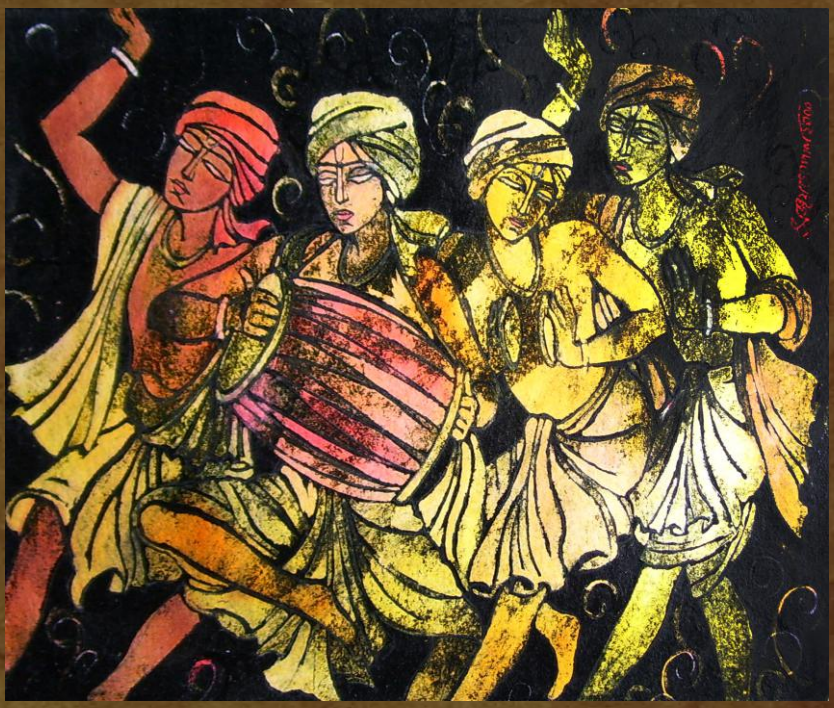
Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca
Cluj Center for Indian Studies

# Romanian Journal of Indian Studies



Editor-in-Chief: Mihaela Gligor

Presa Universitară Clujeană

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# Romanian Journal of Indian Studies

No. 7 2023

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# Romanian Journal of Indian Studies

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# ARGUMENT

**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. Any discussion on anything belonging to India and its culture is incomplete without interdisciplinary dialogue between various cultural aspects and elements.

Through its incredible stories, India has always attracted people of distant places from archaeologists, 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, Bengali or Hindi from the modern period, were and still are fascinating for linguists and researchers.

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

The *Romanian Journal of Indian Studies* is affiliated to the *Cluj Center for Indian Studies*, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca. The Journal appears once per year and it is dedicated to Romanian and international researchers with various interests in Indian cultures.

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## EVENT

# *Romania and India: 75 Years of Diplomatic Relations*

## 75 Years of Transcontinental Diplomacy: Exploring Romania-India Bilateral Relations

**Alexandra-Iulia NUC-ROȘU** in conversation with
**H.E. Mr. Rahul SHRIVASTAVA,**
the Ambassador of India to Romania, Moldova and Albania, and
**H.E. Mrs. Daniela SEZONOV-ȚANE,**
the Ambassador of Romania to India, Nepal and Bangladesh

In the last 75 years, Romania and India managed to follow common interests and created a strong partnership. Celebrating the fruitful cooperation between the two countries, His Excellency Mr. Rahul Shrivastava, the Ambassador of India to Romania, Albania and Moldova, and Her Excellency Mrs. Daniela Sezonov-Țane, the Ambassador of Romania to India, Nepal and Bangladesh were kind to address their perspectives on the evolution of relations between Romania and India, highlighting both the differences and similarities between the two countries, and also the latest challenges.

I would like to sincerely thank the esteemed Ambassadors for their time and participation in these interviews. I deeply appreciate the expertise and valuable insights they have brought to the discussions.

**An interview with H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**,
the Ambassador of India to Romania, Moldova and Albania

**Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu**: Your Excellency, before arriving in Romania, you probably knew a number of aspects about the people, from the perspective of culture or customs. Can you share some examples?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: Frankly speaking, I did not know much, but once I found out that I was going to Romania, I began meeting people who had been there, and something I heard, which proved to be true, was about Romania's hospitality. I met people who had friends in Romania or who had worked with diplomats in Romania, and they told me about Romania's hospitality. Something I knew is that Romanian cuisine is very good, especially the wine and *sarmale*. Then I heard traditional music and I observed that there is a blend between East and West in terms of traditional Romanian music. I heard about a strong sense of family in the community, with families having strong values. I heard about history and heritage of Romania, about the painted monasteries. And, for some reason, I heard a lot about Transylvania, a beautiful area of Romania. These are some things I heard before coming to Romania.

**Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu**: Have you noticed similarities between the Indian and Romanian people? If so, what are they?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: Yes, there are some similarities between Romania and Asian countries. One of them is family values. In India, we also greatly value the importance of family, and everything revolves around family: festivals, customs, and the bond that encompasses what happens within the family. I found that in Romania as well, family is the center of everything. When I spoke about Romanian hospitality, it reminded me of a saying in India which goes, "Guests are next to God." And I found that there is a very strong tradition around food and celebration both in India and Romania. And you have a richness like ours. And when I say richness, I mean you have great empires that came to

Romania. We also had various empires that came to India, which influenced the way we are right now. Finally, I spoke about folk music or traditional music. So, we have several riches like Romania does.

**Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu**: At the cultural level, what are the most obvious differences between the two countries?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: There are many differences. One, I will say, is languages. For example, if you go to India, every state has a different language and cuisine. But in Romania, more or less, everywhere is just Romanian. If you go to the north or south of Romania, the cuisine is more or less the same. The second thing I noticed is the religion. In India, we have diverse religions: Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Christianity, and Buddhism. Also, in the street, you can see a temple in one place, a *gurudwara* in another place, and some distance from there, you can see a church. If you go to Delhi, in the same place, you can see a temple, mosque, all in the same place.

In Romania, Christianity prevails with its magnificent churches. Another thing is cuisine, which is very different. Because in India, from one place to another, the cuisine changes. Sometimes, there is a diversity of flavors, spicy flavors, and specialty dishes differ a lot. But I enjoy Romanian cuisine, with my favorite being the Romanian *ciorbă*. Clothing-wise, you can see that in India, people still wear traditional clothes like the *saree*.

In Romania, and mostly European countries, they do not really wear traditional clothes. So, these are some differences, to which I can add the festivals. In Romania, there are many festivals, but in India, you can see some of them on the street. We have Puja, the celebration of Ganesha, and some Sikh festivals that you can witness. We have Diwali, when you can see the whole city bursting with fireworks, people running around, and you can see that the festival keeps going. Not so much in Romania. Here, I find that New Year's Eve, maybe, has more lights and the cities are lit up. These are some differences.

**Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu**: What would you advise Romanians visiting India for the first time?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: A general advice that I can give to Romanians who are going to India for the first time is to go with an open mind and, maybe, embrace the cultural difference. The culture of India is very different from Romania, so go with an open mind. If you go with a closed mind, you will have a shock. The second advice is that you will need more time. Do not just visit tourist places like Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur. Yes, those are very beautiful, and you should go there, but make some time to explore India. India is different from one area to another, and if you visit more places, you will experience the real India. And some specific advice is that you should be aware of the weather temperature. If you go in May, for example, it is already very hot in India, around 40 degrees. Also, the food is very diverse. It's something you should try, but if you go for the first time, you should be very careful. It would be recommended not to eat street food, but instead, eat in better places. I'm not saying to avoid street food completely, just be very careful. English is spoken, but it helps to learn a few phrases in Hindi. India is a huge country, so you should be aware that there are a large number of people. And if you visit religious places, you should follow certain rules and dress codes. India is a great place to visit. I know many people who have been there and continue to go to India, and they say, "India is my home. I want to go back." So, my advice is to try to embrace what you find there and to enjoy everything that India has to offer.

**Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu**: How do you see the evolution of relations between India and Romania from the moment they were initiated until the present moment?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: Relationships last a long time. From a literary point of view, there are many travelers, poets, and artists who connect the two countries since the 19th century. But Romania and India established diplomatic relations in 1948; a year after India gained its

independence. This year, we celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations. In these 75 years, we have had a very good and intense relationship. Political relations have been very good. We have had several political visits, and we continue to have them. Next month (June), our Secretary of State will come. These visits keep happening, so political relations are very good, but I wish they were more active to have some more visits. From a cultural point of view, in Romania, there are many organizations and many people who like Indian culture, Bollywood movies, Yoga, and many people who follow that spirituality. Then, commerce, trade, and investments have been a very strong part of this relationship. Our trade is increasing very fast. Our bilateral trade has doubled in the last 3-4 years, and I hope it keeps increasing because once you have strong commercial relations, many other types follow. We have a lot of IT companies and pharmaceutical companies that have set up offices or manufacturing facilities here. Some new things that have happened are that we are looking for more cooperation and collaboration with Romania, such as space cooperation or nuclear energy. Over all, the relations are very good, but we are able to have more visits, because visits are very important to push the relations.

**Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu**: After 75 years of diplomatic dialogue between our countries, what other agreements and treaties should be signed to increase collaboration?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: I think we have about 100 agreements already signed. Recently, for example, we signed an agreement on defense cooperation. Before that, we signed an agreement on cultural cooperation, the cultural exchange program, which allows cultural visits. We had a cultural group coming from Delhi to Gorj, Târgu Jiu, for a Folklore Festival, in August 2023. We also signed and formalized an agreement on the International Solar Alliance. So, these are some of the agreements that were signed in the last few months, but we have about 25 agreements that are in the plan. This reflects the thriving trade relationship. I hope some of them will be signed. We have agreements covering all kinds of diversity, for example, an agreement on migration

and mobility partnership, as many Indians come to Romania to work. Over time, many agreements have been signed, and more will certainly be signed, strengthening the connection between India and Romania.

**Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu**: Thank you, Your Excellency, for your time and the valuable insights!

H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava, the Ambassador of India to Romania, Albania and Moldova, joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1999, beginning an impressive career in the diplomatic field. Between August 2001 and July 2004, he held the position of Secretary III and Secretary II at the Embassy of India in Moscow, contributing to the development of bilateral relations between the two countries. From August 2006 to July 2007, he held the positions of Second Secretary, First Secretary, Chargé d'affaires at the Embassy of India in Almaty, Kazakhstan, continuing to engage in promoting bilateral relations. Next, he had the opportunity to bring his diplomatic experience to Russia, holding the position of Counselor at the Embassy of India in Moscow from May 2013 to July 2015. A significant moment in his career was his position as Ambassador of India to Venezuela from July 2015 to March 2018. He had the responsibility of representing India in this South American country and promoting bilateral interests in a complex and dynamic environment. Between April 2018 and July 2020, he held the position of High Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs of India. And from July 2020 until now, he fulfills his mission as the Ambassador of India in Romania, Albania and Moldova, contributing to the consolidation of diplomatic relations and the promotion of bilateral cooperation between these countries.

## **An Interview with H.E. Mrs. Daniela Sezonov-Țane**, the Ambassador of Romania to India, Nepal and Bangladesh

**Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu**: Mrs. Ambassador, you arrived in India in the middle of COVID pandemic, and immediately Romania stepped forward to provide medical aid and supplies for Indian people. In 2022, when the war in Ukraine broke out, Romania had responded swiftly to PM Narendra Modi's call for help and had facilitated the movement of Indian students studying in Ukraine back to India through Romanian territory without a visa. Could you provide us with some details about these examples?

**H.E. Mrs. Daniela Sezonov-Țane**: Romania and India have a long lasting partnership. During pandemic, Romania was among the first states who have offered humanitarian assistance to India, pursuant to a request addressed to the European Union by India. Romania expressed its solidarity and joined the European and international efforts to support India which has confronted unprecedented circumstance due to a surge in COVID-19 cases. The support offered by Romania reflected the excellent bilateral relations we have with India, through the existing Extended Partnership signed in 2013. The medical field is one of the main domains of cooperation, with special relevance in moments of crisis. Our solidarity manifested during this unprecedented critical moment for Indian people represented another confirmation for Romania's engagement in strengthening and extending our relation with India, a key partner for Romania and the European Union in the Indo-Pacific region.

Same support was shown when the war in Ukraine broke out. Romanian authorities along with Romanian people have mobilized swiftly to provide all the necessary help to the thousands of Indian students evacuated through our country at the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Some 9000 out of the 20.000 students stranded in Ukraine once the war started have transited Romania on their way back to India. In a very spontaneous way, local communities offered

them food; clothes and accommodation, before they were safely evacuated back home, by the Indian government flights. In the main transit area, Romanian authorities organized big camps, providing all the necessary amenities. We were and continue to be deeply affected by the war raging at our doorstep and the least we can do is to help any people in need. Since the very beginning, throughout these long months of war, we have offered extensive support to more than 3.770.000 Ukrainian refugees which entered Romania, and have provided all necessary conditions for a decent, dignified and functional life for those Ukrainian refugees who have remained in our country. The Romanian government has ensured full social, health security and educational packages for all these people from the neighboring country.

**Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu**: Has the bilateral trade between Romania and India crossed US$ 1 billion so far? Could you tell us about sectors such as IT, pharmaceutical, agriculture, etc., that Romania seems to be interested in to boost trade?

**H.E. Mr. Daniela Sezonov-Țane**: Total trade between Romania and India has been fluctuating over the past 5 years, but mainly benefited from the positive economic achievements of the two countries. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, our bilateral trade was on an upward trend, followed by a decline in 2019 and 2020, mainly caused by pandemic consequences. In 2021 and 2022 the trade between the two countries has been massively revived. For the year 2021, the total trade reached the value of USD 909 mil, and in 2022, the total trade volume has crossed the 1 billion USD mark, a record achievement that has been targeted for many years. In Romania, we believe we should double that in the next 5 years and are committed to be very active in this regard.

In 2022, Romanian exports to India reached 298.47 million USD, an increase of 9.6%, and imports reached the level of 800.97 million USD, the highest in recent years. Both exports and imports are improving, as economies return to normal after the pandemic period. The main groups of products for Romanian exports to India belong to the range of high

added value and high specialization products such as: machineries, equipment and mechanical devices, transport accessories, mineral products, metal products, chemicals, etc. India sources a larger variety of products to Romania from specialized products to raw materials, textiles, food process, vegetables oil etc.

**Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu**: There are a lot of initiatives by European nations to boost travel and tourism from India especially during the hot summer season in India during which wealthy Indian tourists travel to European destinations for their vacations. Has Romania taken any steps in this regard?

**H.E. Mr. Daniela Sezonov-Țane**: We are aware of the potential that outbound Indian tourism represents and we do consider attracting more Indian tourists. Lately, there has been an increase in the number of Indians visiting Romania, especially part of groups taking package tours in the Central-Eastern Europe, which include Romania as well. Romania can offer a large diversity of tourism, from leisure and adventure to agro-tourism and spa and wellness (different from what India has to offer in this regard). In Romania you can still find ancient traditions, simple rural life, organic food, local architecture and a healthy ecosystem. The Carpathian Mountains, home to the biggest wild forest in Europe, the Danube Delta, the largest ecosystem of this kind in Europe, part of UNESCO natural heritage, the painted churches from Moldova and the fortified churches from Transylvania are just a small part of an amazing touristic experience Romanian can offer.

**Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu**: Your Excellency has made a few visits to cities including Pondicherry and Kolkata. Any specific outcomes of these visits?

**H.E. Mr. Daniela Sezonov-Țane**: Once the pandemic allowed it, I started travelling in India. First trip was to Chennai, where we have an Honorary Consulate, to meet with the local authorities and the Chambers of Commerce. In Pondicherry, in partnership with Alliance Française, we have celebrated 30 years since Romania joined the Francophone

movement. This was done through one-week events, consisting in a movie festival, a quiz about Romania and a painting exhibition of the Romanian artist Alexandru Potecă. The quiz was an excellent exercise meant to bring Romania closer to the French-speaking youth of Pondicherry. I attended the event and I was delighted to see how much the participating youngsters knew about Romania.

In Kolkata, on the 24th of November 2022, with the help of the South and South East Asian Institute of the University of Calcutta and the Romanian Cultural Institute, we organized a seminar called "Between two worlds: Romania and India," with lectures depicting our main cultural connections. "Mircea Eliade and Indian Studies in Romanian Culture" (Liviu Bordaș); "Translation and an Indo-Romanian Cultural Dialogue: reading Amita Bhose" (Mrinmoy Pramanik); "Amita Bhose - from the great Ganges to Bucharest" (Carmen Mușat Coman); "Surendranath Dasgupta: towards a philosophy of Literature?" (Abhishek Bose); "Maitreyi Devi: Crossing Borders and Travelling in Cultures" (Jayati Gupta); "Maitreyi Devi - *Na Hanyate* - the Story behind" (Mihaela Gligor) were the lectures presented, highly appreciated by the students and the professors taking part at the event. It even led to an unexpected result, a two months online introductory course in Romanian language – led by Carmen Mușat Coman, organized at the request of the students. Not the least, I am happy to announce that the Romanian language course at the University of Delhi, which existed for 40 years, was re-opened, after a 7 years gap, with the arrival of a new Romanian lecturer, following the signature of the bilateral Cultural Exchange Programme.

> **Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu**: The last high-level visit from India to Romania seems to have been that of then vice-president of India, Mr. Venkaiah Naidu, in 2018? Any prospect of high-level Romanian officials visiting India in the future?

**H.E. Mr. Daniela Sezonov-Țane**: Yes, you are perfectly right: the last high-level visits between our countries date back to 2018. Former

vice-president of India, Mr. Venkaiah Naidu, paid a visit to Romania in September 2018 and the Romanian minister of foreign affairs in November 2018. The bilateral relations between India and Romania are on a constantly ascending path. This year, we celebrate 10 years since the signing of the Extended Partnership between our countries, as well as 75 years of diplomatic relations. Our Prime Ministers spoke over the phone during the evacuation of the Indian students from Ukraine. We are looking for a right moment for a visit of the Romanian Prime Minister in India, considering also the tight schedules of the leaders, as the one of the Indian Prime Minister, with both G20 and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation presidencies. I am confident that through joint efforts we will bring the Romanian-Indian partnership at the highest level.

**Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu**: Thank you, Your Excellency, for making the time for these questions! All the best wishes for a wonderful future cooperation between Romania and India!

H.E. Mrs. Daniela Sezonov-Țane, the Ambassador of Romania to India, Nepal and Bangladesh, was born in Bucharest and graduated from the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest, specializing in the Romanian-Hindi section. She also completed her studies at the Faculty of Political and Administrative Sciences, focusing on the French language section at the same university. For her master's degree, she attended the University of London, CEDEP (Center for Development, Environment, and Policy), where she specialized in environmental management. Her first trip to India took place in 1992 when she was a third-year student on a scholarship to study Hindi. She began her professional career at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1996. From November 2000 to November 2004, she worked at the Romanian

Embassy in New Delhi. After concluding her mission in India, she desired to be more involved in humanitarian actions and subsequently joined the International Committee of the Red Cross. Over a span of 7 years, she worked in conflict or post-conflict reconstruction zones. She is fluent in French, English, and Hindi.

**About the interviewer:**

**Alexandra-Iulia Nuc-Roșu** is a PhD student within the doctoral school of International Relations and Security Studies, at Babeș Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, working on a thesis dedicated to the diplomatic relations between India and Romania.

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## Cultural Diplomacy or Cultural Relations? Lost in Terminology and Rediscovering the Meaning of Culture

**Hilda-Hedvig VARGA** in conversation with
**H.E. Rahul SHRIVASTAVA**,
the Ambassador of India to Romania, Moldova and Albania

When discussing such a complex concept as culture, it is forever interesting, even surprising, to find out what definitions people give to this all-encompassing notion; what better way to delve into Indian culture and the inner workings of cultural diplomacy and relations than to speak to someone most knowledgeable in the field, the Ambassador of India to Romania, Moldova and Albania, Mr. Rahul Shrivastava. His Excellency was kind enough to sacrifice his time in favor of cultural matters, despite his busy schedule.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: Thank you, Your Excellency, for taking time to dwell upon matters of culture. Without wasting any minute, let me begin by asking how would you define culture and what would its role be in shaping interhuman relations?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: It is always a pleasure to answer questions related to culture, believing that no opportunity to bring some light upon a better understanding of India should be missed. I did ponder intensely on what the definition of culture would be, as it might have several interpretations, but my understanding would be that culture is a set of values, traditions, customs and behaviors that have been passed down through generations and which, in some ways, defines our identity. That is how I would define culture in one sentence; as for the role it plays in shaping interhuman relations, I see culture as something which helps us understand each other better and appreciate our differences.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: Let us ponder upon two essential terms, cultural diplomacy and cultural relations. Is there a difference between the two? How would a discernment help people better relate to Indian culture?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: These are rather two entirely different concepts; cultural diplomacy is a tool to promote cultural relations, and cultural relations is the broader, bigger picture; in simple words, what people do to understand each other's culture is what you may call cultural relations. For instance, if someone writes a book on India, they are intensifying cultural relations. Whether to deeper grasp spirituality or to visit heritage sites, if someone visits India or goes on a pilgrimage, he/she is promoting cultural relations. This has been happening for thousands of years. On the other hand, cultural diplomacy is when you use certain tools to actively promote cultural relations. In a nutshell, that would be the difference between the two.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: Since we established your understanding of the meaning of cultural diplomacy, what can you tell us about it in the case of India and Romania, Moldova and Albania respectively?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: When we speak of cultural diplomacy, I would emphasize the role of institutions in promoting it, and primarily the role of governments, because cultural diplomacy as I see it is primarily promoted by institutions. As far as Romania is concerned, our diplomatic relations started in 1948, when the active promotion of culture and the enhancement of cultural relations was officially established. However, as we have already defined cultural relations, I shall mention that cultural relations started centuries ago, much before the institutional promotion of these relations in all three countries. As an embassy, we see culture as an important element of our work as it provides a huge scope for promoting relations between our countries, contributing significantly to our mission as a whole and in part, the embassy having specific wings for different domains – political, consular, commercial etc. I also see a lot of receptivity in bringing India's cultural legacy to the forefront.

You may wonder how we promote cultural diplomacy and how we have been doing this in the last seven decades since the establishment of diplomatic relations, primarily with Romania, but also with Albania and Moldova. Firstly, we organize events, having a calendar comprising such events every year, our main goal being the promotion of cultural relations. Secondly, we strive to bring the understanding of what Indian culture stands for, whether it is Yoga or Ayurveda, different art forms such as dance or literature, to the audiences in Romania, Albania and Moldova; we may contribute to the translation of books, or invite a troupe from India for performances. I can share my two-and-a-half-year experience in Romania and give you relevant examples concerning cultural diplomacy. No doubt, culture has been an important aspect of my work and we have organized, give or take, around 50 to 60 events annually. We had several exhibitions on Indian paintings or photographs or Indian handicrafts all over Romania, and likewise in Moldova, unfortunately not in Albania. Another element worth mentioning is the translation of literature, to be more exact Romanian literature into English for the Indian audience and vice versa; we try to focus on enlivening the translations from Indian literature into Romanian, so that it reaches a much broader audience. Needless to say, an important component of cultural diplomacy between India and the three countries is also people-to-people contacts; we have promoted this not just in terms of sending people both ways, but also, for instance, by having members of the Romanian Parliament and a Mayor of a well-known Romanian city visit India in the Gen Next Democracy Network, a programme initiated by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. Beyond the programme's main aim to define India's democratic governance structure at various levels and provide an understanding of the success of India's democratic journey across the world, it gives a unique opportunity to participants to get a glimpse into the socio-cultural sphere of the subcontinent.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: It should be no surprise that readers would next be interested in the establishment and development of cultural relations between India and Romania, Moldova and Albania. Do enlighten us on this topic.

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: I had just pointed out what we have been doing institutionally, as a government, to promote cultural diplomacy, however the broader picture is, indeed, cultural relations and cultural relations between India and the three countries are much older than the opening of the embassy or the starting of diplomatic relations between our countries. They do have a long and rich history. Let us start with Romania. I am certain that cultural relations or exchange of people happened much before the following examples, and that people would have known about the literature or language of the two countries even before recorded history as we know it today, but for the sake of establishing a rough timeline, even in the early 19th century, for example, in 1820, we had a philologist from Transylvania, Alexander Csoma de Koros (Sándor Csoma de Kőrös), who travelled to India and lived in the Zanskar Valley and Kolkata, being buried in Darjeeling. Thereafter, the world knows that Romania's national poet, Mihai Eminescu, was attracted to Indian languages and literature and he even translated a book on Sanskrit grammar into Romanian from German. Then, there have been a series of Romanian philosophers and poets like Bogdan P. Hașdeu, George Coșbuc and Lucian Blaga, who were deeply influenced by Indian thought. I would also like to mention the visit of Prince Carol the Second because he went to India just about a century ago, in 1920, and stayed there for several months. It was at the invitation of a Maharaja that he happened to visit; he travelled around India and was deeply influenced by what he experienced.

Shortly after this visit, we had another very important visit and that, I think you would agree, planted many seeds of Indian culture in Romania; that was the visit of Rabindranath Tagore. He came to Romania in 1926. He was well received in the country, primarily in Bucharest; he was even conferred the *Honoris Causa Doctorate* (*Honorary Doctorate*) by the

University of Bucharest. The echoes of Rabindranath Tagore's visit swept through the lands, leading to a huge surge in the interest for Indian philosophy and culture in Romania. Even to this date, I would say he remains among the favorites of Romanians, and, going back to cultural diplomacy once again, we have translated some of his books into Romanian. Another prominent name crosses my mind, that of the great sculptor of Romania, Constantin Brâncuși, who was inspired by Indian symbols, having visited India at the invitation of the Maharaja of Indore. This is but a very brief overview of some significant interactions between our cultures, both in terms of cultural relations and of cultural diplomacy, before their official establishment. In the particular case of Moldova, I have unfortunately not come across any records stating compelling cultural cooperation with India. Nonetheless, time is not lost and one never knows what surprises may lay right beneath the surface.

As far as Albania is concerned, there are a few interesting things. Firstly, there was an architect, (Mahmad) Mehmet Isa, who was one of the main architects of the Taj Mahal. So, our cultural relations with Albania are quite long-established. The example of Alexander the Great comes next to mind, when, say, 3000 years ago, he came to India and brought certain influences from that region to India. So, this is, again, part of our cultural relations because all this very much preceded the official cultural diplomacy; in some ways, one might argue that Alexander was an official sole, so he must have been doing cultural diplomacy, but he surely did not carry out tasks according to our present definition of the concept, therefore he acted thus rather unknowingly. And at that point in time, Alexander may have returned, but several people stayed behind. The influence that we see in Buddhism in the North of India is called Bactrian, where you have sculptures adorned with very different elements from what you find in other parts of India; this influence came from the region around Albania.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: As a speaker of multiple languages, do you find any differences between the word "culture" across those languages, be it more

subtle or more poignant? I mainly have in mind the English "culture", as compared to the Hindi "संस्कृति" (*saṃskr̥ti*), the Romanian "cultură" and the Russian "культура" (*kultura*) – quite evident who the odd one in the group is. Do you think people's perception and understanding of culture is influenced or affected by the language(s) they speak?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: Yes, I do think that languages exert an influence to some extent, as the word *saṃskr̥ti*, which is culture in Hindi, comes from the word Sanskrit, and Sanskrit is someone or something that has been given *saṃskāra* or observance, or has been refined or purified. The root of the word Sanskrit is *saṃ* plus *kuru*, where *saṃ* means even, *kuru* means to make; this gives us *to make even* or *to make complete*. That way, whoever coined the word *saṃskr̥ti* would have thought of culture as something which makes a person complete. My ignorance, but I don't think I know the origin of the word *kultura*. Coming back to influencing, I am convinced there might be some subtle influence on the person because if you discuss the term *saṃskr̥ti* with an Indian, he/she will not just think in terms of dance, art or literature; something else comes to mind, namely how one behaves, how one's entire being is, one's relationship with people, how one is contributing to the society etc., proof enough for anyone that the deeper meaning of *saṃskr̥ti* encompasses much more than the arts.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: Your Excellency, you did foreshadow this question through your answer, but I must admit that I find the case of "*saṃskr̥ti*" terribly compelling, in the best of ways. If popular belief is to be given heed, the deconstructed meaning of the concept hints to "*saṃ*", equal or appropriate, and "*kr̥tah*", completed, done, which, essentially, come together to mean *that which is done properly*. There is a famous phrase that associates living with the notion of art, "the art of living". This brings us to the idea that life is to be lived properly, which does remind us of the very systematic view of human existence in Hinduism, namely the four stages of life (*āśrama*) and the so-called *saṃskāras* – the same root, yet again! – the rites of passage that organize the lifespan of an individual in a fairly transforming manner. Here comes the question, do you see any resemblance

between the particular notion of culture ("*saṃskr̥ti*") and the way Indians fulfil their earthly existence?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: Indeed, I did cover that in some ways, as when you speak to an Indian about *saṃskr̥ti*, it is beyond what the physical and tangible aspects of culture bring to the forefront. It is, as you say, the art of living, meaning how cultured you are is defined by how you live. It is interesting that in many parts of the world what was there 5000 years ago has transformed, changed, people have accepted influences which have covered the original, so to say, culture that existed. But in the case of India, over the last 2000 years, influences have come and gone. But Indian culture, as we saw it several thousand years ago, has survived to this date. A good example are Indian marriages, being conducted the same way, with the same 2000-year-old Sanskrit hymns being chanted. Traditionally, these last anywhere from 3 to 7 days because of the number of rites and rituals that must be performed; it is more than just taking an oath of marriage. Indians see marriage not just as an institution which binds two people, but it brings two entities, two societies, two families together.

About the influence of culture, I would say it is there in the mundane, daily aspects of life, for instance, the mentality around food, considered sacred in India. It is not something that happened in the last couple of years, but handed over, for whatever reason, for several thousands of years. I see the influence of culture in India in terms of thinking as well, and the idea of spirituality is a good example in this respect. People ask me when they go to India "how is it that people are happy." Because people are not comparing themselves to others, especially in the material aspect, you can have a Mercedes parked somewhere and the poor person a few meters away, happy with what he/she has. This I would underline as a difference between our cultures because we see life as something more complex, not just existing in a physical form right now, but beyond that. A poor person might not think about his/her life only in terms of poverty, or in terms of material aspects

that he/she has, but it has a deeper meaning, maybe to be happy, to enjoy every day, to live in the present, these are the concerns that are incurrent in the people in India, and that is why it does not make sense to many people to ponder in terms of richness or poverty.

> **Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: Somewhat related to the previous question, often times the term Sanskrit, the one defining one of the oldest classical languages in history, is translated as something "perfected." As we have seen the closeness between "Sanskrit" and "*saṃskr̥ti*" – language and culture – how relevant do you find cultural diplomacy and relations in perfecting the elusive art of living?
> And, Your Excellency, as an afterthought, there are voices who would prefer translating the prefix "*saṃ*" as together(ness), keeping the meaning "made" or "done" for "*kr̥tah.*" Would you agree that culture, in the light of this evidence, may be perceived as a product of togetherness? Do you think this interpretation is relevant in this day and age?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: Coming to your question, since you mentioned Sanskrit, I thought about Sanskrit and perfection; Sanskrit, in some ways – I do not have a good command of Sanskrit, but from whatever I know of Sanskrit – is considered, if not the most perfect language, one of the most perfect languages. To illustrate its exceptional character, for example, if you teach me Romanian, you can easily make out that I am a foreigner by the way I speak Romanian. Similarly, when a person from Tamil Nadu comes to the North and speaks Hindi, I can tell by their accent in Hindi that they are from the South, Tamil Nadu. Or, if a person from the North goes to Kerala and uses Malayalam, one can recognize that this person is from the North, speaking Malayalam. But when the priest – as I already remarked about marriage – when the priest in South India or the priest in North India chants sacred hymns, whether for religious ceremonies or for marriage ceremonies, you will not find any difference in the accent. So, there is something to do with the language, as both the Northerner and the Southerner speak Sanskrit the same way. This is why I referred to it as the most perfect language. There has been some

research done on Sanskrit as a language that is very suitable for computers or even artificial intelligence. Yet another reason to consider Sanskrit as one of the most perfect languages; let us not forget that Sanskrit is also the mother of many languages, as most languages that we speak in Asia and Europe have their origin in Sanskrit. Consequently, we find words from Sanskrit in almost all Indo-Arian languages; there are several words in Romanian whose origin may be traced to Sanskrit.

How relevant do I find cultural diplomacy and relations in perfecting the elusive art of living? Cultural relations and cultural diplomacy help in spreading information and making connections; if there is a person in Romania searching for spirituality and he/she does not know where to start, having no connections with India, it feels like wanting to learn swimming without being in water. Cultural diplomacy is, therefore, a tool which helps bring the culture of one country to another, of one civilization to another. Whether cultural diplomacy or relations, they improve whatever you are seeking, if not necessarily perfect. If you seek spirituality, as part of cultural diplomacy, we may bring exhibitions; we may translate books on spirituality from India into Romanian so that you get better acquainted with the topic, ultimately improving your life, your wellbeing.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: What are the most important components of culture in your motherland and how can their diffusion further bilateral relations in all three countries of accreditation?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: In some ways, I believe that culture is more so about bringing people together than dividing them in India. One phrase I'd like to mention is *Vasudhaiva Kuṭuṃbakam*, which is "the world is a family." Most probably, when speaking to an Indian on culture, it is about togetherness, rather than finding the differences. The other aspect is India's vast, at times overwhelming, diversity; we have had influences from the outside, India influencing its own civilization, influencing the world and vice versa. Over the years, we have come to accumulate a lot of heterogeneity; this is one thing which people find surprising, as we are a country of 1.4 billion people, with several

hundreds of languages, several thousands of dialects, dozens of religions, root of several major religions in the world; yet India is a peaceful country. This unity in diversity also comes through, as I have just underlined, *Vasudhaiva Kuṭuṃbakam*, the world is a family and if you have to live together, then culture should be uniting you, rather than separating you. The third aspect is spirituality, talking about India's culture without talking about spirituality would be incomplete.

I would rather divide culture into two parts: the *externally manifested culture* – what you experience through your eyes, ears, mouth, even your skin, or nose, that is the senses; they can *feel* culture whether it is through food, or other visible and audible art forms, that is the physical manifestation; and the *internally manifested culture* – what you feel, that is where I would introduce spirituality; what you don't experience physically, but what you feel internally. We could spend an eternity talking about the physical aspects, on that PhDs have been written, with a plethora of books available, whether on Indian art, dance or literature.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: When discussing culture, is it wiser to concentrate on similarities or differences? Is there a recipe to achieve balance?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: I don't think there is a recipe to achieve balance, but you can learn from the differences that exist and get some enjoyment or satisfaction when you see similarities. The best way to go about would be to imbibe other cultures and accept them as they are, rather than judging. Accepting without judgement is key because I do not see any culture that teaches something detrimental. The very fact that some culture has survived for a very long time is because it is, essentially, good. One does feel elated when one sees similarities, like in my case, when coming across a word and thinking that it might have a Sanskrit origin, but more importantly, when it boils down to me appreciating Romanian, Moldovan or Albanian culture, I am compelled to take them as they are, exercising my critical eye as little as possible and only when unavoidable. Learn from the experience and revel in it as long as it lasts.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: Is there a need for a new cultural diplomacy, with the advent of new technology and the increase of its availability?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: There is and it is already happening, by using social media or the power of information technology to accomplish it. Earlier, if you had to organize an event, a particular place needed to be chosen, 20 people would attend; now, because you can use the power of the internet, you can have a hybrid event. The 20 people would gather at the venue and the rest of the participants could be sitting in their offices, in their cars and still benefit from what is happening. The tools of cultural diplomacy are changing; we are slowly moving from a fully physical format to more than that. These instruments are as valid in the literary field as in the entertainment one; if you write a book, it would end up in a library where 20 people would come and read it in a year, but with the use of the internet nowadays, you can make it available online, so that it reaches many more readers. In this sense, the advent of new technology helps promote cultural diplomacy tremendously; the additional tools in archiving, search and research are extremely useful as well.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: Since you have spent a significant time in Romania after assuming your tenure, what aspects of Romanian culture do you believe could be brought to the limelight in order to strengthen Indian-Romanian bilateral relations?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: From whatever I have seen – and I have been to several regions in Romania – there is a rich culture everywhere. From outside, it may seem that Romania is not very diverse, but it truly is. There are three things that I would say are not very well-known abroad, but which are very rich in Romania. The first one is folk dances; every place I go, I see that that region – when I say region, I do not refer to the county, but to a far smaller territory – has its specific folk dances, where the songs might be more or less in Romanian, with its own history; I find that very entertaining and, at the same time, very musical. Then, there are the costumes. Again, the costumes are very colorful, the

material is different, the way they are sewn is different, the way they are worn is distinct; to add to the charm, every costume in every region comes with a long history. I was recently some place where there was an exhibition of Romanian costumes and one can see those differences, but most importantly, I find them very colorful. Let us not forget about the *International Day of Ia* (Romanian blouse); so that is the second thing that Romania can look at better promoting. The third and last component is related to the first part, folk dances, and that is music; I may know some famous Romanian songs, but when I listen to the traditional Romanian music, I find it also very rich and that should be promoted extensively.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: How receptive are Romanians, Moldovans and Albanians to Indian culture? Is there scope for improvement?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: There is receptivity overall, but it can be improved. Even before we started Yoga classes by our teacher of Indian culture, or Hindi classes by you, there were people doing it on their own – people learning Sanskrit, people doing Yoga. Someone told me that there are around 500 Yoga studios in Bucharest alone, so there is interest. You have several channels which stream Indian cinema content every day. But I have also noticed, and this is not specific to Romania, Albania or Moldova, that culture is equated with prosperity in many places. It is inappropriate to conclude that a prosperous place will have a rich culture; development cannot be equated with culture. India is a developing country, meaning that the GDP per capita is not the highest in the world, India still has problems in terms of development, but India is growing fast – that is a story for another time – but you cannot put development and culture in the same category, as culture is somewhat static, whilst development comes and goes. Until the 1700s, India had been contributing 25% to the world's GDP since time immemorial; after that, our contribution with the GDP came down to about 1% when we got our independence. It is slowly increasing, and there is no need to go into details, however, whether we were developed or not, the culture has

always been rich. People need to appreciate it more because a huge skyscraper is not exactly culture; culture is much beyond that skyscraper.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: What can Romania learn from the Indian example in terms of cultural diplomacy and relations?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: As all cultures have their own characteristics and identities, similarly, all countries have their own path. How a country is going to promote its culture cannot be learned from outside. The country has to find its way, since they know best. It would be like me telling Romanians or Albanians how they should learn Romanian or how they should dress, how they should wear their traditional costumes, or how they should change if I happen to not like a particular music. That would, of course, be inappropriate. It has to come from within. And that the country knows best, how to promote its own culture or what kind of cultural diplomacy to employ. Hence, I do not have any suggestions to give to anyone in this matter.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: In which direction do you see India heading in its cultural development, especially concerning its external cultural policy?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: I would primarily say emphasis should be laid on resources. Currently, we do not have enough diplomats, neither in our cultural centers abroad, nor in diplomatic missions and that shall not improve in the near future; we cannot open embassies everywhere, nor can we set up cultural centers everywhere. Therefore, we tend to branch out, we have a Yoga teacher coming especially from India to bring the ancient system closer to the public, or we rely on local teachers for different subjects; we can also engage in a public-private partnership to open some cultural center in a particular place. The interest is at times overwhelming as compared to the available resources. Our objective in the future would be to use, for example, the tools of technology that we talked about; or to find additional ways of promoting culture, to use the strengths of people, the strength of resources which are readily available. For example, if a person is doing research on Sanskrit in Romania, why not use that

resource to bring that aspect of culture to a bigger audience? We join hands with institutions, with individuals to achieve that, because until we wait to open a huge cultural center thinking that our cultural diplomacy will then take off, we risk accomplishing nothing at all. We must use technology, whatever resources are available locally and, thus, attain more cultural development.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: Our present is influenced by our mastery of the English language, the foremost language of communication internationally. Is the danger of forgetting one's roots and gravitating towards the West real? How can we overcome it?

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: English is a very convenient language and if, for whatever reasons, it has become an international language, I do not see a need to fight its popularity and replace it with some other language. As far as forgetting one's roots are concerned, I think it will be too simplistic to say that such is the case only because one is using a specific language. A great example is India. People might talk in English, might think in English, but if you visit an average Indian's home – who might be speaking very good English – does the person eat French food? There is nothing wrong with French food, but for the sake of elaborating, you will find the person eating Indian food. If you attend a marriage, we are getting married following the customs established millennia ago. Even in terms of traditional attire, although men have changed their style, Indian clothes have started regaining their appeal. The Indian *saree* has an uninterrupted history of wear; influences have come and gone, but Indian women still prefer to wear the *saree*. In India's case, the roots will remain steadfast, of that I am certain. Regarding an international language that is so well-rooted that virtually everyone speaks it, why should we be using a translator for it when there is already a language that one knows and communicates in? I do not see any danger in people forgetting their roots and it might be true for many countries; Romania is a good example of honoring roots because wherever I go, I do not see places becoming something they were not originally. The characteristics of people,

buildings, culture in general are alive and well. People in Romania speak hundreds of languages, everyone speaks English, German, French, Spanish; despite this reality, the roots survive as they are very deep, whilst the means of communication such as a language is but the superficial layer. Culture goes deep down and it will take a lot of effort to yank it out. Many a times, when foreign influences are introduced, people do try uprooting, but it never reaches fruition. The superficial layers may incur some damage, but the root is there to stay and the sapling is born anew. To conclude, I do not see any threat to one's roots just because of a language spoken out of convenience.

**Hilda-Hedvig Varga**: I express my gratitude, Your Excellency, for having accepted to respond to these questions and I am truly honored that I got the opportunity to interact with you on topics so close to my interests and heart. It was, indeed, memorable and I hope the rest of your tenure is spent in the good fashion of the patron of arts and culture that you have proven, time and time again, to be.

**H.E. Mr. Rahul Shrivastava**: Thank you for your kind words and I must admit that I am always happy to encourage people who show so much interest in the rich culture of my motherland. I wish you all the best for your future endeavors.

In 2023, India and Romania celebrate 75 years from the establishment of diplomatic relations, as well as 10 years from the signing of the India-Romania Extensive Partnership Agreement (*Joint Declaration for Extensive Partnership*).

**About the interviewer:**

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 holds a PhD in Philosophy, with a thesis on Hindu rites of passage. Her interests encompass anything Indian, be it language and literature, history or philosophy.

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## STUDIES

# *Buddhist Concepts in Mihai Eminescu's Poems*

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**Abstract:** Mihai Eminescu's indianism has been researched by scholars and critics like Amita Bhose or Mircea Itu, but the Buddhist component of his writings was not thoroughly analysed. The present study aims to investigate some fundamental Buddhist concepts that the Romanian writer recycled in his works. All of Mihai Eminescu's friends knew about his keen interest in Buddhism, as Cătălin Cioabă's book *Mărturii despre Eminescu* (2022) revealed to the public, and his fascination for this particular philosophical Indian system was reflected in his poems. The main research questions of this paper are: "Which are the Buddhist concepts that Mihai Eminescu intertextually used in his works?" and "Why did he choose those philosophical ideas?" In the analysis of the Buddhist dimension of Eminescu's poetry, the following methods will be indispensable: close reading, hermeneutics, intertextuality and stylistics.

**Keywords**: Buddhism, Eminescu, Indianism, intertextuality, philosophy.

## 1. Introduction

### Euro-Asian Intercultural Relations and Buddhism

Europeans always considered the Orient as a fascinating source of inspiration. The prestige, long history and complexity of the Oriental civilizations (Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Indian, Persian etc.) represented the main reasons for the import of ideas, symbols, myths, deities, customs and scientific innovations from Asia to Europe starting

in Prehistory, even agriculture was introduced in Europe by some populations which migrated from Anatolia to the southeastern part of the Old Continent during Neolithic. These intercultural and interethnic contacts have had military, political, commercial, religious and spiritual causes. Archaeologists and historians noticed that the first intercultural Euro-Asian relations cannot be exactly identified, and Marija Gimbutas considered the islands of the Aegean Sea and the Balkans as a "bridge" in the way of migrations from Asia to Europe in the Neolithic.[1]

Regarding the genetic heritage of Romanians and other peoples from southern and southeastern Europe, Mihai Netea stated that it was mainly inherited from Anatolian populations that migrated to the Balkans and spread in southern and central Europe in two waves during Neolithic.[2]

In Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the intercultural and interethnic contacts between the two continents became more complex and more intense. Thus, several innovations and discoveries pertaining to all fields of knowledge and life entered to Europe from Asia: the alphabet, gunpowder, paper, irrigation systems, saddle, abacus, porcelain, chess etc. In the culinary domain, the Europeans imported from Asia a number of foods and spices: wheat, rice, sugar, cardamom, cloves, and cinnamon, black pepper, nutmeg, yoghurt, tea, coffee etc. Some of the most significant Asian spiritual influences over Europeans were represented by deities, symbols and myths that Greeks and Romans borrowed from the Middle East: Aphrodite, Hera, Artemis, Cybele, and Christianity which replaced the polytheist religions all over Europe by the end of the Middle Ages. These intercultural relations had also a negative aspect, along the trade routes some new infectious diseases spread from Asia to Europe, and one of the deadliest was the plague.[3]

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[1] Marija Gimbutas, *Civilizație și cultură. Vestigii preistorice în sud-estul european*, Translated from English by Sorin Paliga, București, Editura Meridiane 1989, p. 56.

[2] Mihai G. Netea, *O istorie genetică (incompletă) a românilor*, București, Editura Humanitas, 2022, pp. 77-78.

[3] Andrew Doig, *This Mortal Coil: A History of Death,* London & New York, Bloomsbury, 2022, pp. 62-63.

But the influences occurred in the opposite direction as well, from Europe to Asia, and an eloquent example is the Hellenistic values that were borrowed by people from the Middle East and Central Asia after the conquest of those territories by Alexander the Great. After Alexander conquered the Persian Empire and the northwestern Indian territories, several cultural transfers took place in both directions:

> "Alexander the Great's expedition in Punjab (327-325 BCE) established an ephemeral Macedonian dominance in the two newly founded satrapies in the north-west, and this was the time when the Hellenistic civilization entered these regions."[4]

Later on, by the end of the Antiquity, on the territory of the former Gandhāra Kingdom and the Kushan Empire a cultural melting-pot occurred as a consequence of the collision of "the Persian, the Hellenistico-Roman, the Greco-Bactrian, the Kushan and the Indian civilizations."[5] The local Art has obvious Hellenistic influences, especially the Buddhist sculptures. After Alexander's death, a mixed population (generated by the interethnic marriages caused by the Macedonian conquest) flourished, and they carried on the new culture. At that time were written some books exploring different aspects of this phenomenon (historical, cultural, spiritual): *Indica* by Megastene or *Milinda Pañha* (the dialogue between the king Menandru – Milinda – and the Buddhist monk Nagasena).

The Roman Empire established commercial and cultural relations with India, "while Indian philosophers, sages and poets gathered in the polyglot streets and parks of Alexandria."[6] These relations mainly occurred in the philosophical, religious and spiritual fields. Gnosticism, the negative theology of Basilides of Alexandria, and Bardesanes the

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[4] Dan Costian, *În lumina Bibliei. Biblia și India,* Vol. I, București, Editura Nemira, 1999, p. 25. If not mentioned otherwise, all translations from Romanian belong to the author.
[5] Horia Matei, *Enciclopedia Antichității*, București, Meteor Press, 2000, p. 142.
[6] Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America*, Boston, Shambala, 1992, p. 16.

Babylonian's Neoplatonism were deeply influenced by Buddhist thought. In the Middle Ages, the legend about Siddhartha Gautama reached Europe as a hagiographic novel entitled *Barlaam and Josaphat*. Thus, the story about Buddha's life and work was recycled into a Christian narrative, and Buddha became Josaphat after several changes during its journey across many cultures and languages in the Middle East and the Near East. In the XIII$^{th}$ century, the Franciscan monk Guillaume de Rubrouck was sent by Pope Innocent IV as an envoy to the Mongol Khan Möngke, where he met representatives of many religious traditions: Muslims, Confucianists, Nestorians, and Tibetan Lamas etc. On this occasion, Rubrouck recorded for the first time the mantra of Avalokiteśvara (Boddhisattva of Compassion), *Aum mani padme hum*, and wrote it in Latin characters.

The Great Geographical Discoveries caused an intensification of the Orient-Occident relations, mostly due to commercial reasons, and a consequence of this period was colonialism which transformed the intercultural contacts between Asian and European peoples into permanent and natural encounters. Several explorers and researchers went to Asia to decipher scientifically the mysteries of this fascinating continent. The first Westerner to use the term *Buddhist* in a book was the British surgeon Francis Buchanan, who published the study *On the Religion and Literature of the Burmas* (after an expedition in Burma in 1797), in which he talked about Buddhism. The Buddhist thought attracted numerous Europeans, and they travelled across Asia willing to understand this newly (re)found religion: Brian Hodgson, Eugène Burnouf, Sándor Kőrösi Csoma, Elena Petrovna Blavatsky, and Alexandra David-Néel etc.

Buddhism influenced many European philosophers and schools of thought. Pyrrhonism, founded by Pyrrho of Elis (360-270 BCE), was one of the first Western philosophical systems obviously influenced by Buddhist ideas such as non-attachment. The similarities between these two systems were generated by the contacts that Pyrrho had with Indian

thinkers when he accompanied Alexander the Great on his expedition to India. The Buddhist influence touched even some modern and contemporary philosophers: David Hume, Alfred North Whitehead, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty or Ludwig Wittgenstein.

The next part of the study is an analysis of the Buddhist intertext in Mihai Eminescu's thinking and work, using methods such as close reading, stylistics, hermeneutics and intertextuality.

## 2. Mihai Eminescu's Interest in the Indian Civilization and Buddhism

Mihai Eminescu,[7] like the majority of the European Romantic writers, was interested in and passionate by the Indian culture. He assimilated deep knowledge about Indian civilization, philosophy, literature, and Sanskrit language during his academic studies in Wien and Berlin. The Romanian thinker and writer did not only accumulate vast information in this field but he also inserted it into his works. His interest overlapped Indian linguistics as well, and he translated into Romanian the *Sanskrit Grammar* of Franz Bopp.[8]

Amita Bhose[9] analyzed the Indian influences in Eminescu's work in her doctoral thesis entitled *Eminescu and India: The Indian Influence on Eminescu's Thought*. Another important study on this topic is Mircea Itu's

[7] Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889) was a Romanian poet, thinker, novelist, and journalist. He is regarded as the national poet of Romania, and one of the most influential figures of the Romanian culture. Eminescu was a Romantic writer who was interested in the Orient and Indian philosophies, like the majority of the Romantic poets.

[8] Mihai Eminescu, *Gramatica sanscrită. Manuscrisul 357 II-30-III*, Edited by Constantin Barbu, București, Editura Dyonisos, 1997.

[9] Amita Bhose (1933-1992) was an Indian scholar and writer, a specialist in Mihai Eminescu's life and work. She completed a doctoral program in Comparative Literature under the supervision of Prof. Zoe Dumitrescu Bușulenga, and her doctoral thesis was entitled *Eminescu and India: The Indian Influence on Eminescu's Thought*.

book *Eminescu's Indianism*,[10] but both studies treated the Buddhist dimension of Mihai Eminescu's thought and work only partially, paying more attention to the Hindu sources. Arthur Schopenhauer's writings had significant importance for the discovery of Buddhism by Mihai Eminescu.

Cătălin Cioabă edited in 2013 a volume of memories and letters[11] on the life and work of the Romanian poet, in which some of Eminescu's friends recalled his passion for the Orient and for India in particular, among other topics. He discovered India and its culture, and philosophy (and Buddhism, particularly) due to his vast interest in various fields of knowledge:

> "Besides Romanian language and history, Eminescu used to study with great pleasure the ancient history, especially the history of Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians and Indians [...]" (Cioabă 2013: 57) or "The amazing knowledge that one can find in Eminescu's writings prove that he, as an autodidact, spent his time efficiently and he studied hardly the national history and literature, foreign literatures, philosophical systems, metaphysics, and even Latin, which challenged him during high school (asserted Teodor V. Ștefanelli)."(62)

Thus, it can be inferred that some of Eminescu's favourite subjects were history, philosophy and literature, with a propensity for Oriental history. This preference for Oriental civilizations was the window to a variety of Eastern philosophical systems, among them Buddhism. Ioan Slavici considered Kant and Schopenhauer as mediators between Eminescu and the Oriental philosophies:

> "All these would not have been possible if he wouldn't have read Kant and Schopenhauer, whose books were the ones that he never sold after he read them. I also recall clearly that he used to speak a lot about Buddha, Nirvana and Confucius." (118)

[10] Mircea Itu, *Indianismul lui Eminescu*, Brașov, Editura Orientul Latin, 1995.
[11] Cătălin Cioabă (ed.), *Mărturii despre Eminescu. Povestea unei vieți spusă de contemporani*, București, Editura Humanitas, 2013.

But Slavici also noticed that Mihai Eminescu only partially shared Arthur Schopenhauer's perspective on Buddhism:

> "[...] I used to talk with Eminescu all the time, who neither at that time nor later accepted entirely the German philosopher's views, only the basic principles: that the real world is not what we can see, that the soul is independent of the body, and the foundation of morality is compassion, old and, at the same time, new truths." (175)

Therefore, one could infer that the Romanian poet read about the basic principles of Buddhism such as *pratītyasamutpāda* (law of the dependent arising), *anātman* (the theory about the interdependence of the soul), and the crucial importance of *karuṇā* (compassion) on the path to Enlightenment. Teodor Ștefanelli recalled Eminescu's verve whenever he talked about Buddhism, emphasizing the vast knowledge Eminescu had about this philosophy and about Tibetan Buddhist Tantra:

> "[...] Eminescu used to expose vast knowledge and he used to tell me that Tibet was the cradle and the heart of the Buddhist mysteries, then he used to talk about Nirvana and Buddha-Sakhia-Muni. He used to be so passionate about the principles of this religion that he seemed to be in ecstasy while talking, and he often uttered enthusiastically the words *O! Buddha-Sakhia-Muni!*" (148-149)

Thus, Eminescu's passion and interest in Indian culture, philosophy and literature, and Buddhism in particular, was obvious in his friends and contemporaries' accounts on the one hand, and in his poems on the other.

### 3. The Buddhist Intertext in Eminescu's Poetry

Mihai Eminescu's propensity for Indian topics was constant during his entire life, and it manifested through readings, attending Indology courses, and inserting key ideas and concepts into his writings:

> "The fact that India represented for Eminescu an obsessive cultural area to which he often referred and talked in exalting words since his teenage, the fact that during his academic studies, he attended lectures on this topic, attending even Albrecht Weber's lectures (the famous Sanskritologist), the

> fact that he left as an incomplete manuscript the translation into Romanian of Franz Bopp's *Sanskrit Grammar*, and especially the fact that in his poems one can find indubitably a number of Indian themes and motifs, all these facts raised the problem of the Indian culture as a source of inspiration for Mihai Eminescu."[12]

The Romanian poet succeeded in fully assimilating and recycling in his poems the basic themes and concepts of Buddhism, its core teachings, and set intertextual relations with Buddhist thought. Regarding the philosophical dimension of his work and his meditative nature, George Călinescu wrote:

> "Eminescu is a philosopher, not because of the contemplative attitude of his poems but due to the methodological strategies that can be found in his reasoning, and which agglutinate the speculative parts of his work."[13]

As I previously emphasized, the Buddhist philosophy represented an ethical and ideational system for the Romanian poet, and, naturally, he recycled several Buddhist ideas and concepts in his poems. The following part of the chapter is an intertextual analysis of some of his philosophical poems.

a) *Epigonii* (*The Epigones*)

As Mircea Itu noticed, the line "Round and round the wheel is turning, life and death are always fleeting"[14] is a "mere translation from French"[15] from E. Burnouf's *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism* (1844). The main concept encapsulated in this line is *saṃsāra*,

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[12] Sergiu Al-George, *Arhaic și universal. India în conștiința românească,* București, Editura Herald, 2002, pp. 234-235.

[13] George Călinescu, *Opera lui Mihai Eminescu*, Vol. II, București, Editura Minerva, 1970, p. 8.

[14] Octavian Cocoș (translator). *Mihai Eminescu: 83 poems translated into English,* 2022. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.30693.06883, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358635512_Mihai_Eminescu_-_83_poems_translated_into_English_by_Octavian_Cocos, last accessed on 19.08.2023, p. 123.

[15] Mircea Itu, *Indianismul lui Eminescu*, op. cit., p. 77.

the endless cycle of births and rebirths of the continuum of consciousness due to ignorance until one reaches Buddhahood. Metempsychosis is an idea specific to Indian philosophical systems, and it is found in Buddhism as well. In this case, the entity that transmigrates from life to life is not the soul, but the continuum of consciousness, as Buddhists accept the theory of *anātman* (non-self).

In Gautama Buddha's philosophical system, the self is interdependent, and it is constituted of five aggregates (*skandha*): materiality/form (*rūpa*), physical sensations (*vedanā*), perception (*samjña*), impulses (*saṃskāra*), and consciousness (*vijñāna*); all these covering the physical, mental and emotional aspects of one's existence. The relation between a person and the five *skandhas* is clarified by the comparison of the self to a chariot from *Milindapañha*: a chariot is made up of many parts and it seems to be a unitary entity but when it is broken into its constituent parts, the unity vanishes (the chariot is n interdependent entity just like the self). The main feature of *saṃsāra* is suffering (*dukkha*), this is the main reason for sages wanting to attain enlightenment (*nirvāṇa*):

> "I ran through *saṃsāra*, with its many births,/ Searching for, but not finding, the house-builder./ Misery is birth again and again."[16]

The seventeenth stanza evokes the futility of conceptualization for our transient existence, the "icon" and the "symbol" could be metaphors of the idea of "concept":

> "In this world so ephemeral there's no purpose, there's no meaning;/ People make symbols and icons of all trifles in their head;/ They call holy, good and lovely what is really without worth,/ On a pile of various systems split their thinking from the birth/ And with images and pictures dress a body empty, dead."[17]

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[16] *The Dhammapada*. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by John Ross Carter and Mahinda Palihawadana, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 29.
[17] Octavian Cocoș, *op. cit*., p. 123.

The metaphor "a body empty, dead" might be an allusion to the Buddhist concept *śūnya* (emptiness) because in Buddhism the corpse is the symbol of the transience of life, and at the entrance to the Tibetan monasteries there are skeletons painted on the wall or the gate, aiming to remind people of the inevitability of death, and to urge them to practice the dharma. *Maraṇasati* is a type of meditation in which images and contemplative techniques are used to analyse the nature of life and death. This practice leads to the right effort, and it causes a pressing need to advance on the Path to Enlightenment by renouncing worldly life and concerns. The final objective, the attainment of *nirvāṇa*, can be reached only by understanding emptiness (*śūnya*) through the lens of interdependence (*pratītyasamutpāda*).

The idea of the transience of all things and beings, and the co-dependence of everything in the universe occurs at the end of the poem:

> "Dumb and genius, small and famous, sound and soul and the blue sky - / All is dust… The world entire… and the same dust is in us."[18]

The statement "all is dust" could be interpreted as an allusion to the transience of life and beings or in the manner of the Buddhist atomists Dharmakīrti and Dignāga, as a reference to the granular structure of the universe. They considered that the world is made of imperceptible particles that contain energy, and their perspective is similar to the theories of Quantum Physics. Dignāga argued the common perspective of his time that the object of perception possesses inherent reality, and he admitted that the object represents neither the image of atoms nor the matter itself because substance/matter is made of a multitude of atomic particles.

b) *Glossă* (*Gloss*)

As both Amita Bhose and Mircea Itu noticed, in *Gloss* the Buddhist intertext is obvious and easily decipherable. The initial and final stanzas comprise the main themes of the poem which were borrowed from

[18] *Ibidem*.

Buddhism: the permanence of change, non-attachment, meditative introspection, mindfulness etc. In the second stanza, the lyrical ego focuses on the negativeness of attachment and the cultivation of non-attachment by practising meditation and introspection:

> "We see things of every kind/ And we hear a lot of stuff/ Who can store them all in mind,/ Who can listen well enough?.../ But you'd better sit aside,/ Brace yourself, be ever strong/ When with noises and vain pride/ Time goes by, time comes along."[19]

The illusion of time, as described by *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, is only a trick of memory, devoid of real basis, and this idea can be found in the Quantum Physics theory. Carlo Rovelli, when discussing the *loop theory* in Quantum Physics, deconstructs two of the most traditional concepts time and space due to the interdependence that rules the universe:

> "In a theory of this kind, time and space are no longer containers or general forms of the world. They are approximations of a quantum dynamic that in itself knows neither space nor time. There are only events and relations. It is the world without time of elementary physics."[20]

In Buddhism, neither past nor future have real existence because the present cannot be found after a thorough analysis, and the absence of the present determines the empty character of past and future. The lyrical ego advises impartiality (*upekṣā*) to counterbalance the illusory nature of the world (*māyā*), and, thus, to avoid the emotional and mental turbulences that might arise from this delusion:

> "And don't let its tongue so strange,/ To incline the reason's scales/ To the moment that will change,/ To the phony happy trails,/ Which are rooted in its death/ And will disappear like dew;/ But for those who know at length/ All is old and all is new."[21]

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[19] Translation by Octavian Cocoș, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
[20] Carlo Rovelli, *The Order of Time*. Translated by Erica Segre and Simon Carnell, New York, Riverhead Books, 2018, p. 80.
[21] Translation by Octavian Cocoș, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

A *koinos topos* of the majority of Indian philosophical systems is the cyclic character of time and life/world, and Mihai Eminescu synthesized it masterfully in the following stanzas:

> "And the future and the past/ Are the sides of the same card/ See the outset very fast/ Those who learn them really hard;/ All that was or that will be/ Nowadays, we have in view/ If it's vain for you and me,/ Ask yourself and ponder, too." Or "Because these, as it appears,/ All obey – the strong, the weak,/ And for many thousand years/ We've been happy, we've been bleak./ Other masks, the same old play,/ Other mouths, the same career,/ When you're cheated every day/ Do not hope and do not fear."[22]

Nicolae Manolescu stated that "in *Gloss*, the Schopenhauerian philosophy is lyricized."[23] Schopenhauer represents a *nexus* between Mihai Eminescu and Buddhism, as we previously argued. His propensity for meditation, gaining insight into reality, and reasoning, are intellectual traits that brought the Romanian poet to Indian philosophy. Mircea Scarlat noticed that Eminescu's philosophical poetry was oriented to

> "reflection, searching for general truths and, at the same time, towards lapidary and memorable statements. The extreme case, almost mnemonic, one can find in *Gloss*."[24]

*c) Eu nu cred nici în Iehova* (*I don't believe in Jehovah either*)

In this poem, Mihai Eminescu recycled the Buddhist concept *nekkhamma* (non-attachment) regarding his religious options. Attachment, even for one's own religion, is considered negative in Buddhism, and it is, together with ignorance and desire, one of the three poisons (*triviṣa*):

> "I don't believe in Jehovah either/ Or in Buddha-Sakya-Muni,/ Neither in life, nor in death,/ Nor in extinction like some loony."[25]

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[22] *Ibidem*, pp. 37-38.
[23] Nicolae Manolescu, *Despre poezie*, București, Editura Cartea Românească, 2008, p. 390.
[24] Mircea Scarlat, *Istoria poeziei românești* (vol. II). București, Ed. Minerva, 1984, p. 102.
[25] Mihai Eminescu, *Poezii*. Selecție, cronologie și note de Cătălin Cioabă, București, Editura Humanitas, 2014, p. 200.

Impartiality and emotional balance are to be cultivated in any situation as per Buddhist sutras advice; one should have this attitude towards life and death equally, taking into account the identity of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* stated by Nāgārjuna:

> "There is not the slightest difference/ Between cyclic existence and *nirvāṇa*./ There is not the slightest difference/ Between *nirvāṇa* and cyclic existence."[26]

This idea is resumed in the next stanza, where the poet recycled the theme of life as a dream (specific for Buddhism):

> "All of them are mere dreams,/ And it is the same to me/ Whether I shall live forever/ Or I shall be dead for eternity."[27]

Both, life and death, are illusory like a dream, they do not have a real basis, seen from the perspective of the law of interdependence. The attitude of the lyrical ego to challenge the reality of life and death emphasizes Eminescu's profound understanding of Buddhist philosophy which argues that life and death, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are nothing but two facets of the same reality. After this intertextual analysis, one can notice that Buddhism was profoundly ingrained in Mihai Eminescu's thinking, and it contributed to shaping not only his *forma mentis* but also his philosophical poetry. The main intertextual figures that he used for recycling Buddhist concepts in his poems were allusion, paraphrase and quotation (only once in *The Epigones*).

**Conclusion**

Mihai Eminescu's work and his friends and contemporaries' accounts reveal his indisputable passion and interest in Buddhism, as part of the Indian philosophical background. In spite of Eminescu's

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[26] Nāgārjuna. *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way. Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarika*. Translation and commentary by Jay L. Garfield, New York, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 308.
[27] Mihai Eminescu, *op. cit*., p. 200.

indirect contact with Indian civilization, the Romanian poet assimilated its ideas and values, and used them in his literary works by inserting Buddhist and Hindu concepts and theories in his poems, among them: *Epigones*, *Gloss*, *I don't believe in Jehovah either* etc. The intertextual instruments used by Eminescu in the analyzed texts were paraphrase, allusion and quotation. He researched all aspects of the Indian culture, and studied its literature, philosophies and religions, alongside with Sanskrit language probably to be able to read the original versions of the fundamental works of the Indian literary and philosophical heritage.

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# *A Possible Theological-Philosophical Architecture of Interfaith Dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism*

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**Abstract**: The experience of the religious and cultural encounter of East and West was consummated. Both civilizations looked at each other, admired each other, criticized each other, appreciated each other, but could not avoid the continuous encounter on the social space. This encounter is translated into the everyday experience of a world in which religious-cultural boundaries are much more fluid and perishable because of the innovative complex of communication, mobility, and relationship. Extensive research has been produced exploring the stakes of this West-East encounter from historical, cultural, and religious perspectives. Books, studies, and projects have been written about the differences and common elements of this encounter. Our aim in this study is to project the possibility of a new architecture of the dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism, in particular between Orthodox theology and Advaita-Vedanta, one of the *darśana* in Hinduism, an architecture whose morphology is constituted by the density of the human experience with the divine.

**Keywords**: interreligious dialogue, Advaita Vedanta, Orthodox theology, experience.

## 1. Introduction

It should be noted that the comparative study of religions has focused on two directions, shaped at different times according to the trends of research on the religious fact itself: one direction that has focused on the philosophical and theological proximity of religions, and the other on cultic and theological differences. In order to develop the research horizon, new and novel methodologies have been proposed to address the religious complexity derived from the multiplicity of religions. But one fact has been overlooked: religions are not structures in themselves, but represent a social, philosophical, cultic, and doctrinal

universe assumed by a human being. The analysis of religions has stopped at these facts but has forgotten that man is the conscious entity who concretizes and projects religion in himself, through the assumption of existential references, through individual and community cultic and spiritual behavior. Somehow, this comparative study of religions, focusing too much on the forms and less on the religious substance, has become superficial. And it has omitted another essential aspect: the constant and accelerating transformation of society in which religion is present through its exponents.

The title of this study also sums up our intention expressed in these pages. We therefore propose a rethinking of the architecture of interreligious dialogue between East and West in concrete terms of *possibility*. Is such a dialogue possible or not? It depends on what we are aiming for in this dialogue: to emphasize the irreconcilable differences between the Christian religious complex and the Hindu philosophical-religious complex? Should we transcend the particularity of differences into a syncretistic fusion of consumer spirituality? Or should we define ourselves in this dialogical relationship as privileged to have the possibility of appreciating differences and valuing commonalities? We have one certainty, which is also the premise of our argument in advocating a new hermeneutics of dialogue: in both Hinduism and Christianity, man defines himself, seeks to define for himself the universe in which he lives, and seeks to define the purpose of his existence. Both religions are concerned with man and his quests and seek to respond to them with a well-established guide. Dialogue thus becomes a human experience of the self through the other. After all, we belong to each other in a world that is culturally, economically, and socially compressed and where the proximity of religious otherness is a daily reality. And when the foundation of dialogue is the theological-philosophical substance of religions in interaction, the possibility of dialogue can become, depending on availability, an experience of unity.

## 2. Interfaith dialogue in new social circumstances

After all, why has so much emphasis been placed on interreligious dialogue in recent decades? The answer can be thought of in several versions. The world is changing. Of course, the world has not changed overnight. There has been a gradual, if sometimes rapid, movement in which society, almost as if in a chain reaction, has changed both in its outward forms and in its inward mentalities. Some of the most significant changes have been the consequences of technological and industrial progress, and their effects can be seen in both demographic and individual terms. Ease of transport, market economies and globalization have given rise to a rapid increase in mass migration that has changed the demographics of almost the whole world, but also to a new way of thinking about identity. The local has reshaped itself into global visibility. The meaning of the boundaries of the relationship between identity and otherness has receded; new everyday conditions have imposed a structural rethinking of relations between people. And people belong to different religious cultures. Global emulation has led to new relations between religions.

Thus, with the dynamization of communication and mobility of people *from* and *to* different geographical spaces, there is a growing urgency for multi-religious approaches to issues of common social, cultural, and religious interest.[1] This interest is accompanied by a proliferation of different national and international interfaith initiatives, which are gaining certain attractiveness. In this context, there is a call for these initiatives to be accompanied by appropriate responses from religious communities. And dialogue is or can be an appropriate tool for the new map of religious diversity.

In another vein, in many parts of the world, intolerance and conflict between religious and ethnic communities is on the rise, and in several

[1] J. Bercovitch, A.S. Kadayifci-Orellana, "Religion and mediation: The role of faith-based actors in international conflict resolution", in *International Negotiation* 14 (1), 2009, pp. 175-204.

countries, violence is justified in the name of religion.[2] Never has there been a greater need than now to promote cooperation between religions, on a personal, local, and ultimately global level.

We conclude that interfaith dialogue is necessary. First and foremost, interreligious dialogue aims at better mutual understanding.[3] Primarily, this means understanding what another religious tradition entails. Despite the increasing religious pluralization of our societies, the situation is usually still marked by widespread ignorance of other faiths and often of one's own religion. However, the problem is not only ignorance, but also prejudice against the other who belongs to another religious culture, which can only grow on the soil of ignorance. Finally, the relationship between people of different faiths is often characterized by artificial generalizations. That is, people tend towards a mutual perception that is insensitive to the fact that no religious tradition is a homogeneous entity, but always includes an enormous internal diversity of different beliefs, practices, and interpretations. Therefore, the search for better mutual understanding through dialogue is not just about understanding what the other's religion means. It also seeks to overcome ignorance, prejudice and general generalization.

A second dimension of interfaith dialogue is mutual learning. Quite often, the word dialogue is used in lay literature as a synonym for communication. However, from a theological point of view, and especially in the context of interreligious encounter, it seems advisable to reserve the term dialogue for some quite specific forms of communication. The history of interreligious encounters has often seen

[2] See the "World Watch List 2023" report, published in January 2023, which states that data from 1993 to 2023 revealed the extent of religious persecution. Likewise, data provided by Samirah Majumdar and Virginia Villa, "Globally, Social Hostilities Related to Religion Decline in 2019, While Government Restrictions Remain at Highest Levels," https://www.pewresearch.org (accessed 17.04.2023), suggests the same unfortunate reality.
[3] Perry Schmidt-Leukel, "The Relevance of Interreligious Dialogue in the Public Sphere. Some Misgivings'', in A. Körs et al. (eds.), *Religious Diversity and Interreligious Dialogue*, Springer, 2020, p. 340.

polemical and apologetic controversy, but not so often genuine dialogue between religions. One point that makes the difference between dialogue and controversy is mutual learning. In controversy, opponents look for weaknesses in each other's faith to demonstrate their own superiority. In dialogue, however, they look for strengths in order to learn from them, i.e. to grow in perception and understanding of reality. Inter-religious dialogue will help all participants to reach not only a better understanding of each other, but also a better understanding of religious diversity as such.

A third dimension of interfaith dialogue is that it can and should lead to mutual transformation. In a sense, this is already implied by the idea of mutual learning: submission to a learning process is always transformative. However, it is worth emphasizing this particular aspect because it implies a willingness to enter into dialogue with a genuine openness to new perspectives. Each participant must come to the dialogue without superficial assumptions about the points of disagreement.[4] If one goal of dialogue is the open search for truth from all perspectives, nothing that initially appears to be a barrier between partners should be declared insurmountable. Or to put it another way, the transformative dimension of dialogue requires a willingness to question and change one's own positions during dialogue.

Finally, dialogue also implies a practical dimension. Inter-religious dialogue can also be thought of as a platform to promote a global ethic in order to create the basis for solidarity that responds to human needs: intervention in natural disasters, medical assistance in disadvantaged and poor areas, the provision of food and education, etc.

As mentioned at the beginning of this study, there is a risk: many inter-religious initiatives vary in their scale, impact, and the actors they involve. Often the main interest of these efforts is to promote and stimulate debate and exchange of ideas, to facilitate recognition of

[4] L. Swidler, *After the absolute. The dialogical future of religious reflection*, Fortress Press, 1990, p. 44.

shared values and to encourage respect and tolerance of diversity. However, some initiatives seem mainly to contribute to the "marketing of religions" and to highlight rather ephemeral and superficial events, where image seems to matter more than content. In concrete terms, interreligious dialogue is not really between religions, but between people who project their lives into the religious universe.

### 3. Where Orthodox Theology meet Advaita-Vedanta? Towards a horizon of convergence

Convergence indicates that two or more elements are directed towards the same goal. As far as we are concerned, it can be said that both Advaita Vedānta śaṅkari and Christian theology aim at a common goal, though presented in different meanings: liberation (*mokṣa*) or the realization of the identity of the individual self with Brahman/Ātman in Hinduism, and salvation or the deification of man (*theosis*) in Christianity. The convergence between these two religious paradigms is not only methodological, but dialogical, in the sense that both aim at the fact of human existential fulfilment. But as a meaning, this aim or goal, as a dynamic imperative of spiritual fulfilment, draws a fundamental difference. In the opinion of some Western scholars and even Christian theologians, Advaita Vedānta has been spoken of exclusively as a metaphysics, as a "scientific" philosophy of explaining the reality of the universe. To strip the Advaitin teaching of its spiritual dimension is to reduce it to the status of a mere philosophy, a mere metaphysical paradigm. S. C. Chatterjee corrects such a reductionist view, pointing out that the general tendency of Indian philosophy has been towards the transcendent and spiritual.[5] P. T. Raju[6] critically observes that the Western tradition is essentially a philosophy of exteriority, with a

[5] S. C. Chatterjee, "The Needed Reform in Philosophy", in *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1951), p. 51.

[6] P. T. Raju, "The Western and the Indian Philosophical Traditions", in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (1947), p. 152.

pronounced scientific character, and the Indian tradition is a philosophy of interiority, of the spiritual life.

Indian thought in general, and Advaita in particular, does not meet the criteria applicable to philosophy alone. The philosopher Śaṅkara (788-820) – as the one who outlined the principles of absolute nondualism – explains in the most intricate detail the reality of the universe in relation to the absolute reality of Brahman, not to outline a philosophical discourse with religious overtones, but to expound man's efficient method of coming to awareness of his own ontological authenticity, that of being Brahman/Ātman:

> "Advaita, as religion, is above all ways of returning from the alienation of multiplicity experienced in the phenomenal world to the non-duality truth of reality."[7]

Without any problem, Advaita Vedānta can be seen both as a philosophy and as a religion in the Hindu complex as a whole.

We now present, in a comparative perspective, some points where Advaita Vedānta and Orthodox Christian theology intersect. Both Christianity and Advaita Vedānta base their teachings on the revealed scriptural texts as a point of reference in their doctrinal foundation and apologetic dynamics vis-à-vis other circles of philosophical-religious thought. Recourse to the Holy Scriptures and the śruti texts (Upanishads) was and is the balancing and authoritative factor in confirming the orthodoxy of the teaching. These texts guide the one interested in truth towards realization or salvation.

Another point of intersection is the dimension of apophaticism. In Advaita, Ultimate Reality has two dimensions: *Brahman nirguṇa* and *Brahman saguṇa* or *Ishvara*. The negation neti, neti ("not so, not so" or "not this, not this") is not for Śaṅkara a discourse on Brahman nirguṇa, as it might imply, when contextualized in the Christian view. *Brahman*

[7] T. Kulangara, *Absolutism and Theism. A Philosophical Study of S. Radhakrishnan's Attempt to Reconcile Śaṅkara's Absolutism and Rāmājuna's Theism*, MS Publications, Trivanadrum, 1996, p. 129.

*nirguṇa* is beyond the conceptual sphere, either positive (*sat*, *jñānam*, *anantam*) or negative (*nirviśeṣa*, *niṣkriya*, *nirvikāra*, *niravayava*, *arūpa*), since language, thought and conceptually expressed knowledge belong exclusively to the empirical sphere. Brahman cannot be measured and no concept frames it. To circumscribe it in a definition, even a negative one, is to delimit it. Brahman remains absolutely transcendent, but its transcendence does not reduce it to a void, emptiness or nothingness or, as *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* II.4.1 pronounces it: "words turn back from Brahman." This inadequacy of concept, word and thought in defining *Brahman nirguṇa* suggests the premises of an apophaticism on the basis of which Brahman remains the unfathomable mystery, experienced in mystical silence. In principle, apophaticism has its foundation in an intellectual experience of the failure of thought in the face of what is beyond what can be conceived.

Along these lines, we are not wrong to say that Śaṅkara is perhaps the closest Vedic thinker to Christian apophatic theology in terms of the method of negation. Like *Brahman nirguṇa*, God in being is incomprehensible and impossible for human thought to circumscribe. The difference that delineates two levels of discourse in this negative path is that God is personal, and Brahman is impersonal. Last but not least, we note that the negation neti, neti does not directly target Brahman, but its function is to differentiate the Real from the non-real, the Self from the non-Self. The universe, the non-Self, has attributes, specifications, names, characteristics. Not calling Brahman "unborn", "uncreated", "untainted", "fearless" is to differentiate it from the phenomenal realm. *The śaṅkarian adhyāropa-apavāda* method (false attribution of properties or qualities and subsequent denial) does not denote a progress of cognition, but the exercise of eliminating the upādhi superimposed by ignorance (*avidyā*) on non-dual Reality.

In Christian theology, apophaticism is about knowledge, about a progression of knowledge from affirmation to negation, from rational deduction to experience:

> "In addition to this, we must investigate how we can know God, who is neither intelligible nor sensible and by no means a being among other beings. It is truer to say that we know God not according to His nature, wholly and completely unknown, beyond all understanding and thought, but that we, following the order of all beings, as one which He has made from of old, and which in some way resembles and resembles His divine patterns, we ascend gradually and in order, according to the measure of our powers, to that which is above all, in order to arrive at the negation and overcoming of all and the cause of all."[8]

The apophatic (negative) knowledge of God does not exclude His cataphatic (positive) knowledge, but it clarifies it. When we call God Goodness, Goodness, Love, Life, Almighty, Omnipresent we refer to His works or manifestations in the world, to the uncreated energies through which God descends to us and not to His totally unknowable divine being. Through these uncreated energies, God communicates Himself while remaining incommunicable in His being and makes Himself known while remaining unknowable in His being. The uncreated energies are distinct from the divine Being, but are not separate from it, God being present as Person in them, not merging with them.

On the one hand, God is given innumerable names, on the other, "God is the unnamed One, to whom after being no name fits."[9] When we refer to God's manifestations, we make positive claims about Him, but when we consider His being, we deny all these claims. V. Lossky, giving a clearer specification of Orthodox apophaticism, points out that

> "we cannot conceive of God in Himself, in His essence, in His mystery. To attempt to conceive God in Himself is to be silenced, for neither thought nor speech can embrace the infinite in those concepts which, defining, limit. For these reasons, the Church Fathers turned to the negative way. The apophatic way is an attempt to know God not in what He is, but in what He is not."[10]

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[8] Dionysius Areopagite, *De divine nominibus*, VII.3, 869CD-872A, *Patrologia Graeca,* III, J.-P. Migne (Ed.), Paris, 1857.
[9] *Ibidem*, I.6, 596A.
[10] Vladimir Lossky, *Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, Bucharest, 1993, p. 37.

Apophaticism consists in denying what God is not, without denying God as a super-existent Personal Entity.

On the one hand, in Christian theology, apophaticism does not mean a total closure of God in Himself, in His own sufficiency, since God is the Being that no one can call Himself: "I am that I am" (*Exodus* 3.14). Accordingly, apophatic knowledge in the Orthodox pattern is knowledge through experience, knowledge that better carries the sense of unity. In apophatic experiential knowledge, on the one hand God is grasped; on the other hand, what is grasped hints at something beyond all grasping.

Orthodox theology and Advaita-Vedanta meet in the mystical experience of existential realization. *Brahmanubhava* in Advaita is the experience in which the subject-object duality is completely absent; it is pure experience (*avagatimātra*) or pure knowledge (*kevala jñāna*). By the terms *identity* and *realization*, which are used to suggest this ultimate state, we are not to understand an actual transformation in the being of the individual self, for in the knowledge of Brahman, man becomes nothing else. *Brahmanubhava* is not a newly acquired state, but the realization of one's authentic nature, but enveloped in the limiting additions of *avidyā*. The ultimate realization is figuratively described as a merging into Brahman, like a dewdrop merging into the sea or the space enclosed in a vessel merging into the omnipresent space after the vessel is broken. The empirical frames of the *names-and-forms* of individual selves are dissolved in *Brahmanubhava*, just as the *names-and-forms* of rivers are lost by their overflowing into the sea. The contours of particular existence are abolished. Man *and* Brahman do not become one, *and* disappears from this equation. Only one remains: the One Reality, i.e. Brahman.[11] Genuinely, there is *identity* between self and Brahman, and the awareness of this identity lies in the elimination of ignorance: *to be Brahman* means the extinction of the frames in which the otherness of the individual is conjugated. *Jīvātman* is always

[11] R. Krishnaswami Aiyar, *The Great Equation. An Exposition of the Doctrine of Advaita Vedānta*, Chetana Limited, Bombay, 1963, p. 135.

Brahman, but during sāṁsaric existence the upādhi envelops this reality, and in the state of freedom it shines as Brahman, which was and always is; nothing new arises.

Christian spirituality is centered on the mystical realization of man's deification, the vocation of "being partakers of the divine being" (2 Peter 1.4). Deification is the ultimate union with God, the imprinting of man with the fullness of God, without merging with Him. In view of the possibility of deity, as the ultimate goal of human life, the image of God is given in man, as his aspiration towards his absolute model. And in this inspiration the image finds its fulfilment as the ultimate likeness of God.[12] In the image is implied as a divine command the tension of man towards deification, as Saint Maximus Confessor emphasizes:

> "If we are after the image of God, let us become our own and God's, or rather God's alone, and let us become gods, receiving from God an existence as gods."[13]

In Christianity we speak of a "progress of the person" or "of becoming in God", a mystical experience which involves three stages, called in Orthodox theology (1) the stage of the cure of the passions or destitution, (2) contemplation and (3) mystical theology. As the end point of the spiritual exercise, but as the beginning of living at the optimal level in the divine light, deification is the consummation of man's full penetration of God. In a broad sense, deification means the raising of man to the highest level of his natural powers, or to the full realization of man, since the divine power of grace is active in him all the while. In the narrower sense, deification embraces the progress which man makes beyond the limits of his natural powers, beyond the edges of his nature, into the divine plane above the flesh.

The fact that the fully deified man remains man maximized in his authentic worth is what differentiates deification from *brahmanubhava*.

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[12] Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. I, Bucharest, 1996, p. 272.
[13] Maxim Confessor, *Capita Quinquies Centena*, I.28, col. 1189C, *Patrologia Grecae*, 90, J.-P. Migne (Ed.), Paris, 1865.

In deification there is no non-duality, but duality: man`s nature does not become the divine being:

> "While he remains with soul and body wholly man by nature, he becomes with soul and body wholly god by grace, through the divine radiance of the blissful slave who is totally given to him."[14]

Another noteworthy aspect in a comparative analysis is the intuitive seeing of non-duality (*Brahma-sākṣātkāra*) and the view of God in light. *Brahma-sākṣātkāra* is the expression of the non-duality of Pure Consciousness (*Cit*) and metaphorically is presented in the mystical dimension of the vision of the unseen. Brahman is beyond conceptual knowledge and sense perception and, as the Witness (*sākṣin*) of any cognitive act, is the possibility of the cognitive act, the starting point, and the end point. In this sense, *svayaṁprakāśa* (self-luminosity) is also to be understood, not that Brahman emanates light, even of a spiritual nature, but in the sense that every act of cognition, every sentient thing has the possibility of its existence from Brahman, the pure Consciousness, fundamental to all. Pure Consciousness is non-dual Brahman to which all limiting additions have been removed. *Seeing* is not to be translated as a mere sensory function of the eye, the projection of perception from a subject to an object, but as an intuitive experience of non-duality.

In Orthodox Christianity, the Holy Fathers, of whom Gregory Palamas is the exponential, paid particular attention to the vision of God in light, as the third step of apophaticism. This apophaticism is not a void, but an overwhelming divine presence, not an intellectual denial and a dark sense of God`s presence, but an overwhelming experience of that presence. In the first place, this mystical view preserves the inaccessibility of God in itself but establishes Him as the most positive personal Reality. Secondly, the vision of *light* presupposes the capacity for this experience, a capacity which man acquires through the spiritual progress of penance and contemplation in a continuous synergy with

[14] *Ibidem*, col. 1088C.

divine grace. This light does not suppress the intellect and the senses, but enhances them to the utmost, so that they seem to be inactive in their function. Divine light does not have an abstract, neutral character, as a kind of output, of automatic radiation from God, but has the character of a personal and personalized work.

It should be noted that divine light does not imply a duality in God. Light is not the being of God, but is a different energy of essence, but this does not mean the existence of two Gods. God, by virtue of his simplicity, is present whole and total in his essence and energies.[15] The apophatic dimension of this vision is more appropriately expressed by *darkness*, not in the sense that God is not seen in any way, but in the sense of overcoming, yet knowing that this *darkness* is God.[16] The apophatic dimension of this vision is more appropriately expressed by *darkness*, not in the sense that God is not seen in any way, but in the sense of overcoming, yet knowing that this *darkness* is God. The divine *darkness*, being "light inaccessible because of its overwhelming brightness and exuberant outpouring of supernatural light,"[17] is not to be understood as a void, as an absence, but as a superpositivity.[18] The best interpretation of divine *darkness* as superabundant light is given by Dionysius the Areopagite:

> "The darkness of God is the nearest light, because of the overflowing outpouring of supernatural light. Into it comes everyone who deigns to know and see God, even by not seeing and not knowing; for being lifted into that which is beyond sight and knowledge, he knows precisely that which is beyond all that is sensible and intelligible."[19]

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[15] John Meyendorf, *Saint Gregory Palamas and Orthodox mysticism*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2007, pp. 125-126.
[16] D. Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. I, p. 97.
[17] Dionysius Areopagite, *Epistola* V, 1073B, *Patrologia Graeca,* III, J.-P. Migne (Ed.), Paris, 1857.
[18] D. Stăniloae, *Asceticism and Mysticism of the Orthodox Church*, Bucharest, 1992, p. 275.
[19] Dionysius Areopagite, *Epistola* V, 1073B.

This experience of *seeing* God is not equivalent to what Advaita Vedānta calls *Brahma-sākṣātkāra*, non-dual seeing. The *seeing* of God constantly preserves the personal relationship of two entities: God allows Himself to be seen, man sees Him. *Brahma-sākṣātkāra* cancels the subject-object duality of the seen and the seer. The common element in both traditions is that seeing is an intuitive act, but in Christianity it takes the form of union.

**Conclusions**

The framework of Sankaran Advaita metaphysics and mysticism is a real challenge to Orthodox Christian theology. The meeting of the West and the East in the field of religious culture has brought to the attention of Western scholars a keen concern for the knowledge and translation of Hindu teachings into Western terms, some presented with objectivity, others with great subjectivity. Here we note Richard De Smet, Bede Griffiths, Bradley Malkovsky, Henri le Saux (Abhishiktananda), Francis X. Clooney, Anantanand Rambachan, Sara Grant, Klaus K. Klostermaier, etc. It should be mentioned that these participants in the correspondence between West and East, a correspondence of cultural and philosophical-religious knowledge, have outlined a real and enriching inter-religious dialogue, in the sense that the main purpose of this engagement is to investigate together certain philosophical and religious issues and to agree on them.

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# *Perspectives on the Construction of a Play: Ancient Greece and Ancient India*

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**Abstract**: This article compares the way a play was structured in ancient Greece and ancient India. The different types of actors that can appear during a play (heroes, heroines, companions, etc.) and the qualities they must have (both physically and morally), the types of plays, the length and their ultimate purpose.

**Keywords**: play, actor, rasa, catharsis, characters, hero, heroine.

**Introduction**: Throughout history, one of the most significant art forms that has survived to this day is the theater. To understand how contemporary theater works, a return to its roots is needed. Thus, two ancient sources that can be referred to are represented by the Sanskrit drama, respectively by the Greek tragedy. Both represent some of the oldest forms of this performance art, influencing its evolution to our contemporaneity. The way the characters are built, especially the protagonist, suggests the moral values of the respective society, as does the ending which must have an impact on it.

Both Greek tragedy and Sanskrit drama have a central book that outlines how a play should be constructed. For tragedy, the central book is Aristotle's *Poetics*, and for Sanskrit drama it is Bharata Muni's *Nāṭyaśāstra*. However, there is a downside to Aristotle's text, namely that part of it has been lost over time. It most likely contained his observations on comedy, as the *Poetics* focuses heavily on tragedy; the description of the comedy being quite narrow. However, over time there have been researchers who have tried to theorize a possible continuation based on how Aristotle relates to tragedy, but also by consulting different treatises that could be correlated with the Greek philosopher.

In the case of Bharata Muni, the book is *Nāṭyaśāstra* and is considered to be the oldest theater treatise. The name of the treatise consists of two words: *natya* which translates as theater, stage action, drama and *sastra* whose meaning is in the Indian tradition of sacred writing dedicated to a certain field of knowledge. Additionally, Bharata has the meaning of actor, which may suggest that the treatise is the work of several actors over time, therefore not belonging to a single person. Moreover, the two treatises on the theater present an essential difference regarding the origins of the theater within the culture of ancient Greece and ancient India respectively, namely that in Bharata Muni's treatise the theater is given a mythological origin, while in Aristotle's work there is only the evolutionary perspective on him, linked to the Dionysian cult.

**Actors**

One of the essential elements of a play is the actors who bring the characters of the play to life. As their role is essential, there are different criteria that they must meet to prove that they are fit for a specific role. But these criteria can vary, being influenced in particular by the social mentality of a certain historical period within a society. Thus, numerous differences are observed between the actors of Ancient Greece and Ancient India.

First of all, one can see how the two authors relate to the types of characters specific to the plays. Bharata creates different categories of essential actors in his work, while Aristotle's text focuses on the construction of the hero. The Greek author specifies that this role is meant for a male actor, disregarding both the idea of an actress as a hero, since women are considered inferior, and that of a slave regardless of his gender, the latter being – on the lowest step. Bharata Muni, however, has a different view and places the image of woman on a higher level. For this reason, throughout his treatise, the heroine of the play is described in detail, more precisely the different types of heroine that can be used within the plays. Additionally, there is a difference between what values a hero has. In Ancient Greece, the hero was a brave, strong, skillful person, but one was necessarily a person who possessed the moral values that

contemporary society attributes to a hero. Within Ancient India, heroes fulfill the qualities mentioned above, but appear to be more virtuous, often choosing reconciliation over revenge.

Regarding actors, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* suggests that in Indian drama, the selection criteria for them were much stricter than in Greek tragedy. Indian actors needed rigorous training in the art of theater. Thus, there is almost no movement that does not represent something. Furthermore, depending on the emotion to be conveyed, Bharata Mundi's theater treatise is very explicit about the position of each body member, going so far as to describe the movements of the eyes, fingers and eyebrows. The detailed description of the movements is due to the ritualistic component that Sanskrit theater had. A piece could be offered as an offering to the gods, which is why every move had to be carefully studied. Greek tragedy, even if it has a religious component, seems to have developed more in an aesthetic direction.

According to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* text, some of the main criteria regarding an actor are: age, tone of voice, physical appearance, etc. So, in addition to the necessary training, there are also certain selection criteria that have nothing to do with the actor's talent or aspects over which it has some control. There is a general description of what qualities an actor should have, and then, depending on the role, the details of appearance and behavior become more and more detailed. According to Bharata Mundi, the actor must know the art of theater, have a pleasant physical appearance, and be dexterous and virtuous. Thus, as for the heroine of the play, the one who plays her should have a beautiful body and a gentle character. The case of the roles of kings and princes presents the most detailed description of the actor's physical appearance, but also includes his intellectual qualities and his gestures. The last elements that go into the construction of the character, in addition to the appearance and skills of the actor, are the clothing and make-up which, in turn, must be appropriate. Not only the actors must have certain specific traits, but also the director, in turn, must have certain skills to be

able to stage different plays. The skills he must possess are much broader than those of the actors, the director having to know both the elements related to the art of theater such as music, stage organization, the stages of the plays, etc., as well as the behavior of the characters in detail as well as the context of the plays. Thus, a director must know the behavior of courtesans, for example, he must have political and economic knowledge, he must be skilled in prosody and music, have knowledge of continents, have chosen movements and speech, know all types of rasa etc. So, the occupation of being a maestro (director) within the framework of Indian drama presupposed a vast knowledge of both the art of the theater and the world in which it lives. His assistant must have, in turn, a multitude of knowledge, but naturally, not as much as the director.

In the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the heroine is known as a *nayika* and is either a woman of noble birth or an artist. But the essential element regarding the heroine is represented by her soul qualities. The heroine must be charming, young and balanced. Youth, in turn, is divided into three periods: adolescence, youth and maturity, each of which is characterized by different behaviors of the heroine, but all of which are related to the experience of love. The teenager is at the beginning of discovering love, the young woman has experienced it, and the mature woman represents the passionate woman. In addition, the heroines are also differentiated according to the social status they have. Also, heroines can be goddesses, queens, noblewomen and courtesans.

The hero is called *nayaka* and is the leader of the action. He must be handsome, young, intelligent, educated, people-loving and essentially gentle. There are four types of heroes: majestic (gods), graceful (kings), noble (king's advisors), and serene (Brahmins).

Furthermore, in Bharata's treatise on drama, there is a certain emphasis not only on heroes but also on jesters. They appear as vidusaka and are in the service of gods, kings, ministers and Brahmins. The jester is therefore a character who has the role of friend of the hero. He has many

of his qualities. It is the jester who consoles the hero when he is away from his beloved, and in the case of Indian plays that do not deal with love, the vidusaka is an opportunity for the audience because his behavior helps the audience to relax. Within Indian drama, the jester can be found both in the three plays of Kālidāsa and in plays such as that of Śūdraka and Bhāsa.

In Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, we see Vidusaka both supporting the king while he is separated from his wife, Sakuntala, but also reminding him that he has duties to the people and cannot remain living as a hunter, in the forest, to be close to the woman he loves. In addition to helping the king, the vidusaka is often an element of the comic as he can often be found complaining about the king failing to fulfill his royal duties due to love, often bemoaning his fate. He speaks Sanskrit in dialect.

As for the heroine, she has no companion to play the jester. However, she may have a confidant or a suite of confidants to help her throughout the play. These can be either relatives of the heroine, friends or even slaves. She has the role of messenger between hero and heroine. For example, in *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, she has two female friends who advise her, accompany her to the hermitage and deliver her love letters to the king.

Aristotle focuses on the figure of the hero within his text, and it must be constructed in a certain way. But he should not differ too much from the viewer, so he should be neither extraordinarily good nor bad, and his misfortune should come from an error of judgment. Aristotle names four criteria that should be considered when it comes to character. He should be a hero according to the view of ancient Greece, so have chosen deeds that differentiate him from the viewer. The qualities attributed to the hero, however, must be in accordance with his way of being. It is also about a certain inner steadfastness of the hero. More precisely, its interiority, with all that it implies, should not change, regardless of external factors. Also, there must be naturalness in the behavior of the characters. The thinking he is talking about means finding the appropriate way of expression, according to the situation presented. Due to this folding depending on the situation, it can be deduced that this

element also has a certain political stake. Usually, the heroes of tragedies had the gift of speech due to the interest the authors showed in oratory, thus being able to manipulate the subjects to achieve the desired result.

Comedy needs a different type of characters to be staged. Within it, the characters are divided into three categories: "buffoonish, ironic and boastful." Each of these has a certain defect, namely: the buffoon is wrong because he sets no limits to his jokes, so that he will mock his own person until he is laughed at. Regardless of how far he will have to take his irony. The ironic character uses this humor for his amusement. The last category, that of braggarts, is often the most detested. If a comparison were to be made between the ironic and the boastful character, the ironic seems to be more desirable because sometimes irony can be intended to highlight a negative trait that should be corrected, while praise does not have this dimension.

Within the tragedy, respectively the comedy, there are auxiliary characters that accompany the hero and represent his friend, but here their role is more diminished. For example, in *Oresteia*, the character Pylades appears, Orestes' friend who gives him advice regarding the matricide that the protagonist must commit. But after the crime is committed, the text no longer highlights Pylade, but focuses on Orestes. Also, here the hero's adjunct falls into the jester category. The comedy contains humorous characters, but their construction belongs to the genre of the play, one of the categories of characters to which they belong. An example in this case can be considered Xanthias, the companion of Dionysus in the play *The Frogs* by Aristophanes. It contains the humorous component, but since the play is a comedy, the focus is on this dimension of the character. Thus, it can be concluded that while the hero's sidekick in Indian drama is much more nuanced, being both wise and a good help but also having the humorous element to relax the audience, while the sidekick in ancient Greek plays seems to be built more on extremes, being either a specific adjunct to tragedy or comedy.

In both tragedy and Sanskrit drama, different costumes and make-up were used. These usually indicated the status of the characters, but their role was much more important in Indian theater than in Greek tragedy. According to Aristotle, all the elements that fall into the category of the spectacular could be omitted from the stage representation. Thus, costumes, scenery and make-up are given a secondary role, they are the ones that attract the audience, but do not actively participate in the effect that the play should have on them. For this reason, the focus is on the way the tragedy is written, not on the visual elements within it, because according to Aristotle, a play should be able to have an effect even if a person only reads the play and not sees it staged. However, the costumes of the actors had, from a practical point of view, an important role in the performances. For example, in order to make the actors look as imposing as possible, various materials were used that aimed to create the impression that the actor's proportions were larger than in reality. In this way, bellies, hips, and false shoulders were used, as well as some wooden shoes that raised him, the actors being able to use them to give the impression that their height is over two meters. Costumes, which were considered essential by Aeschylus, attracted the eye by their colors, which were consistent with the type of character wearing them. To allow the audience to identify the role of the character, there were different costumes depending on the type of play performed. Thus, the purple and gold ones are specific to tragedy, which gave the impression of grandeur, and the caricature ones are attributed to comedy.

In the case of Indian drama, make-up and clothing play an essential role. According to Bharata's treatise, dramatic performance depends on these. If the costume is right, the performance of the play should also be a success. These extrinsic elements include: different props, the ornaments worn by the actors, body makeup and even different animals. Each of these elements must correspond to the actor's gender and place of origin. As for men, in the case of ornaments, only those that must be worn by the characters who have the status of king or divinity are explained, such as

the crown, the string of pearls, etc. In the case of women, there are several types of ornaments which are described in more detail. The method of their manufacture is also mentioned. They must be covered with gold or resin, but they should not burden the actors too much because it is much too difficult for them to move when the ornaments are many and make their movements difficult, tiring them. Thus, the Sanskrit drama gives a much greater importance to the scenic elements than the Greek tragedy. He can also note the tendency for greater character development within the *Nāṭyaśāstra* than within Aristotle's *Poetics*.

**Internal construction of plays**

Regarding the way a play is constructed, Aristotle distinguishes between tragedy and comedy, but makes a hierarchy of them in which tragedy is superior to comedy. He constructs, for tragedy, a universal play form that should be respected so that the ultimate goal of tragedy can be achieved. The most important part is the subject. It represents the combination of the actions performed by the characters, thus having an essential role in the construction of the work, dictating either the happy ending or the tragic ending of the hero, as well as its success or failure. In the analysis of the subject, Aristotle attributes to it the unity of the piece that arises precisely from the combination of facts. In order for this unfolding of action to be unitary, those sequences that are not essential to the play should be eliminated. So if the exclusion of a part does not affect the way the play proceeds, then that part should not be kept. Like tragedy, comedy needs a subject around which to build, but according to its own rules. The observations made on the structure of comedy make it very similar to tragedy, the difference being that here the emphasis is on the humorous action, so the way these elements are constructed should serve to provoke laughter.

Bharata Muni makes no distinction between tragic and comic. The tragic is often avoided in Sanskrit drama, and the comic is only one component of what is called *rasa*, a term that can be translated by aesthetic experience, which is the ultimate goal of Indian drama. Instead Bharata

will differentiate between ten possible types of play, which differ according to subject matter, scope, number of characters, etc., here there is no universal pattern of play that the author must follow.

At the base of the Sanskrit plays are the four styles which, like the entire art of the theater, are based on a founding legend. According to it, while Visnu was resting on his snake, two asuras, Madhu and Kaitabha, threaten the god and are ready to fight him. During the confrontation, the two attack him not only physically, but also by hurling words at each other, causing the oceans to shake. Hearing this, Brahma calls this exchange of words the verbal style. Brahma orders Visnu to kill the two asuras, and he obeys. This influx of words between the two asuras became the model for the spoken style. During the battle, the powerful and vigorous swings of the god's bow give rise to the grandiose style. Visnu's movements, including during battle, are characterized by grace and according to legend, the moment when he, using these movements, tied his hair, represents the moment when the graceful style appeared. The last style, the energetic one, has its origin in hand-to-hand combat during battle. Visnu emerges victorious from the battle.

The verbal style was used by men and involved the recitation of texts. The grandiose style is related to vitality, spirit and has the role of bringing happiness. It relies on interpreting through words and gestures. It excludes the race of the pathetic and the erotic. The male characters that face each other predominate. The graceful style includes many songs and dances, which is why female characters predominate within it. The energetic style includes the qualities of the bold but not necessarily a positive character. The one to whom this style is attributed is the character full of deceit and falsehood.

Bhava or emotional states are meant to help the meanings of the play be felt by the audience. For this, gestural, verbal and temperamental interpretation is used. Emotional states are divided into two categories: permanent emotional states, which are eight in number, and transient

emotional states, which are thirty-three in number. These are the causes of the manifestation of *rasa* in the play.

In the *Nāṭyaśāstra* text, ten possible types of plays are distinguished, namely: *nataka, prakarana, anka (utsrstikanka), vyayoga, bhana, samavakara, vithi, prahanasa, dima* and *ihamrga*. *Nataka* and *prakarana* are the two types of plays that encompass all styles, which is why they allow multiple topics to be covered in their course. Another category consists of the pieces that do not include the graceful style, namely: *bhana, samavakara, vithi, ihamrga, utsrstikanka, vyayoga, dima* and *prahasana*. This difference in the appearance of graceful style within the plays also changes the role women play in these types of plays.

Both Greek tragedy and Indian drama often call upon elements known to the audience in the construction of the plays. Thus, according to Aristotle, the tragedy should center on a noble but well-known family. He further suggests that works such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the predecessors of tragedy, and works such as *Margites* as the predecessor of comedy. As far as Indian drama is concerned, even if there are types of plays that are based only on the author's imagination, as is the case with *prakarana* type plays, there are also numerous plays that are based on one of the two essential epics of the Indian world, namely the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, as happens in the case of *nataka* type plays. The combination of known legends and the imagination of the author is found in *natika* type plays.

It is noticeable that within Indian drama, the temporal cues are much more detailed and strict than they were within Aristotle's *Poetics*. According to him, the tragedy should neither be too long so that the memory of the viewer is not overloaded by it, but neither should it be too short. It should have a beginning, a middle and an end that must be built in such a way that the facts are connected to each other, to be complementary, following a logical path. Furthermore, the length must be chosen in such a way as to allow the tragic hero to go either from happiness to misery or from misery to happiness. Often this takes place over the course of a day.

In the case of Indian drama, the length of a play depends on its type. For example, a *samavakara* piece must have eighteen *nadikas.*

The ultimate purpose of the plays is one of the essential differences between Greek and Indian theatre. In Greek tragedy, the ultimate goal is to achieve *catharsis*, an objective that can be achieved either by arousing pity or by arousing fear. The ultimate goal is for the audience to be able to get close to the action of the play, especially the characters, and realize that they could be in their shoes. Thus, a kind of didactic stake appears that allows the viewer to put himself in the place of the characters and learn from their mistakes. Thus, purification takes place. In the case of Indian drama, the ultimate goal is *rasa*, that is, aesthetic experience. Here there is no longer a hierarchy of emotions, but all emotions are directed towards achieving the aesthetic experience. Furthermore, the goal is not necessarily to identify the viewer with the character, but rather it is about how the author manages to convey to the viewer the emotions he felt while writing the piece. Like tragedy, Indian drama also aims at a kind of purification, rather the elevation of the soul and mind because, in the end, Indian drama must succeed in making the viewer look within, to be a kind of mediator with the spectator's self. This difference between catharsis and *rasa* could explain the difference between the endings of the plays specific to tragedy and drama, respectively. In an attempt to arouse pity and fear, tragedy is much more inclined and justified to use violence because an ending in which, for example, Orestes does not avenge his father, would be considered a pathetic ending according to Aristotle's criteria, so it would not evoke neither fear nor pity, and by extension neither *catharsis*. On the other hand, Indian drama revolves around relationships and emotions. The fact that there is no hierarchy of emotions as in Greek tragedy allows him greater freedom. But most Sanskrit plays are based on Bharata Muni's treatise. For this reason, the ending here is a happy one. A tragic ending, such as appears in two of Bhāsa's plays, is not as appreciated.

Thus, it can be seen that ancient Greece focuses much more on a unique play model that should be followed by the authors, relying on the heroism of the heroes and their strength, but not emphasizing the interiority and emotions in the same way in which Indian drama does. In addition, the latter allows for a much wider range of possibilities when it comes to the type of part, but at the same time requires much more thoroughness due to the attention to detail it offers. However, both have as their final goal the mental and spiritual elevation of the public, but the ways in which they produce this effect differ.

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# *Are the Episodes and Entities in the Rāmāyaṇa Depictions of the Interplay of the Triguṇas*?

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**Abstract**: This article attempts to show if the entire story of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa is perhaps a narrative which is a subtle depiction of the interplay of the three *guṇas* of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* which are cardinal principles in the ontology, cosmology, psychology and soteriology of the Sāṅkhya-Yoga system of classical Hindu philosophy.

**Keywords**: triguṇa, sattva, rajas, tamas, Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Vedānta, Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.

## Triguṇas

The triguṇas are sattva, rajas and tamas. Sattva is defined as light (laghu) and illuminating (prakāśaka), rajas as exciting (upaṣṭambhaka) and versatile (cala), and tamas as heavy (guru) and obscuring (varaṇaka).[1] Sattva is associated with the color white, rajas with red, and tamas with black. Later on in the Hindu tradition, sattva's definition base got broadened to include intelligence-stuff, goodness, happiness, spirituality, heaven etc. Similarly, the definition base of rajas too got broadened to include dynamism, energy-stuff, passion, wrath, pain, bewilderment etc. Tamas too got defined broadly to include inertia, mass-stuff, indolence, dullness, anxiety, sadness, darkness, evil, hell etc. In terms of the three gods (trimūrtis) of post-Vedic Hinduism, Viṣṇu gets associated with sattva, Brahmā with rajas, and Śiva with tamas.

The origins of the triguṇas go back to the Vedas themselves. The gods of the Vedas are classified into three types: celestial gods (dyau devatās), atmospheric gods (antarikṣa devatās), and terrestrial gods (bhū devatās). The sky (dyau) is lucid and light, and the abode of the Sun

[1] sattvam laghu prakāśakamiṣṭamupaṣṭambhakam calam ca rajaḥ. guru varaṇakameva tamaḥ pradīpavaccārthato vṛttiḥ. (Sāṅkhyakārikā XIII)

(Āditya). The atmosphere (antarikṣa) is dynamic in terms of emitting thunder, lightning, storms etc. which is associated with the Rudras (the storm gods), and the earth (pṛthivī) is associated with heaviness, mass, and darkness. The word 'triguṇa' *per se* occurs for the first time in Atharva Veda X: 8:43.[2] Thereafter, in Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI:4, the three colors of red, white, and black are mentioned in connection with the three elements of fire, water, and earth.[3] Again, in Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad IV:5,[4] the same three colors are repeated. In both cases, these are supposedly oblique mentions of the triguṇas. In Maitrī Upaniṣad V:2,[5] the three guṇas of tamas, rajas and sattva are not only mentioned, but also expressly associated with Rudra, Brahmā and Viṣṇu.

In the very late Vedic phase of Hinduism, *Mahābhārata* XII: 291: 42-46[6] mentions the three guṇas, and the *Bhagavadgītā* and the Purāṇic lore institutionalize them. In fact, the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas are divided

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[2] puṇḍarīkam navadvāram tribhir guṇebhirāvṛtam. tasmin yad yakṣamātmanvat tad vai brahmavido viduḥ. (Atharva Veda X: 8:43)

[3] Prof. Radhakrishnan opines that both the Sāṅkhya-Yoga doctrine of three guṇas, and the pañcīkaraṇa doctrine of the Vedāntic schools are based on this segment of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (*Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 452)

[4] ajāmekām lohitaśuklakṛṣṇām bahīḥ prajāḥ sṛjamānām sarūpaḥ. ajo hyeko juṣamāṇo'śnute jahātyenām bhuktabhogāmajo'nyaḥ. (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad IV:5)

[5] tamo vā idamekamāsa tatpaścātpareṇeritaṃ viṣayatvaṃ prayātyetadvai rajaso rūpaṃ tadrajaḥ khalvīritaṃ viṣamatvaṃ prayātyetadvai tamaso rūpaṃ tattamaḥ khalvīritaṃ tamasaḥ samprāsravatyetadvai sattvasya rūpaṃ tatsattvameveritaṃ tatsattvātsamprāsravatsoṃ'śo'yaṃ yaścetanamātraḥ pratipuruṣaṃ kṣetrajñaḥ saṅkalpādhyavasāyābhimānaliṅgaḥ prajāpatistasya proktā agryāstanavo brahmā rudro viṣṇurityatha yo ha khalu vāvāsya rājasoṃ'śo'sau sa yo'yaṃ brahmātha yo ha khalu vāvāsya tāmasoṃ'śo'sau sa yo'yaṃ rudro'tha yo ha khalu vāvāsya sātvikoṃ'śo'sau sa evaṃ viṣṇuḥ sa vā eṣa ekastridhābhūto'ṣṭadhaikādaśadhā dvādaśadhāparimitadhā codbhūta udbhūtatvādbhūteṣu carati pratiṣṭhā sarvabhūtānāmadhipatirbabhūvetyasāvātmāntarbahiścāntarbahiśca (Maitrī Upaniṣad V:2).

[6] tamaḥ sattvarajo yuktas tāsu tāsv iha yoniṣu līyate 'pratibuddhatvād abuddha janasevanāt. saha vāso nivāsātmā nānyo 'ham iti manyate yo 'haṃ so 'ham iti hy uktvā guṇān anu nivartate. tamasā tāmasān bhāvān vividhān pratipadyate rajasā rājasāṃś caiva sāttvikān sattvasaṃśrayāt. śuklalohita kṛṣṇāni rūpāṇy etāni trīṇi tu sarvāṇy etāni rūpāṇi jānīhi prākṛtāni vai. tāmasā nirayaṃ yānti rājasā mānuṣāṃs tathā sāttvikā devalokāya gacchanti sukhabhāginaḥ. (Mahābhārata XII:291:42-46) (critical edition)

along the lines of the three guṇas.[7] Further, in the post Vedic phase, the Sāṅkhya-Yoga and the Vedāntic schools of Classical Hindu philosophy wholly incorporate the concept of the triguṇas in the exposition of their various metaphysical tenets, be they ontological, cosmological, psychological, or soteriological. The *Rāmāyaṇa* too displays the triguṇas through its various episodes, entities, and personalities. This article attempts to show this by analyzing some of them.

**The triguṇas in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa**

**A) Vālmīki, krauñca birds, and the fowler episode**

The interplay of the three guṇas is displayed at the very outset of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In this opening episode, Vālmīki, with his disciples, was headed towards the Tamasā River to take his bath and perform his ritual ablutions when he saw a fowler shoot an arrow and kill one of the two crane birds that were sporting with each other. The fowler had apparently killed the male bird, and the female bird was crying piteously at the loss of her partner. Sage Vālmīki was aghast at what he saw and was filled with sadness. The sage then cursed the fowler for his heartless act.[8]

**Analysis:** Vālmīki represents sattva since as a pious sage he was peacefully going about his spiritual obligations. The fowler represents rajas as he performed an act of blood-letting violence. The color of rajas is red as is that of blood. The outraged Vālmīki cursing the fowler is also rajas as it is an act of verbal violence (albeit justified). The two crane birds making love to each other is associated with tamas. And all of this happened at the banks of the Tamasā River which itself, being part of the earth, is tamasic.

**B) The three principal queens of king Daśaratha**

Daśaratha, the king of Ayodhyā, had three principal queens. They were: Kausalyā (the chief queen), Sumitrā (the insignificant queen), and

[7] Bhaviṣya, Brahma, Brahmāṇḍa, Brahmavaivarta, Mārkaṇḍeya, and Vāmana Mahāpurāṇas are considered rajasic; Agni, Kūrma, Liṅga, Matsya, Śiva, Skanda, and Vāyu Mahāpurāṇas are considered as tamasic; and finally, Bhāgavata, Garuḍa, Nārada, Padma, Varāha, and Viṣṇu Mahāpurāṇas are classified as sāttvic.

[8] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa I:2:3-20.

Kaikeyī (the favorite queen). The king, despite having three queens, did not have any children. So, upon the recommendation of his chaplain, the king performs a Vedic sacrifice. At the conclusion of the sacrifice, a being emerges from the sacred fire and gives a jar of milk-porridge (pāyasa) to be distributed among his three principal queens. After this, four sons are born to the three queens.[9]

**Analysis:** Kausalyā represents sattva as she was soon to become the mother of Rāma, the noble (sāttvic) hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa* who is said (by the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa itself) to be the possessor of every imaginable virtue.[10] Kaikeyī represents rajas as she not only went into the battleground to rescue her wounded husband and nurse him back to health,[11] but later on displayed an uncompromising wrath towards her husband in order to get the kingdom for her own son, Bharata.[12] Sumitrā represents tamas as she was docile, insignificant, lowly, and largely ignored by her husband. At least according to one version, Daśaratha in the distribution of pāyasa, completely ignored Sumitrā by not giving her a portion of the pāyasa directly to her. Daśaratha, however, then directed Kausalyā and Kaikeyī to give a portion of their shares to Sumitrā, and in the bargain, she got two shares and eventually gave birth to twin sons (Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna) who became 'good friends' (su+mitrau) of the sons of Kausalyā and Kaikeyī respectively.[13]

**C) The four sons**

The four sons of king Daśaratha were: Rāma (son borne by Kausalyā), Bharata (son borne by Kaikeyī), and the twin sons, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna (borne by Sumitrā).[14]

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[9] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa I:16:9-32 and I:18:7-16.
[10] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa I:1:2-18.
[11] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa II:11:18-19.
[12] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa II:11:24.
[13] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa I:18:28-32.
[14] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa I:18:12-14.

**Analysis:** Rāma, as pointed out before, represents sattva. Lakṣmaṇa represents rajas. He was quick to anger and, in general, was very wrathful in his dealings. To illustrate, the way he mutilated Śūrpanakhā, comes to mind.[15] The *Rāmāyaṇa* itself points out that he was like an angry thousand-hooded serpent on the occasion when he went to remind Sugrīva that the latter had failed to keep his end of the bargain[16] in trying to redeem the abducted Sītā. Bharata and Śatrughna represent tamas. Bharata stayed back (at Nandigrāma just outside of Ayodhyā) to be the caretaker of the kingdom until the return of Rāma from the latter's exile[17], and Śatrughna was such a shadow of Bharata that one hardly hears of him in the entire epic. He kept a very low profile and as such was very insignificant in the epic.

**D) The redemption of Ahalyā**

Ahalyā was the wife of Sage Gautama. Once, while the sage was away, the god Indra took hold of that opportunity to entice and rape Ahalyā. The sage upon his return found this out and cursed both Indra and Ahalyā. He cursed Indra to become a ram, and Ahalyā to be turned into a rock. Ahalyā would get redeemed only when Rāma came that way and by the touch of his right toe, she would regain her original form. Then, after the passage of a considerable amount of time, Rāma, along with Lakṣmaṇa and led by the sage Viśvāmitra, came that way. Viśvāmitra asked Rāma to touch the rock with his right toe, and Ahalyā was finally redeemed from her husband's curse.[18]

**Analysis:** In this incident, the sages Gautama and Viśvāmitra as well as Rāma represent sattva as holy men and a moral hero respectively. Indra's lust for, and the rape of Ahalyā, represent rajas. The wrath of Sage Gautama also falls under rajas. The docile and passive nature of Ahalyā as well as her turning into an immovable rock represents tamas.

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[15] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa III:18:21-22.
[16] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa IV:31.
[17] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa II:115.
[18] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa I:48:14-33 and I:49:1-22.

### E) Wedding of the four princes of Ayodhyā to the four princesses of Mithilā

The sage Viśvāmitra after getting Ahalyā redeemed, then takes the two princes, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, to the court of king Śīradhvaja Janaka of Mithilā. Once there, the king of Mithilā showed them a massive bow that had been gifted to one of the king's ancestors by the god Śiva. The king now wanted to hold a marital joust for his adopted daughter Sītā. The contest required that the bow be lifted, strung, and broken by the potential suitor. Many such potential suitors would be invited for this marital joust. Rāma too was eligible to enter the joust as a potential suitor. When the day arrived, Rāma was the only suitor who was able to lift, string and break the bow. The happy king then sent invitations to Daśaratha, his queens and their two other sons to come to Mithilā. Sītā was then wedded to Rāma. Ūrmiḷā, the own daughter of Śīradhvaja, was married to Lakṣmaṇa. The two daughters of Kuśadhvaja (the younger brother of Śīradhvaja) named Māṇḍavī and Śrutakīrti were married to Bharata and Śatrughna respectively.[19] Toward the tail end of the wedding festivities, the sage Paraśurāma arrived at the wedding venue in a wrathful and violent mood. When Rāma challenged him, Paraśurāma backed off.[20]

**Analysis:** The sage Viśvāmitra and king Śīradhvaja Janaka represent sattva. The king represents sattva because he was a person, who though a kṣatriya, had a deeply inquiring and spiritual mindset. The bow of Śiva and the sage Paraśurāma represent rajas as they are associated with battle, killing and bloodshed. The wedding of the four princes of Ayodhyā to the four princesses of Mithilā represents tamas as weddings are associated with feminine contacts and sexual matters.

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[19] ekāhnā rājaputrīṇām catasṝṇām mahāmune. pāṇīna gṛhṇantu catvāro rājaputrā mahābalāḥ. (Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa I:72:12).
[20] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa I:66-76.

**F) The trio that went into exile**

When Rāma went into exile into the forest for fourteen years, he was voluntarily accompanied by his faithful wife, Sītā, and by his half-brother, Lakṣmaṇa (the older twin son of Sumitrā).[21]

**Analysis:** The rationales for Rāma as being representative of sattva, and Lakṣmaṇa as being representative of rajas, have already been pointed out. This leaves just Sītā. So, it is needless to say that she is representative of tamas. Sītā came from the earth in the sense that her foster father, king Śīradhvaja Janaka, found her in a casket while tilling the soil at the annual agricultural festival. Sītā's name itself means "furrow", an agricultural implement that is constantly connected with the earth (pṛthivī) which is tamas.[22] Sītā, like the earth, is fertile and gives birth to twin sons (Lava and Kuśa).[23] Eventually, at the end of her life, she returns back to the earth by the fact that her mother, the earth goddess, comes and takes her away.[24]

**G) Daśaratha, the filial lad, and his aged, blind parents**

When Kaikeyī had had her way, the grief-stricken Daśaratha was sitting in his chamber with Kausalyā and Sumitrā, and narrated to them an incident that happened in his youth.

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[21] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa II:45:18.

[22] atha me kṛṣataḥ kṣetram lāṅgalātutthitā mama. kṣetram śodhayatā labdhvā nāmnā sīteti viśrutā. (Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa I:66:13-14). bhūtalātutthitām tām tu vardhamānām mamātmajām. (Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa I:66:15).

[23] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VII:58 (critical edition).

[24] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VII:88:10-15 (critical edition).

yathāhaṃ rāghavādanyaṃ manasāpi na cintaye. tathā me mādhavī devī vivaraṃ dātumarhati. (10)

tathā śapantyāṃ vaidehyāṃ prādurāsīttadadbhutam. bhūtalādutthitaṃ divyaṃ siṃhāsanamanuttamam. (11) dhriyamāṇaṃ śirobhistannāgairamitavikramaiḥ. divyaṃ divyena vapuṣā sarvaratnavibhūṣitam. (12)

tasmiṃstu dharaṇī devī bāhubhyāṃ gṛhya maithilīm. svāgatenābhinandyaināmāsane copaveṣayat. (13) tāmāsanagatāṃ dṛṣṭvā praviśantīṃ rasātalam. puṇyavṛṣṭiravicchinnā divyā sītāmavākirat. (14)

sādhukāraśca sumahāndevānāṃ sahasotthitaḥ. sādhu sādhviti vai sīte yasyāste śīlamīdṛśam. (15)

When Daśaratha was a young unmarried prince, he went out hunting one day. He then heard a gurgling sound near the river. Thinking it to be an elephant drinking water, he let loose his shaft which hit the target. However, when he heard the scream and found out that it was human, the young prince became aghast at what he had done. He then went to check out as to who it was. He found out that it was a young lad who had been hit in his chest. The youngster after telling the young prince that he was the sole support of his aged blind parents who were wholly dependent on him were waiting nearby for him to bring them a pitcher full of water so that they could quench their thirst. The dying lad then urged prince Daśaratha to take that water to his parents. After Daśaratha promised him that he would, the lad died.

Daśaratha then nervously took the pitcher of water to the aged couple. When they found out that the person who brought them the water was not their beloved son, and after Daśaratha narrated to them the circumstances of their son's death, the old man cursed Daśaratha saying that the latter too would one day lose his son. This curse had now come into fruition with the exiling of Rāma, said Daśaratha to his two queens.[25]

**Analysis:** In the aforesaid situation, the young filial lad who so dutifully took care of his blind parents represents sattva. Prince Daśaratha going out hunting and killing the filial lad represents rajas. The blind parents who lived all their lives in darkness represent tamas.

**H) The Śūrpanakhā incident**

Śūrpanakhā, the sister of Rāvaṇa, visited the exiled trio at Pañcavaṭī. She wanted to entice Rāma to reject Sītā and marry her. Rāma rejected her advances and sent her in the direction of Lakṣmaṇa who was a 'married bachelor' at this point in his life. Lakṣmaṇa too rejected Śūrpanakhā's advances, but the latter kept pestering him. When Lakṣmaṇa had had enough of her, he flew into a rage, and cut off her ears and nose.

[25] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa II:63:4-56 and II:64:1-61.

Śūrpanakhā went screaming to her brothers, Khara and Dūṣaṇa, and when they got slain by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, she finally went to her oldest brother, Rāvaṇa, the powerful monarch of the Laṅkā kingdom.[26]

**Analysis:** Rāma is representative of sattva as he acted with propriety. Lakṣmaṇa represents rajas both for his rage as well as for his wrathful act of mutilation of Śūrpanakhā. Further, Śūrpanakhā also represents rajas for her lust-filled behavior towards both Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Finally, Sītā represents tamas for her docile and laid-back attitude throughout this aforesaid incident.

**I) Rāvaṇa's abduction of Sītā**

Upon beholding what Lakṣmaṇa had done to his sister and after hearing from her about the whole incident, Rāvaṇa then took matters into his own hands in order to avenge his sister.

Rāvaṇa hatched a plot with his reluctant uncle, Mārīca, in which the latter would assume the guise of a golden deer, strut in front of Sītā who falling for the ruse would ask Rāma to get the deer for her. Rāma would then go chasing after the deer and leave Sītā in the charge of Lakṣmaṇa. After going a considerable distance, Mārīca would let out a phony but loud distressing call for Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. Lakṣmaṇa would then be forced to go looking for Rāma leaving Sītā alone. Rāvaṇa would then, in the guise of a holy man, come to the dwelling of Sītā to seek alms. Rāvaṇa would then spring into action, throw off his disguise, and upon abducting Sītā, fly off to Laṅkā.[27]

**Analysis:** This incident is largely an interplay of rajas and tamas with a few items of sattva thrown in, in a very oblique way. The ever-suspicious Lakṣmaṇa's warning to Rāma that the golden deer might be a ruse, is sattva.[28] Mārīca warning Rāvaṇa about Rāma is also sāttvic.[29] Further, there is a pseudo-sattva item in this episode. It happens when

[26] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa III:17:5-29, III:18-34.
[27] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa III:34-49.
[28] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa III:43:5.
[29] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa III:37-39.

Rāvaṇa came to Pañcavaṭī in the guise of a holy man with the malicious intention of abducting Sītā.

The entire plot is largely rajasic with a lot of dynamic activity and violence. These are: the golden deer chase, the killing of the deer, and most importantly, Rāvaṇa's violent abduction of Sītā. Further, Sītā's ignorance about the true nature of the golden deer despite Lakṣmaṇa's benign counsels, Lakṣmaṇa's dilemma, and bewilderment as to whether he should go in search of Rāma or stay back and guard Sītā, and Sītā's confusion after she had heard the phony screams let out by Mārīca as well as Sītā's docile nature and utter feeling of helplessness in the face of Rāvaṇa's molestation just prior to her abduction, are all representative of tamas.

**J) The killing of Jaṭāyu**

When Rāvaṇa was carrying off Sītā, the noble eagle Jaṭāyu came in the way of Rāvaṇa in order to put a stop to his outrageous and ignoble act. Jaṭāyu tried his best to battle with Rāvaṇa, but was eventually mortally wounded and held on to his breath just so that he could tell Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa as to what happened to Sītā, and then breathe his last.[30]

**Analysis:** Here, Jaṭāyu represents sattva because of his noble character and heroic deed. Rāvaṇa represents rajas for his violent killing of Jaṭāyu, and Sītā represents tamas as she displays fear, anxiety, despair, and helplessness.

**K) The three important vānaras of the Kiṣkindhā kingdom**

The kingdom of Kiṣkindhā had three principal people at its helm. They were Vālī, the king, Sugrīva, his second in command, and the able and intelligent Hanumān.[31]

**Analysis:** Here, Hanumān represents sattva as he was intelligent and spiritual. Upon his first encounter with Hanumān, Rāma confided in Lakṣmaṇa that Hanumān was a cultured and a scholarly person who was learned in the three Vedas, grammar, and the art of refined speaking.

[30] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa III:50-52 and III:67-68.
[31] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa IV:1-23.

Hanumān was observed by Rāma to be articulate, eloquent, and dignified in his speech.[32] Vālī, the king, represents rajas as he was wrathful and violent. He had a violent clash with Māyāvī,[33] and later with his younger brother Sugrīva. Finally, Sugrīva represents tamas as he was deferential toward Vālī,[34] and was always afraid of the latter and his temper.[35] Sugrīva, when challenged by Vālī, ran away to the top of Mt. Ṛṣyamūka where Vālī (on account of a curse laid upon him) could not approach Mt. Ṛṣyamūka, for if he did so, he would die.[36] Also, when Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa approached Mt. Ṛṣyamūka, Sugrīva spotting the brothers from afar became tensed and frightened because he thought that the two brothers had been sent by Vālī to kill Sugrīva.[37] Further, after Rāma killed Vālī for the sake of Sugrīva, the latter just sat there in the capital of Kiṣkindhā in a lethargic manner without moving an inch to fulfill his end of the bargain for Rāma in his quest of getting back the abducted Sītā. The wrath-filled Lakṣmaṇa had to go and remind Sugrīva to get off his slothful lounging around and get moving.[38]

**L) The three brothers of the Laṅkā kingdom**

The three brothers of the Laṅkā kingdom were Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa, and Vibhīṣaṇa.[39]

**Analysis:** In this situation, Rāvaṇa represents rajas as he was wrathful, rude, crude, deceitful, and evil. He was a man who abducted and raped women regularly against their will.[40] Kumbhakarṇa, the middle brother, represents tamas. Kumbhakarṇa was slothful. He slept

[32] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa IV:3:28-33.
[33] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa IV:9:4-21.
[34] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa IV:9:3.
[35] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa IV:9:25.
[36] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa IV:11:47-65.
[37] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa IV:2:5-6.
[38] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa IV:31-36.
[39] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VI:9-18 and VI:60-67.
[40] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VI:60-10-11.

anywhere from seven to ten months in a year.[41] Vibhīṣaṇa represented sattva. He was righteous, benign, decent, and tirelessly advised his cruel brother Rāvaṇa to return Sītā and be a good person. However, when Rāvaṇa who had become tired of Vibhīṣaṇa's admonitions, kicked the latter, Vibhīṣaṇa felt that he had had enough of Rāvaṇa, and departed Laṅkā to join Rāma.[42]

**M) The three kingdoms:**

The three kingdoms of the Rāmāyaṇa were Ayodhyā, Kiṣkindhā, and Laṅkā.

**Analysis:** In this situation, Ayodhyā represents sattva as it is associated with Rāma, Bharata and righteousness (dharma). Rāma's relationships with all the people he encountered from Viśvāmitra, to Daśaratha, to Sītā, to Kaikeyī, to Bharata, to Sugrīva, to Vibhīṣaṇa, and even to Rāvaṇa, were totally dharmic in every sense.[43] He obeyed Daśaratha, followed Viśvāmitra, protected and redeemed Sītā from captivity, fulfilled the wishes of Kaikeyī, was affectionate toward Bharata, kept his promise to Sugrīva, gave refuge to Vibhīṣaṇa, and was even willing to forgive Rāvaṇa if the latter was prepared to return Sītā. On account of his righteous behavior, Rāma was able to successfully finish his fourteen-year exile, win back Sītā, and ultimately upon returning to Ayodhyā, become king of Ayodhyā. The Kiṣkindhā kingdom represents rajas for several reasons. Firstly, the vānaras are a very dynamic group to say the least. Secondly, the vānaras have always been compared to the fickle-mindedness[44] in Indian tradition as a whole. Thirdly, Vālī, king of the vānaras, has already been shown to be a very bold and wrathful character. Finally, the Laṅkā kingdom is representative of tamas. It was the kingdom that was living in moral depravity and darkness. Its ruler, Rāvaṇa, was the very essence of

[41] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VI:60:16.
[42] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VI:16:17.
[43] rāmo vigrahavān dharmaḥ (Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa III:37:13).
[44] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa IV:54:9.

tamoguṇa. Further, Rāvaṇa was a great devotee of the Śiva,[45] who was the presiding deity of tamas.

**Pre-empting a potential criticism**

Perhaps, a criticism might be levelled against the aforesaid analysis in terms of why something should be exclusively representing one of the three guṇas when it has other guṇas in there as well? It is indeed a valid criticism. So, this needs some explanation in trying to understand as to what I am trying to point out.

According to the Sāṅkhya-Yoga system of classical Hindu thought, the three guṇas of sattva, rajas and tamas remain distinct and separate from one another and filter into their own kind in the period between one involution (tirobhāva) and the next evolution (āvirbhāva) of the universe. The three guṇas are intermixed (miśra) with each other in the states of evolution, sustenance (sthiti) and involution of the universe.[46] Thus, in the samsāric state, there is no question of any of the three guṇas remaining exclusive and distinct. Here, it is only a question of which guṇa *predominates* over the other two.

Thus, the Rāmāvatāra having taken place in samsāra where the descent of the Supreme Being (Viṣṇu) becomes necessary to protect the virtuous, punish the vicious, and re-establish righteousness (dharma), the three guṇas will be in a mixed state with one of them predominating the other two in any given person, entity, or episode of the Rāmāyaṇa.

I shall give some examples. The Ayodhyā kingdom was sāttvic, but a rajasic person like Kaikeyī was very much a part of that scenario. The Laṅkā kingdom was tamasic, but a sāttvic person like Vibhīṣaṇa was very much a part of that scenario. Hanumān was a sāttvic person, but he had rajas in him too in the sense that he was dynamic as well. He flew to Laṅkā and after having met with Sītā and assuring her of her immanent redemption,[47] set Laṅkā on fire,[48] then he flew to the Himālayas and

[45] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VII:16.
[46] Sāṅkhyakārikā XV-XVI.
[47] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa V:36:3.

brought back the Sañjīvanī mountain to save Lakṣmaṇa's life;[49] aftermath (the demise of Rāvaṇa and when Rāma was all set to return to Ayodhyā) he flew to Nandigrāma to give a message to Bharata from Rāma saying that the latter was on his way, and that he should not enter into the fire.[50] Hanumān also had some tamas in him in that he suffered from amnesia. He forgot about Sītā's captivity there when he set fire to Laṅkā[51] and began to feel remorse thereafter. He, again, forgot as to which medicinal herb he needed to get from the Himālayas which could save Lakṣmaṇa's life, and in the end, ended up getting the whole mountain itself.[52] Sītā, herself, is primarily a representative of tamas, but in being politely firm with Rāma to take her with him on his fourteen-year exile into the forest,[53] and her aggressive behavior against Lakṣmaṇa after hearing Mārīca's pseudo cry for help in the voice of Rāma, both point to the rajasic streak in her;[54] and finally, her sāttvic side shows up in her empathy with the fallen Jaṭāyu,[55] and later on, with Hanumān. Rāma himself, though quintessentially a sāttvic person, had the rajas streak in him which made him kill Vālī from behind a tree,[56] and the tamas aspect in him when he shed tears on account of unbearable sadness over the death of Jaṭāyu;[57] when shown the jewelry of Sītā by Sugrīva,[58] and when Lakṣmaṇa fainted.[59] Rāma, though considered a manifestation of Viṣṇu,[60] was by his own words, a human being as

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[48] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa V:54.
[49] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VI:74:25-35, and 61-77.
[50] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VI:125:29-39.
[51] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa V:55:7-9.
[52] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VI:101:34-35.
[53] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa II:29.
[54] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa III:45:20-26.
[55] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa III:51:44.
[56] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa IV:16:35.
[57] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa III:67:22.
[58] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa IV:6:15-19.
[59] Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VI:100:36-38.
[60] ityetatvacanam śrutvā surāṇām viṣṇurātmavān. pitaram rocayāmāsa tadā daśaratham nṛpam. (Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa I:16:8)

well.[61] Thus, it is a question of the *predominance* of one guṇa, and not an exclusive domination by one guṇa alone.

Perhaps, this article represents one plausible interpretation of the Rāmāyaṇa based on the doctrine of the triguṇas which is one of the most cardinal tenets of the Sāṅkhya system of Hindu thought.

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Books of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa

Book-1 = Bālakāṇḍa

Book-2 = Ayodhyākāṇḍa

Book-3 = Araṇyakāṇḍa

Book-4 = Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa

Book-5 = Sundarakāṇḍa

Book-6 = Yuddhakāṇḍa

Book-7 = Uttarakāṇḍa

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[61] ātmānaṃ mānuṣaṃ manye rāmaṃ daśarathātmajam. yo'haṃ yasya yataścāhaṃ bhagavāṃstadbravītu me. (Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa VI:117:11)

# *A Phenomenological Quest for the Concepts of Dasein in Tribal Metaphysical Enterprise: Prospect towards Tribal Onto-Theology*

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**Abstract**: It is misunderstood that tribal people have no proper awareness of phenomena[1] of a thing. Perhaps it is for this reason that in any academic scholarship concerning tribal state of affairs, metaphysics in particular and philosophy in general has been dislocated from tribal enterprise. Their physical problems such as landlessness, hunger, poverty including liberation from these sufferings have been the age-old headlines in tribal studies. Many have miscalculated that tribal people solely rely on the objective revelation in defining reality without truly participating in it. In fact, tribal people suspend neither subjective nor objective affirmation; they keep harmonious relationship between the two. It is in the harmonious environment through being in the world that tribal identity has been acknowledged, and the objective truth has also been understood. Being-in-the-world (Dasein) as a methodology for doing tribal theology helps tribal in building authentic existence and in direction towards ontological theology.

**Keywords**: Dasein, primordial, projection, totality, ready-to-hand, present-at-hand, everydayness, potentiality, possibility.

## Introduction

Dealing ontology in theology is one of its kinds in doing theology. With regard to tribal theology, ontology has been posited at the periphery; it is not given enough importance. In reality, 'existence' or

[1] Here Kantian concept of phenomena as appearance is not employed in this article. Phenomenology as philosophical enquiry or methodology proposed by Husserl and Heidegger is taken into consideration. Therefore, 'phenomena' in this paper implies to reality revealed by the object from itself and mental processes directed towards the object to grasp the meaning.

'being' is fundamental to human nature. It is the very foundation of reality that shapes identity. Since human being is an incomplete being, it is a must to develop in a more complete manner (authentic being) with participation in the being of God. For this reason, phenomenological inquiry is the appropriate methodology for identifying the nature of tribal ontology and for active participation of human being into the realm of being of God through other created entities as they are the manifestations of Supreme Being. This paper attempts to discover the concepts of being in tribal existence and envisions employing the concepts of being for navigating tribal ontological theology.

**1. Tribal Metaphysics: Phenomenological Insights**

Tribal metaphysics has something to do with the existential phenomenology because tribal metaphysical knowledge is not directly given by epistemology or consciousness as Edmund Husserl has opined; it is existential and ontological because being is defined by itself when one is thrown into the world and that is to say tribal phenomenology has associated with Martin Heidegger.

For Husserl, the immanent object which is ultimately remained in the pure consciousness or pure ego is considered as the valid knowledge of a thing.[2] In order to arrive at this concrete identity, the general knowledge about things has to be bracketed as they are unimportant for deriving the truth.[3] It is transcendental in the case of Husserl's phenomenology that the ultimate essences after being bracketed subjective assumptions (which are unimportant information about things) which are remained in pure consciousness have been taken into consideration. Here, human

[2] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas pertaining to pure phenomenology and to a philosophical phenomenology,* translated by F. Kersten, The Hague, Boston, Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983, pp. 75, 76, 77.

[3] In Husserl's philosophical method bracketing subjective affirmation or what he also calls phenomenological reduction occupies important place. To him, after phenomenological reduction is done a pure phenomenology or pure consciousness activates in obtaining the essence of the entities. See, Husserl, *Ideas pertaining to pure phenomenology*…, pp. 131, 132.

consciousness acts as a receiver of remaining facts and has nothing to do with critical analysis. However, there is no pure ego or pure consciousness that the pure facts of things have to reach with regard to Heidegger's phenomenology. The human existence in the world participates in the world orders that enable to understand the essence. In Heidegger's phenomenology, interaction between being of man and other entities with no antagonism and in other words feeling of unifying entities has been a major feature of his philosophy. Here, we see no separation between being of man and being of other entities but are closely interconnected.

*1.1. Tribal Space-Time consideration:* For tribal, space and time are intertwined and cannot be separated between the two.[4] It is not possible for tribal to ponder upon the time separately without contemplating events or places. For instance, calculation of elder person's age is one of the most difficult attempts for tribal. One has to recollect the events and place of their cultivation in order to count someone's age. For instance, "I was born when my parents were cultivating that particular field, during that season, at the time when people were going from/coming to the field."[5] For this reason, Wati Longchar has mentioned that tribal count the time as per their participation to the space. In this way, participation in the event at a particular place makes a common method to ponder upon the past or the year of birth. According to Lincoln Reang, jhum cultivation is an important phenomenon in Bru tribal life.[6] This is due to the fact that shifting cultivation plays an important role in deriving the meaning for the Bru tribal people. Jhum cultivation is not just a production system, but the junction which connects Bru tribal people and forest. According to Wati Longchar, land is the fundamental

[4] A. Wati Longchar, "Dancing with the land: significance of land for doing tribal theology" in *Doing theology with tribal resources: context and perspective,* edited by A. Wati Longchar & Larry E. Davis, Jorhat: Tribal Study Centre, ETC, 1999, p. 122.

[5] Wati Longchar, "Dancing with the land: significance of land for doing tribal theology"…, p. 122.

[6] Lincoln Reang, *History of the Reang (Bru)*, Guwahati: EBH Publishers, 2021, p. 30.

source of all reality for tribal.[7] It is in the land or space that tribal people contemplates the past happenings, acknowledges the existential reality of the present, and anticipates onto the future. Wati further advocates the centrality of space in tribal culture. He states that space is the foundation for understanding the tribal culture, identity, personhood, religious ethos and the key to understand all realities.[8] So, it is space and time that shapes tribal's identity.

*1.2. Tribals relation with nature:* The religious identity so called 'animism' affirms that tribal are naturalists by nature. It is reflected in their practical living as well as in their myths and folklores. A good number of tribal folklore in Northeastern India proves that tribal have enormous respect towards the nature.[9] Though they depend on the nature for livelihood, they have a tendency to preserve forest so as to collect medicinal plants for healing disease. Besides religious affairs, tribal social set up has deeply connected with plants and animals through totemism, which is in fact a social taboo.[10] For some tribal in Jharkhand, there is a system called *gotra* which is a conviction of having good relationship with plants, trees, birds and animals. This relationship has two different aspects: firstly, in a normal life tribal people show their respect towards those totem animals, trees, birds and plants; secondly,

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[7] A. Wati Longchar, *Returning to mother earth: Theology, Christian witness and theological education – An indigenous perspective*, Taiwan: PTCA, 2012, p. 87.

[8] K.P. Aleaz, "A tribal theology from a tribal world – view" in *Indian Journal of Theology,* 44/1&2 (2002): 20-30. Also see A. Wati Longchar, *An Emerging Asian Theology: Tribal Theology, Issue, Method and Perspective*, Jorhat: Tribal Study Centre, ETC, 2000, pp. 1, 20.

[9] Lalchawiliana Varte, *An appraisal of the role of folklores and myths in the formation of the beliefs and practices of the tribals: A critical assessment of Biate myth and poem for rediscovering tribal heritage* (an unpublished paper), 2.

[10] L.P. Vidyarthi and Binay Kumar Rai, *The Tribal Culture of India*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1976, p. 309.

annually a feast of the totem is done by family in order to accelerate their relationship with nature.[11]

Similarly, the festivals of the Bru tribal community have been associated with nature. One of the greatest festivals of the Bru tribal people, *Boisu* is annually celebrated during April 13-14.[12] All the rituals practices at the *Boisu* like offer of sacrifice for goddess of paddy, *mainouhma* for their prosperous agriculture; ritualistic dance called *goroia* and *tautoi khangmo* (collection of eggs); sacrifice of the fowl by priest have done for the welfare of the village are all linked with natures.[13]

*1.3. Existence of Spirits and Supreme Being:* Tribal people have a strong belief in the existence of 'spirits' which they refer to supernatural beings.[14] For the Bru tribal people, religiosity permeates all other lives such as social, economic and political. Religiosity is the conditioning factor for all these dimensions of life. Their belief in the existence of spirits and Supreme Being has always controlled their way of life as well as their worldview. Lots of sacrifices have been exclusively rendered for the welfare of the village and community, and for the agricultural prosperity. The Bru tribal believe that spirits have dual power – the power to bless or harm the living beings on one hand and the power to be visible and invisible by human eyes on the other. K.P. Aleaz states that in tribal worldview the material world, the social world and the spiritual world are harmoniously connected and cannot be separated.[15] These three different dimensions such as nature-human-spirit have been intertwined in tribal's life and thought. On the other hand, they have

[11] Nirmal Minz, "Sarhul: A way of maintaining life in the primal societies in Jharkhand" in *Spiritual Traditions. Essential visions for Living,* ed., by David Emmanuel Singh, Delhi/Bangalore: ISPCK/UTC, 1998, pp. 129-130.
[12] Lincoln Reang, *History of the Reang (Bru)…*, p. 99.
[13] *Idem*.
[14] T. Vanlaltlani, *A Study of Religious Identity among the Bru of Mizoram*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2007, p. 71.
[15] K.P. Aleaz, "A tribal theology from a tribal world-view" in *Indian Journal of Theology,* pp. 20-30.

worshiped their ancestral spirits as part of their religio-cultural tradition and this in turn helps in self-realization.[16]

Tribal people regard God as the Supreme Being. They accept both the transcendent and immanent nature of the Supreme Being. For Ao Naga, *Lajiba* is considered as the earth entering Supreme Being who enters to the earth with seeds and rises with the crops. *Lajiba* is also a protector and sustainer of all entities.[17] Tribal believe that creation is the manifestation of the Supreme Being. In this sense, God or Supreme Being is revealed in natural orders such as wind, sun, trees, and rivers. This implies that though tribal people believe in transcendent God, they are more acquainted with the immanent God; of whom they can make a close contact through making partnership with the created beings.

*1.4. Myths and Tribal:* Myth occupies the central place in tribal's life. It is through myths that tribal's identity, religion, culture and their reality have been clearly understood. According to Mircea Eliade, myth is "a true story and, beyond that, a story that is a most precious possession because it is sacred, exemplary, significant."[18] To Vanlaltlani, myth is a story through which tribal people express their feelings and actions, their belief system, their assumption of the world.[19] In other words, myths serves as a unifying concept in which tribal people get involve in assuming the universe, the natural and supernatural worlds, and the temporal world in wholeness.[20] Vanlaltlani has mentioned five different myths of Bru tribal people which express their understanding about natural and metaphysical world.[21] In one

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[16] Nirmal Minz, *Rise Up, My People, and Claim the Promise. The Gospel among the Tribes of India*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1997, p. 29.
[17] Wati Longchar, *An Emerging Asian Theology…*, pp. 82-88.
[18] Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality,* London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1963, p. 1.
[19] T. Vanlaltlani, *Tribal Religion: Mizo and Bru*, Aizawl: Mizo Theological Association, 2009, p. 205.
[20] William A. Lessa, ed., *Reader in Comparative Religion*, p. 168, in the book of T. Vanlaltlani, *A Study of Religious Identity among the Bru in Mizoram*, p. 102.
[21] Bru ethnic group is one of the tribal groups in Northeast India. They inhabited in three regions such as Assam, Mizoram and Tripura. There are five myths of the Bru tribal people mentioned in the book of T. Vanlaltlani – i) myth of creation and sacrifice, ii) myth of

of the myths mentioned by Vanlaltlani, 'myth of creation and sacrifice' talks about cosmology. According to this myth, in the beginning the creator-deity created heaven and earth first and then created human beings (man and woman). However, the human beings were eaten up by the cannibal. The deity then created a dog in order to guard and protect from evils. For this reason, the Bru tribal people consider eating dog meat as totem for they believe that dog is the security guard given by deity and is older than human beings.[22]

Tribal's myths have ethical, religious and ecological implications. Ethically, this myth gives a lesson to the tribal people that helping others including non-human as the key factor for authentic existence. It also teaches the people not to feel pride because bad luck may fall upon them in future. Tribal are taught through this myth to be humble and not to look down upon others on any basis.[23]

**2. Concepts of Dasein in Tribal Metaphysics**

Dasein is derived from German word meaning 'being there' or 'being in the world' or 'existence'.[24] In his entire phenomenological investigation, Martin Heidegger employs Dasein as a fundamental tool. To him, Dasein is the starting point and the fundamental nature of humanity. Being-in-the-world is the beginning of all other rational properties. According to Heidegger, the essence of Dasein is founded on its existence.[25] During 'being-in-the-world', we have 'take it for granted' things which Heidegger calls 'ready-to-hand'.[26] He states that there are

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divine incarnation and intervention, iii) myth of origin of worship of deities, iv) myth of Sibrai and Hangbrai, and v) myth of orphan & divine help and intervention. See, T. Vanlaltlani, *A Study of Religious Identity among the Bru in Mizoram,* pp. 102-107.

[22] T. Vanlaltlani, *A Study of Religious Identity…*, p. 102.

[23] T. Vanlaltlani, *Tribal Religion*…, pp. 213-216.

[24] At the footnote we see the literal translation of dasein as 'being-there' or 'existence'. See, Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1962, p. 27.

[25] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*…, pp. 67, 152.

[26] *Ibidem*, p. 102.

many things on earth which human employ as a tool or as part of our body in order to accomplish certain visions. He uses an example of hammer handled by a carpenter. When an expert carpenter holds hammer for nailing, naturally he does not focus on the hammer while in action rather he is thinking about the entire project to be fulfilled. At the moment of action the carpenter tend to forget the hammer as a tool, but considers as if it is part of his body. For him, 'ready-to-hand' is a practical lived experience without any disturbance by rational thinking. Likewise, we normally do not conscious about what the world is going on, we simply lived in it and focused on the future plans. This is generally how we spend time during our short span of life. But when the hammer is broken then the carpenter's conscious mind has directed towards the hammer. The carpenter concentrates on how to repair the hammer and make it for a useful hammer once again. This state of mind is called 'present-at-hand' by Heidegger. Heidegger states that this is a state of mind which scientists have enormously employed. In other words, the former is universal and inclusive whereas the latter is particular and exclusive. Furthermore, 'present-at-hand' implies to temporary action focusing on a particular object, 'ready-to-hand' on the other hand implies to permanent activity thinking about wholeness of a thing. Thus, 'present-at-hand' refers to ontical realm of existence and 'ready-to-hand' refers to the realm of ontological existence.

In tribal metaphysical enterprise, one may find the concepts of Dasein rooted in the whole sphere. In other words, tribal conceives time in circular manner, wherein the past, present and future have been connected. In this section, we shall try to identify the concepts of Dasein which are embedded in tribal metaphysical orientation.

**2.1. Facticity:** Tribal accepts existence or being in the world as the basic foundation and fundamental potentiality for human being. For them, existential being is prior to essential being or conscious being. In tribal life, rational thinking has less importance than that of practical and experiencing life. The latter has occupied a central place in tribal life. It

does not mean that tribal people are irrational people. In most cases tribal people have experienced the things first and then rationalized the things when it is necessary. Unlike Husserl who tries to establish phenomenology with presuppositionlessness,[27] tribal's reasoning technique has deeply associated with presupposition. It is with the help of presupposition that tribal used to think, rationalize, and reason about things. In fact, the idea of presupposition has been drawn out of their lived experience. That is to say, existence with lived experience is the basic resource for gathering presupposition in retrospection, introspection and prospection of life. Therefore, it is due to the priority given to existence that tribal has struggled against several issues relating to their existence. Landlessness, poverty, cultural assimilation, loss of identity, hunger and discrimination on the basis of skin, size and sex has become the enduring problems faced by tribal in India. These are the problems ontically generated among tribal of Northeast India with regard to their existence. There are several ontology related issues for tribal in relation to practical lived experiencing existence.

*i) Thrownness:* One important aspect of facticity is thrownness. It is thrownness into the world by certain force. Heidegger states that human being is casted into the world for existence and this thrownness for existence is primordial aspect of humanity.[28] He is silent about who throws human being into existence in the world. In this sense, tribal go beyond Heidegger by advocating that they are thrown into the world by the Supreme Being by means of manifestation since tribal believe that

[27] By introducing transcendental phenomenology Husserl tries to establish new philosophical method based on presuppositionless or without prior subjective assumptions for investigating truth. He insists bracketing or suspending prior assumption obtained by a person and transcends subjective particular attributes by opening the mind to receive the object as it is and directing the consciousness towards the reality. By suspension of presupposition, Husserl proposes 'pure ego' or 'transcendental ego'. See, Edmund Husserl, *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy,* translated by F. Kersten, The Hague/Boston/Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983, p. 113.

[28] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time…,* p. 223.

creation as the manifestation of God.[29] The concept of 'thrownness into the world' can be seen in the notion of space-centered tribal worldview. In this worldview, land is regarded as the foundation for understanding tribal's identity, culture and religious ethos. Tribal are not just the beneficiaries of the land, but they are closely embedded into it. Succinctly speaking, tribal's livelihood, culture, identity and spirituality have been thrown into the earth so that in relation to the earth they may obtain wholeness in life.

*ii) A state of 'beyond control':* Heidegger holds the view that being in the world is out of Dasein's control. Existence can neither be stopped nor accelerated by human entities. In other words, being in the world is not of ontical governance; it is of ontological sphere of existence. Tribal also believe that existence on earth is not of a choice, it is a plan and governance of the Supreme Being.[30] Tribal people used to evaluate the past in relation to their lived experience. They believe that whatever happening in the past is programmed by god. They only involved in actualization of the programme designed by the Supreme Being. Unlike the past happening which is out of Dasein's control, the present life and future life can be decided by human being.

*iii) Ready-to-hand:* According to Heidegger, 'ready-to-hand' refers to closeness of equipment or being of equipment which are relatively dealt in everyday life.[31] Tribal people have affirmation that various entities in the world are their co-existent being on one hand and useful material for their authentic existence on the other. In their festive events and sacrificial functions, tribal people employ different objects such as plants, animals, birds and water for their stuffs.[32] Tribal have no tendency to perform these events at the expense of other creations. They employ these entities out of their deep connection with them. It is

[29] Wati Longchar, *An Emerging Asian Theology…,* pp. 82-88.
[30] *Idem*.
[31] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time…,* p. 135.
[32] Lincoln Reang, *History of the Reang (Bru)…*, p. 99.

something 'take it for granted' way of doing things as these stuffs are inevitable in these occasions. However, this does not mean that tribal subordinate other created beings to human being. They are doing this with a view to perform accomplishing the programme as well as to obtain the wellbeing of human being in particular and the co-existential life of all beings in universal. That is to say, land, plants, animals, birds, and other entities on earth are the 'ready-to-hand' not the 'present-at-hand' for tribal people for they sensitize these entities as part of their life and body for envisioning the wholeness of life.

**2.2. Fallenness:** Fallenness can be understood as *existentiell* which is for Heidegger the ontical 'everydayness of life' or the averageness of the present life.[33] The fallenness refers to the everyday life of 'they' (*das Man*) or publicness. Under the realm of publicness, everything becomes obscured and is a deprivation of Dasein.[34] In simple words, fallenness is a state of existence in which majority of people are following what others are doing without examining what is right or wrong. On the other hand, the fallenness state of existence is rather the ontical state of being in the world. Fallenness is a state of present life situation in which normal activities of life have been continued. It could also be a state of 'driven away' from the state of being thrown into the world towards fascination and fantasy. Thus, fallenness refers to the inauthentic state of existence. The characteristics of fallenness are idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity.[35]

In tribal metaphysical orientation one can see a concept of *everydayness* or a state of fallenness with regard to their understanding of the existence of spirits and the Supreme Being. It is under this state of

[33] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time…,* p. 33.
[34] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time…,* p. 165.
[35] In a state of being-with-one-another (fallenness), idle talk is the possibility of understanding without previously making the things one's own. Curiosity is not based on seeing, but by perception in order to encounter the world. Ambiguity also is another feature which refers to the uncertainty of who is genuinely communicated or spoken. Everything seems to be genuinely understood, genuinely taken hold of, genuinely spoken, but in reality it is not. See, Heidegger, *Being and Time…,* pp. 211-219.

existence that sacrifices have been carried out by tribal for wellbeing in totality of life. In almost all rituals and ceremonial functions, drinking of home brewed wine from rice is another religio-cultural institution. Particularly for Bru tribal, wine (*arag*) has been associated with religiosity since time immemorial.[36] Lincoln has further stated that in the olden days it is accustomed for the Bru tribal people to consume *arag* in a group in times of festivals. They regarded *arag* as poison and did not drink alone.[37]

In one of the Bru rituals (*hata malaimi*), in the evening sacrificial meal is prepared and all the participants drink local wine brewed from rice, partake the meal followed by singing and dancing.[38] Although drinking wine is meant for making good relationship in religious and festive affairs, due to excessive consumption of wine sometimes create violence and misunderstanding among them. There is a tendency of following others in consuming wine excessively out of over-joy in times of festivals and other ceremonial functions ended with misunderstanding in several occasions. In this manner, wine as a social institution could be a prey for tribal leading towards everydayness of life.

**2.3. Projection:** 'Projection' is the possibility of being in the world to come out of the everydayness state of life and to anticipate onto the future. It is not an anticipation of *existentiell* possibilities (present-at-hand), rather an anticipation upon existential phenomena over 'present-at-hand' with resoluteness for potentiality of Being-a-whole which authenticates being.[39] Potentiality for being-a-whole implies to possibility of being-towards-death. No one can experience one's own death. Heidegger is of the opinion that understanding death through experiencing the death of others is not a perfect understanding of death.[40]

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[36] Dr. Lincoln Reang, *Arag: A social drink prevalent among the Reang (Bru) community*, Agartala: Niharika Publishers, 2021, p. 41.
[37] Lincoln Reang, *Arag…,* p. 42.
[38] Lincoln Reang, *History of the Reang (Bru)…*, p. 106.
[39] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time…,* p. 350.
[40] *Ibidem*, 282.

*Das Man* (publicness) intends to distract someone from the true understanding of death. At this juncture, Heidegger proposes *resoluteness* which holds back to thrownness which in turn gives way for anxious state of mind to have anxiety which is the potentiality of being in the world. Anxiety makes a person conscious of right or wrong, enables to choose what is good for authentic existence. Simply speaking, resoluteness draws consciousness of one's ownmost self potentiality while in the midst of the crowd whereas anticipation projects towards one's ownmost possibility which is death. To Heidegger, Dasein's own most possibility is death.[41] When one understands possibility of being-towards-death (projection), potentiality of being-in-the-world (thrownness) becomes authentic and wholly transparent as 'ready-to-hand'.

Particularly, tribal conception about time-space relation and their understanding about 'spirits' and 'deities' have in association with the concept of 'projection'. They have time-space consciousness in totality wherein the past, present and future have circularly connected. For tribal, present life is conditioned by past life and by anticipation onto future life. In other words, tribal sensitization about spirits and deities have related to time in the sense that sacrifices have been offered to these spirits and deities for the future wellbeing of the people. Future wellbeing should not be categorized within the temporality of life, but it covers the welfare of being after temporal life. The Bru tribal people have a custom to believe the interconnectedness of temporal world and the world of spirits. Spirits and deities are the communicators between these two worlds. In actual sense, tribal myths start with the world of spirits and end with temporal world. Offering of sacrifice does not only mean for physical welfare but also mean for resting the anxiety (angst), fear, and even death to the Supreme Being. That is to say, tribal people do not anticipate putting aside anxiety, fear and death; rather they project towards anxiety, dread and death so as to attain authenticity of being in the world.

[41] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time…,* p. 307.

### 2.4. Care

The three features of temporality such as facticity, fallenness and projection have different mode of direction in identifying Dasein. It is a *care* which has interwoven these temporalities together which is a primordial totality of ontological structural whole. In fact, temporality is the ontological meaning of care. The totality of structural whole can be understood with the help of *care.*[42] Heidegger avoids the traditional definition of human which understood as a rational animal. For him, human existence is basically consisted of and grounded on *care.*[43] Care permeates these three stages of existence such as being-in-the-world, being-with-others, and being-towards-death. At the stage of facticity or being-in-the-world, care signifies self, in fallenness it is a care for others, in projection care for authentic existence. In this way, care is a unifying factor which is primordial potentiality within each temporality that binds these three temporalities together.

The concept of care is also found in tribal metaphysical investigation. In fact, it is a 'care' that permeates in the ontological and existential life of tribal people in totality. In case of sensitization towards nature, tribal accept plants, animals, forest etc. as their lifeline and are looked after with care and concern. In tribal's shifting cultivation system one can find out that tribal are doing this type of cultivation with an idea of 'care for nature'. Every year cultivation place is shifted from one place to another. This is in fact, not just for the purpose of cultivation of more grains, but also for fallowing or freeing the cultivated land so as to make forest land again. *Totemism* is a good example of showing their love, care and concern towards other entities. Offering sacrifices, celebrating festivals and practicing rituals also denote 'care for oneself' and 'care for others'. The fundamental purpose of sacrifice, be it in rituals, festivals or in sickness – for healing diseases and welfare of

[42] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time…,* p. 237.
[43] Jesus Adrian Escudero, "Heidegger: *Being and Time* and the Care for the Self," *Open Journal of Philosophy,* 3/2 (2013), pp. 302-307.

villagers – is meant for caring oneself and for others. Therefore, tribal's 'care' concerns with the wholeness of life that covers all entities; and focuses not just on physical wellbeing but also on ontological wellbeing i.e. being in totality.

### 3. Towards tribal onto-theology

The term, 'onto-theology' is believed to have coined by German philosopher, Immanuel Kant to project theology as a metaphysics which exists independently of all experience. In this way, Kant understands onto-theology as a form of transcendental theology that puts God as transcendent being with no relation to human experience, but relates God with consciousness. Therefore, Kant defines onto-theology as the transcendental rational theology which claims to know the existence of original being through concepts without experience. Heidegger on the other hand conceives onto-theology as a ruthless critique to western metaphysics.[44] He defines onto-theology as a calculative form of thinking that reduces everything to an object on the basis of an absolute grounding term. God is called upon in onto-theology to be this highest term upon whom all others taken as a whole are grounded in their universal Being.[45]

Methodologically speaking, tribal theology has not been shaped with ontological orientation insofar as the existing tribal theology is concerned. It is formulated within the framework of socio-economic and political context of tribal people; therefore tribal theology can be understood as contextual theology. Tribal theology can also be identified as liberation theology for the fact that tribal theology concerns liberation of tribal people from oppression and alienation. It could still be

[44] Iain Thomson, "Ontotheology"? Understanding Heidegger's *Destruktion* of Metaphysics," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies,* 8/3 (2000), pp. 297-327.

[45] A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by Brian Wayne Rogers, *Onto-theology unveiled: Heidegger and Marion on the intersection of philosophy and theology,* Hamilton, Ontario: Mc Master University, 2007, p. iii.

categorized into identity theology as tribal theology concerns identifying tribal culture, ethnicity, religiosity, and socio-economic and political identity. As a result, traditional tribal theology[46] tries to keep distance from other theologies. Today, tribal people need theology which is not of identity theology alone but of relativity theology too. Relativity theology could be realized if tribal theology is shaped and founded on ontology.

*i) Tribal theology with 'Being-in-the-world'*: Tribal theology should be founded on existence or being of tribal people in order to navigate tribal onto-theology. Here, theology must consider tribal existence in relation to the world. It is not of physical relationship that has to be taken, but of ontological relationship between tribal and the world must be considered in theology.[47]

In ontological study of tribal theology, the world is not regarded as separate entity, it is considered as part of their beings. It is not through the participation into the world or earth that tribal identity has been shaped, but through acknowledgment of the world as 'ready-to-hand' that acknowledges tribal identity. Tribal identity is existed when tribal are thrown into the world for existence. With regard to tribal, identity and existence are like the two sides of the same coin, and this inseparable nature becomes the primordial potentiality of being. A close contact with the earth and other entities under the concept of 'ready-to-hand' that tribal ontological reality could have been acknowledged. The fact is that tribal identity is embedded with their existence and the moment they exist, their identity is also existed. Dealing with this primordial potentiality, 'being in the world' would help us to know what the primordial nature of tribal is and how the world makes tribal

[46] Traditional tribal theology here refers to classical methodologies which the four pioneers of tribal scholars have employed such as 'indigenization and contextualization' of Renthy Keitzar; 'spaced-centred tribal theology' of Wati Longchar; 'synthesis-praxis' of K. Thanzauva; 'postcolonial method' of Yangkahao Vashum.

[47] Wati Longchar has dealt tribal theology with tribal cosmology through 'space-centredness' in which the earth is the primordial factor for defining meanings to tribal people. A new philosophical foundation for doing tribal theology is here proposed i.e. ontology.

acknowledged their primordial identity. That is to say, if tribal theology goes back to the primordial nature and begins with tribal ontological existence, this would open the way for tribal ontological theology.

*ii) Tribal theology with 'Being-with-others':* K. Thanzauva has framed tribal theology under synthetic-praxis as a theological reflection for transformation of tribal community. It is a synthesis between the Word of God and Christian tradition on one hand and tribal experience on the other hand. Being-with-others is not simply a community life, it is more of everyday lifestyle of general people. Eating, taking exercise, reading newspaper, working, chitchatting, listening music and songs etc. are the averaged everydayness of every one on earth. It is a state of living togetherness with the crowd, a state of making choice and decision, and ultimately a state of making transition. Tribal theology must not neglect the general people's purview of life so as to identify the existentiality of life in the midst of the crowd. It is in this state of fallenness of life that tribal could have anxiety due to nothingness. In reality, tribal do not simply offer sacrifices out of the fear of something evil.[48] It is due to the feeling of hopelessness and nothingness burning in tribal existence that sacrifices have been offered to regain hopefulness of life. This state of anxiety should be dealt in tribal theology so as to show tribal the way to authentic existence. Dealing with 'being-with-others' in tribal theology would help tribal in realizing the potentiality of the primordial existence and in believing the possibility of proceeding towards authentic life.

*iii) Tribal theology with 'Being-for-the-end'*: Tribal theology has detached from dealing with the 'end' or 'death'. Tribal theology has been remaining within the circle of lived experience of the tribal since its

[48] Martin Heidegger distinguishes anxiety and fear in such a way that the latter is for something whereas the former is for nothing. If certain fearful thing is removed then there is no more fear. But it is not in the case of anxiety. Anxiety happens due to hopelessness, nothingness and other desperate situations. Fear is more of physical and mental, but anxiety is more of ontological.

emergence. It begins with tribal experience and ends with showing the paths to understand the Supreme Being from tribal perspective and to build mutual relationship between tribal and Supreme Being. Being-for-the-end or being-towards-death is one of the fundamental realities that everyone will face. Without death authentic existence is incomplete. Tribal also concern for the end of human life. Sometimes, anxiety leads them to anxious for death with a hope to pass through the state of hopelessness. They do not fear for death, but anxious to go through death for expecting something good. It is this consciousness of death that tribal have anxious for caring oneself and for others which in turn binds tribal together.

It is necessary for tribal theology to take serious about the concept of 'death' in theologizing for death is the own most possibility of being in the world. Tribal projection of death as a state of accomplishment, blessing, reality, and returning to the state of nature must be dealt in tribal theology. Dealing with this existential reality in theology would help tribal anxious for authentic existence in the world.

**Concluding Postscripts**

In the light of the above discussion, one may find the concepts of Dasein which have been embedded in tribal metaphysical orientation. This shows that Dasein has rooted in tribal existential life. It is in the being that essence or identity has also been mutually co-existed in tribal's ontological sphere of existence. As a result, being in the world enables tribal to feel the world and other entities as 'ready-to-hand' by transparenting rather than bracketing (suspending) the objects in order to transcend 'present-at-hand' for contemplating the wholeness of life. As long as transparenting 'ready-to-hand' things, tribal's Dasein and essential nature would be acknowledged through mutual interaction between tribal and the world at large.

It is the need of the hour to deal with ontology in doing tribal theology. Transposing the concepts of Dasein in doing tribal theology would open the way to navigating ontological theology. Firstly, consideration of 'being-in-the-world' in tribal theology will

acknowledge the primordial potentiality of tribal existence. Secondly, by dealing with 'being-with-others' tribal theology could sensitize tribal people the averaged everydayness of the people in the world which can distract from authenticity of existence on one hand, and would enable them to have confidence in their primordial potentiality (their being-in-the-world) to choose *either/or* on the other hand. Finally, considering 'being-towards-death' will lead tribal theology in acknowledging that death is part of life and is not to be feared of but to be anxious for because death could remove hopelessness and nothingness and could bring hopefulness in life on earth in return i.e. authentic existence. Sensitizing these concepts of Dasein or ontology in doing tribal theology would ensure tribal theology a more complete in its form and a more holistic in its approach.

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# *A Comparative Overview between* Zangs gling ma *and Previous Texts on Padmasambhava*

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**Abstract:** This paper compares the five texts regarding Padmasambhava written before *Zangs gling ma* (*dBa' bzhed* and four manuscripts discovered in Dunhuang - *Pelliot tibétain* 44, IOL Tib J 321, IOL Tib J 644 and *Pelliot tibétain* 307) with the texts from *Zangs gling ma*, in an attempt to identify similarities and differences between them and to reach conclusions resulting from examining them together. The paper also addresses the question of historical credibility of *Zangs gling ma*, taking into consideration its connection with *dBa' bzhed*, as well as the question on length of Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet, by identifying texts in *Zangs gling ma* that refer to places in Tibet where the master stayed.

**Keywords:** Padmasambhava, *Zangs gling ma*, *dBa' bzhed*, Śāntarakṣita, *Khri srong lDe'u btsan*, first spread of Buddhism in Tibet.

## 1. Introduction

In this paper we aim to make a comparison between the five earlier *Zangs gling ma* texts that contain references to Padmasambhava and the texts of *Zangs gling ma* ("The Copper Temple"), discovered by *Nyang ral Nyi ma 'Od zer* in the 12th century, which is the first complete biography of the great Indian master from the 8th century regarded as the founder of Tibetan Buddhism. This endeavour aims to identify similarities and differences existing between these texts and to reach conclusions that can be drawn from examining them together. Thus, we seek to find out whether there is any continuity between the five earlier *Zangs gling ma* texts and the *Zangs gling ma* texts, the significance of the similarities between them, or whether any approach that reconciles the differences between them can be identified.

The five earlier *Zangs gling ma* texts that refer to Padmasambhava are a section of *dBa' bzhed* ("Testimony of *dBa'*") in which Padmasambhava appears as the protagonist (folio 11r-14r, plus a brief reference in folio 14v), as well as four manuscripts that are part of those discovered in the Mogao caves in the Dunhuang oasis: *Pelliot tibétain* 44 (in which Padmasambhava appears as master of the Vajrakīlaya tradition and tamer of the four *bse* goddesses in Nepal), IOL Tib J 321 (in which he appears as author of tantric commentaries), IOL Tib J 644 (in which he appears as *mahāmudrā vidyādhara* and The Second Buddha) and Pelliot tibétain 307 (in which he appears as tamer of the seven feminine spirits of Tibet).

As a starting point in this endeavour, it should be mentioned at least the book on *Zangs gling ma* of Lewis Doney,[1] the papers of Jacob Dalton,[2] Robert Mayer[3] and Doney[4] in connection with the four Dunhuang manuscripts mentioned above,[5] and the book on *dBa' bzhed* written by Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger,[6] as well as the book edited by Doney in the same matter.[7] Cathy Cantwell and Robert

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[1] Lewis Doney, *The Zangs gling ma. The First Padmasambhava Biography. Two Exemplars of the Earliest Attested Recension,* IITBS GmbH, International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2014.

[2] Jacob Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet: A Study of IOL Tib J 644 and Pelliot Tibétain 307," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 124, no. 4, 2004, pp. 759-772, accesed on March 14, 2020. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4132116; Jacob Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet: A Second Look at the Evidence from Dunhuang," in *About Padmasambhava. Historical Narratives and Later Transformations of Guru Rinpoche,* Schongau: Garuda Verlag, 2020.

[3] Robert Mayer, "Geographical and Other Borders in the Symbolism of Padmasambhava," in *About Padmasambhava…*, *op. cit*.

[4] Lewis Doney, "The Lotus-Born in Nepal: a Dunhuang narrative and the later biographical tradition," in *About Padmasambhava …*, *op. cit*.

[5] In this paper we will refer to the four Dunhuang manuscripts mentioned above abbreviated as PT44, ITJ321, ITJ644 and PT307.

[6] Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed: the royal narrative concerning the bringing of the Buddha's doctrine to Tibet,* Viena: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000.

[7] Tsering Gonkatsang and Michael Willis, "Text and Translation," in *Bringing Buddhism to Tibet: History and Narrative in the DBA' BZHED Manuscript*, ed. Lewis Doney, Berlin,

Mayer have dealt with the texts on Padmasambhava in *dBa' bzhed* and the Dunhuang manuscripts,[8] after Matthew Kapstein had already led the way in examining the Tibetan texts on the great master.[9]

We note that the comparison of the *Zangs gling ma* with earlier texts referring to Padmasambhava has already been addressed: Doney pointed out, as early as his 2014 paper, the existence of common elements between ITJ321, PT44 and PT307, on the one hand, and chapters 4, 5 and 9 of *Zangs gling ma*, on the other hand,[10] as well as the possible influences of the *dBa' bzhed* tradition upon *Zangs gling ma*,[11] and in a more recent work he has convincingly demonstrated the similarities, which cannot be ignored, between PT44 (in which Padmasambhava appears as master of the Vajrakīlaya tradition and tamer of the four *bse* goddesses in Nepal) and chapter 5 of *Zangs gling ma.*[12] However, referring to the possibility that *Nyang ral Nyi ma 'Od zer*, the discoverer of *Zangs gling ma*, was influenced by the Dunhuang manuscripts, Doney points out that a certain amount of caution is necessary in drawing conclusions:[13]

> "This is, of course, not proof of the direct influence of these works on *Nyang ral*, but rather shows that the *mythos* surrounding Padmasambhava that grew up after the fall of the Tibetan empire and matured into the later period among clan and religious groups in the heart of Tibet proved

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Boston: De Gruyter, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715309), pp. 102-157; Lewis Doney, "The Testimony of Ba: Literature and Exemplars," in *Bringing Buddhism to Tibet: History and Narrative in the DBA' BZHED Manuscript*, ed. Lewis Doney, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715309, pp. 3-23.

[8] Cathy Cantwell and Rob Mayer, "Representations of Padmasambhava in early post-Imperial Tibet", in *Tibet after Empire Culture, Society and Religion between 850-1000*, ed. Christoph Cűppers, Robert Mayer and Michael Walter, Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2013, pp. 19-40.

[9] Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism. Conversion, Contestation, and Memory,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 155-162.

[10] Doney, *The Zangs gling ma*, pp. 3-4.

[11] *Ibidem*, pp. 31-32.

[12] Doney, "The Lotus-Born in Nepal," pp. 107-108.

[13] *Ibidem*, p. 99.

resilient and popular especially in southern Tibetan borderland where many of these tales are set."

Out of the twelve versions of the biography listed by Doney in his excellent work on *Zangs gling ma,*[14] we have relied on the version included in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* collection,[15] compiled by the great Tibetan scholar *'Jam mgon Kong sprul bLo gros mTha' yas* (1813-1899). Although Doney has shown that this is not the oldest version of *Zangs gling ma*, its legitimation by inclusion in *Rin chen gter mdzod* has made it increasingly widespread and influential at the detriment of the older version.[16] Today, the version included in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* collection is both published online on the Tsadra Foundation's rtz.tsadra.org/ website in Tibetan and translated into English by Erik Pema Kunsang,[17] so its current popularity over the other eleven versions of *Zangs gling ma* can no longer be doubted. However, although the version included in *Rin chen gter mdzod* (called *ZL1* by Doney) is not the oldest (as it contains several texts that cannot be found in the other versions[18]) it cannot be ruled out that it, like the shorter and older version (*ZL3*), also originates from *Nyang ral Nyi ma 'Od zer.*[19]

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[14] Doney, *The Zangs gling ma,* pp. 23-25, 42.

[15] Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer, *Slob dpon pad+ma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs chos 'byung nor bu'i phreng ba (rnam thar Zangs gling ma)*, in Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo pod dang po (*The Great Treasury of Rediscovered Teachings* Volume 1) by 'Jam mgon kong sprul, pp. 1-190, New Delhi: Shechen Publications, 2007-2016, https://rtz.tsadra.org/index.php/Terdzo-KA-001; Rinchen Terdzö contributions, "Terdzo-KA-001," in *Rinchen Terdzö*, accesed on May 30, 2020, https://rtz.tsadra.org/index.php?title=Terdzo-KA-001&oldid=117050. The images of the *dpe cha* pages of the text (numbered 1-190) are published at https://rtz.tsadra.org/images/d/dd/Terdzo-KA-001.pdf. Please note that in the following footnotes we will refer to this text under the abbreviation *Terdzo-KA-001.T307*.

[16] Doney, *The Zangs gling ma,* p. 25.

[17] Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born. The Life Story of Padmasambhava,* transl. Erik Pema Kunsang, Boston: Shambhala, 1999.

[18] Doney, *The Zangs gling ma,* pp. 26-27.

[19] *Ibidem,* pp. 33, 39.

As we have shown in our paper on Padmasambhava in the previous five *Zangs gling ma* texts,[20] the section of *dBa' bzhed* relating to the master can be divided into seven scenes or narrative units,[21] each of which having a certain autonomy. Hence, our comparison with the *Zangs gling ma* texts will consider these eleven narrative units, i.e. the seven scenes in *dBa' bzhed* and the four Dunhuang manuscripts.

**2. Comparison of texts**

Comparison of the earlier *Zangs gling ma* texts with those of the biography showed that they can be divided into four main categories: texts with significant similarity, which refer to the taming of spirits, texts with questionable similarity, texts with diametrically opposed approaches, which represent the pleas of the two opposing factions, and texts having no equivalent in *Zangs gling ma*. In the upcoming sections we present each of these four categories.[22]

**2.1. Texts having significant similarity: the taming of spirits**

The first category of texts we compare are those concerning the taming of spirits, i.e. PT44, PT307 and two scenes from *dBa' bzhed*, against chapters 5, 9 and 10 of *Zangs gling ma*. As will be shown below, the common elements between the above-mentioned earlier *Zangs gling ma* texts and the three chapters of the biography are great enough so that we state that the taming of gods and demons is the main theme in

[20] Iulian Lucian Maidanuc, "On the image of Padmasambhava in Tibetan texts preceding *Zangs gling ma*", in *Romanian Journal of Indian Studies*, No. 5, 2021, pp. 51-89.

[21] The first scene relates Padmasambhava's arrival in Tibet and the taming of the local spirits; the second, about Padmasambhava's meeting with the Tibetan king *Khri srong lDe'u btsan*; the third, about the divination of the mirror; the fourth, about the water vase fallen from the sky; the fifth, about the opposition of the dignitaries to Padmasambhava's suggestions; the sixth, about Padmasambhava's departure from Tibet; and the seventh scene, the last, relates Padmasambhava's attempted murder.

[22] Sections 2, 3 and 4 of this paper are the English translation of most of the Section 2 of Chapter 12 of my PhD thesis. The thesis, entitled *Imaginea lui Padmasambhava în Zangs gling ma* (meaning *The Image of Padmasambhava in Zangs gling ma*), is expected to be defended by the end of 2023.

Padmasambhava's portrait in which there are significant similarities between the texts, which cannot be denied. Below are the four arguments in this regard.

Firstly, the PT44 manuscript confirms, to a relevant extent, the narrative of chapter 5 of *Zangs gling ma*, in which the master, secluded in the *Yang le shod* cave in Nepal, uses the ritual of Vajrakīlaya (also called Kīla) to subdue the local spirits and attain supreme realization.[23] The text of this manuscript relates that Ācārya Sambhava departs from *Yang le shod* for Nālandā in India to bring the 100,000 verses tantra of Kīla. On the way he learns that four *bse* goddesses are killing people by stealing their breath, so he takes them prisoner and keeps them in his hat. When he arrives in Nālandā he opens the hat, and out of it emerges an extraordinarily beautiful woman (as a manifestation of the four *bse* goddesses), whom he forces to become the protector of the Kīla ritual followers. Padmasambhava then travels back to Nepal and meditates in the caves of *Yang le shod* and Asura,[24] in the latter with three other tantric practitioners, achieving accomplishment in Kīla.[25]

Although in chapter 5 of *Zangs gling ma* Padmasambhava does not depart from the *Yang le shod* cave in Nepal to India to bring the Kīla teachings, but sends two disciples there, the ending of the narrative is largely the same as in PT44: attainment of realization as *mahāmudrā vidyādhara* through the Kīla practice (which, of course, also implies attainment of realization in Kīla), which took place in Nepal, in the *Yang le shod* cave. The existence of common elements between PT44 and chapter 5 of the biography has already been demonstrated by Doney,[26] so we do not consider it requires further argument.

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[23] *Terdzo-KA-001*, 28-29; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 53.

[24] The *Yang le shod* and Asura caves are located very close to each other in Pharping, in the south of Kathmandu Valley, in Nepal.

[25] Cantwell and Mayer, "Representations of Padmasambhava in early post-Imperial Tibet", pp. 32-35; Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet: A Second Look," pp. 42-45; Doney, "The Lotus-Born in Nepal," pp. 100-102.

[26] Doney, "The Lotus-Born in Nepal," pp. 107-108.

Secondly, the PT307 manuscript shows significant similarities to the narrative of chapter 9 of *Zangs gling ma*, where upon arrival in Tibet the master subdued, among other local spirits, several feminine spirits. PT307 first describes the seven goddesses of Tibet, who are "also known as *ḍākinīs*, the powerful women, the seven great mothers, or the seven great *rākṣasis*"; then we learn that "both the Indian Padmasambhava and *rLang dpal gyis seng ge* subjugated and supressed them," so that the seven mothers "have been entrusted as the eternally unfailing guardians of Tibet."[27]

The seven mothers (*ma bdun*) can be seen as pre-Buddhist spirits connected with certain places in Tibet, usually sacred mountains, valleys and lakes,[28] so they can most likely be found among the feminine spirits mentioned in the first three scenes of chapter 9 of the biography. In particular, we consider the third scene in chapter 9 of *Zangs gling ma*, taking place in *'O yug*:[29] "then, when they came down from *'O yug*, the *brtan ma* goddesses tried to squeeze them between the mountains";[30] after the confrontation between the *brtan ma* goddesses and the master is described, the ending is the same as in PT307:

> "The twelve goddesses *brtan ma,*[31] the twelve goddesses *skyong ma*[32] and the twelve goddesses *ya ma,*[33] along with the retinues of each, offered the

[27] Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet: A Second Look," pp. 49-50.
[28] Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet", p. 766; Dalton, "The Early Development… : A Second Look," p. 52.
[29] *Terdzo-KA-001*, 39; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 62-63.
[30] de nas 'o yug nas mar byon tsam na / brtan ma rnams kyis ri'i bar du bcar bar byas pas /
[31] *brTan ma bcu gnyis*, "the twelve *brTan ma* goddesses," would be subordinate to the group of (well-known) goddesses *Tshe ring mched lnga*, "the five sisters of longevity." The leader of the *brTan ma bcu gnyis* group is the goddess *rDo rje g.yu sgron ma* (sometimes *rDo rje grags mo rgyal*). After their submission as guardians they received the name *bsTan srung ma bcu gnyis*, "the twelve protective goddesses of Buddhist teaching". They are divided into three subdivisions by four goddesses: *bdud mo*, *gnod sbyin mo* and *sman mo*. See, in this respect, Réne de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet. The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities*, Delhi: Book Faith India, 1996, pp. 181-182, 95, 177.

essence of their lives [to Padmasambhava] and were bound under oath. [He] gave them each a secret name and empowered them as protectors of the [Buddhist] teaching."[34]

The similarity between PT307 and chapter 9 of *Zangs gling ma* has been supported by Dalton[35] and Doney,[36] while Mayer pointed out that six of the seven mothers (*ma bdun*) in PT307 can be identified by name as belonging to the group of twelve *brtan ma* goddesses (*brtan ma bcu gnyis*).[37]

Thirdly, the first scene about Padmasambhava in *dBa' bzhed*, in which the master subdues several local spirits upon his arrival in Tibet,[38] is also similar to chapter 9 of *Zangs gling ma*. Although the accounts of the two texts contain, at first glance, different place names, different events and different spirits, there are nevertheless some common elements: we refer to the confrontation with the strong winds in *sNying drung* (in *dBa' bzhed*),[39] for which there is a similar scene in chapter 9 of *Zangs gling ma*:[40]

"Then they arrived to *'Phan* county, in the north. The northern [spirits] *Ting ting ting lo sman, sTag sman zor gdong ma* and *Byang phug ma* gathered in an instant all the cold winds of the three northern plains and threw them on

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[32] *sKyong ma bcu gnyis*, "the Twelve Protecting Mothers," could be a group related to the *brTan ma* goddesses, since *bsTan skyong ma mo bcu gnyis*, "the Twelve Protecting Mothers of Buddhist teaching," is another name for the *brTan ma* goddesses, seen as guardians. Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, p. 182.

[33] We suppose it could be the twelve great *ma mo* goddesses who accompany *Chos rgyal phyi sgrub*, one of the manifestations of the god Yama (*gShin rje*), "Lord of Death." Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, pp. 85, 270.

[34] brtan ma bcu gnyis / skyong ma bcu gnyis / ya ma bcu gnyis la sogs pa so so'i 'khor dang bcas pas srog gi snying po phul nas dam la btags so / gsang mtshan re re btags nas bka'i srung mar dbang bskur ro /

[35] Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet", p. 767.

[36] Doney, *The Zangs gling ma*, 4.

[37] Mayer, "Geographical and Other Borders in the Symbolism of Padmasambhava," p. 77.

[38] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, pp. 53-54; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 120-121 (folio 11r-11v).

[39] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 53.

[40] *Terdzo-KA-001*, 40; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 63-64.

master and his retinue. Those in the retinue nearly froze, and even the master grew a little cold."[41]

Further, chapter 9 of *Zangs gling ma* relates the confrontation of the three northern spirits with Padmasambhava, which leads to the submission of all *yakşa* spirits (*gnod sbyin*) in Tibet, both male and female (*bod kyi gnod sbyin pho mo thams cad*). Although the strong winds referred to in the above-mentioned scene in *dBa' bzhed* appear only in Wangdu's and Diemberger's translation, while the Gonkatsang's and Willis's translation refers to hot-headed spirits,[42] even the latter translation does not exclude the possibility of common elements between the scene in *dBa' bzhed* and chapter 9 of *Zangs gling ma*: the hot-headed spirits could be the three northern spirits themselves. We also note that in the same scene in *dBa' bzhed* the mountain *Thang lha* and a young (or child) white *nāga* (*klu dkar po'i phrug gu*) are also mentioned,[43] while in chapter 9 of the biography Padmasambhava also tames the mountain-god *Thang lha,*[44] who is also called by the master "the white-skulled *nāga* ancestor" (*klu'i mes po thod dkar*).[45]

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[41] de nas byang 'phan yul la ru byon nas / byang gi ting ting ting lo sman dang / stag sman zor gdong ma dang / byang phug ma gsum gyis byang thang gsum gyi lhags pa thams cad dus gcig bsdus te / slob dpon 'khor dang bcas pa la brgyab pas / 'khor rnams ni rengs la khad / slob dpon nyid kyang bser ba tsam zhig byung nas /

[42] Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 120-121 (folio 11r).

[43] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 53; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 120-121 (folio 11r).

[44] *gNyan chen Thang lha* is regarded as the most important of the mountain deities of Tibet. In the classification of spirits into nine groups used in the *rNying ma* school, *gNyan chen Thang lha* ranks fourth, making it the highest deity of all those tamed by Padmasambhava in *Zangs gling ma*. At the same time *gNyan chen Thang lha* is considered *gter bdag*, "lord of the treasuries," *ser bdag*, "lord of the hail," and ruler of all the *sa bdag* spirits, "lords of the earth," in the province of *dBus* (central Tibet). In this regard see Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, pp. 206, 467, 94, 221; Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 322.

[45] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 40; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 63.

Fourthly, similarities can also be identified between the third scene[46] on Padmasambhava in *dBa' bzhed* and a text from chapter 10 of *Zangs gling ma*:[47] both are about the performance of an important ritual to tame all the spirits of Tibet, immediately after the first meeting between the master and the Tibetan king *Khri srong lDe'u btsan*. But whereas in *dBa' bzhed* the ritual described is the "mirror divination (*pra phab*) of the Four Great Kings (*rGyal chen bzhi*)", in which the master summons before him the evil spirits who had created calamities in Tibet to explain Buddhist doctrine and bind them under oath, in chapter 10 of the biography it refers to a succession of four (or three) rituals performed in the valley of *Mal gro*. Of these rituals merely the last one is strictly concerned with taming all gods and demons, while the first three were aimed at shaking *saṃsāra* from its depths, removing the negativities of the king and his subjects, and establishing a treasury for the brilliant *nāga* of *Mal gro*. Thus, the narrative in both texts has the same central element: the performance of a ritual for taming of all the spirits of Tibet immediately after the first meeting between Padmasambhava and the Tibetan king.

At the beginning of the scene in chapter 10 of the biography Padmasambhava tells the king that on his way to the royal court he had already subdued the gods and demons of Tibet, but there lives "a *nāga* king who rules the entire of Tibet and *Khams*," so he must establish a treasury for the *nāga* spirits;[48] after that the master immediately performs four (or three) tantric rituals:[49]

> "He went to the lower part of the *Mal gro* valley and performed the ritual that shakes *saṃsāra* from its depths. He manifested the glorious *maṇḍala* of purifying the lower realms and performed the ritual of removing the negativities of the king and his subjects. He went to the upper part of the *Mal gro* valley and performed the ritual of establishing a treasury for the

[46] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, pp. 55-56; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 122-123 (folio 12r-12v).
[47] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 44; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 68.
[48] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 44; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 67.
[49] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 44; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 68.

brilliant *nāga* of *Mal gro*. Then he went to [the mountain] *Has po ri* and multiplied, by means of meditative concentration, an offering of water in an onyx vase."[50]

The rituals in the *Mal gro* valley seem to be sequences of a well-thought-out sequence of ritual actions with the same final goal - the taming of all the spirits of Tibet. Thus, the text further mentions the attainment of this goal: "he brought under his command (*bka' 'og tu 'dus*) all the gods and demons (*lha 'dre thams cad*)".[51] The only spirit that had not already been subdued was the deity-mountain *rMa chen spom ra*, but the master subdued this one too, immediately afterwards.

Hence, we conclude that the ritual of taming the spirits in the third scene about Padmasambhava in *dBa' bzhed* has its equivalent in the scene of chapter 10 of *Zangs gling ma*, in which Padmasambhava performs the rituals in the valley of *Mal gro* for the taming of all the gods and demons of Tibet. If there is any doubt about their similarity (given that the details differ quite a bit), we recall that both scenes of rituals for the taming of all the spirits of Tibet, both the one in *dBa' bzhed* and the one in chapter 10 of *Zangs gling ma*, take place immediately after the first meeting between Padmasambhava and the Tibetan king.

**2.2. Texts having questionable similarity**

The second category includes texts whose similarity is partial and questionable, but which, on closer inspection, nevertheless have common elements that cannot be ignored. There are seven arguments in this category, which are listed below.

Firstly, the ITJ644 manuscript, in which Padmasambhava appears as the Second Buddha and *mahāmudrā vidyādhara*, endowed with five kinds

[50] mal gro'i mdor byon nas 'khor ba dong sprugs kyi cho ga mdzad / dpal ngan song sbyong ba'i dkyil 'khor bzhengs nas / mnga' bdag rje 'bangs rnams kyi sgrib pa sel ba'i cho ga mdzad / de nas mal gro'i phu na byon nas mal gro gzi can gyi klu la gter 'dzugs pa'i cho ga mdzad / de nas has po rir byon nas / chab gtor gzi phor gang la ting nge 'dzin gyis rgya bskyed /

[51] lha 'dre thams cad bka' 'og tu 'dus te /

of omniscience,[52] bears some resemblance to a text in chapter 5 of *Zangs gling ma*, in which he attains realization as *mahāmudrā vidyādhara* in the *Yang le shod* cave in Nepal, after he succeeded to defeat the opposition of local spirits through Vajrakīlaya practice.[53] Yet *Zangs gling ma* does not refer to Padmasambhava as the Second Buddha (*Sangs rgyas gNyis pa*), and Dalton has pointed out that the this epithet is attributed not only to him, but to other realized masters as well[54]; however, there are texts in the biography that refer to Padmasambhava's enlightened status and omniscience: in several chapters, are conferred upon him the Śākyamuni's attributes of *bdud 'dul*, "Tamer of demons," or *kun mkhyen*, "Omniscient," which appears as distinct hypostases of his image in *Zangs gling ma*, and in chapter 9 of the biography, one of the names the goddess *gNam sman dkar mo* uses to address the master, who had just tamed her, is *sTon pa'i zhal skyin*, meaning "successor of Buddha."[55]

Secondly, the ITJ321 manuscript, in which Padmasambhava appears as author of tantric commentaries (given the three interlinear notes that seem to mention him as such),[56] may have as its equivalent a short text in the end of chapter 17 of the biography, which relates that Vairotsana composed teachings based on Padmasambhava's answers to his questions:[57] "in particular, Vairotsana asked questions on the Secret

[52] Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet: A Second Look," pp. 33-38.
[53] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 29; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 53.
[54] Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet: A Second Look," pp. 35-37.
[55] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 38; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 62.
[56] Cantwell and Mayer, "Representations of Padmasambhava in early post-Imperial Tibet," pp. 24-25; Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet: A Second Look," pp. 47-48; Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons*, p. 67; Mayer, "Geographical and Other Borders in the Symbolism of Padmasambhava," p. 82.
[57] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 97; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 116.

Mantra to the master Padma and composed many teachings on the questions and answers."[58]

We deem that the above text could also refer to the composing of commentaries on tantric texts, such as manuscript ITJ321. However, it is not clearly in the text of chapter 17 whether Padmasambhava is the sole author of these teachings (thus Vairotsana merely recorded them in writing), or whether their authorship belongs to both. Moreover, the text of *Zangs gling ma* does not specify which tantra of the Secret Mantra it refers to, while ITJ321 is a commentary on a Mahāyoga tantra with the abbreviated title of *'Phags pa thabs kyi zhags pa* ("The Noble Noose of Methods"). Either way, both texts see Padmasambhava as scholar and author of tantric teachings, so their comparison is worth considering.

We note that doubts have been expressed about Padmasambhava's authorship of the commentary,[59] suggesting that Padmasambhava's role in relation to the ITJ321 manuscript was not just limited to writing the commentary, but the tantra itself may have originated from him. In such a hypothesis, the similarity between ITJ321 and the text of chapter 17 of *Zangs gling ma* would be more difficult to sustain, although there would still be common elements: in both the master can be seen as the author of Vajrayāna teachings, the writing of which is done with the help of close disciples. However, the text of ITJ321 also bears similarity to another text in *Zangs gling ma*: Cantwell and Mayer have shown that Śāntigarbha's short prayer to Padmasambhava at the end of ITJ321 is very similar in wording to the prayer uttered by his adoptive father, Indrabodhi, King of Oḍḍiyāna, in chapter 4 of the biography.[60] We note that the insertion of this prayer at the end of the text seems to confirm the

[58] khyad par du slob dpon pad+ma la / bai ro tsa nas zhu ba mdzad de gsang sngags zhu len gyi skor mang po mdzad do /

[59] Cantwell and Mayer, "Representations of Padmasambhava in early post-Imperial Tibet," p. 25. Mayer, "Geographical and Other Borders in the Symbolism of Padmasambhava," p. 82.

[60] Cantwell and Mayer, "Representations of Padmasambhava…," pp. 25-27.

hypothesis that in ITJ321 Padmasambhava was not seen merely as an author of commentary.

Thirdly, in the second scene of *dBa' bzhed* concerning Padmasambhava, wherein he had just arrived at the Tibetan royal court, Śāntarakṣita gives the king a long speech in which he convincingly pleads the necessity of Padmasambhava's presence in Tibet,[61] speaking of the master in very laudatory terms. There is a similar text in *Zangs gling ma*, wherein Śāntarakṣita argues to the king that Padmasambhava's call to Tibet is necessary: at the beginning of chapter 8 of the biography,[62] but surprisingly, it is short and dry, comparing with the speech in *dBa' bzhed.* The major difference between the two pleas of Śāntarakṣita in favour of Padmasambhava is that the one in *dBa' bzhed* is presented in the very presence of the master, while the one in chapter 8 of the biography is presented only in front of the king, as the master had not yet been summoned to Tibet.

Fourthly, the fourth scene in *dBa' bzhed* about Padmasambhava, which refers to the water vase fallen from the sky,[63] has at least three elements in common with a scene in chapter 18 of *Zangs gling ma*:[64] both concern a longevity ritual for the Tibetan king, involve the use of a ritual water vase, and have the same ending: the ritual's completion is

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[61] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, pp. 54-55; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 120-123 (folio 11v-12v).

[62] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 34-35; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 59.

[63] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, 56-57; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 122-125 (folio 12v-13r). In this scene Padmasambhava advises someone close to the king that the king's hair should be washed with water drawn from the *rTa rna* (Aśvakarṇa) spring on the *Ri rab* peak (Mount Meru, or Sumeru), as this will bring the king long life and considerable political authority. He then took an empty silver vase and after uttering a few mantras threw it upwards, causing it to fly higher and higher towards the north. Sometime later that morning the vase returned to Padmasambhava, who opened it and found it full of water, which he said was the water the king should use to wash his hair. But the king's ministers objected to this, demanding that the water in the vase be thrown away.

[64] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 98-99; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 117-118.

prevented by the blatant opposition of Tibetan dignitaries. The scene in Chapter 18 begins with Padmsambhava's invitation to the king:[65]

> "In the palace [the master] practiced the *sādhanā* of longevity, revealing the *maṇḍala* for the *sādhanā* of longevity *vajra*. Signs of realization appeared. He sent word to the king: 'come to let me give you the empowerment of longevity and drip the nectar of immortality from the vase of longevity!'"[66]

However, the differences between the scene in *dBa' bzhed* and the one in chapter 18 of the biography are also worth noting: in *dBa' bzhed* there is no mention of a longevity ritual (although it can be inferred), nor of the master's proposal to grant the empowerment for longevity *sādhanā*, and the water in the vase is to be used to wash the king's hair (whereas in *Zangs gling ma* it was to be drunk) and comes from Mount Meru (there is no mention of this in the biography). Moreover, in chapter 18 the king changes his mind about receiving the empowerment a second time (after the master had proposed it to him again and the ministers had objected again), and at the end of the scene the master hides the longevity vase, together with a treasure-teaching and a *kapāla* cup, in the Crystal Cave (*shel brag*) in *Yang rdzong*.[67]

As for Doney's observation that it is possible that the water vase episode in the *dBa' bzhed* tradition influenced the longevity vase episode in *Zangs gling ma*,[68] we express reservations on this point; as we have already pointed out above, the differences in detail between the two scenes are so great that we suppose it is highly unlikely that the scene of the biography was in any way influenced by, or inspired by, the scene of *dBa' bzhed.* Rather, we deem that both the water vase episode in *dBa' bzhed* and the longevity vase episode in *Zangs gling ma* were derived from an older narrative tradition, after that they evolved in parallel,

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[65] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 98; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 117.
[66] pho brang du rdo rje tshe sgrub kyi dkyil 'khor zhal phyes nas tshe bsgrubs pas / 'grub pa'i rtags byung nas / rgyal po la tshe dbang bskur zhing tshe bum gyi bdud rtsi 'dren no byon cig byas pas /
[67] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 99; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 118.
[68] Doney, *The Zangs gling ma*, pp. 31-32.

independently, without influencing each other; in other words, the scene in the biography is not the succesor of the scene in *dBa' bzhed*, but both could be the succesors of an older tradition, from which several separate narratives developed.

Fifthly, the sixth scene in *dBa' bzhed* concerning Padmasambhava, in which the king offers gifts to the master and asks him to return to India,[69] has elements in common with a scene in chapter 20 of *Zangs gling ma,*[70] in which the king offers gifts to Padmasambhava:

> "The master replied to the king: "how wonderful it is that you offer your illusory riches without attachment. Congratulations, that's great." Then the king thought: "even though the master is a *siddha*, since he came from the south, from Nepal, he seems to have a great attachment to wealth". The master knew [what the king was thinking] and said: "My Lord, hold your coat lap." Then [the master] poured into the king's coat lap three measures of sand and a measure of pebbles, saying: "hold them a moment." But [the king] could not hold the lap of his coat, as it fell off, and the grains of sand became gold and the pebbles became turquoise pieces. The master said to him: "I have received [the offerings] from you only for a few moments, [to help you] for purification of your negativities and accumulation of merit. For me all appearances are gold. I have no need of riches, My Lord, so do [with them] as you wish." Saying this, he gave back everything."[71]

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[69] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, pp. 58-59; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 124-125 (folio 13r-13v). In this scene the king asked Padmasambhava to return to his country, since the purpose of his presence in Tibet had already been achieved: the subjugation of the local spirits. In response, Padmasambhava reproaches him for allowing himself to be influenced, although he does not want the power of a king. The king's request was accompanied by generous offerings and gifts for Padmasambhava, and the king surrounded him three times in respect. But Padmasambhava showed the king that the gold dust he had given him was priceless to him, by turning a little sand taken from below into gold dust. He finally agreed to take a small amount of the gold with him to please the king, and then set off back to India.

[70] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 116-117; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 134.

[71] slob dpon gyis rgyal po la / sgyu ma'i nor la chags zhen med par 'bul ba ngo mtshar che / phyag byed bzang lags gsungs pas / rgyal po'i thugs dgongs la / slob dpon grub thob yin kyang / lho bal nas byon pas nor dad che bar snang snyam pas / slob dpon gyis mkhyen nas / rje thu ba bzed dang gsungs nas / bye ma bre gsum dang rdel 'bru bre gang rje'i thu

Both scenes suggest tense discussions between master and king: the king shows the master much distrust, and Padmasambhava reproaches him in bitter words. Also, in both scenes, the king offers the master generous gifts and due signs of respect, and the master miraculously turns sand into gold to prove his detachment from worldly riches. But the end of the two scenes is completely different: in *dBa' bzhed* the master leaves for India, while in the chapter 20 of *Zangs gling ma* the king regrets his behaviour and the master forgives him and grants him teachings.

Sixthly, the sixth scene in *dBa' bzhed* about Padmasambhava includes, along with the account of the thwarting of the attempt to kill him, the master's prediction of the internal turmoil that Tibet will go through at the end of a five hundreds year Buddhist era.[72] In *Zangs gling ma* two similar texts can be identified: in chapter 11, when the master predicted that in five hundred years the *nāga* spirits will control everything, causing great destruction[73], and in chapter 20 of the biography, where we assume that the same prediction is repeated and developed concerning the period of disputes, fragmentation and decay that Tibet will go through in five hundred years, but without mentioning the problems caused by the *nāga* spirits.[74] The common element of the two texts seems to be the time frame in which the prediction is to be fulfilled - towards the end of a five hundred years era -, but they are so different from each other that we wonder if they are not referring to just one prediction, but to two separate predictions. There are two major

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bar blugs nas / dar cig zungs gsungs pas / rjes thu ba ma thub shor ba dang / bye ma rnams gser du song nas 'dug / rdel 'bru rnams g.yu ru song nas 'dug go / slob dpon gyi zhal nas / rje'i sgrib pa sbyong ba dang / bsod nams gsog pa'i phyir re zhig blangs par zad kyis / nga la snang ba thams cad gser du yod / nga la nor gyis dgos pa med pas rgyal po nyid rang ci dgar spyod cig / ces gsungs nas rje nyid la gnang ngo /

[72] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 59; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 126-127 (folio 14r).

[73] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 49; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 73.

[74] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 109-110 and 113-115; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 128, 130-132.

differences between the texts in *dBa' bzhed* and those in the biography: the first concerns the timing of the prediction (in *dBa' bzhed* just as the master leaves Tibet, and in the biography long before he leaves Tibet), and the second concerns the content of the prediction (in *dBa' bzhed* it is only about disputes between Buddhist factions, while in the biography it is about much more complex disturbances caused by *nāga* spirits in chapter 11 and the decline of Buddhist faith in Tibet in chapter 20).

Finally, it is appropriate to add to this category a brief mention in the first scene of *dBa' bzhed* concerning Padmasambhava, where it appears that Padmasambhava's invitation to Tibet was due to the Indian scholar Śāntarakṣita. With this mention begins folio 11r, which introduces Padmasambhava into the *dBa' bzhed* narrative.[75]

But if we go back a bit in the text, to the last line of folio 10v, we see that the Tibetan king had sent the minister *dBa' gSal nang* to the borderland *Mang yul*, to recall Śāntarakṣita to Tibet; after that, *dBa' gSal nang* also asked for a geomancy expert to come to Tibet.[76] So according to *dBa' bzhed*, the invitation of Padmasambhava to Tibet was either by *dBa' gSal nang* at the suggestion of Śāntarakṣita (as per Wangdu and Diemberger's translation[77]), or by Śāntarakṣita, but with the consent of *dBa' gSal nang* (as per Gonkatsang and Willis' translation[78]); in any case, the *dBa' bzhed* text suggests *dBa' gSal nang*'s involvement in inviting Padmasambhava to Tibet, given his mention in the context of formulating and accepting the invitation.

As we have already pointed out above, Padmasambhava's invitation to Tibet is also mentioned at the beginning of chapter 8 of *Zangs gling ma,*[79] but this time *dBa' gSal nang* has no any involvement, the discussion being between Śāntarakṣita and the Tibetan king. This is a

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[75] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, 52; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," 120-121 (folio 11r).
[76] *Ibidem*, (folio 10v).
[77] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 52.
[78] Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 120-121 (folio 11r).
[79] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 34-35; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 59.

very important difference, since in the biography *dBa' gSal nang* does not appear to have played a decisive role in bringing the master to Tibet, as *dBa' bzhed* seeks to suggest.

### 2.3. Texts having diametrically opposed approaches: the pleas of the two factions

The third category includes texts that refer to the same themes, but in diametrically opposed ways: the first theme is the meeting between master and king, the second is the master's departure from Tibet, and depending on it is the third, i.e. the consecration of the *bSam yas* monastery. The first two of them have a strong symbolic resonance in shaping the relationship between the master and the king (which of the two had ascendancy over the other, more specifically), and it is very likely that these completely different perspectives on the same events represent the views of the two factions created by the master's presence in Tibet: his opponents, regardless the reason (including because they were disciples of other master than Padmasambhava, or were Tibetan dignitaries concerned with maintaining their influence over the king) - who recorded their plea in *dBa' bzhed*, and his disciples - who recorded their plea in *Zangs gling ma*.

The first of the two themes concerns Padmasambhava's first meeting with the Tibetan king. In the second scene of *dBa' bzhed* it is shown that immediately after the master arrives at the Tibetan royal court and prostrates himself before the king, Śāntarakṣita takes the floor and gives the king a long speech, in which he speaks highly of Padmasambhava, after that he begins to realize the divination of the mirror, without having spoken a word.[80] Thus the text emphasises, quite unequivocally, Śāntarakṣita's pre-eminence over Padmasambhava and his subordination to the Buddhist scholar of Nālandā. The text also indicates the nature of the relationship established between master and king: the detail of

[80] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, pp. 54-55; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 120-123 (folio 11v-12v).

Padmasambhava's prostration before the king conveys the idea of his subordination to the king as well, despite the fact that the king was to be his disciple. We note two other significant aspects: in an earlier scene in *dBa' bzhed* Śāntarakṣita had not prostrated before the king, but immediately after their first meeting, the king prostrated before him three times, while Śāntarakṣita was in meditation;[81] and Padmasambhava's prostration before the king is missing in other versions of *dBa' bzhed*, where we see the king bowing before him.[82]

In contrast, in chapter 10 of *Zangs gling ma* the same scene of the meeting between the master and the king is shown in the opposite way: the Śāntarakṣita does not speak at all, Padmasambhava refuses to prostrate himself before the king and takes the floor to introduce himself to the king in laudatory terms (making a superb self-portrait in verse), and after the rays of light from the master's hand burn the king's garment, he is frightened and prostrates himself, showing him great respect.[83] So the thorny issue of the primacy of the temporal or the spiritual is resolved in diametrically opposed ways in the second scene of *dBa' bzhed* and in chapter 10 of *Zangs gling ma*: the two perspectives are so much pushed to extremes that it seems obvious that both authors wanted to emphasise as clearly as possible the message they had to convey: the pre-eminence of the king in *dBa' bzhed* and the primacy of the master in *Zangs gling ma*.

The same antagonistic approaches can also be seen with regard to Padmasambhava's departure from Tibet, which is the second theme in this category of texts. In the sixth scene of *dBa' bzhed*, the departure is at the request of king *Khri srong lDe'u btsan*, following the intrigues of the

[81] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 47. Note that in Gonkatsang and Willis' translation, the king surrounded Śāntarakṣita three times while he was in meditation. See Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 116-117 (folio 8v).
[82] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 54 (footnote 152).
[83] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 41-43; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 65-67.

Tibetan ministers.[84] By contrast, in chapters 23 and 41 of *Zangs gling ma*, the departure is at the master's initiative, during the reign of *Mu tig btsan po* (son of *Khri srong lDe'u btsan*, who had meanwhile died).[85] However, in chapter 23 of the biography the master lists a long list of grievances against the Tibetans, and the first of which are against the king and the Tibetan dignitaries (whom he claims are manipulating the king),[86] suggesting that there were nevertheless tensions or conflicts that led to his decision to leave.

On the timing of Padmasambhava's departure from Tibet also depends the resolution of the dispute concerning his participation in the consecration of the *bSam yas* monastery: while in *dBa' bzhed*, immediately after the end of the section on Padmasambhava, the consecration ritual is performed by Śāntarakṣita (after Padmasambhava had just left Tibet),[87] in chapter 11 of the biography the consecration is performed by Padmasambhava himself.[88] The symbolic stake (not small at all) of this dispute are related to the special significance that *bSam yas* has for Tibetans: since the establishment of the monastery can be considered as the "birth certificate" of Tibetan Buddhism, it is important to establish who "signed" it by performing the consecration ritual: Śāntarakṣita, as claimed in *dBa' bzhed*, or Padmasambhava, as would naturally follow from the special role given to him by *Zangs gling ma* in the conversion of Tibetans to Buddhism.

The fact that these themes of great importance for defining Padmasambhava's role in the spread of Buddhism in Tibet are presented in diametrically opposed ways in *dBa' bzhed* and *Zangs gling ma* are

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[84] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, pp. 58-59; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 124-125 (folio 13r-13v).
[85] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 130-136, 172-177; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 148-154, 203-208.
[86] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 132; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 149.
[87] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 63; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 126-127 (folio 14v).
[88] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 50; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 73.

clear indications that we are dealing with two pleas, supported (most likely in a biased and passionate way, as any plea) by the two factions created by Padmasambhava's arrival in Tibet: his opponents (among whom we suppose were members of the *dBa'* clan) recorded their plea in *dBa' bzhed*, and his disciples and supporters recorded their plea in *Zangs gling ma*. Thus, each of the two pleas tried to give its own version of the magnitude of Padmasambhava's work and thus win the great dispute with the opposing faction. Of these issues, the question of the length of Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet, which includes both the dispute of his departure (whether it was expulsion or voluntary departure and when exactly it happened) and his participation in the consecration of the *bSam yas*, is not only the biggest divergence between *dBa' bzhed* and *Zangs gling ma*, but also the biggest question mark about the historical figure Padmasambhava, so we will assign a separate section to it below.

### 2.4. Texts having no equivalent in *Zangs gling ma*

Finally, the fourth category includes earlier *Zangs gling ma* texts that do not have any equivalent in the *Zangs gling ma* texts: these are two scenes from *dBa' bzhed* (the fifth and seventh scenes relating to Padmasambhava) that bear no resemblance to any of the biography texts.

Firstly, the fifth scene in *dBa' bzhed*, concerning the Tibetan dignitaries' opposition to Padmasambhava's suggestions for valley improvement and water damming to obtain fertile land,[89] has no equivalent in *Zangs gling ma*. However, the repeated opposition of the Tibetan ministers to Padmasambhava's suggestions to grant empowerment for longevity practice is clear from chapter 18 of the biography,[90] and the hostility between master and dignitaries is indirectly apparent from chapter 15, wherein Padmasambhava reveals to the king that the six ministers hostile to Buddhism had previously lived lives as animals, and then reincarnated as six sons of a prostitute, who promised

[89] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, pp. 57-58; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 124-125 (folio 13r).
[90] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 98-99; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 117-118.

to meet again in Tibet;[91] from that it could be understood that Padmasambhava was accused by the six ministers and had to defend himself against them before the king. But in *Zangs gling ma* there is no mention of Padmasambhava's concern for carrying out works to turn the arid sands of the Tibetan plateau into fertile land.

Secondly, the last scene in the *dBa' bzhed* section on Padmasambhava should also be mentioned, as it tells of the failed attempt to kill him, the assassins having been sent by the Tibetan ministers.[92] There is no similar text in *Zangs gling ma*, although the admirable way in which, according to *dBa' bzhed*, the master thwarted the attempt on his life by using his miraculous powers would have been a source of pride for any disciple of Padmasambhava, so there would have been good reason for this scene to be taken up from *dBa' bzhed* into *Zangs gling ma* as well. Therefore, we deem that the lack of a similar scene in the biography is evidence that the texts of *Zangs gling ma* are not inspired by those of *dBa' bzhed*, nor *vice versa*; hence, it follows that the narrative traditions of *dBa' bzhed* and *Zangs gling ma* evolved independently, without influencing each other to any relevant extent.

### 2.5. Conclusions on the comparison of texts

In conclusion to all the above, between the five earlier *Zangs gling ma* texts (i.e. *dBa' bzhed* and the four Dunhuang manuscripts - PT44, ITJ321, ITJ644 and PT307) and the *Zangs gling ma* texts there are both many common elements (in a majority proportion, we would say), but also differences that cannot be neglected, which can be summarized, to get an overview, in the table below.

| **Earlier *Zangs gling ma* texts** | **Equivalent texts in *Zangs gling ma*** |
|---|---|
| Dunhuang manuscript ITJ644 | Chapter 5 |

[91] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 81; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 101-102.
[92] Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 59; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 124-127 (folio 13v-14r).

| | |
|---|---|
| Padmasambhava as *mahāmudrā vidyādhara* and the Second Buddha | Padmasambhava achieves realization as *mahāmudrā vidyādhara*<br>Questionable similarity |
| Dunhuang manuscript PT44<br>Padmasambhava as master of the Vajrakīlaya tradition, in Nepal | Chapter 5<br>Binding of spirits as guardians of Vajrakīlaya, in Nepal<br>Significant similarity |
| Dunhuang manuscript ITJ321<br>Padmasambhava as author of tantric commentaries | Chapter 17 (at the end) and chapter 4<br>Composing of tantric teachings with Vairotsana<br>Questionable similarity |
| Dunhuang manuscript PT307<br>Padmasambhava as a tamer of feminine spirits,<br>on coming to Tibet | Chapter 9<br>Taming of several feminine spirits on coming to Tibet<br>Significant similarity |
| *dBa' bzhed*, the first scene<br>Mention of Padmasambhava's invitation to Tibet | Chapter 8<br>Discussion on Padmasambhava's invitation to Tibet<br>Questionable similarity |
| *dBa' bzhed*, the first scene<br>Taming of local spirits on arrival in Tibet | Chapter 9<br>Taming of several local spirits on arrival in Tibet<br>Significant similarity |
| *dBa' bzhed*, the second scene<br>Padmasambhava's meeting with the Tibetan king | Chapter 10<br>Padmasambhava's meeting with the Tibetan king<br>Diametrically opposed approach |
| *dBa' bzhed*, the second scene<br>Śāntarakṣita's speech on the necessity of Padmasambhava's coming to Tibet | Chapter 8<br>Śāntarakṣita's advice for Padmasambhava's call in Tibet<br>Questionable similarity |
| *dBa' bzhed*, the third scene<br>Mirror divination, for taming of all spirits in Tibet | Chapter 10<br>Performing a ritual for taming of all spirits in Tibet<br>Significant similarity |

| | |
|---|---|
| *dBa' bzhed*, the fourth scene<br>Water vase fallen from the sky | Chapter 18<br>Performing a longevity ritual for the Tibetan king<br>Questionable similarity |
| *dBa' bzhed*, the fifth scene<br>Dignitaries' opposition to Padmasambhava's suggestions on landscaping works | Does not exist any equivalent |
| *dBa' bzhed*, the sixth scene<br>The final discussion between master and king | Chapter 20<br>Tense discussion between master and king<br>Questionable similarity |
| *dBa' bzhed*, the sixth scene<br>Padmasambhava's departure from Tibet | Chapters 23 and 41<br>Padmasambhava's voluntary departure from Tibet<br>Diametrically opposed approach |
| *dBa' bzhed*, the seventh scene<br>Attempted murder of Padmasambhava | Does not exist any equivalent |
| *dBa' bzhed*, the seventh scene<br>Padmasambhava's prediction (on Tibet's bleak future) | Chapter 11 and Chapter 20<br>Discussing Padmasambhava's prediction<br>Questionable similarity |
| *dBa' bzhed*, after the seventh scene<br>Consecration of *bSam yas* by Śāntarakṣita | Chapter 11<br>Consecration of *bSam yas* by Padmasambhava<br>Diametrically opposed approach |

Thus, of all the earlier *Zangs gling ma* texts, four texts show significant similarities to the texts of *Zangs gling ma* (those relating to taming demons), and seven other texts show questionable similarities, but are certainly worth considering. In contrast, three of the earlier *Zangs gling ma* texts contain themes that also exist in *Zangs gling ma*, but are treated in diametrically opposed ways that may reflect the esentially antagonistic positions of the two factions created by the master's presence in Tibet. It is about the meeting between master and king, Padmasambhava's departure from Tibet and the consecration of *bSam*

*yas*. And for two of the other earlier *Zangs gling ma* texts there are no equivalent texts in the biography: the fifth scene relating to Padmasambhava in *dBa' bzhed*, concerning the dignitaries' opposition to the master's suggestions on works for obtaining fertile land, and the last scene in *dBa' bzhed*, relating the attempted murder of the master. We deem that they constitute very good evidence that *Zangs gling ma* and *dBa' bzhed* are part of separate narrative traditions, which although inheriting the same older tradition, have evolved in parallel without influencing each other to any significant extent.

Finally, we also note that the texts in *Zangs gling ma* that seem to be best connected to texts prior to the biography are chapters 5, 9 and 10, which share the common element of the taming of spirits: chapter 5 has similarities with ITJ644 and PT44, chapter 9 with the first scene of *dBa' bzhed* and PT307, and chapter 10 with the second and third scenes of *dBa' bzhed.*

### 3. The question of the length of Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet

As announced above, in this section we return to the biggest divergence between the *dBa' bzhed* and *Zangs gling ma* texts: the question of the length of Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet, including both the dispute over the manner of his departure and the extent of his work in converting Tibetans to Buddhism. The two positions expressed by *dBa' bzhed* and *Zangs gling ma* on this matter are clearly antagonistic: *dBa' bzhed* attributes to the master a short and fruitless stay at the Tibetan royal court, followed by his expulsion from the court and from Tibet as a result of the intrigues of the Tibetan ministers and the distrust of king *Khri srong lDe'u btsan*, while *Zangs gling ma* attributes to him a long (several decades) and very fruitful stay, followed by his voluntary departure from Tibet under the reign of *Mu tig btsan po*, the son of *Khri srong lDe'u btsan*.

#### 3.1. The two pleas

We have already shown above that the two diametrically opposed perspectives on Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet should be seen as two

pleas (biased and passionate, like all pleas) of the two factions created by the master's coming to Tibet: *dBa' bzhed* is the plea of Padmasambhava's opponents (including the *dBa'* clan, we assume), while *Zangs gling ma* is the plea of his Tibetan disciples.

As we have shown earlier,[93] it appears from *dBa' bzhed* that there was a connection between Padmasambhava's departure from Tibet and the sudden ascension of *dBa' gSal nang*, who was appointed, soon afterwards, to a position which gave him the highest authority in religious matters.[94] The master's stay at the Tibetan royal court seems to have overshadowed *dBa' gSal nang* and hindered his ascension, so we assume that he was the direct and immediate beneficiary of Padmasambhava's expulsion from Tibet. The two events cannot be seen separately, but only as sequences in the same narrative, in which the expulsion of the master made possible *dBa' gSal nang*'s meteoric rise.

Therefore, we cannot exclude the possibility that *dBa' gSal nang* perceived Padmasambhava as a rival, or even was in contact with the Tibetan ministers who, through their intrigues, caused his expulsion from Tibet. Likewise, it is not ruled out that the same ministers who caused Padmasambhava's expulsion also decided or influenced the appointment of *dBa' gSal nang* to that high religious office, and that there was a direct causal connection between the two events: since Padmasambhava's expulsion made it possible for *dBa' gSal nang* to be appointed to the high

[93] Maidanuc, "On the image of Padmasambhava in Tibetan texts preceding Zangs gling ma," pp. 67-70. In support of this assumption it can be argued that although it is often mentioned in *dBa' bzhed* before Padmasambhava's entry, *dBa' gSal nang* disappears almost completely from the narrative in the episode on Padmasambhava of *dBa' bzhed* (folio 11r-14r), being mentioned only once, at the beginning, and reappearing only after Padmasambhava's departure from Tibet. We suppose that this omission cannot be coincidental, but suggests lack of cooperation (or even rivalry) between *dBa' gSal nang* and Padmasambhava; given the high probability that *dBa' bzhed* was written at *dBa' gSal nang*'s behest or based on his writings, the lack of mention of *dBa' gSal nang* in the Padmasambhava section of *dBa' bzhed* may mean that *dBa' gSal nang* did not wish to appear associated with the great master.

[94] Wangdu and Diemberger, dba' *bzhed*, p. 60; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 126-127 (folio 14r).

religious office, it is plausible to assume that *dBa' gSal nang* was also involved, to some extent, in the intrigues that led to the expulsion.

Careful examination of the section on Padmasambhava in *dBa' bzhed* leads to the conclusion that the great challenge Padmasambhava faced at the Tibetan royal court was not the hostility to Buddhism of the Tibetan ministers: Śāntarakṣita and *dBa' gSal nang*, both supporters of Buddhism, do not seem to have faced similar problems to those met by Padmasambhava. It seems more plausible that in the Tibetan royal court there were at least two Buddhist factions, which soon came into collision: the first had the support of high Tibetan dignitaries and the protection of the king, and included *dBa' gSal nang*, together with other members of the *dBa'* clan, and perhaps even Śāntarakṣita; and the second Buddhist faction had Padmasambhava as its leader, but apparently had neither the support of Tibetan nobles nor royal protection. The clash ended in victory for the first faction, since Padmasambhava was expelled as a result of intrigues by Tibetan ministers, and soon afterwards *dBa' gSal nang* was given the highest religious office.

Therefore, we believe that the editor of *dBa' bzhed* must have had the task of justifying all these events and presenting them in the most favourable light for the beneficiaries: *dBa' gSal nang* and his relative *'dBa' Sang shi*, of the *dBa'* clan, who, together with the king and Śāntarakṣita, are declared to be the main actors in the victory of Buddhism in Tibet.[95] So the responsibility for Padmasambhava's expulsion was to be placed solely on the Tibetan ministers, the portrait of the master was to be cleverly manipulated by emphasizing his failures (although, paradoxically, his superhuman qualities and achievement as master of the Secret Mantra are acknowledged), and the portraits of the four protagonists were to be creatively retouched to best advantage. The narrative of Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet needed to be simplified as much as possible and reduced to a few irrelevant details (as it could not be completely eliminated),

[95] Wangdu and Diemberger, dba′ *bzhed*, p. 89; Gonkatsang and Willis, "Text and Translation," pp. 146-147 (folio 25r).

downplaying his role in the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, while the spotlight needed to be shone on the actions and achievements of the four, starting with *dBa' gSal nang*, so as to make them out to be the heroes of Tibetan Buddhism. All these guidelines are reflected in *dBa' bzhed*, so that the text constitutes a skilful plea in favour of *dBa' gSal nang* and the *dBa'* clan, in which the downplaying of Padmasambhava's role was not the main purpose pursued by the author of *dBa' bzhed*, but only a side-effect of the imperative to optimise and amplify, to historical proportions, the image of the beneficiaries.

As for *Zangs gling ma*, it is obvious that it constitutes a plea for Padmasambhava, in which his closest disciples must have had the most important contribution, by passing on their version of the master's stay in Tibet and the extent of his work of converting Tibetans to Buddhism. Surprisingly, *dBa' gSal nang* appears in *Zangs gling ma* as a completely insignificant character: he is mentioned in the biography only six times (in chapters 8, 15, 17, 19, 20 and 21),[96] mostly under the name *Ye shes dbYangs*[97] (one of his names after becoming a monk, the other being *Ye shes dBang po*[98]) as one of the Tibetan translators who participated in the vast effort to translate into Tibetan the tantric texts brought from India, and he also seems to have been one of the two Tibetan envoys who departed for *Mang yul* to invite Padmasambhava to Tibet, in chapter 8 of the biography.[99] But that is all we find about him in the biography: the difference between the character of *dBa' gSal nang* in *dBa' bzhed* (where he appears as one of the four protagonists of the spreading of Buddhism in

[96] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 35-36, 83, 94, 105, 115 and 118; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 59-60, 103, 113, 124, 132 and 136.
[97] The fuller name under which *dBa' gSal nang / Ye shes dbYangs* appears in the biography is *sBa A tsa ra Ye shes dbYangs*, meaning "*ācārya* (scholar) *Ye shes dbYangs* of [clan] *sBa.*" Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 113, 124; *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 94, 105.
[98] Arthur Mandelbaum, "Yeshe Yang," in *Treasury of Lives*, accessed on April 18, 2021, https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/ view/Yeshe-Yang/9141.
[99] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 35-36; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 59-60. Here *dBa' gSal nang* is referred to as *sBas Mang rje gSal snang*, meaning "*Mang rje gSal snang* of [clan] *sBas*."

Tibet) and the character of *dBa' gSal nang*, who became *Ye shes dbYangs*, in *Zangs gling ma* (where he is mentioned six times, as one of the minor translators) is so great that it raises huge questions about the objectivity and accuracy of the accounts in *dBa' bzhed*. Whatever *dBa' gSal nang*'s actual role may have been, we deem it was far from the breadth outlined in *dBa' bzhed*, and his major achievement may be the very fact that he commissioned or inspired the writing of *dBa' bzhed*.

Since *Zangs gling ma* and *dBa' bzhed* are two pleas on the same issue, it is natural to assume that both of them contain both historical truths and a fair amount of subjectivity. Thus *dBa' bzhed* would also contain a dose of subjectivity, even though it is seen as historical chronicle, while in *Zangs gling ma* we might also find historical truths, despite it is a treasure-teaching (*gter ma*). As we have shown above, there are common elements between *dBa' bzhed* and *Zangs gling ma* that cannot be ignored; thus if we attribute to *dBa' bzhed* a certain historical credibility, then the biography could also contain information of historical value, inserted among the texts of the biography so that it can be easily overlooked. In other words, we deem that *Zangs gling ma* cannot be considered a pure pious fantasy, a mere hagiography devoid of any historical value, but is rather a romanticized history with a strong didactic character; and even if historicity and factual accuracy may not have been among the priorities of the biography's authors, the common elements between the biography and the texts preceding it (especially *dBa' bzhed*) identified above justify us in supposing that the *Zangs gling ma* narrative was developed on the basis of historical fact but not pure invention.

Not surprisingly, the historical truth about Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet could lie somewhere in the middle, between the two extreme positions expressed by *dBa' bzhed* and *Zangs gling ma*; well hidden among the claims of the two pleas, it could even find arguments in them, if carefully reconsidered in terms of reconciling the opposition between them and identifying the key elements in this regard. So, in what follows we would outline a possible reinterpretation of the *Zangs gling ma* texts

in the issue of Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet, trying to identify, given the similarities with the *dBa' bzhed* or Dunhuang texts, elements of the biography that might have historical credibility.

### 3.2. Padmasambhava in Tibet before his invitation to the royal court

Let's recall Kapstein's assumption that Padmasambhava's passage through central Tibet would have been rather episodic, and that he would have carried out most of his missionary activity in regions of southern Tibet and Bhutan, where control of the central Tibetan authority was more diffuse.[100] A similar assumption can be supported by evidence based on some of *Zangs gling ma* texts, which we examine below.

It is very likely that Padmasambhava had been in Nepal for some time when he was invited to Tibet: from Chapter 5 of *Zangs gling ma*[101] we know that the master spent some time in the *Yang le shod* cave in Nepal with his spiritual consort Śākyadevī, where he overcame the local spirits with the help of Kīla (*Phur pa*) practice, in order to attain realization as *mahāmudrā vidyādhara*. The text of Chapter 5 also mentions two Nepalese disciples of Padmasambhava, whom he sent to his masters in India to ask for teaching to help him against the spirits that had created obstacles for him - *Ji la ji sa* and *Kun la kun sa* - but we assume that these were not his only disciples. Thus, we suppose that around the *Yang le shod* cave in Nepal a community of Vajrayāna practitioners had formed, with Padmasambhava as their master, in the same manner as we know that communities have formed around the great Tibetan masters of the last centuries. This community will probably have included not only Nepalese disciples, but also Indian or Tibetan disciples: in PT44 we see that after returning from Nālandā to Nepal the master meditated in the *Yang le shod* and Asura caves, in the latter with three other tantric practitioners, and from PT307 it appears that on arrival in Tibet the master subdued the

[100] Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism,* p. 159.
[101] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 27-29; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 52-53.

seven mothers (*ma bdun*) together with the Tibetan *rLang dpal gyis seng ge*. It is worth considering that the Kathmandu valley in Nepal, where the *Yang le shod* cave is located, was crossed by one of the major trade routes between India and Tibet, so it is not ruled out that about the community of Vajrayāna practitioners created around Padmasambhava and its master may also have been heard of outside the valley, in the neighbouring regions of India and Tibet. Anyhow, Padmasambhava had spent enough time in Nepal to be seen by Tibetans as a "southern Nepalese" (*lho bal*): that's how the Tibetan dignitaries see him in chapter 18, and also the Tibetan king in chapter 20 of the biography.[102]

From Chapter 8 of *Zangs gling ma*[103] we learn something realy interesting: at the time of his meeting with the Tibetan envoys sent by the Tibetan king, Padmasambhava was already in Tibet, on the border with Nepal, where he had come after having been asked by the protectors of Buddhism; the Tibetan king's emissaries found him in the Central Plain (*Gung thang*) of *Mang yul*, that is to say somewhere in southern Tibet, in the border region between Nepal and Tibet, where the master had been for three months. So, we further assume that from the Kathmandu valley (just south of Tibet) the community of practitioners, part of it, or just the master, moved a little further north to *Mang yul*. The distance between *Yang le shod* and *Mang yul* is not great, so the only difficulty must have been crossing the Himalayan passes. Yet such a journey could have followed right the ancient trade route between India and Tibet, which runs through the Kathmandu valley from south to north; since Buddhism had been spread from India as far as Central Asia, and then to China, by Buddhist monks and pilgrims following the great trade routes connected to the Silk Road, accompanying caravans of traders, something similar may have happened here.

So, we assume that by the time he was called to the Tibetan royal court Padmasambhava had already spent some time not only in Nepal, but also in

[102] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 98, 116; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 117 and 134.
[103] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 34-38; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 59-61.

Tibet or on the edge of Tibet, somewhere in the southern borderland of *Mang yul*, where it is not ruled out that he already had Tibetan disciples and had gained some renown. We can even go further, assuming that the reputation the master had gained in the border region between Tibet and Nepal it was that had lead in his calling to the Tibetan royal court: since the community led by Padmasambhava had its centre very close to one of the major trade routes between India and Tibet, it is easy to imagine that it had also come into contact with merchants who later reached the Tibetan court, and thus made Padmasambhava known there.

### 3.3. Padmasambhava's stay in the *mChims phu* cave

Moreover, a careful analysis of the texts in *Zangs gling ma* shows that during his stay in Tibet, Padmasambhava spent long periods of time not at the Tibetan royal court or in the monastery of *bSam yas*, but in the cave of *mChims phu*, located in the mountains a few hours' walk north of *bSam yas*. There are no less than five chapters of the biography (11, 14, 19, 21 and 22) where there are mentions of the master's stay in *mChims phu*, and we will go through them all briefly below.

Thus, in chapter 11 of the biography (i.e. shortly after the master's arrival in Tibet, when *the bSam yas* had not yet been completed and consecrated), king *Khri srong lDe'u btsan* comes before Padmasambhava in the *Bre gu* cave in *mChims phu* to discuss the wood needed to build the monastery.[104] In chapter 14 the king comes before the master again, in the assembly hall (*tshogs khang*) of *mChims phu*, to tell him about a dream of Vajrasattva.[105] In chapter 19 it becomes clear that Padmasambhava resides in *mChims phu*:[106] first he stays in meditation with the Lady *mTsho rgyal* of *mKhar chen* (*mKhar chen bza' mTsho rgyal*) in the assembly hall of the *ḍākinīs* (*mkha' 'gro ma'i tshogs khang*) in *Bre gu* cave in *mChims phu*, then he is visited in *mChims phu* by the king, who asks him for Vajrayāna teachings leading to enlightenment in

[104] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 48-49; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 72.
[105] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 67; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 90.
[106] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 103-109; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 122-127.

one lifetime, and at the end of the chapter he grants tantric initiation to the eight disciples headed by the king in the hermitage (*dben gnas*) of *mChims phu*. In chapter 21 of the biography Padmasambhava gives the king predictions about the future, tells him the places where he has hidden *gter ma* teachings, gives him advice (similar to the provisions of a will), then we learn that the master remains in meditation in *mChims phu*, and the king continues his reign; after a few brief mentions of the time required to erect the *bSam yas* monastery and the prolonging of the king's life by further thirteen years, due to longevity practices, at the end of chapter 21 there is a short mention of the death of king *Khri srong lDe'u btsan,*[107] thus suggesting that Padmasambhava remained in *mChims phu* for the remainder of the king's reign, until his death.[108] Finally, in chapter 22 we see that the master grants tantric initiation to the new king, *Mu tig btsan po* (son of the deceased king), attends with him the funeral of the scholar Śāntarakṣita, after that Padmasambhava remains in meditation in the upper hermitage (*yang dben*) of *mChims phu* for three months and three days.[109]

Of the above-mentioned texts, chapter 19 of the biography is very important, having three distinct mentions of Padmasambhava's presence in *mChims phu*, a strong indication that his stay there was of long duration. These three mentions come just after the master had been prevented by the opposition of ministers hostile to Buddhism in granting the empowerment for the longevity *sādhanā* to the king, in chapter 18 of the biography;[110] we deem that this detail is not at all coincidental, but can be interpreted as a sign of Padmasambhava's removal from the court

[107] de nas slob dpon gyis mchims phur thugs dam la bzhugs so / rgyal pos rgyal khrims chos khrims bskyangs so / de ltar rgyal pos stag gi lo la bsam yas rmang bting nas / rta'i lo la bsam yas 'byongs / lug gi lo la chos rnams bsgyur / lnga bcu rtsa drug glang gi lo la 'da' dus yin pa la / sku yi rim gro byas pas lo bcu gsum bsring bar nus so / de nas drug cu rtsa dgu stag gi lo la rgyal po dgung du gshegs te / sku rtsal mi rabs med par blon 'bangs rnams la bka' chems rgyas par bzhag nas 'jam dbyangs kyi thugs kar thim pa lags so /
[108] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 125-126; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 142.
[109] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 127; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 144.
[110] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 98-99; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 117-118.

under pressure from the ministers. Moreover, from chapter 19 it appears that the master composed several *sādhanā in mChims phu* between the king's two visits there, so we deduce that there he also performed his current activity, not only meditation.

Therefore, we are required to note the insistence of the *Zangs gling ma* texts to repeatedly suggest that Padmasambhava's long-term residence during his stay in Tibet was not in the royal court, nor in *bSam yas*, but in the cave hermitage of *mChims phu*. There he was visited by king *Khri srong lDe'u btsan at* least three times, and he returned there again both after his last meeting with him and after meeting his son and heir to the throne, *Mu tig btsan po*. From chapter 21 we understand that Padmasambhava stayed there for several years until the death of *Khri srong lDe'u btsan*, and his next departure from there seems to have been occasioned, as chapter 22 shows, by his meeting with the new king, *Mu tig btsan po*. It is worth noting that from chapter 11 (where the first mention of the master's stay in *mChims phu* occurs) to chapter 22 (where there is the last mention of his stay there), there are only three chapters in which Padmasambhava's presence in other places than *mChims phu* is explicitly mentioned: the first is chapter 12, where Padmasambhava was seated on a golden throne, with Śāntarakṣita and two other translators nearby, and they began translating the teachings, so they were most likely in *bSam yas*[111]; the second is chapter 17, where it appears that the master was in *bSam yas*, along with the other Buddhist masters and Tibetan translators;[112] and the third is chapter 20, where Padmasambhava performs a tantric ritual for taming the *nāga* spirits on the shore of *Mal gro* lake, then he is in *bSam yas* or nearby, along with the king and Tibetan dignitaries.[113] So, we cannot help but notice that since from chapter 11 to chapter 22 there are seven mentions of the master's stay in *mChims phu*, but only three explicit mentions of his presence in and

[111] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 53-54; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 78-79.
[112] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 96; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 115.
[113] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 110-112; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 129-130.

around *bSam yas*, this cannot be coincidental, but could means that *mChims phu* was seen as Padmasambhava's long-term residence, from which he sometimes descended to *bSam yas* to take part in certain activities. To get the full picture, we note that in *Zangs gling ma* there is only one explicit mention of the master's presence at the Tibetan royal residence: in chapter 10 of the biography, where Padmasambhava is taken to the palace (*pho brang*) right after his first meeting with the king,[114] which would be the *Brag dmar* ("Red Rock") palace, next to which the *bSam yas* monastery was later built.

In Chapter 22 of the biography there is a noticeable change in the places where the master's stay is mentioned: this chapter includes a list of several places of retreat where Padmasambhava meditated, with precise indication of the length of stay in each of them,[115] suggesting that only from that point on (i.e. after the meeting with *Mu tig btsan po* and the death of Śāntarakṣita, both of which occurred after the death of king *Khri srong lDe'u btsan*) Padmasambhava was free to roam Tibet in all directions. The list of these retreat sites also begins with *mChims phu*, but contains eleven other different places (mostly caves), and the sum of the twelve meditation periods totals over four years.[116] However, we note that none of the eleven retreat sites after *mChims phu* is mentioned in the biography with the same emphasis as the *mChims phu* hermitage is mentioned.

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[114] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 43; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 67.

[115] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 127-128; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 144-145.

[116] mchims phu'i yang dben du zla ba gsum dang zhag gsum dgongs pa mdzad / bsgrags kyi yang rdzong du zla ba lnga dang zhag lnga bzhugs / ti sgro brag dkar la zla ba bdun dang zhag bdun dgongs pa mdzad / mon kha ne'u ring du zla ba gcig dang zhag bcu dgongs pa mdzad / mon mtha' brag mtha' khra mo ru zla ba gsum dang zhag gsum dgongs pa mdzad / mon gong brag phug tu zla ba gcig dang zhag bdun thugs dam mdzad / mu tig shel gyi sba ma gangs su zla ba gcig dang zhag bcu thugs dam mdzad / yar lung shel gyi brag phug tu zla ba gsum dang zhag gsum thugs dam mdzad / rgyal gyi rtsib ri la zla ba gnyis dang zhag bzhi thugs dam mdzad / ti se'i gangs la zla ba lnga dang zhag lnga thugs dam mdzad / lho brag mkhar chur zla ba brgyad dang zhag brgyad thugs dam mdzad / tsa ri tsa gong du zla ba bdun dang zhag bdun thugs dam mdzad /

From all the above we could infer a very interesting conclusion, which both contradicts and confirms the conclusion of *dBa' bzhed* that Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet would have been very short, as he was expelled from both the royal court and Tibet quite quickly: on the contrary, from *Zangs gling ma* it appears that after a short stay of the master at the royal court (as in *dBa' bzhed*), it followed a long stay of the master in the hermitage of *mChims phu*, interrupted only on certain occasions (three of which beeing explicitly mentioned in the biography).

Given that *Zangs gling ma* does not include any mention of Padmasambhava's expulsion from Tibet, like *dBa' bzhed*, but instead repeatedly recalls that he resided in *mChims phu*, it seems reasonable to assume that, in the author's view of *Zangs gling ma*, the removal of the master from the royal court, as a result of the hostility of the Tibetan ministers (resulting from chapters 15 and 18 of the biography[117]), did not ultimately result in his expulsion from Tibet, but only in his exile to *mChims phu.* Naturally, it is not ruled out that it was a self-imposed exile, to avoid more serious sanctions (such as expulsion) or endless tensions with hostile ministers. Also it cannot be excluded that the initial sanction imposed by the ministers was later changed from expulsion or exile to a distant place to a much milder one, such as compulsory settlement in *mChims phu*, a short distance from the *bSam yas* monastery and the *Brag dmar* royal palace. Something similar happened in two other cases mentioned in *Zangs gling ma*: the translator Vairotsana was first exiled to *rGyal mo Tsha ba rong* in eastern Tibet in chapter 14 of the biography,[118] under pressure from the ministers, then later, in chapter 16, he was pardoned and called back to court;[119] and in chapter 13 *Nam mkha'i sNying po* is first exiled to the *Lho brag* region of southern Tibet because of the intrigues of the ministers, then called back to court, after that he returns to

[117] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 81 and 98-99; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 101-102 and 117-118.
[118] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 77; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 96.
[119] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 93; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 111-112.

*Lho brag.*[120] So, it is not impossible that the same thing happened to Padmasambhava: the original sanction of expulsion or exile to a distant place was reversed and he was sent to *mChims phu*. After that, perhaps his exile to *mChims phu* may also have become more lenient, allowing him to leave there under certain circumstances. After all, that the ministers may have wanted very much was the removing of the king from Padmasambhava's influence, so it was sufficient to remove him from the royal court and send him to an isolated place where the king could visit him as seldom as possible.

It is not ruled out that the king himself wanted to maintain a certain balance between master and ministers, thus he may have agreed (or even wanted, perhaps) Padmasambhava's removal from court: *Khri srong lDe'u btsan* was a powerful king, so it makes no sense to imagine him as authoritatively dominated by the Tibetan ministers; even if this is how *Zangs gling ma* tries to portray him, pointing to the ministers as solely responsible for the master's obstacles, it is very likely that such a view is meant to make forgotten the king's responsibility. We recall that chapter 20 of the biography also suggests that there were disagreements between Padmasambhava and the king, independent of the disagreements with the Tibetan ministers.[121] Moreover, we suppose that the Tibetan ministers were not entirely hostile to Buddhism, as they appear in *Zangs gling ma*, but rather were only concerned to maintain their privileges and influence over royal decisions; so, they played the card of the need to preserve the old Tibetan traditions not out of conviction, but to counter the power gained by the Buddhist masters over the king.

In support of the above could be chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16 of *Zangs gling ma*: in chapter 13 Padmasambhava is mentioned only once, at the beginning, then the protagonist of the narrative is *Nam mkha'i sNying*

[120] *Terdzo-KA-001*, p. 65-67; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 87-89.
[121] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 116-117; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, p. 134. In this text the king gives the master generous gifts, but shows him distrust, and Padmasambhava reproaches him for this and turns sand into gold to prove his detachment from worldly wealth.

*po*;[122] in chapter 14 the master is also mentioned only once, as being in *mChims phu*, then as protagonist appears Vairotsana;[123] in chapter 15 Padmasambhava seems to defend his position before the king, against the Tibetan ministers:[124] he talks about the privileged relationship he, the king and Śāntarakṣita had in other lives as brothers who promised to meet again in Tibet, and that the six ministers hostile to Buddhism had previously lived lives as animals and then reincarnated as six sons of a prostitute who promised to meet again in Tibet; in chapter 16 Padmasambhava does not appear at all, the protagonist of the narrative and beneficiary of royal favours being Vimalamitra, and finally Vairotsana reappears.[125] Thus, from the corroboration of the four chapters we deduce Padmasambhava's removal from the king and the conflict between him and the six ministers, that forced him to justify himself before the king, accusing the old hostility of the six against Buddhism.

### 3.4. Reconciling differences between *dBa' bzhed* and *Zangs gling* ma

The above assumption would have the advantage of reconciling, to a large extent, the divergent positions of *dBa' bzhed* and *Zangs gling ma* on the length of Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet; this would mean that *dBa' bzhed* is right about Padmasambhava's stay at the Tibetan royal court, which was short and marked by open hostility from Tibetan ministers, but *Zangs gling ma* is right about Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet, which was very long: after spending a short time with the king, having his favour, we suppose that Padmasambhava fell out of the king's good graces and spent a long period in isolated places in Tibet, notably in *mChims phu*, where *Zangs gling ma* suggests, with an insistence that cannot be overlooked, that the master had residence for a long time until after the death of king *Khri srong lDe'u btsan*.

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[122] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 59-67; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 83-89.
[123] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 67-78; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 90-97.
[124] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 78-84; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 98-104.
[125] *Terdzo-KA-001*, pp. 84-93; Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, pp. 105-112.

As shown above, both texts should be seen as mere pleas, expressing the diametrically opposed positions of the two factions created by Padmasambhava's presence in Tibet: on the one hand, *dBa' bzhed* sought to emphasize the role of the *dBa'* clan members (most likely in connection with the ministers of the royal court) and the scholar Śāntarakṣita in the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet, thus downplaying Padmasambava's role, simplifying the narrative of his stay in Tibet as much as possible and reducing it to a few rather chronological details that deliberately ignored the bigger picture of his stay there; on the other hand, *Zangs gling ma* defended the position of Padmasambhava and his disciples, emphasizing the role of the master in the adoption of Buddhism by Tibetans and perhaps neglecting to some extent the role of other Buddhist masters such as Śāntarakṣita and Vimalamitra; and it is very likely that *Zangs gling ma* tried not only to exonerate the king of his responsibility for the removal of the master from the court by placing it entirely on the shoulders of the Tibetan ministers, but also to gloss over the delicate aspects of the unfair treatment that we could assume the master had been subjected, avoiding mentioning anything about the exile in order not to tarnish his image, but insistently recalling that Padmasambhava had for a long time resided in *mChims phu*.

Since both *dBa' bzhed* and *Zangs gling ma* should be regarded as equally biased pleas - the prosecution's plea and the defence's plea - we deem that both can be used to some extent to reach conclusions of historical value. To ignore the common elements, not a few, that exist between them, and to hold that *dBa' bzhed* is a work of historical credibility, while *Zangs gling ma* is merely a pious fantasy, may be an approach as damaging as the opposite, of accepting without reservation the hyperbolised portrait of the master outlined by Tibetan tradition. In reality, both texts could contain information of historical value, so the opposing positions of the two pleas should be reconciled. *Zangs gling ma* cannot be entirely disavowed simply because it is considered a *gter ma* teaching, just as *dBa' bzhed* cannot be unreservedly adopted simply

for its claim to be historical chronicle, since their common elements suggest that both are derived from an older narrative tradition, which we assume is itself based on historical facts.

However, even if our hypothesis that Padmasambhava had to spend a long time in *mChims phu* proves too bold for the arguments in *Zangs gling ma* that can be raised in its favour, we nonetheless consider that his stay in Tibet was much longer than his stay at the Tibetan royal court. If Padmasambhava was really expelled from Tibet, as claimed in *dBa' bzhed*, then this expulsion occurred much later after the master had been removed from the court of king *Khri srong lDe'u btsan*, and in the time between his departure from the court and his departure from Tibet he stayed in isolated places in Tibet, notably in *mChims phu*.

Therefore, Padmasambhava's time at the Tibetan royal court must have been only a brief episode in his total time in Tibet: it is quite likely that the master stayed in southern Tibet, somewhere on the border with Nepal, even before he was invited to the Tibetan royal court, and we deem there is a case for arguing that he remained in Tibet long after his removal from the court. The work of converting Tibetans to Buddhism must have taken place not only at the Tibetan royal court, as *dBa' bzhed* suggests, but also in countless other places in Tibet, where Padmasambhava found himself among simple, ordinary Tibetans, for whom the Tibetan royal court was as remote and inaccessible as the Buddhist university of Nālandā in India. They were the ones who passed it on, from generation to generation, the story of their master's life, as seen through the eyes of disciples, until it crystallized into what we now call the *Zangs gling ma*.

**4. Conclusions**

At first glance, there seems to be continuity between the earlier *Zangs gling ma* texts and *Zangs gling ma*: the common elements between the texts, by no means few or negligible, seem to indicate the taking up of themes from the earlier texts and their development in the biography. *Zangs gling ma* seems to be the successor of the narrative

tradition outlined by *dBa' bzhed* and the Dunhuang manuscripts, which it would have amplified in a hagiographic manner, hyperbolizing and idealizing the portrait of Padmasambhava. However, on closer inspection we note that the existence of common elements cannot support the idea of continuity between the texts, i.e. of direct influences that the older texts would have exerted on *Zangs gling ma*. On the contrary, both the pre-biography texts and the biography could be the succesors of an older narrative tradition based on historical facts, but after the separation from it we suppose that they evolved separately, without significantly influencing each other. We suppose that this tradition had its roots somewhere between the 8th and 9th centuries and that the transmission of this tradition involved the master's first Tibetan disciples, together with other Tibetans who were eyewitnesses of his stay in Tibet; but this supposition can only be speculatively proposed, without being proven.

The arguments for the development of at least two independent narrative traditions concerning Padmasambhava have already been mentioned above: the first is that both the texts of significant similarity and especially those of questionable similarity exhibit a multitude of differences in detail that make it highly unlikely that the biographical texts have taken up and developed themes from the earlier texts. The second argument concerns the two *dBa' bzhed* texts that have no equivalent in the biography; both portray Padmasambhava in a flattering way, as capable of miracles, so it would have been natural for them to be taken up and developed in *Zangs gling ma*, if indeed the biography had been based on *dBa' bzhed*. However, we deem that did not happen: comparison of texts shows that *dBa' bzhed* cannot be considered the "ancestor" of *Zangs gling ma*, as it was not created by taking over and developing themes from *dBa' bzhed.*

We suppose that the possibility of influences in the opposite direction, from the *Zangs gling ma* tradition to the *dBa' bzhed* texts, cannot be supported either. We are considering the likelihood that the section in *dBa' bzhed* relating to Padmasambhava was added to *dBa'*

*bzhed*, as it could be self-contained, without connections to the rest of the narrative.[126] But even if that were so, we deem that the addition of the Padmasambhava episode in *dBa' bzhed* could not have been done under the influence of *Zangs gling ma*. If the episode in *dBa' bzhed* about the master had been inspired by *Zangs gling ma*, then there would be no justification either for the many differences in detail, in the treatment of common elements, or for the two scenes in *dBa' bzhed* having no equivalent in the biography.

Moreover, texts with a diametrically opposed approach prove that the separation into parallel traditions would have been largely determined by the different attitudes of Tibetans towards Padmasambhava's role in Tibet: his disciples laid the foundations of the tradition that later flourished through *Zangs gling ma*, and their descendants became, over the centuries, the majority in the *rNying ma* school; and others who were not among the master's disciples, such as members of the *dBa'* clan, Tibetan dignitaries of the royal court, or disciples of other Buddhist masters (such as Śāntarakṣita) initiated the tradition that later resulted in *dBa' bzhed*, but their descendants became fewer and fewer in the *rNying ma* school. Thus, in our view, *dBa' bzhed* and *Zangs gling ma* constitute the pleas of the two factions: the pro-Padmasambhava faction and the anti-Padmasambhava faction.

Although it presents Padmasambhava as a superhuman being with very special attributes, which it does not hesitate to praise openly, there are some elements that definitely make *dBa' bzhed* a plea against

[126] Tsering Gonkatsang and Michael Willis, "An Archaeology of the Dba' bzhed Manuscript," in *Bringing Buddhism to Tibet: History and Narrative in the DBA' BZHED Manuscript*, ed. Lewis Doney, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715309, pp. 39, 48. Doney has shown that however, there are elements of connection between the section in *dBa' bzhed* relating to Padmasambhava and the rest of the narrative in *dBa' bzhed*. See, in this regard: Lewis Doney, "History, Identity and Religious Dynamics in the Portrayal of Khri Srong lde btsan," in *Bringing Buddhism to Tibet…*, *op. cit*., p. 94.

Padmasambhava: the master is presented as subordinate to both the king and Śāntarakṣita (as is evident from the scene of his first meeting with the king), and powerless before the Tibetan court ministers, who thwart all his initiatives and cause his expulsion from Tibet; he does not participate in the consecration of the *bSam yas* and does not complete anything in Tibet, and the only thing he does perform is the ritual of subduing the spirits of Tibet, but this too had to be repeated twice more to have full effect; he does not have the king's confidence and apparently also loses the support of Śāntarakṣita, since he is expelled so quickly; moreover, he has no Tibetan disciples and leaves nothing behind him, and at the end of his stay in Tibet he seems to have nobody's support. The *dBa' bzhed's* portrayal of Padmasambhava in terms of his actions in Tibet seems almost caricatured, being drawn from failures and unfinished deeds, thus we presume it is totally out of the question that some of Padmasambhava's disciples or their spiritual followers would have given their master such a description. On the contrary, in our view, such a portrait must have been painted by someone who did not have the courage to challenge him openly, so chose to manipulate his description by thickening the failures he attributed to him, despite acknowledging his superhuman qualities.

In contrast, the Dunhuang manuscripts seem to be much closer to *Zangs gling ma* than to *dBa' bzhed* in terms of their attitude towards Padmasambhava, since they acknowledge his superhuman status and do not contain elements of minimizing his role in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, as do those of *dBa' bzhed*. However, we do not admit that there is continuity between them and the *Zangs gling ma* texts either, given the differences in detail that burden the common elements. Just as it cannot be argued that *Zangs gling ma* takes up and develops themes from *dBa' bzhed*, it cannot be argued that *Zangs gling ma* takes up and develops themes from the Dunhuang manuscripts.

The Dunhuang manuscripts are of particular importance in settling the dispute between the two factions created by Padmasambhava's arrival in

Tibet. Without PT44, ITJ321, ITJ644 and PT307, we would only be looking at two pleas written many centuries ago: *Zangs gling ma*, the plea of Padmasambhava's disciples, and *dBa' bzhed*, the plea of the *dBa'* clan; we recall that the advantage seems to be on the side of *dBa' bzhed*, because it is considered historical chronicle, while the biography is a *gter ma* teaching, so it is often mistakenly seen as pious fantasy. But the four manuscripts discovered in the Mogao caves are the very evidence that confirms, to a relevant extent, the plea of *Zangs gling ma*. They seem to compose the image of a realized being with superhuman qualities, which we also find in the biography, and not the image of a master passing through Tibet, not very different from other great masters who have reached the Tibetan royal court, as it appears in *dBa' bzhed*. Of the four manuscripts, the most eloquent in this regard is ITJ644, in which Padmasambhava appears as *mahāmudrā vidyādhara* and the Second Buddha, endowed with five kinds of omniscience, as a sign of full recognition of his special role within Tibetan Buddhism.

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## REVIEWS

**Wendy Doniger, *An American Girl in India: Letters and Recollections, 1963-1964*, New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Books, 2022, 254 pp., ISBN: 978-93-5447-285-5.**

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*An American Girl in India: Letters and Recollections, 1963-1964* is a collection of letters that twenty-two year old Wendy Doniger of Great Neck, Long Island, New York, wrote to her parents during her first visit to India, on a scholarship to study Sanskrit and Bengali. Typed on her little Hermes typewriter that she carried with her everywhere, the letters, as the author herself recognizes, are

> "a mixed genre, part intimate, introspective letters to my parents and part field notes, long, highly detailed passages of description and meditation which were designed to be used in the writing of my Ph.D. dissertation." (13)

Apart from being a reminder of her time in India, an insight into the journey of a twenty-two-year old American girl in the subcontinent, it is also a deep analysis of the young nation, of an India that "belongs to the Indians and it is not just a playground for Europeans," (30) realized by the one who would become an authority on Hinduism. In fact, these letters already contain the seed of the author's future works and interests regarding Hinduism and mythology over the next half century. For example, she is "already mad about Shiva", the hero of her first book, *Siva: The Erotic Ascetic*, 1973), or interested in the human aspect of the Indian gods:

> "I have discovered one thread in Indian religion that interests me very much. It is the role of the human god. Starting with Indra, who commits every sin and grows greatly by it; and then Damayanti who loved Nala, and chose him, […] and of course Krishna, who stole butter and danced with the cowherds' wives; and my old pal Shiva, who is always being cursed by the sages because he goes around with a tremendous lingam […]." (176-177)
> "I am still coming across more aspects of the humanization of the Hindu gods; I realize this is the significance of the many poems about the goddess Parvati being all messed up by making love with Shiva, her hair untidy, her make-up rubbed off, etc. She is, at this time, a human being, fallible, mess-up-able, just as a human woman when in the ecstasy of love is considered to partake of the divine." (211)

The book is divided into seven parts, starting with her first days in India, the time spent living in Shantiniketan, and then Calcutta, her travels around the subcontinent in Delhi, Varanasi, Khajuraho, Bhubhaneswar, Agra or Bombay, and her eventual return home, not before participating to a Congress of Orientalists and meeting the famous sarod player Ali Akbar Khan.

Although homesickness seems to be the red string that connects all the other topics in the book, her letters uncover impressions about different Indian cities, Indian life and family system, poverty, the governance of nature and how everything is dictated by the weather, the simplicity but also the complexity of Indian life, or about the contradictions regarding attitudes towards sex. Also, it talks about the kindness and the hospitality of Indian people, the crisis between traditional and modern, or simply about different ways to understand India, the realization that "one doesn't have to love everything about India in order to love India" (150) and the acceptance that the love she feels doesn't have to sacrifice her own views and ideals:

> "India is still the one I love, but not to the desecration of my own ideals of the way the Good Life should be lived and I believe it can be lived in the West with an eclectic world of Indian thoughts and things." (236)

First of all, Wendy Doniger's idea of India is a very sensorial one; she writes about the smell of India:

> "compounded of incense, sweat, flowers, dust, cow dung, sour milk, melted butter, rain, grass, and wet earth," (83)

the taste of it:

> "my food is all cooked over cow dung, and it all tastes like cow dung to me I know it's all in my mind, but it really does taste sort of smoked, especially the bland foods, and not smoked with just anything," (80)

and the visual part as well is always present throughout her writing:

> "everything is green, different shades of green, ranging from forest green to a bright goldy green that I have never seen anywhere else […]." (87)

The India she observes is surreal ("This is not a worldly place; that is why I like it so much,") (61) it is a place dominated by the sun and the rain which overcome the human element; in fact, everything else melts into the nature, including the architecture of the Hindu temples she visits in South India which "melt into the land like tigers in the jungles, grasshoppers on leaves." (183)

Agreeing to the Indian philosophy that man is just a part of nature, she makes friends with lizards and insects which are "big enough to have real personalities," (93) she gets accustomed to the Indian way of boiling water and showering twice a day because of the hot weather, and she accepts that life in India is most of the times governed by the weather "as it is in a fishing village – your whole mood and the boundaries of your activities are controlled by the sun and the rain." (72) Light is one of the main characters in her letters, one which makes everything magnificently beautiful and which dominates the Indian landscape that she fell in love with:

> "There is something unique and queer about the light. […] and the air is warm and moist, so that everything looks very far away and blurry, and story-bookish, something like the backgrounds in Renaissance portraits. […] and then, in this hazy, flat, hypnotic green, objects appear in the background, highlighted by a sudden shaft of light that breaks through the clouds." (87)

There is a magical aura that surrounds the village landscape in India, especially on days "of strange light" with a "dark grey sky but bright sun coming through the clouds" making everything seem out of a fairytale; the description of the pond and the merchant sleeping next to two brass pots is very vivid, and there is this feeling that nothing else in the world existed, that objects can never be reached, felt, but just visualized, or rather suggested:

> "[…] the pond seemed to recede as we approached, as if it were a mirage, and we never reached it, but saw it always shining in the distance, framed by the soft *kash*." (119)

The things that catch her interest are, in fact, the same things that interest her at home as well, thus building a connection between the world of home and that of India: the sky, the children, and the trees. The reason for this is that the place itself is

> "so tied up in nature – the temple services are held outdoors, and you can see squirrels and monkeys fighting and the crows stealing things, and the birds shaking drops of water off flowering trees while you hear the old Vedic poem about the spirit that dwells in the leaves and in the waters, and about the sanctity of life." (70)

Her observations about the Indian life, connected to nature, unlike in the West, are the same reflections Tagore had about the Indian heritage as one which grew up in forests while the West was busy building cities and securing possessions between walls. Indians, in the East, living in forests, without boundaries, are more about *realizing* than possessing. However, despite shunning cities and loving life in Shantiniketan, she confesses that she is "not wholly a forest dweller; I have my own ways of possessing, and that is to possess in memory." (70)

References to her homesickness kept leaking into discussions of other topics, particularly when she tries to analyze her state of mind as she lived in India. For example, she gets reminded of home whenever she meets people who recite English poetry or talk about English literature or the American way of life, and despite adjusting to life in a hostel in

Shantiniketan, ("the most fascinating and stimulating place I have ever known") where she learns so many things and where she makes many friends, she "cannot hear Brahms, or read the *Times*, or go to the movies" (40) and the only solution for her being homesick is to read her own literature and think that "it was just a few hours' trip home by jet any time I wanted, and that there were just 325 days to go." (39)

For the young Wendy, India is "the land of homesickness" because she notices that, in order to survive, everyone needs to move all the time, to leave their families, to learn new languages and people struggle to adjust in new places, just like her. This is perhaps why, the distance from home and the homesickness makes everyone appreciate their own culture even more:

> "everyone is fiercely proud of his province, his language, his music, and adopts only with a great deal of criticism the culture of the province to which he has been forced to move." (124)

And even Wendy herself feels closer to home by being physically far from it: "I haven't forgotten about my heritage; not by a long shot. Being without it makes it all the more vivid to me." (114)

Moved by the way Indians treat human beings at the extremities of life, there are long descriptions in her letters about the special treatment children get in India. She notices how Indians love to play with their children all day long and they treat them with respect, realizing that the children are the ones "who know what's up," so the adults try to "make themselves like them," and not the other way round. She also observes the close bond between children and their grandparents who are not seen, like in the West, just like some "unproductive hangers-on." On the contrary, the children are sent to keep them company and to receive from them the wonderful Indian heritage hidden in folktales, transmitted from generation to generation:

> "[…] and since grandparents know wonderful stories and cook delicious candies, it is no chore to visit them." (115)

However, she notices with sadness that things have changed even in India because of a modern lifestyle, and even children are spending more

time at school or with their classmates and not with their grandparents unlike in the old days. Therefore, the stories remain untold and the heritage will eventually be lost over time.

The India she describes in her letters is a culture of contradictions, where the chaos of the big cities like Calcutta and Delhi is tied to the calm and simplicity of Shantiniketan ("the abode of peace,") a place like an ashram, a retreat from the chaos and the poverty of Calcutta where people are diseased, "possessing only a white cloth which only approximately covers their genitalia," (40) and where everyone stares. Similarly, Delhi or Varanasi are wicked places full of contrasts, where there are

> "women twisting in saris, Muslim women in *purdah* carrying transistors radios, and mourners using Zippo lighters to ignite the funeral pyres." (239)

The contrasts can be observed in different areas of life; for example, when the cosmopolite Bengalis still don't agree to marrying people from a different caste, or how

> "*Kama Sutra* tells all sorts of subtle ways to choose a woman who will be good in bed, but no one gets a chance to choose a woman at all." (91)

Moreover, Wendy notices the discrepancies between old India and newly modernized Indians who want to copy the West and who are so eager to give up their values: "Delhi is the epitome of India I like the least, the India that is ashamed of being India and wants to be America." (178) She prefers Calcutta to India, because Bengalis still preserve their customs, read their literature, paint their houses, and "even the poor people eat off beautiful metal plates that last for centuries," unlike in Delhi where they use a lot of plastic, "but it's 'American' and so preferred." (180)

For Wendy Doniger, understanding India can only be done through her own prejudices. She likes animals and children and mountains and good stories, but she doesn't like spicy food and tropical weather, and she finally makes peace with the fact that an objective understanding of India is possible just because she is not Indian:

> "I think the biggest distortion in my understanding of Indian life is the difficulty in getting used to the things that they are used to and considering striking the things that they consider striking." (124)

She feels that it would be impossible for her to not react to poverty or things that she considers striking to her, like a sunset, or a naked man, a woman nursing a child, or a dancer in ecstasy. However, she tries to become closer to them by struggling to react, in addition, to things that are striking for Indians as well. Although she adopts very easily an Indian way of life, dressing up in a *saree*, travelling in bullock carts, and living in a simple way ("things here are very simple and beautiful," 56), she later acknowledges that despite beauty being omnipresent, most of the people are sad and this is visible in their eyes:

> "unless one is very thick-skinned, it is difficult to live in India. There is beauty everywhere, but most of it is no longer a part of the people, and the people are very sad. You can't escape it even if you try." (173)

What emerges from these letters sent to her parents is the voice of a young girl in a young nation, a young scholar who embraced Indian contradictions of all kinds, who tried to understand the mechanics of temple rituals, the intricate architecture of south Indian temples, or the madness of Indian bureaucracy which, as she states, is only led by curiosity. And through her understanding of India, she manages to become more aware of her own identity as an American Jew, of the differences between her world and their world, and the things that she should be grateful for (like, for example, her parents sending her to study Sanskrit and being so far away for one year).

Haunted by an inability to love everything about India, she is still full of wonder at everything surrounding her during her travels and during her stay in Shantiniketan and Calcutta; her wonder encompasses everything, from the kindness and generosity of the people she meets and befriends (like Chanchal and Mishtuni Roy), the hospitality of a train master who doesn't allow the train to leave until she is on it, wonder at the people living in the streets who seem to simply get up at any point

and go home, or simply, wonder at the complexity of Indian life in general, one that can be observed even in the intricate details of a temple, like the one at Khajuraho, or in the streets of Calcutta or Delhi.

**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 now enrolled as a M.A. student at CeMIS (Centre for Modern Indian Studies), Göttingen University, Germany. She is mostly interested in the history of Malabar region, spice routes and anything related to the Islamic history in India.

Cătălina-Ioana Pavel is the author of the volume: *Acolo unde se naște musonul. Un an în regatul zeului Parasurama*, Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2023, ISBN: 978-606-17-2176-4.

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**Mihaela Gligor and Elisabetta Marino (Eds.), *Tagore beyond Borders: Essays on His Influence and Cultural Legacy*. London, New York: Routledge, 2023, 150 pp., ISBN: 978-1-032-11208-4 (hbk), ISBN: 978-1-032-13334-8 (pbk), ISBN: 978-1-003-22874-5 (ebk). DOI: 10.4324/9781003228745.**

**Marius Ion BENȚA**
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This collective volume, carefully put together and edited by Mihaela Gligor and Elisabetta Marino, two eminent scholars in the field of Indian and Asian studies, invites readers to reflect upon the charismatic and the liminal figure of Rabindranath Tagore, modern India's most outstanding creative artist and probably the most influential author in creating bridges between India and the West – or rather, one should say, in opening doors in those walls that history has raised between peoples. Tagore was not only a prolific and profound author; he was certainly a charismatic personality. In Weberian understanding, charisma is eminently *exceptional* and, thus, *liminal*: Charismatic persons are exceptional (i.e., *not all* of us are charismatic), yet they are generally granted wide recognition (i.e., they are able to touch the hearts of *many*).

*Tagore beyond Borders: Essays on His Influence and Cultural Legacy* is a book about *borders* and, at the same time, about the superfluousness of borders. The book addresses the international dimension of modern culture by focusing on an exemplary exponent thereof, yet it tactfully avoids the problem of globalisation, which today has turned into a powerful and sometimes destructive wave. By using the syntagm "beyond borders" in the title, the book answers and problematises them. Thus, we understand that this is about *crossing* existing borders by travelling (Rabindranath Tagore's own journeys), by translating literary works, and by innovating in the field of education, but it is also about

*overcoming* borders and about understanding the illusory character of the walls that have been raised between nations and cultures and which obstruct our clear vision of our communal essence as human beings.

By publishing this book at a particular anniversary moment, 82 years from the death of the writer (such moments are indeed buoys and "temporal landmarks" to our conceptualisation of history, as they give us a sense of belonging to a collective history and help us make sense of it), the editors make us aware of the border between us and our own past, between us and our ancestors, between our ways of being modern and our modes of belonging to a tradition.

Borders and walls are the epitome of liminality, and Rabindranath Tagore has been indeed "on the threshold" in everything he did in philosophy, literature, education, and the political realm. One can learn from these essays about Tagore as a man who has lived on the threshold between East and West, between Western civilisation and Indian traditions: He was deeply rooted in the Indian spirituality (see the chapters written by Mihaela Gligor and Halina Marlewicz), yet his poems and meditations betray an encounter with Western and Muslim mystical spaces, too. The importance of the problem of translation, in the context of Tagore's translated and self-translated works, treated in this book (see the chapters by Fakrul Alam and Radha Chakravarty), reveals the conundrums of contemporary culture, which is not only multicultural and intercultural, but liminally-cultural, reflecting the implications of the impossibility of true translation and the recognition of translation work as a new creation. Tagore has received the highest intellectual recognition from the West – the Nobel Prize for Literature (remarkably, for his contribution to *English* literature!) – but he was also confronted with the rude coldness of the racist bureaucratic machine of the West (e.g., his Canadian incident mentioned at p. 37). During his life-time, in India, he was confronted with misrecognition and with a reputation that he wasn't very happy with, and yet he is today recognised as the founder of modern Indian literature. His stories depict the perennial and eternal

light that shines in the human being, but also become intimate with secondary and subaltern categories, such as women or migrants (see the chapters authored by Bashabi Fraser, Paromita Mukherjee, and Daniela Rogobete).

Paradoxically, Rabindranath Tagore wrote about overcoming the barriers created by modern nationalism in a time when India was fighting for independence (see the essays of Elisabetta Marino and Uma Das Gupta) – which produced mixed feelings among his conationals, and at the same time he contributed to the recognition of Indian identity in the West, which is remarkable given that recognition is an essential dimension of independence. One realises that Tagore was a proponent of cultivating the spirit of the nation as a form of freedom, but was not an exponent of nationalism as a political theology that brings new modes of border-making among people.

The book also sheds light upon the problem of modern education (see Eleonora Olivia Bălănescu's text) by discussing Tagore's own experience with it: his project of creating an alternative-style university at Santiniketan in contrast with, and stemming out of his own dissatisfaction with, the rigid, scholastic chains of British school system.

Rabindranath Tagore was a journeyman and has crossed many borders; he has traveled a lot to various parts of the world – North America, South America, Europe and Asia – as he was invited to talk on various subjects after having been awarded the Nobel Prize, and his journeys and his status as a journeyman in the first decades of the 20th century show that the constitution of the modern spirit took place, and is still taking place, in the form of *journeys*, which on the one hand imply going away from one's home in tiresome walks and pleasant and unpleasant encounters, and at the same time they stem out of the primeval experience of the pilgrimage and the Western practices of missionarism. This book is a journey, too, in the footsteps of Tagore's intellectual interests and personal experiences, and as such it is itself "beyond borders": the authors are academics and intellectuals who

belong to a diversity of cultural spaces from several continents. In spite of the diversity of topics addressed, these essays manage to take shape in a unified and coherent book that addresses indeed the topic that it promisses in the title: The reception and the cultural legacy of this exceptional mind and spirit worldwide.

**About the Author**:

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**Mihaela Gligor and Elisabetta Marino (Eds.), *Tagore beyond Borders: Essays on His Influence and Cultural Legacy*. London, New York: Routledge, 2023, 150 pp., ISBN: 978-1-032-11208-4 (hbk), ISBN: 978-1-032-13334-8 (pbk), ISBN: 978-1-003-22874-5 (ebk). DOI: 10.4324/9781003228745.**

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Just as Rabindranath Tagore travelled all over the globe, so does the interest in him and his extensive work constantly reach miscellaneous writers and translators far and wide. Among the recent publications on his life and work, *Tagore beyond Borders: Essays on His Influence and Cultural Legacy* (2023), edited by Mihaela Gligor and Elisabetta Marino, highly demonstrates the focus on Tagore's genius and his relevance in today's world.

The present volume comprises ten essays which pay an homage to the 1913-Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, the best-known Asian literature figure not only in India, but also worldwide. At the same time, this collection published by Routledge (London and New York, and also in a South Asia edition exclusively distributed in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) celebrates the 75 years of diplomatic relations between India and Romania, as well as 82 years since Rabindranath Tagore's departure from life, yet not from the academic and literary scenes. The two editors, Mihaela Gligor and Elisabetta Marino, are affiliated with Romanian and Italian higher-education institutions, namely the Romanian Academy and the Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Romania (the sole Romanian university boasting a *Cluj Center for Indian Studies*, since 2014), and, respectively, the University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy. As they announce in their *Introduction*,

> "*Tagore beyond Borders: Essays on His Influence and Cultural Legacy* brings together researchers of Tagore's life and passionate readers of his works. They have various academic backgrounds and are part of different generations and cultures. Furthermore, their approaches to Tagore are personal and unique." "Today, more than ever, Rabindranath Tagore can not only be identified with the Bengali culture and ethos: his essence is at once Indian and universal. *Tagore beyond Borders: Essays on His Influence and Cultural Legacy* is another reassurance of his universal representation." (1)

Backing his chapter "Cultural Transfer, Rabindranath Tagore's Travels and Travel Writing" with theoretical considerations on cultural translation and transfer from Walter Benjamin, Homi Bhabha and Stefanie Stockhorst, the Bangladeshi writer and translator Fakrul Alam provides his own noteworthy poetical versions of two *Gitanjali* poems, mirroring Tagore's self-translations from Bengali into English. Chosen as stances of acculturated translation or domestication, they will be followed by a brief presentation of the poem entitled *The Child*, which illustrates translation as hybridization.

In Radha Chakravarty's study, "Travelling Fictions. The English stories of Rabindranath Tagore", the reader has the opportunity to discover Tagore's short fiction, namely four stories located "in-between cultures, geographies, histories and literary traditions," (22) which he himself translated into English. The literary critic and translator from Delhi, herself authoring a series of books on Tagore, provides some nicely woven analyses on these stories, whose themes range from the critique of mechanical learning imposed in schools to the social hypocrisy or the double standards promoted in misogynistic societies. Lastly, she underlines that Tagore's literature should be regarded as "a site for collaboration, diversity and inclusivity that respects difference without divisiveness." (31)

The third contribution in the volume, authored by the Italian professor and researcher Elisabetta Marino and entitled "Du Bois and Tagore. Between transnational solidarity and cultural appropriateness," draws on the conceptual similarities such as colour and race shared by both the Bengali personality and the African American sociologist and

civil rights activist (yet at times articulating divergent opinions, Du Bois rather interpreting Tagore's discourses or life experience in the United States for his own benefit).

In her chapter, "Tagore's educational paradigm and its relevance to modern teaching," Eleonora Olivia Bălănescu (University of Craiova) brings interesting details about Tagore's school experience (a living example being himself, as he abandoned school at the age of 13) and his perspective (strikingly similar to the Montessori System) on education – rather modern, freed from institutional constraints and harsh discipline, yet focused on the emotional, physical and spiritual needs of the pupils, Tagore being convinced that

> "the highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence." (51)

The distinguished Tagore biographer, Uma Das Gupta, writes about "Tagore and Gandhi. Their deep thoughts about their country," and mainly relies on the 30-year letter exchange between the two personalities (1912-1940), sporadically through their mutual close friend, Charles Freer Andrews. Their bond of friendship was strengthened by their common struggle for Indian freedom, all their endeavours proving

> "the immense superiority of right over might, of soul-force over brute-force, of love and reason over hate and passion." (65)

In her chapter "The mysterious inner world. Remarks on representation of religion in Rabindranath Tagore's *Sādhanā*, and *The Religion of Man*", Mihaela Gligor briefly describes the intellectual and artistic milieu in which Tagore lived, further concentrating on the essayistic collection *Sādhanā* (1913), considered "a great book of life as it is seen, experienced, and lived by the poet," (77) later refined into *The Religion of Man*:

> "I felt that I had found my religion at last, the religion of Man, in which the infinite became defined in humanity." (81)

For Tagore, as Gligor observes,

> "Both philosophy and religion explore the nature of the real world, the basis of human values, and the foundations of reason." (80)

The Polish Indologist researcher Halina Marlewicz argues that Tagore was not a philosopher per se, but an adept of "philosophical reconstructions" (88) and reflexions on palpable and abstract domains, ranging from nature and politics to love and freedom, focusing in her chapter, "*All broken truths are evil*. Rabindranath Tagore on the life-transforming freedom (*Mukti*)," on the multifaceted idea of *mukti*, mainly perceived as spiritual freedom and joy:

> "*Mukti* is said to be "freedom from the ego to reach that disinterested joy which is the source and goal of creation" and the soul's deliverance "from the mirage of appearances endlessly pursued by the thirsty self" into "the unity of truth." (89)

The Indian-born Scottish academic and writer Bashabi Fraser approaches "Women's voices in Rabindranath Tagore's later poetry. A postcolonial perspective." She highlights Tagore's modernity by means of four poems from *Punashcha* (1932), whose main theme is the female presence – be it a deceased daughter in her mournful father's life, a disappointed young woman rejected by her lover's family, an independent college student or a straightforward woman narrator, free to imagine a society in which men and women have equal roles.

Paromita Mukherjee (Amity University Kolkata) goes further with the above-mentioned topic, in her chapter "Strangeness and the 'New Woman'. Rereading Rabindranath Tagore's *The Laboratory.*" In this short story, published in 1940, Tagore shapes an unconventional model of a woman, typical of the whole Indian society, hence "a universal figure of modern womanhood," (112) set against the broader context of Indian emancipation from the British rule.

The last contribution in the volume belongs to Daniela Rogobete (University of Craiova) and bears the title: "Cinematographic Adaptations of Rabindranath Tagore's Short Stories – Between Reality, Lyricism and Visual Poetry." After a comprehensive analysis of his short stories, in

terms of themes and style, the Romanian academic focuses on the hardships of translating literature from Bengali into English, preserving the original atmosphere and tone, and shifting to the transposition of Tagore's stories into moving images. Rogobete mentions a series of screen adaptations from 1923 to 2017, the emphasis being laid on *Kabuliwala*,

> "as it is highly representative for Tagore's deeply lyrical and profoundly ethical short fiction as well as for the beauty of the human emotions he depicted and the world of truth and beauty he created." (134)

To conclude with, the ten essays function as separate entities in the body of the volume, but they naturally tackle on interconnected subjects revolving around Tagore's literary, philosophical, social and political discourse. The various themes approached by these chapters, as well as the prestige of the contributors and of the publishing house, will definitely whet not only the curiosity of any reader but also the bibliophilic appetite of Rabindranath Tagore's supporters on every side of the world.

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**Diana-Viorela Burlacu** (née Ionescu), PhD, is a teaching assistant within the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca. Since 2019, a Romanian-language lecturer within the Leipzig University, 2017-2019 within the University of Regensburg (Germany). Author of *A Pragmatic Approach to Pinteresque Drama* (2011, Cluj-Napoca), co-author of *Antonime, Sinonime, Analogii* (1st ed., 2011, Bucharest; 2nd ed., 2013, Cluj-Napoca) and *Manual de limba română ca limbă străină (RLS). Nivelul B2* (2021, Cluj-Napoca). Main areas of interest: RFL (Romanian as a foreign language), lexicology, pragmatics, semantics, translation and cultural studies.

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**Mihaela Gligor & Lipi Ghosh (Eds.), *Between Two Worlds: Romania and India. Essays on Expanding Borders through Culture*, Cluj-Napoca: Cluj University Press / Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2023, 183 pp., ISBN 978-606-37-1734-5.**

**Marinică Tiberiu ȘCHIOPU**
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In 2022, several cultural events strengthened the long-time friendship between India and Romania. The first Indo-Romanian diplomatic relations date back to 1948. The Embassy of Romania in New Delhi was established in 1955. The Romanian Ambassador to India, Her Excellency Daniela Sezonov Țane, had the initiative to organize two seminars at the University of Calcutta and the University of Delhi, and she received the support of Prof. Lipi Ghosh and Prof. Minni Sawhney. In the foreword to this book, the Romanian Ambassador named the year 2022 "The Indo-Romanian Cultural Year" (9), and she expressed her happiness regarding the presence of two Romanian specialists in Indian civilization at these events: Dr Mihaela Gligor and Dr Liviu Bordaș.

The editors of this book are Mihaela Gligor and Lipi Ghosh. Mihaela Gligor is the founder and director of *Cluj Center for Indian Studies* at Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. She has published several books and articles on India and the Indo-Romanian cultural relations, and she is a specialist in Mircea Eliade's life and work. Lipi Ghosh is the Centenary Chair Professor of International Relations at the University of Calcutta, and her areas of interest include ethnicity, minority and cultural studies. The contributors to the book are scholars, professors and writers from India and Romania. Mrinmoy Pramanick is a professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Calcutta. Carmen Mușat-Coman is a Romanian writer, journalist, translator and editor focused on publishing Amita Bhose's works. Abhishek Bose is a professor of

Comparative Indian Language and Literature at the University of Calcutta. Jayati Gupta is a retired professor of English and a visiting professor at Adamas University, Kolkata.

The five chapters of the present volume provide the readers with new and interesting perspectives on the intercultural relations between Romania and India, focusing on four outstanding figures of the Romanian and Indian culture, namely Surendranath Dasgupta, Maitreyi Devi, Mircea Eliade and Amita Bhose. This book represents a necessary and captivating reading for all those who are interested in the Indian civilization and the Indo-Romanian relations. Even scholars researching this field can have new insights into the topic after reading it.

In the *Introduction*, the editors offer a theoretical background of the concept of culture and emphasize the paramount importance of intercultural relations in the context of the globalized human society. Beginning with the etymological explanation of this notion, they define it as

> "a phenomenon which goes beyond boundaries and in today's world of globalization it is very important to understand cultures of other countries and reciprocal interactions of their culture with our own culture. Culture is a process which is transmitted as well as shared." (17)

The proteic character of culture is stressed by two nouns used in the definition of the concept: "phenomenon" and "process." Then, the editors briefly summarize the structure and the importance of the present book, emphasizing the novelty of the perspective:

> "This collection is a significant effort to understand the links between two cultures from a perspective hitherto not attempted." (17)

The first chapter, "Amita Bhose: Translator, Comparativist, and Cultural Ambassador", written by Mrinmoy Pramanick, focuses on the figure of this Indian scholar who fell in love with Romania and its civilization. Pramanick commences his chapter from the perspective of Oriental Studies and places Amita Bhose among internationally renowned European indologists. The author speaks about her as a specialist in both Indian and Romanian literatures, analyses her passion

and interest in Mihai Eminescu's life, thinking and work (her doctoral thesis analyzed the Indian influence on the Romanian writer), and deciphers in Amita Bhose's writings an "Eminescu metaphor" by which he understands a linking role of the poet between two cultures:

> "This Eminescu metaphor in literary reading, reception and translation may be extracted from Bhose's works as a model of comparison in comparative literary studies." (43)

After that, Pramanick discusses the influence of Rabindranath Tagore on Amita Bhose, and their shared ideological ground, asserting that the Indian professor contributed to the popularization of Tagore's writings in Romania. Through her activity as a translator, Amita Bhose created a cultural bridge between India and Romania, and both Eminescu and Tagore were the main pillars of this magnificent ideational monument.

The second chapter of the volume, "Amita Bhose, from the Great Ganges to Bucharest", by Carmen Mușat-Coman, explores the same scholar, but from the perspective of one of her students and disciples. The author of the chapter presents Amita Bhose's life and professional activity in detail, making use of the metaphor of the bridge to assess Bhose's achievements as a writer, translator and professor. But, for Carmen Mușat-Coman,

> "Amita Bhose remains as a teacher. Many enrolled in her courses out of curiosity. Curiosity turned into passion and the students remembered the first exciting moments when they became children again, studying the letters of the Bengali or Sanskrit alphabet to enter the fascinating world of India." (79)

At the end of Carmen Mușat-Coman's study, a short review written by Amita Bhose to Sergiu Al-George's book *Language and Thought in Indian Culture* was inserted, in which the Indian scholar praised the scholarship and the remarkable comprehension of the Indian thought of Al-George:

> "Like the ancient sages of India, Sergiu Al-George is at once synthetic and analytic, intensive and extensive, rational and intuitive." (90)

Abhishek Bose wrote the third chapter, "Surendranath Dasgupta: Towards a Philosophy of Literature?" investigating the life, the work and the legacy of the famous Bengali intellectual. Bose begins by mentioning the relation of Surendranath Dasgupta with his student Mircea Eliade, and the intercultural link they created. The author emphasizes Dasgupta's vast interest in a variety of fields and topics:

> "The sheer magnitude and brilliance of this intellectual giant is astounding; his works range from Philosophy to Iconography, History to Literature, Arts and Aesthetics and what not." (95)

Dasgupta's scholarship exceeded Humanities and touched Science and Mathematics as well. Bose evokes the recognition of the significance of Surendranath Dasgupta, the numerous awards and invitations from universities and organizations abroad that the Indian professor received during his lifetime. After a brief commendation of Dasgupta's expertise in philosophy, the author shifts his attention to the literary contribution of the Bengali scholar, analyzing his poetry and narrative texts, and quotes Surendranath Dasgupta's option for Sanskrit literature instead of Indian literature due to the diversity of the Indian literatures. In the literary field, the professor from Kolkata took an anti-colonial stand, placing himself between the British Empire and the ancient Indian thought:

> "And though praising the 'West' for their achievements in science and economy, he is emphasizing on the knowledge and experience that is not accessible to the outsiders, the colonizers." (109)

Abhishek Bose concludes his study by praising Dasgupta's legacy and contribution to various fields of Indian culture and civilization:

> "I feel it is necessary for us to go beyond the anecdote land remember and rediscover him for all these wonderful things – his contribution to philosophy, literature, art, aesthetics, science, and above all, his faith in the mutuality of similarities and differences – things that have drawn people to him from within and without." (110)

The fourth chapter, "Maitreyi Devi: Crossing Borders and Traveling in Cultures", written by Jayati Gupta, is devoted to an outstanding feminine figure of the Indian culture, Maitreyi Devi, Surendranath Dasgupta's daughter. She was famous not only inside the Indian subcontinent but internationally as well, her life and work inspired writers and filmmakers. Jayati Gupta's article is an interesting insight into Maitreyi's life, following chronologically the main events of her life, paying sometimes excessive attention to the political side of her thinking and activity. The author caught the main character features of Maitreyi Devi and the social background of her time, depicting her as an

> "ardent admirer of Rabindranath Tagore and his cosmopolitanism, an independent thinker in a social ethos that was repressive for women, as well as an inveterate traveler in geographical locales and concomitant cultural spaces, both the provincial and regional and the national and international." (115)

Ideologically, she had anti-colonial views, and she also adhered to cosmopolitanism not only under the influence of Tagore but also due to the Vedic concept of the unity of the entire world: "*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*" ("the entire world is one single family") (119). The second part of the chapter deals mainly with the encounters Maitreyi had with Communism during her visits to Russia and China, hesitating between the social "progress" of these communist countries and the atrocities of the totalitarian regimes. During her transnational experiences, she tried to learn from other cultures and alleviate the social and living conditions of Indians.

Mihaela Gligor wrote the last chapter of the volume, and it was entitled "Maitreyi Devi – *Na Hanyate* – The Story Behind." The author centered her paper on the relationship between Mircea Eliade and Maitreyi Devi, investigating it on two levels: the biographical aspects and the literary reception of *Bengal Nights* and *Na Hanyate*. Thus, Gligor's study is a valuable account of a life experience retraced by two novels written from two different perspectives. The Romanian scholar recalls her personal encounter with Maitreyi's family, from whom she learnt about novel aspects of the Indian intellectual and writer's life. An important part

of the chapter is devoted to the way Maitreyi found out about *Bengal Nights* and her efforts to meet again Mircea Eliade in the US in order to settle some aspects of her life. As a consequence of her meetings with Eliade, his mother, and other Romanians, and because of her inner restlessness, Maitreyi wrote a novel, *Na Hanyate* (published in 1974) retracing her relationship with Mircea Eliade. Mihaela Gligor emphasizes the preciseness of Maitreyi's novel and its philosophical significance. The Romanian professor masterfully interweaves literary criticism with a historical presentation of facts, concluding that Maitreyi Devi

> "changed the lives of people who had the opportunity to meet her or read her books, and she continues to do so even now, as her work still inspires people all over the world." (166)

Readers discover in the present book a fascinating story of the intercultural connections between two countries, India and Romania, built upon the efforts of a number of dedicated people, scholars who opened their minds' wings to embrace the alterity in their exploration of life and the world. The mastery of the authors' writing style makes the reading even more enjoyable, giving the impression of a journey in time and space.

**About the Author**:

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**Rajendra K. Jain (editor), *Changing Indian Images of the European Union. Perception and Mispercetion*, Palgrave MacMillan Singapore, 2019, 162 pp., ISBN 978-981-13-8790-6,** and

**Rajendra K. Jain (editor), *India and the European Union in a Turbulent World*, Palgrave McMillan Singapore, 2020, 220 pp., ISBN 978-981-15-3916-9.**

**Alexandru BALAS**
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Despite the European Union and India representing the two most populous democratic polities in the world, there are not many books or academic journals written about the relationship between the two. Rajendra Jain's 2019 and 2020 edited volumes fill this huge gap in research about Indian-European Union relations and thus should be read by scholars, and non-scholars alike. The chapters in the two books are written in a very accessible format by mostly Indian professors, researchers, and practitioners with a couple of contributions from Europe-based professors (in Poland and Belgium). Prof. Jain, the first EU Jean Monnet Chair in India (2010-2015), who also serves as the director of the Center for European Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India, through these two volumes has done an excellent job for increasing the understanding of the Indian-European Union relations.

The two volumes focus on different aspects of the Indian-EU relations: the 2019 volume focuses on images of the EU in India, while the 2020 volume puts this relationship in the larger international context of the 2016-2020 period. However, there are also important common themes between the two volumes: 1) the rise of China and the decline of the US; 2) Brexit and its ramifications for EU-India relations; and 3)

trade interests at the GATT/WTO, nuclear non-proliferation, and the EU-India trade agreement negotiations.

The first commonality is that both volume authors place the relationship between India and the EU in the context of a rising China and the (partial) withdrawal of U.S. as a global community leader, especially during the Trump Administration. This major geopolitical shift permeates to a larger or smaller extent all chapters. The general assumption is that this shift should bring India and the EU closer together, as both try to counter-balance China's rise, and the slow withdrawal of their old (or more recent, for India) ally (US) from a global leadership position. However, most of the findings show that this strengthened convergence and cooperation has not actually taken place yet. There have been some increased levels of rhetoric since the 14th EU-India Summit in 2017, from both Indian and EU leaders, about how these two entities are "natural partners", but the rhetoric has not been matched yet by the reality on the ground. The second commonality between the volumes is the context of Brexit. India has close historical relations with the UK and "Indian companies preferred to use the UK as the gateway to access the larger European market" as P. Chaudhuri states on page 92 of the 2020 volume. Brexit meant that the authorities in New Delhi had to shift their focus towards increased cooperation with France and Germany, but also with other EU member states, in search of a new gateway to the European Union's half a billion people market. In the 2019 volume, Babalova and Goddeeris captured in their chapter a significant amount of news stories from the Indian media about Brexit and the European Union in the 2016-2017 period. These news stories helped educate to a small extent local Indian audiences about the intricacies of the European Union. Finally, the third area of commonality is related to the topics India and the EU discuss most often: cooperation (or lack of cooperation) initially within General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor, World Trade Organization (WTO);

non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the Broad-Based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA).

Next, I will review each volume separately, starting in chronological order, with the volume about *Changing Indian Images of the European Union* from 2019. This type of volume should be commissioned by the European Union public diplomacy units to assess how the EU is perceived in various countries and regions around the world. Luckily for the EU, Prof. Jain and his collaborators have done the work for them, for the case of India. The main research questions asked by this volume, which guided most, but not all, of the chapters, is:

> "How is the India's image of the European Union changing over the decades? What have been the major narratives about the EU in India? Is the image of the EU changing in India as the Union is acquiring a new personality in world politics?" (v).

This volume has seven chapters. Two of them are authored by European-based scholars while five are written by Indian-based scholars and practitioners.

The first chapter does an excellent job laying out the groundwork for the entire volume by highlighting the history of these two entities which were created around the same time (India in 1947; European Union's predecessor, the European Coal and Steel Community, in 1951). Prof. Jain highlights that the early perceptions of Indians towards the European "experiment" were very much skeptical, given the heterogeneity of the original six members of the EU. He relied on views of Indian think-tanks and journalists on the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, European Defense Community, European Free Trade Area, and the Treaty of Rome. Despite the skepticism, most Indian observers of European politics in the 1950s, saw this project correctly, from the onset, as having a political integration goal, rather than just an economic alliance, as it was generally portrayed by other global observers. When the European Economic Community was created through the Treaty of Rome in 1957, Indian diplomats and politicians

were concerned about the impact on African colonies and the implications for India's exports (mostly tea, coffee, tobacco, and cotton) in the context of GATT regulations.

India was the first Asian country to set up a mission to the European Communities (EC) in January 1962. A year prior, in 1961, India already moved its office for Economic Affairs in Europe from London to Brussels, signaling the growing importance of the European Community for India, in the aftermath of UK starting the membership process to the EC in 1961. This being said, the knowledge about the EU was very low amongst members of the Indian Parliament throughout the 1950s and 1960s. One aspect mentioned by Prof. Jain in this first chapter, which should be explored more by European Union scholars, is the similarity between the Indian and EU experiments. Both created functioning polities out of tens of cultures, several dozen or (hundreds, in the case of India) languages, and historical traditions. This topic should be explored further also by historians of regional integration.

As good as the first chapter was, unfortunately the second chapter begs the question why was it included in the volume. However, the third chapter by Kanwal Sibal makes a significant contribution, in the style of the first chapter. This, despite its obvious (small) biases against Europeans as a whole, and promoting an India-first policy, as one should expect from a former Foreign Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India. The argument that Europe's thinking about India was dominated by a) India in the Non-Alignment Movement; b) India's close relations to Soviet Union, and c) India's economy being quite protectionist still, is an important one for understanding the history of the relationship. The critiques delivered by Sibal are many and sharp. First, there is no expectation of a BTIA to be signed because the interests of the EU and India are too far apart: Europe has issues on access to services, intellectual property rights, government procurement policies, duties on cars/wines/and spirits while India is critical of EU's movement of Indian professionals and the difficulty of securing visas for its nationals. The question of how vital the BTIA is (the

negotiations around which have been stopped since 2013) for the development of increased trade ties is an interesting one. The trade data is quite outdated by now, but, regardless, it does point out that India and the EU trade significantly with each other even in the absence of a free trade agreement. Second, clearly the author is annoyed by European "lecturing" about Pakistan, and he points out the mistakes of Europe in relation to Russia and in the Middle East. The critiques of EU smaller member-states towards India's record on human rights and on nuclear proliferation also do not sit well with this author's perceptions of the larger ties. But he does signal correctly that EU does not have much to offer to India in terms of military aid in the geostrategic conflict developing with China in the Indian Ocean. The author recommends India to focus its relations with the EU towards those Central and Eastern EU member-states which do not have a "moralizing"/" lecturing" approach towards his country. This recommendation might be spurred by the other Central and Eastern Europe authors participating in the volume, as these countries, even taken as a group, do not have enough "clout" to change EU's foreign policy towards India. Finally, in this chapter the views of Europeans towards India are discussed, but not so much of the Indians towards Europeans as expected based on the book title, except for the views of the author.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 from the 2019 edited volume form the strongest contribution to this book in terms of data about Indian images and perceptions towards the EU and the research methods used. Next, I will discuss these chapters as a group. The authors of these chapters analyze the image of the EU in Indian newspapers (both English and Hindi), through interviews with policy makers, and through a public opinion survey. The timeframes range from 2009-2010 (for the 4$^{th}$ and 5$^{th}$ chapters by Pandey, and Jain and Pandey, respectively) to 2016-2017 (for the 6$^{th}$ chapter by Babalova and Goddeeris). Despite the outdated data from over a decade ago, I do find that chapters 4 and 5 are excellent in terms of their research design and methods and provide useful findings.

The EU is generally presented in the Indian media as an economic actor which has some, but not much, normative power. The European Commission is the most featured EU institution, followed by the European Central Bank (for the Eurocrisis management, during the 2009-2010 research period) and the European Council for the latter research period. Only the Presidents of the European Commission and the European Council get some significant exposure in the Indian media. Chapter 5 points out in a funny way that Indians associate EC with the Election Commission (of India) rather than the European Commission and that the EU has the 3D (distant, difficult, and different) for Indian audiences. The authors of Chapter 5 do an excellent job at highlighting the most important EU documents and projects about the relations with India, from 1996 to 2008[1], complemented by a thorough literature review[2] about Indian perceptions of the EU. What is shocking is the lack of visibility of the EU Delegation in India since 1983. The newspapers and the political & business elites of India had no idea about the work done by this delegation. Such findings should raise alarm bells amongst the EU public diplomacy leaders and beg the question on what the EU spends its money in India. On the other hand, the few images that Indian elites have of the EU are positive:

> "The dominant images of all 'elites' were clearly the Euro, the Schengen visa, borderlessness, the brotherhood and unity that emerged after the Second World War and of the EU being a unique experiment." (104)

But the EU is not perceived as a political actor:

[1] 1996's Communication on EU-India Enhanced Partnership; Communication on 'An EU-India Strategic Partnership 2004; EU-India Economic Cross Cultural Programme, 18-month project which facilitated the creation of a news 'hub' in Brussels called the India News in Europe Programme (INEP); India-EU Joint Action Plan 2005, Implementation Report of 2007; revised India-EU Joint Action Plan of 2008.

[2] Amongst others: Vaugier-Chatterjee 2002, 2006; Subrahmanyam, 2005; Dixit, 2001; Lisbonne-de Vergeron 2006, 2011; Vivekanandan 2001; Fioramonti 2007; Fioramonti and Poletti 2008; Mitra 2006.

> "The elites in general were skeptical about the political strength of the EU as an actor and about its relative significance and strength compared to the United States." (104)

Finally, Jain and Pandey make several much needed suggestions for the EU to raise its visibility in India.

The findings from Chapter 6 interestingly contradict those from the previous two chapters.

> "This chapter, however, indicates a rather sudden departure from this 'economic actorness' and points to the EU's shifting image towards a greater 'political role'." (115)

The newfound political role for the EU reminds the reader of the perceptions of Indian elites in the 1950s about the early European Communities as having a political goal in the long run, despite their larger focus on economic integration in the short run. But, more likely, the chosen timeframe for the study of Indian perceptions towards the EU (2016-2017) are the rationale for these findings: the 14th India-EU Summit held in New Delhi in 2017 dealt mostly with political-related issues (cooperation on anti-terrorism and Indian Ocean geopolitical aspects). This chapter has excellent research design and methods, while also acknowledging some of the potential shortcomings. This chapter is a must-read from all the chapters of the two edited volumes.

Chapter 7 is an odd addition, about the Indian perceptions of one EU member-state, Poland. While, the author, Patryk Kugiel, presents interesting findings, this case study, should really be accompanied by other case studies focused on other parts of the European Union to give a better perspective. For example, if Poland is representative of Central and Eastern Europe, there should be chapters on Indian perceptions of representative Northern, Southern, and Western European member-states, too. Some of the findings that were interesting in this chapter are that "The average Indian citizen often mistakes it [Poland] for Holland" (p. 140) and that in 2017

> "Indians compris[ed] the third largest national group of foreign students at Polish universities, after those from the Ukraine and Belarus." (148).

This point out at the lack of knowledge of Central and Eastern European countries amongst the average Indians. In the same time we learn about the potential for recruitment of Indian students and cooperation with Indian universities.

The second, 2020 volume by Jain, *India and the European Union in a Turbulent World*, has 11 chapters, with 3 of the authors based in Poland, and the remainder based in India. This volume is focused on the India-EU relation in the context of the current "turbulent world." In this world, China's rise, U.S.'s decline, and UK's Brexit from the European Union are the main characteristics framing the relationship under study. The liberal world order has been eroded, we are witnessing increased multipolarity with emerging powers demanding a greater voice in world affairs and institutions, and

> "a proliferation of frenemies… allies who publicly turn on each other or competitors who are compelled to make common cause on issues." (vii)

In chapters 1 and 5 Pramit Pal Chaudhuri analyzes the reception by India and the EU of Donald Trump's foreign policy actions (chapter 1) and of Brexit (chapter 5). Neither India, nor the EU were happy with these exogenous "shocks" to the international system. Because of these actions however, the Indian author argues that Europe and India have become much closer to each other.

In chapter 2, the only common author between the two volumes, Patryk Kugiel, argues that even though there seems to be convergence between India and the EU in terms of rhetoric, no such thing exists in practice. In terms of rhetoric, the EU argues in its 1st ever India Strategy that the EU and India share

> "the values of democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms and support the rules-based global order centered on multilateralism […]." (European Commission 2018, p. 2)

In reality, there is no convergence about a reform of the United Nations, the principles of sovereignty vs. human rights, democracy promotion, and even on trade:

> "While most of the EU 2018 Strategy on India is written in a friendly and diplomatic way, the language tends to become more critical when it deals with trade." (44)

Kugiel argues that these differences in practice stem from the fact that the EU is a postmodern liberal entity, while India is a Westphalian state. This dichotomy deserves to be further explored and investigated scientifically.

Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the EU and Indian interests at the World Trade Organization (WTO), and in the governance of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and the Bank of International Settlements. Both entities are interested in these organizations continuing to provide stability and predictability for the international trade and financial markets. Chapter 6 is an excellent contribution of the history of negotiations between India and the EU, as one of the key negotiators of the Broad-Based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA), former Ambassador to the EU, Dinkar Kullar, provides an insider's guide to these failed negotiations. These negotiations that started in June 2007 and continued until April 2013 dealt mostly around the issue of tariffs. The ambassador argues that the two sides came close to "a broad agreement on up to 94 per cent of tariff lines." (116) Unfortunately, the two sides were not able to "seal the deal" by the 2013 self-imposed deadline spurred by the European Union elections.

The next five chapters of the 2020 volume deal with the interactions between the EU and India on several thematic aspects: dealing with international terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism (chapter 7), nuclear non-proliferation (chapter 8), human rights (chapter 9), climate agenda (chapter 10), and legal/illegal migration and the movement of refugees (chapter 11). These chapters are useful for a historical overview and for the suggestions regarding the potential for increased cooperation

between the European Union and India. Most of these five chapters are analyzed in view of the US withdrawal from global issues, and China's attempts to start imposing its own rules. Chapter 11 deserves special attention because it compares India's and EU's reactions to dealing with several migrant and refugees' crises. Most people reading these volumes would not immediately realize that India is a major recipient of refugees and migrants from neighboring Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, plus Afghanistan, in addition to hosting the historical refugees from Tibet. India welcomes these refugees, while also sending economic migrants to other parts of the world, including the European Union. This comparison, of the way these two entities welcomed migrants and refugees, should be further developed.

I strongly recommend European Union public diplomats and scholars/practitioners working on the EU-India relations to own these two volumes as they contain troves of excellent information. The two volumes complement each other very well, and the EU should provide funds for other similar "perceptions of the EU" edited volumes from other parts of the world. The suggestions for improving the relations between the two are excellent and I can only hope that at least some of them will be implemented as EU and India do seem to be "natural partners" given their historical ties, values, and common approaches to the international global order. As the EU is increasing its presence in India, and the Indian Ocean as a whole, and India's economic footprint is increasing within the EU, I hope that more scholars will specialize in the relations between these two polities.

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**Cătălina-Ioana Pavel, *Acolo unde se naște musonul. Un an în regatul zeului Parasurama*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, 2023, 202 pp., ISBN: 978-606-17-2176-4.**

**Daria IOAN**
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*Acolo unde se naște musonul. Un an în regatul zeului Parasurama* (*There where the Monsoon is born. A year in the kingdom of God Parasurama*[1]) presents the state Kerala of India under multiple aspects, from the stories of the black gold, the pepper, the guiding thread of Cătălina Pavel into the green paradise and an endless palette of tastes and aromas found in gastronomy, to the political regime, traditional dances or performances of shadow puppet theater, which last until late at night, in the middle of the woods. A territory with an impressive culture and history, a mixture of the most diverse ethnicities, the so-called *God's Own Country*, Kerala, is revealed in Cătălina Pavel's book through personal anecdotes, diary entries or forays into history. Always concerned with the fascinating past of these dream places on the Malabar Coast, but at the same time keeping the reader's attention on an equally glamorous present, the author passionately tells us stories and legends that intertwine to create a new image of Kerala. The discovery of the green paradise comes after a long journey by train, which almost never ends and offers us details and curiosities about what it means to use this means of transport over long distances in India.

Once in Kochi, Cătălina lends herself to the streets near the old port, Mattancherry area, and takes us, as readers, on the footsteps of the last Pardesi Jews. Observation and imagination intermingle, providing a vivid view of the communities encountered in Kochi. Always fascinated by what is being revealed to her, Cătălina attributes beautiful descriptions to

[1] All the titles and cited fragments from the book belong to my translation.

both the ensemble and the details that make Fort Kochi such a special place. Not only what remains of the city's Jewish community is presented through the buildings and the few encountered characters, but also the community of the laundrymen, the *Vannas*, who came from Tamil Nadu 400 years ago. Among the walks and discoveries that follow, the book offers us a fresh episode of life interspersed with the past, example given the carnival in Kochi, with the burning of an effigy, full of symbols, called *Papaanji*, at the beginning of the New Year. The city of Kochi cannot be described without mentioning the old Chinese fishing nets in the port and the giant rain trees that shade the alleys in the fish market area, and Cătălina Pavel pays attention to them too, mingling with the locals and yet maintaining a keen foreigner's gaze that, in spite of feeling at home, notices the smallest detail with curiosity.

Next comes the natural encounter with *Kathakali* dance and the practitioners of this ancient performing art of Kerala. The preparation of specific makeup and the practice of *mudras* are amazingly described so that the reader can almost take part in a live performance. The author explains to us the meaning of certain gestures and colors used in *Kathakali*, so that we can almost visualize a performance. The knowledge of the complex dance is not limited to a first contact, but it is followed by a visit to the Kerala *Kalamandalam* traditional arts academy, where the author also records several aspects of *Kathakali* performances. With a special elegance, she makes the transitions between the world of arts and the vast Kerala gastronomic empire, or between rituals, traditions and geography, as it happens with the discovery of the city of Aleppey, after Kochi. The chapter not only changes the place it introduces us to, but is peppered with curiosities such as the practice of *Thalaikoothal*, where old and afflicted members of the family could ask to be killed by drinking big amounts of coconut water. Throughout the book, Kerala is often personified so that it takes part in its own story:

> "If I were to describe it, Kerala would be a shy young woman with glossy skin, smelling of coconut, with jasmine flowers in her bun and the coconut-

colored smile. I see her hurrying through the rain, barefoot. She rushes to look at the sea from the heights of the mountains in the West. She plays unhindered through the *chai* plantations, braids jasmine in her hair, and smiles heartily to anyone who gives her attention." (60)

A visit to the famous *saree* shop *S.N. Sarees* in Aleppey is gracefully followed by the description of a suite of Kerala's delicacies and then by the legend of king Mahabali, who sacrificed himself to save his kingdom confronting the avatar of the god Vishnu, incarnated as a little boy who turns into a giant and threatens to crush the beautiful Kerala, if the king had not allowed himself to be killed and trampled by the giant.

In a fragmentary style, in Catalina Pavel's diary, the annual celebration of Mahabali is followed by considerations about the status of women in India, especially in relation to public transport, and an episode describing a *Theyyam* performance, an act of devotion to certain gods, in North Malabar, during which the one who embodies the god comes to identify himself with this one. Between conversations with local friends and fleeting pansies about various other details related to the Kerala space, the author inserts some historical data, as well as clarifications about this ritual and this character, which did not manage to escape the caste system, like many other Hindu celebrations. The all-night lasting performance is described in detail so that the reader can integrate this purely Indian experience, difficult for Europeans to understand. The author then gives details about various *Theyyams* in Kerala, each built after the personality of the celebrated god: *Wayanad Kulavan*, *Ali Theyyam* – the Muslim magician killed by the goddess Bhagavathy, *Kalanthan Mukri*, often serving both Hindu and Muslim religions. The eulogy of the good understanding between ethnic groups as well as that of religious harmony, of the exchanges between cultures, are a constant element of the book, being sometimes expressed through notes of amazement and admiration, sometimes through simple observations in various contexts.

The Indian wedding, the wedding as in fairy tales, is not absent from the portrait that the author makes of Kerala, so that, halfway through the

journey and the diary, an episode of participation in such a ceremony and party is integrated, with all the luxury of details that an India lover may be able to provide. Also guided by the train that crosses the state, with all the worlds it contains, Cătălina notes in the pages of her diary that she is heading to Kasargod to take part in the wedding of a girl she does not know yet, Maryam. Thus, she gets to know the intimate realities of her family, as well as what such an event means in the lives of young Indian women. The time spent in this context gives the author access to different rules, beliefs, preconceptions and customs that come into play regarding the image, but also the reality of women in India. On this occasion, we learn how precious gold is to Keralites and what a strong tradition has been created regarding it, especially in the case of weddings and related rituals.

The Zamorin, the emblematic figure which appears and reappears throughout the book, the leader of the Malabar region at the time when Vasco de Gama set foot in the spice paradise, becomes a character in Cătălina's book. The evocation of this figure creates descriptive contexts for the activity of Arab traders, for the first encounters with Europeans, but especially for illustrating the organization of the kingdom over the five centuries that this type of ruler was in power. The city of Calicut is delicately outlined among the references to this semi-legendary character, which we learn had multiple roles: ruler, banker, builder, fighter and more. The history of some communities coming from other lands is related to the way the Zamorin managed to integrate them into his kingdom, such as the *Vairagis* of Gujarat or Rajasthan, a community made up of lower castes, to which he assigned the duty of taking care of medicinal plants, trees, animals and especially cows. A tradition that has been preserved to this day.

"From Argentina to Malapurram. A History of Football in Kerala" is the chapter that records, with a touch of fun, Kerala's realities during the 2022 football world's championship, which engaged large groups of sports lovers in some of the most curious activities aimed at promoting teams and international football idols across the state, but mostly in

conflict with the KSEB electricity company which outrageously allowed power cuts during the matches. From the effervescence of football matches during the World Cup, the author moves on to other mysteries of India, such as the great festival of *Mahashivaratri*, during which the god Shiva is celebrated everywhere in the Hindu communities of the fascinating subcontinent. Being in Calicut, Cătălina Pavel notes in her diary the impressions caused by the impressive organization of this god celebration, so important in Indian culture, a day when

> "human spiritual potential is at its maximum capacity. Shiva's adepts must stay awake all night to ensure the verticality of the column throughout the night, precisely to absorb this energy." (107)

The description of the phenomenon abounds in details, from which we learn many details about the rituals of glorifying the *Shiva Lingam* in the temples of Kerala, both in the city and in the middle of the lush forests. In Cătălina Pavel's book, there are many considerations about the similarities between the religious culture in Romania and the Indian one. Similarly, in the case of the great *Mahashivaratri* celebration, there are dotted connections between the traditions of Hindu temples and Orthodox churches, for example the gathering, in the past, under the auspices of a great celebration, of the suitors of high-class young women in places of worship. The elephant show, dances and songs paying homage to Shiva complement and support the explanations of this great and enchanting celebration of the spirit.

Leaving behind the spectacular night of Shivaratri, the author goes on to describe the *Thirayattam* ritual dance of the Malabar region, by which local gods are invoked and celebrated to protect families and sacred forests, *kavus*, inhabited by ancestral spirits and snake deities, called *nagas*. Kerala mystics and magicians are then described, such as the famous Pradeep Houdino of Beypore, whose performance, *Magic Fiesta*, she had the opportunity to witness. The following chapters describe the journey to the Western Ghats, through Wayanad, the land of coffee flowers and Adivasi tribes, dialogues about the communist

politics in Kerala, a visit to the Kurichya community and Thirunelli temple, the pineapple and *chai* plantations of Vagamon, all described by interweaving legend and history with the strong impression of the moment. Among the last encounters that Cătălina Pavel offers to her readers is the one with the Cistercian monks of Mount Kurismala the one with what remained of the Thalassery Protestant missionaries, and with the church of Saint Thomas in Kondungalloor.

"The last day in India" marks the beginning of the pandemic and the desolate state of the deserted cities that a short time ago were bustling with life. However, the end of the book is an optimistic one, with the author linking the catastrophe to new beginnings, to the New Year celebrated in Kerala with golden *konnapoo* flowers adorning the statues of blue Krishna and to the night-long lasting *Tholpavakoothu* performance somewhere in Palakkad. This ancient artistic tradition presented in the book, the shadow puppet theater performed by master puppeteers in honor of the goddess Badhrakali even in the absence of spectators, concludes the fabulous itinerary in the kingdom of the god Parasurama, where the monsoon is born and Ram always defeats the demon Ravana, like good defeats evil.

Cătălina Pavel's book is an encyclopedia of beauty, in the lands of spices, Kerala, a diary covering the time of a year spent in this paradise, embroidered with the golden thread of legends, myths and stories of daily life episodes among the Keralites, in which the flavors of the local cuisine naturally intertwine with sports, politics and the continuous present of ancient beliefs.

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**Lipi Ghosh (Editor), *Rabindranath Tagore in South-East Asia. Culture, Connectivity and Bridge Making*, New Delhi: Primus Books, 2016, 138 pp., ISBN: 978-93-84082-80-2.**

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Loved and appreciated all over the world, Rabindranath Tagore is remembered as one of Asia's greatest writers. During his life he created an incredible oeuvre and his genius connected the world in a very special way. His various works (poems, novels, plays, songs, paintings) are now appreciated more than ever before, and he continues to inspire young people worldwide. So it is not surprising that every year people celebrate his fascinating personality through conferences, seminars, workshops, volumes, or festivals. Rabindranath Tagore is among the most recognizable personalities of the world, and his legacy speaks for itself.

*Rabindranath Tagore in South-East Asia*, the volume edited by Professor Lipi Ghosh, is just another example of the respect towards the man and his creation. The volume is an outcome of an international seminar organized by Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Calcutta, and it looks at Tagore's perspectives and also to his voyages to different South-East Asian countries. Rabindranath Tagore was a true "intellectual pilgrim," as Sugata Bose considers him. In his travels, from Borobudur to Siam, Rabindranath Tagore was fascinated by the splendors of the region, and by the creativity of its people.

The seven chapters of this volume offer us an incredible journey to the South-East Asia and, more than that, we are witnessing Rabindranath Tagore's journeys and the rich cultures he got in touch with and the ways in which these cultures influenced his writings.

The chapter written by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, "Rabindranath Tagore in South-East Asia: Connectivity and Bridge Making," opens the volume and offers us important details on the concept of "Asianism,"

which came from the "discourse of nationalism in modern times." (13) The author continues:

> "What empowers the idea of Asia is *the memory in the unwritten archives of each culture*, the memory of the pre-colonial and pre-modern times when there was a free flow of people and cultures across the continent." (17)

Rabindranath Tagore's encounters with all the cultures of Asia and his efforts to build bridges between them were not an isolated event.

> "He saw in the transmission of elements of Indian culture to South-East Asia not a cultural conquest, but a resuscitation of the creativity." (19)

"His visit to South-East Asia in 1927 was exceptionally well documented," also agrees William Radice, the author of the second essay included in this collection.

> "His journeys were an expression of his deep commitment to internationalism and intercultural understanding and exchange, and they were also closely linked to the aspirations of the institution that he regarded as his main like work: Visva-Bharati." (21)

In his essay on "Leaving Home: The Journeys of Rabindranath Tagore," William Radice offers an overview on Tagore's journeys, but also on his homecomings. Returning home, in his beloved Bengal, "where he belongs," is a separate story of identity and belonging, and also of cultural influences that make South-Asia so special for the poet.

> "Tagore has left home, he is on a journey, but there is a sense in which, as he arrives in India-influenced Indonesia, he is coming home, returning to deep roots which he as an Indian can share with the people of the region." (25)

Tagore traveled in many parts of South-Asia. On "Rabindranath Tagore in Myanmar. Understanding His Visits and Impacts," the chapter written by U Thaw Kaung and Daw Khin Hnin Oo traces the history of Tagore's connection to Myanmar and the deep respect he received there.

> "Travelling in South-East Asian countries he could see at first hand how the local indigenous cultures had been blended with Hinduism and Buddhism received from his homeland." (39)

> "The few that saw him, respected him as a seer and a saint, an imposing, bearded figure with a sonorous voice when he recited his poetry in Bengali. They also saw the Bengalis treating him like a god." (43)

Similar descriptions come from Sawitree Charoenpong who's writing on "Rabindranath Tagore in Thailand: His Visit, Impact And Legacy;" Angela Oons Kheng Fay writing on "Rabindranath Tagore's Visit to Singapore and Malaya in 1927: Local Responses and Controversies;" Phan Thi Thu Hien on "Rabindranath Tagore's Visits to Vietnam and its Impacts" and Arun Das Gupta's chapter on "Rabindranath Tagore in Indonesia: An Experiment in Bridge-Building." In all these countries Tagore was very well received and appreciated for all the things he did:

> "Tagore's main ideas were always reflected from his lectures: promoting the syntheses of different cultures and glorifying the East." (51)
> "Tagore's trip to Malay and Singapore may be characterized as a 'triumphal progress'." (67)

The same opinion is expressed by Phan Thi Thu Hien in the opening of his chapter:

> "Rabindranath Tagore's visits to Asian countries at the beginning of the twentieth century are significant events of intercultural communication. […] Tagore was not only the first Asian writer to have won the Nobel Prize for Literature, but also a pioneer to revive inter-Asian relations and build the Asian Community in modern times." (79)

His influence has lasted in all these countries for a much longer time then his visits, and his legacy can contribute to promote cooperation further and for a long time to come.

In the *Afterword* of this important volume, Sourindranath Bhattacharya focuses on the fact that

> "many of the journeys of Rabindranath were part of a project, a path to some of his broader understanding. These were for him means to relate to another order of things, to other ways of life, other cultures and other social

systems and practices. This was also for him a way to get back to himself, to situate himself in his universe." (127)

His travels were incredible exercises of admiration and appropriation between people and cultures. Tagore was the ultimate traveler and South-East Asia was his home. His spirit lives on everywhere in Asia and his legacy still influences destinies, everywhere in the world. *Rabindranath Tagore in South-East Asia. Culture, Connectivity and Bridge Making*, edited by Lipi Ghosh, is a milestone in Tagore studies, and it provides an in-depth analysis of his philosophy, especially his concepts of nationalism, internationalism and universalism. Such a volume is very important and it is recommended to all those who want to learn more about Rabindranath Tagore's views on South-East Asian cultures.

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**Mahasweta Devi, *Our Santiniketan*. Translated by Radha Chakravarty, London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2022, 133 pp., ISBN: 978-0-8574-2-901-8.**

**Mihaela GLIGOR**
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For those who had the chance to visit, Santiniketan is an amazing place! Imbued with the personality and legacy of Rabindranath Tagore, Santiniketan is a place dedicated to arts and cultures of Bengal and the entire world, as Visva Bharati itself explains: Visva Bharati means "the communion of the world with India."

During times, numerous volumes on Rabindranath Tagore or Santiniketan were written and many generations found inspiration in them. But this one, *Our Santiniketan*, written by Mahasweta Devi, and wonderfully translated from Bengali by Radha Chakravarty, herself a writer, critic, and translator, is different and tells the story of a time when "Rabindranath, on his armchair, […] read for a while." (57-58)

Mahasweta Devi (1926-2016) was a writer and social activist. She was the author of numerous novels, essays, and short stories. She was deeply involved in India's literary scene and she was awarded Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary honor, in 1996. Also, in 1997, she received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for her "compassionate crusade through art and activism to claim for tribal peoples a just and honorable place in India's national life."

In *Our Santiniketan* we find a wonderful and personal chronicle of Rabindranath Tagore's favorite place, how it started, how it was during 1930s, who were Tagore's friends and visitors, how all of them created an university that lasts today and it is recognized all over the world as a hub of arts and culture. "Visva-Bharati was Rabindranath's creation, after all!" (4) An unknown Santiniketan appears under the eyes of the readers of this beautiful volume. "The Santiniketan of those few years I

spent there would come to occupy the place ‘closest to my heart’ in my memory,” (21) writes Mahasweta Devi. “In the Santiniketan of those days, all things filled one’s mind with bliss.” (24)

In the school created by Tagore, the students learnt different things, not only from the books, but also from nature, by observing the events and respecting everything around. “Santiniketan taught us to respect nature, and to love it.” (30) The lessons of that incredible place are mentioned in the entire volume, and they speak about the power of education, which was Tagore’s ‘superpower’ in India of those times. “Santiniketan taught us to recognize the unique glory of each separate season.” (90) “Santiniketan had taught us to love the spirit of life. For the spirit of life has spread its welcome everywhere.” (93)

> “In Rabindranath’s time, Santiniketan offered independence. It offered nurture. And those days, they didn’t teach us the value of discipline through any kind of preaching. They taught us through our everyday existence. That is the Santiniketan I summon up in my mind, daily.” (31)

The times remembered by Mahasweta Devi were different.

> “On the ground, we also created clay relief maps of the India of those days. […] The India of our times looked different, indeed. Those days even Bengal was undivided.” (55)

Those times, Rabindranath was there, among students, building his dream, receiving guests from abroad, teaching and being present for people that needed him around.

> “When we went to Rabindranath, I sometimes gazed at him in silence and marveled at the greatness of the person before me.” (60)

In many pages we find detailed descriptions of the times Tagore was there, among his students, reading or singing for them, performing different rituals, being a model and an inspiration for everybody.

> “Rabindranath himself, attired in undyed garad-silk dhoti and panjabi, performed the early morning prayer at the Mandir on the seventh day of the cold month of Poush.” (66)

> "All this I saw […]. I didn't realize then, that not everyone is so lucky!" (67)

Many personalities of those times visited Tagore at Santiniketan, and Mahasweta Devi was also lucky to see them. She mentioned, among others, Nandalal Bose, one of India's most significant artists; Kshitimohan Sen, one of the vice-chancellors of Visva-Bharati and the grandfather of Nobel laureate Amartya Sen (the name Amartya was Tagore's choice); Charles Freer Andrews, English missionary who advocated for Indian independence and for the rights of Indian laborers; Maitreyi Devi, the famous poet and novelist, best known for her novel *Na Hanyate*, and also for being Mircea Eliade's main character of the novel carrying her name, *Maitreyi* (*Bengal Nights*).

"*Our Santiniketan* testifies to the formative and lasting influence of Tagore," as Radha Chakravarty writes in her Introduction to Mahasweta Devi's memoir.

> "*Our Santiniketan* simultaneously captures the immediacy of the child's eye perspective while offering a window to the adult author's mature perspective." (xiii)

*Our Santiniketan* is a fascinating journey. "Have I succeeded in communicating to you what our Santiniketan was like?" (122), asked Mahasweta Devi in her concluding remarks. The answer is a big "Yes!" The readers of this wonderful volume know that Santiniketan is more than a place on the map. Santiniketan is synonym with Rabindranath Tagore and a guaranty for success. Santiniketan was, is, and will forever be the place where artists meet and create. Santiniketan's immortal legacy is Rabindranath Tagore. Any nostalgic journey to the beginnings of Santiniketan is an invaluable insight and must be appreciated.

*Our Santiniketan*, by Mahasweta Devi, is such a wonderful and powerful volume, and I highly recommend it to all those interested in Tagore, his Visva-Bharati, and in the amazing landscape of Bengal.

**Sarvani Gooptu, *Knowing Asia, Being Asian. Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in Bengali Periodicals, 1860–1940*, South Asia edition, New Delhi: Routledge, 2022, 276 pp., ISBN: 978-1-032-33229-1.**

**Mihaela GLIGOR**
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For most people living in those parts of the world belonging to the so called West, Asia is, most of the times, an exotic place, populated by people who speak strange languages, worship many gods, have different customs and eat a much too spicy food. Sometimes, it still takes courage to venture in Asia and to try to discover its impressive cultures. But when someone does that, a world of incredible richness captures the traveler and the only thing one can think is how to go back in Asia. This is something that was true in the past and definitely it is true nowadays, when traveling around the world and discovering new places are much easier and affordable.

Sarvani Gooptu, a Professor of Asian Literary and Cultural Studies at Netaji Institute for Asian Studies, Kolkata, India, offers us in this wonderfully written volume called *Knowing Asia, Being Asian* a different journey through Asia as mentioned in Bengali periodicals between 1860 and 1940. Asia of those times was a totally different world comparing with what we know these days, and the travelers were also different, most of them highly educated people – Indian poets, artists, writers – or English officials with a huge interest in Asian cultures, many of them setting up the printing press in India.

> "What was this 'Asia'? In the writings of Orientalist scholars in the second half of the 18th century, Asia was considered as a whole despite their imperialist biases." (xi)

During those times, the first "cosmopolitan ideas and Asian sensibilities" were discussed among the prominent Indian intellectuals.

> "Ram Mohan Roy […] was one of many who due to a knowledge of many languages could have a broader conception of history and a consciousness about India is Asia.
> […] Another world figure, Swami Vivekananda, represented Asia in the west, which he visited twice – 1893-1897 and 1899-1902 – and was able to establish connections with many intellectuals in Europe, England and America." (xiii)

In the same way, the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore's travels across Asia and his inspiring lectures were very important for establishing cultural bridges between Asian countries. But Tagore did more than that, as the author of this book reminds us:

> "Rabindranath Tagore's discussion on the importance of periodicals for impressionable youth in the late 19th century is probably the most well-read commendation given to them." (xxxiii)
> "Rabindranath Tagore remembers how *Bangadarshan* had stolen the heart of every Bengali." (xxxv)

Other Bengali intellectuals (among them Suniti Kuram Chatterjee, linguist and educationist or Sahana Devi, a singer) expressed the joy of receiving and reading, in the Calcutta University Library,

> "the latest edition of the periodical Prabashi which had become 'a national institution for expression of political, literary and cultural history in Bengali'." (xxxv)

Pointing out the numerous ways in which Asia was seen through the eyes on important figures of those times,

> "*Knowing Asia, Being Asian* aims to discuss most of the articles which expressed an Asia consciousness through various lenses." (xxxvii)

In her writing, Sarvani Gooptu takes a force tour following "travelling in Asian lands" as seen both by men and women, showing that "travel accounts have been an important source of history." (19)

> "In general, in these travelogues, two aspects are important. One was the straightforward travel story where the traveler is describing the places he

> visited, routes he takes and then inspires his fellowmen to follow suit. The other aspect in these essays is more complex and nuanced and must be gleaned through inferences. Descriptions of places of interest as well as customs, dresses and culture as well as notes on political, social and cultural values of the places visited reflect an Indian vision, and make these articles valuable." (19)

Intricate descriptions of the wonders of Asia, as well as the most personal and deep feelings towards something special seen on the way, stories of ports, temples, gods, festivals, people, and life changing experiences, all these are important for "physical and spiritual well-being" of the travelers. (32) Across Asia, from India to Siam, Malay, Manchuria, Singapore, Cambodia, Japan, China or Korea, Indian travelers were carrying with them their own Indian values. So that "all the travelogues compare what they see with India and the people they encounter with Indians." (35)

In Chapter 3, "A woman's perspective. Writings for women, about women and by women," Sarvani Gooptu discusses how women became the focus of disseminating of Asian consciousness. The articles by women "describe features, attributes, activities and dilemmas of women of Asia as well as similarities or dissimilarities with Indian/Bengali women." (51)

> "All travelling women start their journey from the preparations at home and then describe their travel through the ocean and the road or rail in detail. Presumably, they are the first women in their families to be making this arduous journey which is why they go into details." (67)

These women "set an example for other women" (73) and we must admit that they were courageous enough to travel and write about. They offered us first hand descriptions of Asian lands as seen by women, important pages for the women that take the same journey nowadays.

Very interesting is the chapter dedicated to "teaching about Asia in children's magazines." We learn that "*Sakha* has been considered to be the first monthly periodical for children." (77) Inspired by this magazine,

> "Gyanadanandini Debi, wife of Satyendranath Tagore, […] draws in the Tagore house […] a new magazine for young called *Balak*. […] Soon Rabindranath Tagore took over as executive editor." (77)

Translation of stories and folk tales also had an important role in educating the young generation. In the same way, the quest for an Asian art and culture was important and "it was both the world and the local and national context where it was played out." (95)

> "Other forms of culture like drama, music and dance are also discussed in detail and a consistent comparison is made with India. Much before Tagore ventured to popularize Asian theatre and dance in India, there are references to them in the journals." (102)

Tagore and other prominent intellectuals were dreaming on Asian interconnections, and Santiniketan was the best place to introduce and study different cultures.

Pilgrimage was also represented in the periodicals studied by Sarvani Gooptu in writing of this wonderful book.

> "Connection with Outer Asia was most evident in the rediscovery of Buddhism […] identified as originating from India, through its living presence in the other Asian countries. Buddhism thus acquired for Indian intellectuals a new area of pride, intangible yet strong." (113)
> "The recovery of lost memories of Buddha and Buddhism was a unique history and Indians eagerly and strategically joined with the British in this journey of rediscovery […] their own history and philosophy." (113)

The nationalist discourse and nation's place in the world (of Asia) represent another touching and important analysis for what *knowing* Asia, *being* Asian means. The cultural identity of each country that belongs to Asia is important for unveiling the image of political identity of that country.

> "In Bengal, the discovery of Indian political and cultural influence in South and South-East Asia through the archeological and philological discoveries of the French and German scholars invoked a deep pride and nationalistic fervour. India was in no way inferior to colonizers." (141)

The united Asia was a dream many shared those times. “In much of the writings, unity of Asia is a familiar theme.” (163) “Buddhist linkages in Asia were often probed in the journals as a means of considering a long-lasting unity.” (165) “An Asian nation’s triumph symbolized the end of western hegemony as well as Asia’s awaking.” (166) Most of the periodicals analyzed by the author tried to explain the political situation of Asia in the context of world politics, also focusing on the ideas of unity opposed to nationalism. Important scholars from different parts of Asia of those times were involved in all these aspects, proving that it was important for them to have an opinion on the matters as such.

Rich in details, based on archival research, this is a very complex volume which can be extremely useful for students and all researchers interested in the idea of Asia. *Knowing Asia, Being Asian* is a must read before embarking in a journey to Asia of our times, as the reader can find wonderfully written passages on the places and cultures that continue to impress visitors.

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## Anti-Plagiarism Policy

The *Romanian Journal of Indian Studies*'s anti-plagiarism policy and procedure on preventing plagiarism in the studies published by the Journal:

The current document, in accordance with the Decision No. 82/4.01.2022 of the Administrative Council, the Decision No. 119/23.09.2021 of Babeş-Bolyai University's Senate and the Decision No. 15823/14.11.2022 of the Administration Council, describes the procedure of the anti-plagiarism analysis of manuscripts received for publication and the use of plagiarism detection software within the editorial office of *the Romanian Journal of Indian Studies*.

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For general conceptual guidelines regarding plagiarism, the *Romanian Journal of Indian Studies* recommends the following:

- Law no. 206 of May 27, 2004 updated version (http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/52457).
- *Avoiding Plagiarism*, published by Harvard University (https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/what-constitutes-plagiarism).
- *Plagiarism: Decision making & dealing with grey-zones across academic fields* (https://researcheracademy.elsevier.com/publication-process/ethics/plagiarism-decision-making-dealing-grey-zones-across-academic-fields) and *Plagiarism* (https://researcheracademy.elsevier.com/publication-process/ethics/plagiarism) published by Elsevier.
- *The Strategy for Preventing and Combating the Phenomenon of Plagiarism at Babeș-Bolyai University* (https://doctorat.ubbcluj.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Strategie-Anti-plagiat-UBB-3.pdf) and the *Ethical Committee's Guide for Students on Academic Honesty and Ethics* (https://www.ubbcluj.ro/ro/despre/organizare/files/Comisia-de-etica-Etica-si-onestitate-academica-ghid-pentru-studenti.pdf).
- *COPE Recommendations on Publication Ethics* (https://publicationethics.org/).
- *Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing* (https://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines/principles-transparency-and-best-practice-scholarly-publishing).

## Call for papers

The *Romanian Journal of Indian Studies* invites researchers and academics to contribute to the eighth issue (2024).

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 2024.

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

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*Cluj Center for Indian Studies* is dedicated to the research of Indian traditions, philosophies, languages and religions that render India as one of the most interesting and exciting cultures of the world. The center's main objective is the promotion of Indian culture and its better comprehension through complete programs of education, research and publishing.

*Cluj Center for Indian Studies* developed academic cooperation with well-known universities from India (among them: University of Calcutta, Jadavpur University Kolkata, University of Delhi, Ambedkar University New Delhi, Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar) and similar centers from Europe (Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS), Georg-August Universität Göttingen, Germany, and Institute of Oriental Studies, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland).

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Among *Cluj Center for Indian Studies* activities are invited lectures on Indian culture, history, philosophy, literature, religions; workshops of Sanskrit, Bengali, and Hindi; courses of history, culture and civilization; conferences, seminars, summer schools, book and film presentations; exhibitions of photography, documentaries, concerts of Indian classic music or dance recitals.

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