉavaṉ* "the melody of music" is Viṣṇu according to Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 6.1.7, cited in Kalidos 2006: II, 90).

7. muṭiyārtaru caṭaimēlmuḷai yiḻaveṇmaticūṭip
poṭiyāya tirumēṉiyar poḻilcūḻpuḷamaṅkaik
kaṭiyārmalar puṉalkoṇṭutaṉ kaḻalētoḻutēttum
aṭiyārtamak kiṉiyāṉiṭa mālanturaiyatuvē
"The Lord is crested with the young moon (Candraśekhara). He is smeared with the holy ash all over the body, *bhasmabūṣaṇa*. He is the Lord of Puḷamaṅkai. He is dear to those that worship him offering flowers (cf. *pūppali Cilappatikāram* 28.2131), and sacred water (*nīraṇiviḻa* ibidem 10.22). The Lord's abode is Ālanturai."

8. ilaṅkaimaṉaṉ muṭitōḷiṟa veḻilārtiruviralāl
vilaṅkalliṭai yaṭarttāṉiṭam vētampayiṉṟēttip
pulaṉkaṭamai veṉṟārpuka ḻavarvāḻpuḷamaṅkai
alaṅkaṉmali caṭaiyāṉiṭa mālanturaiyatuvē
"The crowns and shoulders of the king of Laṅkā were crashed down by the sacred foot of the Lord (Rāvaṇānugrahamūrti). Puḷamaṅkai is the venue of those that cultivate the *Veda*s, overcome the *pañcendriya*s (sensual five instincts), and flourish offering services. Decorated with the Indian Laburnum flowers, the Lord is abiding in the grove at Ālanturai."

9. ceṟiyārtaru veḷḷaittiru nīṟṟiṉṟirumuṇṭap
poṟiyārtaru purinūlvarai mārpaṉpuḷamaṅkai
veṟiyārtaru kamalattayaṉ māluntaṉainmāṭi
aṟiyāvakai niṉṟāṉiṭa mālanturaiyatuvē
"The Lord is graced with the immaculate white-ash on forehead, and invested with the sacred thread. Brahmā seated on the lotus and Viṣṇu could not trace the root and acme of the inaccessible divine *kuṟi* "mark" (Liṅgodbhavamūrti). The Lord's venue is Ālanturai."

10. nītiyaṟi yātāramaṇ kaiyarōṭumaṇṭaip
pōtiyava rōṭummurai koḷḷārpūḷamaṅka

ātiyavar kōyiṟiru vālanturaitoḻumiṉ
cātimmiku vāṉōrtoḻu taṉmaipeṟalāmē
"Pūḷamaṅkai is full of the presence of the nude Jains and anti-vedic Buddhists. The Lord is the Ādi, the Primeval Principle. Those that resort to the venue for worship are credited with the honour conferred on the gods."

11. pontiṉṉiṭait tēṉūṟiya poḻilcūlpuḷamaṅkai
antaṇpuṉal varukāviri yālanturaiyāṉaik
kantammali kamaḻkāḻiyuṭ kalaiñāṉacampantaṉ
cantammali pāṭalcoli yāṭattavamāmē
"Puḷamaṅkai is full of groves graced with honeycombs. Kāviri flowing with cold water surrounds Ālanturai. The music of Ñāṉacampantaṉ is prospering at this venue. Those that sing and dance to the melody of notes are blessed to attain the bliss of *yogic* meditation."

Annexe II
Puḷḷamaṅkai Inscriptions

Inscriptions since the time of Parāntaka I are present in the temple, reported in Mahalingam (1992: VII, 522-26, ARE 1921 and SITI).

Early Cōḻa		
ARE 1921, 555	Parātaka I 927 CE	gift of land yielding 500 *kalam* of paddy to the temple of Ālanturai-*mahādeva*
Ibidem 556	Āditya II 969-70 CE	donation 72 sheep for a perpetual lamp (PL)
Ibidem 137	Sundaracōḻa 971CE	donation of 90 sheep - supply of ghee for PL
Middle Cōḻa		
Ibidem 553	Rājendra I 996 CE	gift of land for *brāhmaṇa*s well versed in *Sāma* and *Ṛg Veda*s for recital in the temple
Ibidem 554	Rājarāja I 997 CE	gift of land to the temple
Later Cōḻa		
Ibidem 554	Vikramacōḻa 1127 CE	notes the name of temple *kāval* (watchman) Paḷḷi-Ponni-Nāṭāḷvān and gift of 72 sheep for PL; note *paḷḷi*, cf. Paḷḷikoṇṭa Perumāḷ denoting Śeṣaśāyī,

		Ponṉi stands for Kāviri (*Periya Tirumoḻi* 5.1.9)[30]
Ibidem 549	Parakeśarivarman	notes transactions taking place in the *maṇḍapa* of the temple
Ibidem 546	Parakeśarivarman	gift for PL, Tiruvālanturai-mahādeva, Puḷḷamaṅkalam *brahmadeya*
Ibidem 550	-missing-	notes *archanābhoga* lands for the priests
SITI 656	Kulottuṅga III 1195 CE	notes Ālanturai-mahādeva temple at Puḷḷamaṅkalam in Kilār-*kūṟṟam*, Nittaviṉōta-*vaḷanāṭu*, gift for services in the temple
Ibidem 657	Kulottuṅga III 1178 CE	gift of land
Ibidem 552	Kulottuṅga III 1178 CE	Tiruvālanturai-mahādeva at Puḷḷamaṅkalam, a *brahmadeya*

The Puḷḷamaṅkai temple to begin with was of perishable materials such as wood and brick-lime, converted to stone-*kaṟṟaḷi* during the time of Parāntaka Cōḷa. Settlement of *brāhmaṇa*s, *brahmadeya* or *caturvedimaṅkalam*, and *nityapūjā*s and *utsava*s were stabilized under the Cōḷas since the ninth to the twelfth

[30] The cited hymn says Ponṉi deposits gold sediments in the delta (cf. *Tēvāram* 1.1.16.5 above) along with *akiḻ* (*devadāru* "eagle-wood"), *cantaṇam* (sandal), *muttu* ("pearl" *Periya Tirumoḻi* 7.8.3), *ariyuki* (nails of lion), *karikkōṭu* (ivory) and so on (ibidem 6.9.4-5, Rajarajan et al. 2017a: 1184).

century CE. Transactions relating to the temple and the village administration, *grāmasabhā*, took place in the temple *maṇḍapa*. Today, the temple complex is surrounded by a *tirumatil*, graced with a *gopura* "gateway" that may be post-Cōḻa. Set in a typical Cōḻanāṭu countryside, it is not a pilgrim centre. Scholars interested in Cōḻa art may visit the *sthala* occasionally.

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Tiruvantāti I, II, III: part of 'Nālāyiram'.

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Tolkāppiyam: see *Cemmoḻit-Tamil*, pp. 1-105.

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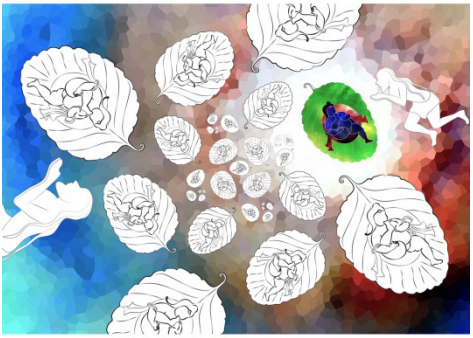
FIGURES



The *sthalapurāṇa* and oral tradition talk about Vaṭapatraśāyī of Śrīvilliputtūr. Immortal Mārkaṇḍeya having seen several eons-*kalpa* in deep meditation poses Lord Nārāyaṇa a question… (of creation?) Mārkaṇḍeya finds himself wandering through the deluge, the doomsday (*praḷaya*) and there is a baby floating on a banyan-tree leaf in the Cosmic Ocean. Mārkaṇḍeya wonders at the child! The child swallows Mārkaṇḍeya and inside is the entire cosmos. The sage sees creation, *kalpa*s and *praḷaya*s. Yet again, the episode of finding the child happens once again, Mārkaṇḍeya comes out of the child's mouth. Repetition of ideas such as *cirañjīvī*-Mārkaṇḍeya, the question, deluge and the child flairs up to be surreal legend. Mārkaṇḍeya is amazed and he is back in his *āśrama*. Slightly different versions of this story are found in the *Mahābhārata* (*Araṇya-parva*), *Matsya-* and *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* (Skanda XII) cited by Desai (2016).

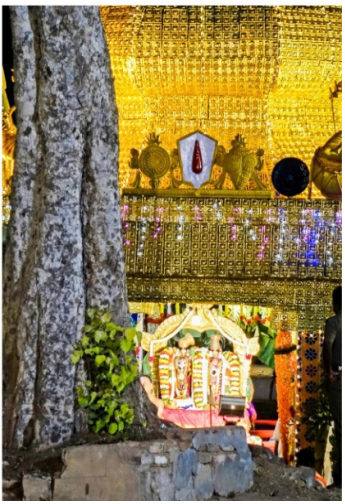
1. *Āl* leaf
2. Author's drawing from his doctoral dissertation "Mārkaṇḍeya finding Vaṭapatraśāyī"
3. *Aracu* sprouts

4. *Vimāna* Brahmapurīśvara temple, Puḷḷamaṅkai
5. Brahmā in *devakoṣṭha*, Brahmapurīśvara temple, Puḷḷamaṅkai
6. Detail of Fig. 5, Vaṭapatraśāyī*in makaratoraṇa*, Brahmapurīśvara temple, Puḷḷamaṅkai

7. *Vimāna* Nāgeśvara temple, Kumpakōṇam
8. Brahmā in *devakoṣṭha*, Nāgeśvara temple, Kumpakōṇam
9. Detail of Fig. 8, Vaṭapatraśāyī in *galapāda* plinth molding, Nāgeśvara temple, Kumpakōṇam

10. Vaṭapatraśāyī *vimāna*, Śrīvilliputtūr. For detail see Fig. no. 17
11. Temple for village God Caṅkili-Kaṟuppaṉ (Black one) under *āl*-tree *vimāna*? Compare with Fig 17 and 20, Añkuḷippaṭṭi (Tiṇṭukkal)



12. *Devakoṣṭha* devoid of *devatā*, Kālahastīśvara temple, Uttamapāḷaiyam
13. *Vimāna*, Nṛsiṃha temple, Kaṉṉivāṭi/Tiṇṭukkal
14. *Aracu* tree and *nāga*s, Periyāṟu River bank, Uttamapāḷaiyam, Tēṉi
15. Āṇṭāḷ-Raṅgamaṉṉār *Teppattēr* crossing *aracu* tree-temple, *tirumukkuḷam* pond, Śrīvilliputtūr

Āl tree temple spreading over granite out corp. *Kaṟaṭu* are distinctive hillocks abutting Western Ghats

Ālamar-kaṭavuḷ: A young mediating male deity seated below a *Āl* tree-*vimāna* on a course stone pedestal (*kaṟaṭu*?)

Polerammā: compare with images “Rude Shine at Foot of Tree” (Whitehead 1916: plate no. I drawing and III photo)

16. Caṅkili-*kaṟaṭu*, Kāmayakavuṇṭaṉpaṭṭi, Tēṉi
17. Viṣṇu-Dakṣiṇa, Vaṭapatraśāyī *vimāna*, Śrīvilliputtūr
18. *Vēmpu* tree-Goddess (Neem/Azadirachta Indicatrunk as *mūlabera*), Kailācapaṭṭi, Tēṉi

Aerial roots of Banyan tree creeping over the granite outcrop *kaṟaṭu*. See the protective sand filing for the aerial root on which the local *pūcāri* is seated

Refined Cōḻa Dakṣiṇāmūrti

Kaṟaṭu geological texture includes solid granite outcrops with *caralai* (natural course gravel)

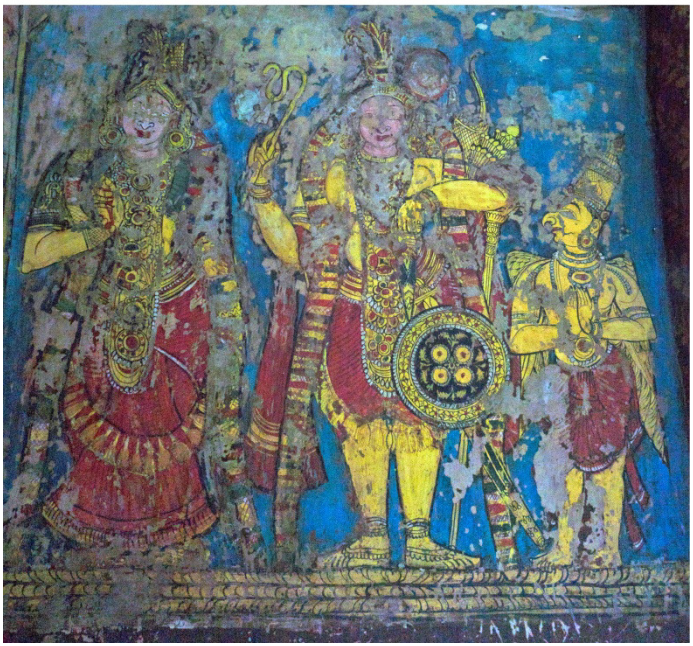
19. Caṅkili-*kaṟaṭu*, Kāmayakavuṇṭaṉpaṭṭi, Tēṉi
20. Dakṣiṇāmūrti (Ālamar-*kaṭavuḷ*), Koraṅganātha temple, Śrīnivasanallūr
21. View of Caṅkili-*kaṟaṭu*, Kāmayakavuṇṭaṉpaṭṭi, Tēṉi

Terracotta horses, bulls, and Ēḻukaṉṉimār along with images of potential male and female child donors (?) below the banyan tree

Thatched roof *vimāna*

Thatched roof *vimāna* laced round a tree and the tree trunk *mūlabera*. *Vimāna* and tree interlaced

22. Caṅkili-Karuppaṉ temple, Caṅkiliyāṉ-*pāṟai*, Añkuḻippaṭṭi
23. Thatch *vimāna* over *vēmpu* tree trunk, Kailācapaṭṭi cf. Polerammā
24. Detail of Fig. 18, Kailācapaṭṭi



25. Rare depiction of a full-grown man reclining on a banyan leaf. Nāyaka painting of Vaṭapatraśāyī *mūlabera* (Śrīvilliputtūr), Attikiri, Kāñcīpuram
26. Feathers on head and the bow arrow suggesting a tribal make over. Nāyaka painting of Āṇṭāḷ-Raṅgamaṉṉār-Garuḍāḻvār *mūlabera*, Attikiri, Kāñcīpuram.
(Photo credit no. 25 R. K. K. Rajarajan, rest by the author)

About the author:

Parthiban Rajukalidoss did his graduation in Architecture in the Regional Engineering College, Tirucirappalli, and Master's in World Heritage Studies in the UNESCO Chair of Heritage Studies, the Brandenburg University of Technology, Cottbus, Germany. He was Director Cheran School of Architecture, Karur and later faculty in the Kalasalingam University, Srivilliputtur, and completed his doctoral programme in the Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad (IITH).

He has published in the *Acta Orientalia* and *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*. A few publications stand to credit at the national level. He is the coauthor of *Samāpti-Suprabhātam: Reflections on the South Indian Bhakti Tradition in Literature and Art* (Sharada: Delhi 2017). His doctoral dissertation is on the Architectural and Intangible cultural heritage of Śrīvilliputtūr Temple.

E-mail: parthikal@gmail.com

Initiatory Death in the Hindu Rite of Passage called *Upanayana*

Hilda-Hedvig VARGA
University of Bucharest
Faculty of Philosophy

Abstract: In world cultures, the individual's transition from one stage of existence to the other is marked by specific ceremonies. When a youth is on the verge of entering adulthood, this milestone is touched upon through rites – more or less challenging from a physical, mental and emotional point of view – meant to prepare him for the active participation in the community's life, of which he is a member, and take on the specific responsibilities of his new identity. I have used the term *identity* since, we shall see, the transition from one stage to the other involves the casting off of one's old garb and bedecking one's self anew, a fundamental reconfiguration of the individual. Starting from the philosophical framing of the rites, in order to understand the concept of *initiatory death* we shall, first, reveal the origins of *Upanayana*, the context of its birth, its development stages, goal, and lastly, stop at some relevant passages for this rite from the sacred texts.

Keywords: initiatory death, identity, Indian philosophy, rites of passage, *Upanayana*.

Philosophical framing

It is strenuous to include the rites of passage in a certain line of thought on the grounds that the Indian philosophical schools view them in a very distinct manner. In order to convert this experience

into a smooth one, we shall stress the concepts and the importance commentators grant rites in general briefly.

About the Indian schools of thought (*darśana*) we know that they are divided into *āstika* and *nāstika*, scholars, most often, using the terms *orthodox* and *heterodox* in translation[1]. Thus, *āstika* refers to the person who believes *it exists*, while a *nāstika* to a person who trusts *it doesn't exist* – all that is left is to have the question of "what exists and what not" answered. In our endeavour to narrow down the large assortment of opinions, we shall stop at one of Medhātithi's writings, the well-known commentator of the *Manusmṛti* (*The Laws of Manu*), who states about the *nāstika* that it is someone who says "there is no other world; there is no [purpose in] gift-giving; there is no [purpose in] sacrificing" (Nicholson 2010, 168). According to Medhātithi, this person refuses the authority of the Vedas and, inherently, the participation in Vedic rituals, not so much because they were untrue, but more owing to the fact that he sees the entirety of ritualistic requirements unfit (Nicholson 2010, 168). Hereafter, we shall discuss only those traditions that fall under the umbrella of *āstika*.

We recall that Vedic tradition was, chiefly, focused on rigurously performing sacrifices and rituals – by means of appropriately combining steps, the uttered word (*mantra*) and the sacrificial objects needed – for the begetting of the desired fruit, *phala* (from events related to natural phenomena like rain, to the

[1] Translating these phrases is anything but easy, the literature of the field of study overflowing with opinions; we have confined ourselves to one option, that which we have come across mostly; details can be found in Nicholson's work (see References).

birth of a son and victory in battle). The Vedas embodied the sole source of authority, therefore the truth, after whose guideline man could correctly follow the necessary procedures in obtaining the covetted result, being instructed, at the same time, in regard to the possible faults and things to be avoided. Consequently, as S. Dasgupta underlines, in such a tradition "truth cannot be determined *a priori* but depends upon the test of experience" (Dasgupta 1922, 209). For a sacrificial-type belief, the principles and rules were important so long as they directed one to the fulfillment of personal or collective aspirations. The path of action, *karmamārga*, but also the concept of action-fruit, *karmaphala*, had a meaning constricted[2] by the Vedic girdle, in the sense that action and its fruit were strictly related to sacrifice; the knowledge that man acquired was limited to that of sacrifice and Vedic canon.

Let us proceed towards the *āstika*[3] schools, listing them and pointing out some of the important characteristics that will determine their position towards rites and sacrifices. Ascribed to the mythical figure of Kapila, the *Sāṃkhya* school is many a time discussed in the same sentence with the *Yoga* school, formulated by Patañjali, many of the metaphysical structures being identical. Nonetheless, a significant difference lies in the acknowledgement of a personal god (*Īśvara*), other than *Ātman*, in the *Yoga* tradition, whilst the members of the *Sāṃkhya* school refuse to admit the existence of such an entity, thinking "that sincere philosophic

[2] For the multiple meanings of *karma*, turn to Phillips 2009, chap. 3

[3] We shall not press upon chronology or stress the chronological listing of these; considering the absence of a written tradition for a long while, any framing in a particular time span is ever so difficult, viewpoints on this subject being diverse, and often conflicting.

thought and culture are sufficient to produce the true conviction of the truth and thereby bring about liberation" (Dasgupta 1922, 68). Of course, the conspicuousness of the *Yoga* school is unquestionable in that it calls on particular methods to obtain liberation (breathing exercises, meditation). Hence, we may speak of the *Sāṃkhya* school as being engaged in the *path of knowledge* (*jñānamārga*), the thinkers' restlessness being of an epistemological nature. As for the *Yoga* school, it includes, no doubt, the path of knowledge, since the only way in which man can rid himself of worldly restraints is by knowledge (indeed, that involves meditation and ascetic practices). Consequently, rites and rituals have no place among such epistemological views.

Although *Nyāya* has mostly been translated as *logic*, M. Müller warns us that the writings of this school do not resemble at all "our treatises of formal logic" (Müller 1899, 484). Gautama, the figure from whom the teachings of this school must have originated, had his interest targeted towards the science of logic in his writings. Knowledge could be obtained from four sources: *perception* (*pratyakṣa*), *inference* (*anumāna*), *analogy* (*upamāna*) and *credible testimony* (*śabda*); again, we may notice a disposition for the path of knowledge, with the tradition's specific features[4]. *Vaiśeṣika*, attributed to Kaṇāda, is based on the acceptance of perception and inference as certain sources of knowledge. The *atomic theory*[5] postulates that all objects can be reduced to atoms because there has

[4] We shall not linger much upon theoretical details, but we will bring to mind that parallels can be drawn between this tradition and ancient Greek philosophy by coming across syllogisms or other topics of interest such as the Self, the senses, perception, mind etc.

[5] Parallels can be identified with Democritus', Epicurus' and others' philosophies.

to be something that cannot further be divided. Without this idea, says Kaṇāda, we would smash into an *infinite regress*[6]. We will not ponder upon the theoretical framework, but we insist on underlining S. Dasgupta's words:

> The fact that the *Vaiśeṣika* begins with a promise to describe *dharma* and after describing the nature of substances, qualities and actions and also the *adṛṣṭa* (unknown virtue) due to *dharma* (merit accruing from the performance of Vedic deeds) by which many of our unexplained experiences may be explained, ends his book by saying that those Vedic works which are not seen to produce any direct effect, will produce prosperity through *adṛṣṭa*, shows that Kaṇāda's method of explaining *dharma* has been by showing that physical phenomena involving substances, qualities, and actions can only be explained up to a certain extent while a good number cannot be explained at all except on the assumption of *adṛṣṭa* (unseen virtue) produced by *dharma* (Dasgupta 1922, 282).

Furthermore, the author adds:

> But what leads to *adṛṣṭa*? In answer to this, Kaṇāda does not speak of good or bad or virtuous or sinful deeds, but of Vedic works, such as holy ablutions *(snāna),* fasting, holy student life *(brahmacarya),* remaining at the house of the teacher *(gurukulavāsa),* retired forest life *(vānaprastha),* sacrifice *(yajña),* gifts *(dāna),* certain kinds of sacrificial sprinkling and rules of performing sacrificial works according to the prescribed time of the stars, the prescribed hymns (*mantras*) (VI.ii.2) (Dasgupta 1922, 283).

[6] Both for Aristotle, and for Indian thinkers, this constitutes an obstacle that must be disposed of.

Behold the clear proof that the *Vaiśeṣika* school's theoretician had not completely detached himself from the rules and rituals imposed by the Vedas, although the word (*śabda*) does not have pre-eminence as a source of knowledge, and neither are the Vedas looked upon as having supreme authority. Summing up, *Nyāya* is centered on the description of knowledge mechanisms and brings arguments against the skeptical position which asserts that nothing is certain (Radhakrishnan 1931, 30). *Vaiśeṣika* analyzes, first of all, experience, formulating notions that target known things, either through inference, or authority (Radhakrishnan 1931, 30). Even if both schools turn their gaze towards atomism, *Nyāya* accepts the postulates without too many debates, whilst *Vaiśeṣika* develops a complex perception of atomic constituency of objects (Radhakrishnan 1931, 30).

Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, meaning the one prior to, contrasts in name with what we call today *Vedānta*, that is *Uttara Mīmāṃsā*, the latter one. These tags of prior and latter do not have any chronological implication, as we might think, but are there to emphasize the first one's affiliation to the ritual section, *karma kānda*, and the second's to the knowledge section, *jñāna kānda*, of the Vedas[7]. That is why the first one is remembered as *Mīmāṃsā*, while the second one is known as *Vedānta*. Let us get acquainted, foremost, with Vedantic principles: according to M. Müller, the essence of this school's teachings can be thus summarized, "in one half verse I shall tell you

[7] This order has its logic in the flow of the four stages of Hindu life, in that man must first have been the head of a family, hence to have performed sacrifices (*gṛhastha*), only after to have retreated to the forest and to have dedicated his existence to meditation and contemplation (*vānaprastha* or *saṃnyāsa*).

what has been taught in thousands of volumes: Brahman is true, the world is false, the soul is Brahman and nothing else" (Müller 1899, 159–160). Nothing is more important than the ultimate truth, Brahman, and man is nothing but a drop of that matchless principle. The outside ceases to have a meaning in reaching the superior spheres, even becoming a hinderance, if the actions are of the nature to enchain the individual and fasten him in *karma's* noose. The personal and intimate ruminations of the sacrificial act have precedence, symbolism taking over the physical performance of sacrifices. The identification of Brahman in the Self is the greatest achievement since it signals that the union with the supreme is imminent. Thinkers have done everything in their power to detach themselves from Vedic sternness and the almost blind constraint of sacrificial performance[8].

In contrast to the previous tradition, *Mīmāṃsā* forms the foundation with the help of which the interest for sacrifice and rites was revived. Although preceding *Vedānta* and handling action (*karma kānda*, the section dedicated to action), it cannot be comprehended without the explanations occasioned by a system such as Bādarāyaṇa's, the mysterious philosopher to whom the fundamental treatise of the Vedantic school is ascribed. Jaiminī, the supposed author of the basic text for the *Mīmāṃsā* tradition, collected in his work rules and instructions in performing sacrifices so that no confusion may arise, and mistakes be completely avoided.

[8] Speaking of texts that encompass an extensive time frame, with possible additions and alterations, Vedic lingerings are frequent; this does not hinder us from extracting the core concepts and constructing an image that highlights the essential ideas.

Considering the correct execution of sacrifices rested upon the flawless interpretation of the Vedic text, any departure from the norm or erronous perception was equal to committing a sin which beckoned suplementary expiation sacrifices[9]. There are voices claiming that this tradition lacks a philosophical layer, the poorly represented philosophical sphere being undermined by the ritualistic aim[10].

Nonetheless, a definite separation of the tradition from Vedic norms is unimaginable, even if the emphasis falls upon the performance of rites and rituals; thence, we may confidently state that the *Mīmāṃsā* school brings to the forefront concepts with a philosophical overtone such as *dharma* and its uprightness, or the source of knowledge, the definition of duty and theories of sound and word, discussed in the first part of Jaiminī's work. The epicentre of the tradition being the rite and the performance of ceremonial gestures to perfect the ontological realm, the reality of the soul must be asserted – a being with a permanent body, upon which the results of sacrificial acts are reflected (Radhakrishnan 1931, 375) – the only outright independent authority capable of claiming ultimate truth and knowledge being the Veda.

Let us remember that the extensive Vedic literature has determined the development of the *sūtra* writing, namely as concise and clear aphorisms as possible, such that the content articulates the essential and unquestionable. The economy of words and ideas, and avoiding errors respectively, were key elements that structured the form of *sūtras* – because human memory is limited, and yesteryear's

[9] See *The Mīmāṃsā Sūtras of Jaiminī* 1923, 996 (XII.3.13)
[10] See Dasgupta 1922, 68, 372; Müller 1899, 259; Radhakrishnan 1931, 375.

scholars could not count on the support of the printing press. However, their highly concentrated fashion is the one to bring about understading issues due to the mystery that envelops every line, commentaries being quintessential for an in-depth reading of the text.

Summing up, each tradition promises their followers infinite bliss, the path of achieving it being different; despite the fact that the nature of that happiness may be contrasting, the journey towards knowledge that man has to undergo is essentially the same – and it ensures him with all the vital elements needed to sever his ties with an existence that can never bring him true bliss.

Rite, in general and the rite of passage, in particular

We cannot talk about about rites in the singular since many situations are part of this category, with different functions for the individual and group; thus, by virtue of complexity of meaning, it is impossible to find one definition to fit an entire array of communities or people who practice them. However, generalizing, a rite can be interpreted as an act or ceremony of a, usually, religious, social or cultural nature; this explanation may prove unsatisfactory if we think of cultures with manifold ritual practices, among which we also include the Indian one.

The rite is not a confined phenomenon, but is part of a sequence-chain with multiple distinct stages, each highlighting changes in the individual or collective identity. No one has more clearly defined this in a theory than the French anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep, coming with a tripartite rendering (with a proneness to rites of passage): *preliminal* rites (or of *separation*), *liminal* rites (or of *transition*) and *postliminal* rites (or of

incorporation). The outline does not claim whatsoever that every rite contains all the categories or that these are equally shared among rites. Moreover, when one of the categories is strong enough, it may become a rite on its own (eg. betrothal as a transition between adolescence and marriage) (Van Gennep 2004, 11). The author mentions the following on the meeting of rites in general with those of passage:

> All these rites which have specific effective aims, occur in juxtaposition and combination with rites of passage – and are sometimes so intimately intertwined with them that it is impossible to distinguish whether a particular ritual is, for example, one of protection or of separation (Van Gennep 2004, 12).

For Van Gennep, the rite is in a tight relation with the socio-cultural environment and the order that governs it. Clearly, he does not underrate the biological component at all and its usefulness in the ritualistic universe, but underlines the fact that neither the social, nor the cultural can break away from the biological.

Another worth to mention name in this discussion is Victor Turner's, who advocates that social structure is subjected to change, and is, therefore, dynamic, contrary to his predecessors' judgements that everything is immobile. It is, thus, that the concept of liminality or of transition, found in Van Gennep as well, can be linked to the movement existent at the social level. In her study, Adina Șandru correctly notes that

> liminality in rites has openned Turner a universe comprising all possibilities, in which individuals are neither "here", nor "there", in which they are defunct to social structure, forming, at the same time, a *communitas,* a socially unstructured world (Șandru 2016, 114).

The term *rite* has been explained by some to originate from the Latin *ritus*, that sends us to the order that it, necessarily, establishes. The stringent dilemma in literature arises when the synonymy between *rite* and *ceremony* is debated; due to the fact that their meaning is very similar, it is impossible to draw a clear line that may cast away the partiality for one or the other. Nonetheless, in Romanian, *rite* seems to have, primarily, a religious interpretation, close to the sacred, while ceremony is, oft, correlated with profane events (graduation, swearing in, master of ceremonies etc.). Owing to the lack of synonyms that do justice to both words in their specific contexts, we sincerely believe that the safest approach would be the one in which the scholar briefly clarifies his position, pour some light over his decision to use the words alternatively, based on an artificial alikeness that saves one from irksome repetition. Hence, not ceremonies are the ones that determine a new order in social structure or modify the existent one, but rites; all that is left to ceremonies is to highlight and consecrate events.

Modernity has attracted a deprivation from sacredness in the universe and a decline, if not complete loss, of contact with the sacred. Man is enstranging himself from his roots and tradition more and more, caught in the turmoil of an active life and dazed by the everyday whirlpool. *The rites of initiation* (for which we shall employ the alternative *rites of passage* in the present work) represent those ties with the traditional world that compel the human being to restore contact with the universe he was once part of and to embrace the identity that fuses cultural, religious and social components.

By *initiation*, in its general sense, as defined by Mircea Eliade, we understand "a body of rites and oral teachings whose purpose is to produce a decisive alteration in the religious and social status of the person to be initiated" (Eliade 1958, x). Mircea Eliade continues with a philosophical augmentation and tells us that

> initiation is equivalent to a basic change in existential condition; the novice emerges from his ordeal endowed with a totally different being from that which he possessed before his initiation; he has become another (Eliade 1958, x).

For the perfection of the adult, a certain amount of time is needed – variable according to the particular culture – in preparation of the youth and teaching him responsibility as a future member of society. Through the *rites of initiation* (or *of passage*), the youngster shall acquire a series of cultural and spiritual values that will complete and mould his behaviour. As Mircea Eliade points out, he is not only exposed to a different behavioral pattern, but also learns new techniques and is acquianted with the institutions of adults; moreover, sacred myths and community traditions are revealed to him (especially in tribal associations), as well as the history of divine works, but, most importantly, he learns about the mystical relationship between tribe and supernatural beings (Eliade 1958, x).

Origins and *Upanayana's* stages of development

If in primitive societies the forms of initiation require extremely challenging physical and mental endurance or even mutilation, in the case of *Upanayana* the period of isolation and being apart from family, that follows after the performance of the rite, makes up the

most demanding part of it all. Initially, we may assert, that the need to perform the *Upanayana* was of a social and cultural kind, as R. Pandey also states, the rite being endowed with sacredness only when the idea of religion and sacredness flooded every stage of life, and ceremonies concerning the community needed religious acknowledgement to flaunt their legitimacy (Pandey 1994, 111–112). From a social point of view, without *Upanayana* man cannot be allowed to find an Aryan companion whom to marry. With regard to the concept of race, a cultural perspective is appropriate: R. Pandey underlines that the individual was accepted in the heart of the community, taking advantage of all his rights and priviliges, only on account of his *cultural fitness* (Pandey 1994, 112), since without *Upanayana* he could not call himself a *twice-born*. This transformation is many a time associated with *baptism* (Pandey 1994, 112), but can also be compared to the *rite of confirmation* found in catholicism and protestantism because its performance implies the *reforming* of the being's spiritual life[11].

The roots of performing this rite go back to the times when Indo-Aryans and Iranians cohabited[12]. The proof that R. Pandey brings to uphold this idea is the rite entitled *Naujat* (new birth) in which children, both boys and girls, receive initiation after the age of six years and three months (Pandey 1994, 112).

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[11] *Confirmation* comes as a replenishment of baptism, a reassertion of belief in Christ and a nearing of a preexistent connection between believer and church at an age where one is able to make sense of the events that occur around him. It is oft doubled by the function of rite of passage into another age category and earning the complete status in the religious community one is part of.

[12] See Pandey 1994, 112; Kane 1941, 268.

Let us, now, cast a glance upon the information available to us in the Vedas. In the *Ṛg Veda*, mentions of the *brahmacārī* stage appear, about which we know it follows initiation:

> The *Brahmacārī* goes engaged in duty: he is a member of God's own body. Through him Bṛhaspati obtained his consort, as the Gods gained the ladle brought by Soma[13] (*Ṛg Veda*, X.109.5).

Atharva Veda contains one of the most important hymns, in which the disciple (*brahmacārī*) is glorified, elevated to a creator's station and source of everything there is:

> The plants, what is and what shall be, day, night, the tall tree of the wood, the year with seasons of the year, all from the *Brahmacārī* sprang.
> All creatures of the earth and heaven, tame animals and sylvan beasts, winged and wingless creatures, from the *Brahmacārī* sprang to life[14] (*Atharva Veda*, XI.5.20–21).

During the *brāhmaṇa period*, ceremonies that were connected to the *Upanayana* were beginning to gain a clearer outline[15].

In the *upaniṣadic period*, the *theory of the four āśramas*[16] was crystalizing, in which each stage received special standing. The respect for the teacher was remarkable, and *Upanayana* was not

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[13] *The Hymns of the Rigveda* 1897, 552.
[14] *The Hymns of the Atharva-Veda* 1917, 71.
[15] See *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, I.2.1–8.
[16] The four *āśramas*: *Brahmacharya* – dedicated to study; *Gṛhastha* – the sustainer of the family; *Vanaprastha* – withdrawal in the forest period; *Saṃnyāsa* – ascetism. Olivelle, in *The Āśrama System – The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution* (1993, 73), gives the timeframe close to the composition of the *Dharmasūtras* of Gautama, Baudhāyana and Āpastamba as the source of birth of this system.

performed with great pomp, but by the simple arrival before the teacher and securing his acceptance to become a student (Pandey 1994, 113). It is in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (I.11.4) that some of the teachings that any *brahmacārī* has to acquire are stated, the appreciation of the teacher being obvious:

> Treat thy mother as a God; as a God treat, thou thy father; as a God shalt thou treat thy teacher; thy guests as God shalt thou treat[17].

Once we've arrived in the *sūtra period*, we may, unmistakebly, say that the details of the rite take shape. The *Gṛhyasūtras* are the fundamental texts where we find all the rules and details regarding the correct performance of the ceremonies pertaining to the rite (for example in the *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhyasūtra*, chap. II; *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra*, I.19–24).

The meaning of the term

The meaning of *Upanayana* is that of "sitting next to, being guided/led by a teacher"[18] (it is a compound made up of the preffix *upa-*, translated by "near, by, with, together with" and a form of the verbal root *nī*, first class conjugation, which means "to lead, to guide").

As we have shown above, the rite has undergone numerous stages of development; naturally, its meaning has changed as well. R. Pandey shows that in the *Atharva Veda*, XI.7, the word *Upanayana* is used with the sense of "taking over a disciple", referring to the initiation that takes place when the disciple is

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[17] *Taittirīya Upaniṣad with the commentaries of Śankarāchārya, Sureśvarāchārya and Sāyaṇa (Vidyāraṇya)* 1903, 159.

[18] For the meaning of the compound, see Monier-Williams, Monier 1960, 201; for the preffix *upa-*, 194; for the verbal root *nī*, 565.

admitted under the teacher's protective wing (Pandey 1994, 115); this meaning is preserved in the *brāhmaṇa period*, as proven by the descriptions in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[19].

Kane says that *Upanayana* may be comprehended in two ways: 1) bringing the boy to the *ācārya*; 2) the rite in which the boy is taken to the *ācārya*. Furthermore, he believes that the first interpretation is the original and that only when a complex ritual was associated with *Upanayana*, can we speak of the second interpretation (Kane 1941, 268–270). Kane also notes that, for instance, in the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* I.1.1.19[20] it is said that *Upanayana* is a *saṁskāra* (namely a rite of purification) handed down by revelation to the knowledge seeker – thus, arising the preference for the second way of understanding – but can be read, as well, as a "saṁskāra brought about by imparting the *śruti* (viz. *Gāyatrī ma*^{n}*tra*) to him who seeks learning" (Kane 1941, 269). This sharing of the *Gāyatrī ma*^{n}*tra* is suggested in the fragment

> He created the Brahmin with the *Gāyatrī* meter, the Kṣatriya with the *Triṣṭubh* meter, and the Vaiśya with the *Jagatī* meter; whereas the Śūdra he created without the use of any meter (*Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*, IV.3; Olivelle 2000, 369).

In addition, in the *Baudhāyana Gṛhyasūtra* I.3.7–12 (Olivelle 2000, 201),

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[19] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1900, vol. XLIV, part 5, chap. 11.

[20] "A Brahmin should be initiated in the spring, a Kṣatriya in the summer, and a Vaiśya in the autumn; a Brahmin in the eighth year from conception, a Kṣatriya in the eleventh, and a Vaiśya in the twelfth." – Olivelle 2000, 25

> The years are counted from conception. A Brahmin should be initiated in the eighth year after conception,
> a Kṣatriya three years later than a Brahmin,
> and a Vaiśya one year later than a Kṣatriya.
> According to the order of the classes, spring, summer, and autumn are the seasons in which they are initiated; the *Gāyatrī*[21], the *Triṣṭubh*, and the *Jagatī* are the meters used in their initiation;
> and the time for their initiation does not lapse until the sixteenth, the twenty-second, and the twenty-fourth year, respectively.

The purpose

In his work, R. Pandey recounts that, initially, the main aim was an educational one, and the ritual in which the initiated was brought to the teacher was secondary (Pandey 1994, 116). He also tells us that, with the passage of time, from the simple act of the youth to come before an *ācārya* and ask to be accepted as a disciple (Kane 1941, 273) – the emphasis falling upon education – we have arrived at an ellaborate process with stages, as it is featured in the *Gṛhyasūtras* – the emphasis having been moved to ritual, becoming a *bodily saṁskāra*, lacking educational lining in its latest stages of development[22].

We shall not linger too much on the age topic, but we will state that, for example, in the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra* (I.19.1–6) the

[21] The connection between the age of initiation and the type of meter chosen to be imparted is one very tightly knit: the number of syllables of each meter matches the prescribed age for initiation; so, the *Gāyatrī* has eight syllables in each foot, the *Triṣṭubh* has eleven, and the *Jagatī* twelve.

[22] This change gave birth to abnormalities: categories prior excluded from those able of receiving the rite ended up being initiated as a rule – the mad, mute, deaf, people with other disabilities – see Pandey 1994, 117.

following are given: a *brāhmaṇa* should undergo *Upanayana* at the age of eight, a *kṣatriya* at eleven, and a *vaiśya* at twelve. Textual differences are many, but we will not press upon them. We can, however, speculate as to why such a difference among castes: according to R. Pandey, the most plausible explanation would be that, many a time, the father performed the role of the *ācārya*, in the case of *brāhmaṇas*; for them, early initiation was not an inconvenience since they did not leave home to acquire education. The situation for *kṣatriya* and *vaiśya* children was another matter because, if they had left the familiar environment that early, they would have suffered greatly. Another distinguishing factor arises in the age question, that is related to the nature of education to be received. The *brāhmaṇas*, due to their religious studies and priestly obligations, had to begin their journey earlier, their future resting upon the quality of their knowledge of the sacred texts.

Contrary to the priestly caste, the members of the *kṣatriya* and *vaiśya* communities had military careers or jobs in administration, commerce, or agriculture to dream about, needing not the same quantity and type of content as the *brāhmaṇas* (Pandey 1994, 118–119). It can be said that this caste difference came about from a practical requirement and not out of the superiority complex the *brāhmaṇas* were supposed to have endorsed – we must admit their zeal in the safekeeping of the ancient knowledge, but also their own contribution that surfaces owing to the in-depth analysis of millenial wisdom[23].

[23] See Altekar 1944, 18.

In the beginning, there used to be an age limit and its breaching led to excommunication[24]. We stress that for *brāhmaṇas,* the situation was less flexible in the virtue of their function as safekeepers of sacred knowledge, but for a *kṣatriya* and a *vaiśya*, together with the loss of the educational aim in favour of over-ritualization, the age restriction was no more a fixed criterion (Pandey 1994, 120). Nonetheless, it was absolutely necessary that the rite be performed before marriage, since only a *twice-born* could choose to marry an Aryan girl[25].

The second birth and initiatory death

One of the most crucial aspects of *Upanayana* is that of being invested with the quality of *twice-born*. *Atharva Veda* offers precious details concerning this second birth:

> The master, welcoming his new disciple, into his bowels takes the *Brahmacārī*. Three nights he holds and bears him in his belly. When he is born, the Gods convene to see him (XI.5.3)[26].

The three nights spent by the disciple in his teacher's belly remind us of Jonah's adventures from the Judaic, Islamic and Christian traditions; they share the common fate of being blessed with a rebirth, the time spent in darkness representing an internal journey, an introspective and didactic experience.

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[24] Sixteen for a *brāhmaṇa*, twenty-two for a *kṣatriya*, twenty-four for a *vaiśya* – see above pages 110–111 for the quote from the *Baudhāyana Gṛhyasūtra* I.3.7–12.

[25] Let us comprehend Arianism as a defining term for those following the Vedic tradition and worshipping Vedic Gods; it is prudent to consider the concept of Aryan (from the Sanskrit *ārya*, noble) applicable from a religious, cultural and linguistic point of view and less from a racial one.

[26] *The Hymns of the Atharva-Veda* 1917, 68.

This time, in the *Manusmṛti*, we have an image in which Sāvitrī becomes the mother and the father becomes the teacher:

> Among those (three) the birth which is symbolised by the investiture with the girdle of Muñja grass, is his birth for the sake of the Veda; they declare that in that (birth) the Sāvitrī (verse) is his mother and the teacher his father.
> They call the teacher (the pupil's) father because he gives the Veda; for nobody can perform a (sacred) rite before the investiture with the girdle of Muñja grass[27] (II.170-171).

See how the role of the progenitor is taken up by the teacher and how much responsibility rests upon his shoulders in becoming a father for the disciple not only symbolically, but in the true depth of the notion – a parent is the one who takes care of the education, well-being and empowerment of the child.

Again, in the *Manusmṛti*, the following fragment is to be found:

> According to the injunction of the revealed texts the first birth of an Aryan is from (his natural) mother, the second (happens) on the tying of the girdle of Muñja grass, and the third on the initiation to (the performance of) a (*Śrauta*) sacrifice (II.169)[28].

Thus, after the physical one, *Upanayana* reveals a second birth that comes with an entire baggage of characteristics and denotes the beginning of a lengthy period of study. *Upanayana* honours two functions: it used to represent, at its beginnings, a threshold that once crossed meant entering a different stage of life and in which the student, as mentioned before, concentrated not only on learning, but

[27] *The Laws of Manu* 1886, 61.
[28] Ibidem.

also on rules of conduct in society under the watchful gaze of the *ācārya*; on the other hand, having become more symbolic nowadays, it still enforces its power by the fact that a marriage cannot be performed without the youth having gone through it – these are, therefore, the two functions, an educational and a social one.

Mircea Eliade shows that, in archaic thought, the majority[29] of initiatory rites

> more or less clearly imply a ritual death followed by resurrection or a new birth. The central moment of every initiation is represented by the ceremony symbolizing the death of the novice and his return to the fellowship of the living. But he returns to life a new man, assuming another mode of being. Initiatory death signifies the end, at once, of childhood, of ignorance, and of the profane condition (Eliade 1958, xii–xiii).

Mircea Eliade continues his line of thinking with mentioning that

> for archaic thought, nothing better expresses the idea of an end, of the final completion of anything, than death, just as nothing better expresses the idea of creation, of making, building, constructing, than the cosmogony (Eliade 1958, xii–xiii).

Consequently, cosmogonies represent the starting point for any making; imitation – be it only symbolical – of a cosmogony comes with an implicit success since what can be more perfect that divine creation itself? As M. Eliade well notes, "symbolic repetition of the creation implies a reactualization of the primordial event, hence the

[29] This majority affirmed by M. Eliade is better to be viewed guardedly; we are not convinced that the concept of initiatory death has such a large applicability as stated by the author, which is why we prefer to focus it on our area of interest.

presence of the Gods and their creative energies" (Eliade 1958, xii–xiii). Human mind safekeeps the fascination of the return to origins, yearning to reproduce the former picture. We, however, are aware that in order to produce something new, the old must be abandonned – translated into creationist terms, for something new to be born, the old world and existence must cease.

To achieve such an end, we may revert to chaos or focus on cosmogonical elements (Eliade 1958, xii–xiii). Due to the fact that it puts an end to a way of living, initiatory death means a temporary return to chaos – together with the initiated, ignorance, lack of maturity in decision-making, iresponsibility characteristic to young age and child-like innocence end as well. The construction of a new man needs a *tabula rasa*, an empty piece of paper on which new features, rules and responsibilities that complete the new identity are to be written. The most important thing is, however, the opening of a once closed door: the one that enables spiritual growth and the availability of information previously forbidden – *only the initiated is allowed to enter the realm of the sacred*.

Conclusion

Culture is marked by both the profane and the sacred; the two spheres breathe in an unbreakable interdependence. We strongly believe that the sacred is forever present in the ontological realm, but that it can go through periods of darkness, when man is highly keen on declaring his superiority, on removing himself from the spiritual and forcing scientific answers where they prove inappropriate. The rites of passage remind us of the divine essence that resides in us and reinforce or build anew a dormant relation.

We have seen how man's initiation into the secret Vedic knowledge is perceived as a second birth and how identity itself undergoes a deep reconfiguration. The philosophical framing has helped us assign concepts in a matrix that would be available whenever needed, and the origins, stages of development, meaning of the rite of passage called *Upanayana* and its aim of performance have underlined its importance. Lastly, we have learned how the concept of initiatory death intertwines with the changing power that *Upanayana* has over man in Indian thought. Man is disassembled and reassembled, learning about the wordly and sacred in such a way that he may hold his place in both.

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About the Author: After having completed a B.A. in Philology, with the major in English and the minor in Hindi, Hilda-Hedvig Varga went on to finish her Master’s studies in Religious Studies, both at the University of Bucharest. She is currently a PhD student at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest, with a thesis on *Hindu rites of passage*. Her interests encompass anything Indian, be it language and literature, history or philosophy.

Contact: hedwig0silver@gmail.com

Raziya Sultan, a Turkish by Blood, but an Indian by Heart

Alexandra-Iulia NUC
"1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia

Abstract: The history of Central Asia is full of situations where the leadership of the territory was in the hands of a woman. Sometimes she served as a regent, sometimes she held the ultimate power. One of these women was Raziya (1236-1240), who ruled a northern India kingdom that fell into the hands of Muslim invaders. One of the most ambitious historical characters of the Indian subcontinent, an echo of the struggle for gender equality, Raziya loved and respected the people chosen to govern it regardless of religion, belief, and habits.

Raziya was a surprising personality leader with a big ambition, an inherited intelligence in the family, and an overwhelming energy. These qualities have been combined with tolerance to other people, the hardness and the power to continue that made her immortal and memorable in the people's consciousness.

Keywords: Delhi Sultanate, medieval times, Northern India, empress, foreign domination.

She was endowed with all the qualities befiting a king, but she was not born on the right sex and so in the estimation of men all these virtues were worthless. May God have mercy on her.
(Minhaj Al-Siraj, Tabaqat-i Nasiri)

Medieval India presents an evolving world. Foreign invaders brought with them different customs and traditions that they attempted to implement. The language, culture and civilization of newcomers have influenced and merged with those of the natives. For the Hindu population from northern India, the invasion period was a dark period, followed by assimilation of fear by indigenous people.

Employing empires by the foreigners has put the Hindu population on the second place. But not all rulers were ruthless and oppressive with the other people. In the other category is Raziya-ud-Bin Iltutmish, who marks the history of medieval India. Her story is not in wealth, pride or ignorance, behind the royal title was a princess who, due to circumstances, reached the throne of a great sultanate, the Delhi Sultanate. Raziya has shown that through tolerance and understanding she can obtain the appreciation of the people led, even if she is a stranger.

The specialized literature that has approached this subject is almost inaccessible due to very few sources available, but also the language used in the 10th - 13th centuries (Al-Biruni, *Alberuni's India*, Minhaj-al Siraj, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*; Ferishta, Mahomed Kasim, *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India*). The woman's condition was only debated at times when they began to play important roles in politics, literature, or other areas.

Creating a great Muslim Empire in Northern India (13th century)

The entry of Muslims in Northern India was the most important step muslims made until the end of the 12th century, in the process

of territorial domination, thus putting the first brick to building a powerful empire, the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526).

Why are we talking about this empire? The answer is simple: because, during the time he led the territory, there was a woman who seized power, not as a regent, as it was, but as the Sultan. During the sultanate, there were five dynasties, the first being known as the Mamluks dynasty or the "Ilbari Turks" (1206-1290)[1].

The true founder of the sultanate was Qutb-ud-din Aibak (1150-1210), who was a mamluk, bought from the market in Nishapur. Aibak was a slave from Turkestan[2] who then became a military commander in Ghori's army. After the latter's death, the slave ruled the province of Lahore, while conquering neighboring areas. At the beginning of the 13th century, most Hindustan[3] from Ganges to Indus, came under his authority.

The Muslim society was run by the Turks who tried to protect the territory of non-Muslims, non-Turkish people and indigenous Muslims by any means. From a religious point of view, there was a struggle between Hindus, Indian Muslims and converted Buddhists, eager to affirm themselves.

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[1] The Mamluks were initially young slaves of the Abbasid Caliphate. Since 850 AD, caliphs have captured or bought young people who were not Islamic, and led them as Sunni Muslims into a slave army. See also Chandra, *History*, p. 36.

[2] Meaning Turk's Land in Persian, Turkestan is the area in Central Asia that has as neighbors: Siberia and Tibet in the North, India and Afghanistan in the South, Caspian Sea in the West, and the Gobi Desert in the east. See also Gladys D. Clewell, Holland Thompson, *Lands and Peoples: The world in color*, vol. III, New York, Grolier Society Pub, 1932, p.163.

[3] It is a widely used endonym for the Republic of India. From a historical point of view, it was also used as a geographical term for the northern / northwest subcontinent of India, and sometimes for the entire subcontinent.
See also https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hindustani.

Although it took a long time, local customs have been influenced by those of the "newcomers", and they have also taken on Hindu customs. The Indian plate (betel leaf) has become popular among Muslims, as it has been the use of spices.

As far as the Hindu people were concerned, their social life was relatively unchanged, although during the military operations they suffered territorial and human losses. Sultanate was a period of tension and conflict. The theory of the racial superiority of the Turks, which took place during the reign of early kings, was not conducive to engaging Hindus or even indigenous Muslims in high civil and military posts.

The follower of Aibak, Iltutmish, who was neither son nor brother, but a slave coming from the Turkestan steppes, made history repeat itself. From a simple chief of royal bodyguards (sarjandar) he has become one of the most remarkable rulers. After him, the list of leaders continues with the upcoming of the power of his son, who was accused of incompetence, and was replaced by the first Muslim woman-sultan on the indian subcontinent, the subject of this paper, Raziya.

From Raziya-ud-din Bin Iltutmish to Raziya "Sultan"

Raziya descends from the Seljuk Turks, which was Islamized later and to a lesser extent. We wondered if the mentality of the woman among the Turkish people was different from that of the Muslim woman in the Abbasid caliphate. Looking for an answer, we thought of the cultural interference that took place in Central Asia in that period, but also in the previous centuries, because the territory we are referring to was invaded by several people from

Central Asia. We could say that it was not a good ground for measuring the influence of Islam. The Turks were Muslims for a short period of time, and it is supposed that the old mentality and old habits were still preserved and practiced.

Child raising, sewing, milking cows and sheep were attributions belonging to Turkish women. They were taking care of the way they looked, so men could admire their beauty. They were appreciated for the way they were arranged, for arched eyebrows and thin lips[4]. The Turkish woman did not wear a veil and she did not hide.

She enjoyed certain freedoms: she had her place in the yurt[5], could give advice to the husband, participate in celebrations, performances, etc. Compared with other people, the Turkish woman often had the right to marry in love. The youngsters visited, knew better and decided if they wanted to marry. But there were cases of marriage for political reasons and rules of conduct. Women were punished for the sin committed: "The infidel was burned alive"[6].

The status of Turkish women played a significant role in the genesis of Islamic society in Central Asia. Nizam al-Mulk, the great visionary of the Seljuqs, considered them to be a negative model and would have disastrous effects on social life. In his opinion, women must stay as far as possible, not listen to their advice because "they do not enjoy intelligence"[7], a point of view known as

[4] Jean-Paul Roux, *Central Asia*, p. 271.
[5] Yurt is a portable wooden lattice structure, covered with felt, traditionally used by nomadic people in the Central Asian steppes. See also Vasile Breban, *Dictionary of the Romanian Contemporary Language*, Bucharest, Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House, 1980, p. 87.
[6] Jean-Paul Roux, *Central Asia*, p. 272.
[7] Ibidem, p. 273.

nāqes ʿaql. Historian Maria Szuppe[8] has specified the existence of some differences between Turkish-Mongolian culture and the Iranian-Islamic tradition. In her opinion, the Turkish-Mongolian cultural tradition compared to the sedentary Iranian-Islamic habits, give more attention to women's social and political activities and family ties. In addition to the fact that women became regents in different circumstances, they had the chance to lead an empire themselves[9]. Therefore, the position of the woman (her role and place in family and society) in these Turkish nations differed from that of Muslims in the Near East or the Arabian Peninsula (the cradle of the Islamic world). Saljuqs turks took up religion, but not entirely, that's why we noticed differences in thought.

Faced with this feminine presence in supreme power, the question arises automatically: *how did state became powerful while governed by a woman?* Because such an ascent seems to have an opposition from the very beginning in Islam. For example, following the crowning of the first empress of the Sasanian Empire, Boran (the second half of the 7th century), the Prophet Muhammad would have said, "Never will succeed such a nation who is making a woman their ruler"[10].

The history of the empires that went through Central Asia and Iran mention some names of feminine personalities who, through a method or circumstance, managed to lead their people.

[8] CNRS Research Director: Medieval and Modern History - Iran and Central Asia.
[9] Maria Szuppe, *Women in Iran from the Rise of Islam to 1800*, Chicago, 2003, p. 63.
[10] Told by Abu Bakra, cited by Muhammad-al-Bukhaari, in *Al-Bukhaari,* vol. IX, book 88, hadith 219.

First of all, we have the empress mentioned above. The daughter of the last great king of the Sasanian dynasty, Khosrow II Parvez (590-628), reached the throne as a result of the lack of an heir. Boran made reforms to the social, economic and cultural system, but could not stop internal struggles, which eventually led to the empire breaking apart. Her ascension to the throne proves that the Persian political system supported the idea of throne climbing by a woman[11].

From the 12th century we have been mentioned the queen of a Muslim-Sunni dynasty, originating in the Turkish mamluks, Terken Khatun, known as Turkan Khatun (the Queen of Turks). She came to govern as a regent following the death of her husband, Shah Ala ad-Din Tekish, through her son Muhammad Al-II[12].

Geographer Yāqut (1179-1229), who traveled to Khwarazm in 1219 and early 1220, noted that, under the leadership of Terken Ḵhātun, the region enjoyed a last glimpse of economic and cultural prosperity[13]. But mongols put an end to their power. Allah-al-Din Mohammad abandoned Transoxania, and at the beginning of 1220 she decided to leave Khwarazm and withdraw with his entourage in the Mazandaran fortress. But before she left, he arranged the execution of local rulers, as well as other important prisoners. After a four month siege, Terken Ḵhātun had to surrender to the mongols.

We do not have enough details about the governments that belonged to the medieval empress, but their existence confirms the

[11] Kia Mehrdad, *The Persian Empire,* vol. I, California, ABC-CLIO, 2016, p. 46.
[12] Michal Biran, *The Empire of the Qara Khitai in Eurasian History: Between China and the Islamic World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 165.
[13] Vasili W. Barthold, *Turkestan down the Mongol Invasion*, translated by V. Minorsky, edited by CE Bosworth, London, Asian Review, 1969, pp. 428-429.

idea that women have been able to rule a smaller or larger state since the 7th century. The traditions and customs that allowed this fact influenced the surrounding people, as we will see in the following example.

Daughter of Shams-ud-din Iltutmish, *Sun of Faith*, and Qutb-ud-din-Aibak's niece, Raziya was the first and only woman who climbed the throne of Delhi's sultanate. It seems that her father decided to allow her to follow him to the throne due to her strong character and the training she received about the administration of the state. Raziya ascended to the throne in 1236 and reigned three years, six months, and six days[14].

The Persian political ideology allowed the ascension of a woman in supreme position. According to this ideology, divinity resides in the person of the king. Since none of the royal blood had any right to assume royal titles, and since sacredness could only be transferred by direct descent, it was permissible for a girl to follow her father[15].

So, in the course of his life, Sultan Iltutmish named his daughter, Raziya, as a successor to the throne of Sultanate. But, from the very beginning, there was a group called *sultan-i-chihalgani*[16] (a council of nobles who had the duty of choosing the successor of the sultan) who tried to oppose her. The reason was that if Raziya had been his son and not his daughter there would have been no problem, but because she did not have the "right kind"

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[14] Duration specified by Minhaj-al Siraj, Persian historian of the 13th century in his book *Tabaqat-i Nasiri.*

[15] Abu Habibullah, *Sulta nah Raziah*, 1940, p. 753.

[16] The group of the 40-Corps made up of nobles Turks who had the right to choose the next sultan. See also Chandra, *History*, p. 39.

she could not rule[17]. Minhaj-al Siraj records that with Raziya's climbing on the throne all things entered on a normal and safe course[18].

Governance

As a sultan, Raziya was preoccupied with the reorganization of the army, appointed officials as capable and trustworthy, many of whom were not Muslim or Turkish. She realized that it was necessary for the welfare of the country to diminish the power of the Turkish nobles.

She tried to abolish the charge for non-Muslims, but encountered difficulties due to the opposition of the nobles. As a result of their religious tolerance, the Turkish nobles accused her of defying the rules of Muslim religion.

Raziya organized public tribunals, listening to the complaints of hern subjects, and carefully supervised the activities of each administrative department. During the government of Raziya, schools, universities and public libraries were set up to find the works of the ancient philosophers, the Koran, the prophet's traditions, and the Hindu works of science, literature and philosophy.

It is known that with the rise on the throne, Raziya began to hide her femininity, taking a more masculine appearance and behavior. She went public in her tunic (quba) and on her head with a kulah, a helmet worn by men, and often riding on an elephant. Only at the end of her reign, she began to wear the veil, purdah, which had to cover the woman's face, although Ibn Battuta stated that she had declared

[17] Rafiq Zakaria, *Razia, queen of India*, p. 22.
[18] Minhaj, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, p. 457.

that the face of women should not be covered, but rather the eyes and minds of the man[19].

Raziya was not the only woman in the government who mastered her behavior. Queen Boran was immortalized in paintings dressed like Sassanian kings, a green tunic over blue pants, a blue crown on her head, sitting on the throne, and holding a battle axe in her hand. In comparison with the contrary statements made by the Prophet: "cursed the man who dresses like a woman, and the woman who dresses like a man"[20].

In the Arabic language, the sultan term "zawjat-al-sultan" refers to the Sultan's wife, and in Turkish the "sultan valide" means the sultan's mother). There was no specific term to name the woman who rules the Sultanate. Although it still needs to be proven, it seems that Raziya wanted to be seen as a sultan in the eyes of the nobles and subjects, or to legitimize her power by acting more like her father. On the coins used during the government[21], it wore the *al-soltan al-mo'azzam,* "great sultan", along with that of her father, *al-soltan al-azam,* "the greatest sultan".

By presenting herself in a masculine appearance and using the title of sultan, she thought she can change something in the way she was seen and finally be accepted by the nobles, and hoped to change their mentality and the society they were part of. Raziya Sultan was no longer merely an heir chosen by her father, but a sacred figure who renounced her female side, with which she was born, in order

[19] Rafiq Zakaria, *Razia, queen of India*, pp. 20-24.
[20] Abu Dāwud, XXXII, no. 4087, cited in *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures* III, s.v. "Sexualities: Transvestism."
[21] Jackson 1998, 187, 195, n. 40; Wright 1936, 40.

to affirm her status as a ruler by trying to defy the sacred laws of a society in which women hardly would take any part in politics.

Detronation

Raziya's reign was challenging. She was not accepted as a sultan by the Turkish nobles. She was accused of having a relationship with an Abyssinian slave, Jamalludin Yakut, whom he raised from the rank of *amir-i-akhurr* (chief of the royal stables) to the rank of the *amir-ul umars* (more of the nobles).

In April 1240, Tabarhinda governor, leader of the rebellion, Malik Altunia (volume III of *The Cambridge History of India* argues that the turkish nobles, jealous of the slave's relationship with Raziya), had influenced Altunia in his decision to lead the rebellion against the sultan). Raziya was betrayed by her own bodyguard and surrendered to her opponents. Before being chained and sent to Tabarhinda[22], Raziya witnessed the bloody death of Yakut. Meanwhile, the throne was occupied by her stepbrother, Bahram Shah. While Raziya was in Bhatinda, he declared himself sultan with the help of *sultan-i-chihalgani* group. To recover her throne, she accepted Altunia's proposal to marry him. With her husband she gathered a strong army with which she headed for Delhi. Two major clashes followed, of which in both they were defeated and forced to withdraw: "her eyes shedding tears of blood at every step". The scene of defeat shows the main actors in a bloody field of bodies, symbolizing the growing power of the Turkish nobles.

The views of the medievalists interested in this subject, Ibn Battuta and Minhaj-al Siraj, converge only with the date and place

[22] The area is known as Bhatinda. See also Chandra, *History*, p. 39.

of death, which would be October 25, 1240, in Kaithal. But the way Raziya was killed differs, the first suggesting that her death was caused by a peasant, then buried in his land, where she remained. Minhaj brought another variation of death, which says that Raziya, along with Altunia, was killed by the Hindus soldiers.

No clear sources have yet been found to show where Raziya was buried or how her life ended. In the following centuries, three tombs were discovered. One would be at Kaithal, in Haryana, other in old Delhi and the last in Rajasthan. One thing is certain: it needs archeological research, because there are many issues that need to be analyzed about the true history of Raziya's death.

Conclusion

Starting with Mahmud Ghazni and reaching Sultana Raziya, Muslims have written the history of northern India for centuries. This is the beginning of a foreign domination, which has led to some major social, cultural, religious and political changes.

The situation in the neighboring states will allow the climbing of characters who were not part of the upper layer of the society, but they were not considered ready to govern. If a mamluk slave could create an empire, then why a woman could not fully take over the power and to rule the empire? The decision to transmit a woman's power also contributed to certain previous situations that have facilitated the rise of powerful women. Raziya was part of the Saljuqs turks group who, before converting to Islam, practiced tengrism. We can say that her religious belief was not an obstacle to her reign.

Raziya is not the only woman to lead an empire from the Sultan position, not just the regent. From the sources that we have, we realize that she played a significant role in the history of women's status not through the period of her reign, but through the message she sent. By masculinizing her appearance, Raziya has proven that it does not matter if you have a strong personality. She did this because she was aware of the fact that there was a gender difference. Although, as we have seen, the Muslim Turkish woman had more freedoms than the Arab woman, she still had an inferior status to men. The role of the women was to take care of the household, family, and were considered weak beings who had to be protected by their husbands.

When she dressed in men's clothing, she realized that what she really wanted was to look like her father. Even if she spent her whole life with him, teaching herself his habits and mastering his strong character, she could not be like him. She was hindered by the gender she tried to masquerade, which was a cause for her short reign. A peculiar feature of her reign over the rest of the previous rulers was that Razyia ruled a foreign territory inhabited by a different kind of people. It was not easy either the moment of choice or the period of reign, yet the sultan accepted her father's desire and respected him. She considered herself worthy of the throne, although her opponents were very strong.

The views of her contemporary historians are different, but they all have the same conclusion: Raziya was a cautious ruler and an exemplary daughter, with only one "defect", that she was born as a

woman[23]. Although during her reign there were voices who opposed this, she managed to rule for more than three years.

From the bibliography dedicated to Raziya, we realize that the sultan did not have a quiet reign, although she had the qualities of a very talented administrator. Some historians have praised the spirit of justice and the care for reforming the education, but their works are written from a subjective point of view[24].

According to Minhaj, Raziya was endowed with all the qualities necessary to govern but needed to be recognized by the men of the great nobility, otherwise she could not have remained sultan. From her entire biography and works of contemporary writers, it appears that Raziya sultan was truly a historical character who tried to change the mentality of those who considered her to be only a woman and incapable of governing. For this she had to display some masculine attributes, such as clothing, military training, and especially the sultan's title to be accepted by the Court and its nobles.

[23] Chandra, *History,* p. 50.
[24] For example, Rafiq Zakaria, in his work, *Razia, queen of India.*

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About the Author:

Alexandra-Iulia Nuc is a master student from Alba Iulia, preoccupied with India's medieval history. In 2018 she finished her bachelor's thesis with the theme *The reign of a Turkish women on Indian subcontinent. Case study: Raziya Sultan (13th century)*. Her field of interest is the woman's status in medieval India, wanting to achieve a research on the devadasi system from South India.

REVIEWS

Margaret MacMillan, *Women of the Raj. The Mothers, Wives, and Daughters of the British Empire in India*, New edition, London: Thames & Hudson, 2018, 320 pp., ISBN 978-0-500-29374-4.

Mihaela GLIGOR
Babeș Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

Margaret MacMillan is a Professor of History at the University of Toronto and emeritus Professor of International History and the former Warden of St. Antony's College at the University of Oxford.

First published thirty years ago, *Women of the Raj* (the new 2018 edition contains 56 illustrations) reveals a world full of mysteries and fascinating stories about incredible people. In the nineteenth century, at the height of colonialism, the British ruled India under a government known as the Raj. British men and women left their homes and traveled to this mysterious, beautiful country, where they attempted to replicate their own society. This is the true story of the life of women of the Raj, the mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters of the British Empire in India, "most of them, ordinary middle-class women put in an extraordinary situation" (p. 20).

Without any strident feminist ardour, MacMillan goes on to claim that women "shared in the glory of the Raj" (p. 24). "The women were there and their story is a part of the Raj's history" (p. 29).

In order to explain how those women played their part in the Raj, Margaret MacMillan has arranged the book perfectly. There are 13 chapters, and each of them deals with a particular theme ("The Voyage

Out", "First Impressions", "The Land of Exile", "Facts of Life", "Women in Danger", "On Holiday", "Unconventional Women", and so on). Every chapter tells a story, and all of them talk about, chronologically, the history of the Raj.

The first impressions were (as they are even today) very important. The encounter with India is something people always remember in details. The women of the Raj made no exception: "The smell was the first thing they noticed. Even before they landed, a whiff of India was borne out to them on the breeze. India has a smell so much its own" (p. 41). Everything else was new and fascinating: the colors, the sounds, the food, the cities, the green areas of Bengal, the trees and the flowers, as the ladies described in their letters to the families. Many of these women lived in Calcutta, beautiful enough to be loved. As Mrs Fay found out, "the banks of the river are as one may say absolutely studded with elegant mansions... By the nineteenth century, Calcutta was to become more impressive for its docks and warehouses, factories and offices, for its vitality and dynamism, and for the fact that it was the capital of India" (p. 45).

But almost all the British women were both delighted and frightened by what they encountered and discovered in India. The good things were that they found themselves in a vast and diverse country, living in spacious houses provided by their government, and enjoying many privileges, not least, an army of servants and gardeners. Together, they formed a small community in this huge landscape. They could not but feel that they were entirely different from the people around them, who, in turn, looked on these occupiers with a mixture of awe and resentment. But not everything was easy for these women: together with their families, they had to face not only the fierce Indian extremely

warm climate and the monsoon, but also the particular diseases which were rampant (and some still are) in India.

To explain and illustrate all the particular situations, Margaret MacMillan uses the reminiscences and letters of such women, rather than academic books and articles. Those primary sources are extremely important and offer unexpected details about life in India during the Raj. Using a rather simple and easy to follow narrative, MacMillan truly writes accessible history. Events of historical importance, like the 1857 mutiny, are explained briefly, offering the reader the necessary context, but not superfluous details.

The first and the most important obligation of the British in India was "loyalty to the community". It was a responsibility most of them took very seriously, as "the British family in India has been analyzed as a symbol and representation of the Raj in miniature" (p. 15). The British lived in small communities where there was a strict hierarchy, and the slightest touch of foreign blood was regarded as suspicious. Men who married Indian women and stayed in India were not accepted as British, nor were they treated as belonging to the ruling class. They could not join the peculiarly Indian institution called the Club. Initially, women were not allowed to go there either, but with the passage of time, they were admitted. They were in India only because their husbands were paid more money there than they would have earned in their own country. Similarly, they too, having belonged to middle-class families in England, were pleased with their status as wives of the ruling class in the Raj. They enjoyed luxuries which they could not have imagined in their homes in England. This was some compensation for the intense heat and the illnesses that were almost endemic in their adopted land.

But, with all these facilities, it was not easy at all to bring up children in a foreign land where diseases were widespread, the climate was harsh and modern medicines were difficult to obtain. “Children could die with appalling suddenness” (p. 162). There were all kind of reasons for their death: “abscesses, bites of wasps, of scorpions, of mad dogs and of snakes, colds, cholera, colic, dysentery, fever, indigestion, itch, piles, sunstroke, they might have added malaria, typhoid and smallpox” (p. 162). All these were worrying, not just for the sake of children and their families, but also for the Raj as well. That is why MacMillan’s conclusion for this chapter is rather unsurprisingly: “Motherhood in India was ultimately unsatisfactory for many memsahibs” (p. 169).

In the later part of her book, MacMillan concentrates on these women’s domestic and social lives. An entire chapter, called “Housekeeping” (chapter 9), narrates on the domestic aspects of their stay in India. “The other great field of battle for the memsahib was the kitchen. Here she waged a constant struggle to make sure that the servants kept it clean and that the cook produced British meals and did not cheat her too much” (p. 185). “British women in India tended to take the supervision of their establishments very seriously.... Some memsahibs learnt to speak one, two, or even several Indian languages so that they could communicate with their employees” (p. 188).

Chapter 12, “Unconventional Women”, is, in my opinion, the most interesting of the entire book. It deals with the experiences of those few extraordinary women who did manage to “go beyond the constraints of their time, their class and their sex in their reactions to India and the Indians” (p. 236). Such women, visual symbols of the Raj - among them, Lady Hailey, a famous explorer; Lady Dufferin; Lady Curzon, the beautiful and rich American wife of the Viceroy Lord Curzon; Lady

Minto, whose husband was Viceroy just before the First World War - worked as missionaries or teachers, or, in later years, provided health care. Some also came for adventure, and a few even for opportunities to engage in politics on behalf of the subjugated.

"Emma Roberts, a writer and journalist, lived in India between 1828 and 1832... She occupied herself with studying the country and its people and writing learned books and articles as well as editing a Calcutta paper, the *Oriental Observer*. She found much to admire in Indians" (pp. 239-240).

Others had married Indians, and came out without realizing how little they would count as Memsahibs, and consequently how difficult their lives might be. Individually, their stories are the most interesting of all. Another wonderful example of "strong-minded and independent lady" is the writer Flora Annie Steel, who spent more than twenty years in India between 1867-1889. "Her interests were wider than those of most other British women in India" and "she knew far more about the country than was considered necessary for a woman" (p. 242).

But "perhaps the most unconventional of all of them was the poet Adela Florence Cory, who wrote as 'Laurence Hope'. In 1889 she fell madly in love with Malcolm Nicolson, a dashing colonel in the Bengal Cavalry. She married him after a whirlwind courtship, and in 1890 disguised herself as a Pathan boy to follow him on an expedition through the wild, lawless country on the frontier between India and Afghanistan. In 1902, she published *The Garden of Kama*, a collection of poems with exotic oriental themes, which instantly became popular" (p. 244).

Since this book was first published thirty years ago, it predates more recent gender and postcolonial studies. It is a book that should be read by all those interested both in Indian studies and the role of women

in society. The book describes not only episodes of the existence of those women and the historical period known as the Raj, but also tells the story of India as seen through their eyes and their perspective. This is a real story! As "they were living women, with worries, happinesses and sorrows like anyone else. Their world has gone now, with its insular little community and its glory reflected from the Raj. They probably would not have worried much about how posterity regards them. They had a duty to do and they did it to the best of their abilities. Most of all, they simply got on with living" (p. 288).

Women of the Raj is a book about the *memsahibs*, "the masters" women; "a historical artefact"; a wonderful and intimate book about a time in history - the Raj, and an incredible place - India.

About the Author:

Mihaela Gligor is a Scientific Researcher II in the field of Philosophy at The Romanian Academy Cluj-Napoca, "George Barițiu" History Institute, Department of Humanities and also the founder and the Director of *Cluj Center for Indian Studies* from Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca.

She is a specialist in Mircea Eliade's life and work and also interested in Philosophy and History of Religion, Indian Studies, and Interwar History. She is a member of The Romanian Writers Union, Associate Professor at Babeș-Bolyai University and PhD coordinator within Doctoral School of International Relations and Security Studies, BBU Cluj-Napoca. Recipient of VIRA 2017 award: *Outstanding Scientist in History and Philosophy* (www.viraw.info).

Contact: mihaela.gligor@ubbcluj.ro.

Kamala Das, *My Story*, HarperCollins Publishers, India, 2009, 214 pp., ISBN: 978-81-7223-897-1.

Cătălina-Ioana PAVEL
Bucharest University

"Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better
Still, be Madhavikutty.
It is time to choose a name, a role."

Kamala Das, An Introduction

Ente Katha or *My story* - first published in English in 1988, fifteen years after its publication in Malayalam - is the autobiography of one of the most controversial female writers of India: Kamala Das. Starting with a short description of her childhood life in Calcutta, Kamala Das offers a portrait of an upper-class Malayalee girl from a very traditional family and whose absolute honesty and lack of self-pity resembles Gandhi in his *Satyana Prayaga* (*My Experiments with Truth*).

From a very young age, Kamala reveals a sentimental and inquisitive nature as she often writes "sad poems about dolls who lost their heads and have to remain headless for eternity"[1]. The cold relationship she has with her own parents turns her closer to her brother and they develop a special relationship, "the kind a leper may feel for his mate who pushed him on a hand cart when they went on their

[1] Kamala Das, *My Story*, New Delhi, 2004, p. 8.

begging rounds.[2]" Apart from being sentimental, there is also the feeling of loneliness and from her writing we can understand that there is a strong desire to be heard. She even wishes to be born to another parents: "I wondered why I was born to Indian parents instead of to a white couple who may have been proud of my verses."[3]

The harshness of her own reality determines a closer connection with her grandmother and her childhood house in Malabar, a house whose mystery and magic are often described in her autobiography as well as in her poetry. Apart from her grandmother who was "plump fair-skinned and good-looking"[4] and whose throat was always smelling of sandalwood, Kamala builds a strong relationship based on admiration with other two women of the Nalapat House: her great-grandmother, a silent listener who listened to her without any interruption as she was unable to move, and her aunt Ammini, who is described as a rebel, an attractive woman who "kept turning down all the marriage proposals that came her way."[5] Like all the women in her family, strongly influenced by Gandhi's figure, she wore only "white khaddar and did not use oil on her wavy hair. She chose to live the life of an ascetic."[6] Opposed to her relationship with the females of the family, she also writes about the cold relationship she has with her father, her uncle and her grandfather.

Kamala's life meanders through different cities: from the corrupting atmosphere of British Calcutta to the metropolitan Delhi, Colombo in Sri Lanka, at the time of the Tamil riots, the eclectic Bombay and, finally, to her old childhood house in Malabar, the

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 2.
[3] *Ibidem*, p. 9.
[4] *Ibidem*, p. 13.
[5] *Ibidem*, p. 14.
[6] *Ibidem*, p. 14.

Nalapat House. Brought up in convent schools and with a very strict education, she struggles to escape a society where patriarchy was a norm. Ultimately, she is forced to accept an arranged marriage at the age of fifteen and gives up the idea of reciprocal love, at the same time feeling like a burden and a responsibility for her own parents. For Kamala Das, marriage suddenly becomes a "show of wealth to families like ours" and she would be just another victim "of a young man's carnal hunger".[7]

Kamala Das's autobiography can also be considered as a repertoire of different stages and shades of love. Initially, the feeling is seen as something as innocent as flowers in the hair, conversations, companionship and warmth, then as a desperate need to be heard and understood and it finally becomes a quest for something higher, more spiritual. Marriage and love are dominant themes in her autobiography and sometimes she gives a mythical framework to her search for true love. She is often identifying herself with Radha looking forward to meet her Krishna.

On the other side, there is also the maternal love that she often writes about in her autobiography. She wants to have a child the same way Kunthi from Mahabharata, the mother of Pandavas, got hers by praying to the god of the Sun.

The feeling of love is pre-existent but she needs an object or a person to share the overwhelming experience with: "like alms looking for a begging soul was my love which only sought for it a receptacle"[8]. That is why she falls in love easily with different persons. For example, in her teenage years she admires the strange fractured voice of her Bengali teacher, admitting that she fell in love with her because at that time she

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 81.
[8] *Ibidem*, p. 112.

had "a need to squander but there were no takers."[9] The concept of love for the same sex is also recurrent in her poetry as well as in her autobiography. She is often mentioning that Oscar Wilde is her favorite author as he is always talking about homosexuality with frankness and that most of the people pass through that stage in their lives.

The unhappy marital life that she shares with her husband leads to a rich interior experience yet she determines herself not to be tied up by societal conventions so she does not forget that she has to find love somewhere else, maybe even outside of the marriage's legal orbit. However, her continuous attempts to escape the routine of a simple housewife led to serious consequences on her mental health as she is often getting sick or depressed. As a matter of fact, illness is a recurrent metaphor in her autobiography, a representation of the aberration in her own life as she is unable to find neither the intensity of love that she is looking for, nor the peace and the tranquility that she needs in order to be happy. On one side, there is the continuous craving for a life full of adventure and risk ("I yearned for adventure. I wanted to fling myself into danger.")[10] and on the other side there is the constant yearning for stability and inner peace.

Kamala Das's autobiography is more than the story of her life from childhood until her late years. It is also a detailed description of the traditional environment and lifestyle in a twentieth century Malabar society. For example, she mentions that her grand-uncle loved to see the women adorned with jewels and flowers and that his second wife was seen even at night wearing heavy jewellery and the traditional cosmetics of a Nair[11] woman: turmeric on her cheeks, a sandal line on

[9] *Ibidem*, p. 71.
[10] *Ibidem*, p. 111.
[11] The Nairs are a group of Indian Hindu castes living in the southern state of Kerala.

the forehead, collyrium in her eyes and the betel leaf in her mouth. Apart from that, she lives in a world full of magic and superstition. For example, in one of the chapters she mentions that the Nairs believe that the dead return for their treasured possessions and therefore, they need to gift away to the poor everything that belonged to the deceased person. In another chapter she writes about the Parials, people who were usually basket weavers but also sorcerers. Their women were known to have love potions and they were wearing around their necks only strands of red beads, leaving their breasts uncovered. They were usually approached by the poor people who were looking for potions in order to destroy their enemies.

Her autobiography is a vibrant description of the South Indian culture of Malabar as well. The festivals and the traditions of Kerala are recurrent in *My Story*. For instance, on her wedding night she is forced to miss the Kathakali dance in order to be with her husband. Strongly attached to her own cultural identity, she is often describing the numerous beliefs and stories of her own land:

> in the quieter months, mainly during the rains, came the Ottanthullal[12] dancer with his drummer and his cymbalist. He brought his kit of traditional make-up, the green Manola for his face, the powder to redden the eye, and the collyrium…

Kamala Das's writing is also an insight into the more delicate aspects of a traditional society like physical love. It was a normal thing for a Nair young girl to get married at a very young age to an older husband without being told of what is required from her on the very first night of being married. Such discussions were always a taboo in

[12] Ottanthullal is a dance form of Kerala which was introduced by Kunchan Nambiar in the 18th century.

the puritan environment of Malabar and in the whole Indian society, in general. Writing about these issues, that too in a high-class society of Kerala obsessed with public opinion, depicts the profile of a woman far ahead of her times and for whom the most desirable aspect of marriage was companionship and warmth and not just physical love.

At last, her own autobiography can be read as the confession of any poet, a creature who is oversensitive and emotional, always looking for an existence full of adventure and inner turmoil in order to write. Through her own experiences she is actually portraying the experiences and the conflicts of any other female writer who is forced to live and find her own path but also obeying the societal norms at the same time. A confessional writer is also concerned with the decay of the body, with death or disease. Although she is often interested in the changes in her ageing body, the illnesses and the potential death that may come, *My story* ends on a very positive tone. Kamala Das ends her autobiography writing about death as an experience of letting go of any attachment or material goods. For her, death also means an ending of human suffering and frustration and a possible encounter with her divine lover Krishna.

The latter parts of her autobiography start with some of her poems which serve as epigraphs for that particular chapter. There is also a striking similarity between her poems and her autobiography and we can as well read her confessions as a poetical prose for she herself admitted to include some fictional parts in *My Story*. Her prose, her poems and also her autobiography have the same mood of confession and a lyrical effusion of intense feelings. Unlike male autobiographies, the ones written by women showcase a split consciousness: on one side there is the self as it is culturally defined, and on the other side, there is the self which is different from the cultural prescription. As Sheila Row

puts it in *Threads through Time: Writings on History and Autobiography*, we are always split in two, without knowing where we would begin to find ourselves or one another[13]. That is the reason why Kamala Das's *My Story* is also an analysis of her own duality. There is in herself a need for domestic security and also an intense desire to be liberated, to be a rebel who criticizes the societal conventions.

About the Author:

After having completed a B.A in Anthropology and Comparative Literature with a thesis on Shiva and Kali, Cătălina-Ioana Pavel went on to study Arabic and Hindi at the University of Bucharest. She is mostly interested in the history of Malabar region, the spice routes and the Islamic influence in Kerala and anything related to South India in general.

Contact: catalinaioanapavel@gmail.com.

[13] Sheila Row, *Threads through Time: Writings on History and Autobiography*, London, 1999.

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The *Romanian Journal of Indian Studies* invites researchers and academics to contribute to the fourth issue (2020).

Contributions are welcomed in the form of studies or book reviews. The materials will be accompanied by an *Abstract* (10 lines) – except for book reviews – a list of up to ten *Keywords*, and by the author's bio-note.

The language in which materials will be published is English. The deadline for the submission of the papers is 1 September 2020.

Materials, as well as general inquiries, can be sent via e-mail at mihaela.gligor@ubbcluj.ro.

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