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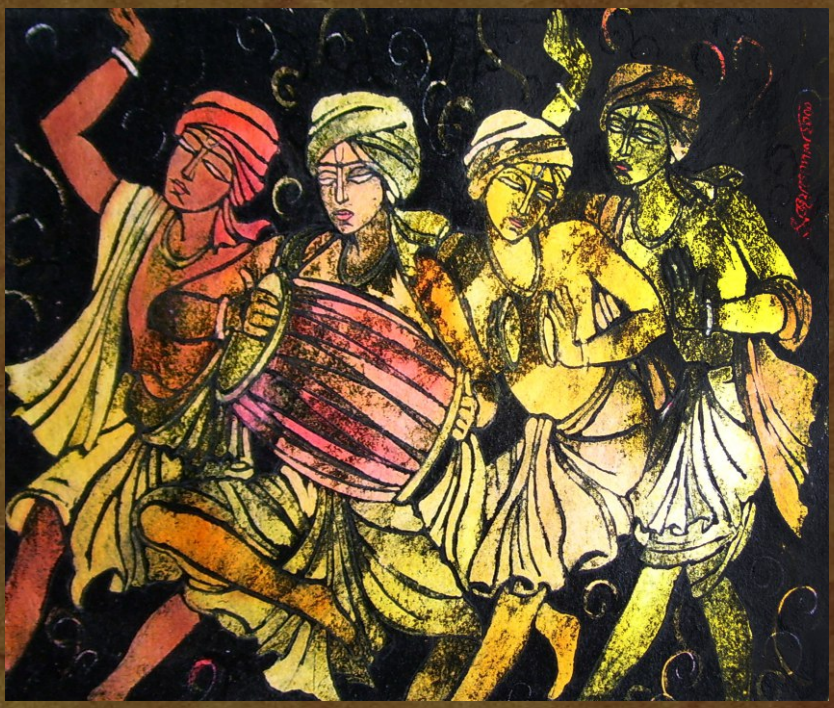

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ARGUMENT

Mihaela GLIGOR
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> "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.

STUDIES

A Comparison of Atheistic Attitudes in Jainism, Buddhism, and Some Systems of Philosophical Hinduism

B.N. HEBBAR
George Washington University, U.S.A.

Abstract: This article expounds and examines the various arguments against the existence of God advanced by the philosophers of the various traditions in Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. More than that, the article summarizes and classifies these arguments under several titles. In the end, it divides the religious history of India into the non-theistic and theistic eras.

Keywords: Atheism, God, Jainism, Śvetāmbara, Digambara, Hemacandra, Jinasena-II, Theravāda, Mahāyāna, Madhyamaka, Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, Śāntideva, Vasubandhu, Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita, Sāṅkhya, Kapila, Aniruddha, Mīmāṁsā, Prabhākara, Śālikanātha, Kumārila, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Basavaṇṇa, Nimbārka, Vallabha, Caitanya, Kabīrdās, Sūrdās, Theism.

On the issue of God (*Īśvara*), the philosophically oriented intelligentsia of ancient and medieval India have dabbled in all the

theories – polytheism, henotheism[1], skepticism[2], agnosticism[3], atheism, monism[4], and theism – associated with this issue.

Firstly, the concept of God needs to be, at least, rudimentarily defined. God is understood as a Supreme Being who is without peers (*asamāna*) or superiors (*anīśa*). God is, by definition, omnipresent (*sarvavyāpi*), omniscient (*sarvajña*), omnipotent (*sarvaśakta*). He is the creator (*sṛṣṭikartā*), sustainer (*dhāraka*), destroyer (*samhārakartā*) of the Universe (*jagat*). He is eternal (*nitya*), transcendental (*pāramārthika*), completely self-sufficient (*pūrṇa*), free from defects of any sort (*akalaṅka*), righteous (*dharmātmā*) etc. The Hindu philosophical systems such as the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Yoga, and Advaita Vedānta that accept the existence of God have generally refrained from identifying who this God[5] is. The sectarian Hindu traditions such as those of Rāmānuja Vedānta and Madhva Vedānta have identified God as Viṣṇu, the Śaiva Systems have identified God as Śiva, and the Śākta tradition has identified God as Devī (Mother-Goddess).

Secondly, the terms God (*Īśvara*) and gods (*devas*) need to be distinguished. The gods (*devas*) are generally considered as powerful divine beings who have attained that status by engaging in meditation (*dhyāna*) and other spiritual exercises and are largely limited to and identified with their celestial portfolios. For example, the Vedic deities such as Agni, is said to be the god of fire, Vāyu, the god of wind, Sūrya

---

[1] Examples of henotheism: *Ṛgveda* I: 24: 14-15 (Varuṇa), I: 44: 1 (Agni), VI: 30: 1 (Indra).

[2] Example of skepticism: *Ṛgveda* X: 129 (*Nāsadīya Sūkta*).

[3] Examples of agnosticism: *Dīgha Nikāya* 1 (*Brahmajāla Sutta*), *Dīgha Nikāya* 11 (*Kevaḍḍha Sutta*), *Dīgha Nikāya* 13 (*Tevijja Sutta*), *Khuddaka Nikāya* (*Sutta Nipāta* V: 15-16).

[4] Examples of monism: *Ṛgveda* I: 164: 46, *Chandogya Upanisad* III: 14: 1.

[5] Though some have identified the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika God with Śiva, and the Yoga God with Viṣṇu, and Advaita with its iṣṭadevatā concept has the left the matter to the votaries of one of the pañcāyatana gods.

as the Sun-God, Uṣas as the goddess of dawn, and so on. The gods of Classical Hinduism are similarly identified with one particular function such as Gaṇeśa who is considered as the god of beginnings, Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, and so on.

In the early Vedic era (3000-1500 BCE), the whole attitude was very polytheistic. However, the Vedic masters constantly engaged in henotheism, the idea of temporarily raising and praising one chosen god as deity *extraordinare* over others besides acknowledging the existence of other gods. The result was that no one particular Vedic deity became the Supreme Being. In the Upaniṣadic era, Prajāpati emerged as some sort of head of the divine hosts with Indra as his deputy. However, all these gods seemed to have been inundated with all sorts of desires, and as such when the heterodox traditions of Jainism and Buddhism emerged on the Indian religious scene, their religious teachers considered these gods as inferior to the Jain Tīrthaṅkaras and the Buddha. While Jains and Buddhists accepted the gods at the popular level dealing with worldly matters, they largely ignored them in matters of spiritual discipline leading to enlightenment (*prajñā*) and salvation (*nirvāṇa*). When the systems of philosophical Hinduism emerged, two of them became avowedly atheistic. One was the Sāṅkhya, and the other was the Mīmaṁsā.

Non-Vedic Dharmic Traditions

Jain Arguments against the Existence of God

Śvetāmbara Tradition

An example of Jain atheism from the Śvetāmbara tradition comes from the philosopher Hemacandra (12th century CE) where he points out that the Universe has neither been produced by anyone nor is sustained by anyone. It exists by itself without any support.[6]

[6] *Yogaśāstra* IV: 106 (based on Quarnström translation).

Digambara Tradition

An example of Jain atheism from the Digambara tradition comes from the philosopher Jinasena-II (9th century CE), as he says the following:

> "How many foolish people say that there must be someone who created this world? To dispel the prejudice of such people, the first thing that is examined here is the doctrine of creationism. If it is assumed that there is a Creator of this world, then one should consider where He lived outside of creation before creating the first, the world of creation? Where did he sit and create the world? If it is said that He is baseless and eternal, how did He create this creation and where did He create it and place it? The second thing is that you have considered that God to be one and without a body, even then he cannot be the creator of the universe because how can one God be capable of creating many forms in the universe? And how can the bodiless, immaterial God create tangible objects? Because it is clearly seen in the world that tangible objects are created by tangible men only, just as tangible pots are created by tangible potters. There is another thing, when all the material things in the world cannot be created without causal material, then how can God create the world without it? If you say that He first creates the causal material and then creates the world, then this is also not correct because it creates the defect of instability. To create the causal material, a causal material is also required. If God creates that causal material first, then He will have to create the third causal material suitable for the second causal material before that. And in this way, that cycle will never end. If you say that the causal material is created by nature itself, God has not created it, then this can also be applied to the world – it should be accepted that the world is also self-evident, no one has created it. Apart from this, there is one more thing which is worth considering that who created this God? If someone has created Him, then the condition defect as mentioned above comes into play and if He is self-proven – no one has created Him then this world can also be self-proven – it can be created on its own. If you say that God is independent and capable of creating the universe, therefore He creates the world without any material things just by

His will, then this is just your wish. Which intelligent person will believe this statement that is devoid of all logic? Another thing that is worth pondering over is that if God is accomplished – He has completed all the work – He has no work left to do, then how would He have the desire to create the universe? Because the accomplished person does not have any kind of desire. If you say that He is uncreated, then He cannot be capable of creating the world. Just like an uncreated potter cannot create the world. There is another thing, that the God you believe in is immaterial, inactive, all-pervasive and without any defects, so such a God can never create the world, because it has been written above that immaterial God cannot create material things. To accomplish any work, some action like movement of hands and feet etc. has to be done but you have considered God to be inactive, therefore He cannot create the world. If it is considered active then it is impossible, because action can be done only by that person from whose abode some area is left, but your God is omnipresent, how will he be able to do any action? Apart from this, God cannot even have the desire to create the universe because you have considered God to be without any vices. It is impossible for a person whose soul does not have vices like attachment, hatred etc. to have any desire. When God is self-sufficient and does not desire anything, then what reward will He get in creating the world? This too should be considered, because if a person creates the world without any purpose, then His creation proves to be futile. If you say that this is just His play He creates the world only through play, then I will have to say with sadness that your God is very attached, very ignorant who acts like children without any purpose. If you say that God creates the bodies of living beings according to their deeds, that is, He creates the bodies of the people according to the deeds they perform, then this is also not correct to say, because if you believe like this, your God ceases to be God. The reason for this is that by expecting results from actions He will become dependent like a weaver and by becoming dependent He will no longer be a God, because just as a weaver is dependent on the yarn and other equipment and cannot be called God because of his dependence, similarly your God is also dependent on His deeds and cannot be called God because of His

dependence. God is always independent and free from all obstacles. If you say that happiness, sorrow, etc. happen automatically according to the deeds of the living beings and God is considered to be the cause of them, then also your statement is not correct, because when happiness, sorrow, etc. happen automatically according to the deeds, then it is a pity that you are uselessly affirming the existence of God. Perhaps it may be said that God is very loving and compassionate, therefore He creates the world to benefit the living beings, then He should have made this whole world happy and trouble-free. Why does He make many parts of the world unhappy despite being compassionate? Another question is whether the world existed before the creation or not? If it did, then why did He waste His efforts in creating a self-existent thing? And if it did not exist, then what would He create? Because no one can create a thing which is completely unreal like a lotus in the sky. If God, the creator of the world, is free from the impurities and stains of karma, then being indifferent and free from attachment and hatred, He cannot create the world. And if He is a worldly person, tainted with the filth of karma, then He cannot call himself God just like you and me, then how will He create the world? In this way, this theory of creation cannot be proved in any way. Just think about this fact that God creates the world and therefore all the living beings in the world are like His children. Then the same God also destroys everyone and therefore He commits a grave sin in destroying His own children. Perhaps you may say that He kills the evil beings only to control them, then it would be better if He did not create the evil beings at all. Thus, creationism is a false doctrine."[7]

Buddhist Arguments against the Existence of God

Theravāda Tradition

An example of Buddhist atheism according to the Theravāda tradition is to be found in many suttas of the Pali Canon. Below is given

[7] *Mahāpurāṇa* IV: 16-31, 38. The excerpt is quite long, but it is very important in explaining the tradition.

one of them as an example. It is the *Tevijja Sutta* which is the 13th sutta of the *Dīgha Nikāya*.

The context of the *Tevijja Sutta* is of two young brahmin men named Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja that were conversing with each other (while taking a bath in the river) as to which among the many paths to salvation enunciated by the various brahminical teachers was the correct one? After dialoging quite a bit, neither could convince the other as to which of the paths was the correct one. So, Vāseṭṭha thought that it would be a good idea to go to the Buddha for his opinion and guidance on this vital matter. After they both agreed, they went to the Buddha. When they finally started talking with the Buddha, below is the most vital part of their dialog extracted from the Tevijja Sutta.

> "Concerning the true path and the false, Gotama, various Brahmans, Gotama, teach various paths; The Addhariya Brahmans, the Tittiriya Brahmans, the Chandoka Brahmans, the Bavharijjha Brahmans. Are all those saving paths? Are they all paths which will lead him, who acts according to them, into a state of union with Brahmā? "Just, Gotama, as near a village or a town there are many and various paths, yet they all meet together in the village – just in that way are all the various paths taught by various Brahmans – the Addhariya Brahmans, the Tittiriya Brahmans, the Chandoka Brahmans, the Bavharijjha Brahmans. Are all these saving paths? Are they all paths which will lead him, who acts according to them, into a state of union with Brahmā?" "Do you say that they all lead aright Vāseṭṭha?" "So I say, Gotama." "But yet, Vāseṭṭha, is there a single one of the Brahmans versed in the three Vedas who has ever seen Brahmā face to face?" "No, indeed, Gotama!" "Or is there then, Vāseṭṭha, a single one of the teachers of the Brahmans versed in the three Vedas who has seen Brahmā face to face?" "No, indeed, Gotama!" "Or is there then, Vāseṭṭha, a single one of the Brahmans back to the seventh generation of a teacher's teacher who has seen Brahmā face to face?" "No, indeed, Gotama!" "Well then, Vāseṭṭha, those ancient Rishis of the Brahmans versed in the Three

Vedas, the authors of the verses, the utterers of the verses, whose ancient form of words so chanted, uttered or composed, the Brahmans of today chant over again or repeat; intoning or reciting exactly as has been intoned or recited – to wit, Aṭṭhaka, Vāmaka, Vāmadeva, Vessāmitta, Yamataggi, Aṅgīrasa, Bhāradvāja, Vāseṭṭha, Kassapa, and Bhagu – did even they speak thus, saying; 'We know it, we have seen it, where Brahmā is, whence Brahmā is, whither Brahmā is?'" "Not so, Gotama!" "Then you say, Vāseṭṭha, that none of the Brahmans, or of their teachers, or of their pupils, even back to the seventh generation of a teacher's teacher has ever seen Brahmā face to face. And that even the Rishis of old, the authors and utterers of the verses, of the ancient form of words which the Brahmans of today so carefully intone and recite precisely as they have been handed down – even they did not pretend to know or to have seen where or whence or whither Brahmā is. So that the Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas have forsooth said thus; 'What we know not, what we have not seen, to a state of union with that we can show the way, and can say: This is the straight path, this is the direct way which makes for salvation, and leads him, who acts according to it, into a state of union with Brahmā! "Now what think you, Vāseṭṭha? Does it not follow, this being so, that the talk of the Brahmans, versed though they be in the Three Vedas, turns out to be foolish talk?" "Verily, Gotama, that being so, it follows that the talk of the Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas is foolish talk." "Verily, Vāseṭṭha, that Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas should be able to show the way to a state of union with that which they do not know, neither have seen – such a condition of things can in no wise be. "Just, Vāseṭṭha, as when a string of blind men are clinging one to the other, neither can the foremost see, nor can the middle one see, nor can the hindmost see just even so, it seems to me, Vāseṭṭha, is the talk of the Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas but blind talk: the first sees not, the middle one sees not, nor can the latest see. The talk then of these Brahmans versed in the Three Vedas turns out to be ridiculous, mere words, a vain and empty thing."[8]

[8] *Tevijja Sutta* vv.10-15 (Rhys-Davids translation).

The great Theravāda Buddhist philosopher, Buddhaghoṣa (370-450 CE), in his work, the *Visuddhimagga* says: "For here there is no Brahmā God, Creator of the round of births, Phenomena alone flow on – Cause and component, their conditions."[9]

Mahāyāna Tradition

In the Mahāyāna text, the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, the Buddha while teaching Mahāmati says: "The personal soul, continuity, the Skandhas (five aggregates), causation, atoms, the supreme spirit, the ruler, the creator, – [they are] discriminations in the Mind-only."[10] In another Mahāyāna text, the *Hṛdaya Sūtra*, the Buddha while teaching his eminent disciple Śāriputra says: "O Śāriputra, form does not differ from emptiness, and emptiness does not differ from form."[11]

Madhyamaka School

The Madhyamaka school of Mahāyāna Buddhism takes the aforesaid *Hṛdaya Sūtra* statement as one of its main pillars on which its thought rests upon. The Buddha talked about the essencelessness (*anātmā*) of all phenomena as one of three marks of 'existence'. This concept of essencelessness is understood as emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of all phenomena in the Madhyamaka School. The world of Relative Reality is the world of forms and phenomena. This world is ultimately essenceless as it is non-substantial (*anatmā*), impermanent (*anitya*), and dependent (*paratantra*). The world of Absolute Reality is emptiness. This is what the *Hṛdaya Sūtra* was trying to convey in an enigmatic way. Thus, this notion of God as someone that is an uncaused, permanent, independent

[9] *Visuddhimagga* XIX: 20 (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli translation).
[10] *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* II: 139 (Suzuki translation).
[11] *Hṛdaya Sūtra* 2 (Dharma Master Lok To translation).

Supreme Being is totally rejected as the existence of such a being contradicts the basic worldview of Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings.

Nāgārjuna (150-250 CE), the principal exponent of the Madhyamaka school, rejects the notion of any causeless cause like God with the words: "If there were to be a cause of material form distinct from material form, there would then be a cause without an effect. There certainly is no ineffect-ive cause."[12]

Candrakīrti (600-670 CE), another important exponent of the Madhyamaka School, points out that the notion of causality is impossible. He says: "Since the sprout and the seed do not exist simultaneously, there cannot be otherness. So how can the seed be other? Thus, as creation of sprout from seed is not established, reject this premise of production from other."[13]

Using the analogy of the seed (cause) and the sprout (effect), Candrakīrti tries to show the absurdity of the notion of causality. Firstly, to have a connection between cause and effect they need to exist simultaneously. However, the very process of causality requires chronological sequence with the cause preceding the effect. But this cannot happen because seed (cause) and sprout (effect) do not exist simultaneously to say that one is the cause, and the other is the effect. And on the other hand, if they do exist simultaneously, the effect (sprout) is already there, and so what did the so-called cause produce?

---

[12] rūpena tu vinirmuktam yadi syād rūpa kāraṇam, akāryam kāraṇam syāt nāsti akāryam ca kāraṇam. (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* IV:3) (Associated translation above from Kalupahana).

[13] astyaṅkuraś ca na hi bījasamānakālo bījaṃ kutaḥ paratayāstu vinā paratvam. janmāṅkurasya na hisidhyati tena bījāt saṃtyajyatāṃ parata udbhavatīti pakṣaḥ. (*Madhyamakāvatāra* VI:17) (Associated translation above from Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche).

So, by implication, that God as the creator and the world as His creation in terms of cause and effect is similar to seed and sprout and hence must be rejected.

Yet another philosopher of the Madhyamaka School was Śāntideva (685-763 CE), who said:

> If "God is the cause of the world, then explain what God is? If He is 'the elements', (then) so be it, but then why the fuss over a mere name? Moreover, the earth and other elements are not one, nor permanent. They are inert and not divine. One can walk on them. They are impure. That is not God. Space cannot be God, because it is inert. Nor is the Self, because its existence was disproved above. If creativity belongs to what is beyond conception, what can be said of the inconceivable? What does He want to create? If a Self, surely that is something eternal? God, consciousness resulting from a cognizable object, and the nature of earth and other elements, are without beginning. Suffering and happiness are the result of action. So, say what He created? If you argue that the cause has no beginning, how could there be a beginning to its effect? How come He does not create continuously, if He is not dependent on anything else? There is nothing else whatsoever which was not made by Him, so on what might He depend? If you argue that God is dependent on a combination of conditions, then again, He is not the cause. He would have the power neither to refrain from creating if the combination of conditions were present, nor to create if they were absent. If you argue that God creates without desiring to create, it follows that He is subject to something other than Himself. Even if He creates out of the desire to create, He is subject to desire. In what way does this creator have omnipotence?"[14]

[14] *Bodhicaryāvatāra* IX: 118-125 (Crosby & Skilton translation).

Yogācāra School

This school of Mahāyāna Buddhism believes that Consciousness is the only reality. The pluralistic world is just a (ultimately false) projection of this one Consciousness (*vijñāna*). The different individual consciousnesses are merely sullied (by ignorance and karma) versions of this one super consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*).

Vasubandhu (4th century CE), one of the two co-founding philosophers of the Yogācāra School, while rejecting the idea of God, said:

> "All the dharmas that arise, arise by reason of the five causes and the four conditions that we have just explained. The world does not proceed from a single cause that is called God, or Puruṣa, or Pradhāna (Primal Matter), or any other name.
>
> How do you prove this thesis? If you think that the thesis is proven through arguments, you betray your doctrine that the world arises from a single cause.
>
> Not from God or from any other cause, since there is a succession, etc. That things are produced by a single cause, by God, Mahādeva, or Vāsudeva, is inadmissible for many reasons.
>
> If things were produced by a single cause, they would arise all at the same time: now each of us knows that they arise successively.
>
> Theist: They arise successively by virtue of the desires of God, who says, 'May this arise now! May this perish now! May this arise and perish later!'
>
> If this were the case, then things do not arise from a single cause, since the desires (of God) are multiple. Moreover, these multiple desires would have to be simultaneous, since God, the cause of these desires, is not multiple, and things would all arise at the same time.
>
> Theist: The desires of God are not simultaneous, because God, in order to produce his desires takes into account other causes.
>
> If this were so, then God is not the single unique cause of all things. And the causes that God takes into account are produced successively: they

depend then on causes which are themselves dependent on other causes: an infinite regression.

Theist: It is admitted that the series of causes has no beginning.

This would admit that samsāra does not have an origin. You then abandon the doctrine of a single cause and return to the Buddhist theory of causes (*hetus*) and conditions (*pratyaya*).

Theist: The desires of God are simultaneous, but things do not arise at the same time because they arise as God wishes them to arise, that is, in succession.

This is inadmissible. The desires of God remain what they are. Let us explain. Suppose that God desires 'May this arise now! May that arise later!' We do not see why the second desire, at first non-efficacious, will be efficacious later; why, if it is efficacious later, it will not be so initially.

What advantage does God obtain from this great effort by which He produces the world?

Theist: God produces the world for his own satisfaction (*prīti*).

He is then not God, the Sovereign (*Īśvara*), in what concerns his own satisfaction, since He cannot realize it without a means (*upāya*). And if He is not sovereign with regard to his own satisfaction, how can He be sovereign with regard to the world?

Further, do you say that God finds satisfaction in seeing the creatures that He has created in the prey of all the sufferings of existence, including the tortures of the hells? Homage to this God! Well said, in truth, is the popular stanza, 'He is called Rudra because he burns, because he is excited, ferocious, terrible, an eater of flesh, blood, and marrow'.

The followers of God, the single cause of the world, deny visible causes – causes and conditions – the efficacy of the seed with regard to the sprout, etc. If, modifying their position, they admit the existence of these causes, and pretend that these causes serve God as auxiliaries, this then is no more than, a pious affirmation, for we do not maintain any activity of a cause besides the activity of the so-called secondary causes.

Furthermore, God would not be sovereign with regard to auxiliary causes, since these cooperate in the production of the effect through their own

efficacy. Perhaps, in order to avoid the negation of causes, which are visible, and in order to avoid the affirmation of present action by God, which is not visible, the Theist would say that the work of God is creation: but creation, dependent only on God, would never have a beginning, like God himself, and this is a consequence that the Theist rejects.

We would refute the doctrine of Puruṣa, of Pradhāna, etc., as we have refuted the theist doctrine, *mutatis mutandis*. Thus, no dharma arises from a single cause.

Alas, persons are unclear! Like the birds and the animals, truly worth of pity, they go from existence to existence, accomplishing diverse actions; they experience the results of these actions and falsely believe that God is the cause of these results. (We must explain the Truth in order to put an end to this false conception)."[15]

Dharmakīrti (600-660 CE), who was a philosopher of the Svatantra-Yogācāra School provides three arguments rejecting the existence of God. His first argument is that the existence of God cannot be proved by resorting to the design argument by the theist who provides the analogy of the particular form of the jar (*ghaṭa*) being produced by an intelligent maker, i.e., a potter (*kumbhakāra*) as being equivalent at a cosmic level to the universe being produced by a super-intelligent maker, i.e., God. Dharmakīrti points out that the aforesaid analogy is riddled with logical problems. Firstly, the jar is one simple effect of a certain form that has been created by the potter, whereas the universe is made up of multiple complex effects (such as mountains, lakes, various types of bodies etc.). Secondly, there is no concrete proof that the complex universe could not have come about without God. Thirdly, to use the jargon of the logicians, 'the middle term (grayness of the smoke) is too wide (as grayness is not exclusive to smoke).' It is not the fire and smoke type of invariable cause-effect relationship here, in which there is no doubt, but more like

[15] *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* II: 64d (de La Vallée-Poussin translation).

the gray color of the smoke which is looked upon as a means to prove that fire is the cause instead of the smoke. This is logically fallacious as the color gray is shared by many other things which have no relation to the fire. Fourthly, the anthill (*valmīka*) which is also an effect has multiple producers, i.e., the ants, not just one cause like God.[16]

Dharmakīrti's second argument against the theist who tries to establish the existence of God by resorting to the analogy of the axe which sits there in the block of wood until an agent, i.e., the woodcutter, picks it up and starts chopping to produce firewood. According to the theist, God is like the woodcutter who affects the motion of creation. However, Dharmakīrti points out that this analogy again is faulty because God who is a permanent being in every sense of the term cannot change in any way. The act of creation would make God change in some way, and hence His permanence would be jeopardized. Also, God was not the cause of creation before He began the creation process, and suddenly, He becomes the cause when He begins to create. This again would bring change to an essentially changeless being. In the case of the woodcutter and the axe, all this would be fine, as the axe, the woodcutter, and the wood are all impermanent entities.[17]

Dharmakīrti's third argument against the theist who tries to establish the existence of God through the analogy of the battle-axe craftsman who may not be there when the battle-axe is put to use, but still remains the remote unseen cause of the effect of the battle-axe. According to the theist, God is like the battle-axe craftsman. In other words, God is the remote, unseen cause of the Universe. To this, Dharmakīrti points out

[16] *Pramāṇavārttika* II: 11-13.
[17] *Pramāṇavārttika* II: 14-20.

that God (unlike the battle-axe craftsman) can never be absent as God (by definition) is permanent and omnipresent.[18]

Śāntarakṣita (725-788 CE), also a philosopher of the Svatantra-Yogācāra school, and who was the abbot-president of the Nāḷandā Buddhist University (which functioned from 400 to 1198 CE), also rejects the existence of God. This rejection is found in his work, the *Tattvasaṅgraha*, on which his commentator, Kamalaśīla (740-795 CE) has written a gloss under the title of *Pañjikā*. Śāntarakṣita has written this portion in the form of a debate between himself (as a Svatantra-Yogācāra Buddhist) and a theist (of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school of Hinduism). Below are important segments of that debate:

> "Śāntarakṣita: Where there are already such causes of the world as merit and demerit, atoms and so forth, why do these philosophers postulate another cause in the shape of God?"
>
> Theist: Otherwise, all things would come into existence simultaneously – what is meant is that, if the cause were one whose efficiency is never obstructed, then all things would come into existence simultaneously – exactly like things which are admitted to be produced at one and the same time. No insentient thing, etc. – though merit and the rest may be the cause – yet all these, being devoid of sentience or intelligence, cannot, by themselves, without an Operator or Supervisor, produce their effects; hence there must be a Creator (who is intelligent), as nothing that is devoid of intelligence is ever found to be the Operator. This argument is formulated as follows: – 'What is devoid of Intelligence cannot produce its effect, without an Operator, e.g. such things as clay-lump, stick, water, string and the rest (all of which are required for the making of the jar) cannot produce the jar, without the potter – merit and the rest (which are regarded as the cause of the World) are all devoid of Intelligence, hence the idea that (these are enough to produce the World) would be contrary to the universal

[18] *Pramāṇavārttika* II: 22-28.

proposition stated. Thus, it becomes established that there is an Operator and that is God. Even so, merit and the rest do not become useless (in the producing of the World); because God is only the 'Efficient Cause' (Guide, Supervisor) [and atoms and merit, etc. would still be needed as the 'constituent' and 'contributory' causes].

Śāntarakṣita: "Those merit and demerit that are held to subsist in the Soul or Spirit (of Man) may be the required Operator; why should one assume a God?"

Theist: That cannot be right. The particular Spirit at that time (of Creation) would be wholly unconscious – so long as his body, sense-organs and other aggregates of causes and effects are not produced, the Spirit remains unconscious, not perceiving even such color, etc. as are quite perceptible; under the circumstances, how could it perceive merit and demerit, which are entirely imperceptible? To this end, there is the following declaration: 'the ignorant creature, not master of his own pleasure and pain, may go to Heaven or to the Nethermost Hole, only as he is urged by God.'[19]

Śāntarakṣita: Any such eternal things as God and the like cannot produce any effects; because in any productive activity of an Eternal Thing, there is incompatibility between Consecutiveness and Concurrence; hence only non-eternal things can be productive causes; as it is these alone which go on unceasingly changing their sequential character – of being present now and past at the next moment. Thus, it is proved that an Intelligent Maker must be evanescent and many.[20]

If there is help that has got to be rendered to God by the auxiliary causes – then alone could He be regarded as dependent upon their aid; as a matter of fact however, God is eternal and as nothing can introduce into Him any efficiency that is not there already, there can be no help that He should receive from the auxiliary causes; why then, should He need such auxiliaries as are of no use to Him. Further, even these auxiliary causes, all

[19] *Tattvasaṅgraha* with *Pañjikā* II: 46 (Ganganath Jha translation).
[20] *Tattvasaṅgraha* with *Pañjikā* II: 76 (Ganganath Jha translation).

of them, should have their birth subject to God and as such, they should be always near Him. Thus, how can our reason be regarded as 'unproven'! Nor is our reason 'inconclusive; for if that were so (doubtful), then there would be no 'perfect (defectless) cause' at all (of things). If then, the perfect cause itself never came into existence, then there would be no birth (production) of anything, as the 'absence of perfect cause' would always be there.

Theist: (Uddyotakara[21] has argued as follows), "Though the cause of things named 'God' is eternal and perfect and always present, yet the producing of things is not simultaneous, because God always acts intelligently and purposely; if God had produced things by His mere presence, without intelligence (or purpose), then the objection urged (by you) would have applied to our doctrine. As a matter of fact, however, God acts intelligently; hence the objection is not applicable; especially as God operates towards products solely by His own wish. Thus, our reason is not inconclusive.

Śāntarakṣita: This is not right. The activity and inactivity of things are not dependent upon the wish of the cause; only if it were so that the appearance of all effects would not be possible, even in the constant presence of the untrammeled cause in the shape of God, simply on account of His wish being absent. The fact of the matter is that the appearance and non-appearance of things are dependent upon the presence and absence of due efficiency in the cause. For instance, even though a man may have the wish, things do not appear, if he has not the efficiency or power to produce them; and when the cause in the form of seeds has the efficiency or faculty to produce the sprout, the sprout does appear – even though the seed has no wish at all. If then the cause called 'God' is always there fully endowed with the due untrammeled efficiency – as He is at the time of the producing of a particular thing – then, why should things stand in need of His wish, which can serve no purpose at all? And the result of this should be that all things should appear simultaneously, at the same time as the appearance of any one thing. Thus, alone could the untrammeled causal efficiency of God be shown, if things were produced simultaneously. Nor can God, who

[21] A philosopher of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school of Hindu Thought.

cannot be helped by other things, stand in need of anything, for which He would need His wish.

Further, in the absence of Intelligence, there can be no desire for anything else – and the Intelligence of God you hold to be eternally uniform; so that, even if God acted intelligently, why should not there be a simultaneous production of things! Because like God Himself, His Intelligence also is always there. If then, His Intelligence be regarded as evanescent, even so, it must co-exist with God, and its presence must be as constant as God Himself; so that the objection on that score remains in force.[22]

Theist: "All beings, from Brahmā (chief of the gods) down to the piśāca (ghoul) must have over them a single All-Superior Being – because among themselves there are found to be of varying grades of superiority – in the ordinary world it is found that where there are several persons of varying grades of superiority, they are always under the sway of one Superior Being, e.g. the controllers of the house, the village, the city and the province are all under one Sovereign Emperor of the entire world; and all such beings as serpents, rākaṣas, yakṣas and such other beings are possessed of varying grades of superiority among themselves; from these facts we are led to think that all these also are under one Controller in the shape of God. "All the Seven Worlds must have been created by the intelligence of a single Being – because they are all included under one 'Entity' – just like the several rooms of a house; we find that all the rooms of a house are built by the intelligence of a single architect; in the same way all the seven worlds are included under the one universe; hence it is concluded that these must be the creation of the Intelligence of a single Creator; and the one Being, by whose intelligence all these have been created, is the Blessed Lord, the one Architect of the whole universe.

Śāntarakṣita: If what is meant to be proved is that all these Beings are 'controlled' by God – then the reason put forward is 'inconclusive' as there is no valid reason for precluding the contrary conclusion; specially as no invariable concomitance is admitted. The corroborative instance also is

[22] *Tattvasaṅgraha* with *Pañjikā* II: 87 (Ganganath Jha translation).

found to be devoid of the *probandum.* If from the mere fact of there being a Controller, it is meant to prove that the control is actually there – then the argument is futile; as we also accept the fact that the 'Enlightened One' (Buddha), who was the crest-jewel of the entire universe, did actually control the entire world, through His mercy; by virtue of which all good men of the present day also attain prosperity and the Ultimate Good."[23]

Vajrayāna Tradition

The Vajrayāna tradition of Buddhism largely follows the Mahāyāna tradition in terms of the many issues such as the rejection of the existence of God etc. It is interesting to note, however, that one of the tantric texts (which are a set of texts that the Vajrayāna alone accepts) has almost a 'theistic' understanding of the Buddha. However, the Buddha, is by no means, considered to be a creator like being. Below is a rendering of the passage from the *Hevajra Tantra*:

"The Buddha said:
Whatever things there are, moving and motionless, all these things am I.[24]
The whole of existence arises in me, in me arises the threefold world, by me pervaded is this all, of nought else does this world consist."[25]

Perhaps Śāntarakṣita's reference above of the Buddha controlling the entire world through His mercy has some connection to the *Hevajra Tantra* passage. After all, it was Śāntarakṣita (as the abbot-president of Nāḷandā Buddhist University) who was invited by King Trisong Detsen (reign: 755-797 CE) (the 38th monarch) of Tibet to introduce Buddhism into his kingdom.

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[23] *Tattvasaṅgraha* with *Pañjikā* II: 92 (Ganganath Jha translation).
[24] sthiracalam yāni tāni sarvāny etānīty evāham. (*Hevajra Tantra* I: 8: 39) (associated translation above from Snellgrove).
[25] madbhavam hi jagat sarvam madbhavam bhuvanatrayam. madvyāpitam idam sarvam nānyamayam dṛṣṭam jagat. (*Hevajra Tantra* I: 8: 41) (associated translation above from Snellgrove).

Vedic Dharmic Traditions

Sāṅkhya Arguments against the Existence of God

The Sāṅkhya system of Hinduism is a strictly dualistic tradition. Its ontology consists of just two eternal irreconcilable categories. These are Primal Matter (*Prakṛti* or *Pradhāna*) and souls (*puruṣas*). It has no room for a Supreme Being. This system's arguments against the existence of God are put forth in the *Sāṅkhyapravacana Sūtra* of Kapila, and its commentary, the *Sāṅkhyapravacanasūtravṛtti* of Aniruddha.

> "The fruit does not proceed from [the cause], guided by the Lord, since this results from work.[26]
>
> If the Lord were an independent creator, He would create even without work, [i. e., regardless of merit and demerit – which will not be maintained even by the theistic Naiyayika opponent]. 'But He creates with the co-operation of work, [i. e., with regard to merit and demerit.' Then] let work alone be [the *causa efficiens* of the fruit]; what need is there of a Lord? 'But a co-operative factor does not set aside the force of the chief cause!' [This maxim is not applicable to our case], because the independence [of the Lord] would be annihilated. Moreover, we know by experience that [all activity] is either egotistic or for the sake of others. Now, the Lord has no egotistic aim; [and] if [you declare that his activity] is for the sake of others, [we reply that] it is unfit to ascribe the painful creation to a benign [Lord]. Besides, an activity which is [exclusively] for the sake of others does not exist, because even by service or the like, bestowed on others, one attains egotistic objects and is active for this reason. Therefore, let work, [i. e., merit and demerit] alone be *the causa [efficiens]* of the world.[27]
>
> His guidance [would be] on account of his own benefit, as in daily life.[28]
>
> And, in the case of one who is eternal, His own benefit is not possible.[29]

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[26] *Sāṅkhyapravacana Sūtra* V: 1: 2 (Garbe translation).
[27] *Sāṅkhyapravacanasūtravṛtti* V: 1: 2 (Garbe translation).
[28] *Sāṅkhyapravacana Sūtra* V: 1: 3 (Garbe translation).
[29] *Sāṅkhyapravacanasūtravṛtti* V: 1: 3 (Garbe translation).

Otherwise [he would be] like the worldly rulers.[30]

That is to say, not omniscient.[31]

Without desire it is not possible, because this is the constant cause.[32]

If inseparableness which is the cause [of inference] had exceptions, there would never be reliance [on conclusions of any kind]. Now, desire is the [determinate] *causa [efficiens]* of activity; therefore, how can there be a creator of the world without that? And one who is liberated [as such the Lord must be regarded by you] has no desire."[33]

Prabhākara Mīmāṁsā Arguments against the Existence of God

The Prabhākara School of Mīmāṁsā is a staunchly (Hindu) Vedic system of thought laying emphasis on the Mantra and Brāhmaṇa sections of the Vedas. In its ontology, it is pluralistic and atheistic. It accepts the gods (*devas*) mentioned in the Vedas but rejects the notion that there any sort of a Supreme Being (*Īśvara*). Śālikanātha Miśra (9th century CE), a major philosopher of this school, provides the arguments against the existence of God in his work the *Prakaraṇapañcikā*.

The following are the arguments against the existence of God by the Prabhākara school of Mīmāṁsā of Hindu thought.

1. All creatures are seen to beget offspring of their respective kinds when the male and female of any given species mate. There is no unseen creator over and above the parenting mates. Hence, there is no need to posit a Supreme Being who creates all things.

2. The existence of God need not be postulated just for the sake that there needs to be an omniscient cosmic supervisor who keeps track of the karmic merits (*dharmas*) and demerits (*adharmas*) of each soul. These karmic merits and demerits belong solely to each soul. They cannot be known by anyone else either through sensory or mental perception.

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[30] *Sāṅkhyapravacana Sūtra* V: 1: 4 (Garbe translation).
[31] *Sāṅkhyapravacanasūtravṛtti* V: 1: 4 (Garbe translation).
[32] *Sāṅkhyapravacana Sūtra* V: 1: 6 (Garbe translation).
[33] *Sāṅkhyapravacanasūtravṛtti* V: 1: 6 (Garbe translation).

3. Further, the karmic merits and demerits can be accessed by another being (besides the agent) only by contact which is not possible because karmic merits and demerits are qualities (*guṇas*) and not substances (*dravyas*). And contacts are possible only between any two substances. The contacts cannot be brought about by inherence (*samavāya*) either, as what inheres in each soul belongs to that soul alone and cannot be accessed by any other being. The analogy of the carpenter coming in contact with his tools cannot be resorted to, because both the (body of the) carpenter and his tools are substances, and karmic merits and demerits are not substances. They are attributes.

4. Also, God cannot let loose the accrued karmic merits and demerits of each soul (that has not yet achieved salvation) on the material atoms by merely willing it as such, as an act needs effort which in turn needs a body. Since God does not have a body, this would not be possible. And God cannot possess a body, for if He does, He no longer would be infinite, but limited. Even if (for argument's sake) God did possess a body, since His being would be eternal, the act of creation would be ceaseless and aeviternal.[34]

Kumārila Mīmāṁsā Arguments against the Existence of God

The Kumārila school of Mīmāṁsā, like its rival Prabhākara School, is also ontologically pluralistic and atheistic. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (7th century CE) was the founder of this school of Mīmāṁsā, and his chief schoolman who augmented it was Pārthasārathi Miśra (10th century CE). Kumārila criticizes the whole notion of God as untenable in his treatise the *Ślokavārtika*.

The following are some of the important arguments against the existence of God by the Kumārila school of Mīmāṁsā of Hindu thought.

[34] *Prakaraṇapañcikā* (*Vimalānjana*) VII: 6-8.

"How is it that He (God) should have a desire to create a world which is to be fraught with all sorts of troubles to living beings?[35] (If it be held that Prajāpati (chief of all the gods) creates the world, out of pity, then, we say) in the absence of objects of compassion (in the shape of living persons), no Pity (or Compassion) could be possible for Him. And if He were urged to creations by pure compassion, then He would create only happy beings.[36] And if He were to depend upon Laws and Agencies, then this fact would deprive Him of His (boasted) independence. (You say He desires to create the world, will you let me know) what is that end which He desires, and which could not be gained without creating the world? For without some end in view, even a fool does not act. Then if He were to act so (without any end in view), then what would be the good, of His intelligence? If the activity of the Creator were due to a desire for mere amusement, then that would go against his ever-contentedness. And (instead of affording any amusement) the great amount of work (required for creation) would be a source of infinite trouble to Him."[37]

Analysis

Now that we have looked at all the arguments against the existence of God from the philosophers of Jainism to the Kumārila School of Mīmāṁsā of Hindu thought, some observations are in order. These arguments will be categorized and then commented upon as to which ones are strong in nature.

God as a Self-Sufficient Being

God, by definition, is a self-sufficient being. That being the case, He cannot have any desires (including that to create). If He does, then He is cannot be regarded as self-complete. He would be lacking something as

[35] *Ślokavārtika* (*Sambandhākṣepaparihāra* section) v. 49 (Ganganath Jha translation).
[36] *Ślokavārtika* (*Sambandhākṣepaparihāra* section) v. 52 (Ganganath Jha translation).
[37] *Ślokavārtika* (*Sambandhākṣepaparihāra* section) v. 54-56 (Ganganath Jha translation).

He feels this desire to create many things and beings. Such an insufficient being cannot be God. This is a powerful argument (against His existence) which shows the incompleteness (and therefore the imperfection) of such a being which would be unbecoming of God.

God as One Being

The unity of God is one of the most important aspects of His essence and being. The very fact that God desires to create many things and beings, itself violates this essential unity of the Deity. How can the one God have this many desires? Theologians and philosophers in general have a hard time trying to reconcile the many attributes of God with His one impartite being. Are His many attributes different from Him, or are they one with Him? Either way, it seems an irreconcilable metaphysical impasse. God having innumerous desires to create a vast variety of things and beings would be similarly irreconcilable with His essential unity. This too is a very powerful and genuine argument against the existence of God.

God as an Eternal and Changeless Being

God, by definition, is an eternal and changeless being in every sense of these terms. So, when God creates, He would change in some way, and this would violate His attributes of being changeless and eternal. This too is quite a powerful argument metaphysically speaking against the existence of God.

God as the Epitome of Goodness and Omnipotence

God, by definition, is goodness personified and the Almighty which is the average man's expression for the omnipotence of the Deity is thus both descriptive and fitting to His splendid majesty. That being the case, why did God create a universe which is full of misery, struggle and

suffering of every type and watches His creatures go through at times, unimaginable horror. Even if He allowed it, why does He not get rid of it through His omnipotence. The very fact that seemingly endless suffering endures, goes against the very notion of a benign Supreme Being. In the Western religions, this is usually referred to as 'God and the Problem of Evil.' This argument too has been a pressing one for all philosophers and theologians, and one of the most perplexing ones to answer when challenged by lay people on the issue of a loving God and the depth of human suffering in the face of natural and moral evil. Usually, such things are answered with the phrase "God is testing you."

God and the Law of Karma

If the problem of suffering is to be traced to an individual's past (karmically retributive) actions, then that itself is sufficient explanation to account for not only the causes of suffering but many other discrepancies in the endowments of life from one individual to the next. There is no need to postulate God. In fact, postulation of the existence of God, over and above the Law of Karma, actually undermines that Law's innate fairness as God can play favorites in terms of His devotees. The Law of Karma works without fear or favor towards anyone and does so optimally without God. Also, if God exists over and above the Law of Karma, and strictly abides by it, it will result in a case of double jeopardy as this would not only leave no room for Divine Compassion which is one of the hallmarks of the Deity, but also undermine Divine Independence. A non-compassionate God lacking sovereignty is no God at all. Hence, this too is a very powerful argument against the existence of God.

God and the Material World

God and the material world that He creates are so opposite in every way. In fact, they are polar opposites, strictly speaking. God is one,

spiritual, changeless, conscious, and blissful. The material world, on the other hand, is pluralistic, material, ever-changing, non-conscious, and the very crucible of suffering of all kinds. How then could God be the cause of something so utterly different from Him in every possible way? Why would an intelligent, benign, and compassionate Deity create this terrible world and watch beings suffer? What possible purpose could this have?

The aforesaid are the most powerful arguments against the existence of God, while arguments that a bodyless God cannot create, and some others (I find) are rather weak and thus not worthy of neither exposition nor examination.

A Brief Note on Non-Theism and Theism in the Religious History of India

Even though the rays of theism in India began around 200 BCE through literary means in the form of the two epics, the Rāmāyaṇa, and the Mahābhārata, and later on blossomed in the Purāṇic literature; theism in India (especially of the devotional and emotional sort) began only around 600 CE, and continues to be the dominant form of religiosity of the Hindus to this day. It began with the Śaiva Aḍiyārs (7th century CE onwards), furthered by the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava Āḻvārs (7th century CE onwards), and augmented and institutionally sectarianized by the philosophers Rāmānuja (1017-1137 CE), Basavaṇṇa (1134-1196 CE) and the Vīraśaiva vacanakāras (12th century CE), Madhva (1238-1317 CE) and the Haridāsas of Karnataka (15th century CE onwards), the Śaiva Siddhanta philosophers (13th century CE onwards) of the Tamil country, and thereafter popularized by Carnatic musicians like Muthusvāmī Dīkṣitar (1776-1835 CE), Tyāgarāja Bhāgavatar (1767-1847 CE) etc. in Southern India. In Northern India, it was institutionalized by the philosophers Nimbārka (1130-1200 CE), Vallabha (1478-1530 CE), Caitanya (1486-1534 CE), and furthered by

the saints Jayadeva (12th century CE), the bhakti saints of Maharashtra (13th century CE onwards), Rāmānanda (15th century CE), Kabīrdās (1398-1518 CE), Sūrdās (1478-1583 CE), Śaṅkaradeva (1449-1568 CE), Narsi Mehta (1414-1488 CE), Mīrābāī (16th century CE), Tulasīdās (17th century CE) and others.

Prior to 600 CE, the religious leaders of India were largely made up of Vedic polytheists, yogic seers, skeptics, agnostics, and atheists. The philosophers of Jainism, Buddhism, the five rival teachers in the Buddha's time (like Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta, Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gośāla and others), the Sāṅkhya, and Mīmāṁsā philosophers in Hindu thought, all seemed to have belonged to this pre-600 CE group.

The philosopher Śaṅkara (788-820 CE) acted as a theological bridge between the pre-600 CE non-theistic era of Indian religious history, and the post-600 CE theistic era of the same. From the standpoint of his Ultimate Reality (*pāramārthika satya*) Nirguṇa Brahman doctrine, Śaṅkara is closer to the non-theists. However, from the standpoint of his Relative Reality (*vyāvahārika satya*) Saguṇa Brahman doctrine, Śaṅkara is closer to the theistic group.

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Language in Motion. Travelling Words. The Shared Legacy of Common Words in Romanian and Hindi

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Abstract: The present paper concentrates on highlighting twenty examples from the shared words pool in Romanian and Hindi that are most commonly used in modern language, avoiding, as much as possible, to discuss very specialized or archaic terms that bear no significance for today's man. Identifying a common history and travelling routes of these loanwords is one of the aims of this paper, which makes etymological comprehension much more accessible and pleasant. In no particular order, we discuss similarities and differences in meaning and usage of these travelling terms. To close the circle, we propose a possible explanation for the semantic changes undergone by most Romanian words, which throws light on the mentality of the oppressed.

Keywords: common words in Romanian and Hindi, etymology, origin of words, semantics, shared words.

Travelling words

Articulate language is the foremost means of communication among human beings. It is, undoubtedly, a social phenomenon that shapes and receives shaping. Consequently, language reflects socio-cultural, political and economic changes through choice of words, semantic changes and the decline of certain terms, a natural process to make way

for the new. It is intimately interwoven with the past, present and future, the collective memory bearing an important role in the development and evolution of vocabulary. Generations are linked through an unbreakable bond, as the present uses words born long before it saw the light of day, while the future can only sit restlessly, depending on what the present dictates and what needs may arise in projection of itself. The present is forever endebted to the past and its many generations for the foundation on which it can rest and may hope to build in the future.

Words survived even before writing appeared through the collective memory of their users. As long as there are speakers, no language can go extinct. Thus, words contain the memories of their users and carry their thoughts, woes and solutions. Any change, any innovation takes generations to become recognized and enter mainstream employment. Such instances are proof of the flexibility and perpetually moving nature of language. Modern languages, such as the ones discussed in the this paper – Romanian and Hindi, through English, of course –, are characterized by a vocabulary that underwent variations and revisions relentlessly, having words of different etymology and distinct age. Historically and etymologically, any lexical treasure of any modern language is heterogeneous, with layers of depth, tone and specialized register. Once the human being became able enough to build means of transport, words travelled with their hosts.

Romanian was bestowed with its loanwords during its contacts with the Ottoman Empire and the Phanariots.[1] The vocabulary of Ottoman Turkish could not sustain the growth and evolution of the civilization it

[1] The *phanariots*, Greeks established in the Phanar quarter of Constantinople, aware of their ancestry and who occupied high administrative positions in the Ottoman Empire. They were wealthy merchants, highly educated and ambitious.

was part of, so, naturally, it welcomed Arabic and Persian into its family, with which it had a long-lasting religious and faith connection.[2]

While Persian bloomed more for its poetic value, Arabic became the repository for moral and religion, but also for administrative terminology, jurisprudence, science and literature.

> "Not only that the numerous Arabic-Persian ingredients did not touch the essential character of the vulgar language, on the contrary, the latter profoundly, and according to its own spirit, modified these foreign elements, adapting them to the Ottoman way of pronunciation and enriching them with nuances of meaning unknown to the original languages."[3]

The Turkish words that entered Romanian sprawled over a period of three centuries. Șăineanu mentions two successive waves: a first one between the 15th and 17th centuries, followed by a second between the 17th and 18th centuries. He states that most travelling loanwords from the latter time frame (of political and social nature) ended up in the forgotten box of history, once the phanariot rule declined; some of them survived, but not having enough time to dwell on the local tongue, they were christened with a pejorative or humorous meaning. An entirely dissimilar fate was reserved for the words from the first category; they were warmly welcomed into Romanian, had a wide expansion and rooted themselves thoroughly. Terms like *amanet* or *duşman* – which are discussed in the present paper as well – do not have any competition and are here to stay for a long time.[4] An excellent proof is the fact that they underwent *affixation* (*derivare* in Romanian) or *changing of*

[2] See Șăineanu, Lazăr, *Influența orientală asupra limbii și culturii române*, Editura Librăriei Socecu & Comp, București, 1900, vol. I.
[3] *Idem*, p. XXXII.
[4] *Idem*, p. LXXIII.

grammatical value (also known as *conversion* in Romanian[5]) and formed new words, from *amanet* to *amanetare* (noun, pawning), *a amaneta* (verb, to pawn), or from *duşman* (noun, enemy), *a duşmăni* (verb, to hate), *duşmănire* (noun, hatred), *duşmănos* (adj., hateful) etc. These are *internal language mechanisms* that contribute to the enrichment of the vocabulary, which is why it is a great achievement if a borrowed word (*external means of vocabulary enrichment*) undergoes *derivation, composition or change in morphological category*. It marries into the family through an unbreakable bond. Nouns were mostly borrowed, while there were no verbs that entered Romanian, most probably because of the nature of Ottoman Turkish and modern Turkish (distinct grammatical mechanisms that were impossible to be adapted to Romanian conjugation patterns).

As far as Hindi is concerned, Muslim rule in the subcontinent is conventionally considered to have started with the Arab conquest of Sindh and Multan in 712 C.E. The empires that dominated for more than five centuries were the *Delhi Sultanate* (1206-1526 C.E.) and, after its decline, the *Mughal Empire* (1526-1857 C.E.) until the dissolution of the East India Company. The various conquerors – mostly Turkic, Mongol or Afghan – brought Persian in the subcontinent and introduced it as *lingua franca*. It had a lasting impact on administrative proceedings, socio-cultural life, music and poetry especially, politics and education in general. Hindustani[6] is the language that was born in the military camps around Delhi, a language that emerged from a mixture of vernacular varieties (*prāḵtas*), Persian and Arabic, starting its existence as *khaṛī bolī* (the upright dialect). What we officially call Hindi today is the

[5] *Schimbarea valorii gramaticale, conversiune*; one word may change, for instance, from an adjective to an adverb or a noun.

[6] It is a better suited name for Hindi especially as it highlights the fantastic marriage of the Sanskrit and Perso-Arabic legacy in its vocabulary.

Sanskritized Hindustani, cleared of as many Perso-Arabic loanwords as possible. The pauperization of vocabulary items brings with it the loss of certain grammar mechanisms and structures[7], whose survival is pointless in the absence of the lexical items on which they rest.

Modern standard Hindi heavily leans on Sanskrit and Prakrit-derived words and is written in the Devanāgarī script; in order to be able to analyze the common legacy of Romanian and Hindi, we rely more on Hindustani, the variety that encompasses Perso-Arabic words. Therefore, we have rested our exploration more on modern Hindi (the contemporary spoken and day-to-day variety), rather than on standard Hindi.

Language in motion. Current examples.

In no particular order, we have concentrated our attention on twenty examples of common words to Romanian and Hindi, explaining different layers of meaning, adding sentences to show contemporary use. Wherever possible, archaic uses have also been provided to highlight the richness of significance and usage. The common link, Persian, has provided most of the original terms that underwent little to no change over the centuries. The phonetic transformations that occurred especially in Turkish, through which words travelled to Romanian, are owed partially to the difficulty of pronouncing clusters of consonants and naturally introducing vowels (i.e. *bereket* and *barkat*), as well as the gravitation towards certain vowels (may be due to *vowel harmony*). It is not in our scope to view and explain phonetic and phonological patterns, as it would be overly lengthy and complicated (and with no real applicability in contemporary usage). However, many of these changes

[7] Such as the *izāfat*, which is futile as long as Sanskrit does not employ it, being specific to Persian; or the irregular plural, characteristic to Arabic. Even sounds and letters may disappear, as Sanskrit did not have *z* or *f*, for example. They were introduced much later, in the pre-modern language, to accommodate new sounds, thus new words.

in pronunciation and writing follow the general – almost universal – phonetic and phonological rules, where sounds are adapted based on the length of vowels, on their place of articulation, on the class of the consonants (manner and place of articulation, as well as voicing); the loss of some sounds from the original language is mended with the addition of the closest counterpart on the receiving end.

Hindi terms underwent significantly less changes than the Romanian ones, mainly because the language was able to conserve the original pronunciation (even writing) of these words – something that did not happen in Turkish, words undergoing two waves of dilution, once when travelling from Arabic/Persian to Turkish, then again when entering Romanian soil. Hindi managed to safeguard even the mechanisms of obtaining new words from the original – we shall refer to Persian more here, as with Arabic, some grammatical mechanisms did not survive, or survived only partially[8] – like in *duśman, duśmanī* (*-ī* is characteristic to noun composition in Persian), *hāl, behāl* (*be-* is typical affixation in Persian to obtain the negative or the lack of something), *qasūr, qasūrvār* (*-vār* is a Persian suffix that gives adjectives). Let the discovery of the common words[9] in Romanian and Hindi begin:

[8] This is an idea to be demonstrated in a future installment of the present paper, as space is limited.

[9] As space is limited, there is enough scope for further development and additional words. On our personal blog, we had managed to exemplify fifty such words, which constitute the foundation of the present endeavour. Along the years, we had added new shared words, but which were never publicly shared. No doubt, there is a plethora of sites, scientific papers and books discussing Arabic or Persian loanwords that were adopted into Romanian, but there are few (if any!) Romanian contributions regarding the shared vocabulary items between Romanian and Hindi. (See: https://hedwig27silverhenna.wordpress.com/?s=cuvinte+comune, five posts of ten words each).

1. *duşman* (noun, masc., in Romanian from the Turkish *düşman*) = दुश्मन (*duśman,* noun, masc., in Hindi from the Persian *duśman*[10])

Other than the slight difference in pronunciation (mainly accent and stress), there is a perfect synonymy in meaning; the words in both languages mean enemy, someone who presents a threat for the wellbeing of an individual or a community. A Sanskrit term worth mentioning here is दुर्मनस् (*durmanas*), which translates to being in bad disposition, essentially having bad thoughts. Taking it a step further, we may interpret it as evil incarnate, namely someone who nurtures wicked thoughts, therefore an enemy.

> RO: Domnul Ionescu s-a dovedit a fi un **duşman** al ţării şi trebuie arestat imediat.
> (Mr. Ionescu has proven to be the country's **enemy** and must be arrested immediately.)
>
> HI: श्री योनेस्कु मुल्क़ के **दुश्मन** साबित हुए और उनको फ़ौरन गिरफ़्तार करना पड़ेगा।
>
> (*Śrī Yonesku mulq ke **duśman** sābit hue aur unko fauran giraftār karnā paṛegā.*[11])
> (Mr. Ionescu has proven to be the country's **enemy** and must be arrested immediately.)

[10] For the transliteration of the words of origin, we have used the one given by McGregor in the *Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*.

[11] The transliteration used, for those who cannot read Devanāgarī, is a personal adaptation of the Hunterian system; our goal was to make it as straightforward as possible. For Perso-Arabic sounds like ख़, क़ or ग़ we have employed *xa*, *qa* and *ġa*, respectively.

2. *musafir* (noun, masc., in Romanian from the Turkish *misafir*) = मुसाफ़िर (*musāfir,* noun, masc., in Hindi from the Arabic *musāfir*)

There is a more specialized usage in Romanian, the Hindi version keeping more of the original meaning from the source-word, namely in Romanian the word means guest, visitor, invitee, but the Hindi version chose to honour the traveller, the passenger. This may stem from the fact that, having an Arabic origin, the term intrinsically carries the Arabic root, and, thus, its meaning as well; *s-f-r* (س-ف-ر) generally relates to travelling, journeying, sending someone off, even uncovering or revealing something – see words such as सफ़र (*safar*, travel, journey), सफ़री (*safarī*, travel-related), सफ़ीर (*safīr*, envoy, consul, ambassador), सिफ़ारत (*sifārat*, a diplomatic mission, an embassy); the last two, mostly present in Urdu, as Hindi speakers prefer the terms originating from Sanskrit (राजदूत, *rājdūt* for ambassador, literally envoy of the king; राजदूतावास/दूतावास, *rājdūtāvās/dūtāvās*, an embassy, literally the home of the royal envoy).

> RO: Mama face curățenie pentru că diseară avem **musafiri**.
> (Mother is cleaning because we have **guests** this evening.)
>
> HI: इस दुनिया में हम सब सिर्फ़ **मुसाफ़िर** हैं।
> (*Is duniyā me*^{n} *ham sab sirf* ***musāfir*** *hai*^{n}.)
> (We are all but **travelers** in this world.)

If we were to express the same meaning in the Romanian example, we would have to use a different word for *guest*, much like in:

> माँ सफ़ाई कर रही हैं क्योंकि आज शाम को **मेहमान** आने वाले हैं।
> (*Mā*^{n} *safāī kar rahī hai*^{n} *kyo*^{n}*ki āj śām ko* ***mehmān*** *āne vāle hai*^{n}.)

(Mother is cleaning because we have **guests** this evening/**guests** are coming this evening.)

3. *maidan* (noun, neuter, in Romanian from the Turkish *meydan*) = मैदान (*maidān*, noun, masc., in Hindi from the Persian *maidān*)

Here, the meaning is shared and the main use is identical: a large area of empty land, to be found in or outside a settlement; it may be sligthly more specialized in certain contexts as we can see below.

RO: Locul preferat de joacă al copiilor din cartier este **maidanul** de la marginea orașului.
(The favourite playground of the neighbourhood children is the **empty field** on the outskirts of town.)

HI: मुहल्ले के बच्चों के खेलने की पसंदीदा जगह शहर के बाहर का **मैदान** है।
(*Muhalle ke bacco*^{n} *ke khelne kī pasa*^{n}*dīdā jagah śahar ke bāhar kā* ***maidān*** *hai.*)
(The favourite playground of the neighbourhood children is the **empty field** on the outskirts of town.)

This empty space may have served as a gathering spot for locals, more often than not as a marketplace, an area for goods of all kinds to be displayed, where people came to sell their produce (specific terms in Romanian, *obor, târg*). In time, one's presence in such gatherings became synonymous with making it big, becoming someone of high regard in the community, being well established and well off. Interestingly enough, both Romanian and Hindi developed expressions to highlight this growth of the human being, but in connection to an artificial, speedy and somewhat illegal personal evolution – that is beside the more orthodox meaning of simply becoming famous, well-known in a business: *a ieși la maidan* (to come forth in the field) is equal to make oneself known in the underworld, or to sell one's body. Much in the

same fashion, मैदान में आना/उतरना (*maidān me*^{n} *ānā/utarnā*) means to come into the field (as a don, or an escort), however it may also imply to be prepared for battle, as the *maidān* is readily a battle-field, a place of conflict and action (मैदान-ए-जंग, *maidān-e-ja*^{n}*g*).

4. *viran* (adj., in Romanian from the Turkish *viran*) = वीरान (*vīrān,* adj., in Hindi from the Persian *vīrān*)

Speaking of empty fields, both languages bear the same understanding of this example, an empty and uninhabited space, left unkempt, usually unfenced, baren land. The minimal difference in pronunciation, having mainly to do with vowel quantity, does not disturb either meaning or resemblance.

> RO: Nu-mi place să trec prin acest teren **viran**[12] în drum spre casă.
> (I do not like crossing this **empty place/field** on my way home.)
>
> HI: घर जाते समय, मुझे इस **वीरान** जगह से गुज़रना पसंद नहीं।
> (*Ghar jāte samay, mujhe is* ***vīrān*** *jagah se guzarnā pasa*^{n}*d nahī*^{n}.)
> (I do not like crossing this **empty place/field** on my way home.)

5. As one leads to another, *mahala* (noun, fem., in Romanian from the Turkish *mahalle*) = मुहल्ला (*muhallā,* noun, masc., often मोहल्ला, *mohallā*, in Hindi from the Arabic *maḥalla*)

In its golden days, the word started out as signifying a suburb, a neighbourhood of a settlement, a quarter of a town and travelled accordingly in Arabic speaking communities. It entered Romanian

[12] Almost always, *teren* and *viran* are used together, having reached a collocation status. Hindi, on the other hand, developed a noun out of the adjective, वीरानी, *vīrānī*, desertedness, ruin, desolation. It is available in its masculine form as well (with a final *ā*).

through Turkish and slowly, but surely, weakened and declined until it came to convey an area with decrepit houses, unclean, unsafe and lacking basic amenities. The people of the mahallas were known to be vulgar and lacking both education and manners, loving to gossip and spread rumours. Although its Hindi counterpart is used mainly with its original meaning, it may happen that the term is associated with poorer and less developed communities.

> RO: Cum să te muți în acel colț de oraș? N-aș sta în **mahalaua** aia nici să mă plătească!
> (How can someone move to that corner of town? I would not live in that **slum** even if they paid me!)
>
> HI: कोई कैसे शहर के उस कोने में जा सकता है? पैसे ही क्यों न मिलते, मैं उस **मुहल्ले** में कभी नहीं ठहरती!
>
> (*Koī kaise śahar ke us kone me^{n} jā saktā hai? Paise hī kyo^{n} na milte, mai^{n} us muhalle me^{n} kabhī nahī^{n} ṭhahartī!*)
> (How can someone move to that corner of town? I would not live in that **slum** even if they paid me!)

6. We may as well delve into the world of *dugheană* (noun, fem., in Romanian from the Turkish *dükkân*) = दुकान[13] (*dukān,* noun, fem., in Hindi from the Arabic *dukkān* and the Persian *dūkān*).

In both languages, the word started out meaning a small shop that sold a limited number of items, or a small and crowded establishment that sold many useful items, household, food and beverages. Hindi has kept its meaning, whilst Romanian has sprinkled it with a derogatory aura that stood the test of time. One never uses *dugheană* to mean

[13] Also spelt दूकान, *dūkān.*

anything but a run-down, unclean, dubious little store, where even the seller or owner exudes untrustworthiness.

> RO: I-am zis lui Marcel să nu mai cumpere legume de la **dugheana** aia. Cine știe unde le țin, se vede că nu sunt proaspete.
> (I told Marcel not to buy vegetables from that **beat-up stall** anymore. Who knows where they keep them, you can see they are not fresh.)
>
> HI: मैंने मरचेल से कहा कि वह उस **दुकान** से सब्ज़ी न खरीदे। किसको क्या पता कहाँ रखते हैं, देखा जा सकता है कि ताज़ी नहीं हैं।
>
> (*Maiⁿne Mārcel se kahā ki vah us **dukān** se sabzī na kharīde. Kisko kyā patā kahāⁿ rakhte haiⁿ, dekhā jā saktā hai ki tāzī nahīⁿ haiⁿ.*)
> (I told Marcel not to buy vegetables from that **stall** anymore. Who knows where they keep them, you can see they are not fresh.)

Regardless of how well we are able to translate the Romanian example into Hindi, the Hindi sentence shall never bear the same negative connotation of the store because Hindi never carried such a meaning in the first place; a *dukān* is simply a shop of whatever kind, that can be appreciated or not, based on the quality of services and products and their variety and price.

7. *hal* (noun, neuter, in Romanian from the Turkish *hal*) = हाल (*hāl*, noun, masc., in Hindi from the Arabic *ḥāl*; in Hindi, there is also हालत, *hālat*, noun, fem., from the Arabic *ḥāla:* and the Persian *ḥālat*)

What began as an expression of someone's state, condition, circumstances of a situation in both languages, developed into a bad situation, unfavourable circumstances, disaster, even deathly danger in Romanian. Thus, we shall distinguish between examples:

> Nu te vezi în ce **hal** ești?
> (Can't you see what **situation** you're in?)

Nu îți e rușine, în ce **hal** ai adus-o pe fata asta?
(Have you no shame, what kind of a **mess** did you get this girl into?)
E într-un **hal fără de hal** de când i-a murit nevasta.
(He's been **devastated** since his wife died.)

The examples speak for the negativity surrounding this term in Romanian, that is exclusively used in such contexts in the modern language.

In Hindi, however, there is a wonderfully refreshing use of both positive and negative connotations, sharing a delicate balance:

(आपका) क्या **हाल** है?
(What is (your) state?/ How are you?) (*Āpkā) kyā **hāl** hai?*)
(आपका) क्या हाल-चाल है?
(How are you **doing**?) (*Āpkā) kyā **hāl-cāl** hai?*)
क्या **हाल** हो गया है मेरा?
(What have I **come to**?) (*Kyā **hāl** ho gayā hai merā?*)
मुझे हर **हाल** में वहाँ पहुँचना है।
(I need to get there **no matter what/at any cost.)**
(*Mujhe har **hāl** me^{n} vahā^{n} pahu^{n}cnā hai.*)
हाल (ही) में, सब कुछ शाँत हो गया।
(At present, everything quieted down.)
(***Hāl** (hī) me^{n}, sab kuch śā^{n}t ho gayā.*)

Often used in spoken language, asking about one's situation is the most common usage for this term. It is extremely present in modern Hindi, be it formal or informal register. In the second example, we have an equally common compound, whose significance bears no change. The third example highlights the possibility of using the term in a negative context, expressing grief, sadness, misery, even hopelessness regarding a state or situation – much like in Romanian. Interestingly, it can be used

as an adjective (leaning towards adverb) in examples such as the last two, where it becomes *no matter what*, *at any cost* and *presently, now, at this point in time* respectively.

8. *cusur* (noun, neuter, in Romanian from the Turkish *kusur*) = क़सूर (*qasūr*, noun, masc., also spelt क़ुसूर, *qusūr*, in Hindi from the Arabic *quṣūr*).

In both languages, the main understanding of the word focuses on lack, imperfection, defect, weakness, fault, error, shortcoming. In most examples, it will appear in a negative sentence in which the speaker/writer focuses on underlining a lack or a shortcoming, as in the examples:

RO: Nu-i om fără **cusur**.
(There is no man without **fault**.)

HI: इसमें उसका कोई **क़सूर** नहीं है। (*Isme*^{n} *uskā koī* ***qasūr*** *nahī*^{n} *hai.*)
(There is no **fault** of his in this matter.)

RO: A făcut o treabă **fără cusur**.
(He did a **flawless** job.)

HI: वह **बेक़सूर** है। (*Vah* ***beqasūr*** *hai.*)
(He is **innocent/not guilty**.)

To be noted that if we use a negative word – but not verbal negation – in Romanian with *cusur* (in our case, *fără*, without) in an affirmative sentence, the end result translates to something proving to be flawless. However, if we combine a negative prefix with its Hindi relative, we end up with a completely different meaning, innocent – having no flaw, indeed, but in a different interpretation.

9. *habar* (noun, neuter, in Romanian from the Turkish *haber*) = ख़बर (*xabar*, noun, fem., in Hindi from the Arabic *khabar*).

Both Romanian and Hindi safeguard the principal meaning of the word, namely that of news, information, notification, message, idea, even rumour. However, Hindi has proven to offer a larger pool of meaning, combining the noun with a plethora of verbs, resulting in related, but different usages. We shall notice at once that Romanian encouraged the relationship between *habar* and *a avea*, to have, which ultimately gave birth to the a very popular reply to anything and everything under the sun, perfect for when one does not know or does not want to answer (see last example in Romanian).

> RO: Cum îți e **habarul**[14]? = Cum îți merge?
> (How are **things** going?)
> Se vede că are **habar** după cum ține cuțitul.
> (It is obvious that he is **knowledgeable** by the way he is holding the knife.)
> **Habar** nu are când sosește trenul.
> (He has no **idea** when the train is coming.)
> **Habar** n-am![15]
> (No idea!)
>
> जिस तरह से वह चाकू पकड़ता है, उससे ज़ाहिर है कि उसका/उसको अंदाज़ा/**ख़बर** है।
>
> (*Jis tarah se vah cākū pakaṛtā hai, usse zāhir hai ki uskā/usko a^{n}dāzā/**xabar** hai.*)

[14] Archaic, may be used in remote, rural areas of Romania.
[15] There is a specific way of reprimanding someone who does not wish to cooperate in a certain matter in Romanian, *Nu mai face pe **habar n-am**(ul), pune mâna și ajută-l pe taică-tău* (Stop playing **stupid** and help your father). There is a sister expression, a remnant of Russian influence, *nu face pe **niznaiul*** (don't play stupid).

(It is obvious that he is **knowledgeable** by the way he is holding the knife.)

We can see here that Hindi prefers using a different word to express the ability to accomplish something. Nonetheless, it is a possible scenario with our discussed term.

HI: क्या **ख़बर** है? = क्या हाल है?

(*Kyā **xabar** hai? = Kyā hāl hai?*)
(What's the **news**? = How are you?)
उसको फ़ौरन **ख़बर करो** कि मंत्री पहुँच गए हैं।

(*Usko fauran **xabar karo** ki maⁿtrī pahuⁿc gae haiⁿ.*)
(**Inform** him immediatelly that the Minister has arrived.)
उसे **ख़बर मिली है** कि बच्चा मर गया।

(*Use **xabar milī hai** ki baccā mar gayā.*)
(He received the news that the child died.)
मुझे वह लड़का अभी चाहिए! **ख़बर लगाओ** कहाँ छिपा हुआ है!

(*Mujhe vah laṛkā abhī cāhie! **Xabar lagāo** kahāⁿ chipā huā hai!*)
(I want that boy at once! **Find out** where he is hiding!)
उसकी **ख़बर लेते रहो**। मुझे लगता है कि उसकी तबीयत बिगड़ जाएगी।

(*Uskī **xabar lete raho**. Mujhe lagtā hai ki uskī tabīyat bigaṛ jāegī.*)
You keep checking on him. I think his health will deteriorate.
आजकल के बच्चे कितना **बेख़बर** होते हैं, दुनिया के बारे में कोई **ख़बर** नहीं...

(*Ājkal ke bacce kitnā **bexabar** hote haiⁿ, duniyā ke bāre meⁿ koī **xabar** nahīⁿ...*)
Kids nowadays are **clueless**, they know **nothing** of the world...
ख़बरदार तुम उसके घर गए तो...

(***Xabardār** tum uske ghar gae to...*)
Don't you dare go to his house...

सैनिकों को **ख़बरदार करो**, उनको बताओ कि जंग के लिए तैयारी करें!

(*Sainiko^{n} ko **xabardār karo**, unko batāo ki ja^{n}g ke lie taiyārī kare^{n}.*)
Alert the soldiers, tell them to prepare for war.

10. *rahat* (noun, neuter/masc., in Romanian from the Turkish *rahat*) = राहत (*rāhat,* noun, fem., in Hindi from the Arabic *rāḥat*)

The Romanian word is surprisingly polysemantic, with three levels of meaning being unveiled to the curious: we start out with the sweet cube-like dessert from Türkiye, the Turkish delight, then we fall into a different register and talk about excrement, feaces; lastly, only in the most archaic of texts may we hope to find it symbolizing comfort, relaxing, joy.[16] We may rarely encounter it meaning a trifle, a thing or situation of no importance.

RO: Cred că am să fac o prăjitură cu **rahat** în acest weekend.
(I think I might bake a cake with **Turkish delight** in this weekend.)
Nu-mi lăsa **rahatul** câinelui prin curte. Pune mâna și curăță!
(Don't leave the dog's **poop** in the yard. Start cleaning it!)
Nu mă interesează pe mine **rahatul** altcuiva. Să se descurce.
(I don't care about other people's **stuff**. They can handle it.)

Contrastingly, in Hindi, the original meaning exists unaltered, repose, ease, relief, piece of mind, and gives most beautiful and poetic examples:

HI: मत जा, तू मेरे दिल की **राहत** है।

(*Mat jā, tū mere dil kī **rāhat** hai.*)
(Don't go, you are my heart's **comfort**.)

[16] We do not remember ever coming across this particular usage in any text; it may well be that it was so long ago and the term is so obsolete, that remembering it proves impossible. We did not provide an example for this usage.

To be noted that its usage is confined more to the literary and poetic world, and for expressing ease of mind other words may be used in day-to-day language: शांति (*śā*^{n}*ti*), सुकून (*sukūn*), both meaning peace.

11. Another perfect example connected to peace is *huzur* (noun, neuter, in Romanian from the Turkish *huzur*) = हुज़ूर (*huzūr,* noun, masc., in Hindi from the Arabic *ḥuẓūr*).

Walking on different significance paths, the Romanian term retains much of its meaning from the original Turkish, that of peace, quiet, wellbeing, lack of stress, a life of indulgence, luxury and pampering, even laziness and languor. Hindi took the course laid down by Arabic, and preserves as main meaning the presence of a person of high authority. In modern audio-visual content, the word is almost exclusively used as a term of addressing people of high regard, either members of royal families or superiors, especially by the helping hands, much like in the examples below.

> RO: Cu așa viață de **huzur**, nu mă mir că nu vrei să te întorci la muncă.
> (With such a **comfortable** life, I am not surprised that you do not want to return to work.)
>
> HI: इतना **आरामदायक** जीवन जीकर, आश्चर्य की बात नहीं है कि तुम काम पर लौटना नहीं चाहते।
>
> (*Itnā* ***ārāmdāyak*** *jīvan jīkar, āścarya kī bāt nahī*^{n} *hai ki tum kām par lauṭnā nahī*^{n} *cāhte.*)
> (With such a **comfortable** life, I am not surprised that you do not want to return to work.)

Hindi uses a completely different adjective to express the idea of a life without worries. The actual uses of *huzūr*:

शांति रखें, **हुज़ूर** आ गए हैं।

(*Śā*^{n}*ti rakhe*^{n}*,* ***Huzūr*** *ā gae hai*^{n}*.*)

(Keep quiet, **Sir/His Highness** has arrived.)

हुज़ूर, मैं बड़ी मुसीबत में हूँ, आप मदद करें...

(***Huzūr****, mai*^{n} *baṛī musībat me*^{n} *hū*^{n}*, āp madad kare*^{n}*...*)

(**Sir/Your Highness**, I am in deep trouble, if You could help...)

जी **हुज़ूर**, जैसे आप कहें!

(*Jī* ***Huzūr****, jaise āp kahe*^{n}*!*)

(Yes **Boss/Sir/Your Highness**, as you say!)

जी हुज़ूरी[17] करते-करते, तेरी पूरी ज़िन्दगी निकल गई।

(***Jī huzūrī*** *karte-karte, terī pūrī zi*^{n}*dagī nikal gaī.*)

(After all that **flattery**, life passed you by.)

12. *berechet* (noun, neuter/masc., in Romanian from the Turkish *bereket*) = बरकत (*barakat,* noun., fem., in Hindi from the Arabic *baraka:* and the Persian *barakat*).

Both languages kept the same main significance over the passing years, that of good luck or fortune, abundance, blessing, benediction, increase, prosperity, success, auspiciousness, unexpected wealth.

RO: Ce **berechet** la vecinii noștri! Ai văzut ce de lucruri și-au cumpărat?

(What **abundance** with our neighbours! Have you seen how many things they have bought?)

Cum să fie scump? Are bani **berechet** ăsta!

(What do you mean expensive? The guy has **plenty** of money!)

Vezi-ți de treaba ta, nu te pune cu toți **berecheții**.

[17] A fun expression, the phrase came to light as there were many people having to agree to the demands of the job and their lord (i.e. boss, superior), and *Jī, huzūr!* (Yes Sir/My Lord) was uttered many times a day.

(Mind your own business, don't medle with all the **lowlives**.)
Ce mai **berechet**[18] de om...
(What a **scoundrel**...)

We may note that, in the last two examples, Romanian developed a pejorative use of the term, the noun being used to signify a fraud, a scoundrel, rascal, cheater, liar, a master manipulator, but also someone dangerous enough not to be played with.

HI: जब से परिवार में बच्चा आया है, तब से घर में **बरकत** ही बरकत है!
(*Jab se parivār me*^{n} *baccā āyā hai, tab se ghar me*^{n} ***barkat*** *hī barkat hai!*)
(Ever since the child came into the family, there is **prosperity** all around!)
अल्लाह आप पर **बरकत** बरसाए!
(*Allāh āp par **barkat** barsāe!*)
(May Allāh shower you with **blessings/wellbeing**!)

We notice that Hindi gravitates towards the Muslim world in its use, as the word originates from the language of the Quran. It would, by no means, be a mistake if it was used with a Sanskrit-based word such as *Īśvar* or *Bhagavān*, but the natural tendency of the speakers is to join the Perso-Arabic pool. Meaning-wise, it is generally used in blessings and well-wishing.

13. Speaking of kinds of people, we are reminded of a word with beautifully enchanting origins, but that underwent pejoration, yet again:

[18] Both this and the previous example rarely appear in modern Romanian. They may still be alive in rural areas across the country.

derbedeu (noun, masc., in Romanian from the Turkish *derbeder*) = दर-ब-दर[19] (*dar-ba-dar*, adv., in Hindi from the Persian *dar-ba-dar*).

Hindi is the only one that retains the original beauty of a concept, that of going from „door-to-door" in search of alms[20] in times long gone – much used in modern language by a lover in search of their partner. A *dar-ba-dar* in modern Hindi is a wanderer, a vagrant, vagabond, a lost soul in search of an identity. It is used as an adjective or an adverb and has lost its nominal independence. It does shoulder the negative tinge as well, referring to a person who is up to no good, a lowlife who wanders aimlessly and is many a times intoxicated.

जब से घर जल गया, यह **दर-ब-दर (दरबदर)** भटकता है।

(*Jab se ghar jal gayā, yah **dar-ba-dar/darbadar** bhaṭakta hai.*)
(Since his house burned down, he is **wandering aimlessly/from door to door**.)
तेरे प्यार में, मेरा दिल **दरबदर** है।[21]

(*Tere pyār me^{n}, merā dil **darbadar** hai.*)
(In your love, my heart is wandering from **door-to-door**.)
जब बच्चा नहीं मिल रहा था, माँ उसको **दरबदर**[22] ढूँढने लगी।

(*Jab baccā nahī^{n} mil rahā thā, mā^{n} usko **darbadar** ḍhū^{n}ḍhne lagī.*)
(When the child could not be found, the mother started looking for him **from door-to-door**.)

[19] Also spelt in one word, without hyphenation.
[20] See also the *dervish*, *darveś* in Persian and दरवेश (*darveś*) in Hindi, the Muslim mendicants who were affiliated to one of the orders of Sufi tradition.
[21] From a popular Bollywood number, (दिल) दरबदर (तेरे प्यार में), sung by Jubin Nautiyal; it focuses on the destruction undergone by the lover, deeply smitten by the partner whose lack of interest sends the former into a wandering frenzy.
[22] Here, घर-घर (*ghar-ghar*, from house-to-house) may be preferred.

Romanian, much more straightforward and static, uses the term only pejoratively, for a looser, good-for-nothing, a hooligan, a rogue, someone who is not trustworthy and can be dangerous.

> Ce **derbedeu** mai e și vecinul nostru! Și-a aruncat sacul cu gunoi de la fereastră!
> (What a **jerk** our neighbour is! He threw his trash bag out of the window!)
> Nu te duce să le faci observație. Sunt niște **derbedei** și poate sar la bătaie...
> (Don't go have an argument with them. They are some **rascals** and might start a fight.)

14. Continuing with types of people, extinct in modern Romanian unfortunately, we have *pehlivan* (noun, masc., in Romanian from the Turkish pehlivan) = पहलवान (*pahalvān*, noun, masc., in Hindi from the Persian *pahlvān*).

To no surprise, Romanian also retains the pejorative interpretation, denoting a trickster, an acrobat, juggler, who becomes synomynous with someone who tricks and lies, is indeed entertaining, but can be a crook, charlatan, con artist, a scammer.

> **Pehlivanii** au arătat tot felul de jocuri și scamatorii.
> (The **jugglers** showed all kinds of games and tricks.)
> Mare **pehlivan** omul ăsta! Oricum îl sucesc, tot nu pot scoate nimic de la el.
> (This man is such a **shrewd**! No matter how hard I try, I still cannot get anything out of him.)

It seems that only in Dobrogea[23] part of the original meaning, which is present in Hindi, is alive, where it refers to young lads who participate in fights and competitions with prizes, usually on the occassion of a Turkish wedding.

> În vreme ce mireasa se pregătește, **pehlivanii** joacă din picioare și îi țin pe nuntași veseli.
> (While the bride is getting ready, the **youngsters** danced their feet off and keep the guests entertained.)

In Hindi, the original meaning is the one that shines, a wrestler, an athlete, a strong person who helps around the community with performing activities that require significant physical strength. In rural India, they used to be the chiropractors and massagers of the common folk, the unlicensed doctors who realigned bones and put them back in their sockets after an accident, those who eased muscle pain resulted from days on end of agricultural work.

> गाँव के सारे **पहलवान** आ गए कुश्ती के लिए।
> (*Gā^{n}v ke sāre **pahalvān** ā gae kuśti ke lie.*)
> (All the village **wrestlers** came for the wrestling competition.)
> गोपाल **पहलवान** को बुलाओ, उसको हड्डियाँ ठीक करना आता है।
> (*Gopāl **pahalvān** ko bulāo, usko haḍḍiyā^{n} ṭhīk karnā ātā hai.*)
> (Call Gopāl the **wrestler**, he knows how to put bones in their place.)

15. *cherem* (noun, neuter, in Romanian from the Turkish *kerem*) = करम (*karam*, noun, masc., in Hindi from the Arabic *karam*).

Archaic and lost in Romanian, it used to mean generosity, favour. However, it is used exclusively in expressions related to dependence

[23] Dobruja; we have employed the Romanian spelling throughout the paper.

(usually in a negative sentence) today, to be dependent on someone's whim, to lie at someone's mercy:

> Îl are pe tânăr la **cheremul** lui; băiatul nu poate comenta nimic pentru că rămâne fără serviciu.
> (He has the young man **at his mercy**; the boy cannot comment anything because he will be fired.)
> Nu suntem noi la **cheremul** unui interlop! Să ne omoare pe toți, dar tot nu cedăm în fața lui!
> (We are not **at the mercy** of an underworld lord/don. He can kill us all, we will still not give in to him.)

Hindi preserves the original meaning and uses the term frequently, especially in cinematography (either dialogues or song lyrics), concentrating on generosity, kindness, grace, favour:[24]

> उसका ही **करम** है, अब हम चैन की नींद सो सकते हैं।
> (*Uskā hī **karam** hai, ab ham cain kī nī*ⁿ*d so sakte hai*ⁿ.)
> (It is due to his grace, now we can sleep peacefully.)
> अल्लाह, अपना **करम** दिखा!
> (*Allāh, apnā **karam** dikha!*)
> (Oh Lord, show your benevolence/grace!)
> हमपर **करम** बरसाओ!
> (*Hampar **karam** barsāo!*)
> (Shower me with Your grace!)

16. *amanet* (noun, neuter, in Romanian from the Turkish *emanet*) = अमानत (*amānat*, noun, fem., in Hindi from the Arabic *amāna:* and the Persian *amānat*).

[24] This word may often be confused with करम that should trully be कर्म (*karm*), deed, action, especially duty in patriotic songs and films.

Romanian uses the noun to solely mean a pawn shop,[25] the place where someone goes to leave/entrust an object as a guarantee for the money received; its verb, *a amaneta*, is equal to the English *to pawn*:

> Mă duc până la **amanet** să recuperez cerceii de aur primiți de la soțul meu.
> (I'm going to the **pawn shop** to reclaim the gold earrings received from my husband.)
> Din cauza problemelor financiare, a trebuit să-și **amaneteze** telefonul mobil.
> (Due to financial problems, he had **to pawn** his mobile phone.)

Hindi employs its meaning in a much more personal and poetic way, to signify entrusting one's most valuable assets or the wellbeing and security of the entire family to another person (usually in high regard, deeply trusted), who generally is a family member or a close friend:

> मेरी बेटी अब से तेरी **अमानत** है; उसका ख़याल रखना!
> (*Merī beṭī ab se terī **amānat** hai; uskā xayāl rakhnā!*)
> (From now on, I **entrust**[26] my daughter to you; take care of her!)
> तू मेरी **अमानत** है...[27]
> (*Tū merī **amānat** hai…*)
> (You are mine/You are **entrusted** to me.[28])

[25] When we were a child, the *amanet* used to be the place where people brought in their jewellery (gold, precious stone pieces) and received a certain amount of money, the last resort when in financial difficulty. Should they want their prized possessions back, they would have to pay the amount of money received, plus an interest calculated by the day. One had a set number of days available to reclaim one's effects, otherwise they would be sold on to another buyer. Nowadays, one can pawn many kinds of objects, from mobile phones to designer bags.
[26] Even if we have used a verb in translation, Hindi features a noun.
[27] A line from the famous *Sunn Raha Hai* from *Aashiqui 2* (2013).
[28] It may fall into the trap of considering someone one's property, but that is a discussion for a different theme.

मेरे जाने के बाद, मेरा परिवार तेरी **अमानत**।

(*Mere jāne ke bād, merā parivār terī **amānat**.*)
(After my departure – i.e. death – I entrust my family to you.)

17. *tabiet* (noun, neuter, in Romanian from the Turkish *tabiat*) = तबीयत (*tabīyat*, noun, fem., in Hindi from the Arabic *ṭabī'a:* and the Persian *ṭabī'at*).

Romanian kept a very interesting take of the word, namely a habit, something that one fancies enough to turn it into a daily activity; it is also to be somewhat understood as personal taste, having fixed and precise customs.

> Vecinul de deasupra mea are un **tabiet** tare ciudat, în fiecare dimineață la patru cântă o arie cu toți plămânii.
> (The neighbour above me has a very odd **habit**, every morning at four he sings an aria at the top of his lungs.)
> După ce-și face **tabietul**, bătrânul iese la plimbare în fiecare dimineață.
> (After he finishes his morning **routine**, the old man goes for a walk every morning.)
> Nea Gheorghe nu-și strică **tabietul** pentru nimic în lume: înainte de fiecare masă, bea un păhărel de vin de casă.
> (Mr. Gheorghe does not ruin his **routine** for anything; before every meal, he drinks a little glass of home-made wine.)

If we were to express the same idea in Hindi, we would have to use other terms:

> ऊपरवाले पड़ोसी की बड़ी अजीब **आदत**[29] है, रोज़ सुबह के चार बजे, पूरी ताकत से, यह एक आरिया (गीत) गाता है।

[29] There is also the more Sanskrit स्वभाव (*svabhāv*, nature).

(*Ūparvāle paṛosī kī baṛī ajīb* ***ādat*** *hai, roz subah ke cār baje, pūrī tākat se, yah ek āriyā – gīt – gātā hai.*)

(The neighbour above me has a very odd **habit**, every morning at four he sings an aria at the top of his lungs.)

श्री ग्योर्गे अपना **कार्यक्रम**/अपनी **दिनचर्या/आदत** बिलकुल नहीं बिगाड़ते/बदलते; हर भोजन से पहले, एक गिलास घर में बनाई हुई मदिरा को पीते हैं।

(*Śrī Gyorge apnā* ***kāryakram****/apnī* ***dincaryā/ādat*** *bilkul nahī*^{n} *bigāṛte/badalte; har bhojan se pahle, ek gilās ghar me*^{n} *banāī huī madirā ko pīte hai*^{n}.)

(Mr. Gheorghe does not ruin his **routine** for anything; before every meal, he drinks a little glass of home-made wine.)

Its usage in Hindi is quite different, hinting towards temperament, state of mind, mood, but mostly used as state of health in the modern language:

आपकी **तबीयत** कैसी है आजकल?

(*Āpkī* ***tabīyat*** *kaisī hai ājkal?*)

(How is your health nowadays?)

उसकी **तबीयत** बिगड़ गई है।

(*Uskī* ***tabīyat*** *bigaṛ gaī hai.*)

(Her **health** has worsened.)

कुसुम की **तबीयत** अचानक ख़राब हो गई है।

(*Kusum kī* ***tabīyat*** *acānak xarāb ho gaī hai.*)

(Kusum's **health** has suddenly deteriorated.)

इसकी **तबीयत** में काफ़ी सुधार है।

(*Iskī* ***tabīyat*** *me*^{n} *kāfī sudhār hai.)*

(Her **health** has improved significantly.)

18. *chef* (noun, neuter, in Romanian from the Turkish *keyif*) = कैफ़ियत (*kaifiyat,* noun, fem., in Hindi from the Arabic *kaifiya* and the Persian *kaifiyat*).

Romanian preserved two meanings, the first one, a loud party, with food, music and good spirits aplenty; the second, good disposition, hapiness, good spirits, personal disposition or mood. In the appropriate context, the meaning shifts to whim, temper, tantrum, fancy of someone.

> Mergem la **chef** sâmbătă? Vine și Gabi.
> (Are we going to the **party** on Saturday? Gabi is coming as well.)
> Am un **chef** de citit de nu știu cum să ajung mai repede acasă și să pun mâna pe o carte.
> (I am in such a **mood/hurry** to read that I don't know how to get home quicker and lay my hands on a book.)
> Nu am **chef** să termin de spălat vasele.
> (I am in no **mood** to finish washing the dishes.)
> Eu nu mă duc după **cheful** cuiva. Fac lucrurile așa cum trebuie făcute.
> (I do not follow someone's **fancy/whim**. I do things as they should be done.)

In modern Hindi, we mostly find it signifying quality, nature or condition. We have not come across the meaning of account, description, details, state of affairs, which may be more specific to Urdu than Hindi.

> उसपर परेशानी की **कैफ़ियत** भारी हो गई।
> (*Uspar pareśānī kī **kaifiyat** bhārī ho gaī hai.*)
> (The **state** of worry is weighing on him.)
> इस **कैफ़ियत** को बयान नहीं कर सकती।
> (*Is **kaifiyat** ko bayān nahī*^{n} *kar saktī.*)
> (I cannot describe this **mood/state**.)

मरीज़ अपनी **कैफ़ियत** अगर न बताए, तब बहुत बार इलाज करना नामुमकिन हो जाता है।

(*Marīz apnī **kaifiyat** agar na batāe, tab bahut bār ilāj karnā nāmumkin ho jātā hai.*)
(If the pacient does not tell you about his **state**, then, many times, it proves impossible to treat him.)
मैं ग़म की हर **कैफ़ियत** से गुज़रा हूँ।

(*Mai^{n} ġam kī har **kaifiyat** se guzrā hū^{n}.*)
(I have gone through all the **stages/mood** of sadness.)
उसको अकेला छोड़ दो; यह अब ख़ास **कैफ़ियत** में है।

(*Usko akelā choṛ do; yah ab xās **kaifiyat** me^{n} hai.*)
(Leave him alone; he is now in a special **state/mood**.)

19. Should anyone be in the mood for some good seafood, one may visit a Romanian *cherhana* (noun, fem., in Romanian from the Turkish *kerhane*[30]) = कारख़ाना (*kārxānā*, noun, masc., in Hindi from the Persian compound *kār*, work + *<u>kh</u>ānа*, building, house).

Hindi retains much of the original Persian logic, that of a place where work is done, organized work is performed, a factory, a business. Therefore, it is a factory, a workshop or a business where activities are accomplished.

हमारे शहर में एक नया **कारख़ाना** बनवाया जा रहा है।

(*Hamāre śahar me^{n} ek nayā **kārxānā** banvāyā jā rahā hai.*)
(A new **factory** is being built in our city.)
कारख़ाने के नए मालिक कल से काम शुरू करेंगे।

[30] Curiously enough, we have only found the pejorative meaning in Turkish dictionaries, that of a brothel (a different kind of fishy business, that is; funnily enough, a pimp is *un peşte* – a fish – in Romanian).

(***Kārxāne*** *ke nae mālik kal se kām śurū kare*^{n}*ge.)*
(The new owners of the **factory** start work tomorrow.)

Romanian has developed quite a specific sense when speaking of a *cherhana*, retaining part of the original factory or place where organized work takes place. It is an establishment where fish is being sorted, conserved, transported, and usually erected near a body of water to be close to the raw material. In modern language, it is more synonymous with a restaurant specialized in serving fish and seafood – in Dobrogea, especially.

Cherhanalele de la malul mării oferă cea mai mare varietate de pește din țară.
(The **fish and seafood restaurants** from the seaside offer the best fish variety in the country.)

20. In case anyone was thinking of a trick to get a reservation at such a restaurant, then one will need a *tertip* (noun, neuter, in Romanian from the Turkish *tertib*) = तरतीब (*tartīb*, noun, masc., in Hindi from the Arabic *tartīb*).

The uses meaning order or project have fallen out of grace and are long forgotten in Romanian. What remains is the idea of cunning planning, web of lies, trickery to attain the desired results; the use in the plural is most common.

Pentru a prelua puterea, partidul a recurs la niște **tertipuri** nemaiîntâlnite.
(In order to take over, the party resorted to some unprecedented **tricks**.)
Nu știu cu ce **tertipuri** umblă fata asta, dar e clar că vrea scaunul de șef.
(I don't know what **tricks** this girl has up her sleeve, but it is clear that she wants the boss's chair.)

Hindi stayed with the idea of arrangement, order, methodical and orderly planning.[31]

संख्या **तरतीब** से बाहर है।

(*Sa^{n}khyā **tartīb** se bāhar hai.*)
(The numbers are out of **order**.)
कमरे में फूलों की **तरतीब** बहुत ख़ूबसूरत है।

(*Kamre me^{n} phūlo^{n} kī **tartīb** bahut xūbsūrat hai.*)
(The **arrangement** of flowers in the room is very beautiful.)
इसकी कोई **तरतीब** नहीं है; हम मालिकों के आने का इंतज़ार करेंगे।

(*Iskī koī **tartīb** nahī^{n} hai; ham māliko^{n} ke āne kā i^{n}taz̲ār kare^{n}ge.*)
(This has no **arrangement/plan/solution**; we will wait for the owners.)

Conclusion

Not focusing on phonetic and phonological changes, the most evident conclusion regarding the nature of the common words in Romanian and Hindi is the fact that all are loanwords from Turkish in Romanian, and Persian/Arabic in Hindi, respectively. Additionally, the pejorative nature that these terms developed in Romanian may be due to the rebellion against foreign rule, as the Phanariot Period was especially challenging for common folk (with rulers so adamant to rapidly achieve high status and financial power, that the taxes and constraints imposed proved almost impossible to bear for the people); in the mind of the oppressed, once liberated from tyrany, anything associated with the gruesome past must be washed away, forgotten or given a negative interpretation as soon as possible. Survival is essential and coping mechanisms have been the only hope of getting to the other side alive.

[31] More common in Urdu than Hindi.

Although we have tried our best to select solely words that are still used in the contemporary Romanian language, some examples have indeed fallen into oblivion, mainly due to the fact that Ottoman rule fell a long time ago and the relevance of these terms (many related to administration, politics) is null and void. Nonetheless, their isolated use – in certain areas of the country – proves that the collective memory has not yet forgotten, it has adapted meaning and kept their use in common language.

Hindi has been more consistent partly because it has managed to maintain more of the original meanings than Romanian. Grammatically speaking, it was able to embrace foreign structures and mechanisms and help them coexist with the parent language – Sanskrit. With a higher flexibility – both semantically and grammar-wise – Hindustani[32] was more successful in maintaining these terms in contemporary vocabulary, even after the country where it was born attained independence and became a republic and a democracy.

The present paper aimed to discover, remind and celebrate the common link that ties us by bringing to the fore elements of something indispensible in the functioning of the world: articulate language. By analyzing these elements, layers of historical events, turmoil and tribulations, centuries of tyrany and looting, unimaginable injustices were revealed. At the same time, hope, beauty in thought and deed, as well as resilience never forsake the common man, who did what he knew best: adapt to change, as change is the only constant to ontology.

[32] There is no place for the Hindi-Urdu controversy in this paper. Although we are well aware of the divide created by political and cultural policies (starting maybe from the British Raj in the 19th century) of the past, continued with socio-political movements that aspire to a certain religious identity in the 20th century and present, the two varieties can coexist peacefully, as "there is enough space under the sun for everybody", as a famous Romanian saying points out (*este destul loc sub soare pentru toată lumea*).

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In 2025, she completed the second volume of the Hindi course book, dedicated to intermediate learners (*Manual de limba hindi*, vol. 2, mediu, Ed. Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2025, ISBN: 978-606-17-2536-6). Her interests are mainly focused on Hindi language and literature, Indian culture and philosophy, having published several papers in this respect.

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Sámuel Brassai and the Sanskrit Language

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Abstract: The name of Sámuel Brassai resonates with anyone of Hungarian mother tongue or with those familiar with Hungarian culture. Should one be asked who Brassai was, the likely answer would be the somewhat clichéd phrase "the last Transylvanian polymath". Indeed, this seems justified: he was the last Transylvanian intellectual who achieved lasting accomplishments in several branches of science while also moving with ease in a variety of artistic domains. He is known to have made significant contributions to literary studies, linguistics, economics and the natural sciences, as well as to have dealt with questions of philosophy of art and aesthetics, and to have written art criticism. What is far less known, however, is that Brassai was perhaps the first person in Transylvania to undertake a systematic scholarly engagement with the Sanskrit language and, through it, with Indian culture. The present study seeks to present this dimension of Brassai's intellectual profile.

Keywords: Sámuel Brassai, Sanskrit language, Transylvania, literary studies, linguistics, intellectual profile.

Brassai's Family and Childhood

Transylvania has given Hungarian culture numerous outstanding talents. There is a long list of scholars, writers, poets, artists and musicians who were born in Transylvania, who have worked there and many of whom attained not only national but also European or even global fame.

Sámuel Brassai, whom posterity remembers as the last Hungarian polymath of Transylvania, belongs to this distinguished circle.

Little reliable information survives regarding his ancestry, family background, and early years. Even his year of birth is uncertain: some sources state 1797, others 1800. His paternal grandfather, according to available records, was a craftsman of Saxon origin – either from Brașov[1] or from Abrud[2] – who had arrived in Rimetea[3] under the name János Wellmes (elsewhere given as Werwetz). Because of his origins form Brașov, the family came to be known as "Brassai," a surname his son officially adopted. His son, Sámuel W. Brassai, became a Unitarian minister serving in Colțești[4] and Sânmihaiu[5] (currently Mihai Viteazu). He was remembered as a man of great learning and culture. He married Krisztina Koncz Kissolymosi, daughter of the local Unitarian minister in Colțești. From this marriage was born Sámuel Brassai. The father's life ended tragically in April 1837, when he was struck by lightning, while he was standing at the window inside his house[6].

Given the uncertainty of Brassai's birth year, it is perhaps unsurprising that the precise location of his birth is also disputed: both Colțești and Rimetea claim the honor. Two facts, however, are certain: the first is that he was registered in the parish records of Colțești, and the second is that a passport found after the death of Brassai shows Rimetea as the place of his birth. It is important to note that the community of Colțești seems to have prevailed in this contest of memory, as during

[1] In Hungarian: Brassó, in German: Kronstadt.
[2] In Hungarian: Abrudbánya, in German: Gross-Schlatten or Altenburg.
[3] In Hungarian: Torockó, in German: Eisenburg.
[4] In Hungarian: Torockószentgyörgy, in German: Sankt Georgen.
[5] In Hungarian: Szentmihály.
[6] Kővári, László, *A száz évet élt Dr. Brassai Sámuel pályafutása és munkái (1797-1897).* Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. Albert Könyvnyomdája, 1897, pp. 4-6.

Brassai's lifetime a memorial plaque was erected at the pastor's house on 18 June 1897[7].

Brassai's early studies most probably began in the paternal home, where he was studying German language, natural sciences (mathematics, geography, biology), and music. Later he continued his studies as a private student at the Unitarian College in Cluj (later Cluj-Napoca)[8], a form of study chosen likely because his father had trained him from an early age to pursue knowledge through independent learning. Rather than conducting formal lessons, the elder Brassai set tasks for his son, allowing him to recognize and correct his own mistakes. For a short period he also studied at the College of Aiud[9]. He completed his studies relatively late, at the age of twenty-one, in Cluj[10].

Academic Career

After completing his studies, the young Brassai became a private tutor, teaching the children of Transylvanian aristocrats Hungarian and German, as well as piano. In the meantime, he began publishing, initially anonymously or under pseudonym. He also travelled widely throughout Transylvania and Hungary.

In 1834 he settled in Cluj, where he founded a newspaper entitled *Vasárnapi Újság*[11] *(Sunday Gazette)*. From 1837 to 1848 he served as a teacher at the Unitarian College in Cluj, where he taught history, geography, Hungarian language, and mathematics. Beginning in 1838,

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[7] *Ibidem*, p. 6.
[8] In Hungarian: Kolozsvár, in German: Klausenburg.
[9] In Hungarian: Nagyenyed, in German: Straßburg am Mieresch.
[10] Nyiredi Szabolcs (ed.), *Brassai Sámuel (1797-1897) emlékezete.* Budapest: Dávid Ferenc Egylet, 1997, p. 31.
[11] Gazda István (ed.), *Brassai Sámuel (1800-1897) akadémikus, unitárius tudós, a kolozsvári egyetem professzora, nyelvész, matematikus, botanikus, irodalmár, zenetudós, fordító munkásságának és az életében róla megjelent írásoknak a kronológiája. Tájékoztató jellegű bibliográfiai adatokkal.* Budapest: Neumann Kht, 2004, p. 3.

alongside his teaching duties, he also held the position of director of the college for two years, and he was re-elected to this office in 1845. That same year he was elected a corresponding member of the Mathematical and Natural Sciences Department of the Hungarian Scientific Society (the predecessor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences).

Meanwhile, two of his books were published: the first in 1834, entitled *Bevezetés a világ, föld és statusok ismeretébe* [*Introduction to the Knowledge of the World, the Earth, and States*] and five years later, in 1839, the second one entitled *Bankismeret* [*Banking Knowledge*]. In 1848 he was elected a member of the municipal council of Kolozsvár, but in the turmoil of that year's Hungarian revolution and freedom fight he fled to Budapest. During the Hungarian revolution of 1848-1849, he served as an officer in General Bem's camp. After two years spent in hiding, he returned to Budapest, where he taught at Pál Gönczy's private school until 1859. He then returned once more to Kolozsvár, initially as a teacher at the Unitarian College, subsequently as the first museum keeper of the collections of the Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület[12], and from 1862 as its director. In 1865 he was elected a full member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. From the 1870s onward, his career was closely tied to the Royal Hungarian Franz Joseph University of Cluj: he taught, served as vice-rector, then rector, and also as dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, contributing significantly to the institution's development.

In 1874 the university awarded him a doctorate, a distinction befitting a scholar who was by then widely respected and admired. In 1883, at the age of 86, he was retired by the Minister of Education. In

[12] The Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület (in Romanian: Asociația Muzeului Ardelean, in English: Transylvanian Museum Society) was founded in Cluj-Napoca in 1859, being the oldest Hungarian scientific association in Transylvania, whose main aim is scientific research and dissemination of knowledge.

1887, the Academy elected him an honorary member, and a year later was published his last book, *Az igazi pozitív philosophia* [*The True Positive Philosophy*][13].

Brassai devoted his entire life to science. From the 1830s onward he published continuously, edited several periodicals, leaving a lasting mark across numerous disciplines through his books, essays, and translations. That is why he is often referred to as the last Transylvanian polymath. That this designation is justified is evident from the fact that he made significant contributions in fields as diverse as economics, linguistics, literary studies, pedagogy, and the natural sciences. His name is also associated with important reforms in education, such as his 1841 proposal that Hungarian replace Latin as the language of education[14]. He also concerned himself with the philosophy of art, aesthetics, and art criticism. The oft-quoted saying about him – that his life revolved around the "magic number ten" – aptly captures the breadth of his genius: he mastered ten sciences, spoke ten languages, and lived ten decades.

Brassai and the Sanskrit Language

Few are aware that among the many languages[15] Brassai spoke was Sanskrit, which he acquired on his own, in an autodidactic way. To recall briefly: Sanskrit belongs to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages. It is the liturgical language of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, and is therefore often referred to as "the language of the gods". In addition to sacred texts, it also served as a medium for

[13] Nyiredi Szabolcs (ed.), *Brassai Sámuel (1797–1897) emlékezete.* Budapest: Dávid Ferenc Egylet, 1997, p. 32.
[14] Kővári, László, *A száz évet élt Dr. Brassai Sámuel pályafutása és munkái (1797–1897).* Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. Albert Könyvnyomdája, 1897, p. 16.
[15] According to historical records, Brassai spoke Latin, German, French, English, Russian, Turkish, Romanian, Hebrew, Greek and Sanskrit, in addition to Hungarian, his mother tongue.

philosophy and literature. Although no longer used for everyday communication, Sanskrit remains one of India's twenty-two official languages. Today it is mainly employed in religious rituals and scholarly research. Put simply, Sanskrit has played for South and Southeast Asian culture a role comparable to that of Latin in Europe.

Our knowledge of Brassai's method of language learning, the works he read in the original, and the substantial Sanskrit library he assembled derives from a letter preserved from his time. In June 1870, upon learning that a professorship in Sanskrit had been established at the University of Pest, Brassai wrote a letter of complaint to the literary historian Ferenc Toldy, expressing his bitterness that he had not been invited to fill the newly created chair of Oriental Languages and Literatures. The letter also reveals that, although no one had ever officially offered him the opportunity to teach Sanskrit, he had secretly cherished the hope of receiving such an appointment – hence his disappointment.

This letter has been quoted by several scholars (Boros 1927: 215-216; Gaal 2004: 173-174), but the version cited here comes from a study by Péter Dániel Szántó, who examined the original text as a Sanskrit scholar, and was thus able to correct earlier errors and to shed light on details that had remained obscure until then. A crucial passage reads as follows:

> "Allow me, on this occasion, a confidential word. In Pest, in the 1850s, in the interest of comparative philology, I learned Sanskrit as far as was necessary. Since, for me, the language considered purely as language has limited value, once I reached the point where the difficulty of comprehension no longer hindered enjoyment, I endeavoured to acquaint myself with its literature. For this purpose I had, for the most part, to purchase auxiliary materials at my own expense, for in Pest there was very little available at the time. Even now, apart from the gift from Pulszky, I possess the only collection in Pest of any considerable size, not as a duplicate but as a complement. Thus supplied, I read through four

substantial chrestomathies, various published episodes of the *Mahābhārata* (two of which, *Nala* and the *Bhagavadgītā*, are sizeable books), the first three books of the other great epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa*; among the dramas, the five most distinguished; the *Hitopadeśa*; and the *Līlāvatī*, which teaches calculation. I believe that from these I have acquired at least as much and as thorough knowledge of the language as any Hungarian today could claim. As a result, I published in Pest a translation (*Kandu*) in one of the newspapers and – particularly in the analysis of verb forms – made comparisons that shed light on the subject in many ways." [16]

Szántó's research further identified the translation to which Brassai referred: it appeared anonymously in *Pesti Napló* on 1 September 1856 under the title *Tudomány, irodalom és müvészet. Két mythus (Science, Literature and Art. Two Myths)*. Without going into the content or the plot of the text translated by Brassai, it is worth noting that, according to Szántó, the second part of this article, *Kandu remetesége* (*The Hermitage of Kandu)*, is thus possibly the earliest Hungarian translation made directly from Sanskrit, without recourse to intermediary languages[17].

Another interesting feature of the letter is that it clearly shows that Brassai's knowledge of Sanskrit was of such a level that "the difficulty of comprehension no longer hindered enjoyment" enabling him to engage freely with Sanskrit literature. Moreover, it is also revealed by this letter, that he possessed a substantial collection of Sanskrit books, comparable both in quantity and composition to those then available in Pest, and deliberately acquiring works not otherwise accessible there.

His disappointment at being passed over for the newly created chair emerges clearly in another part of the letter. The fact that Brassai was disappointed about not being taken into consideration when the

[16] Szántó Péter Dániel, "Brassai Sámuel, az első erdélyi szankritista", in *Távol-keleti Tanulmányok,* 17/2, 2025, p. 214.
[17] *Ibidem*, p. 215.

department was set up is very nicely illustrated in the second part of the letter:

> "I must add, that I could have call numerous living witnesses who would testify that I assisted them, tuto, cito and jucunde [safely, quickly, and pleasantly – author's note] in acquiring comprehension of one or another foreign language. As a teacher, in general, I do not have a bad reputation. Well, I was under the misapprehension that the Minister of Education might have some awareness, even if he were not the President of the academy and did not know me personally, that someone had undertaken studies in such a rare field. In this misbelief, I confess with a blush, some small hope flashed through me when I read the news of the establishment of a Sanskrit department (at the University of Pest), that I might be asked if I had the strength and courage to fill the said position. But this did not happen; on the contrary, I heard a most obscure name mentioned, which made my exclusion all the more painful. Even if it had been, for example, Flórián Mátyás, who, after all, provided me with my very first aid in these studies – I should not have been surprised!"[18]

The accusation implicitly directed at both the President of the Academy and the Minister of Education was aimed at Baron József Eötvös, who held both offices at the time. Although Brassai and Eötvös were personally acquainted, it is highly probable that the minister was unaware of Brassai's Sanskrit scholarship, especially since Brassai's aforementioned translation in *Pesti Napló* was anonymous, likely because he wished to avoid drawing attention to himself, given his role in the 1848-49 Hungarian revolution and freedom struggle[19]. Of course, this is all conjecture, as there is no historical record of this.

Szántó also identified the "obscure name" mentioned by Brassai as István Tamaskó (Štefan Ján Tamaško, 1801-1881), a teacher from

[18] *Ibidem*, pp. 215-216.
[19] *Ibidem*, p. 215.

Bratislava[20], remembered as one of the earliest Hungarian Sanskrit scholars[21]. Further evidence of Brassai's Sanskrit proficiency is his 1884 publication – preceding that of Károly Fiók – of a translation of a portion of the *Hitopadeśa*, entitled *Hitopadeša bevezetője és első meséje (Fordításkisértmény)* [*Introduction and First Tale of the Hitopadeśa (Translation Attempt)*], in the journal *Erdélyi Múzeum*[22]. The same journal also printed his lengthy, thirty-page review of Fiók's 1885 Hungarian translation of the *Nala and Damayantī* episode of the *Mahābhārata*, published by the Kisfaludy Society[23]. In this thorough critique, Brassai attributed most of Fiók's errors to negligence, haste, and lack of attention. Interestingly, in his article he concluded with a postscript noting that a new Hungarian translation of the same story had appeared in 1886 by Manó Michalek, which he judged to be far superior to the Fiók translation[24].

Fiók, in turn, responded in *Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny*, openly questioning Brassai's knowledge of Sanskrit[25]. Their scholarly exchange and debate between Brassai and Fiók continued: in 1887, Fiók published his translation of Kālidāsa's drama *Śakuntalā*, again under the auspices of the Kisfaludy Society. That same year, Brassai issued a review entitled *A Magyar Sakuntala (The Hungarian Śakuntalā)*[26], in which he

[20] In Hungarian: Pozsony, in German: Pressburg.
[21] Szántó Péter Dániel, "Brassai Sámuel, az első erdélyi szankritista", in *Távol-keleti Tanulmányok,* 17/2, 2025, p. 216.
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[23] Brassai Sámuel, "Könyvsimertetés. Nala és Damajánti - Hindu rege a Mahábharatából. Szanszkritból fordította Fiók Károly. Budapest(en) 1885", in *Erdélyi Múzeum*, III/4, 1886, pp. 314-347.
[24] *Ibidem*, 347.
[25] F. K. [Fiók Károly], "Pár szó egy megkésett «Könyvismertetés»-hez. Válaszul Brassai S. urnak", in *Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny.* XI,1897, pp. 419-432.
[26] Brassai Sámuel, "A magyar Sakuntala", in *Erdélyi Múzeum*, IV/4, 1887, pp. 394-423.

praised the translation as an improvement over Fiók's earlier effort, yet nevertheless filled nearly thirty pages with suggested corrections aimed at making the work "perfect and unreservedly recommendable, a worthy contribution to our literature of translation." [27]

In his later years, Brassai also turned to the study of religions. The written version of two of his lectures was published in contemporary journals. A short extract of his lecture at a meeting organized by the Ferencz Dávid Society was published in *Unitárius Közlöny* and was entitled *Buddha és a buddhisták üdvözítő tana*[28] *(Buddha and the Salvific Doctrine of the Buddhists)*, while a second one, entitled *Buddhismus (Buddhism)*, was published in *Keresztény Magvető*[29]. In yet another essay, *Egy új vallás (A New Religion)*, also in *Keresztény Magvető*, he translated and annotated a study by Max Müller on Buddhism[30], for a better understanding.

However, Brassai not only researched and published, he was also a keen lecturer, and teaching remained dear to him. After the founding of the university in Cluj in 1872, Brassai, despite his advanced age, was appointed to teach mathematics. But just two years later, in 1874, he was also licensed to teach Sanskrit language and the philology. At the close of the academic year 1875-1876, Rector Géza Entz reported that

> "the disciplines represented at our university have been multiplied during the year by the fact that Dr. Sámuel Brassai, professor emeritus of mathematics and natural sciences, has been authorized to give lectures in Sanskrit language and literature."[31]

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[27] *Ibidem*, p. 394.
[28] Brassai Sámuel, "Buddha és a buddhisták üdvözítő tana", in *Unitárius Közlöny*, II/12, 1889. pp. 223-225.
[29] Brassai Sámuel, "Buddhismus", in *Keresztény Magvető*, 25/1, 1890, pp. 1-19.
[30] Brassai Sámuel, "Egy új vallás", in *Keresztény Magvető*, 28/5, 1893, pp. 255-277.
[31] dr. Gaal György, "Brassai Sámuel, a szanszkrit nyelv tanára", in *Keresztény Magvető*, 110/2, 2004, p. 175.

Brassai announced his Sanskrit lectures each year with varying content, and continued even after his retirement. The last academic year in which Sanskrit appeared in the curriculum was the second semester of 1884-1885.

The Sanskrit Holdings in the Brassai Legacy

In addition to his teaching, Brassai assembled a remarkably substantial Sanskrit library for his time, numbering over one hundred volumes. As his letter to Toldy quoted above also indicates, he was very proud of his Sanskrit-language book collection, and contemporary accounts confirm that he made daily use of these books. After his death, his entire library was transferred to the library of the Unitarian College. During the communist era's nationalization, the collection was taken into state ownership. Today it forms part of the holdings of the Cluj-Napoca branch of the Library of the Romanian Academy.

Without attempting to catalogue each and every item of Brassai's Sanskrit library, a few general observations may be made. The diversity of themes represented by the books suggests, first, that Brassai's engagement with Sanskrit was serious rather than a mere hobby, for which he willingly invested significant sums. Second, the breadth of subjects covered testifies to his wide-ranging curiosity and intellectual appetite.

The bulk of the collection consists of religious literature and the most important Indian epics and dramas, but there are also books on linguistics, dictionaries and other scientific subjects (astronomy, mathematics, logic, etc.). As to the specific authors and their works that made up the Sanskrit book collection, there are currently two sources. First, an appendix of eighty-seven items compiled by György Gaal on the basis of available catalogues and other information, appended to his study *Brassai Sámuel, a szanszkrit nyelv tanára* (*Sámuel Brassai,*

Teacher of Sanskrit Language)[32]; and second, a study by Péter Dániel Szántó published in the catalogue of an exhibition organized in 2023 by the *Cluj Center for Indian Studies* at Babeș-Bolyai University, headed by dr. Mihaela Gligor, in collaboration with the "George Barițiu" Institute of History of the Romanian Academy and the Cluj-Napoca branch of the Library of Romanian Academy, with support from the Embassy of India in Bucharest and the Ministry of Culture of India. The exhibition entitled *Sanscrita, limba sacră* (*Sanskrit, the Sacred Language*) focused on the Sanskrit-language and Sanskrit-themed volumes preserved in the Cluj-Napoca branch of the Library of Romanian Academy, including several items from the Brassai legacy. The catalogue published on this occasion includes a study by Szántó, which briefly explains the importance of the works that formed Brassai's Sanskrit collection. This summary is particularly significant as it represents the first rapid inventory of the collection undertaken by a Sanskrit scholar.

According to Szántó, the legacy includes key works of Vedic religious literature, such as the *Ṛgveda* and the *Sāmaveda*, as well as the two great epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Volumes of the great poet and dramatist Kālidāsa were also present, together with other masterpieces of Indian drama. In contrast, verse collections were fewer in number, though the *Hitopadeśa* and the *Pañcatantra* were certainly included. Among Brassai's favoured works appears to have been the *Kāmandakīya Nītisāra*, an ancient Sanskrit treatise on politics and statecraft, as well as the *Līlāvatī*, a work on arithmetic and related mathematical subjects. There were also a few texts on Buddhism, and most likely works on astrology as well[33].

[32] *Ibidem*, pp. 182-186.
[33] Péter Dániel Szántó, "Sámuel Brassai, primul sanscritist transilvănean", in *Catalogul expoziției Sanscrita, limba sacră,* 2023, pp. 3-8.

Equally valuable are Brassai's own manuscripts, which contain translations of various Sanskrit texts, grammatical and philological notes, and extensive Sanskrit-Hungarian glossaries of dictionary-like character. According to Gaal and others, these manuscripts were probably prepared in the course of Brassai's university teaching.

Conclusion

As the foregoing makes clear, Brassai was thoroughly at home in Sanskrit. At the same time, he sought to share this knowledge in the framework of university teaching for a decade, and he possessed a library of Sanskrit works that was unique and of considerable value in his day. Nevertheless, none of his students seems to have developed a serious interest in "the language of the gods" or in the literature written in it. This may explain why Brassai's contributions to Sanskrit studies fell into near oblivion for so long and remain to this day a scarcely researched area.

A fitting tribute to the memory of the last Hungarian polymath would be to bring this neglected aspect of his scholarly work into the light, especially as the year 2027 will mark the 230th anniversary of his birth and the 130th anniversary of his death.

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Writing India, Configuring Indianness: A Study of two Indian English Novels from Early Twentieth Century

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Abstract: This paper explores the theme of imagining India as a nation while configuring Indian identity during the early twentieth century and it engages in a detailed study of two early Indian English novels published in 1909: *The Prince of Destiny*: *The New Krishna* by Sarath Kumar Ghosh and *Hindupore: A Peep Behind The Indian Unrest*, *An Anglo-Indian Romance* by Sidda Mohana Mitra. The paper concentrates on the complex and ambiguous negotiation between colonial discourse and nationalist ideology undertaken by Indian writers in a bid to imagine a nation which is yet to become a political reality. During the heyday of colonialism, Indian identity was ambiguously associated with loyalist aspirations characterized by Anglophilia. The essay also focuses on the politics of aspirational "Englishness" while negotiating Indian identity and it explores the challenges of writing Anglophone Indian literature during the colonial period.

Keywords: Early Indian English Novels, Colonialism, Nation, Nationalism, Identity.

Motto:

> "India, anciently called the 'Bharat Varsha' after the name of a monarch called 'Bharat' is bounded on its south by the sea; on the east partly by this sea, and partly by ranges of mountains separating it from ancient China, or rather the countries now called Assam, Cassay and Arracan; on the north by a lofty and extensive chain of mountains which divides it from Tibet; and on the west partly by ranges of mountains, separating India from ancient Persia, and extending towards the Western sea, above the mouth of the Indus, and partly by this sea itself. It lies between the 8th and 35th degrees of the north latitude, and the 67th and 93rd degrees of the east longitude."[1]
>
> (Rammohan Roy, 175)

> "I can lose my way, I may drown, but that port of abundance is always there. That is my fully formed Bharat – full in wealth, full in knowledge, full in dharma." (Rabindranath Tagore, *Gora*, 21)

These quotations elucidate two most prevalent modes of conceptualizing India during the colonial era. They are significant since Rammohan Roy speaks of its geographical extent while writing about Bharatvarsha. The putative nation has been conceptualised as a concrete geographical space. Gora, the ultra-Hindu nationalist character from Tagore's eponymous novel speaks about the country in terms of abstract quality like knowledge and righteousness. Temporally, they are significant since Rammohan Roy was one of the earliest historical figures to articulate the concerns of India as a country wrote this in 1832; while Tagore's novel, *Gora* was published in 1909. This paper seeks to explore the myriad ways through which the nation of India was imagined in *The Prince of Destiny*: *The New Krishna* by Sarath Kumar Ghosh and

[1] This quotation is taken from Rammohan Roy's essay "A Brief Preliminary Sketch of the Ancient and Modern Boundaries and History of India," published in 1832.

Hindupore: a Peep behind the Indian Unrest, *An Anglo-Indian Romance* by Sidda Mohana Mitra, both published in 1909.

The 'Nation' in Imagination

Ideas of nation and construction of a national identity remain the primary focus of these novels. The putative nation to be carved out of the empire is vividly expressed through the portrayal of princely kingdoms of Barathpur in *The Prince of Destiny* and Hindupore in *Hindupore.* The names of the kingdoms are suggestive of their representative character. Barathpur and Hindupore are allegorical spaces which are symbolic of the nation being imagined. This is vindicated by their non-descript location. At a critical juncture in *The Prince of Destiny* Vashista hails Barath as the ruler of Barathbarsha. "Vashista, Ramanand, and the priests combined did homage. "Hail, Ruler of Barath-barsha!"" (Ghosh, 580)

The Kingdom of Barathpur and the country of India are thus conflated at a moment of supreme climax as well as crisis. Barathpur is located somewhere in Rajasthan which can only be ascertained from the frequent use of the word Rajput. There are frequent references to people reading Todd's *Annals of Rajasthan* in the novel. Hindupore is located between the rivers Ganga and Yamuna, somewhere near Allahabad. These novels invented the device of not locating the novel anywhere specifically and thereby locating it everywhere. Meenakshi Mukherjee, in her famous essay, "The Anxiety of Indianness," suggests that,

> "In English texts of India there may be a greater pull towards homogenization of reality, an essentializing of India, a certain flattening out […] this attenuation is artistically valid when the narrative aspires to the condition of allegory but for the Indian writer in English there may be other unarticulated compulsions – the uncertainty of his target audience […]" (172).

The anxiety that Mukherjee writes is aggravated manifold by the absence of a concrete nation for these authors. The use of princely state as

the space where the drama of the nation unfolds is also very significant. It is curious that both the authors, Bengalis by origin, born in British territories and cosmopolitan in intellectual make-up wrote about Indian princely states when they wrote about national space. The political project of gerrymandering of identity is at work in these novels. This may also be interpreted as the recognition of the princely states as an integral component of the putative country struggling to attain nationhood. Besides, the portrayal of national glory can only be executed through the princely states because British territories only symbolised defeat, oppression and ignominy at the hands of an alien force. Besides, the presence of an authoritarian colonial regime and its regime of censorship also acts as a limiting factor for the authors in terms of their setting. Alex Tickell has rightly pointed out in the context of *The Prince of Destiny*,

> "In striking contrast to the […] later nationalist novelists, earlier romance writers also used the 'princely' kingdom as the setting of their fictions, the reasons for which are partly tactical (their critical focus is, ostensibly, not 'directly ruled' British India) […]" ("Writing the Nation's Destiny", 528).

Although the primary focus in the novels remains on the princely state yet British ruled India has been represented in the context of travels undertaken by major characters to the colonial metropolises like Calcutta, Bombay, Allahabad, and London. The characters also travel to places of historical and religious significance like Chittor, Puri and Agra. The motif of travel is of crucial significance and assists in imagining the nation and empire in its entirety. There is an impatient urge to travel in both novels. As Benedict Anderson puts it,

> "Here again we see the 'national imagination' at work in the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside" (30).

The references to random places like Benaras, Tarakeshwar, Nadya, Nasik, Allahabad, Jhansi, Krishnanagar, Cuttack, Calcutta and Bombay give rise to a curious feeling that they are arbitrary but belonged to a single political and administrative entity – the British Indian Empire. The horizon is clearly bounded, and it is that of colonial India. It is through references to these places that the precincts of the putative nation are demarcated. A characteristic alien feeling is generated in the description of London and the Egyptian port of Alexandria in *The Prince of Destiny* and the port Aden in *Hindupore*.

Both the novels portray the hustle bustle of big cities of India like Bombay and Calcutta while representing British India. These cities become the symbol of British prestige, although their incorporation in the narrative considers them as part of the nation. They represent the mingling of East and the West – India transformed after the onslaught of colonial modernity. In contrast, the princely states are imagined as a bucolic setting and portray a certain degree of laid-back aristocratic lifestyle of the medieval ages. In *The Prince of Destiny* reference to Barath's maternal grandmother's hill fortress, Pertabpur, and Chittor which are in- accessible by the railways symbolise quintessential India unsullied by the touch of modernity. In *Hindupore*, the states of Hindupore, Karimabad and Nabob Shamshere Khan's estate all exude a charming medieval flavour. The celebration of Persian culture in Nabob Shamshere Khan's abode 'Rahut Manzil' exudes the charm of late Mughal period. The figure of Khusru Khan, an accomplished Persian poet shows the decay of a rich cultural heritage which is getting wiped out by the imperialistic British imposition of English language. These novels in conjunction with the British notions of the Victorian era conceptualises India as a medieval space where time stands still. Quaint medieval charm of the princely states helped the British to visualise their own pre-industrial past in the present state of India as stated by Thomas Metcalf:

> "Much in the description of India as 'medieval' was simply an extension of the 'picturesque' vision, attracted by the colourful and the exotic, which found such comparisons to be the most satisfactory way of coming to terms with India's difference from Victorian England […] the princely states of Rajputana (now Rajasthan) personify a 'medieval' India. In the princely state […] time stood still. The Rajput states […] had changed so little in the preceding 800 years. In this way India's princes were shaped to fit the needs of the Raj, India's past was once again created anew" (72-73).

The motif of 'medieval' India is played to the utmost at the occasion of the Grand Durbar in 1877. The Raj not only conceptualised India as a 'medieval' space but also produced its own version of a medieval spectacle at the Durbar event when prince, potentates and vassals from all over the Indian empire were made to congregate and showcase their wealth, glamour and valour in the form of a procession. The rich descriptions of wealth and glory of the Indian princes as well as that of the British make it a spectacle. Both novels vividly describe the Durbar thereby stressing its political and symbolic significance to the empire. The selection of Delhi as the site of the event was shaped by a desire to create for the Raj a Mughal past. In a curious way these novels validate the Orientalist mode of representing a 'medieval', pre-modern image of India.

The idea of the nation as a storehouse of riches has been put forward by most Indian authors. Ghosh and Mitra are no exceptions. Ghosh describes Barathpur's richness in minerals like iron ore and coal. On the contrary, Mitra depicts Hindupore as a prosperous agrarian state which has the wealth of 'Mahwa flowers' eagerly sought by liquor manufacturers of Britain. Both novels advocate modernization. The princely rulers undertake initiatives for agrarian reforms, irrigational facilities and industrialization, though the adoption of modernity is selective.

In *The Prince of Destiny*, modernization in the material domain is accepted, though conservatives like Vashistha and Vindara vehemently oppose the introduction of social reforms like abolition of Sati, legalisation of widow remarriage, abolition or modification of compulsory dowry and the joint family system. The spiritual core of the nation resists changes. In fact, the crisis in the novel arises out of this imposition of modernity from above on a society which is inherently feudal, agrarian, and traditional. There is a certain contradiction in the way Barathpur evolves as a national space within the novel. Economic changes were brought which would inevitably disrupt the traditional order. The resistance from the traditional social order is vindicated by non-allegiance of the nobles when Barath urged them to accept the new bureaucratic system of governance by wiping out the feudal order. Traditional elements in Barathpur society thwart social reform while accepting and benefitting from economic reforms.

This dichotomy, though portrayed within the context of a particular princely state is the way British tried to come to terms with their Indian empire. While they "sought to maintain India as a feudal order", yet recommended and legalised changes "which would inevitably lead to a destruction of this feudal order" (Cohn, 166). In *Hindupore*, where the kingdom is comparatively peaceful and ordered, no projects of reform are at hand except for the construction of irrigational infrastructure. In fact, Hindupore is the perfect specimen of a feudal state almost idyllic in its operation conforming to the Orientalist fantasy of a perfectly ordered feudal space. Raja Ram Singh's popularity is evident as subjects flock on both sides of the road to welcome their king. Even the paternalistic attitude of Raja Ram Singh is very evident in his rhetoric of the best interests of his subjects while indulging in a lavish life of comfort.

History of the Putative Nation

History emerges as the most contentious domains of complex and ambiguous negotiation in the context of colonial India. British colonizers and Indian nationalists tried to appropriate history to suit their own needs for legitimacy. The British idea of Indian history had a wide range of variation, from fascination and encomiums of Orientalists like William Jones to severe criticism of Utilitarians like James Mill. The British view of Indian history is erratic and contingent upon the ideology and personal predilections of the historian and the political need to establish a colony. Quite rightly, "[…] history becomes the great terrain of politics. Because history is a way of talking about the collective self, and bringing it into existence" (Kaviraj, 108).

British colonizers tried to repudiate the idea of a glorious historical past of India during the initial days of colonialism as elaborated by James Mill in *History of British* India published in three volumes in 1818. Subsequently, when India's past was discovered by the assiduous efforts of British Orientalist scholars it was difficult to interpret India as a "rude" nation without a past. Consequently, British historians modelled the narrative of Indian history which led to a logical or providential conclusion in their advent and paramountcy, making them the natural rulers of this alien country thereby generating legitimacy for British imperialism. British Orientalist historian took recourse to two mutually inconsistent devious logic to legitimize their oppressive rule, they:

> "Postulated a clear disjunction between India's past and its present. The civilized India was in bygone past […]. The present India, the argument went, was only nominally related to its history […]. Secondly and paradoxically, the colonial culture postulated that India's later degradation was not due to colonial rule […] but due to aspects of traditional Indian culture which in spite of some good points carried the seeds of India's later cultural downfall" (Nandy, 17).

Embedded within the colonial framework, Ghosh and Mitra, applied the colonial model of Indian history to serve their own purpose. Their agency lies not only in selective appropriation of these interpretations for projecting a glorious past for India but also in creating an imaginary past to bolster claims of antiquity and glory. The subversive potential of imaginary history has been utilised most effectively by eminent intellectuals and authors of nineteenth century India like Kylas Chunder Dutt in his *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945* (1835), Soshee Chunder Dutt in his *A Republic of Orissa* (1845), Bhudeb Mukherjee's *Swapnolobbdho Bharatbarsher Itihas* (1895), and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in his novels. In *The Prince of Destiny*, Barath's dynasty is said to be ruling India for thousands of years to whom all the other big dynasties like the Chohan, the Rathore, the Sesodia and the Agnikool pays homage. In *Hindupore*, the armoury has antique arms and armaments. There are many instances of imaginary history interspersed with real historical events in both novels. Such hyperbolic claims of antiquity and excellence are a well-wrought strategy in the novels to create a glorious past to instill a sense of pride among the Indians in their own culture and achievements. In *The Prince of Destiny*, Vashista says,

> "[…] the wrought iron pillar erected by thy noble ancestor sixteen centuries ago when northern Europe was still steeped in barbarism […]. We have lost that skill in the sixteen centuries but shall now try to regain it" (Ghosh, 387).

This statement simultaneously vindicates the colonial logic of a degraded present condition of India as well as subverts it by reaffirming the faith of the nationalists that India will regenerate culturally, economically and scientifically thereby obviating the need for the 'benevolent' British rule.

Questions of ownership and the right to represent become crucial since history is a narrative of the collective self. The question of writing Indian history is extremely important in the context of colonial India when Orientalist and hegemonic narratives fabricated by the British became authentic history of India. Vashista, a spiritual guru in *The Prince of Destiny* refers to manipulation of history,

> "Read their history books taught to every little boy or girl at school – and every passing reference to India from Clive to the Mutiny is a falsehood or a misstatement" (Ghosh, 548).

He urges Barath, the vassal monarch, to write the Indian version of Mutiny, thereby urging Indians to take control over and the onus of representing their country in the historical past as well as in the contemporary era. The novel sees through the power equation inherent in colonial historiography whereby India and the Indians are always the ready subject and already represented and written about without any input from themselves. Ghosh tries to put forward the necessity and pertinence of a nationalist historiography through this scathing critique of colonial historiography. He presents a case for salvaging the nation's history from the hands of the colonizer before any effective political battle may be waged.

Not only do these novelists delegitimize colonial historiography but within the limited scope of the novel they present a contrary version of India's history which primarily highlighted the glory of India, instead of the gradual decline. Although such a conception of glorious history is not totally in disjunction with Orientalist historiography yet, in the context of early twentieth century India, their selective appropriation of historical facts is antithetical to colonial assumptions. Occasionally, both novelists put forward an alternative history, inherently Indian in perspective, in opposition to the colonial one. Both authors express a

curious predilection to prove the antiquity of the achievements of ancient India as well as to claim an Indian precedence for many western inventions and traditions, thereby inverting the imperialist notion of European civilizational superiority. In the most radical chapter in the novel, "The Secret of Western Might", Ghosh bursts the colonial logic of civilizational superiority through Vashista's words:

> "An Asiatic people like the Japanese, Chinese, or Hindus may send all the works of their arts and philosophies to Europe, but they will still be called barbarians – till they succeed in killing a few thousand Europeans in a pitched battle: then indeed will they be deemed civilized" (391).

By expressing the true nature of colonial rule Vashista urges Barath to strive for military superiority which alone will keep the English at bay. In a curious way Mitra even debunks the myth of invincibility of the English and complicates the contemporary history of British conquest by pointing out the use of diplomatic as well as political intrigues and use of Indian troops by the British in its conquest of India. These instances from both the novels invert the colonial logic of legitimizing the empire based on civilisational superiority and are completely in disjunction with colonial historiography.

Hinduism and Indian Identity

Homogenous notion of an Indian identity has various dimensions, both political as well as cultural. In the context of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the primary aspect of the national identity was religious, primarily Hindu in character. Hinduism was upheld as the core religion of the putative nation since it was the religion of the majority. Hinduism remained the terrain where nationalists primarily tried to unite themselves. The massive propaganda of the missionaries against Hinduism also contributed to catapulting religion as the site of contestation with the colonizer and as a basis for unification

among Indian nationalists. The ontological nature of religion as a signifier of identity is conducive for its application in the formation of national identity. Since religious identities:

> "[…] are based on alignments of culture and its elements – values, symbols, myths and traditions, often codified in custom and ritual. They have therefore tended to join in a single community of the faithful all those who feel they share certain symbolic codes, value systems and traditions of belief and ritual, including references to a supra-empirical reality, however impersonal, and imprints of specialized organizations, however tenuous" (Smith, 6).

National identity was under the strain of producing new symbols that the new political community could easily identify with. Hinduism provided a common resource pool for the nascent nationalists with codes and symbols. Hinduism was supposed to provide an authentic character to the nationalist movement and gave them a cherished past as well as cultural link. In fact, the project of securing a glorious past to inspire people led to the appropriation of the ancient past, which was conveniently interpreted as Hindu. Notwithstanding the majoritarian and hegemonic nature of such appropriation and re-interpretation of the past, it emerges as the only possible route to unify a disparate population residing in the landmass identified as the putative nation.

Consequently, it was adopted by a populace of diverse political disposition which included even the relatively secular as well as loyalist sections, like the novelists, Ghosh and Mitra. As Sumit Sarkar pointed out:

> "It has often seemed important for even the most secular of Indian nationalists to derive sustenance and authenticity from images of subcontinental unity (or at least unity-in-diversity) extending back into a supposedly glorious past. As, except for brief periods of 'imperial unity' (often excessively valorized), this is difficult to substantiate at the political

> level, the tendency has remained strong to assume some kind of cultural or civilizational integration as the ultimate foundation of nationalism. And then it becomes difficult […] to resist the further slide towards assuming that that unity, after all, has been primarily Hindu (and upper-caste, often north-Indian Hindu at that). The slide was made easier by the undeniable fact that the bulk of the leading cadres of the nationalist […] have come from Hindu upper-caste backgrounds" (*Writing Social History,* 363).

In India, nationalist and religious discourses proliferated hand in hand during the nineteenth century drawing sustenance from each other during what has been arguably termed as Bengal Renaissance. Hinduism became the spiritual code of the Indian nationalist movement. Both *The Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore* are products of this era and engage with Hindu identity and its alignment with nationalist discourses. Alex Tickell has rightly pointed out that these novels showcase,

> "The most revealing point of this national-communal historiography is the way Hinduism is accorded an exclusive historical monopoly on Indian identity […]" ("Writing the Nation's Destiny", 535).

In *Hindupore*, Mitra describes Hinduism as a 'political force' and the nationalist agitation has been thoroughly identified with Hindu religion. The concept of Pan Hinduism is almost a reference to the political/national community or the putative nation, which is united despite the differences prevalent in the sub-continent. The progress of national movement has been described as the progress of Pan-Hinduism. Congregation of Hindu pilgrims in the Kumbh fair at Prayag and the shrine of Jagannath at Puri are provided with political connotation beyond historical truths. Religious pilgrimages have been accorded with political/national significance. "The Church of Jagannath is a national force we cannot afford to ignore" (Mitra, 291). This programmatic

politicization of religious life of the community was constructed to suit the formation of a national cultural identity.

Another significant device which both Mitra and Ghosh employ is the figure of ascetic or Guru who not only remains the most virulent protector of national culture and tradition but also emerges as the primary spokesperson of anti-colonialism. In *Hindupore*, the figure of Bargad Bairagi and in *The Prince of Destiny,* Vashista acts as the avant-guard of anti-colonial nationalist sentiment. Bargad Bairagi is a traditional ascetic, healer, portrayed as an upholder of military culture and Hindu traditions. Ghosh develops Vashista, referred to as the high priest of Vishnu, as a character whose lifelong mission is to guide the protagonist Barath to his destiny, that is, to make him an independent sovereign of Barathpur. The figure of the ascetic/guru was also a recurrent literary motif of the era used to culturally connect nationalist politics with Hinduism. This device was used both in Bengali as well as English novels of the era. Notable examples are ascetic figures in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Anandmath* (1882) and Babaji Bissonath in Soshee Chunder Dutt's *The Young Zeminder* (1885).

The consequence of the alignment of religion and nationalism was not only Hinduization of the nation but also nationalization of Hinduism to suit the imperatives of the nationalist movement, which in a bid to fight the colonizer inaugurated an era of reformation and restructuring of religion. The brand of Hinduism endorsed in the novels is significantly different from the traditional religion itself. The clash with the traditional and the nationalist conception of Hinduism is portrayed in *Prince of Destiny* through the clash between Vashista and Barath. Ghosh, an incipient and ambiguous nationalist as well as modernist agenda privileges Barath's version. Since the early nineteenth century there is a general tendency in India to reform and modernize Hindu religion. Nineteenth century reformers "tried to improve the Hindus and

modernize their faith. The sought a sense of community as Hindus and a sense of history as a community" (Nandy, 103). The sense of community was generated by projecting Hinduism as a homogenous entity, somewhat ahistorical in its conception. Tagore has critically commented on Hindu nationalism in *The Home and the World* through the ultra-nationalist Sandip,

> "This is why such bizarre things are happening side by side in our country. We are riding on the crest of patriotism and religion with equal passion. I am fully carrying on the fad of the nation and simultaneously using religion as a pretext to do so. We want both Bande Mataram and the Bhagwad Gita. Consequently, neither of them is comprehensible to us, and we do not realize that the brass band and the shehnai are playing simultaneously" (Tagore, 115).

Political/ideological imperative of projecting Hinduism as the core of the putative nation categorically marginalized minority religions of the sub-continent. Islam has been projected as a religion brought by invaders from central Asia having detrimental impact on Hinduism. The hypocrisy of Hindu nationalism of early twentieth century lies in the numerical incorporation of the followers of minority religions residing in the precincts of the putative nation while marginalizing them from the nationalist idiom. *Hindupore* dwells on the communal relationship between the Muslim and the Hindus at great lengths. Though *The Prince of Destiny* refers to glorious achievements of the medieval period under the Mughals, it is mostly silent about inter-faith relations. Interestingly, Vashishta, the spiritual guru of Barathpur criticizes the Parsis for their religious customs as well as their role as collaborators of the British Empire. In both the novels, Buddhism has been presented as an off shoot of Hinduism which in a way is directed towards the proclamation of numerical majority of the Hindus and their brand of nationalist ideology.

Elevation of Hinduism as the core of the nation also presents the supremacy of caste hierarchy thereby privileging Brahmanical conception of Indian society. Both the novels eulogize the caste system as an ideal pattern of social division. They conceptualize caste system in its ideal form while erasing the structural marginalization of lower castes institutionalized by the system. In a curious way, religious/caste discourses of the early twentieth century simplify the inherent diversity of Hinduism. During the colonial period, Anglophone writers like Ghosh and Mitra, writing for Anglo-American readership and situated outside the precincts of the nation wrote under the enormous pressure of presenting the country in a suitable light. Their discourses on caste were not only influenced by Hindu nationalist ideology but also by their desire to earn respect and sympathy of the metropolitan readers.

The Representative Indian: Figure of the central Protagonist

Both novels link the glorious history of their country with the present through the figure of the Chosen One – a Prince or a Raja, who claims divine descent and is inextricably linked with contemporary history performing a significant role. They are "hand cuffed to history", a phrase which gained much currency with respect to *Midnight's Children* (1981). Barath, the chosen one in *The Prince of Destiny*, is born with forty-two birth marks meant to symbolize divinity. He was born on the occasion of the Grand Durbar of 1877 in Delhi. He also attends the Diamond Jubilee celebration of Queen Victoria's coronation in London as his father's representative, meets Italian soldiers who are going to fight in Abyssinia in 1896. The turmoil in his kingdom corresponds with the turmoil in global politics. In *Hindupore*, Raja Ram Singh is also born on the same date as Queen Victoria, describes his experience of the Grand Durbar of 1877, the Golden Jubilee celebration of Queen Victoria, and his visit to the Pope in Rome. Both these protagonists belong to dynasties which reigned over

their respective kingdoms for thousands of years. The central protagonist acts as the connecting link between the glorious past and the present of the nation. It is through these figures both the novelists project their imaginary version of India and Indian identity.

These extraordinary individuals are well versed in the Oriental and Occidental systems of knowledge and possess exemplary personal character showcasing the epitome of Indian/Hindu masculinity. The conception of Indian Hindu masculinity assumed crucial significance in the context of proliferation of colonial discourse of an effeminate Hindu as opposed to the virile Englishman. As the upholder of quintessential national values, the representative Indian, was required to possess personal courage and valour. One of the major trends in the literature of this era was to project Rajput princes as central protagonist of novels. The Rajputs were projected as the epitome of martial courage and valour hence worthy representatives of Indian masculinity[2].

Both Barath in *The Prince of Destiny* and Raja Ram Singh in *Hindupore* are Rajputs princes. In *The Prince of Destiny*, physical strength is privileged over bookish knowledge for the future leader of the nation. Reading also emerges as an essential quality of the representative of the country for cosmopolitan and scholarly authors like Ghosh and Mitra. The characters of Barath and Raja Ram Singh were created as an ideal sovereign, a figure of authority juxtaposed against colonial governmentality which was somewhat abstract and disembodied. They are projected in stark contrast not only to imperious British colonial officers like Colonel Ironside or Charles Hunt in *Hindupore* and the Viceroy in *The Prince of Destiny* but also to the remnants of the decadent traditional patriarchy symbolized by Prem Singh in P*rince of Destiny* and Raja

[2] This pattern was followed by the almost all the novelist of the era who wrote Historical Romance in most of the Indian languages as well as English. It was inaugurated in Bengal by Bhudev Mukherjee and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.

Ranbir Singh in *Hindupore*. This newly constructed Indian male identity has political dimensions. The subversive contrast with British colonial officers is significant in the context of colonial frame of knowledge and representation whereby the colonized is primarily regarded as a degraded human being and the colonizer is represented as engaged in civilizing mission. The contrast with traditional patriarchy is essential for the nationalist imperative of constructing an identity which will be simultaneously modern as well as Indian.

Indian as well as English: Contradictions in Identity

There is a great degree of ambivalence in Indian attitude towards England during the early twentieth century. While both the novels are crystal clear that an Indian identity must be constructed in opposition to the accorded identity of British subjects which contemporary politics bestowed upon them, there is an inherent desire to be 'English'. The desire to be 'English' is valued on both ends of the colonial divide since both the Indians and the British cherish this prospect. It is crucial that most of the British characters in the novel are Irish. In *The Prince of Destiny*, Lord Melnor, a thorough colonialist, desires such a prospect for Barath immediately after his arrival in England. He asks Ellen, the mistress of the household, "See that you make a thorough Englishman of him, and a true blue!" (Ghosh, 162) Such a project of imperial subject fashioning is imperative for the maintenance of imperial domination and hegemony over far flung areas. A certain degree of legitimacy may be claimed for the English occupation of India if Anglicization or 'Englishness' may be foisted on a colonized population as a cherished ambition. Yet the ramification of such a statement must be analysed in the context of Melnor's later statement where declares Barath to be a 'true born Englishman.' Such a statement is idealistic, even on the part of

colonialist like Melnor.[3] In retrospect this move of identifying colonised Indians as 'English' may be interpreted as a political move. In another context[4] Ian Baucom writes:

> "For only in viewing the Indian as a citizen rather than as a conquered subject may England impress upon him or her, the obligations of loyalty rather than the narrower need to submit to an occupying power. The act of re-visioning could have marked a crucial moment in the discourse of empire, a moment that imbues the colonial subject with the cultural and juridical rights attaching to English identity and which demands that the pursuit of empire incorporate a renegotiation of the subjective boundaries of Englishness. This is indeed what the demand for Indian "loyalty" implies. But of course, this is not what happened […]. Instead, it secured the inscription of a narrative of empire that identified the Indian as a person of whom England demanded the obligations of citizenship, but from whom the nation withheld the rights of an English subject" (105-106).

In both novels, the Indian characters are primarily concerned with English interests while the British colonists are careless about their arrogance and brutal display of racism, hierarchy and strength which exposes the imbalance of power distribution in an inherently unequal system like colonialism. The interpellation of Indian subjects as Englishmen generates a curious situation where the onus of loyalty is

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[3] In the context of early twentieth century colonial India, the idea of being both an Englishman and Indian was not unheard of. In his book, *The Intimate Enemy*, Ashis Nandy refers to the fact that Mahatma Gandhi referred to C.F. Andrews as "an Indian at heart and a true Englishman" (Nandy, 48).

[4] Baucom deals with the anxiety of the colonist's regarding the loyalty of the colonial population in the aftermath of the revolt of 1857. He basically explores the nuances by which colonialism tried to fashion/discipline colonized population without providing them proper rights. In fact, Melnor, the well-intentioned colonist also thinks in a similar paradigm of loyalty and subjectivization. I have used the idea to analyze the confusion regarding national identity which is at jeopardy at the wake of such a statement.

burdened on them without the corresponding benefit of the rights to protect their interests.

Melnor's statement is apt for presenting the ideal operation of colonialism which Ghosh and Mitra try to project in their novels. Ghosh's politics is almost contradictory, or ambiguous to say the least. "The best way for a man of keen perception to know England objectively – that is, truthfully – is to be born outside, and then to come in and become an Englishman" (Ghosh, 252). Ghosh is trying hard to prove that Barath has become an Englishman not by being born in England (since nativity remains one of the primary criteria for ascertaining identity), but by virtue of his contact with England as a territorial space, its tradition as well through English system of education. Apart from raising serious issues about determining factors for the acquisition of English identity; this statement raises a significant question not only on the project of constructing Indian national identity which the novel undoubtedly engages with but also destabilises the category of national identity itself. While Barath is projected as a quintessential Indian; he is also simultaneously projected as an Englishman; thereby, belonging to two nations. He not only belongs to both nations but remains loyal to both, simultaneously. Protection of English interests remains one of his primary concerns as a ruler. In fact, he is more English than the English, even when concerned about India and its people.

There is a curious instance of playing a Hindustani version of the English national anthem, "God save the King" during the celebration of Raja Ram Singh's birthday in *Hindupore*. As a sort of explanation the Raja says, "It happens that I was born on the same day as the Queen Empress Victoria, so the National Anthem has a place in our celebration of the day" (Mitra, 100). The anthem that Raja Ram Singh so proudly proclaims as national anthem is the national anthem of England. His identification with the anthem curiously exposes the confusion regarding

issues of national identity and nation. In a bid to generate national symbols of India and a corresponding Indian identity, these authors project a peculiar reverence towards the national symbols of Great Britain. Within the fictional world of *The Prince of Destiny* and *Hindupore*, which strive to project harmonious co-existence of both the English and the Indians within the parameters set by colonialism; there seems to be no contradiction in their allegiance/identification both to England and India. While dealing with the concept of Hindu Nationalism in the context of nineteenth and early twentieth century, Chetan Bhatt quite rightly says:

> "These ideas of nationalism were not uniformly received by the divergent elites in colonial India, nor could they easily or always be separated from patriotic loyalties to Empire among large sections of those elites […]" (8).

To unproblematically categorise these as nationalistic or anti-national is very difficult since the ideology of Indian nationalism was somewhat derived from European nationalistic discourses, which in the context of early twentieth century meant allegiance to the Empire along with a nationalist angst to address the loopholes in colonial governmentality.

Anglicized education was introduced as an imperial mechanism of disciplining the colonial mind whereby institutions of colonial domination were accorded a certain degree of legitimacy among colonized population. Benedict Anderson, the veteran scholar of nationalism, labels Anglicization as a process of official nationalism. The Anglicization of education and consequently of psyche was primarily undertaken to create "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay, 375). As privileged, Anglicized Indian of the colonial period Ghosh and Mitra could not resist the charm of being 'English', despite their own points of departure from colonial ideology. In both the novels, most Indans are greatly praised for their ability to speak good English

which in this context was a signifier of civilization. In the realm of colonial discourse such thorough Anglicization perhaps provides a strong base for the colonial foundation and was the locus of English identity outside the territorial space of England. In the hey-day of imperialism, knowledge of English was a marker of civilization and a necessary tool to climb the social ladder within the hierarchies institutionalized by colonialism for both the colonizer as well as the colonized. Yet, the irony lies in the willing acceptance of imperial subject fashioning among Indians to be 'English', especially among intellectuals when they were consciously framing a national identity.

As cultural texts of the early twentieth century, the two novels reflect the major trends and developments in the national movement. While the elite are represented as the vanguard of the nation, their conflict with the colonizer – primarily cultural in nature – decides the aesthetics and politics of the novels. The agenda of glorifying Hindu Indian tradition depicted in these novels – a necessary corollary of Indian nationalism – betrays the hegemonic nature of nationalist discourses. It puts a grave question on the emancipatory potential of nationalism and exposes the totalising tendencies of nationalist discourses. Nationalism did not necessarily entail inclusivity or the emancipation of underprivileged groups like women, lower castes/class and minorities. The narrative space provided to these groups and the dynamics of their representation in these novels vividly show their secondary status within the emancipatory project of nationalism. The formation of identity occurs both in conjunction as well as disjunction with colonial discourse. Both Mitra and Ghosh are influenced by the Orientalist construction of an Indian – who is exactly the antithesis of the Western man, yet both differ with the Orientalist discourse in a significant way.

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Sati. Devī. Maa.
Incarnations of Femininity in Indian Culture *

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Abstract: This essay offers a brief overview of the evolution and role of women in Indian society throughout history, and it is based on personal research on this matter. The subject is vast and challenging, and it will be used as the basis for further research.

Keywords: Women, Indian society, historical perspective, culture, role of women, modernity, emancipation of women.

The status and role of women in India have undergone many major changes over the past few millennia. Perhaps the most famous representation of femininity in ancient India is the renowned Indus Valley Civilization Dancer, a fascinating sculpture dating from 2500 BCE, one of the greatest achievements of the Mohenjo-Daro artists. This small statue is an important cultural artifact that reflects the aesthetics of the female body as it was conceptualized in that historical period.

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Archaeologists and art historians are of the opinion that the Dancer is "the most captivating piece of art from the Indus Valley site".[1] And that's because it led to two important discoveries about the Indus Valley Civilization, also known as the Harappa Civilization. First, that community knew the mixing of metals, their casting, and other methods of metalworking, quite sophisticated for those times; second, the statuette shows that entertainment, especially dancing, was an essential part of their culture. The status of women in India can be properly defined by the visual art of a particular time. In this context, literature, art, architecture and religious manuscripts can be included because visual representation is the reflection of society. Therefore, paintings can be used as a medium to review the role of women in society, because art is always related to socio-cultural trends and closely related to the taste and requirements of the individual. Fertility and mother goddess cults have been concentrated since prehistoric times and began to develop in the Indus Valley Civilization, where women were symbolically depicted in clay figurines, bronze sculpture, and on seals.

In ancient India, women played a particularly important role. The *Ṛg Veda* mentions that women enjoyed a high status in society and were given the opportunity to attain high standards, both intellectually and spiritually. But towards the end of the Vedic period, women began to be discriminated against in terms of education and other rights. Very early marriage, *Sati* (widow burning), *Devadasi* or polygamy further worsened the position of women. The Epics and Puranas considered women as property. For its part, Buddhism has done quite a bit for women. Although the Maurya kings employed mostly female bodyguards, their

[1] Pratul Sharma, "100 years of Indus Valley Civilisation: This ancient culture remains mysterious", *The Week Magazine*, online edition, last accessed on August 5, 2025. https://www.theweek.in/theweek/cover/2024/12/21/debate-over-indus-valley-civilisation-and-aryan-invasion-continues.html.

status was still quite uncertain. During this period, men were polygamous, and widow burning was an accepted norm. Things escalated further during the Gupta period. Women were often abused. *Manusmriti* (*The laws of Manu*) held that woman should be dependent on her father in childhood, her husband in youth and her son in old age. In this way, according to Manu, woman should be protected and honored at all stages of her life. However, child marriage and *Sati*, prostitution and *Devadasi* became rampant.[2] The word itself, *Sati*, was reinterpreted and it referred only to women, particularly to widows.

> "These widows were called '*sati*', an old Sanskrit word that originally meant 'that which exists' or 'that which is true'. This meaning later developed into 'good', 'loyal', 'virtuous' and 'honourable', positive qualities that could be applied to both sexes, but gradually over time *sati* came to mean 'the ideal woman'".[3]

But there are some notable exceptions to this bleak picture. The role of women in ancient Indian literature is remarkable. Ancient India had many women of great intelligence. On one side were the *Brahmavādinīs*,[4] the ascetic women, those who never married and occupied themselves all their lives only with the study of the Vedas. On the other side were the *Sadyodvahas*, those who studied the Vedas until

[2] These topics have been extensively debated, including in films and literature. Among the most important achievements of this kind is the film *Water* (2005), by Deepa Mehta, an award winning director. Part of the famous Elements trilogy, which also includes *Fire* (1996) and *Earth* (1998), *Water* focuses on the difficult lives of an impoverished group of widows (including a child) living in an ashram and being used for pleasures by rich men from upper cast. In the same direction, in her recent volume *Widows. A Global History*, Mineke Schipper offers a fascinating compendium of facts and stories, gathered from all over the world, creating an overwhelming portray of widows.

[3] Mineke Schipper, *Widows. A Global History,* New Delhi: Speaking Tiger, 2024, p. 100.

[4] For more details on *Brahmavādinīs*, see a recent paper of M. Vinoth, "Thinking beyond Womanhood: Ṛṣikās and Brahmavādinīs in Vedic Tradition", in *Women in Vedas*, Vedic Vidya Kendra, December 2024, Pondicherry, India.

the time of marriage. Pāṇini himself mentions women studying the Vedas. Sanghamitra, daughter of Emperor Ashoka, studied and preached Buddhism. From the Jain texts, we learn about princess Jayanti, who devoted herself to the study of religion and philosophy. From various sources we learn that many Buddhist hymns were composed by women nuns. Women studied Sanskrit and wrote plays and poetry, excelled in music, painting and fine arts. Many of these women were courtesans.

Courtesans were trained in poetry and music as well as the skills of sexual pleasure and were respected members of society. An important example is that of Vasantesena, a noble-hearted woman, the heroine of *Mrichchhakatika*, a popular Sanskrit play attributed to Śūdraka. The other major female heroine of classical Indian literature is Śakuntalā, an intelligent young woman longing for her distant lover, a story admirably described by Kālidāsa in his famous work *Śakuntalā*. Much information about the role of women also comes from the *Kāma-Sūtra*, a famous manual on the many ways to acquire pleasure. Women were to be educated to give and receive sexual pleasure and to be faithful wives.

As Hinduism developed, certain facets became dominant, among them the caste system, karma, dharma, and reincarnation. Originally there were four main castes, and women were represented in all of them. Caste determines association for marriage. In certain cases, a man was allowed to marry a woman of a lower caste, but a woman could not do so, as it dishonored her family. The relatively inferior status of women determines its rebirth. For example, if a woman did not do her duty or dharma well, then she would not have accumulated enough karma to be able to reincarnate into a higher caste. Rebirth as a woman was considered inferior to rebirth as a man.

Around the same time, Hindus came to think of the various deities as manifestations of the god Brahmā, the soul of the world. Of course, special importance was given to goddesses, among the most important

and beloved being Sarasvatī, Parvati, Lakshmi, Durgā, Devī and Kālī, carefully represented in works of art and/or literature. All of these are also revered in India today, with important festivals dedicated to each of them, the goddesses being absolute incarnations of femininity. "For centuries, Sita, Draupadi and Savitri have been held up as role models for women".[5]

In India's two famous epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, women are presented as having more freedom and competence than in religious and legal literature. The events in these stories demonstrate women's problem-solving abilities. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the main heroine, Sītā, is the epitome of the perfect wife, who shows determination in managing her own life. But her innocence is denied and Sītā is forced to go into exile. In fact, Sītā returns to her mother, the Earth. This suicide ritual then becomes the prototype for *Sati*, the self-sacrifice of a wife at the stake of her husband, a ritual that appears later in Indian history.

In medieval India, wives and daughters could become ascetics if their lives were unbearable. This choice was possible because, during the 6th and 7th centuries, two new religions developed in India, Buddhism and Jainism, which had an extraordinary impact not only in India, but also in other regions of Asia. Many women found refuge in these religions. The Buddha wanted to eliminate the caste system and ritual sacrifices. But he maintained the Hindu idea of *karma*, believing that our actions in life affect others. But anyone could attain Nirvana, including women, although at first, he did not agree to their becoming nuns.

In all ages, women have been recognized and respected as mothers. *Maa* (Mother) is among the most beloved words in all Indian languages.

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[5] Shashi Deshpande, "Listening to the Woman's Voice", in *This too is India. Conversationson Diversity and Dissent,* Edited by Githa Hariharan, Chennai: Context, 2024, p. 166. In her works, Shashi Deshpande often focuses on women and the numerous problems they face in contemporary Indian society.

The mother has the most important role in society, that of giving birth and educating the new generations. In the Indian mind, women not only have a particularly important role in maintaining a family, but they keep the whole world out of harm's way.

Myth and reality intertwine at every turn in India, even today. It is said, for example, that Goddess Durgā saved the earth from the giant Mahishasur by defeating him. Other remarkable women gave birth, raised and educated great freedom fighters such as Subhas Chandra Bose or Mahatma Gandhi. Important cultural figures of India – including Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore or Raja Ram Mohan Roy – opened wide the door to education for women. Thus, women have reached every field of activity and every sector of society. Indian women have proven that beyond motherhood they can assume other roles in society.

Rabindranath Tagore was a great ally of women of India, and a progressive thinker whose writings were manifestos of women's power. His understanding of women generated courageous, assertive, strong portrayals of women, focusing on their emancipation through female representations such as Chitrangada, Chandalika, Prakriti, Charulata and Hemnalini. "His portrayal of their joys and sorrows, hopes and despair, their yearnings and their dreams is genuine and perceptive."[6]

In India, women's participation in politics can be traced through the reform movement of the 19th century. Social reformers believed that social change could be initiated by educating women and passing progressive legislation. Social differences could be more easily eradicated by raising collective consciousness and sensitizing people to the injustice done to women. In the 19th and 20th centuries, some laws were enacted with the sincere efforts of Indian social reformers and some

[6] Sushil Kumar Mishra, "Feminism in the works of Rabindranath Tagore", in *Research Chronicler,* vol. VIII, issue I, January 2020. Avalable online: https://research-chronicler.com/reschro/pdf/Jan2020/80102.pdf. Last accessed on August 5, 2025.

British administrators with a desire to improve the condition of women in Indian society. The first effort in this direction was the enactment of the law against the practice of *Sati*. Beginning in 1812, the Bengali reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy began his own campaign against the practice. On 4 December 1829, the practice was officially banned in the Bengal area by the then Governor-General William Bentick. The abolition of *Sati* was considered a great achievement of the reformist movement. Following the same path of reform in favor of women, the widow's right to remarry was recognized by law in 1856.

Female infanticide is another inhumane practice that has plagued Indian society. Several laws against this practice were enacted in 1795, 1802, 1804 and then in 1870. But even in the 20th century, the Indian practice of female infanticide and sex-selective abortion were cited to partially explain a reported gender imbalance.[7]

During the British rule, several changes were made in the economic and social structures of Indian society, and some substantial progress was made in eliminating inequalities between men and women in education, employment, social rights etc. Swami Vivekananda, Annie Besant, Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Dayanand Saraswati also took an interest in the social and political rights of women. Some women's organizations like the Banga Mahila Vidyalaya and the Ladies Theosophical Society functioned locally to promote modern ideas for women. These organizations addressed issues like women's education, abolition of child marriage, Hindu law reform, moral and material progress of women, equal rights and opportunities, etc. Slowly but surely, the women of India have not only come out of the shadow cone

[7] On this subject see, among others, Namit Arora, *The Lottery of Birth: On Inherited Social Inequalities*, Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2017. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen also writes about this problem is an important essay ("Women and Men") included in his *The Argumentative Indian*, Penguin India, 2005.

in which they were unjustly kept, but they have started to gain the respect they deserved. "Power politics begins in the family and it is gender that separates the powerful from the powerless".[8]

India's freedom struggle is another example in history where women left their usual roles as mothers and wives to take on the responsibility of carving out the concept of a new nation amidst the conflict between the people and the colonial state. Along with men, India's women have braved bullets and tough times. They embodied self-reliance as Mahatma Gandhi himself visualized it by using a simple *charkha* (tool used for warping cloth) through which he conveyed a message. Considered an exclusively female occupation, practiced at home, obtaining cloth with a *charkha* became the model for understanding the endurance of the spirit.

Given that India was founded on ideals drawn from home, such as body art practiced by women, the fledgling nation took note of the need to give women a voice. The constitution of independent India did not disappoint this expectation and soon enough women found their rights enshrined on paper, in laws and constitutional provisions giving them equal rights in all aspects that define a quality life. This came to fill a void, as

> "all women, whatever class, religion or even caste they belong to, have been deliberately, from times immemorial, deprived of power, even power over their own bodies and lives".[9]

India offers many examples of amazing women who made history (and continue to do so). Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (1900-1990), Jawaharlal Nehru's sister, was the first Indian woman to hold a cabinet post in pre-independent India. In 1953, she was the first woman (and first Indian) president of the United Nations General Assembly, and in 1979, she was appointed the Indian representative to the UN Human Rights

[8] As Shashi Deshpande considers, *op. cit*., p. 161.
[9] *Idem*.

Commission. Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi (1917-1984) was an Indian politician and the only female Prime Minister of the country. Daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, she served as Prime Minister of India from 1966 to 1977 and from 1980 until her assassination in 1984.

Anandibai Joshee (1865-1887) was among the first Indian women doctors qualified to practice western medicine. Maharani Chakravorty (1937-2015) was an Indian molecular biologist. She organized the first laboratory course on recombinant DNA techniques in Asia and Far East in 1981. Kamala Sohonie (1912-1998) was a pioneering biochemist who in 1939 became the first Indian woman to receive a PhD in a scientific discipline. Her acceptance into and work at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, paved the way for women to be accepted into the institution for the first time in its history. Asima Chatterjee (1917-2006) was highly regarded in India for her pioneering work in medicinal chemistry. She won India's most prestigious science award in 1961, the annual Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize for important achievements in phytomedicine. Her work has contributed immensely to the development of drugs that treat epilepsy and malaria.

Anita Desai (born in 1937) is an Indian novelist and the Emerita John E. Burchard Professor of Humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (born in 1942), an Indian scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic, is considered one of the most influential postcolonial intellectuals, and she is best known for her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and for her translation of and introduction to Jacques Derrida's *De la grammatologie*.

In modern India, women are not just wives, mothers, daughters, but educated researchers, educators, artists, singers, writers or women who have embraced careers that were, until recently, reserved for men, such as pilot, driver, officer in the army, engineer, doctor, teacher, reporter, director, prime minister, governor or even president.

Pratibha Devisingh Patil (born in 1934) is an Indian politician who served as the 12th President of India from 2007 to 2012. A member of the Indian National Congress, Patil was the first woman to hold the office. She previously served as the Governor of Rajasthan from 2004 to 2007. Through out her public life, Pratibha Patil has worked actively for the welfare of women and children and the underprivileged sections of society. For their benefit, she established several institutions. The actual President of India, Droupadi Murmu,

> "sworn in as the 15th President of India on 25 July, 2022. Previously, she was the Governor of Jharkhand from 2015 to 2021. She has devoted her life to empowering the downtrodden as well as the marginalised sections of society and deepening the democratic values".[10]

Having a woman as a President doesn't solve all the problems women face in India, but at least this gives them some trust that the future could be better for them and their daughters. This hope appears in numerous literary works written by Indian women writers, from Anita Desai to Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri or Anuradha Roy, important voices that raise questions in their acclaimed novels, translated into numerous languages, showing that women do have a voice in modern India and they use it in the favour of other women.

Sati, *Devī*, *Maa*, icons or victims, missing numbers in an official census or powerful political leaders, the women of India are the strength of their nation, the mothers of important figures that changed the destiny of the country, the rock of any Indian family, rich or poor, the goddesses from the temples or the top models from Bollywood movies.

> "It has been a very long journey for me, as I am sure it has been for many women, moving from a vague sens of dissatisfaction and inchoate thoughts

[10] Cf. https://www.presidentofindia.gov.in/, last accessed on August 5, 2025.

> to confused ideas of something being wrong. And then, connecting it to the way women are regarded and treated, before finally stumbling on feminism. […] To live feminism day by day is just as hard as reconciling your feminist views with your writing. To live with feminism means a moral streggle within yourself. […] But change will come, changes have to come. The wheel of fortune never rests, it keeps turning".[11]

The women of India have a long, painful and complicated history and, hopefully, a brighter, safe and peaceful future ahead of them, and the respect they deserve.

In this essay, I have attempted to provide a brief overview of the evolution and role of women in Indian society throughout history. Of course, the subject is vast and could be the basis for further research. The women of India should be respected and protected, as they fought for their rights and their dreams. *Sati*. *Devī*. *Maa*, the daughters of India impressed generations and continue to do so.

[11] Shashi Deshpande, *op. cit*., pp. 173-176.

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Femininity and the Loneliness of the Woman Poet in Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange's Poetry

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Abstract: This paper is a critical essay dedicated to the feminist poetry of the Indian poet Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange, a trilingual poet, who also writes in English. Her femininity is acutely aware of the traditional, even mythological roots of her entrapment in a gender role; she – and women in general – need to live up to or lower her dreams and expectations down to such stereotypical expectations. The poetic voice expresses sadness, loneliness, even though the poetic imagination wanders freely. The poet draws many comparisons with European culture, as she is a scholar who teaches English literature, and moves freely from history to contemporary times, with comparisons to old Sanskrit or Hinduist mythology combined with the newest history like the lockdown during the recent pandemic. Part of her poetry has been translated into Romanian, and other translations will follow.

Keywords: femininity, entrapment, walls, threshold, gender roles.

This critical essay on the poetry of Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange's poetry is rooted in two instances of our collaboration. Firstly, Teja is a close friend who has been part of our conferences at the university in Baia Mare, and whose contributions have been appreciated by the scholars present at the conferences, or those who read her papers in our volumes of proceedings. Secondly, the author of this paper is the official translator of Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange's poetry in Romanian, in the bilingual volume *Talons and Nets,* which was published by EIKON in

2017. Consequently, this is a critical essay that deals with poems from the 2017 collection, and also from a collection of poems that the author, herself, sent to her translator and friend in a personal Email message, which in the present paper we marked in parentheses as *personal communication,* which the poet allowed us to do. These poems are part of an international collaboration that the poet was part of, entitled *Olio of Enlivened Moments.*

Doctor Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange is an Associate Professor, Head of the Department of English in Smt. Husumtai Rajarambapu Patil Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Islampur, Dist.-Sangly (Maharashtra), and the founder and director of two major literary international journals – INNAEI, and MatruAkshar. She has an extraordinary activity as an academic, being member of several associations and editorial boards, of committees and institutes of scholarly reputation. Her scientific research on literature – especially poetry – is published in more than thirty-seven national papers, in twenty-seven international publications, in book guides, book chapters, and in eight edited books. Besides the remarkable academic and scholarly presence, Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange is also a prolific poet, she writes in three languages – Marathi, Hindi, and English – and is published in many anthologies in India, Romania, the United Kingdom, South Africa, the USA, and France. Her poetry in English is gathered in three volumes, *Talons and Nets,* which benefits from a Romanian translation as mentioned before, *Verses of Silence,* and *A Glass of Time.* She also has many of her poems published in a collaborative English volume, entitled *Olio of Enlivened Moments,* of which she has sent us few of her poems in a personal message. She has also tried her pen in writing memoirs, critical essays, and literary essays. Three of her Interviews are published in *21st Century Critical Thought,* Vol I; in *Postmodern Voice,* Vol III, and in *Looking Afresh: Keat's Theory.* She has received many prizes for her poetry, and she has been

invited with a selection of poems in the 2018-2021 Rio Grande Valley International Poetry Festival, in Texas, the USA.

Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange is a poetic voice of great sensitivity and displaying an overwhelming imagination and creativity; nevertheless, her being a professor, a learned and very well-read scholar, a person of deep knowledge of cultures and languages is also transparent. Therefore, her poetry seems to never lose touch with reality, the poetic voice is lucid and clear and sometimes even cuttingly sharp.

Part of her poetry is a love story, a kind of epic that goes on in many forms and verses, a genuine and sometimes overpowering romance that seems to be bivalent: a-temporal and thus general, and genuine, which makes the reader feel they are just allowed a peek into the most intimate feelings of the poetic voice. Somehow, this romance, scattered in many poems along Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange's work, makes the reading of her poetry an experience that is similar to binge-watching a television series: one cannot stop reading. This meeting point of a refined scholar, an intellectual of substance with a woman of incredibly deep femininity, who sees love in its oldest architecture as eternal and uncompromising, makes the poet seem to be part of a grand gallery of classical culture that is still relevant even if contemporary culture seems to try to 'forget' such roots.

Though mesmerizing in their femininity, Indian women still live in a society that is not fully cognizant of their rights. Whether such mentalities come from traditions and customs so old that they are difficult to outgrow, or from a world-wide culture of marginalizing women and stereotyping gender-roles, the poet is acutely aware of such issues, and many of her poems are dedicated to a feminine outlook. We should avoid the use of the word *feminist,* as there is little consensus of what feminism still represents. Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange's metaphors of captive femininity come as images of "ties", "thresholds", and "talons and nets", all seen as places of captivity, of forced silence,

and of unfulfilled dreams. In her poems, Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange makes multiple references to women's feelings of being tied down, trapped in a place of too many duties and very few moments of freedom, which mainly come from dreams and hopes. Duties are rooted in traditions, in the many customs and the many rules that Indian women must observe, in the mentalities regarding women's role in society, in the family, and how such roles become a suffocating series of obligations and recipes that seems to never allow any fresh breath.

The link between traditions and the immemorial times when such roles were distributed is underlined in the many references of the poetic voice to history, to the ancient narratives, like in the poem *Seeta and Helen: A Dialogue,* in which Patil shows not only her knowledge and sensitivity for Indian traditional texts, but also her scholarly knowledge of European traditions and ancient narratives. Both Seeta – a character that was destined to never be believed, despite her fulfilling all her duties – and Helen, the character that was at the core of a war she never asked for – express their sadness, their feeling of betrayal, of entrapment. The limitations of her condition as a woman provoke Seeta (one of the main characters in *Ramayana*) to run in a circle all her life, trying to prove her fidelity and innocence, while she meets with distrust and she is exiled for a guilt of which she is not guilty. Trapped in such a circle, a kind of eternal punishment, she goes back to her mother, who is Mother Earth. The poet seems to think that women are all daughters of Mother Earth, who are always trying to do their best to meet all requirements of their roles, but never succeed to convince that their wishes are genuine. Professor Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange does not allow her woman to be just a representative of Indian culture; she shows that all cultures seem to converge in the way women are trapped and silenced. In the *Odyssey,* Helen of Troy is never asked whether she loves her husband and wants to still live with him. Maybe she does not want to leave Menelaus and

flee with Paris, just because Paris thinks she is the most beautiful woman of all. Helen is destined to a life of "Abduction, exile, the Great War and […]" and so she comes with a definition of the woman's role: "The woman is cursed/ to be in exile […] Forever". She is nothing but an object of "the Lust, the Ego, the Guilt of men" (*Seeta and Helen*).

The poetic voice – the poetic "I" – sometimes even the whole category "She" appears in poems to define a sisterhood; they are just examples and places of concurrence of what being a woman entails in this world, historically, but also in our days, as such traditions are present in the genes of women, or as the poet puts it, they all have "the skeleton hanging in them/ may dig centuries" (*The Womb*). The womb ties the woman in such a way that she sometimes feels that it is "dragging to nothingness", as what it does is trap, tie, chain the woman until she feels like she cannot shake the cobweb that comes between her and her wish to be free, to fly, to just get closer to her ideal and dreams: "She is awaiting/ her arms/ to break into wings/ and fathom the sky" (*The Womb*).

The rhetorical question of the poem *Woman* comes to show the many sides, the many facets, the many duties a woman has to 'employ' under the umbrella of her gender role. There is so much she needs to do, there are so many masks she needs to wear, there are so many taboos and customary ties that she needs to observe that her true identity is rarely shown, or she never really gets to have an identity that satisfies her: "Which is fit for me? / Daughter? Sister? Mother? / Radha? Meera? Rukmini?" All these come to ground the daughters of Mother Earth, to stop them from getting that "feathery lightness / To soar deep in the sky". The poet uses this motif of the feathers, of flying, of getting up and deep in the skies in many of the poems in the volume *Talons and Nets / Năvoade și Odgoane,* translated into Romanian a few years ago. Such wish of freedom, such wish for cutting those ties, of freeing themselves

from the "talons and nets" that "pull down" women is an invariable image and an invariable of Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange's poems.

The pursuit of love gives women powers and wings that allow them to fly from one realm to another, like in the old legend of Urvashi, Kalidasa's ancient poem, in which the woman is abducted by a demon. She is in the hands of disaster, seemingly reduced to victimhood, but she has this extraordinary capacity to fly. She flies from Earth to Heaven, she is perpetually trying to find love, which she wants to save her from her fate. In such pursuit she sometimes is invisible – a metaphor for all invisible women, dressed in their role in such a way that they are never really seen – or she is visible, but she appears in various forms. Sometimes she is a vine, which again speaks of the capacity of women to bear fruit under the most difficult predicament. Eventually, she is permitted to find love and live at least part of her life with a mortal human being, even if she is immortal, herself. This poem – *Urvashi,* but also in the poem *Urvashi Won by Valour* – , the poet again speaks of wings, of how women have to fight being "pinned down/ to the threshold", of how they want to "fathom the skies/ and unbound" themselves. Urvashi's symbol functions as a symbol of femininity itself, of the dream women have: freedom.

In reality, though, as women do not have such abilities, or an eternal earthly life, the dream of flight remains in the imagination, which is a way to just escape. Like Scheherazade, to a certain extent, *Aasia* helps girls who listen to her stories come with a follow up of the epic, which allows them to escape the "threshold" of all expectations and limitations brought by their traditional duties. She tells the stories of mythological female characters, of extraordinary abilities and powers such characters are endowed with, and this is how her narratives conduct the girls' imagination and allow them to conceive a way to flee from such limitations and constraints. Like Aaisa, who has the power to fly from

Hell to Heaven and "around the Globe", and be free, women will tell stories as a means to free themselves; in this continuous narrative imagination becomes the vehicle for travel, and the means to fight against the binding rules and regulations imposed by traditions, by customs, by their own nature and physical condition.

Imagination, though, is not enough to allow women to free themselves from guilt, from a feeling that there is always a burden "binding my feet". The poet declares that such binding keeps the poetic "I" always "torn between / the ties and the skies". The collection *Talons and Nets* ends with a poem that has the same title as the entire volume and draws a conclusion to the whole issue of the gender predicament. The conclusion appears in the poem under the form of a question: "Is it possible to uproot/ these superficial nets/ to dive into my skies?" The poet answers the questions by using the adjective "superficial" because she arrives at the conclusion that in following her dream, she needs to understand that what holds her back are nothing but superficial chains, made up of things that are less powerful than her wish for freedom and for knowledge. Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange is following this theme of entrapment and wish for freedom in many of the poems in the collection *Talons and Nets,* in various forms, as she is scholarly aware of her own culture and of European culture, but she also escapes both (stereo)types by constructing a universe made up from her own poetic energy, her wisdom, and her philosophical detachment. She, herself, is very much aware of how mythologies are still present in modern life, of how contemporary women are still under the pressure of many pre-conceived ideas, of how their own bodies betray them to a certain extent. Nevertheless, she is also advancing the idea that there is much more to a woman than her role as a mother and a wife, there is much more to a woman than her role in the family and her ability to procreate, that there is much more to a woman than the necessity to demonstrate her fidelity

over and over again. What is striking in the way the poet constructs this message in so many poems, is not only the images she uses, the poetic symbols and metaphors, but the general tone that brings sadness, sometimes even a feeling of deep disappointment, which is contradicted by the fact that there is no bitter vindictiveness. Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange avoids gracefully any ideological traps, any aggressive assertion of 'girl power', and any violent words. The more grace, wisdom, and femininity she displays, the more powerful the message, the more she convinces the listener/reader, because she is not an activist, but a refined poet. There is much to say about activism, of course, but poetry reaches further and deeper because it reaches all women, irrespective of their personal identification or background. The tone is intimate, personal, and even semi-biographical at times, but the message becomes general, addressing all women in the world.

The 2020s came with newer images for the poetic self, the same overwhelming femininity is, again, trapped, but the "pins", the "talons", the "thresholds", the "nets", the "ropes" are now replaced to a certain extent by "walls". After lockdown, Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange sees the entrapment of women inside their own minds and souls as a permanent lockdown, between walls, which allow for just very short breaks: "I'm aware of my being locked down / inside these four walls/ since ages" (*Lock Down,* personal communication). These walls not only contain the body and soul of the poetic ego but also limit the possibility of imagination to escape: "I've been accustomed to / having my sky lowered in them". Nevertheless, the poet's imagination, even if compared to "humming", has the power to go beyond such walls, even if only for a shorter time. The capacity of stories, verse, and literature to break down walls seems to be the only real instance when the woman inside can forget about her limitations: "I've decorated them with my

dreams / one by one like stars. / The piece of rainbow sails / in my sky effortlessly" (*Lock Down,* personal communication).

The position of the woman poet, though, seems to have grown into a more philosophical form, embracing a more generic type of humanity. The human being is always somehow trapped by its horizontality and their wish for verticality. The temptation to fly, to grow, is tamed by the need to exist in a limited physical body, in an existence that takes its share of energy. Nevertheless, the poet finds her position between earth and skies more nuanced, in the sense that her story as a woman, her story as a human being is more often than not a story of isolation, loneliness, yet a story of power and universal value. The masks we need to wear in order to fulfil our duties are "balanced" by the depth of thought, by intellectual and creative energy: "I am a performer […] / performing roles / allotted to me by the abundance. / The more I move towards the light, / I balance it inwards/ creating space deep within. / I am high, I am deep. / I behold the cosmos" (untitled, personal communication). Again, this poem comes with a reference to two mythological characters, Soham and Chaitanya. Soham is the symbol of the human as a whole, as a unity of the poet's consciousness and the universal consciousness (unity between Jivatma and Paramatma). By invoking the name of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange reveals her understanding of her role as a poet, who follows the philosophy of Vaishnavism, which is a trend in religion and culture that promotes divine love and humility. This is what the poet should be about: a human being that embraces the universe that contains both axes, that represents cosmos within her soul and mind, but who approaches her inner and outer life with love and humility. The capacity of the poet to gather all these elements in her work is seen by the poet similar to how a bee is able to create honey from the physical reality of flower nectar: "I am a seeker, / I am a honey bee extracting the nectar / from the abundance of

my surrounding […] / I am filling up the empty holes […]". Words are the tools of the poet to suggest her status, her art and her vision: "I am the utterance / of the silence within me."

The poetic self comes with one more tie, which, though, allows the poet to connect reality to her inner self, to "filter" feelings and experiences, to express feeling in evocative words: "I am a woman/With pen in my fingers / Which works as a filter / That filters her feelings" (*Woman and Her Pen,* personal communication). The instrument in her hands is felt as insufficient, because the way a woman has to "filter" her feelings does not allow the pen to "ooze / her anger, revolt and self-esteem / she suppresses every time?" Such enumeration of the things a woman must suppress is very surprising at a first glance, as two seem to be coming from the subconscious – anger and revolt – while the third one – self-esteem – should be accompanying other words, other feelings. The enumeration is also convincing, as most women lack self-esteem *because* they feel angry and they feel the need to revolt, but they do not, they filter such feelings out, just to fit the profile of how they are supposed to behave, just to fulfill the traditional role they are assigned. The poet reaches the idea that even with her talent, even with her "pen" in hand, even with her scholarly knowledge and her wisdom, she is nothing but *a woman,* any woman: "The more books she reads, / she changes her dreams, / paints them in innovative colours/ and bears them entry outside her dream." The violent history of women, the contemporary pressures on women do not cease with the pen of the talented poet, because she will never feel free to express the entire range of her feelings freely: "Why can't she open her bosom/ to her closest companion? / How many centuries need/ to be trampled upon with blood-red footprints? / Why doesn't her pen help her?" (*Woman and Her Pen,* personal communication).

In the poem *Dear Woman,* the poetic voice addresses herself, by identifying her permanent state of dreaming of one thing and having to yield to another, with three old names that are symbolic of such permanent pendulation: *Teja, Anahat,* and *Moksha.* Somehow *Teja* is identified as the "existence" of the woman-poet, which is dark, "empty", still difficult to keep silent, fighting for being expressed. Teja is short for Tejaswini, friends will call her Teja. In Sanskrit, Teja is associated with light and luster, with a brilliant, sharp mind, with fortitude, all solar, luminous qualities. The sadness of the poetic self, though, appears to be contrary to such derivation, as in Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange's poem, "Darkness carries to inner *Teja*". The woman-poet is not allowed her luminosity, she is denied her inspiration, and she is perpetually brought back to the constraints of earthly womanly existence.

"Silence glides to *Anahat* […]". In spiritual traditions, Anahat is the place of the heart, it contains a person's love, compassion, but it is also referring to purity, to pure movement and sound. Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange, herself, learned traditional dancing, so Anahat can also refer to a contemporary film in which Indian traditions of dancing are revived and combined in a rather modern rendition of mythological correspondences. Anahat is the place of balance, the place of sound, of the pumping heart. In the poem, though, *Anahat* seems to be silenced, incapable of striking that pure, uncompromising perfect sound.

As for *Moksha,* the poetic self associates it with "Nothingness". Moksha is the goal, the spiritual target of being freed from the samsara (birth-death-rebirth). In Hinduism, especially, it is the moment when the flesh, the body, the earthly existence stops, and the soul is finally reunited with the cosmic forces, with the divine in a perfect union where there is only bliss and where there is no suffering.

The woman in the poet's vision is eternally prisoner of all three, wanting to be all of them at the same time, and not being able to identify

with any: the darkness of existence "carries" the soul towards *Teja,* silence "glides" in search of *Anahat,* while Nothingness "moves" permanently in its attempt to achieve *Moksha* […]. This makes the poetic self feel that: "existence is empty, / still out-bursting […]". After such introspection, the last lines of the poem function like an address to ALL women, in their struggle to pin down a locus for themselves to fight these contrary forces and desires: "Dear woman, / This is YOUR Being […] / Unseen and seen […] / Uniting in parting […] / Towards unknown shores […]" (*Dear Woman,* personal communication).

The dramatic tone of loneliness, of being trapped and pinned down, of being prisoner of her role as a woman is rarely referring to men, to the man or men in general. Most of the poet's lines refer strictly to the role distributed to women, without direct reference to the male role, to how men are different, or whether they are different. In her love stories, Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange cries the loss of love, of youth, or dreams to fulfill her love together with a lover whom she sometimes describes as virtual, phantomatic to a certain degree. Her love is much connected to seas and shores, to skies and stars, to being one with the divine, or being free to stroll in nature. The poem *Ain't I…?,* notwithstanding, is very different, as the woman is on the verge of rebellion. Such feelings are brought about by the lockdown, when both men and women were confined to their own houses. When men were affected by such measures, they felt that their houses were cages, they deplored their impossibility to sail the seas, to go outside and live their lives as usual. They entered the *usual* of the women. Identifying with generations of women, the poetic self confesses how "since ages, / I have been locked/ Behind the threshold", where invisible but powerful "lines" seem to have encompassed a place that cannot be escaped, that define the woman's physical realm. Her behaviour has also been thoroughly defined by rules and regulations; she has either been seen as a goddess, or as a tramp,

while fulfilling her womanly duties and never being asked if she agrees with any of these facets of her existence. She is forced into such roles, while denied what is considered by men to be "human": "Either I'm worshipped; / Or raped; whipped to rein. / For them, that's me […] not a human. / They expect me / In all roles, perfect / Or else, a housemaid to neglect." Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange expresses in these lines a history of humiliation, of annihilation, and of violence towards women, that is hardly even acknowledged as such. With the lockdown, reality somehow struck men, too, the reality of being prisoners in their own houses, of understanding the pressure of the walls. But they are not reduced to silence. They do not see their entrapment as *normal*: "Locked down within four walls / Which is unbearable, they wail. / They need the sky to soar; / They need the ocean for voyage; / They need everything, not cage." Their *humanity* appears to give them entitlement to freedom, to fulfill their dreams, to move freely into the world, without being judged, without being held prisoners to certain roles and perceptions of morality; on the contrary they are supposed to seek adventure, to go as far as they can and when they fail, they will come 'back' to the threshold where a *human* that is *not* allowed to try her wings is supposed to wait and console. The conclusion of the poem is bitter, disappointed, as the feminine poetic voice expresses the depth of the cage: "Then, ain't I a human / At least, to breathe freely […] / to encompass the horizons […] / Ain't I?" (*Ain't I?,* personal communication).

As the poet matured, she is less inclined to accept silence, patience and confinement; she seems to want to shout this inequality in her poems. Tejaswini Deepak Patil Dange is not a revolutionary, or a radical feminist, but her voice reaches hearts and minds in a more effective manner. She refers to "I" and "she", and "woman" and her poems, particular and unique as they may seem, indebted to Indian culture, become universal, because it is the universal womanhood that sees itself in the mirror the poet imagines

with her verses. Deeply feminine, deeply devoted to her family, to her friends and to her students, the poet feels the burden of the many faces and the many roles of her performing her womanhood. She feels pressure from all sides, from the roots of her culture, from mythological and immemorial times, to contemporaneousness, to the novel types of entrapment. Obviously, the poet's vision will continue to imagine new and new poems of womanhood and femininity, and it is provoking to try and guess the path she will take in the future, in her golden years of full maturity and wisdom.

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Cultural Diplomacy between Romania and India. Literary and Artistic Exchanges (1957-1967)

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Abstract: The Post-war India Fund, hosted by Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry Foreign Affairs, contains essential documents on cultural relations between Romanian People's Republic and India between 1957 and 1967. During this period, there were numerous cultural visits, literary translations and exhibitions organized in Romania or in India, with the aim of promoting culture and the exchange of ideas.
In this study, I'm bringing to reader's attention titles of Romanian literary works translated in India between 1957 and 1967, and folk-art exhibitions organized in India. It should be noted that most exchanges were based on reciprocity, the aim being bringing the two countries closer together and finding a common cultural identity.

Keywords: communism, cultural exchanges, literature, exhibitions, cultural identity.

Introduction

During the Cold War, Romania[1] signed cultural agreements with countries that shared the same political regime, as well as with developing countries. The aim was to secure a place on the international stage and promote Romanian culture and traditions. In April 1957,

[1] To refer to the Romanian territory, throughout my study I will use the names Romania, Romanian People's Republic and Socialist Republic of Romania.

Romania and India signed a cultural agreement which provided, among other things, literary translations by each side, the organisation of Romanian exhibitions in India.

Literary works translated in India

According to cultural agreements signed between 1957 and 1967, India was tasked with translating and disseminating in India literary wprks written by Mihai Eminescu, Ion Luca Caragiale, Mihail Sadoveanu, and Zaharia Stancu. Likewise in the case of Romanian People's Republic, who was responsible for translating works of Indian literature, such as those written by Rabindranath Tagore, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and Mulk Raj Anand.

In July 1957, Jawaharlal Nehru's book, *An Autobiography*, was translated into Romanian and published by Editura de Stat pentru Literatura Politică.[2] The previous year, another book, *The Discovery of India*, by the same author, has been translated.[3] The 1949 socialist realist novel *Mitrea Cocor*, by Mihail Sadoveanu, was translated into Punjabi by Navtej Singh. Since 1959, there was a desire to translate Zaharia Stancu's novel *Desculț*.[4] Later, it was translated into Bengali by Amita Bhose,[5] and published in *Navajatak.*[6] In 1961, Ion Luca Caragiale's play

[2] The original volume appeared in 1936, had 68 chapters, and was translated into over 30 languages.

[3] Published in 1964, it was written during the period when J. Nehru was imprisoned in Ahmednagar Fort (1942-1945).

[4] The autobiographical novel was published in 1948 by Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă and presented the trials of the character Darie durind the 1907 uprising. AMFAR (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania), file 176/1959, f. 64.

[5] Born in Calcutta, Amita Bhose's name became linked to that of Mihai Eminescu. She was the first translator of Eminescu's works into Bengali. In addition to Mihai Eminescu, she also translated poems and novels from Bengali into Romanian and vice versa, written by Zaharia Stancu, Al. Mirodan, I.L. Caragiale, I. Agârbiceanu, Tudor Arghezi, Rabindranath Tagore, D. Bhattacharya.

O scrisoare pierdută (*A Lost Letter*) was translated by Padala Ramarao into Bengali (*Harano cithi*). The play premiered seven years later, but the translation was not published until 1971.

At the exhibition dedicated to the centenary of Rabindranath Tagore, held in New Delhi, Romania exhibited the translation of the book *Ghirlanda dragostei* (*The Gardener*), published in 1961 by Editura pentru Literatură, and the article written by Petre Pascu about Rabindranath Tagore, published in the Romanian magazine *Viața Românească*[7]. Speaking of Tagore, we must mention that Amita Bhose wrote the article *Rabindranath în România* (*Rabindranath in Romania*), published in the *Desh* literary gazette, in Calcutta. In 1964, Amita Bhose was asked by the Embassy of Romanian People's Republic in New Delhi to translate Mihai Eminescu *Poezii alese* into Bengali. Challenge accepted, and along with this volume, she also translated works by I.L. Caragiale, *O scrisoare pierdută*, *O noapte furtunoasă*, *Urgent*[8], *Triumful talentului*, and those of Mihail Sebastian, *Steaua fără nume* and *Jocul de-a vacanţa*. And a troupe from Allahabad performed the play *Ultima oră* by Mihail Sebastian in Hindi.

In 1966, the translation of the novels *Bordeienii*[9] and *Hanul Ancuței*, (written by Mihail Sadoveanu), appeared in a single volume entitled *Bordeienii și alte povestiri* (*Jhonpadi Wale Aur Anya Kahaniyan*), published by the Sahitya Akademy, translated by Nirmal Verma. During the same period, Amita Bhose translated two other works by Mihail

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[6] The novel *Desculț* was published in 1971, Calcutta, and the volume *Constandina*, also written by Zaharia Stancu, appeared in *Almanahul Chandida*, 1970, Calcutta. AMFAR, file 495/1964, f. 12.

[7] *Viața Românească*, vol. XIV, no. 12, pp. 91-95.

[8] Appeared in *Saptanik Basumati*. https://www.amitabhose.net/Bibliografia.html, last accessed at 13.11.2024.

[9] There is also a 2010 edition, translated by Vani Prakashan. https://www.amazon.in/-/hi/Mihail-Sadoveanu/dp/9352291395, last accessed at 14.11.2024.

Sadoveanu, which she published in *Saptanik Basumati* (*Pădurea*) and *Gharani* (*O poveste de demult*).[10] *Povestea unui copil indian* (*Untouchable*) written by Mulk Raj Anand, has been translated into Romanian. It was published by Editura Tineretului, translated by Isac Peltz and Andrei Bantaș.[11]

Romanian exhibitions organized in India

Many Romanian exhibitions were organized abroad with the aim of proving to the post-war world that the establishment of the communist regime was the right path, which brought with it an active foreign policy. Regarding the cost of exhibitions, the country sending the exhibition paid for transportation from its country to the capital of the other country, and the country where the exhibition arrived paid for the transport of the exhibition to that country and the transport back to the country from which it was sent, transport to a third country (if it had been sent) and the costs related to the organization and promotion of the exhibition.[12]

In January 1957, the International Exhibition of Fine Arts was organised, to which Romanian People's Republic sent 12 works. The exhibition was organised by All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society (A.I.F.A.C.S.).[13] In February 1957, an exhibition of Romanian folk art was held in Lucknow, organized by Social Welfare Society of Lucknow. Carpets, tablecloths, Romanian blouses, ceramics, and wood carvings were exhibited.[14] It was inaugurated by Kanlapathi Tripathi, it lasted four days and approximately 60 folk artists participated. Another exhibition

[10] http://www.amitabhose.net/Bibliografia.html, last accessed at 14.11.2024.
[11] It was not the first time that the Indian writer's books had been translated into Romanian. In 1950, Octavian Nistor's translation of the novel *Culli* was published by Editura de Stat (a second edition appeared in 1954, at the same publisher).
[12] AMFAR, file 89/1957, f. 77-81.
[13] AMFAR, file 89/1957, f. 46.
[14] *Ibidem,* f. 41.

was opened in Allahabad on March 2, 1958, inaugurated by the Minister of Bihar State, Binodanand Jha. It lasted until March 22. Handicrafts, dolls, and Romanian art publications were exhibited.[15]

On January 11, 1957, the Embassy of Romanian People's Republic in New Delhi received a letter from the president of All India Fine Arts Society requesting pieces for an exhibition in India. Negotiations were conducted between the Embassy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Romanian Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (I.R.R.C.S.) until October 1957,[16] when it was decided to send the exhibition. However, it did not arrive in Bombay until January 1958, after which it was transported to Delhi in February. The exhibition in Delhi was inaugurated on March 5 by Vice President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. It remained in Delhi for ten days, during which time it was visited by approximately 3.000 people. *The Times of India* described the exhibition as a reflection of Romanian artistic sensibility, with a divine gift for decorating the interiors of peasant homes. *Statesman* described it as the most beautiful exhibition ever organized in Delhi. And to learn about Romanian culture, people, and art, you didn't need to visit Romania, just see the exhibition, reported *Indian Express*. After Delhi, the exhibition was sent to Calcutta, where it was organized by All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society and Calcutta Academy of Fine Arts.

In April 1958, an international exhibition of children's drawings was held in Delhi, where Romanian artist Gabriela Pleșoianu won an award.[17] At the same time, there was the International Children's Book Exhibition, for which the Romanian People's Republic sent 71 volumes of literature. In June 1958, 14 philatelic panels were sent to India, to the Romanian Embassy in New Delhi, for the exhibition that was to be

[15] *Ibidem*, f. 52.
[16] *Ibidem,* f. 30-35.
[17] AMFAR, file 121/1958, f. 11.

organized. The exhibition was held in honor of the 100th anniversary of the issuance of the first Romanian postage stamp.[18] A first exhibition was organized in New Delhi, after which it was taken to Jaipur.

In the same year, it was decided to decorate a Romanian corner at the Embassy of the Romanian People's Republic in India. Dolls, lace doilies from Cluj, tablecloths, towels, spoons, wooden flutes, ceramic vessels, embroidered blouses, skirts, plates,[19] women's costumes from Muscel, Suceava, Sibiu, Banat, men's costumes from Dolj, Suceava, Sibiu, Banat, two catrințe (Romanian traditional apron-skirt) from Romanați, small carved wooden objects, and three sheepskin coats.

In August 1958, an exhibition of Romanian graphic art was held, for which Romania sent 70 works by Romanian graphic artists Corina Beiu-Angheluță, Jules Perahim, Gy Szabo Bela, Eugen Crăciun, Gh. Ivancenco, Ana Iliuț etc.[20] After Bombay, the exhibition moved to Rangoon.[21] In 1959, several Romanian exhibitions were held in India. One in March, which Vice President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan declared to be the most beautiful exhibition in Delhi.[22] For the other exhibition, which focused on theater in the Romanian People's Republic, approximately 140 photographs were sent from the country, along with explanatory texts in English about the theaters in Iași, Bucharest, Brașov, and Galați.[23] There was also an exhibition on the oil industry, held in Jaipur, and one on folk art in Amritsar.

In the following years, exhibitions continued to be sent to India. In June 1960, Romania held an exhibition of Romanian folk art and graphic art in Shimla, in the state of Punjab. The exhibition was organized by the

[18] *Ibidem*, f. 35.
[19] *Ibidem*, f. 28.
[20] *Contemporanul*, XII, no. 27, 11 July 1958, p. 3.
[21] AMFAR, file 121/1958, f. 43.
[22] *Scînteia*, XXVII, no. 4158, 8 March 1959, p. 6.
[23] AMFAR, file 171/1959, f. 16.

All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society in New Delhi and the Government College of Art in Shimla.[24] It was inaugurated by the governor of Punjab, who received two volumes by Grigorescu and Aman and two carved objects as gifts. The exhibition was open to the public for seven days, until June 13, 1960, during which time it was visited by 3.500 people.

Other important Romanian exhibitions in India:[25] *Arhitectura în R.P.R* (*Architecture in R.P.R.*), *Cartea în R.P.R.*, (*The book in R.P.R*), both in New Delhi, *Expoziția de artă populară* (*Folk Art exhibition*), in Gauhati, *Expoziția de filatelie* (*Philatelic exhibition*), in Jaipur and Kanpur.[26] Romania also participated at the exhibition *Totul pentru copii* (*All for children*) with five photomontages depicting the lives of children in the Romanian People's Republic along with storybooks, folk art objects, and dolls.[27]

In March 1962, an international exhibition was organized in Punjab, where Romania sent books, albums, and stamps to be displayed. It is said that it was visited by about 10.000 people. I would like to mention the exhibition of Romanian books in Madras and Indore, *Viața copiilor în R.P.R.* (*The life of children in R.P.R.*), in Ajmer, a philatelic exhibition in Kanpur, and an exhibition of photographs about youth in Romania in Punjab.[28] In September, Romania participated at the Cultural Exhibition and International Cultural Exhibition in the state of Kerala and at the International Exhibition of Art Publications.[29]

In 1963, an exhibition dedicated to cultural and artistic life in the Romanian People's Republic was held in Ajmer, organized by the Indo-Romanian Friendship Association from Ajmer. At Pen-Friends, a

[24] AMFAR, file 218/1960, f. 143.
[25] AMFAR, file 278/1961, f. 12.
[26] AMFAR, file 280/1961, f. 6.
[27] *Ibidem*, f. 7.
[28] AMFAR, file 358/1962, f. 5.
[29] *Ibidem*, f. 28.

celebration dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the creation of the Indian National Pen-Friendship League, Romania participated with a stamp exhibition consisting of seven panels measuring 1.00x0.80 meters.[30]

In January 1963, Romania participated with photographs at the International Children's Exhibition, organized in Ajmer. In February 1963, the exhibition *Republica Populară Română Azi* (*Romanian People's Republic Today*) opened, also in Ajmer, where photographs relating to the life of children in the R.P.R., education, and cultural life in Romania were displayed.[31] Between August 14 and 23, 1963, the exhibition *Monumente arheologice în R.P.R.* (*Archaeological Monuments in the Romanian People's Republic*)[32] took place in New Delhi, in the A.I.F.A.C.S. hall, organized under the auspices of the Indian Commission for UNESCO. The inauguration was held by Humayun Kabir, Minister of Culture and Scientific Research. After New Delhi, the exhibition was sent to Calcutta, where it was to open on September 15, 1963. After Calcutta, it traveled to Bombay and Madras.

In September, the exhibition *Realizările regimului democrat-popular în cei 19 ani de la eliberare* (*The achievements of the people's democratic regime in the 19 Years since Liberation*) opened, and Abagiu Mircea presented the achievements of the Romanian People's Republic in the fields of economics and social life. At the end of the year, the third Folklore Conference was held in Calcutta, to which Romania was invited to participate with an exhibition of folk art.[33] The publications were prepared and sent by the Institute of Folklore and Ethnography of the Romanian Academy.

[30] AMFAR, file 432/1963, f. 34.
[31] AMFAR, file 422/1963, f. 10
[32] AMFAR, file 429/1963, f. 2-4.
[33] AMFAR, file 432/1963, f. 11.

In August 1964, the Embassy of the People's Republic of Romania in New Delhi, together with the International Centre in Kanpur, opened an exhibition of Romanian handicrafts.[34] The following year, between August 19 and 26, the Romanian Graphic Arts Exhibition was inaugurated and the gala screening of the film *România Orizont 1964* (*Romania Horizon 1964*) took place.[35] Romania also participated in the Delhi Philatelic Exhibition (February), the International Publications Exhibition in Bangalore (August), the International Philatelic Exhibition (October), a Romanian handicraft exhibition in Kanpur, and a photo exhibition on Romania's achievements in Indore.[36]

The following year, the cultural department sent stands to 12 exhibitions organized at various educational institutions. It also participated in the 5th International Exhibition of Contemporary Art in Delhi and in a doll exhibition organized by the Children's Books Trust. In August, the R.P.R. organized an exhibition of Romanian graphic art in India.[37] In April 1966, Brăduț Covaliu's painting exhibition was sent to India, and the following year, the photography exhibition *Biserici pictate în Moldova* (*Painted Churches in Moldova*) also arrived in India.[38]

Conclusion

During the communist period, the Romanian People's Republic attempted to show the world that it was a modern, open-minded country with a rich national culture by disseminating literary works. With the same goal in mind, they sent materials for organizing exhibitions. Through these actions, they aimed to promote a positive image abroad and present Romania's rich national culture.

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[34] *Dobrogea Nouă*, XVII, no. 4999, 3 August 1964, p. 1.
[35] AMFAR, file 491/1964, f. 21-23.
[36] *Ibidem*, f. 56.
[37] AMFAR, file 546/1965, f. 7.
[38] *Romînia Liberă*, XXV, no. 6964, 9 March 1967, p. 4.

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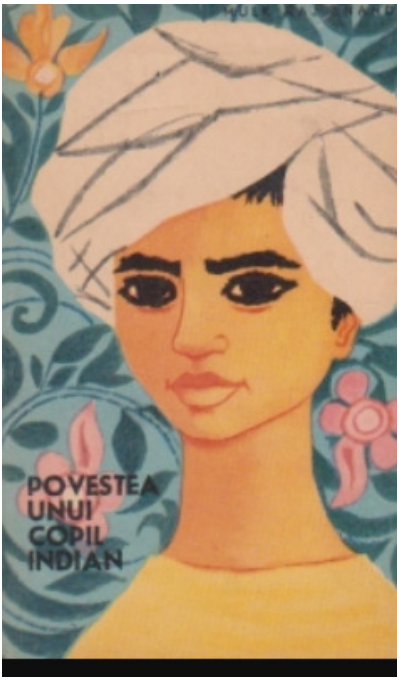
Annexes:

Cover of novel *Mitrea Cocor*, by Mihail Sadoveanu, translated in India (https://www.singhbrothers.com/en/mitria-kokor, accesed at 12.07.2025)



Cover of the book *Povestea unui copil Indian*, by Mulk Raj Anand, translated in 1965. (https://www.anticariat.net/p/22296/Povestea-unui-copil-indian-Peltz-Mulk-Raj-Anand, accessed at 12.07.2025)

Romanian exhibition in India (AMFAR, file 218/1960, f. 89)

Romanian exhibition in India (AMFAR, file 218/1960, f. 90)

REVIEWS

Nandini Das, *Courting India: England, Mughal India and the Origins of Empire*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023, 440 p., ISBN: 978-1-5266-1566-4.

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There is always something small and uncertain with every new beginning regardless of how big and haughty it might evolve. Such was the very the first official encounter between England and India, then the mighty Mughal Empire in the beginning of the seventeenth century.

In *Courting India*, Nandini Das, professor of Early Modern English Literature and Culture and Fellow of Exeter College at the University of Oxford, presents us with a very detailed and scholarly insight into the first English attempt to set up a diplomatic mission in India led by Sir Thomas Roe to mainly secure advantageous trading relations. Longlisted and shortlisted for several prizes, Nandini Das' book has garnered significant praise and won the 2023 British Academy Book Prize for the Global Cultural Understanding.

The beginning of the seventeenth century was a time when the Dutch and the Portuguese were controlling most of the trading routes over the seas and they were quite comfortably settled into profit-making trading deals with the Mughal Empire. Their dominance made English attempts to enter Indian trades markets painfully difficult. The need to seek official approval for trading was imperious as the newly established East

India Company was looking for reliable, direct and gainful trade with the Mughal Empire. This could be done at that stage using the power of good and thus, an ambassador was required to carry across the seas the message and the intentions of King James I and rich merchants. Thomas Roe, nephew of Sir Thomas Roe senior, Lord Mayor of London from his mother's side, embassy in Spain in 1605 at the age of only 25, was picked by the merchants of the newly found East India Company to lead the convoy of four ships to the Mughal court.

Nandini Das provides a skilled and detailed narrative following closely Roe's own diary and rapports and letters sent to the East India Company. At the end of a long and quite eventful journey, Roe's first landing was in Surat, one of the most strategic western ports of Mughal India. Portuguese tried in vain to capture it for years, but it was now in full control of the emperor for at least two reasons. It was one of the main gateways of the goods traded by Europeans and for the Muslims in India the point of departure for the pilgrimages to Mecca. Hence, there was a close watch on the port and the position of the port governor (*mutasaddi*) was one much sought after. Roe's diplomatic exchanges with the governor of Surat, Zulfikar Khan, are in many ways a trying introduction into the new diplomatic ways he had to approach. However, he had to continue his mission and therefore he set on a 600 miles journey over some of the toughest Vindhyas in central and north-western India to meet the Jahangir, the emperor.

Next to a remarkable compelling narrative force, Nandini Das's descriptive skills recreate artfully the court of the Great Mughal. We could thus see the Mughal court's circles, from the outer to the inner ones, the ceremonies, the hierarchies, the intrigues, and the elaborated and sophisticated ways up and the distressing ways of falling out of the favours of the powerful men of the court, not to mention the emperor himself, Jahangir. Close and enlightening analysis is given to the ways

Mughal palace and imperial entourage is built around a culture of gift-exchange and patronage. Roe was no stranger to pomp and ceremony as he was rather close to the entourage of James I, but the scale of Mughal displays was unnerving; this shows right from the first meeting with the emperor recorded carefully by Sir Thomas Roe in his diary and report to his co-employer, the East India Company. Somehow, the English ambassador's first presentation seems to have passed unnoticed since there isn't any Mughal chronicle or record of it, nor any small diary entries from the emperor himself.

Jahangir, son of the great Akbar, may have not been as flamboyant as his father but his reign of over twenty years brought a period of great stability to the Mughal Empire. Paradoxically, Jahangir held a peripatetic court (*laskhar*) moving it from place to place at the expense of great costs and elaborate planning, which does not go unnoticed by Roe.[1]

From 16 November 1616, Jahangir moves his Ajmer court from place to place to accompany prince Khurram, the future emperor Shah Jahan, in his Southern campaign to subdue and hold in check the Deccan warlords. Roe, along with his household followed him closely at great expense. The description of the moving court with all its paraphernalia demonstrates the qualities of Nandini Das's writing skills. This peripatetic imperial court become the best occasion for throwing large scale, sophisticated and sumptuous lake banquets commissioned either by Nur Jahan, the chief consort, and arguably one of the more politically influential women at the Mughal Court, or Jahangir himself. Roe, in bad

[1] He records in his diary: "one of the woonders of my little experience" to see a town that "may equall almost any towne in Europe for greatnes' rising up in front of his eyes, sometimes within four hours, "wherin the streets are orderly, and tents Joynd, are all sorts of shopes and distinguished so by rule that every man knows readely where to seek his wants, every man of qualetye and every trade being limited how far from the kinges tentes he shall pitch, what ground he shall use, and on what syde, without alteration," apud N. Das, *Courting India*, 230.

health with ailments, must have been overpowered by such an unrestrained display of power, luxury and wealth and with each of them he must have understood with even more certainty how difficult his mission was.

Nandini Das chooses to focus attention on describing in minute details certain episodes of Roe's mission. By doing so she can portray the English ambassador not directly but using the power of suggestion. Thus, we see that Thomas Roe was not much a man of accommodating ways and episodes like the Bath Chamber (*ghulskhana*) meeting with Jahangir is equally funny and closed to a political disaster.

Lots of misunderstandings occur as everyone is lost in translation. Roe is more than reluctant to learn Parsi, and so he tries to have his message across using the Italian Protestant jeweller John Veronese as interpreter with whom he communicates in his broken Spanish. On a different occasion, Roe is simply lucky to have picked the emperor's interest, (- he was known to be more interested in the curiosities and rarities than anything else-), with a £6 small, limned picture of a woman by the miniaturist Isaac Oliver. He is ready to strike a wager with the emperor who claims that his artists are perfectly capable of replicating the original with such exquisite craftmanship that the English ambassador will not be able to tell apart the copy from the original. This episode is invaluable because "it opens a different door into the Mughal world for him and us" (197). Either he won the wager or diplomatically accepted defeat, this makes for a more intimate social exchange. These suggestive episodes somehow complement the paintings of the famous artists Manohar, Abu'l-u-Hasan and Bichtri where Roe is but a minor personage at the Mughal Court.

The difficulty of the mission Roe was entrusted with came not only from the extravagant and slippery ways of the Mughal Court, but also from the tensed relationship with the factors of the East India Company.

Thomas Kerridge, the Factors' chief, was utterly discontented when he got word that all of them should place themselves under Roe's authority. The relationship between Roe and Kerridge was a rather strained one right from the start. Yet, some, as Joseph Salbank, one of the oldest of the factors, were highly appreciative of Roe's. Comfortably seated in London, the Company was using old but efficient methods based on authority dispersion and mutual surveillance and soon both, Kerridge who was in favour of direct trade with Persia, and Roe who was advising against, quickly realised that their hands were tied by the Company.

For all his shortcomings, Thomas Roe was also a man of certain vision. Roe suggested that Bengal could be a better option for setting up a trade factory, but his ideas were disregarded and quickly dismissed because at that time Bengal was controlled by the Dutch. Breaking though their power and control was difficult to achieve. However, history has proven him to be right, and only a few decades later; the English laid the foundation of future Calcutta.

By December 1617, after less than two years from his arrival in India, Roe starts to more often express his weariness and complaining of ill health and other difficulties. He also gives a full report of what he could not achieve. In many ways his failures are being given close analysis because it is what makes Roe a very credible character. Roe was well aware that the goodwill letter from the emperor that he is carried to king James I which granted freedom of trade and of residence for English merchants was a mere diplomatic assurance of good relations in the absence of the actual imperial decree (*farmāns*) to execute it on the ground. There was not another English ambassador at the Mughal Court for almost a hundred years till 1699 when William Norris was appointed for the office. Roe continued his diplomatic career and right after India he became the English Ambassador in Istanbul.

For all his shortcomings, Thomas Roe is, as Das poignantly describes, from the generation he belongs to: "late-Elizabethan, Armada-fuelled, Protestant seafaring". His friends, John Donne and Ben Jonson have admirably captured in their poems and play these generational features. A strong will and an embedded belief that there should be always a way to make things happen seemed to prevail over other qualities. Yet, Roe's times were not yet ripe with neither will, nor way. Nandini Das introspection on Roe's mission in India provides profitable case study into how different cultures interact with one another, and how long it takes to smooth the rough edges of dissent views, or to advance new ones. Somehow, regardless of the obvious differences, Roe knew there was always a middle ground usually paved by money and power of all sorts. However, East India Company, his main sponsor, didn't exactly throw money into it at that moment.

Yet, somehow, in less than two centuries, English perseverance and determination or ruthless ambition led to having the *diwani* or the office of economic management of Mughal provinces forcibly passed on from the then Mughal emperor Shah Alam into the hands of Robert Clive, arguably one of the most ambitious employees of the East India Company. With this, most of India fell under dominance and control of Britain and stayed thus for another two centuries.

Nandini Das's *Courting India* is, as the title suggests, a wonderful intricately detailed description of how the English tried to make themselves noticeable as trading partners at the Mughal Court at a time when the Dutch and the Portuguese in more than one way exceeded them. Das is a wonderful observer of how customs, cultural constructions and beliefs fold and unfold to make themselves appealing to a different world. The narrative, presented from many perspectives, is supported by great scholarship and extensive research.

Courting India is thus a must-read, a vivid, attentively crafted tapestry as well as a map to guide our understanding of how Britain's adventure in India once begun.

About the Author: **Florina Dobre-Brat** has a master's degree in Sanskrit from the University of Pune, India. In 2007 she has been awarded a Ph.D. in Philosophy by the Institute of Philosophy of the Romanian Academy for a thesis on the fifth century CE grammarian-philosopher Bhartṛhari's contribution to philosophy of language in India. Alongside working for over twenty years with the Central Library of the University of Bucharest and I.C. Petrescu National Pedagogical Library, between 2011-2018 she taught courses in Sanskrit, Classical Indian culture and civilization, and Indian Classical Literature at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Modern Languages and Classics.

Some of the published papers covering her areas of expertise are available at https://unibuc.academia.edu/InaBrat. She lives in Scotland with her family.

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Banu Mushtaq, *Heart Lamp: Selected Stories*, translated into English by Deepa Bhasthi, published in Penguin Books by Penguin Random House India 2025, 216 p., ISBN: 9780143464471.

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Banu Mushtaq's International Booker Prize-winning book, *Heart Lamp: Selected Stories* (trans. & pub. 2025), is a collection of twelve stories that depicts the daily lives of Muslim women in Southern India, and at the same time, a portrayal of a universal condition of women in a patriarchal environment and the constant fight for identity and freedom.

Mushtaq is a Kannada writer, lawyer and activist whose writing is closely related to the Bandaya Sahitya literary movement of the 1970s and '80s. *Bandaya*', which means "dissent, rebellion, protest, resistance to authority, revolution and its adjacent ideas" gave birth to a movement which urged marginalized communities including women and Dalits to tell their stories and fight for their rights. Educated in Kannada (and not Urdu, as it was often the case for Muslim girls), Banu Mushtaq came of age during the decades when, as her translator mentions, "the personal-is-political emerged as a major theme in intellectual thought" (209). Banu's work, summed up in the same one word "Bandaya", sought out narratives that questioned patriarchy and its double standards as well as narratives that brought marginalized communities in the limelight.

As Bhasthi writes in her epilogue to *Heart Lamp*, Mushtaq

> "does not see herself writing only about a certain kind of woman belonging to a certain community […] women everywhere face similar, if not the exact

same problems, and those are the issues that she writes about. The particulars may be different, but at the core is a resistance to being controlled".

The duality light-darkness is one of particular importance throughout the collection as it is present from the title itself and it can be understood in two ways. First, the flickering light of the heart, like a lamp, exploring the shadows and weaknesses of humans- desire for freedom, alienation from the self, and the quest for identity and a meaningful existence in a patriarchal background. Secondly, the same duality can be perceived as the resilience of women trying to survive in a men's world, finding their own strength, their own voice, just like the rays of light find their way in the darkness, an allegory for patriarchy and oppression. There are multiple examples from each story that suggest that, although women are constantly silenced, sometimes by their own gender, they find beams of light in subtle and often unexpected ways. For example, empowered women or women who question, in general, are also present, like for example in "Black Cobras" where Zulekha Begum, who "read one or the other book all day long", appears in the positions of a counselor for Aashraf, in her fight for justice (47).

Characters like Zulekha Begum who lifts the veil regarding the rights of women in Qur'an, Amina who takes the decision to undergo a surgery to stop having children or Arifa who decides to break the high-heeled shoes, to protect her unborn child, are all examples of women's resilience and strength. Interestingly, women in Banu Mushtaq's collection appear as physically fragile and socially weak, but mentally and emotionally strong. Men, on the other side, although strong and socially unbreakable ["He is a man, and he has stamped on some slush, but he will wash it off where there is water and then come back inside. There is no stain that will stick to him" (102), or "Whether he is there, not there, whether he carries responsibilities, whether he neglects them,

who's going to ask? Who does he have to answer to? He is langoti yaar, after all, a man, everybody's best friend. His past does not rise to dance in public. The present doesn't touch him […]" (50)] seem to have less inner strength:

> "Mehaboob Khan felt intolerably tormented, suffered silently and stopped talking. His laughter, his words began to feel artificial; he felt as if he had lost everything of his own and became distressed. He began to get angry if he was so much as touched. He began to flare up like a mustard seed dropped in fire" (117).

Another important theme emerging from the collection is the hypocrisy of men and society, in general. While they think providing material support is enough for the woman to bear the births of many kids, men are abandoning them to remarry or to find another younger or less burdened or exhausted partner, often to repeat the same cycle. For example, in the first story, "Stone Slabs for Shaista Mahal", Iftikhar declares his eternal love to his wife Shaista, comparing his love to that of Shah Jahan for his wife, but he remarries soon after his death to have someone to take care of his children. Similarly, in another story, "Black Cobras", Yakub remarries to get a son:

> "Yakub is going to marry again. He wants a son who can drive the autorickshaw after him, it seems. […] What forbidden thing has he done now? He has done another nikah, that's all, isn't it? He didn't elope with anyone, did he? Let him do it. Do you know that there is a Sharia law that says he can get married to four women?" (51).

In *Heart Lamp*, women are usually the backbone of the house, always involved in domestic activities, while men seem to be unaware of what is going on in their own homes, busy with maintaining their social status and power in the society. For women, on the other side, chores go

on endlessly, the rhythm of domestic life taking its toll on women's health and behavior:

> "The conversation continued as the pressure cooker whistle went off, and the blender whirred, and the strong smell of masala wafted in, and the chicken was brought in, and the food was ready because Mehrun had made it, and Salma ran around serving them all lunch. Mehrun came out of the kitchen only once, only briefly" (107).

All the women characters in the twelve stories appear as depressed, tired, bored, exhausted or frustrated and angry on those around them. Many times, their own children or husbands find excuses for their mothers' or wives' behavior, refusing to analyze the lack of involvement in women's lives and daily routines, often considering the house chores a woman's duty by default. Meanwhile, men are busy defending their own positions in the society, even at the cost of morality or women's physical or mental health. For example, in "Black Cobras", when Amina is complaining about the hardships of raising many kids, her husband, a prominent religious leader (*mutawalli*) does not seem to understand her worries. Despite the risks women take at the cost of their health, men consider their status more relevant:

> "Have I ever left you wanting for anything? No matter what, the thing you ask for will not happen, understand that very clearly. I am the mutawalli, if people get to know that I got the operation done for a woman in my own house, I will have to be answerable to them" (43).

Mostly confined between the isolating walls of their houses, "home" is often an elusive concept for a woman. It becomes a courtroom, a nostalgia, a desire, or a lonely place filled with abuse and endless chores. In the Muslim society of rural Karnataka, as it often happens in many regions in India, girls are not welcomed back to their houses after being married:

> "The whole house momentarily stood still. It felt unfamiliar to her. The mother who had kept her in her belly for nine months and raised her did not say 'There you are. Come in, my dear.' And her father, who used to delight in the little girl who jumped on his wide chest, didn't have even a small smile of welcome" (100).

In fact, a girl coming alone to her house after her marriage is a sign of dishonor:

> "[…] The feeling of being a stranger in her own house nagged at her, and the fire of insults ground her down, and so she had sought the help of her family" (109).

Moreover, by the time a woman gets the freedom to be herself in her own house, after all the children are raised, and after the sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law have moved to their respective places, women get to be too old:

> "This old dream, of having a house of her own, had been fulfilled. But now that it had, her face had become wrinkled, and the veins on her hands stood out, and there was a thin shadow under her eyes […]" (108-109).

Apart from the previously mentioned duality light-darkness, there is another one between the traditions, childhood memories, roots, and the desire to be modern, to have a better life and to emigrate. Symbols of this modern world, sought after or strongly dismissed, appear to be interwoven in the threads of the narrative. For example, in "High-heeled shoes", Nayaz Khan dreams of his wife wearing the high-heeled shoes of his sister-in-law, a returnee from Saudi, a world of glittering wonders for those who remained at home:

> "Then, when someone returned from Saudi, there were no Rajas and Maharajas like them in a family! No, no, there were no emperors like them. From the nappies they stuck to their children's bottoms, to the toothpaste-

filled plastic tubes they used, to the frills those women wore, the colorful and tantalizingly thin nighties with delicate lace, the sarees that draped around them like dead snakes and showed off their curves, the scents that emanated with every beat of their pulses, the dress watches, the Samsonite suitcases […]" (112).

While Nayaz Khan is tormented by the desire to see his wife wearing the high-heeled shoes, his brother, Mehaboob Khan, is lost in his childhood memories about the mango tree that had been cut by Nayaz, in order to create a business and have a better life. One brother is on a quest to live a modern life, while the one who was returned from abroad is looking for the old life, a simpler one, where "the swing that he and his brother played on was going up and down" and where "their father was sitting on a chair below the tree and teaching him and Nayaz verses from the Qur'an" (118).

Lastly, the stories written in this collection are a treasure trove of information regarding Muslim households and their rituals and traditions in a South Indian context. Each story depicts a different tradition, be it the ritual of women confinement after giving birth, the burial rites, the preparations for the Hajj pilgrimage, the circumcision of young boys, or the *urs* festival and the sandalwood ritual[1] that are usually celebrating the death anniversary of a Sufi saint. The Kannada language used in her narrative is also a repository of knowledge, as Banu Mushtaq chooses a direct style, filled with regional expressions and slangs. As an old language with a rich and vibrant tradition of storytelling, Kannada in Banu's stories is filled with mixed tenses, interjections or soliloquies in

[1] The Urs festival is an annual celebration commemorating the death anniversary of a Sufi saint, featuring rituals, prayers, and gatherings at their shrine. A key part of this festival is the sandal ritual, or "Sandal procession," where devotees carry trays laden with sandalwood powder, flower garlands, and other offerings in a procession to the saint's tomb, symbolizing their love and respect for the saint. The sandalwood paste is then applied to the tomb, a deeply symbolic act of devotion.

the middle of a dialogue. Her language is theatrical, sometimes dramatic, but perfectly conveying the reality of her world, a rural Karnataka where words are often mixed with gestures to express a message. For example, in "Stone Slabs for Shaista Mahal", when referring to her husband, Shaista refers to him as "your Bhai Saheb" (your elder brother). That implies the respect given to men, as "sahibs", but it also encodes a wealth of other information too: about how in conservative societies, women cannot call their husbands by their names.

Banu Mushtaq's *Heart Lamp* emerges as a powerful collection centered on the marginalized Muslim women in rural Karnataka and which reveals their quest for identity, their struggles and social conditioning in a patriarchal landscape. Her protagonists are often silenced, oppressed or abused, yet they manage to question their lives and to escape their bleak realities. Their attempt to find themselves and live a meaningful life are encountered with many challenges, but their inner strength, conveyed by the writer through many allegories, is what determines Banu Mushtaq's women to find the cracks through which the light can come in.

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, *The Song of the Banyan*, with a Foreword by Chinmoy Guha, Kolkata: Penprints Publication, 2025, 103 p., ISBN: 978-81-981564-7-1.

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"*Time is not anchored anywhere. It has no front, back or sides. Time does not rise and set. Only to express me the infinite becomes finite*".

The words belonging to Maitreyi Devi and quoted by Mihaela Gligor in the first chapter of her book, *The Song of the Banyan*, published at the beginning of 2025 at Penprints Publication in Kolkata, are equally evocative for several of the stories she is telling, placing them under the metaphorical canopy of the Great Banyan Tree of Kolkata – a tree seemingly harbouring "the life of the city itself" (11) and a symbol of longevity and immortality, as "the constantly expanding Banyan trees represent eternal life" (11). And just as the highly symbolic tree is more of a framework bundling up over 4400 aerial roots and constantly growing other, hers is a book of many stories, about many more people, artworks and books, some told and others merely introduced, awaiting their time to be told in future works by the author – introduced as "a pilgrim of culture from East Europe" (7) by Chinmoy Guha, Professor Emeritus of the University of Calcutta, recipient of the Knighthood of Academic Palms from France.

The material which extends up into such a metaphorical canopy of love for Bengali culture has its epicenter in the story behind Maitreyi Devi's book *Na Hanyate*, placed at the very beginning of Mihaela Gligor's book. The heroine of Mircea Eliade's famous book [*Bengali*

Nights, as it was translated and it is known in English, or simply *Maitreyi*, in Romanian], and as such object of so many discussions still igniting strongly divergent feelings in the international literary world, Maitreyi Devi is the subject of an essay "opening new perspectives about the love affair that thrilled several generations of Romanians, immortalized in two most exotic novels produced by the great Romanian Bengali/Indian interface" (7), as professor Chinmoy puts it. Revisiting in her essay the initiative University of Chicago Press took in 1993 of republishing together the two books, Eliade's *Bengali Nights* and Devi's *It Does Not Die (Na Hanyate)*, Mihaela Gligor writes not only a story about Mircea Eliade and Maitreyi Devi – her lifelong inspiration source, but also an account of the reactions to their story and engagement with it in the life and books of Amita Desai and Anuradha Roy, Sergiu Al-George, Amita Bose, Basarab Nicolescu and Mac Linscott Ricketts.

The second chapter of Gligor's book is dedicated to "The House of Tagore", the place in Kolkata which is the most "imbued with the personality, and cultural, material, and spiritual heritage of the great Rabindranath Tagore of Bengal" (42). In her enthusiasm of expressing the spirit of the house on Dwarkanath Tagore Lane, Mihaela Gligor revisits not only the childhood years of the great poet, but also the history and legacy of one of the most prominent families in Bengal – where Rabindranath Tagore "is seen as a god" (51). The discovery of Jorasanko Thakurbari, the Tagore family's universe, inspires a very personal essay constructed through dialogue with pages from Eliade's memories of Tagore and with Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen's childhood memories from both Calcutta and Shantiniketan, coupled with a quick overview of Visva-Bharati University and the pedagogical system created by Tagore. Overall, as Gligor concludes, "the house of Tagore is closely linked with the growth of Bengali Culture" (51).

Following this essay dedicated to the rich cultural environment of Rabi Thakur's dwelling place, the third chapter, titled "The Mysterious Inner World", engages with the representation of religion in Rabindranath Tagore's *Sadhana* and *The Religion of Man*. First published in the volume *Tagore beyond Borders: Essays on His Influence and Cultural Legacy*, edited by Mihaela Gligor and Elisabeth Marino and published with Routledge in 2023, this essay offers interesting remarks upon the inspiration sources behind the great poet's religious mindset. Starting with the Upanishads and the Gita, going to "the teachings of Buddha, Christian tradition" (57) and ending with "the fascinating universe of the Bauls of Bengal or Sufi tradition" (57), all influences are taken into consideration, to the conclusion that "for Tagore, religion was essentially a matter of spiritual experience" (61). As expressed in *The* R*eligion of Man*, religion is seen as *dharma* and "inspires in us works that are the expressions of a Universal Spirit" (70). Gligor delves into the analysis of *Sadhana*, a work focused on the problem of the self, which she considers "the basis of his vision of the world, as well as a starting point in life, which served as a frame of reference for his artistic creation" (60), referring thereby as well to the inner universe revealed hy *Gitanjali* poems, and concluding that in his approach to the Upanishads, Rabindranath Tagore was essentially a Rishi, a religious poet.

Even the fourth chapter of Mihaela Gligor's book is linked to the literary and cultural universe of Rabindranath Tagore. Titled "At Home and in the World. Remarks on the Bengali Sense of Belonging", the small essay inspired by Tagore's novel *Ghare Baire (The Home and the World*) discusses Bengali identity in the light of the ever-changing dynamics of contemporary migration. Gligor is structuring her ideas through dialogue with the influential contemporary Bengali scholar

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, discussing recent concepts and ideas pertaining to the philosophy and anthropology of belonging.

The fifth essay, "The City beyond the Words. A Personal Approach of Calcutta", is an unexpected but altogether charming love letter to the city of Kolkata, ending Mihaela Gligor's tiny but engaging and densely inspiring book on a very personal note.

A collection of rich, well-informed, thought-provocative essays, *The Song of the Banyan* is overall a very personal book, dealing with a personal selection of books, people and places, and reaching out to readers from different academic and cultural backgrounds. I recommend it as a book which, by addressing major themes for anyone fostering an interest in Bengali culture, manages in the end to spark any cultivated reader's interest for Indian culture.

About the Author: **Raluca Boboc** is Lecturer of the University of Bucharest, Swedish Department. She has published articles in the anthropology of religion, mythology and cultural studies, especially on 20th century Scandinavian writers of travel literature, along with book translations from Swedish literature. Her PhD research in the philosophy and anthropology of the body in the religious field, an interdisciplinary analysis of the Hebrew *Book of Proverbs,* was published in 2015 by Ratio et Revelatio Publishing House in Oradea. Raluca Boboc is also a writer and a photographer, author of the artist book *Threshold Worlds* (Ratio et Revelatio, 2025).

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Christopher Harding, *The Light of Asia. A History of Western Fascination with the East*, Penguin Random House UK, 2025, 452 p., ISBN: 978-0-141-99227-3.

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In 1879, Sir Edwin Arnold first published his magnificent poem *The Light of Asia*, and for the first time the story of the Buddha and his teachings was made accessible to popular audiences in Europe and America. It had a remarkable success!

After 145 years, another author uses the title *The Light of Asia* for telling the history of western fascination with the East. A professor at the University of Edinburgh, Christopher Harding tells the history of the complicated relationship and express many ways in which Asia has shaped European and North American culture over centuries. Harding not only takes this story up the 1970s, via the Beatles and Ravi Shankar, but he also deepen into the fascinating times when explorers like Marco Polo and Columbus were traveling to Asia in search for "silk, spice, paradise" (35).

Christopher Harding takes Asia by step, so to speak, and offers the most incredible examples to support his view that Asia is the place where 'light' is an essential symbol for both religious living and everyday life, even in our times. And this too justifies the Western fascination with the East. He mentions "the age of early English diplomacy, trade and religious encounter in India" (89). Numerous examples are being offered, including the story of "Thomas Coryate [who] left the Mughal

court in September 1616. He travelled to Agra, carrying on to Hardwar to witness people bathing in the Ganges." (99) Unfortunatelly, he died "at Surat, in December 1617", but others were luckier. "Sir Thomas Roe was an altogether different prospect: aristocrat, Member of Parliament, experienced diplomat […]" (98).

Harding follows different stories of different people fascinated with India and the East. Interesting from the perspective of someone in search for wisdom is the story of Roberto de Nobili (1577-1656) and Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) that "went beyond learning the necessary anguages. They and Their successors lived with – and *as* – the people they hoped to convert" (105). "Nobili learned Sanskrit, becoming perhaps the first European to do so" (109). Writing about such stories, Hardings not only insists on the European fascination towards Asia, but also traces the history of Western interest into Asia's cultural diversity.

The chapter Harding dedicates to Calcutta is my favourite, as I had the oportunity to learn about his characters and see the places where the action happened and to understand exactly what the mighty East India Company meant for the city of joy, as Calcutta is called.

> "Efforts were duly made at the reaorganization and reform of the East India Company's operation in India. In 1773, the post of governor-general was ceated in Calcutta. […] India's first governor-general, Warren Hastings. Fluent in Bengali, Urdu and Persian, he advocated language-learning amongst Company men both as an effective means of governance and a way of keeping them out of trouble […]. But Hastings found his most powerful ally in Sir William Jones, who arrived in Calcutta […] to take up as a judgeship on the Supreme Court.
>
> A gifted linguist, Jones had picked up Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic while at Harrow. […] Arriving in Calcutta, […] Jones could fulfill his dream of establishing an 'Asiatic Society'" comprising "languages and

> culture, geography and natural history, mathematics and physics, botany and medicine, painting and poetry, music and architecture" (141-143).

And William Jones had succed! The Asiatic Society of Bengal, an institute of national importance declared by an Act of Parliament under Ministry of Culture, Government of India, remembers Jones as its founder and organizes, every year, multiple events dedicated to him. William Jones is buried in the South Park Street Cemetery in Kolkata and people all over the world visit his grave and leep his memory alive. "The images of India, which he [Jones] and his fellow orientalists conjured in their writings, travelled far further" (155).

Harding focuses next on *Germany's Oriental Renaissance*, as

> "Goethe also shared Herder's interest in Vedānta and the eighth-century philosopher Shankara. […] Alongside Herder and Goethe, the brothers Schlegel – Friedrich and August Wilhelm – played important roles in bringing Indian inspiration to early German Romanticism" (159).

"Indian thought was most warmly embraced […] by Arthur Schopenhauer" (163). Later,

> "Westerners who were inclined to treat Schleiermacher sympathetically found in Ram Mohan Roy an Indian intellectual who had reached remarkably similar conclusions on the basis of his own religious inheritage" (171).

Their ideas were similar and that proved that great minds think almost the same, no matter how close or far they are geographically located or religiously different.

Christopher Harding's *The Light of Asia* is full of such examples, wonderful and incredible stories on the importance of cultural exchanges and influences that widened the horizon and continues to do so. "Arnold's epic poem, *The Light of Asia*, was an attempt to bring

Buddhism to the British, and to the wider West" (191). Harding's *The Light of Asia* is a contemporary journey into the wise East and a reminder that ideas always have their own destiny and bringing cultures together is the most important mission of an intellectual.

The entire Asia, not only India, is a canvas Harding puts his magic on and creates a captivating story about love and war, silk and spices, Gods and spirituality as seen from the beginning of Western fascination with the East. Nothing is too much when expressing his ideas regarding the incredible worlds of Asia that shaped some of the most influential minds of the world!

Christopher Harding's *The Light of Asia* is such a beautiful written volume and I highly recommend it to all those interested in Asian history and spirituality, to all the contemporary travelers that seek to deepen the dense universe of Asia. It's a wonderful read and an invitation to explore Asia not only geographically, but culturally as well.

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Following any notices of a possible plagiarism or other fraudulent actions regarding studies already published in the *Romanian Journal of Indian Studies*, and after a rigorous verification of such notices, the editorial office of the journal will take measures to notify all interested institutions, providing all necessary documents that provide evidence of plagiarism or other unethical scientific practices, and, at the same time, it will also publish the journal's official position regarding the respective situation, on the website of the journal
(https://www.ceeol.com/search/journal-detail?id=1944).
(https://indian.centre.ubbcluj.ro/?page_id=217)

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The editorial office of *Romanian Journal of Indian Studies* will enter the text of the manuscript proposed for publication into the plagiarism detection software made available by BBU, within 30 days of receiving the manuscript. The report generated by the plagiarism detection software will then by analyzed by the editor-in-chief, and the invited editors of the issue. Based on these evaluations, an anti-plagiarism report will be created that will contain a list of documents identified as possible sources for certain fragments of the text and one or more similarity coefficient(s). Regardless of the alert threshold signaled by the plagiarism detection software, a qualitative analysis of the results of the automatic plagiarism detection will be performed, in accordance with the standards and specificities of the field. The manuscript will not be accepted for publication if the anti-plagiarism report shows that: (a) the unauthorised fragment(s) that were found in the manuscript are not justified and bear signs of plagiarism; or (b) the work contains

intentional changes to the text, which indicate an attempt to conceal unauthorised use of fragments from someone else's work.

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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 Babeş-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).

Indexing and Webpage

The *Romanian Journal of Indian Studies* is abstracted and indexed in **C.E.E.O.L.** (Central and Eastern European Online Library GmbH).
https://www.ceeol.com/search/journal-detail?id=1944

From August 18, 2025, the *Romanian Journal of Indian Studies* is indexed in **ERIH PLUS**. European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences.
https://kanalregister.hkdir.no/publiseringskanaler/erihplus/periodical/info?id=508538

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The *Romanian Journal of Indian Studies* invites researchers and academics to contribute to the tenth issue (2026).

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 2026.

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

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