HerStory – Historical Scholarship between South Asia and Europe

Festschrift in Honour of Gita Dharampal-Frick

edited by
Rafael Klöber
and Manju Ludwig

HerStory. Historical Scholarship between South Asia and Europe
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Rafael Klöber · Manju Ludwig (eds.)

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Gita Dharampal-Frick

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Preface

It is with immense pleasure that we dedicate this Festschrift to Gita Dharampal-Frick, who will officially embrace her new role as professor emerita of South Asian History at the University of Heidelberg in the autumn of 2018. The present volume assembles a number of innovative contributions by friends, colleagues and former students to several research fields that Gita Dharampal-Frick has enriched over the last decades. We hope that reading the intriguing articles published in this Festschrift will indeed be a great start into an active 'retired life' – spurring Professor Dharampal-Frick to continue her scholarship fuelled by her irrepressible curiosity and sharp mind.

Gita Dharampal-Frick was the head of the Department of History at the South Asia Institute (SAI) since 2002 and has left her mark on the institute as well as on the university in general. She filled positions in numerous academic and administrative bodies, was engaged in interdisciplinary research projects, initiated Indo-German collaborations and still found the time to do what staunch academics love to do: teaching and conducting research. Whereas the impressive bibliography of Professor Dharampal-Frick's works bears testimony to the latter, it has always been her original and critical mode of teaching that made her a students' favourite at the SAI. Not only do the contributions of some of her former doctoral students pay tribute to her commitment to facilitating young scholars, but also we, the two editors of this Festschrift, have greatly benefited from her guidance and support as MA students, doctoral students and post-doctoral researchers over more than a decade now.

Having celebrated her sixty-fifth birthday in 2017, Gita Dharampal-Frick can look back on a fruitful academic career that exemplifies her own transcultural biography. Hailing from an Indo-British Gandhian family, she spent her childhood years in India as well as in England. After completing her undergraduate education at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, she went on to receive her masters (1977) and PhD (1980) in Indology/History from the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris with the dissertation *La religion des Malabars. Tessier de Quéralay et la contribution des missionnaires européens à la naissance de l'indianisme*. Professor Dharampal-Frick was habilitated with her seminal study on German accounts of India from the pre-modern era (*Indien im Spiegel deutscher Quellen der Frühen Neuzeit (1500–1750): Studien zu einer interkulturellen Konstellation*) at Freiburg University, Germany in 1990. She was an assistant professor of Modern and Contemporary History at Augsburg University, Germany, before she was appointed full professor and head of

the Department of South Asian History at Heidelberg University. Staying true to her transcultural roots, Gita Dharampal-Frick – awarded, inter alia, with the Heisenberg and Humboldt Fellowships – has taught and conducted research all over the globe: whether in Regensburg or in New Delhi, in Stanford or in Hyderabad, in Cambridge or in Heidelberg.

During her time at Heidelberg University, Professor Dharampal-Frick was involved in interdisciplinary and innovative projects like the Collaborative Research Center (SFB) 619 *"Ritual Dynamics" Socio-Cultural Processes from a Historical and Culturally Comparative Perspective* (2005–2009), where she led the sub-project "Ritual Transfer between South Asia and the West, 1600–2000". Being a veritable cosmopolitan scholar and human being, it is hardly surprising that Gita Dharampal-Frick was a committed member of the Heidelberg Cluster of Excellence *Asia and Europe in a Global Context: The Dynamics of Transculturality* as well. Here she collaborated and contributed to sub-projects as diverse as "Nationising the Dynasty", "Satire", "Rethinking Gender" and "Large Dams". She has also been a zealous promoter of Indo-German dialogue and friendship, best exemplified by her close involvement with the Indo-German Society. Since 2011, Professor Dharampal-Frick has been a regular visitor to the Gandhi Research Foundation at Jalgaon, India during several research sabbaticals. This place has grown very dear to her heart and she will focus her attention and expertise on this institution and its projects after retiring from her duties at the South Asia Institute.

The contributions assembled in this Festschrift reflect the most important research areas that Gita Dharampal-Frick has focused on during her long and prolific career. The volume is arranged thematically in four parts. The first part interrogates various transcultural encounters between South Asia and Europe. The essays cover the time span from the early modern period to the Indian nationalist movement in the 1930s and mirror Professor Dharampal-Frick's own work in this field – including her seminal work on the intercultural constellations in premodern Germany's perception of India. The second part focusses on various aspects of the colonial discourse in British India and its legacies by interrogating concepts, categories and discourses, while reflecting on the asymmetrical and global nature of knowledge production. The third chapter combines two (temporally very distant) contributions to the maritime history of the Indian Ocean. This field has become one of Gita Dharampal-Frick's research interests more recently, wherein she focuses on historical analyses of the Indian Ocean's entangled past. Lastly, the volume includes perspectives on the life, work and writings of M. K. Gandhi who has been the focus of many of

Gita Dharampal-Frick's research projects, publications and teaching in the past and whose legacy will continue to be of utmost importance to her.

We would like to wholeheartedly thank all contributors to this Festschrift without whom this entire endeavour would not have been possible. We are also indebted to Nicole Merkel (SAI Library) and Frank Krabbes (Heidelberg University Publishing) for their help and advice during the publication process with CrossAsia-eBooks. We are grateful to Daniela Jakob (Heidelberg University Publishing) for the layout of the book cover. Finally, we wish to thank Dagmar Brombierstäudl, Felix Eickelbeck, Mrs. Jensen, Divya Schäfer and Simon Rohlfs for their assistance and input.

Last but not least, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Gita Dharampal-Frick for her crucial contributions to the field of South Asian History and for the fascinating time that we spent together in Heidelberg. We genuinely wish her all the best for her future endeavours. HerStory surely is not over.

Rafael Klöber & Manju Ludwig
Heidelberg, April 2018

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Compiled by Manju Ludwig

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Transcultural Encounters between South Asia and Europe

Die Nairen der Malabarküste zwischen Adelsstand und Kriegerkaste. Praktiken des Vergleichens und die europäische Weltaneignung[1]

Antje Flüchter

Abstract

This essay interrogates the production of knowledge about India in Europe via practices of comparison and its integration in the existing knowledge canon. How did the construction of the relationship between Europe and India, similarities and differences work? How did these processes change over time? By illuminating the example of the Nairs, an Indian elite at the Malabar Coast who were mentioned in almost every European travelogue in the Early Modern Period, these questions will be addressed. The Nairs were most commonly compared to the European nobility in the Early Modern Period. On the one hand this comparatum *indicated proximity and comparability. However, the specific* tertia *or comparison aspects used (war, appearance, choice of partners, performative orchestration) also highlighted Otherness in those similarities. The early modern practice of comparing thus oscillated between 'similar' and 'different' while the comparison to the nobility was discontinued in the modern period. Instead the Nairs came to be understood as a warrior caste, a social form incommensurable to Europe.*

Einleitung

Jürgen Andersen, der mit der *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) im 17. Jahrhundert nach Indien kam, schrieb über die Bewohner der Hafenstadt Surat:

> *„Es wird allhier grosser Handel geführet von vielen Nationen/so theils ihre Wohnung in der Stadt haben/als von Engelländern/ Holländern/ Arabern/ Persern/ Türcken/ Armenern und Juden/und hat der Mogul von den auß und eingeführten Waren sehr großen Zoll. [...] Die continuierlichen Einwohner seynd Guhusatten/ Cambajer/ Benjanen/ Brahmanen/ Decanarier und etliche Rasbuten. Die Benjanen aber/ weil sie die größte Kauffmanschafft treben/seynd die reichesten"* (Andersen & Iversen 1980: 25).

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[1] Ich bedanke mich für Diskussion und Kritik bei Anna Dönecke.

Antje Flüchter

Frühneuzeitliche Reisende waren in Indien in vielerlei Hinsicht mit einer überbordenden Diversität konfrontiert und ins Staunen versetzt: Die Vielfalt fremder Pflanzen und Tiere war wohl noch am einfachsten zu verarbeiten; die Vielzahl von Religionen verunsicherte schon deutlich mehr. So lässt es sich immer wieder feststellen, wie die Vielfalt an Kategorien, nach denen die Menschen in Indien geordnet werden konnten, die europäischen Reisenden[2] ratlos ließen. Eine hierarchisierte Ordnung der Gesellschaft war den vormodernen Europäern nicht nur vertraut, sie gab ihrer Weltdeutung Sicherheit. Rangfolgen, Sitzordnungen und die entsprechenden Streitigkeiten waren ihr Alltag; soziale Distinktion durch sichtbar verschiedene Kleider und andere Zeichen war ihnen zumindest als Norm bekannt. Mit der sogenannten europäischen Expansion und der Erfahrung unbekannter Vielfalt wurden diese Gewissheiten herausgefordert. Die neuen Erfahrungen, Dinge, Menschen und Konzepte mussten in die eigene Weltdeutung integriert werden: Dies geschah nicht zuletzt durch Praktiken des Vergleichs.

Vergleiche haben viele Funktionen in der menschlichen Kommunikation, im Rahmen der sogenannten europäischen Expansion und im Kulturkontakt dienen sie nicht zuletzt dazu, fremde Erfahrungen zu verstehen und in die eigene Weltdeutung einzubauen.[3] Dabei konstruieren Vergleiche auch die Welt und bewerten sie. Solche Vergleiche orientieren sich selbstredend an dem Vertrauten; werden sie aus europäischer Perspektive angestellt, sind sie also fast zwangsläufig eurozentrisch (Osterhammel 1989: v. a. 33). So lieferten Vergleiche und die vielen vergleichenden Wissenschaften wichtige Bausteine, um die Meistererzählung der westlichen Überlegenheit zu ‚beweisen' und zu zementieren. Daher kann man über die Vergleiche aber eben auch umgekehrt die Mechanismen eben dieser Meistererzählung aufdecken.

Vergleiche pressen aber nicht nur das Neue in das Altbekannte, ebenso können sie letzteres in Frage stellen und damit auch verändern: Vergleiche können Denkmuster ebenso stabilisieren wie dynamisieren. Vergleiche sind

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[2] „Europäisch" wie „indisch" wird in diesem Aufsatz nicht im Sinne feststehender Gruppen verstanden, sondern als dynamische Konzepte. Weder Europäer noch Inder bildeten eine Einheit oder standen sich gar von Anfang an dichotomisch gegenüber. Die Wahl dieser Begrifflichkeit macht dennoch aus vor allem zwei Gründen Sinn: 1. teilten beide Gruppen im Sinne von Kommunikationsgemeinschaften mehr untereinander als miteinander, 2. im Übergang der Moderne verfestigte sich die Grenze zwischen Europäern und Nicht-Europäern und eben diese Grenzziehung soll hier untersucht werden.
[3] Angelika Epple und Walter Erhart formulierten: „Die Welt beobachten heißt hier eben auch, sie der europäischen Vorstellung anzugleichen, sie dadurch erst vergleichbar machen." (Epple & Erhart 2015: 7–8). Die konzeptionellen Überlegungen zum Vergleich stehen im Kontext der Diskussionen im SFB 1288 *Praktiken des Vergleichens* an der Universität Bielefeld, vgl. dazu: Epple & Erhart (2015), darin v.a. die Aufsätze von Angelika Epple, Johannes Grave, Walter Erhart und Willibald Steinmetz.

zudem nicht nur essentialisierend, sie schreiben nicht nur das Fremde und das Eigene stereotypisch fest, vielmehr vermitteln sie zwischen den alten Gegensätzen von Identität und Alterität, denn sie schreiben Ähnlichkeiten wie Unterschiede fest und erlauben damit Schattierungen, spielen durch welcher Grad an Identität und Alterität denkbar ist (vgl. von Sass 2011: 31; Pethes 2011: 201).

Durch den Kulturkontakt und die so hervorgerufenen Praktiken des Vergleichens wird aber auch das eigene Wissen verändert und so kann das produzierte Wissen über die Welt als transkulturell bezeichnet werden. ‚Transkulturell' wird damit nicht im Sinne einer positiven Wertung verwendet,[4] diese Wissensproduktion erfolgte aus europäischer Perspektive, war selbstredend ebenso eurozentrisch wie Wissensproduktion auch immer in Machtverhältnisse eingebettet ist. Das produzierte Wissen war aber eben kein reines Produkt europäischer Akteure, bestand nicht nur aus europäischen Ideen, sondern entstand in der Auseinandersetzung mit anderen Weltregionen, Gesellschaften und Kulturen. Und das macht sie als Denkfigur so spannend und untersuchenswert.

Der vorliegende Aufsatz will am Beispiel der 500-jährigen europäischen Wahrnehmung der Nairen, einer Elite der westindischen Malabarküste, ausloten welche Bedeutung die Praktiken des Vergleichens für die europäische bzw. vor allem deutschsprachige Wissensproduktion[5] und die Modellierung der westlichen Moderne und des Glaubens an die europäische Überlegenheit hatten. Die Nairen versetzten durch ihre Lebensform die Europäer in vieler Hinsicht ins Staunen, es kann davon ausgegangen werden, dass sie lange auch nicht oder doch sehr falsch verstanden wurden (Dharampal-Frick 1994: 142–143).[6] In diesem Aufsatz, das muss betont werden, geht es nicht darum, ob die Erzählungen und Vergleiche mit der sozialen und kulturellen Realität der Malabarküste übereinstimmten, sondern wie sie im europäischen Diskurs dargestellt, erklärt und bewertet wurden.

Da die Nairen durchgehend Thema im deutschsprachigen Indiendiskurs sind, stellen die Narrative zu ihnen ein relativ klar konturiertes Corpus dar,

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[4] Ein normative Aufladung des Transkulturationsprozesses findet sich zum Beispiel bei Wolfgang Welsch: Welsch (1995); Welsch (1999). Das hier verwandte Transkulturalitätskonzept wurde am Cluster *Asia and Europe in a Global Context* in Heidelberg entwickelt: Vgl. grundlegend Juneja & Kravagna (2013), weitere Literaturangaben: Flüchter & Brauner (2014).

[5] Quellengrundlage der folgenden Analyse ist der deutschsprachige Diskurs, also die Texte zu Indien und den Nairen, die auf Deutsch den Lesern vorlagen, aber nicht unbedingt auf Deutsch oder von deutschen Autoren verfasst wurden. Übersetzungen ins Deutsche werden auch berücksichtigt. Vgl. zur besonderen Bedeutung des deutschsprachigen Diskurses: Dharampal-Frick (1994: 56-63); Flüchter (2018b), Einleitung.

[6] Vgl. zu den Nairen in der modernen Forschung: Fuller (1976); Thurston & Rangachari (1909); Janarthanan (2008).

was die Untersuchung von Verschiebungen in den Vergleichspraktiken und ihren Konsequenzen für die Bewertung erleichtert. Darüber hinaus stellen die Nairen wegen ihres Elitenstatus ein gutes Untersuchungsobjekt für Praktiken des Vergleichens dar.[7] Mit einer gewissen Ausdifferenzierung muss jede Herrschaftsform Macht an Eliten delegieren. Sie sind daher ein Phänomen, das alle differenzierten Gesellschaften teilen, und damit konnten die Zeitgenossen der hier untersuchten Texte auf eine grundlegende Vergleichbarkeit, die die Voraussetzung für jeden Vergleich ist, zurückgreifen.

Darüber hinaus sind Eliten, ihre Konstituierung, aber auch ein relevantes Kriterium für die Bewertung von Kulturen und Gesellschaften, jedenfalls in der westlichen Moderne. Der Übergang vom geburtsständischen Adel zu einem meritokratischen Bürgertum stellt ein grundlegendes Element des europäischen Modernisierungsparadigmas dar und wird entsprechend als zivilisatorischer Fortschritt verstanden (Reitmayer 2010).[8] Gleichzeitig wurde die als versteinert beschriebene indische Kastengesellschaft am Übergang zur Moderne zu einem stereotypen Gegenbild dieser europäischen Entwicklung konstruiert (Dirks 2001).[9] Eine Untersuchung der vergleichenden Wahrnehmung von Eliten eröffnet daher Einblicke, wie die Zeitgenossen soziale Distinktionen wahrgenommen und legitimiert haben. Bei diesem Thema werden Ideale wie Kritikpunkte der jeweiligen Gesellschaftsform deutlich.[10]

Dennoch mag man zunächst verwundert fragen, ob man denn überhaupt Vergleiche als Thema für eine transkulturelle Perspektive verwenden kann. Die komparative Methode hat bei all ihren Verdiensten auch viele Probleme aufgeworfen, nicht zuletzt die Essentialisierung der verglichenen Einheiten. In einem globalen Kontext wurden Vergleiche oft verengt auf ein Abgleichen des jeweils anderen mit einem westlichen Ideal und entsprechende Defizitgeschichten geschrieben. Aus diesen Gründen arbeiten sich die Kulturgeschichte und die postkoloniale Perspektive seit Jahren, wenn nicht Jahrzehnten am Vergleich ab (Mignolo 2013; Middell 2000; Pernau 2007; vgl. die Diskussion mit weiteren

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[7] Bezogen auf die komparative Methode hat daraufhin schon Kuchenbuch hingewiesen: Kuchenbuch (2006); vgl. auch die empirische Umsetzung: Duindam (2016).

[8] Vgl. auch für weitere Literaturangaben: Dartmann, et al. (2015, v.a. Einleitung, 1–32 und Eliten in transkultureller Perspektive, 33–174).

[9] Die Wahrnehmung der indischen Gesellschaft als versteinert zeigt sich sehr deutlich beispielsweise: Robertson (1791: 373); Furtwängler (1942: 8).

[10] So trifft gerade bei diesem Thema zu, was Michael Harbsmeier allgemein für Reiseberichte als mentalitätsgeschichtliche Quelle herausgearbeitet hat: Selbstverständliches und daher sonst kaum Thematisiertes wird im Kontext des Kulturkontakts und seiner Beschreibung erläutert, vgl. Harbsmeier (1982).

Belegen: Flüchter 2015).[11] Aber gerade diese Probleme machen den Vergleich zu einem so interessanten Untersuchungsfall. Es geht im Folgenden also nicht darum historische Phänomene zu vergleichen, sondern darum, die Praktiken des Vergleichens zu untersuchen. Die kritische Frage „Why compare"? (Radhakrishnan 2013) wird so ersetzt durch die Frage: Wie, warum und mit welchen Konsequenzen haben die untersuchten Autoren verglichen?

Bei Vergleichen werden mindestens zwei *comparata* durch Vergleichshinsichten, den *tertia,* miteinander in Bezug gesetzt. Damit diese Operation möglich ist, muss man von mindestens einer Gemeinsamkeit der *comparata* ausgehen, um dann anhand verschiedener *tertia* Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede genauer herauszuarbeiten (Epple & Erhart 2015: 18–19; Grave 2015, v.a. 136–137). Damit stellen Vergleiche Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede fest und sie stellen sie durch das Vergleichen ebenso her. Die Wahl der *tertia* betont gewisse Eigenschaften der *comparata* und stellt andere in den Hintergrund. Weder *comparata* noch *tertia* sind in irgendeiner Art natürlich gegeben;[12] sie werden ausgewählt, eine andere Wahl könnte zu einem anderen Vergleichsergebnis führen. Somit konstruieren vergleichende Akteure mit ihrer Wahl bestimmter *tertia* die *comparata.* Aber auch die Wahl der *comparata* bestimmt den Ausgang und die normativen Konsequenzen des Vergleichs, *comparata* können sich gegenseitig beeinflussen.[13] Die Wahl von *tertia* und *comparata* wie auch die (nicht zuletzt normativen) Konsequenzen hängen wiederum vom Kontext ab, weshalb dem Vergleich auch eine tetraedische Struktur zugeschrieben wird (Epple & Erhart 2015: 18–19); von Sass (2011, v.a. 28).

Vergleichen ist daher weder ein neutrales noch eine harmloses Verfahren![14] Entsprechend führt eine komparative Methode auch nicht zu ,objektiven' Ergebnissen. Das hat nicht zuletzt die zahlreiche postkoloniale Kritik festgestellt; diese Wirkmächtigkeit der Praxis des Vergleichens wurde aber von VergleichstheoretikerInnen wie Bettina Heintz auch fruchtbar gewendet (Heintz 2010).[15]

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[11] Sehr grundlegend findet diese Diskussionen in den Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaften statt, vgl. z.B. Radhakrishnan (2013); Melas (2013); Saussy (2013).

[12] Eindrücklich formulierte Ming Xie: „Two things being compared are regulated by the comparison, not by supposedly inherent qualities", Xie (2013, hier 676).

[13] Vgl. zu der gegenseitigen Beeinflussung der *comparata,* auch über die *tertia*: Radhakrishnan (2013).

[14] Daher ist es auch etwas schwierig, wenn von Sass zwischen präferenzlosen und asymmetrischen Vergleichen unterscheidet: „Vergleiche können *neutral* belassen bleiben oder *normativ* aufgeladen werden", von Sass (2011: 36).

[15] Bettina Heintz beklagte zum Beispiel, dass es nur wenige Arbeiten gäbe, „die den Vergleich explizit zum Thema machen und danach fragen, welche sozialen Dynamiken durch öffentliche Vergleichskommunikation ausgelöst werden" (Heintz 2010: 163). Sie selber geht diesen Konsequenzen von Vergleichen am Beispiel von vergleichen mit

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Bezogen auf die Nairen soll das Wissen über sie und wie es durch Vergleiche produziert wurde, untersucht werden. Da die Nairen seit 1498 zu den Interaktionspartnern der Europäer zählten, könnte eine Akkumulation von Wissen, also ein Lernprozess, angenommen werden. Dem ist die Position entgegenzusetzen, dass die Produktion des gesellschaftlich anerkannten Wissens viel eher durch die Umstände der Produktion, mächte- wie diskurspolitische, zu verstehen ist.[16] Und auch bei Vergleichen bestimmt der kulturelle, soziale oder diskursive Kontext, was wie und womit verglichen wird.

Nicht die Eurozentrik, aber der feste Glaube an die westliche Dominanz, die die europäische Perspektive so hässlich macht, ist ein Kind der Moderne. Bis weit ins 18. Jahrhundert hinein hatten europäische Akteure in Asien wenig Grund solch ein Denken zu entwickeln (Osterhammel 1998).[17] Diesen Aufsatz interessiert, wie sich der Umschwung von einer Gleichrangigkeit und Ähnlichkeit in die Arroganz der westlichen Überlegenheit gestaltete. Dabei gehe ich davon aus, dass Verschiebungen in den Praktiken des Vergleichens eine wichtige Rolle spielten:

Die Verschiebung der Machtverhältnisse in Indien im 18. Jahrhundert wird begleitet von der These der Vergleichstheorie, dass im 18. Jahrhundert eine qualitative Veränderung der Vergleichspraktiken stattgefunden habe. Vorsichtig formuliert besteht diese darin, dass die Vergleiche sich zunehmend temporalisierten, d.h. die Anderen an der eigenen Entwicklung maßen und ihnen einen weniger entwickelten Zustand zuwiesen.[18] Andere Autoren gehen von einer viel tieferen Veränderung aus. Foucault verortete in diesem Zeitraum eine Verschiebung von dem Denken in Ähnlichkeiten zu einem in Differenzen (Foucault 1971: 46–65, 82–91). Bettina Heintz formulierte: „Während die Ver-

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Zahlen nach; konzeptionell interessant, aus vormoderner Sicht aber auch etwas schwierig: Heintz & Werron (2011). Vgl. auch die Überlegungen zu einer Ethik des Vergleichens: Xie (2011).

[16] Stefan Hirschauer betont gerade in Bezug auf Differenzierungen zwischen Menschen, „Humandifferenzierung werden in der Zeit stillgestellt und reißen wieder auf." Sie folgen also keiner linearen Evolution, sondern „geschichtliche und biographische *Konjunkturen*" prägen und strukturieren sie, Hirschauer (2014: 184).

[17] Dies ist unmittelbar einleuchtend, wenn die Kontakte mit den großen Reichen Chinas, Japans oder des Mogulreichs betrachtet werden, trifft aber auch auf viele kleinere Reiche zu, wie eben an der indischen Malabarküste, vgl. dazu demnächst: Flüchter (2018b, v.a. Kap. 5).

[18] Zur Bedeutung temporalisierter Vergleiche vgl. Willibald Steinmetz, der sie allerdings progressive Vergleiche nennt: ‚Progressiv' kann man diese Vergleiche nennen, weil sie – obwohl synchron existierende Einheiten betreffend – diese diachron auf einer zeitlichen Skala schon erreichter oder noch zu erreichender Fortschritte anordneten und daraus nicht selten entsprechende Handlungsaufforderungen ableiteten." Steinmetz (2015: 125).

gleichskriterien in der Frühmoderne als Bestandteil einer natürlichen und heiligen Ordnung begriffen und dadurch gegen Zweifel immunisiert wurden, stehen sie in der Moderne zur Disposition und geraten damit in den Sog der Relativierung." (Heintz 2010: 165). Das wird zu überprüfen sein.

Die Nairen der Malabarküste

Die Höfe der Malabarküste und deren Herrschaftsinszenierung entsprachen in ihrer Bedeutung nicht den großen indischen Reichen, mit denen die Europäer oft interagieren mussten, wie dem Mogulreich, den Sultanaten des Dekkan oder bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts dem südindischen Vijayanagar. Doch durch ihre Lage an der indischen Westküste gehörten sie durchaus zu den Interaktionspartnern der meisten europäischen Gruppen. Durch den ‚Erstkontakt' Vasco da Gamas mit Calicut und Cochin hatten diese Orte überdies einen zentralen Platz im deutschsprachigen Indiendiskurs, weshalb sie auch öfter erwähnt wurden, als es ihrer Bedeutung in Indien wie im europäisch-indischen Kontakt entsprach. So entwickelten sich die Nairen, die ‚Kriegerkaste' oder ‚Edelleute' der Malabarküste, zu einem beständigen Personal deutschsprachiger, frühneuzeitlicher Indienberichte. Man findet sie schon um 1500 in den Reiseberichten Balthasar Springers und Ludovico Varthemas, sie haben ein Lemma in Zedlers Universal-Lexicon des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts, in Johann Georg Krünitz' Oeconomischen Enzyklopädie um 1800 und auch noch die moderne Wikipedia erläutert sie, nun allerdings unter dem Lemma Nayar.[19] Zumindest kurze Abschnitte über sie und ihre Besonderheiten wurden in Reiseberichten fast zu einem Ausweis dafür, dass der Erzähler über ein tieferes Wissen über Indien verfügte und die Malabarküste ‚wirklich' besucht hatte.

Die Bedeutung des Comparatum: Adelsstand oder Kriegerkaste?

Die Mehrzahl der Reiseberichte bezeichnen die Nairen als Adel. In den meisten Gebieten Europas war in dieser Phase die privilegierte Position des Adels als einer Spitzengruppe der ständischen Gesellschaft sozial akzeptiert und im frühneuzeitlichen Weltbild verankert; zudem ist diese Formation gut erforscht (Asch 1999; Asch 2003; Morsel 1997; Sikora 2009). Die Gleichsetzung begann in den frühen Berichten um 1500: Balthasar Springer (gest. 1509-1511) nannte bei seiner Aufzählung der vier sozialen Gruppen der Malabarküste die „Nayer: das sein Edellut" (Springer 1902 [1505/1506]: D2).[20] Expliziter verglich Ludovico de

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[19] Vgl. die genauen Belege im Folgenden.
[20] Die einzelnen Autoren zu kontextualisieren würde den Umfang dieses Aufsatzes sprengen, zur groben Einordnung werden Lebens-, Reise- oder Veröffentlichungsdaten

Varthema (1470–1517): Sie würden „etwas ähnliches darstellen wie bei uns die Edelleute" (Varthema 1996: 155–156, 139). Durch die Übernahme der Varthema-Passagen in die Weltchroniken von Sebastian Franck (1499–1542) und Sebastian Münster (1488–1552) (Franck 1534: 197, 199) erhielten die Nairen als Adel der Malabarküste einen festen Platz in der Wahrnehmung Südindiens. Es folgten Erwähnungen und Beschreibungen von den geographisch wie sozial verschiedensten Autorengruppen.

Auch im 16. Jahrhundert wurde der Vergleich mit dem Adel beibehalten: So enthält eine der wichtigsten frühen Sammlung von Reiseberichten aus dem Verlagshaus de Bry einige Passagen zu ihnen: Beispielsweise lesen wir dort in der Übersetzung des Berichts von Gasparo Balbi, der von 1576 bis 1588 Indien bereiste, die Nairen seien der „Adel" der Malabarküste, vor allem des Königs von Cochin (Balbi, in: de Bry 1605: 55, 102). Und auch der für den weiteren Diskurs so wichtige Bericht von Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1563–1611) bezeichnet sie als „Kriegsleut" und als Adlige (Linschoten, in: de Bry 1613: 125, 128). Ähnlich bleibt die Wahl von Adel als plausiblem *comparatum* für die Erklärung der Nairen in den nächsten Dekaden: Der schleswig-holsteinische Adlige Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo (1616–1644) nennt sie Edelleute (Mandelslo 1696: 100) und auch Jean de Thévenot (1633–1667), ein französische Reisender, beschreibt den „Adelsstand" der Nairen (Thévenot 1693: 172).[21] Nur der sonst so ins Detail gehende italienische Reisende Pietro della Valle (1586–1652) hielt sich mit Begriffen, die an europäische Verhältnisse erinnerten, zurück und schrieb schlicht, die Nairen seien eine Gruppe, „die von Krieg leben / und tapfere Soldaten seyn" (Della Valle (1674, 7. Sendschreiben: 127).

Die Wahl des europäischen Adels als *comparatum* für die Nairen wird auch bei einer für den deutschen Diskurs typischen Autorengruppe gezogen, nämlich den Reiseberichten deutscher Söldner bei der niederländischen VOC (Gelder 2004; Flüchter 2007; Harbsmeier 2001: 40–44). Sie stammten meist aus niedrigeren sozialen Schichten als die üblichen gelehrten, oft adligen, teils kaufmännisch tätigen Autoren. Deshalb machten sie auch oft andere Erfahrungen in Indien als die anderen Reisenden; ihre Vergleichspraktiken haben also einen anderen Kontext als die bisher erwähnten. Zudem sind ihre Texte ein guter Beleg dafür, was jenseits der eigenen Erfahrung zum allgemeinen Haushalt frühneuzeitlicher Indienreisender gehörte. Denn ihre Texte wurde oft grundle-

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genannt, zur genaueren Kontextualisierung vieler der genannten vgl. Dharampal-Frick (1994), sowie demnächst Flüchter (2018b).

[21] Thévenot lässt allerdings schon einen kritischen Unterton mitschwingen, geht es bei ihm doch vor allem darum, dass die Nairen sich zu viel auf diesen besonderen Stand einbildeten. In den sonst so wichtigen Berichten von François Bernier und Jean-Baptiste Tavernier kommt die Malabarküste und ihre Bewohner nicht detailliert vor.

gend von Editoren mit Hilfe des bereits in Europa Bekannten bearbeitet.[22] Auch bei diesen Autoren findet man Belege dafür, dass „Adel" als *comparatum* für die Nairen genutzt wird. So nennt Albrecht Herport (1669) die Nairen „Edle" und grenzt sie ausdrücklich von den „Bawren" ab (Herport 1669: 119, 123). Bei dieser Autorengruppe[23] wird aber ebenso oft auch statt des Adels nur der Vergleich mit Soldaten und „Kriegsleuten" gezogen (vgl. Burckhardt 1693: 121).

Geradezu selbstverständlich wurden also die Nairen in verschiedenen Reiseberichten des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts mit dem Adel, also mit der Elitenformation und -konstitution, die Autoren wie Lesern aus Europa am vertrautesten waren, verglichen. Ein Nebeneinanderstellen ist nicht unbedingt ein Vergleich, aber die Verwendung des Begriffs „Adel" oder „Adelsstand" kann als vergleichsinduzierte Anordnung aufgefasst werden,[24] spannte sie doch einen Vergleichshorizont auf, in den die weiteren Beschreibungen wie *tertia* eingeordnet wurden. Zudem handelt es sich um einen selbstreferentiellen Vergleich, bei dem der Autor sich in den Vergleich mit einbezieht. Dadurch wurden die Nairen mit einer sozialen Formation Europas vergleichbar.[25]

Die deutliche Präsenz der Nairen in den Reiseberichten führte wohl dazu, dass sie auch in viele weiter verarbeitende Texte aufgenommen wurden. Die Weiterverarbeitung des Wissens über Indien durch den Transfer der Erzählungen von Reiseberichten in Welt- und Landesbeschreibungen, staatstheoretische Texte oder auch Enzyklopädien sind wichtige Schritte bei der Produktion von gesellschaftlich akzeptiertem Wissen. Dabei findet eine sehr tiefgreifende Selektion statt, aus hunderten von Seiten werden einige Passagen ausgewählt, so kommt es zu inhaltlichen Verschiebungen, aber auch die Bewertung kann geradezu verkehrt werden.[26] Mit diesem Transfer verändert sich zudem der für die normativen Konsequenzen von Vergleichspraktiken wichtige Kontext. Ist

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[22] Naber diskutiert und problematisiert die editorischen Eingriffe in die Texte ausführlich in seiner Neu-Veröffentlichung im frühen 20. Jahrhundert, vgl. die Vorworte in Verken (1930).

[23] Über diese Autoren ist generell sehr viel weniger bekannt, angegeben sind daher hier keine Lebensdaten, sondern das Jahr der Veröffentlichung des jeweiligen Berichts.

[24] Die Begrifflichkeit der vergleichsinduzierten Anordnung stammt aus den Diskussionen der Sektion B „Aushandeln und Abgrenzen" des SFB 1288, bei der ich mich hiermit bedanke.

[25] Der Gegenbegriff zum selbstreferentiellen Vergleich ist der fremdreferentielle, bei dem der Auto/Vergleichende (und seine Welt) selber nicht Teil der Vergleichspraxis ist. Schon durch diese Struktur wird eine Differenz zur Grundlage der Wahrnehmung. Dies wird im Folgenden am Beispiel des späteren Verständnisses der Nairen als Kaste ausgeführt. Vgl. zum Unterschied zwischen selbst- und fremdreferentiellen Vergleichen: von Sass (2011).

[26] Diese Veränderung der Narrative des Indiendiskurses durch die Wissensproduktion ist das Thema des bald erscheinenden Buchs der Autorin: Flüchter (2018b).

für den ‚ursprünglichen' Vergleich der Kontext des Reisenden wichtig und will der Reisebericht vor allem über die Reise und das Bereiste berichten, werden die fremden Phänomene in staatstheoretischen Texten für ein Argument benutzt und in den entsprechenden diskursiven Kontext eingeordnet.[27]

Der Polyhistor Erasmus Francisci verarbeitete die ‚schönsten' der Reiseberichtsgeschichten über die Nairen in seinem „Lust- und Statsgarten" (1668) und verankerte die gewählten Passagen damit im deutschsprachigen Diskurs. In seiner Darstellung berief er sich vor allem auf Varthema, Linschoten, Mandelslo und Botero, also eine sehr heterogene Autorengruppe. Er stellte die Nairen als „die Edlen und Ritter selbiger Nation" vor (Francisci 1668, v.a. Sp. 1435). Damit behielt er also das *comparatum* Adel bei, spezifizierte es aber um den Begriff des Ritters. Auch der niederländische Theologe Abraham Rogerius (1609–1649) verwandte den Begriff des Ritters (Rogerius 1663: 831).[28] Das Motiv des adligen Ritters für die Nairen hielt sich im Übergang zur Moderne in sehr verschiedenen Textgenres, allerdings oft im Sinne eines Verfalltopos. Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813) beschrieb in seinem Roman „Der Goldene Spiegel" eine dekadent gewordene Adelskaste dieses Namens (Wieland 1795: 310, 360). Und auch der Geograph Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904) erwähnte sie in diesem Sinne: „Auch Südindien hatte einst die kriegerische und ritterliche Kaste der drawidische Naird, die heute zu Polizeidienern degeneriert sind." (Ratzel (1895. Bd. 2: 572) Während bei Francisci oder Rogerius das europäische Rittertum anklingt, ist es bei Ratzel der nordindische Rajputen-Krieger.

Noch wichtiger aber ist, dass hier der Begriff der Kaste auftrat, der im frühneuzeitlichen Diskurs zuvor kaum eine Rolle gespielt hatte.[29] Für die Nairen stabilisierte er sich im Begriff der Kriegerkaste. Montesquieu (1689–1755) bezeichnete sie als „Adelskaste", nicht mehr als Adlige an sich und auch nicht als „Adelsstand" wie es Thévenot wenige Jahrzehnte zuvor getan hatte (Montesquieu 1799, Bd. 2: 128). Auch bei Guillaume Raynal (1713–1796) in seiner „Geschichte der beiden Indiens" lesen wir „Kriegerkaste" (Raynal, et al. 1988: 62). Im Sinne der Vergleichstheorie wird hier das *comparatum* ausgewechselt, indem das *comparatum* Adel durch das *comparatum* Kaste ersetzt. Damit verschob sich die Struktur und die inhärente Bewertung des Vergleichs. Mit dem

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[27] So nutzten Justi oder Montesquieu Beispiele aus Indien oder Persien um ihre staatsphilosophischen Argumente zu illustrieren und zu stärken.

[28] Rogerius beschrieb zudem eine Zeremonie die an den europäischen Ritterschlag erinnert: „Darum wann der König die Nairi, das ist/Ritter macht/und ihnen das Schwert angegürtet hat/so umfasse er sie nacheinander/mit diesen Worten: Du sollst beschützen die Brammaner/und Kühe"! Leider gibt Rogerius nicht an, woher er diese Information hat.

[29] Der Begriff war bekannt, abgeleitet vom portugiesischen *casta*, aber noch nicht so fest etabliert wie später. Dies entspricht der postkolonialen Position, dass die Kaste in ihrer Statik ein Konstrukt des westlichen, vor allem orientalistischen Diskurs ist, vgl. Dirks (2001).

Begriff des Adelsstands war der (implizite) Vergleich selbstreferentiell: Er setzte Autor und Leser bzw. ihre Gesellschaftsform mit der sozialen Formation der Malabarküste in Bezug, eine Ähnlichkeit wurde hergestellt. Der Begriff der „Adelskaste" dagegen strich deutlich mehr den Unterschied heraus. Aber es ist nicht nur eine Verschiebung von dem Denken in Ähnlichkeiten zu einem in Differenzen. Es ist zu überlegen, ob durch die Wahl des *comparatums* Kaste nicht die Vergleichbarkeit schon in Frage gestellt wurde, so die Non-kommensurabilität impliziert wurde und damit die moderne Idee einer Unvergleichlichkeit des Westens vorbereitet wurde. In dieser Konsequenz würden die Praktiken des Vergleichens im 18. Jahrhundert nicht zunehmen, sondern vielmehr die Vergleichshindernisse ansteigen.[30] Oder anders ausgedrückt: Durch das andere, fremdreferentielle *comparatum* wurde nicht mehr der Vergleich mit europäischen Elitenformationen, sondern der mit anderen indischen sozialen Gruppen impliziert. Durch das *comparatum* Kaste wurde zumindest eine grundsätzliche Konstruktion von Alterität überhaupt ermöglicht. Diese Fremdheit oder kulturelle Entfernung verstärkte sich im Laufe der Moderne, als die statische oder „versteinerte Kaste" geradezu zum Gegenbegriff einer modernen, dynamischen, verdienstorientierten und selbstredend westlichen Elitenbildung wurde.

Eine vergleichbare Verschiebung der *comparata* zu den Nairen zeigt sich auch in den Enzyklopädien: Der Zedler bezeichnet sie 1740 noch als „Edelleute" (Zedler 1731–1754, Bd. 23, 1740, Sp. 556). Interessant für den langsamen Übergang ist, dass in der Realenzyklopädie von Krünitz, 1806, im Eintrag zu den „Nairen" schlicht viele verschiedene Begriffe gewählt werden, nämlich „die Edelleute und Krieger unter den Hindus, welche die dritte Kaste oder Volksclasse derselben ausmachen" (Krünitz 1773–1858, Bd. 101: 204). Die Parallelisierung von Kaste und Klasse ist dabei besonders bemerkenswert. Im Verlauf des 19. Jahrhunderts verfestigte sich der Kastenbegriff: Im Brockhaus Bilder-Conversationslexicon aus dem Jahr 1837 wurden die Nairen in den Lemmata „Rajah" und „Ostindien" als die zweite Kaste der indischen Gesellschaft, nämlich als „Kschättri-Nairen oder Rajaputs", bezeichnet.[31] Nach dem Eintrag „Naïr" in Meyers Großem Konversationslexikon aus den Jahren 1905 bis 1909

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[30] Es gibt aber auch Gegenbeispiele: Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi (1717–1771) bezeichnete in seiner Vergleichung der asiatischen und europäischen Staatsformen die Nairen als typisch für den „Soldatenstand", Justi (1762), 219. Auch er benutzte also nicht mehr den Adelsbegriff, durch den Begriff des Soldatenstandes blieben die Nairen aber vergleichbar und das war schließlich auch das Ziel seines staatstheoretischen Textes.

[31] Einträge zu „Rajah", in: Brockhaus Bilder-Conversationslexicon (1837–1841, Bd. 3: 622), sowie „Ostindien", in: (1837–1841, Bd. 3: 365-370). Kschättrie ist eine Transkription von Kshatriya, der Bezeichnung für die zweite Kaste/Varna im Hinduismus.

war dies ein Volksstamm, der „zur Sudrakaste gehört, aber sich zu den Kschatrias rechnet".[32] Schaut man in die moderne Wikipedia findet sich eine weitere Erweiterung des *comparatum*. Einerseits wird immer noch erwähnt die Nairen seien eine „Kriegerkaste", sie sollen aber auch mit den Samurai des mittelalterlichen Japan verglichen worden sein.[33] Auch hier macht die Wahl des *comparatum* etwas mit dem Objekt, den Nairen: Einerseits kann man bei heutigen Wikipedia-Usern wie -Autoren eine gewisse Bewunderung für die Samurai voraussetzen; ritterliche, kriegerische, tapfere Eigenschaften schwingen hier mit. Durch das Adjektiv „mittelalterlich" werden die Vergleiche bzw. das *comparatum*, also die Nairen, andererseits aber auch temporalisiert und so in die Vergangenheit, wenn nicht in den Warteraum der Geschichte (Chakrabarty 2000) geschoben.

Die Wahl der *comparata* hat also eine große Bedeutung dafür, wie die Vergleichsobjekte verstanden und bewerten werden. Eine noch größere Bedeutung wird oft der Wahl der *tertia* zugemessen. Denn diese bestimmen, welche Eigenschaften, welche Aspekte der *comparata* verglichen werden. Mit den Vergleichshinsichten wird quasi durchgespielt, welche Beziehungen zwischen den *comparata* hervorgerufen werden, also zunächst zwischen den Nairen und dem europäischen Adel, ob die Ähnlichkeiten oder die Unterschiede betont werden. So ist es auch möglich, nicht nur Verschiebungen in diesem Verhältnis herauszuarbeiten, sondern auch Schattierungen statt einer schlichten Dichotomie Identität-Alterität (vgl. von Sass 2011: 30–31). Daher soll im zweiten Teil dieses Aufsatzes genauer untersucht werden, was die Nairen zu einer herausgehobenen sozialen Formation machte: Was machte sie zum Adel oder zur Kaste? Welche Rolle spielte dabei die Auswahl der *tertia*? Wie veränderte diese sich? Und weshalb veränderten sich *tertia* und Vergleichspraktiken: Veränderten sie sich im Laufe der Zeit, in den einzelnen Schritten des Transfers von Reiseberichten in den allgemein als Wissen anerkannten Indiendiskurs oder hingen die *tertia* nicht an der Wahl des *comparatum*? Das *comparatum* Adel ist zumindest im 16. –18. Jahrhundert selbstreferentiell. Aber ist es präferenzlos oder wurde die indische Elite im Sinne eines asymmetrischen Vergleichs nur mit der Norm des europäischen Adels abgeglichen?[34] Auch das wird zu untersuchen sein.

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[32] „Naïr", in: Meyers Großes Conversationslexikon (1902–1920, Bd. 14, 1908: 29); „Malabar", in: Ebd. (1902–1920, Bd. 13, 1908: 153).

[33] https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nayar (eingesehen und Zustand vom 7.1.2018); leider ohne Quellenangaben, wer diesen Vergleich mit den Samurai gezogen hat.

[34] Von Sass formuliert, „die Wahl eines *tertiums* kann schon von der Absicht geleitet sein, eines der *relata* als überlegen zu erweisen", von Sass (2011: 36).

Tertia des Elitenvergleichs

In der Mehrzahl der zitierten Reiseberichte wurden die malabarischen Nairen mit dem europäischen Adel verglichen. Es wurde oft, hier noch einmal das Varthema-Zitat, konstatiert, die Nairen stellten etwas Ähnliches dar, „wie bei uns die Edelleute" (Varthema 1996: 155–156). Damit die Operation des Vergleichs funktioniert, muss mindestens eine Gemeinsamkeit der *comparata* festgestellt werden, über ein oder mehrere *tertia* werden dann Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede genauer bestimmt. Welche Vergleichshinsichten werden nun für die Nairen herangezogen? Die Darstellung der Nairen bezieht sich vor allem auf ihr Aussehen (Kleidung, Haartracht, teils auch Hautfarbe), ihren Kriegsdienst, Waffenbesitz und teils auch Ausbildung, besondere Praktiken der Partnerwahl und schließlich ihr ausgeprägter Stolz, der sie als distinkte soziale Gruppe auszeichnete. Diese Bereiche werden in diesem Aufsatz als die *tertia* verstanden, mit denen die malabarische Elite mit anderen Eliten- oder Gesellschaftsformationen verglichen wurden.

Spezieller Geburts- und Justizstand

Diese Aufzählung verweist aber auch schon auf wichtige Leerstellen: Wenig Interesse zeigen die zeitgenössischen Autoren an der wirtschaftlichen Grundlage der Nairen,[35] ebenfalls kaum thematisiert wurde die geburtsständische Konstituierung dieser Gruppe. Für den westeuropäischen Adel wurde der Geburtsstand im Laufe der Frühen Neuzeit immer wichtiger, wie die wachsende Bedeutung sogenannter Ahnenproben zeigte (vgl. Harding & Hecht 2011). Hiermit unterscheidet er sich von modernen Eliten, aber auch zeitgenössisch ist der Geburtsstand ein wichtiges *tertium* im Elitenvergleich. So heben verschiedene Reiseberichte hervor, dass die Eliten des islamischen Mogulreichs eben kein Geburtstand waren. Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo beklagte beispielsweise „Die *Raschi* oder Fürsten am Hofe/wie auch alle im Lande/ werden nicht Fürsten geboren/sondern [...] vom König darzu erkoren.[...] Auf diese Weise kann

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[35] Die wirtschaftliche Unabhängigkeit gehört zu den spezifischen Charakteristika des europäischen Adels, vgl. Sikora (2009: 1). In manchen Reiseberichten scheinen die Nairen für ihre Kampfbereitschaft entlohnt worden zu sein, zum Beispiel: Della Valle (1674, 7. Sendschreiben: 127); in anderen hieß es explizit, dass sie das für wenig Bezahlung täten, Herport (1669: 119). Am nächsten an zeitgenössischen europäischen Adelskonzepten ist eine Bemerkung Linschotens, die Nairen ließen sich die Nägel wachsen, um anzuzeigen, dass sie nicht arbeiten würden, vgl. de Bry (1613: 127). In der heutigen Wikipedia ist dieser Aspekt zentraler, dort werden die Nairen als „Militär" und vor allem „ländliche[...] Grundbesitzer" beschrieben, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nayar (eingesehen und Zustand vom 7.1.2018).

auch ein Handwerks-Mann oder Stall-Knecht Hoffnung haben/ ein Fürsten-thum zu überkommen." (Mandelslo (1696: 66)

Bei der Darstellung der Nairen kann die geburtsständische Konstitution aus Springers Formulierung, es gäbe vier „Geschlechter" an der Malabarküste (Springer (1902 [1505/1506]: D2), herausgelesen werden. Jean de Thévenot schrieb, die Nairen „bilden sich auf ihren Adelsstand viel ein/weiln sie meynen von der Sonnen ihren Ursprung zu haben" (Thévenot 1693: 173). Mehr Belege sind aber kaum zu finden. Vielleicht erschien die geburtsständische Konstituie-rung einer Gruppe, die mit dem europäischen Adel verglichen wurde, so selbst-verständlich, dass sie nicht mehr erläutert werden musste.

Thévenots kritischer Unterton kann zudem verschieden gedeutet werden. Vor der Folie des Vergleichs mit dem europäischen Adel könnte dies als eine allgemeine Kritik am Geburtstand verstanden werden, wurden ja gerade im französischen Diskurs oft ausländische Phänomene genutzt, um die eigene Kultur zu kritisieren. Eben diese Kritik kann aber auch anzeigen, dass Thévenot einen asymmetrischen Vergleich anstellte, also einen Vergleich, der das Eigene zur Norm erhebt und das Andere nur noch abgleicht. Danach wäre der europä-ische Geburtstand die Norm, aber der Glaube, von der Sonne abzustammen, eher ein lächerlicher Aberglauben. Beides ist möglich, die Art des Vergleichs zeigt aber deutlich, dass Vergleichskriterien auch in der Frühmoderne nicht schlicht „als Bestandteil einer natürlichen und heiligen Ordnung begriffen und dadurch gegen Zweifel immunisiert wurden" (Heintz 2010: 165).

Neben dem Geburtstand war es vor allem der besondere Rechtsstand, der den europäischen Adel auszeichnete (Asch 2008: 18), und so verwundert es nicht, dass der Rechtsstand ein *tertium* bei der Darstellung der Nairen bildete, allerdings eines, das vor allem in den frühen Berichten aus der portugiesischen Phase ange-führt wurde: Linschoten erklärte, dass nicht einmal der König die Nairen richten oder gar töten dürfe. Dies müsse durch einen anderen Nairen geschehen (Lin-schoten, in: de Bry 1613: 127). Im historiographischen Werk Castanhedas wird betont, dass sie nicht „gefenglich" gehalten werden könnten (Castanheda 1565: 126). In späteren Passagen verliert der Rechtsstand an Bedeutung in der Darstel-lung. Aber auch für diese früheren Belege ist festzuhalten, dass die Ähnlichkeit zum europäischen Adel nie explizit thematisiert wurde.[36]

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[36] Das erinnert an Beobachtungen Pompa Banerjees, dass die Ähnlichkeit von Witwen-verbrennung/Sati und Hexenverbrennung im europäischen Diskurs nahe lag, dass der Vergleich aber erst angestellt wurde, als die Phase der Hexenverbrennung lange vorbei war, v.a. Banerjee (2003: 35, 68–69).

Eliten und Herrschaft

Das gewählte *comparatum* Adelsstand legt ebenfalls nahe, nach der Funktion der Nairen für die regionale und lokale Herrschaft zu fragen. Im europäischen Kontext hatte der Adel als Hofadel eine wichtige Rolle bei der Inszenierung von Herrschaft im höfischen Zeremoniell.[37] Daher gehörte das Zeremoniell sicherlich zur Erwartung vieler Leser, wenn sie über adlige Eliten in anderen Weltregionen lasen. Und wenn sie davon lasen, dass die Herrscher der Malabarküste im Gefolge von Nairen auftraten, lag die Assoziation zu den europäischen Herrschereinritten nahe.[38] Dies drängt sich umso mehr auf, wenn man Illustrationen dazu heranzieht: Der „Kunig von Gutzin" war eine der wenigen Illustrationen zu Indien in Springers Indienfahrt. Die Vergleichbarkeit erfuhr aber weitere Verbreitung durch ihre Übernahme in den berühmten Holzschnittdruck „Triumphzug Kaiser Maximilians I.".[39] Interessant für den Kontext dieses Aufsatzes ist dabei, dass in den Bildunterschriften dieser Arbeit um 1500 die Bevölkerung als savages/Wilde bezeichnet wurde. Hier wurde das *comparatum* Adel also bereits sehr früh, um 1500, während des Transfers von den Reiseberichten in einen größeren Diskurs ersetzt (vgl. Burgkmair 1873–1875: 147).

Einige wenige spätere Reiseberichte deuten ebenfalls eine besondere Rolle der Nairen bei den Aufzügen der malabarischen Herrscher an. So grenzte Albrecht Herport, ein VOC-Angestellter, ihre Position bei Aufzügen der Könige von anderen „wehrbaren Soldaten" ab (Herport 1669: 123). Er wählte also eine Formulierung, die eine Unterscheidung zwischen Soldaten und Nairen anzeigt, und den Eindruck hervorruft, dass jeder in diesem Aufzug einen seinem Rang entsprechende Position hatte.[40] Obwohl die Belege für Nairen bei Aufzügen in den Reiseberichten eher dünn sind, schrieb auch Erasmus Francisci in seiner Zusammenschau verschiedener Herrschaftsformen auf der Welt über einen solchen Aufzug: Nach den Musikern kämen die „fürnehmsten Geschlechter", die durch ihre bloßen Schwerter als Nairen zu erkennen seien. Eine ähnliche

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[37] Höfisches Zeremoniell ist schon seit längerem ein wichtiges Thema der neueren Kulturgeschichte, vgl. Stollberg-Rilinger (2000); Pečar (2005). Allerdings wurde dieses Interesse lange auf den europäischen Kommunikationsraum beschränkt, die Perspektive öffnet sich langsam: vgl. die kürzlich erschienenen Sammelbände: Tremml-Werner & Crailsheim (2014); Burschel & Vogel (2014).

[38] Vgl. die relativ kurze Beschreibung bei: Linschoten, in: de Bry (1613: 127); zu dem europäischen Phänomen: Schenk (2002).

[39] Vgl. *Triumph Kaiser Maximilians I,* (1995); vgl. dazu Lüken (1998); Kleinschmidt (2000/01), sowie ausführlich zu visuellen Repräsentation der Bevölkerung von Calicut: Feest (2014).

[40] So eine Lesart für Prozessionen in Europa hat Robert Darnton eindrucksvoll nachgewiesen, Darnton (1989).

Formulierung wurde in den Zedler übernommen (Francisci 1668: Sp. 1478; „Calicut", in: Zedler 1731–1754, Bd. 5, 1733: Sp. 254).

Es gibt zudem einige wenige Hinweise auf ihre konkrete Rolle innerhalb des Hofzeremoniells. So beschrieb der VOC-Angestellte Johann Verken, dass bei der Audienz des Samudrins, des Herrschers über Calicut, immer ein „Edler" mit einem großen goldenen Becher anwesend sei, in den der Samudrin spucken könne (Verken 1930: 44). Bei Erasmus Francisci ist festgehalten, dass „Edelleute" dem Herrscher Schüsseln mit Konfekt nachtrugen, die dieser an die Gäste verteilte (Francisci 1668: Sp. 1480/81). Ihre Bedeutung für das Zeremoniell als *tertium* verband hier Nairen und europäischen Adel. Allerdings ist anzunehmen, dass dem europäischen Leser die beschriebene Stellung oder Aufgaben der Nairen (Konfekt- oder Spucknapfträger) vergleichsweise weniger ehrenhaft erschienen.[41] Insofern bringt die Ähnlichkeit in diesem asymmetrischen Vergleich die Fremdheit der indischen Adligen umso stärker hervor. Dabei ist aber herauszustreichen, dass die Alterität nicht entlang einer Europa-Indien-Dichotomie konstruiert wurde. Zeitgenössische Beschreibungen des Mogulhofs zeichnen diesen gerade wegen seines Zeremoniells als vergleichbar mit Europa (Flüchter 2016).

Erwähnungen der Nairen in einem zeremoniellen Kontext lassen sich in späteren Texten nicht mehr belegen. Vor allem in keinem Text, der die Nairen als Kaste verstand, wurde Entsprechendes erwähnt. Eine vorsichtige Interpretation ist, dass bei den Nairen als Adligen ihre Rolle in der Herrschaftsrepräsentation nahelag, wenn sie auch an europäisches Zeremoniell nicht herankam. Bei den Nairen als Kriegerkaste passte sie nicht mehr in den Vergleichshorizont. Dieses *tertium* verschwand daher.

Weitergehende Formen der Herrschaftspartizipation der Nairen haben sich dagegen nicht in den deutschsprachigen Quellen niedergeschlagen. In den untersuchten Texten wurden eher andere Gruppen genannt, die auf die Politik Einfluss ausübten oder als Ratgeber wirkten.[42] Die Funktion der Nairen für die Herrschaftssysteme an der Malabarküste wurde neben ihrer Funktion im Rahmen der Herrschaftsinszenierung vor allem mit ihrer Waffenkraft und Dienst im Kriegsfall begründet.

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[41] Es erinnert aber auch entfernt an die Ursprünge europäischer Hofämter, die von der Funktionsstelle zu einem symbolischen Ehrenamt wurden, vgl. zur Entwicklung des Kämmereramtes am Kaiserhof, Pečar (2003: 25–31).

[42] Castanheda beschrieb einen Brahmanen, der die ersten Verhandlungen da Gamas und des Samudrins begleitete und so als Ratgeber fungierte, ebenso wie den Einfluss der arabischen Kaufleute, Vgl. Castanheda (1565: 155–162). Daran erinnerte noch der Bericht des Franzosen Jean de Thévenots und des Schweizer VOC-Angestellten Albrecht Herport: Thévenot (1693: 171); Herport (1669: 117).

Krieg und Kampf als Lebensinhalt

Die Stellung der Nairen als Krieger war in den Reiseberichten wichtiger und deutlich prominenter als ihr Geburts- und Rechtsstand. Dieses *tertium* streicht am deutlichsten eine Ähnlichkeit zum europäischen Adel hervor. Denn das Kriegshandwerk oder das Recht, Waffen zu tragen, gehörte auch in Europa zu den Kerneigenschaften des adligen Standes; der Kriegsdienst brachte den adligen Habitus besonders zur Geltung und war eine zentrale, standesgemäße adlige Tätigkeit (Sikora 2009 55). Albrecht Herport stellte beispielsweise den Kriegsdienst der Nairen vergleichbar zum europäischen Adel dar. Denn sie erhielten keinen Lohn für ihre Kriegs- und Hofdienste, sondern könnten sich stattdessen von den anderen Einwohnern alles nehmen, was sie begehrten, wozu „auch jhre eigenen Weiber" gehörten – darauf wird zu sprechen kommen sein (Herport 1669: 119). In diese Ähnlichkeit wurde aber auch eine Differenz eingearbeitet. Denn die Bedeutung des Kampfes und des Waffentragens ging über das aus Europa Bekannte hinaus: So betonte schon Varthema, dass den malabarischen Nairen ihr Adel abgesprochen würde, wenn man sie ohne Waffe anträfe (Varthema 1996: 155–156). Ähnliche Erläuterungen geben uns spätere Autoren, beispielsweise der VOC-Angestellte Johann Wilhelm Vogel (1704) und der französische Autor Charles Dellon (1649–1710) (Dellon 1700: 191; Vogel 1704: 707). Auch Francisci nahm diesen Zusammenhang auf.[43]

Vergleichbarkeit mit dem europäischen oder deutschen Adel wird ebenfalls durch die Darstellung ihrer Ausbildung zum Kriegsdienst hergestellt. Dies geschieht interessanterweise weniger in den Reiseberichten,[44] als in den weiterverarbeitenden Texten. Castanheda erklärte in seinem frühen historiographischen Text, die männlichen Nairen begännen schon mit sieben Jahren sich im Waffengebrauch zu üben, und benutzte den Begriff der Schule in diesem Kontext (Castanheda 1565: 127–128). Es ist Erasmus Francisci, der diese Einrichtung in seinem „Lust- und Statsgarten" ausdrücklich als „Kriegs- und Ritterschulen" bezeichnete (Francisci (1668: Sp. 1482). Die Bezeichnung dieser Institution als „Kriegs- und Ritterschulen" brachte die Nairen noch näher zum europäischen Adel, da dem zeitgenössischen deutschsprachigen Leser solche Schulen aus dem Alten Reich bekannt waren.[45] Dieser selbstreferentielle Vergleich funktionierte deshalb im Alten Reich besser als in anderen europäischen

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[43] Bei Francisci hieß es: „daß/wer unter ihnen Wehr-los wird befunden/derselbige seines Adels verlustigt ist", Francisci (1668: Sp. 1477).

[44] Wenige Reisende, wie der VOC-Reisende Herport erwähnen immerhin, dass sie sich von ihrer Jugend an im Waffenhandwerk übten, Herport (1669: 123).

[45] Vgl. zu den Ritterakademien im Reich eher bildungsgeschichtlich Conrads (1982); Rump (1991); sowie mit Blick auf die Ausbildung einer adligen Lebensweise: Kniep (2006).

Gebieten und er ist für eine spezifische Leserschicht verständlich. Aber auch hier folgt auf die Implizierung von Nähe und Ähnlichkeit eine deutliche Abgrenzung: Francisci beschrieb nämlich die für den deutschsprachigen Leser seltsam anmutenden Verfahren in diesen Institutionen: Geschickte Meister bestrichen die Schüler mit „Sesam-Öl", damit ihre Nerven sich ausdehnten und sie so biegsam würden. In einer fast gleichlautenden Formulierung wurde dies dann auch in das Lemma „Nairis" im Zedler aufgenommen (Zedler 1731–1754, Bd. 23, 1740: Sp. 556).[46]

Die Schattierungen zwischen Ähnlichkeit und Differenz werden so beim Thema Krieg und Waffenkunst besonders deutlich. Interessant und zu betonen ist, dass die späteren Texte, die die Nairen nicht mehr als Adel, sondern als Kriegerkaste oder Soldatenstand ansahen, genau diese Tätigkeiten jenseits einer genuinen Eigenschaft der Tapferkeit oder einer kriegerischen Mentalität nicht mehr ausführten (vgl. Raynal, et al. 1988: 63; Montesquieu 1799, Bd. 2: 128).

Aussehen

Einen viel größeren Raum als die bisher genannten Themen nimmt in den Reiseberichten die Darstellung von Aussehen und Lebensführung der Nairen ein. Aussehen und Erscheinung war für die Elitenkonstitution in der vormodernen europäischen face-to-face Gesellschaft zentral. Das Aussehen der Nairen wurde immer detailliert beschrieben und prägte sich auch durch viele Illustrationen im europäischen Diskurs ein.[47] Vier Aspekte sind dabei besonders präsent: Die Hautfarbe, die langen Haare, die langen Ohren und die langen Nägel. Interessanterweise werden das Aussehen betreffend mehr, aber auch sehr verschiedene explizite Vergleiche benutzt, diese aber nicht auf ihren Adelsstand oder Elitenstatus bezogen. Jan Huygen Linschoten betonte die langen Nägel, die durch Ohrringe verlängerte Ohren und die langen Haare. Er schloß aber die Beschreibung mit einer Betonung einer Ähnlichkeit: „Von Angesicht/von Leib vnd von Gliedern/sind sie eben gestalt wie die Leut in Europa/ohn einigen differentz oder vnderschied/außgenommen nur an der Farben". Hier haben wir also einen expliziten Vergleich mit den Europäern, wobei verschiedene körperliche *tertia* herangezogen wurden (Linschoten, in: de Bry 1613: 127). Die Hautfarbe alleine sei anders und eine dunklere Farbe erwähnen auch manche anderen Reiseberichte (Vogel 1704: 705; Andersen & Iversen 1980:

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[46] Als ungleich gewalttätiger hatte dies Castanheda beschrieben: Bei ihm wurden den jungen Nairen zu eben dem Zweck der Biegsamkeit sogar die Glieder gebrochen, Castanheda (1565: 128).

[47] Schon bei Springer wurden die Nairen abgebildet, aber auch bei Linschoten oder in späten Editionen des Mandeslo Berichts.

67).[48] Auf den erwähnten Illustrationen wird diese Zuschreibung allerdings nicht umgesetzt. Es ist interessant, dass Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo bei der Hautfarbe das *comparatum* änderte und die Nairen nun mit den „Afrikanischen Mohren" verglich. Er betonte, dass die Nairen diesen zwar ähnlich sähen und die gleichen Proportionen hätten, aber eben nicht „schwartz" seien und auch „nicht so auffgeworffene Lippen" hätten (Mandelslo 1696: 100). Hautfarbe ist in europäischen Reiseberichten ein häufiges Thema, sie ist aber noch kein fixiertes *tertium*, verschiedene Farben sind eben noch nicht fest bestimmten Ethnien oder Kontinenten zugeschrieben.[49]

Neben diesen ethnisch bestimmten *comparata* spielte auch Geschlecht eine Rolle in den Vergleichen des Aussehens. Linschoten betonte, die Männer schnürten ihre Haare zu einem Knoten (de Bry 1613: 127), eine Haartracht, die in Europa eher weiblich ist. Expliziert wird dieser Vergleich mit den Frauen nur von dem französischen Reisenden Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605–1689), der sich darüber mokierte, dass die Malabaren „ihre Haare lang gleich wie die Weiber/wachsen lassen" (Tavernier 1681: 173). Dieser Vergleich mit Frauen hat einen kritischen Unterton, wie Thévenot ja auch schon über die Abstammung von der Sonne spottete. Es ist aber noch nicht die Feminisierung des Orients, wie sie im Orientalismus charakteristisch wird (Bermann 1996). Auch in vielen anderen Berichten werden die langen Haare betont und sie halten sich im Diskurs in den modernen Enzyklopädien, vor allen in den entsprechenden Lemmata bei Zedler und Krünitz (Krünitz 1773–1858, Bd. 101, 1806: 205; Zedler (1731–1754, Bd. 23, 1740: Sp. 556).

Der Elitenstatus ist bezogen auf das Aussehen nur bei den langen Nägeln wichtig. Wieder etablierte hier Linschoten die Interpretationen. Er erklärte nämlich die langen Nägel als Zeichen des Adelsstandes der Nairen, denn sie sollten anzeigen, dass sie kein Handwerk ausüben könnten (de Bry 1613: 127). Der Niederländer band diese Zuschreibung an die Europäer in Indien zurück: „etliche Portugesen vnd Mesticos nunmehr auch nachthun wie die Affen: haben dieselbige Opinion von den Nayros gelernet [...]/vnd lassen ire Nägel vm ebenmessiger Vrsachen willen wachsen". Dies ist eine der wenigen Stelle, in denen er seine Indienbeschreibung für eine Kritik an seinen europäischen Begleitern nutzte. Der Zusammenhang von Adelsstand und Nägeln etablierte sich im Diskurs, gehörte wohl auch zu dem unter Europäern in Indien verbreiteten

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[48] Interessanterweise ist auch das Lemma im Zedler zu den Nairen noch nicht eindeutig bezogen auf die Hautfarbe, die Nairen hätten demnach eine „schwartzgelbe Haut", Zedler (1731–1754, Bd. 23, 1740, Sp. 556).
[49] Zur Bedeutung der Hautfarbe Bitterli (1991: 349–354); Münch (1995).

Wissen über die Malabarküste.[50] Der Zusammenhang von Nägeln und Eliten-
status gehört zu den wenigen Informationen, die noch bei Zedler und Krünitz
angeführt werden. Bei Zedler ist es allerdings noch ein Zeichen ihres „Adels",
bei Krünitz nur noch ihrer „Würde" (Krünitz 1773–1858, Bd. 101, 1806: 205;
Zedler 1731–1754, Bd. 23, 1740: Sp. 556). Darin spiegelt sich das Abrücken der
Nairen vom *comparatum* Adel. Ebenso bezeichnend für die Entwicklung im
Diskurs ist aber auch, dass die bei Linschoten geäußerte Kritik an einem ähn-
lichen Verhalten der Europäer, vor allem der Portugiesen, in der weiteren Rezep-
tion wegfiel.

Ein letzter Aspekt des Aussehens wurde immer wieder thematisiert: die
Kleidung. Bei der vormodernen europäischen sozialen Hierarchie war die Nor-
mierung von Kleidung, die immer wieder in diversen Kleiderordnungen festge-
schrieben wurde, bekannt (Bulst 1993; Matzerath 2006: 42–44). Marita Bombeck
betont, dass die adlige Kleidung die ritterliche und feudale Macht des Adels
ausdrücken sollte (Bombek 2005: 60). Bei den Nairen wurde geradezu im Ge-
genteil immer wieder herausgestrichen, dass diese nackt bzw. nur mit einem
Tuch um die Hüften gingen, vor allem aber dass sie so kämpften. Nacktheit
konnte im europäischen wie im deutschsprachigen Diskurs verschiedene Be-
deutungen haben, so konnte sie sowohl auf Unschuld als auch auf Barbarei
hinweisen (Dharampal-Frick 1994: 139–142; Jütte 1992; Schreiner 1992). Als
unschuldig erschienen die kriegerischen Malabaren in den Texten kaum, eher
veranschaulichte die Nacktheit ihre Wildheit, die oft mit ihrer Kampfesweise
verknüpft wurde. Durch ihr Fehlen wurde Kleidung zu einem *tertium*, das ei-
nen grundsätzlichen Unterschied zwischen Nairen und europäischen Adligen
wie von den Europäern überhaupt herausarbeitete. Diese Narrative stabilisier-
ten sich im deutschsprachigen Diskurs.[51] Sie überstanden auch den Transfer in
verarbeitende Textgattungen mit wenigen Veränderungen. Im „Lust- und
Statsgarten" des Erasmus Francisci wurde die Nacktheit der Nairen vor allem
im Sinne einer Kriegsbekleidung erwähnt (Francisci 1668: Sp. 1482). Die Enzy-
klopädie von Krünitz widmet den Nairen noch einen kurzen Artikel, der gerade-

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[50] Dafür spricht, dass so verschiedene Reisende wie der Linschoten und der französische
Reisende Tavernier darüber schrieben.

[51] Varthema (1996: 155); Bei Springer heißt es: „geend nackend", außer einem Tuch, das
die Scham bedeckt, Springer (1902 [1505/1506]: D2); Jan Huygen von Linschoten schrieb:
„gehen nackent/haben allein die Scham bedeckt", in: de Bry (1613: 125); deutlich später
und aus der Gruppe der VOC-Angestellten: Wurffbain (1686): 16. In späteren Berichten
verschiebt sich manchmal der Aspekt der Nacktheit auf die nackte Kampfesweise. Bei
Francisci hieß es explizit, sie hätten weder Harnisch noch Panzer und seien deshalb
auch so behände beim Kämpfen, Francisci (1668: Sp. 1482). Gasparo Balbi hatte die
Nacktheit der Nairen dagegen insofern eingeschränkt, dass sie nur bis zum Gürtel na-
ckend seien, vgl. Balbi, in: de Bry (1605: 55).

zu als Beschreibung der fast 200 Jahre älteren Illustrationen verfasst worden sein könnte: „Auch im Kriege gehen sie, bis auf einen Gürtel um den Unterleib, nackt, geschmückt mit goldenen oder silbernen Armbändern. Ihr langes Haar winden sie auf dem Kopfe in einen Knoten, und die Nägel lassen sie sich, zum Zeichen ihrer Würde, lang wachsen." (Krünitz 1773–1858, Bd. 101, 1806: 205)

All diese Ausführungen zum Aussehen grenzten die Nairen von europäischen Eliten ab. Aber, und das muss betont werden, diese Abgrenzungen fanden vor allem in den Texten statt, die die Nairen als Edelleute mit den europäischen Eliten vergleichbar machten. In den untersuchten Texten, die sie als Kaste verorteten, wird ihr Aussehen sehr viel weniger detailliert beschrieben. Bei Raynal heißt es beispielsweise sehr knapp, „die Nairen sind wohlgestaltet und tapfer, aber roh, schwächlich und abergläubisch." (Raynal, et al. 1988: 63)

Partnerwahl und Partnerschaftspraktiken

In den meisten Reiseberichten, die auf Deutsch vorliegen, wurden die Nairen durch ihre Praktiken der Partnerschaftswahl als besonderer sozialer Stand gekennzeichnet. Heiratsstrategien und exklusive Ehezirkel sind ein *tertium*, das für einen Vergleich mit dem europäischen Adel nahelag, denn für diesen waren spezifische Heiratskreise charakteristisch und stabilisierten den Geburtsstand (Sikora 2014; Sikora 2005). Die spezifische Partnerwahl der Nairen gestaltete sich in den deutschsprachigen Berichten einerseits deutlich anders als im europäischen Adel, andererseits ist eindrücklich, dass sich genau in diesen Praktiken ihr Elitenstatus darstellte und durch dieselben hergestellt wurde. Interessanterweise gibt es recht verschiedene Darstellungen oder Interpretationen. Die moderne Forschung betont, dass die frühneuzeitlichen Europäer die Heirats- und Familienpraktiken der malabarischen Eliten nicht verstanden hätten (Dharampal-Frick 1994: 142–143). Die Interpretationen zeigen also, wie verschieden man etwas falsch verstehen konnte. Während bei anderen Themen, die Narrative zu den Nairen relativ gleichförmig sind, gibt es hier drei verschiedene Erzählungen oder Interpretationen des Erfahrenen.

Nach der Ersten haben Nairen als Privileg und Gegenleistung für ihren Kriegsdienst Zugang zu allen Frauen. Der VOC-Angestellte Albrecht Herport erklärte, die Nairen erhielten keinen Lohn für ihre Kriegs- und Hofdienste, sondern könnten sich stattdessen von den anderen Einwohnern alles nehmen, was sie begehrten, wozu „auch ihre eigenen Weiber" gehörten. Herport beschrieb auch, wie dies vor sich ging: Nachdem der Naire sich eine Frau ausgesucht habe, stelle er seinen Speer oder eine andere Waffe vor das Haus als Zeichen seiner Anwesenheit. Dann wage niemand, auch nicht der Ehemann, die beiden zu stören (Herport 1669: 119). Diese Geschichte des Speers – oder auch

des Gewehrs[52] – vor der Tür findet sich bereits bei Varthema und war in seiner Bildlichkeit so eindrücklich, dass eigentlich keine Beschreibung der Nairen ohne sie auskam.[53] Wohl nicht zuletzt wegen dieser Omnipräsenz wurde es auch in viele verarbeitende Texte aufgenommen, bis weit in die Moderne hinein und bis hin zu modernen Enzyklopädien (bspw. Francisci 1668: Sp. 1482; Zedler 1731–1754, Bd. 23, 1740: Sp. 557). In der Fassung bei Krünitz drückt sich allerdings in den Formulierungen ein neues Moralverständnis oder genauer gesagt die neue bürgerliche Prüderie aus, denn hier zeigte der Speer an, dass man bei diesem „vertrauliche[n] Besuche[n]" das Paar „in ihrer Unterhaltung nicht stören" dürfe (Krünitz (1773–1858, Bd. 101, 1806: 204–205).

So fremd die Geschichte mit dem Speer vor der Tür erscheint, der Ehemänner und Familienangehörige davon abhielt, ihr Haus zu betreten, so passt sie doch in allgemeine und europäische Konzept von Eliten. In den meisten Reiseberichten des 17. Jahrhunderts bezog sich dieses Privileg auf Frauen aus sozialen Gruppen, die unter den Nairen rangierten (bspw. Balbi, in: de Bry 1605: 55; Mandelslo 1696: 100–101). Die Inszenierung von Machtverhältnissen durch den Zugriff auf die Frauen der abhängigen Gruppen verdeutlicht in der europäischen Vormoderne den Elitenstatus. So sehr das mittelalterliche adlige Privileg der ersten Nacht ein Mythos ist, so war es doch ein in Europa bekannter Mythos (Wettlaufer 2000). Ähnliches gilt für spätere Zeit, als die bürgerliche Kritik am Adel in den Anklagen über deren Übergriffe auf die bürgerlichen Frauen kulminierte, wie sie das bürgerliche Trauerspiel öffentlichkeitswirksam verbreitete. In den Reiseberichten des 17. Jahrhunderts mag diese Deutung durch eine gewisse Verfügbarkeit von nicht-adligen Frauen für adlige Männer in den europäischen Gesellschaften beeinflusst worden sein. Danach wäre das in den Reiseberichten dargestellte Phänomen moralisch zwar zweifelhaft, aber das dahinterstehende Prinzip Reisenden wie Lesern plausibel.

Während sich das gerade erläuterte Narrativ im Diskurs stabilisierte, gab es auch weitere Varianten im deutschsprachigen Diskurs. Gerade entgegengesetzt schränkt die zweite Deutung die Wahl der Partnerin strikt auf die eigene soziale Gruppe ein. Diese Variante wurde früh von Jan Huygen Linschoten, in der Fassung bei de Bry, vertreten (Linschoten, in: de Bry 1613: 126). Hier sind die

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[52] Der Speer überwiegt, aber Thévenot schrieb beispielsweise, die Männer ließen einen „Stock oder Gewehr" vor der Tür, Thévenot (1693: 172), ähnlich: Dellon (1700: 217).

[53] Neben Varthema und Herport, beispielsweise noch: Balbi, in: de Bry (1605: 55); Mandelslo (1696: 100–101). Bei italienischen Reisenden wurde sich gerne auf Marco Polo bezogen, der bereits über diesen Brauch der Nairen berichtet habe Varthema (1996: 159–160); Della Valle (1674, 7. Sendschreiben: 127); im englischen Diskurs war der Bezug auf Marco Polo noch viel ausgeprägter als im deutschsprachigen, vgl. Teltscher (1995: 47, Anm. 33).

Nairen nicht „beweibt", dafür stehe ihnen jede „Nairentochter", aber eben auch nur diese, frei – auch diese Darstellung kann allerdings nicht auf den Speer vor der Tür verzichten. Partnerwahl außerhalb der eigenen Gruppe war dagegen sanktioniert. Diese Fassung war weniger weit verbreitet als die erste Variante, dafür wurde sie aber detailliert von dem Gelehrten und schleswig-holsteinischen Hofbibliothekar Adam Olearius in seinen Anmerkungen zum Mandelslo-Bericht erläutert. Da Olearius auf der Grundlage des gelehrten Indiendiskurses diskutierte, belegen diese Stellen, dass das zweite Narrativ in der Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts zum gelehrten Standardwissen über Indien gehörte. Während in Mandelslos Haupttext die erste Variante erzählt wird, fügte Olearius mit Bezug auf Linschoten in der Anmerkung hinzu, die unverheirateten Nairen könnten jederzeit die Frauen ihrer verheirateten Mit-Nairen besuchen.[54] Ausdrücklich fährt der Text fort, die anderen Bewohner der Malabarküste, die Poleas, seien zwar sozial weniger angesehen, hätten aber immerhin Glück, „weil kein Edelman seiner Hoheit halber/der niedrigen Standes Weiber und Töchter berühren darf" (Mandelslo (1696: 100, Anm. (a)). Eine Formulierung, die die erste Interpretation, aber vielleicht auch eine allgemeine Sorge vor den Übergriffen der männlichen Eliten ausdrückte. Hier steht also die Deutung, dass ein adliger Mann Zugriff auf andere Frauen haben könne, derjenigen gegenüber, dass eine Beziehung zu solchen unter ihm stehenden Frauen – wegen deren Unstandesgemäßheit – seine Ehre beschädige. Damit wurden diese Beziehungen für den europäischen Leser in die Nähe der adelstypischen standesspezifischen Ehe gerückt, wenn auch ohne Ehe und mehr als endogame Partnerschaftskreise.[55]

Und es gibt eine weitere Variante, die nach einem Art Frauentausch oder Polyandrie klingt. Denn laut Ludovico de Varthema war solch eine Praxis in Calicut unter den Edlen und Kaufleuten verbreitet (Varthema 1996: 159–160). Diese Stelle wurde fast wörtlich von Sebastian Franck übernommen (Franck 1534: 200), auf den sich wiederum der Artikel „Calicut" in Zedlers Universallexicon bezog (Zedler 1731–1754, Bd. 5, 1733: Sp. 254). Diese Interpretation hat also einen ziemlich durchgehenden Rezeptionsstrang im deutschsprachigen Diskurs. An dieser Interpretation ist besonders spannend, dass sie umgedreht werden kann und auch wurde. Denn wenn sich mehrere Männer eine Frau teilen, hat eine Frau auch mehrere Männer. Entscheidend ist dann, wer wählte. Im 17. Jahrhundert wurde, gerade im französischen Kontext, diese Frage nach der *agency* umgedreht: Bei Jean de Thévenot findet sich die Polyandrie-

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[54] Vgl. zu den tiefen Eingriffen von Olearius in Mandelslo Reisebericht: Flüchter (2018a).
[55] Die Frage der Standesgemäßheit stellte sich im europäischen Kontext vor allem für den Adel, vgl. dazu die grundlegenden Arbeiten von Michael Sikora, vgl. Sikora (2005); Sikora (2010).

Antje Flüchter

Variante als Vorrecht der Frauen des Königshauses (Thévenot 1693: 172).
Charles Dellon wies diese Praxis gar allen Frauen der Malabarküste zu (Dellon
(1700: 217–218). Die Bekanntheit des Narrativs im französischen, vielleicht
auch im europäischen Gelehrten-Diskurs zeigt sich nicht zuletzt darin, dass es
in staatstheoretisch-philosophische Texte, wie Montesquieus „Vom Geist der
Gesetze", aufgenommen wurde (Montesquieu 1799, Bd. 2: 128).[56] Wahrschein-
lich nicht zuletzt durch die Aufnahme in Montesquieus Werk hielt sich das
Polyandrie-Motiv bis in die Moderne. Doch während bei Montesquieu eher
misogyne Züge durchscheinen und die Deutung sich in das zeittypische La-
mentieren über die Bürde der Ehe einfügte, wandelte sich das Narrativ in der
Moderne zu einem Zivilisations- bzw. Barbareiargument: In der Krünitzschen
Enzyklopädie wurde im Artikel „Vielweiberey" die Malabarküste als Beispiel
herangezogen, um die „Vielmännerey" zu illustrieren. Nicht nur könnten Frau-
en dort mehrere Männer haben, manche hatten gar „zu gleicher Zeit zehn
Männer, die sie als Sklaven ihrer Reize behandeln" (Krünitz 1773–1858, Bd. 224,
1854: 290).[57] Diese Darstellung widersprach dem deutschen und auch dem eu-
ropäischen Frauenideal des 19. Jahrhunderts,[58] passte aber zu den Narrativen
einer europäischen moralischen Überlegenheit. Dies wurde schon durch den
Wechsel des *comparatum* vorbereitet: Die Texte, die den Nairen Polyandrie
zuschrieben, hatten sie nicht als Adlige oder adelsgleich charakterisiert, son-
dern meist als Kaste verstanden. Der Vergleich funktionierte fremdreferentiell,
dazu kam im Übergang zur Moderne eine temporale Aufladung: Im Artikel
„Nair" im Meyerschen Konversationslexikon (1908) hatten die Naïren als „dra-
widischer Volksstamm" die „uralte [...] Vielmännerei" beibehalten.[59] Die Nairen
wurden so aus der Gleichzeitigkeit zu Leser und Autor herausgelöst und einer
Vergangenheit zugeordnet, die die europäische Gegenwart hinter sich gelassen
und überwunden hatte. Diese Darstellung war aber nicht einheitlich; im glei-
chen Lexikon kann die Verwendung verschiedener *comparata* wie *tertia* belegt
werden. Denn im Artikel „Malabar" des gleichen Lexikons wurden die Nairen

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[56] Montesquieu argumentierte, dadurch, dass die Männer der Nairen sich eine Frau
teilen würden, sei die Ehe für die Männer weniger „lästig" und die Sorge um die Familie
geringer, was beides ihre kriegerische Gesinnung erhöhte. Das Argument, dass die
Nairen durch diese Praxis kriegstüchtiger, tapferer oder tollkühner wurden, war nicht
neu, vgl. z.B. Francisci (1668, Sp. 1482).

[57] Ähnlich ebenfalls im modernen Diskurs: Klaußner (1791: 231).

[58] Statt auf die unzähligen Titel über die Polarisierung der Geschlechterrollen und die
Geschlechterrollen des 19. Jahrhunderts sei hier auf einen reich illustrierten Ausstel-
lungsband verwiesen: Westhoff-Krummacher (1996).

[59] Nair, in: Meyers Großes Conversationslexikon (1902–1920, Bd. 14, 1908: 299); Im
Artikel „Polyandrie" teilten sie diesen Brauch mit anderen „Völkern" und Stämmen
Indiens sowie den Eskimo, Koljuschen und Irokesen, Polyandrie, in: Ibid. (1902–1920,
Bd. 16, 1908: 119).

wie im frühneuzeitlichen Diskurs zur aristokratischen Schicht der malabarischen Gesellschaft erklärt. In diesem Artikel wurde dann bezeichnenderweise auch weder die Polyandrie noch die Partnerpraktiken überhaupt erwähnt.[60]

Die Praktiken der Partnerschaft der Nairen waren im europäischen und im deutschsprachigen Indiendiskurs beliebt und allgegenwärtig. Kate Teltscher urteilt für den englischen Diskurs, die Beliebtheit des Narrativs sei nicht erstaunlich, habe es doch alle Männerträume erfüllt (Teltscher 1995: 47). Moralische Verurteilungen der Praxis finden sich in verschiedenen frühneuzeitlichen Texten und zwar sowohl gegen die ‚Freiheit‘ der männlichen wie der weiblichen Nairen. Der VOC-Angestellte Vogel schrieb geradezu derb, dass die Nairen durch die Praxis der freien Frauenwahl ihre „unkeuschen beynahe viehischen Begierden" befriedigten (Vogel 1704. S. 707). Dies betrifft die freie Frauenwahl der Männer, die Möglichkeit aber, dass die Frauen sich frei verschiedene Männer aussuchen konnten, war nicht nur sehr fremd, sondern auch ein klarer Indikator der moralischen Unterlegenheit der Bewohner der Malabarküste. Schon Linschoten schrieb: „Sie sind das allergeylste vnnd vnkeuscheste Volck so man im gantzen Orient findet/also daß wenig Maydlein bey inen vber sieben oder acht Jaren sind/welche ire jungfrawschafft noch haben. Machen sich auch leichtlich mit einem jedem gemein/vnnd lassen sich williglich gebrauchen/vmb einen geringen Pfennig/halten es für keine sindere Schande. Sie haben nicht grosse Sorg für die Haußhaltung/haben fast einerley Haußhaltung mit den Canaryns vnd Corumbyns/im land Goa" (Linschoten, in: de Bry 1613: 125). In diesem Zitat wird die Funktionsweise impliziter Vergleiche und ihrer normativen Konsequenzen besonders deutlich. Europäische Sittlichkeits- und Geschlechterideale, die dem Leser vertraut waren, fungierten als implizites und vor allem normativ aufgeladenes *comparatum*. Das Ergebnis ist ein vergleichendes Moralurteil. Der VOC-Angestellte Christian Burkhardt schreibt deutlich kürzer aber ebenso eindeutig: „Es ist das aller unkeuschestes Volk/ so man im gantz Orient findet" (Burckhardt 1693: 121). Der Franzose Dellon erklärte die Polyandrie schlicht als „Frechheit" der Frauen (Dellon 1700: 191).

Performanz und Präzedenz

Ein weiterer Vergleichsraum, in dem Nairen und europäischer Adel verglichen werden konnten, bezog sich auf den Habitus, konkreter den Stolz, der sich in Präzedenzfragen ausdrückte. Rang- und Präzedenzstreitigkeiten, also die Frage, wer vor wem gehen, stehen oder sitzen durfte, sind typisch für die vormoder-

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[60] „Malabar", in: Meyers Großes Conversationslexikon (1902–1920, Bd. 13, 1908: 153).

nen Gesellschaften und gerade für den Adel.[61] Präzedenzstreitigkeiten sind darüber hinaus im Unterschied zu den bisher behandelten Themen schon in sich Praktiken des Vergleichens.

In den frühneuzeitlichen Reiseberichten wird immer wieder von dem Präzedenzanspruch der Nairen gegenüber anderen sozialen Gruppen berichtet. Dieses Narrativ ist schon im frühen Bericht Ludovico de Varthemas angelegt. Er schrieb, dass Mitglieder der niedrigeren Gesellschaftsgruppen rufend auf sich aufmerksam machen mussten, damit sie nicht einem Brahmanen oder Nairen in die Quere kamen (Varthema 1996: 157). Jan Huygen von Linschoten erklärte im frühen 17. Jahrhundert, dass die Nairen selbst „po po" schrien, und lieferte auch eine Übersetzung dazu: „tracht auff ich komme/gehet aus dem Weg" (Linschoten, in: de Bry 1613: 126).[62] In späteren Beschreibungen, vor allem bei Jean de Thévenot, wird diese eingeforderte Distanz mit den malabarischen Reinheitsvorstellungen verknüpft und die rituelle Seite der sozialen Distinktion aufgezeigt.[63] Die Formulierungen dieser Beschreibung lassen neben sozialen Rangfragen auch Assoziationen an die Behandlung von Aussätzigen im vormodernen Europa aufkommen (vgl. Riha 2007).

Auch in weiterverarbeitenden Texten wurde diese Form der sozialen Distinktion wieder aufgenommen und durchaus positiv bewertet. In Olfert Dappers (1636–1689) Asienbeschreibung liest man, „Es ist eine Lust zu sehen/was für grosse Ehrerbietigkeit die Unedle den Edlen erweisen". Diese ‚Lust' umfasst auch, dass diejenigen der ‚Unedlen', die nicht auswichen, von den Edlen selbst oder „von den Soldaten/mit dichten Stößen dazu gezwungen werden" (Dapper 1681: 45). Francisci übernahm, dass der Naire, wenn der Poleas ihm zu nahe käme, diesen „ohn alle Straffe/erwürget" (Francisci 1668: Sp. 1477). Durch diese Reduktion blieb die dem deutschsprachigen Leser verständliche, wenngleich auch etwas übertriebene soziale Distinktion und ihre drastische Durchsetzung nach unten erhalten, während die vielleicht schwerer verständliche Kategorie der Reinheit ausgelassen wurde.[64]

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[61] Für die Kulturgeschichte ist sie daher ein wichtiges und vielfach bearbeitetes Thema, vgl. Stollberg-Rilinger (1997); Stollberg-Rillinger (2001); Weller (2006); Füssel (2010).

[62] Ähnlich auch in einer Anmerkung im Mandelslo-Bericht, Mandelslo (1696: 100, Anm. (a)).

[63] Der Naire, der einem Poleas, also einem rangniedrigeren Malabaren, zu nahe gekommen war, musste in dieser Interpretation entweder den Poleas töten oder hatte aber wenigstens „öffentliche Abwaschungen mit großen Ceremonien", also eine rituelle Reinigung, vorzunehmen. Entsprechend drastisch waren hier die Strafen, die dem Nairen drohten, der einem Poleas zu nahe gekommen war und sich nicht entsprechend gereinigt hatte. Wenn der König davon erführe, so ließe er den Nairen töten oder zumindest als Sklaven verkaufen, Thévenot (1693: 173).

[64] Zwar war auch die soziale Distinktion der europäischen Vormoderne vielfach religiös begründet, wurde aber nur sehr selten mit den Kategorien Reinheit-Unreinheit gefasst, Sabean (1996). Das Gegensatzpaar war ein wichtiges Kriterium in der europäischen

Im Laufe des 17. Jahrhunderts rückte der Präzedenzanspruch der Nairen als Zeichen ihres übergroßen Stolzes in den Vordergrund. Dies lässt sich in den Berichten so verschiedener Reisender wie des Italieners Gasparo Balbi und des VOC-Angestellten Christian Burckhardt belegen (Burckhardt 1693: 122; Balbi, in: de Bry 1605: 102). Es wurde immer wieder geschildert, dass die Nairen die Präzedenz auf der Straße vehement beanspruchten, also den Vorrang vor allen anderen verlangten und damit die anderen zwangen, ihre Unterlegenheit performativ zuzugestehen.

Doch die Frage der Präzedenz diente nicht nur der internen Distinktion, sondern wurde oft auch für eine Darstellung des Verhältnisses von Portugiesen und der Elite der Malabarküste genutzt. Da der Stolz der Portugiesen in den (nicht-portugiesischen) Reiseberichten ebenso allgegenwärtig war wie der der Nairen, verwundert es nicht, dass diese zwei narrativen Stränge sich zur Geschichte eines Zweikampfes zwischen beiden Gruppen um die Ehre des Vortritts verdichteten. Die Portugiesen konnten sich den Präzedenzanspruch der Nairen nicht gefallen lassen, so dass ein portugiesischer General mit dem König von Cochin übereinkam, dieses Problem in einem Kampf „Mann vor Mann" auskämpfen zu lassen. Es ist nicht ganz klar, ob damit das *tertium* von Ehre zu Stärke wechselte oder ob die Erzählung dieses Kampfes an Gottesurteile erinnern sollte. Der Portugiese gewann, und seitdem mussten alle Nairen den Portugiesen den Vortritt lassen. Diese Geschichte wurde ebenfalls zu einem festen Bestandteil des deutschsprachigen Indiendiskurses.[65] Der Präzedenzstreit stellte trotz aller geschilderten Alteritätszuschreibungen eine Gleichrangigkeit und damit eine Vergleichbarkeit der malabarischen Nairen mit den Portugiesen dar. Allerdings bedeutete er, und das darf nicht unterschätzt werden, keine Gleichrangigkeit der Nairen mit den europäischen oder portugiesischen Adligen. Der Kampf fand zwischen einem Nairen und einem Portugiesen statt. Die Portugiesen wurden nicht weiter differenziert dargestellt. Vielmehr konnten sie als Gesamtheit nicht zulassen, dass die Nairen sie mit den sozial niederen Malabaren gleichsetzten. Zugespitzt heißt dies: Die Portugiesen beanspruchten für sich als ganze Gruppe den Rang der malabarischen Adligen.

Die weiterverarbeitenden Texte übernahmen auch diese Erzählung. Adam Olearius fügte sie als Anmerkung dem Mandelslo-Bericht (1668) bei. Ausführlich kommt sie aber auch bei Erasmus Francisci vor. In dieser Anekdote benannte der Erzähler Sinnebald den Zweikampf explizit und im Unterschied zu

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Vormoderne, doch werden sie in der Forschung vor allem auf den religiös-kultischen und religiös-moralischen Bereich bezogen, vgl. Burghartz (1999); Angenendt (1993).

[65] Sogar der Franzose Jean de Thévenot beschrieb sie (1693), obwohl er eigentlich die Malabarküste kaum erwähnte, Thévenot (1693: 172); und Adam Olearius fügte sie dem Mandelslo-Bericht (1668) bei Mandelslo (1696: 100 sowie Anm. (a)).

den Texten von Thévenot und Mandelslo als Duell. Damit stellte Francisci eine direktere Analogie zu europäischen Rangstreitigkeiten her als dies in den Reiseberichten geschehen war, denn ein europäisches Duell bedeutete, dass beide Parteien sich als satisfaktionsfähig anerkannten (vgl. Frevert 1992, v.a. S. 27–35). Floris, ein anderer der drei Erzähler in Franciscis Text, wandte daraufhin ein, dieser Streit sei doch lächerlich gewesen, worauf Sinnebald konterte, „noch weit närrischer [sei]/daß Christlicher Potentaten Gesandten/deß Vortritts halben auch bey uns/manchesmal streiten/und durch Erwürgung ihres Neben-Eivereres/oder dessen seiner Leute/ihnen Platz zu machen trachten" (Francisci (1668, Sp. 1435). Francisci nutzte also den Vergleich ebenfalls als Moralurteil, aber dieses Mal gegen die europäische Adelsgesellschaft gerichtet, als einen Spiegel, um die europäischen Herrscher zu kritisieren.

In späteren Texten im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, seien es Enzyklopädien oder andere Informationen verarbeitende Texte, finden sich dagegen kaum noch Hinweise auf diesen Streit zwischen den Portugiesen und den Nairen. Dies mag an dem generell immer distanzierteren ethnographischen Blick liegen, der stärker auf die beschriebene Kultur als auf deren Interaktion mit der eigenen fokussiert war. Es spiegelt sich hier aber auch der Wechsel des *comparatum* wieder, mit adligen Nairen war eine solche Präzedenzgeschichte plausibler als wenn es um die ganz andere ‚Kriegerkaste' ging.

Ergebnis

Mit den Darstellungen der Nairen wurde in diesem Aufsatz ein Thema untersucht, das mehr als 300 Jahre lang zum festen Bestandteil europäischer Berichte der indischen Westküste gehörte. Die Situation in Indien hatte sich zwischen Varthemas Reise und der Wende zum 19.Jahrhundert tiefgreifend gewandelt. Die Narrative über die Nairen und noch mehr ihre Rezeption wirken demgegenüber wie eingefroren. Dies deutet darauf hin, dass die Malabarküste als Interaktions- und Handelspartner im Übergang zur Moderne ihre Bedeutung verloren hatte und es daher kaum zu neuen Erfahrungen kam, die die überkommenen Narrative hätten aktualisieren können oder müssen. Damit stellten sie einen besonders geeigneten Untersuchungsgegenstand dar, um die Aneignung fremden bzw. indischen Wissens im deutschsprachigen Diskurs durch Praktiken des Vergleichens und damit die Transkulturationsprozesse des Wissens zu untersuchen.

Das Wissen über die Nairen, so das erste Ergebnis, steigerte sich nicht im Übergang zur Moderne. Einige Aspekte des Nairenbildes verfestigten sich geradezu, bei anderen verschoben sich die Bewertungen, aber dieser Wandel kann nicht als Lernprozess verstanden werden. Die komplexe soziale Formation der

Nairen wurde dabei weniger verstanden als vielmehr auf verschiedene Weise in den deutschsprachigen und europäischen Diskurs eingearbeitet. Die Art und Weise, wie die Erzählungen integriert und bewertet wurden, und vor allem, ob sie ihre Fremdreferenz behielten, stand in einem engen Zusammenhang mit den verwandten Praktiken des Vergleichens.

In den Reiseberichten des 15. –17. Jahrhunderts wurden die Nairen im Vergleichshorizont des adligen Standes und damit vergleichbar zu europäischen Elitenformationen betrachtet. Dies war sicherlich nicht ein neutraler Vergleich, denn der europäische Adel prägte implizit als Norm die Bewertung des Dargestellten. Doch dies resultierte nicht in einer Defizitgeschichte, wahrscheinlich weil noch die aufklärerische Basiserzählung des Fortschritts fehlte. Stattdessen wurde über das Vergleichen das Fremde im Ähnlichen festgestellt und über die Zeit festgeschrieben.

Im Übergang zum 18. Jahrhundert und zuerst in den verarbeitenden Texten wurde das *comparatum* ausgewechselt. Nun wurden die Nairen nicht länger als Adlige verstanden, sondern als Kriegerkaste. Ein selbstreferentieller wurde durch einen fremdreferentiellen Vergleich ersetzt. Damit fiel der geteilte Vergleichshorizont weg, diese Texte luden dadurch nicht mehr zum Vergleichen ein, sondern zum Betrachten des exotisch Anderen.

Besonders deutlich ist dieser Umschlag bei den Partnerschaftspraktiken: Sah man die Nairen als Adel war ihr freier Zugriff auf alle Frauen oder doch auf diejenigen ihrer eigenen Kaste vielleicht unmoralisch, aber nicht fremd. Europäische Assoziationen konnten geweckt werden, auch wenn diese wie das *ius prima noctis* meist nicht positiv waren. Trotzdem konstruierten diese Praktiken nur Fremdes im Vertrauten, das Fremde ließ sich eben noch in europäische Muster einbauen. Mit dem Umschlagen zur Kaste verstärkte sich die Deutung, dass auch die Frauen viele Männer hätten – Polygamie oder Unzucht ist moralisch verwerflich, Polyandrie aber ist für die europäisch-christliche Deutungen das ganz Andere. Diese Praktiken werden non-kommensurabel, es wird also geradezu in Abrede gestellt, dass die *comparata* vergleichbar sind.

Interessant ist, dass die Vergleichshorizonte bei der Darstellung des Aussehens der Nairen anders gestaltet sind. Hier spielt die Frage Adel oder Kaste kaum eine Rolle, stattdessen werden verschiedene Europäer oder auch Afrikaner als *comparatum* ausgesucht, auch Geschlecht wird hier im Unterschied zu den anderen *tertia* herangezogen.

Aus vergleichstheoretischer Perspektive ist interessant, dass bei der Darstellung der Nairen weniger die *tertia* (Kriegshandwerk, Geburtstand, Partnerschaft etc.) die Bedeutung und Bewertung determinierten als die Wahl der *comparata*. Sicherlich haben die ausgesuchten *tertia* bestimmte Aspekte dieser

Elitenformation hervorgehoben, aber der wirkliche Umschwung von dem Fremden im Ähnlichen zum ganz Fremden kam mit dem Wechsel des *comparatum.*

Dieser Wechsel fand am Übergang zur Moderne statt. Aus der Perspektive der Moderne aufgestellte Thesen, dass Vergleiche in der Vormoderne statisch waren, weil sie als „Bestandteil einer natürlichen und heiligen Ordnung begriffen [wurden] und dadurch gegen Zweifel immunisiert" waren, treffen für die Nairen und auch den weiteren Indiendiskurs nicht zu (Heintz 2010: 165). Vielmehr ermöglichte die vergleichende Aneignung fremder Welten die vertrauten sozialen Distinktionen in Frage zu stellen und zu kritisieren. Aber hier ist einer der Ursprünge der europäischen oder westlichen Einzigartigkeit und unvergleichlichen Überlegenheit. Während in der Vormoderne Andersartigkeit in der Ähnlichkeit möglich war, sehen wir in diesem Wandel der Vergleichsperspektiven, wie sich der Westen selber seine Einzigartigkeit erschrieb und dies bis heute tut – jedenfalls bezogen auf die malabarischen Nairen.

Dieser Wandel ist aber nicht nur zeitlich zu verorten. Es ist auch zu vermerken, dass er in dem verarbeitenden Diskurs begann. Nicht die hier untersuchten Reisenden schrieben die Fremdheit der Nairen als Kriegerkaste in den Diskurs, sondern die Autoren, die die Information aus den Reiseberichten für ihre anders gelagerten Argumentationen in weiterverarbeitenden Texten nutzten. In der Vergleichstheorie wird postuliert, dass Vergleiche die Welt ordnen, stabilisieren und dynamisieren. Die Verfestigung der Sicht auf die Nairen durch Vergleichspraktiken konnte gezeigt werden, ob der Wandel von der fremden Ähnlichkeit zur inkommensurablen Andersartigkeit den beschriebenen Wandel spiegelt oder Teil seiner Entstehung ist, muss weiterer Forschung überlassen werden.

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ges auß Portugal Vnterthanen zu Meer ersucht, gefunden vnd bekriegt worden, etc.; Auß Frantzösischer Sprach jetzt newlich ins Teutsch gebracht. o.O.

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Exotic Tastes, Familiar Flavours. Transcultural Culinary Interactions in Early Modern India[1]

Divya Schäfer

Abstract

The period between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries was one of increasing global cultural interaction, fuelled first by trade and European maritime explorations, and later, by nascent colonialism. New food items were an important aspect of the global cultural exchange that occurred during this era. Culinary cultures were transformed as a result of these transcultural interactions: who could imagine Italian cuisine without tomatoes, European confectionary without chocolate, or Indian food without chillies? Yet the nature of these transformations and the manner in which they occurred remain a subject of some debate. In this article, I will examine the nature of food-oriented cultural transformations that occurred during this period on the Indian subcontinent with a view to evolving an understanding of the factors that promoted or inhibited cultural evolution. I argue that these culinary changes took place through a process of cultural translation in a largely non-coercive context and following an evolutionary rather than revolutionary pattern. The extent to which these findings may predict trends of cultural exchange in other societies or historical circumstances, however, requires further research.

From the mid-fifteenth century onwards, maritime explorations undertaken by explorers from various European states heralded a new stage of social, economic and cultural interactions in the world (Crosby 1972; Glamann 1958; Subrahmanyam 2012). These changes were by no means sudden or dramatic, but they

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did bring hitherto unknown biological and cultural commodities as well as pathogens to new shores. The so-called "Columbian exchange" set in motion a number of historically momentous migrations and cultural transfers (Crosby 1972). It brought European colonisers to American shores, and along with them, they brought their diseases as well as their crops and livestock. While Europeans migrated voluntarily to the New World, enslaved Africans were forcibly shipped to America. Conversely, numerous New World crops, turkey, as well as the dreaded sexually transmitted disease, Syphilis, spread across the Old World. Many of the fruits and vegetables that originated in the New World became fundamental, even distinctive, aspects of African, Asian and European culinary cultures (Achaya 1994: 218–238). Who could imagine Italian cuisine without tomatoes, an Irish table without potatoes, West and Central African culinary traditions without cassava, European confectionary without chocolate or Indian food without chillies?

Yet the nature of these transformations and the manner in which they occurred remain a subject of some debate. Nor is there any reason to suppose that there exists a particular pattern that characterises all such developments. The absorption and integration of new foods was influenced by varied socio-economic, cultural, political and ecological circumstances in different regions of the world. However, elements of this process of culinary assimilation or incorporation, given a certain set of circumstances, may be understood with respect to specific food items in particular regions.

In this article, I will examine the nature of food-oriented cultural transformations that occurred during the period between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries on the Indian subcontinent. Cross-cultural comparisons with European experiences vis-à-vis the cultural assimilation of New World foods shall be undertaken to enable a more contextually precise appreciation of the processes that underlie such culinary metamorphoses. As case studies, the trajectories of culinary absorption and indigenisation of three food crops will be taken up: tomatoes, potatoes and chillies. These have been chosen because of their successful integration into Indian cuisines, to the extent even of becoming an inseparable aspect of subcontinental diets. In the contemporary context, a fairly rich répertoire of potato recipes as well as tomato-based dishes generously spiced with chillies are a common feature of local culinary cultures in many parts of South Asia.

The Sour Fruit: Tomatoes

Tomatoes (*Solanum lycopersicum*) are botanically speaking fruits, and belong to a genus of weed-like plants native to North-Western South America, arising

from an original variety called cerasiforme. Early references to the tomato's use in Europe date to the mid-sixteenth century (Achaya 1994: 225; Purseglove 1974: 531–532). In India, as well as in Asia generally, the tomato took much longer to be regularly cultivated and consumed.

Perhaps one of the earliest reliable references to the tomato on the Indian subcontinent comes from the *Nuskha-i Ni'mat Khān* (1801), which is a Persian translation of a now untraceable English cookbook. This culinary manual, a product of early modern cultural cross-pollination, has a recipe for tomato soup, which is titled *tarkīb-i ṭomāṭā sūp ya'nī shorbā wilāyatī baigan*, or "recipe for tomato soup otherwise known as *wilāyatī baigan*" (MS BL OR 2028, f. 2r). Throughout the recipe description, the vegetable is referred to as 'eggplant' or *baigan* (MS BL OR 2028, f. ff. 41v–42r). Thus, the tomato is named after a known vegetable, a common process by which the unfamiliar is rendered familiar. The name (*wilāyatī baigan* or 'foreign eggplant') also recalls its foreign origin. The fact that the vegetable is referred to by both its transliterated English name as well as an Indian or Persian name, suggests that the vegetable was relatively new and rare, but nevertheless gathering familiarity in some circles. The tomato was at this time still unknown in Indo-Persian cookbooks, but may have been an exotic vegetable available to the elite.

The earliest references for the routine use of the tomato date from the first half of the 19th century. In 1832, it was recorded as being "very common in India" by William Roxburgh in the *Flora Indica* (Roxburgh 1832, Vol. I: 565). By the late nineteenth century, there is no doubt that the tomato had become ubiquitous. In Birdwood's *Catalogue of Vegetable Productions of the Presidency of Bombay* (1865), it is described as being widely cultivated and being used in sauces and salads (Birdwood 1865: 173). J. F. Duthie and J. B. Fuller, in the *Field and Garden crops of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh* (1882–1893), identify the Hindi name of the "Tomato, or Love-apple" as "*vilāyati baigan*" and note that "this vegetable is coming more into favour with natives as an article of food on account of its acid taste" (Duthie & Fuller 1893, Part III: 30). Even towards the end of the nineteenth century, George Watt (1891, Vol. V: 100) records in his *Dictionary of the Economic Products of India* that "(n)atives are beginning to appreciate the fruit, but the plant is still chiefly cultivated for the European population. Bengalis and Burmans use it in their sour curries". He also records that in the plains tomatoes are sown in the autumn, and the fruit ripens during winter and spring. In the hills, the tomato grows more luxuriantly (Watt 1891, Vol. V: 100). All of this evidence leads to the conclusion that the tomato perhaps first made its initial presence (at least to any noticeable degree)

on the subcontinent towards the end of the eighteenth century, but took several decades to become widely cultivated and consumed.

The Underground Esculent: Potatoes

The potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) is native to the South American Andes, and reached Europe by the mid-sixteenth century (Achaya 1994: 226; Purseglove 1974: 560). The potato emerged as an important staple in many parts of Europe (Purseglove 1974: 562), but is consumed only as a vegetable in India and many other parts of the world. Tracing the early trajectory of the potato in India is rendered somewhat complicated by confounding nomenclature in the sources of the period. Edward Terry mentions potatoes "excellently dressed" as being served at a dinner given by Āṣaf Ḵẖān in 1615 for the English ambassador Thomas Roe (Terry 1777: 197). John Fryer (who travelled in India between 1673 and 1682) noticed "potatoes" being cultivated as a garden crop in Karnataka and Surat (Fryer 1698: 104). However, these may have actually referred to the sweet potato, rather than the white potato. This is because any mention of 'potato' in the English sources of the time could refer to either the white potato, or varieties of sweet potato, or even to yams (Achaya 1994: 226; Habib 1999: 53, fn. 101).

Writing in 1847, George W. Johnson quotes another nineteenth century writer as follows:

> *"Threescore years ago, a basket of potatoes, weighing about a dozen pounds, was occasionally sent, as opportunity offered, by Warren Hastings, to the Governor of Bombay, and was considered a very acceptable present. On acceptance the members of the council were invited to dine with the governor, to partake of the vegetable. Somehow or other, the potato was introduced into Guzerat, and in process of time, Bombay became well supplied with it; so well that the market had ever an abundance at a low price, and very good"* (Johnson 1849: 19).

This anecdote is recorded as a quotation within inverted commas from a "recent writer" whose identity has been lost (Johnson 1849: 19). The above quote seems to indicate that potatoes were available in India during Warren Hastings' tenure as governor-general (1772–1785). Mahesh Upadhya (1974: 140) and following him, K. T. Achaya (1994: 226), have taken this as evidence of the white potato's arrival in India by the latter part of the eighteenth century. If the quote is accurate, it certainly does provide us with not only an anecdote of its use and value in the last decades of the eighteenth century, but also tells us of its spread over the next few decades. However, since this is a second hand quote of an anecdote recorded several years after the supposed event, I regard its evidence as suspect. The above quotation is on firm-

er ground in recording events of the nineteenth century, and it is probable that the potato had indeed become fairly common in Gujarat and Bombay by the early decades of the nineteenth century.

We do, in fact, have clearer details emerging for the spread of the potato from the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, both from English as well as Persian sources. In interpreting the evidence from Persian language sources, care must be taken to distinguish between the Persian word *ālū*, which means 'plum' and the identically spelled and pronounced word that derives from the Sanskrit word *āluka* (Achaya 1994: 199). The latter is normally a generic name for esculent roots (Apte 1957–1959: 36), but its derivative also came to be used for the white potato, which is an esculent underground stem.

The *ālū* listed as a *kharīf* crop (autumn harvest) in the *Kitāb-i Zirāʿat* or *Book of Agriculture* – an Indo-Persian agricultural manual dated 1796–97 on the colophon – can be identified as the white potato on account of its categorisation as a *tarkārī* or 'vegetable' (MS BL OR 1741, f. 5r). There is also a detailed description of the emerging potato culture in Bengal (Berhampore or Baharampur, 1797), given by the Rev. William Tennant in his *Indian Recreations* (Tennant 1803: 45–51). Tennant clearly distinguishes this vegetable as the regular potato, rather than the sweet potato whose cultivation had already been practiced for some time (Tennant 1803: 50). Tennant's account provides a mixed picture of the potato's adoption:

> *"In this district, we have first to notice the Culture of Potatoes, which has been introduced into Bengal; and apparently with the most beneficial effect. It is a comfortable circumstance, that superstition in Hindostan, all-powerful as it is, does not shut up every avenue to improvement, or preclude the people from every advantage to be derived from the superior attainments of Europeans in industry, art, and science. No prejudice prevents the Hindoo from the culture and use of the potatoe: the most useful and nutritious of all vegetables in every country where the growing of it is fully understood. If the natives here have hitherto derived but small benefit from this plant, it is because the culture has not become universal, nor has the method of preserving it been so much attended to as in Europe"* (Tennant 1803: 46).[2]

Tennant appears to suggest that the potato had achieved a noticeable, if somewhat limited, presence in Bengal. Indians had begun to incorporate it into their diet, although he later adds that the potato was much more commonly con-

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[2] Since I have been unable to reproduce the original typescript, which contains the old form of "s", I have used the regular, modern font instead.

sumed by the European population (Tennant 1803: 47). Tennant also states that he had been informed of the introduction of the potato in Madras and some other parts of the Coromandel (Tennant 1803: 48). Based on similar evidence from the end of the eighteenth century from Roxburgh, Watt suggests that the potato must have been introduced in India sometime between the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the eighteenth century. He adds that it must have been widely cultivated all over India before the beginning of the eighteenth century (Watt 1893, Vol. VI, Part III: 266). However, there does not, in fact, appear to be much evidence of the regular cultivation and use of the potato in most parts of the subcontinent from the seventeenth century, or even from the earlier part of the eighteenth century.

Various references exist for the use of the potato in the early nineteenth century. The *Nuskha-i Niʿmat Khān* or *Recipes of Niʿmat Khān* (1801) has some basic recipes for the potato: two methods for boiling potatoes (*tarkīb-i jūshānīdan-i ālū*) and a recipe for mashed potatoes (*tarkīb-i ālū-i māsh yaʿnī bhūrta*) (MS BL OR 2028, f. 8r).[3] The fact that the potato is called only by its Indian name (*ālū*) is indicative of familiarity. The recipe descriptions leave no doubt that it is the white potato that is being described (MS BL OR 2028, ff. 118r–120r).

Potatoes are also mentioned, albeit infrequently, in the household accounts of Lord Wellesley in Bengal dated April 1804 to August 1805 (MS BL Add. 13891). The fact that these potatoes cost as much as six rupees a maund[4] suggests they were indeed white potatoes (MS BL Add. 13891, ff. 23v, 40r). By the 1820s the potato had become common in Bengal and was also spreading rapidly to other regions of the subcontinent. The monthly bazaar accounts of the Calcutta Great Jail in 1824 regularly mention the potato (MSS BL Eur E392/6/a and E392/6/b).[5] Evidently, the new esculent had become part of the regular purchases for prison inmates. This would indicate that it was no longer a rarity, but an item of everyday consumption.

The *Majmūʿ al-Taʿm* or *Collection of Flavours* (1826) has a recipe for *sālan-i ālū* or potatoes in a sauce or curry (MS BnF Supplemént Persan 1878, f. 13v). In this recipe, potatoes are peeled and kept in fermented or sour milk (*dogh*). Onions are fried with a little turmeric to which ginger and garlic are added. The

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[3] The word for mash is normally spelt as *bharta* or *bhurta*, but here in this manuscript is spelt as *bhūrta*.

[4] A maund of Bengal at the time was equivalent to around 80 lbs., which means that 1 rupee could buy approximately 6 kg of potatoes, which would have not been cheap by the standards of the time.

[5] The accounts are collected in two volumes labelled 'a' and 'b' covering the years between 1824–1834. The second volume (E392/6/b) also includes the personal accounts of the jailor, Pearson (March 1836–May 1838).

meat is also washed, kept in *dogh* and fried in the aforementioned spice base. Then the potatoes are added and fried. After six minutes some *dogh*, water and salt are added. When the water dries up, the dish is ready. Here, we find the potato integrated into a 'traditional' recipe, with Indian spices and a familiar style of preparation.

Another significant reference comes from a *materia medica* titled *Qūt-i Lā-yamūt*[6], authored by Saiyid Faẓl ʿAlī (d. 1834) under the *nom de plume* Shifāʾī Ḵ ān. In this text, there are two entries for *ālū*: one under the section on fruits – which clearly refers to the plum – and another in the section on vegetables. The latter reads as follows:

> *"It belongs to the class of arwī, shakarkand [varieties of taro and sweet potato respectively] etc. that the Christians have brought from their islands to the country of Bengal. Now it has become abundant in Hind [North India] as well. It has also arrived in the country of the Deccan, but has not become very common. The potato is very tasty. Cook it in water and when it has softened, remove the thin peel that covers its skin, and eat with or without salt. It is very delicious"* (MS SJML Ṭibb 183: 54).

The entry goes on to briefly describe some other potato recipes, notably, meat with potatoes and potato mash (*bharta*) (MS SJML Ṭibb 183: 54-55). This description gives details on the potato's penetration into various parts of the subcontinent. For the Deccani author of this text, the potato was a novelty that he was evidently excited about. At the same time, his description suggests that it had already established a happy home in other parts of the subcontinent. Other references indicate that potatoes had been cultivated around the 1830s on the Shimla hills as well as the hills surrounding Dehra Dun and the Khasia, Jaintia, Garo and Lushai hills of Assam (Achaya 1994: 226; Upadhya 1974: 140). Roxburgh (1832, Vol. I: 565) records the potato as being "very generally cultivated over India, even by the natives for their own use". Likewise, Watt (1893, Vol. VI, Part III: 265–272) records the potato as being cultivated and eaten all over India. However, it never attained anything resembling the status of a staple.

The New Pepper: Chilli

Perhaps the most notable import from the New World that transformed palates was the chilli. Chillies belong to the genus *Capsicum* and family *Solanaceae* (the family of nightshades). There are various species of it in use all around the world. The species most commonly used in India are the *Capsicum annum* and

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[6] The term 'qūt-i lā-yamūt' refers to a substance that when ingested in very small quantities, was believed to prevent death and extend life.

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the *Capsicum frutescens*. The chilli is a fruit that typically starts out green, but turns red upon ripening. The active ingredient that lends chillies their pungency is the alkaloid capsaicin. Of all the New World imports that spread across the world from the fifteenth century onwards, it is the one food that is initially highly unpalatable, but (unlike coffee, for instance) is without any attenuating desirable psychotropic properties (Rozin & Schiller 1980: 79). How and why certain populations (mostly in South Asia, Southeast Asia, parts of West and East Africa, parts of China and Hungary) incorporated the chilli into their diets following the discovery of the New World is not entirely known (Rozin & Schiller 1980: 79). I hope that my investigations in this article provide some clues to this puzzle, at least as far as the South Asian context is concerned.

There is no record of the chilli in India prior to the past few centuries. Achaya (1994: 227) has drawn attention to a tantalising reference to it in a composition attributed to the South Indian devotional poet Purandaradāsa (1489–1564).[7] However, the historical authenticity of Purandaradāsa's verses is uncertain, since they were not textually codified and compiled until the late nineteenth century (Divya T. 2011: 15). Manrique mentions pimienta pickles at a dinner hosted by a Mughal notable (Manrique, 1649: 329–330).[8] The English translation of this passage renders pimienta as green chillies (Manrique, 1927: 127). But this is misleading, since the Spanish referred to the newcomer chilli as pimiento and not pimienta (Toussaint-Samat 1994: 515–516). What Manrique actually refers to is green peppercorn. Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, who spent several years in Portuguese ruled Goa during the 1580s, tells us that green peppercorns were often used to prepare achār or pickles, just as Manrique describes (van Linschoten 1885: 75).

Most probably, the chilli was first introduced in parts of Southwest India, particularly in and around Goa, primarily through the agency of the Portuguese from the sixteenth century onwards (Collingham 2006, ch. 3, par. 12, loc. 928). Even towards the end of the nineteenth century, Watt notes that the chilli (*Capsicum annum*) was cultivated more extensively in Goa than in any other part of the western coast, and was known in Bombay as *gowa'ī mirchī* or Goanese chilli (Watt 1889, Vol. II: 135). The paucity of references to it in the sources of the period between the sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries

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[7] "I saw you green, then turning redder as you ripened, nice to look at and tasty in a dish, but too hot if an excess is used. Saviour of the poor, enhancer of good food, fiery when bitten, even to think of [the deity] Pānduranga Vittalā is difficult."
[8] I am grateful to Borayin Larios of the University of Heidelberg for translating this passage of the Spanish text of Manrique's account for me. He suggested to me a reading for the term *pimienta* that I was able to confirm as correct from my consultation of other sources.

suggests that the chilli may have taken a considerable period of time to become a regular item of consumption, as well as to spread across the subcontinent. The spice that was usually used to add heat and pungency to food was black pepper (*Piper nigrum*), both round and long (Tavernier 2000, Vol. II: 11). Black pepper derives its pungency from the alkaloid piperine rather than from capsaicin, and most varieties of black pepper do not have the same intensity of heat as do green or red chillies.

Regular references to the chilli begin trickling into Indo-Persian cookbooks from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. There is a reference to *mirch-i surkh* (red chilli) in the chutney recipe recorded in the *Risāla Dar Bayān-i Aṭʿima* (*Treatise on the Description of Foods*), which probably dates to sometime between the third and fifth decades of the eighteenth century (MS RAS Codrington/Reade 213, f. 13v). It is mentioned in the chutney recipe of another eighteenth century text, the *Khwān-i Niʿmat* or *Table of Delights* dedicated to Nawāb Qāsim ʿAlī K ān Bahādur (*Khwān-i Niʿmat wa Shakaristān-i Khayāl* 1882: 11 marginalia). A reference to *mirch-i surkh* also appears in an untitled manuscript of vegetarian recipes dating to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries (MS BL IO Isl. 717, f. 10r). In Ḥājī Qambar's *Alwān-i Niʿmat* (*Varieties of Good Things*),[9] the red chill is used in two pickle recipes: *achār-i līmūn kāghazī* or pickle of paper-thin lemon slices and *achār az khichṛī* or pickle of hodgepodge (MS SBB Sprenger 2002, ff. 310–11). In addition, there is a reference to *mirch-i surkh* in the translated cookbook, *Nuskha-i Niʿmat Khān* (MS BL OR 2028, f. 192v).[10] Thus, early references to the chilli in Persian cookbooks are in chutney or pickle recipes. In other dishes, pepper continued to be the pungent spice of choice. Perhaps the chilli was still considered too hot for use in regular food, and thus its use was restricted to spicy relishes such as chutneys and pickles.

Āzād Bilgrāmī, writing in 1762–63 seems to indicate that the chilli had become fairly common (Bilgrāmī 1871: 48; Habib 1999: 52, fn. 96). He argues that the reason for the dry temperament of the Indian people could be traced to their diet (Bilgrāmī 1871: 48). Such 'anthropological' observations reflect the

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[9] This text probably dates to sometime between the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries on account of the style of its presentation, the fact that its only known manuscript copy uses the hard 'ṭ' as well as the fact that it reproduces some recipes almost verbatim from another Indo-Persian cookbook – the *Khulāṣat-i Mākūlāt u Mashrūbāt*, which itself is a late seventeenth or early eighteenth century text.

[10] The red chillies are here used in a curry recipe. This of course is a translation of an English cookbook, so it is not possible to draw inferences regarding typical use of the chilli based upon this reference. But it is nevertheless relevant since red chillies were evidently by now an established ingredient with an indigenous name (*mirch-i surkh*). In this recipe, the seeds are removed from the chillies so that they do not lend much heat.

close interface between medical and socio-cultural thought in the early modern period. Whether rich or poor, according to Bilgrāmī, the base of the Indians' diet was *dāl-i tūr* (split pigeon pulse; *Cajanus cajan*), to which they added little to no oil or ghee (*be rauġhan yā kam rauġhan*). Instead, they added red chillies (*mirch-i surḵẖ*), asafoetida (*ḥiltīt*) and turmeric (*zard chūba*) to all their dishes. He adds that some Indians had learned the use of the chilli in the past ten or twenty years (Bilgrāmī 1871: 48). From Bilgrāmī's slightly inconsistent account, it is not possible to say exactly how common the chilli had become, since he first seems to indicate that it was in wide use, but later qualifies this with the statement that *some* Indians (*barḵẖī mardum-i Hindūstān*) had learned its use (Bilgrāmī 1871: 48). Thus, his initial generalisations about the Indian diet must be read with some scepticism. This is reinforced by the fact of his belief that this diet was responsible for the humoural imbalances of the Indian temperament. Nevertheless, the inescapable and conservative conclusion that we must draw from this reference is that the chilli was at least in the process of coming into common use in various parts of the subcontinent by around the mid-eighteenth century. By the end of the eighteenth century (1796–97), the chilli had apparently acclimatised itself sufficiently as an agricultural commodity for it to find place in the *Kitāb-i Zirāʿat* (MS BL OR 1741, f. 5r). By the third decade of the nineteenth century the chilli seems to have become common, since Roxburgh notes in the *Flora Indica* that dried chillies (*C. frutescens*) were available in markets all over India (Roxburgh 1832, Vol. I: 574).

By the mid-nineteenth century, chillies were already considered characteristic of Indian cuisine. The cultural trope (not without basis) of the 'hot Indian curry' had well and truly arrived. Private Robert George Hobbes, in his unpublished account of India (1852), writes in his usual sensationalistic style of the breakfast enjoyed by the English at Fort William:

> "...and down the centre [is] a row of tables at which a batch of recruits lately arrived from Europe are taking their <u>hazree*</u> [*Breakfast]. What a glorious spread they seem to think that before them! See the gusto with which they devour those savoury but apparently hot curries; which while they tickle the palate, bring streams of water from their eyes! Observe how they lick their lips..." (MS BL Eur B260, f.25).[11]

It would be fair to assume that the hot curries that Hobbes mentions would have been spiced with chillies, rather than with the milder black pepper. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Watt observed that chillies could be purchased at

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[11] Asterisk indicates footnote provided in the manuscript itself.

every Indian bazaar. They were an indispensible ingredient in Indian curries and a ubiquitous flavouring agent in pickles (Watt 1889, Vol. II: 138).

The gradual but sure manner in which these new foods were absorbed within Indian culinary cultures naturally begs the question of what circumstances and factors underlay this process. To understand the absorption of New World imports into the dietary traditions of the Indian subcontinent, it is necessary to first take a detour through Europe.

Becoming Indian: The Culinary Assimilation of Foreign Foods

In his *De Historia Stirpium* (1542), Leonhart Fuchs, a botanist and Lutheran professor of medicine at the University of Tübingen records a description of the chilli, which had recently arrived in the German lands (Andrews 1995: 24). Fuchs mistakenly identifies India as the original home of the chilli, and in fact refers to it as "Calicut pepper" and "Indian pepper" (Anderson 2016: 64; Andrews 1995: 24). On the one hand, this misidentification is testament to how closely associated spices were to India, and particularly to the Malabar Coast, in the European imagination. But it also begs the question as to why the chilli was not very successfully absorbed into German, or in general, most European cuisines, even though the earliest German references to it date as far back as the first half of the sixteenth century.

Not all foods find acceptance in new homes. In Italy, the tomato's association with the nightshade family meant that it was initially feared for being poisonous and harmful to health (Gentilcore 2010, ch. 1). Similarly, the potato, despite its eventual significance in European history, was at first slow to progress as a crop and as a dietary component. Potato cultivation required practices that were different from that of traditional grain cultivation, and also conflicted with traditional land use patterns. Furthermore, the early potatoes that arrived in Europe were variably coloured and gnarly in appearance. For all these reasons, John Reader (2009: 111–114) argues that potatoes were eventually accepted only out of necessity. Chillies were a New World import that had a highly variable rate of acceptance and assimilation into the cuisines of different cultures. Thus, the fairly dramatic impact that the advent of tomatoes, potatoes and chillies eventually had on Indian culinary traditions was by no means a forgone conclusion.

Climate and soil conditions may not prove ideal for their cultivation. But there is also the possibility that they may not appeal to people's tastes. Cultural sensibilities, food prejudices and previous experiences with similar foods mediate the reception to new foods. The psychologist Paul Rozin, for instance, has described the phenomenon of the 'omnivore's dilemma' (or generalists dilem-

ma), which refers to the tension between the neophilic and neophobic tendencies inherent in the omnivore's approach to unfamiliar foods (Rozin, 1976; Rozin, 2002; Rozin & Rozin, 2005). This phenomenon can be seen as operating both at the individual as well as cultural levels. The fact that the foods discussed above found acceptance in India thus begs certain questions: why and how did these become such a ubiquitous part of Indian diets, what were the factors that promoted their culinary integration, and what were the impediments that had to be overcome?

The deleterious associations that nightshades suffered from in Europe did not exist in India, and thus some of the negative feedback that these might have generated was not an impediment to the assimilation of tomatoes, potatoes or chillies into South Asian diets. Nevertheless, the eventual integration of these vegetables into Indian culinary traditions was a gradual process. People had to get used to their taste and find ways to cook them that pleased their palates.

The evidence that we have to reconstruct the process of culinary assimilation is somewhat limited, but it is enough for us to draw a few broad extrapolations. What seems clear is that the new vegetables were sought to be used in ways that were indigenous and familiar. This was often done by associating them with already familiar ingredients, and cooking them in similar ways. Borrowing new vegetables from another culture did not necessarily mean that ways to cook these new ingredients were adopted along with the foods themselves. For the tomato, we have very limited evidence of its early use. The recipes found in the *Nuskha-i Ni'mat Khān* obviously do not represent instances of typical use. However, the evidence of Duthie and Fuller suggests that it was commonly used as a souring agent in familiar dishes (Duthie & Fuller 1893, Part III: 30). The methods prescribed by the *Qūt-i Lā-yamūt* for cooking the potato mostly recall well-known recipes. Apart from a basic recipe for boiling the potato, it suggests that potatoes with meat be prepared in a manner similar to meat with *arwī* (taro). It also gives a recipe for potato *bharta* or mashed potatoes (MS SJML Ṭibb 183: 54–55). The evidence of Indo-Persian cookbooks reveals that mash or *bharta* recipes had a familiar place in culinary praxis.

Chillies, although hotter than black pepper, came to occupy a familiar space in Indian culinary traditions. The concept of adding heat and pungency to recipes was a well-established one, and familiarity with black pepper has been proposed as a reason for eased acceptance of the chilli in other parts of the Old World as well (Rozin 1990: 238). Indeed, in India, the chilli inherited its name from pepper (*mirch*), which indicates that it was associated and compared with black pepper. The initial induction of these highly pungent chillies in chutney and pickle recipes may have lent a pathway to their eventually ubiquitous use

in a broad array of preparations. This was thus a process of gradual acclimatisation and graduation to higher levels of heat and pungency. To some extent, it mirrors – at a macro-level – the process of preference acquisition among children in chilli eating cultures described by Paul Rozin and Deborah Schiller, i.e. one of gradual and incremental exposure (Rozin & Schiller 1980).

A significant contribution to the debate on why the use of spices (including chillies) is more prolific in some cultures and parts of the world than in others was made in 1998 by Jennifer Billing and Paul Sherman. They argue that spices are consumed in greater quantities in hot regions because their antibacterial properties provide protection against the higher incidence of infection in tropical and subtropical climates (Billing & Sherman 1998; Sherman & Billing 1999; Sherman & Hash 2001). Billing and Sherman put forward a carefully collated and persuasive statistical analysis of spice use, which does provide some clues as to why preparing food spiced with chillies may have certain advantages in the tropical and subtropical climes of the Indian subcontinent. But their hypothesis does not answer all questions on the prevalence of spice use among various human populations (Romanovsky 2015; Abdel-Salam 2016; Bosland 2016).[12] It does not, for instance, answer the question as to why or how chillies came to be gradually integrated into South Asian culinary cultures, although these cuisines had long done without the pungency of capsaicin. How did people acclimatise themselves to its sharp taste, and in what manner did socioeconomic and cultural factors influence this process? The evidence points to a multifactorial process that includes biological, ecological and cultural factors acting in conjunction to produce culinary transformation.

With regard to all three newcomers discussed in this chapter – tomatoes, potatoes and chillies – the evidence gleaned from the South Asian experience suggests that local contextualisation was crucial to the acceptance of the new foods. This appears to have parallels in other cultures and historical contexts as well. Gentilcore observes a similar process of indigenisation in his analyses of the early use of the tomato in Italy: "Native American uses [of the tomato] had

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[12] In the May 2015 issue of the journal *Temperature*, there appeared an editorial about tree farming. This piece discussed, among other topics, the role of capsaicin as a big-game repellent. In conclusion, the author Romanovsky, asked the question "while herbivores avoid capsaicin, why do people living in hot climates consume large quantities of it (in chili peppers)?" A series of letters to the editorial board and article comments in a following issue published in 2016 (*Temperature*, 3, 1)] discuss at length, the question as to why chillies are more often consumed in the tropics. Views varied widely, with some arguing that the hypothesis proposed by Billing and Sherman is inadequate. For reasons of space, it has not been possible to provide an in-text citation of all letters and comments that appeared on this topic in the 2016 issue of *Temperature*. A full enumeration is given in the list of references below.

little impact on European perceptions and uses. Because Europeans regarded native societies as inferior, the various roles of their plants were not passed on except in a very superficial way" (Gentilcore 2010, ch. 1, par. 28, loc. 318). Gentilcore argues that colonial European perceptions of Latin American societies impeded the adoption of their culinary methods. Instead, Europeans incorporated the new vegetable into their cuisines by cooking them in familiar ways. It may well have been the case that European colonial perceptions did indeed have such an impact. But it seems that such processes were not limited to a situation where a colonial power borrowed foods from a colonised region. When the Europeans brought New World vegetables to South Asia, Indians did not merely emulate European ways of preparing and eating them. Instead, they sought to find familiar and indigenous ways of cooking them, and to locate a place for the new food in their cuisines. Even where some elements of cooking methods may have been borrowed, this occurred only when these were found to be in harmony with current culinary practice.

The processes by which a culture perceives and incorporates new foods may be condensed to certain fundamental questions, as per Gentilcore's (2010 ch. 1, par. 36, loc. 367) interpretative paraphrase of Madeleine Ferrières's (2006) analysis: What do you resemble? What do you taste like? What do you replace? The unfamiliar was always rendered familiar by a process of comparison and incorporation. People sought to locate the new ingredient within a familiar cosmos of foods, so that it could be incorporated into their world. They sought to find something familiar that the new food resembled (*what do you resemble?*). This is the impetus behind the *Qūt-i Lā-yamūt*'s introduction of the biscuit. The novel food was familiarised by describing it as being similar to the *nān khaṭāʾī* (MS SJML Ṭibb 183: 125). Potatoes were compared to yams, taro or sweet potatoes. Chillies played the role of pepper, only more potently. Tomatoes probably fulfilled the role of souring agents, as tamarind and yoghurt may have previously (*What do you replace?*). In this way, the flavours of these new foods were sought to be understood (*What do you taste like?*) and brought into play in well-known recipes. Tastes do change, and these new ingredients profoundly altered the flavours and textures of South Asian foods. The route through which this occurred was by way of *cultural translation*, a rendering of the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar. It was through such processes that new foods were indigenised and incorporated into local culinary traditions. This may be characterised by the progression *translation-incorporation-transformation*: when a new food enters a culture, it is first understood in terms of the familiar (*translation*). If it finds a place within the cultural and sensory universe of the new host culture, then it is successfully *incorporated* into it.

Through this process, both the food and the culinary culture into which it is amalgamated are irreversibly altered (*transformation*).

The Roles of Ecology, Socio-Economy and Nutritional Environments

The assimilation of new crops into the agricultural cycles of their new home enables a steady supply at affordable prices. This is particularly important in the early modern context, given the constraints of cost and speed on the transportation of perishables over long distances. Members of the *Solanaceae* family are generally well suited to tropical conditions, and thus their incorporation into the agricultural cycles of the subcontinent would not have been difficult, especially once local cultivars had been developed. Chillies do well in the tropics with moderate rainfall, while tomatoes can tolerate a fairly wide array of climatic conditions. Potatoes are not strictly speaking ideally suited to the tropics, yet they succeeded in becoming ubiquitous in South Asia as a vegetable (Purseglove 1974: 523–563). Ambient conditions for cultivation are an important aspect of a food's dietary acceptance and incorporation. However, this is only moot when the food finds cultural acceptance, and when other political and economic conditions collude to aid its propagation.

Circumstance, opportunity and requirement constitute various kinds of positive and negative feedback mechanisms that also influence the integration of new foods into an exiting food system and culinary practice. In Italy, the tomato was eventually assimilated as a key element of the diet. But potatoes did not achieve the same iconic status in Italian culinary cultures. Following a chequered history of hesitant and temporary adoption as a famine staple, the potato eventually stabilised as a well-integrated part of Italian dietary traditions, albeit mostly as a vegetable, snack and occasional comfort food, rather than as a staple or bread substitute (Gentilcore 2012: 158–165). There was also scepticism towards the potato among Italian peasants, who often resisted their landlord's bidding to cultivate the unfamiliar esculent (Gentilcore 2012: 16–20). While in other parts of Europe, the potato was initially seen as a food of the poor, in Italy, it was often a feature associated with the tables of the elite Austrian aristocracy (Gentilcore 2012: 12). Here, there are some similarities as well as differences with the South Asian experience. In India, agricultural produce of staples such as rice, wheat and millets was usually abundant, such that the positive feedback mechanism of necessity was weak. Neither the pre-colonial state nor powerful intermediaries had either the incentive or sufficient power to coercively enforce the culture of specific crops. Instead, peasants appeared to have gradually and voluntarily adopted potato cultivation (Tennant 1803: 46). Even

in culinary terms, potatoes did not resemble any of the subcontinent's known staples.

An economic factor to be considered in the case of chillies is the fact that the fiery fruit lends itself to relatively widespread cultivation and therefore historically tended to be much cheaper than other spices (Ilyas 1976; Rozin 1990: 240, 245). In Hungary, for instance, chillies were adopted first by the poor (Rozin 1990: 240). In the context of India, both Āzād Bilgrāmī and Watt attest that chillies were consumed equally by the rich as well as by the poor (Bilgrāmī 1871: 48; Watt 1889, Vol. II: 137). However, economic logic as well as scattered literary references such as Purandaradāsa's reference to chillies as "saviour of the poor" suggest that at the very least, chillies were a more valuable flavouring agent for the poor (Achaya 1994: 227). Rozin draws attention to the following line from the novel *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), which deals with rural life in South India: "...when the tongue rebels against plain boiled rice, desiring ghee and salt and spices which one cannot afford, the sharp bite of a chillie [*sic*] renders even plain rice palatable" (as quoted in Rozin 1990: 245). For the rich, the chilli supplemented and complemented a répertoire of spices. But for those of meagre means, it was probably the only affordable seasoning, apart from salt.

Conclusion

In the ultimate analysis, it was a congeries of multiple factors that contributed to the absorption of tomatoes, potatoes and chillies into subcontinental menus. First of all, the extensive maritime trading contacts that the Indian subcontinent had with Europe as well as other parts of Asia had long facilitated the movement of spices from peninsular India to western Asia and Europe. The same trading networks, as well as the presence of European trading factories in India, proved an impetus for bringing the new vegetables to Indian shores. This was especially true since the establishment of European trading colonies along the Indian coastline. In addition, it was possible for these vegetables to find a place in the agricultural cycles of the subcontinent. A further significant set of factors is however cultural: these vegetables managed to find a place within subcontinental culinary traditions.

The process of *translation-incorporation-transformation* that characterised the indigenisation of tomatoes, potatoes and chillies on the Indian subcontinent may not be universal. Assimilation processes may happen faster in other historical circumstances. Agencies such as the state may play a supportive or even coercive role in promoting the cultivation of new crops. Technological, socio-economic, ecological or nutritional circumstances may differ. Nevertheless, it is probable that elements of this process were or are mirrored in other cultures

and historical periods as well. Comparative research into processes of assimilation would shed some light on this question.

Abbreviations

BL	British Library, London, United Kingdom
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France
ch.	Chapter
fn.	Footnote
IO Isl.	India Office Islamic
loc.	Location of a passage on the Kindle Edition of a book
MS	Manuscript
MSS	Manuscripts
par.	Paragraph
RAS	Royal Asiatic Society, London, United Kingdom
SBB	Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, Germany
SJML	Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad, India

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How a Subject Negates Servitude: A Peasant Dialectic about Mastery and Self-Rule from Late Colonial Bengal

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Abstract

*This essay focuses on a report from 1918, produced by the Kshatriya Samiti, the premier early-mid twentieth century organization of the Rajavamshis, a 'lower caste' peasant community of colonial northern Bengal, the princely state of Cooch Behar, and adjacent parts of Assam. The report describes a dialectical transition from an originary state of nature (*prakriti*) and animality (*jantupunja*), to the rule of the master (*prabhushasana*) or king (*rajar shasana*), and then to the rule of society (*samajashasana*), and subsequently to self-rule (*atmashasana*). In the process, the rule of the outside (*bahirer shasana*), including the rule of the master, paradoxically becomes a slave/servant (of self-rule). The trajectory culminates in an anarchic negation of all rule. The essay analyses why this Rajavamshi discourse took the specific form of a dialectic, mediated through antagonisms, as well as the surpassing of these conflicts, as each stage sowed the seeds for its own negation. To do so, the essay relates the report to broader currents of Rajavamshi intellectual production, as well as to multiple South Asian and European discourses on political authority. Further, the essay locates this discourse in the landscape of British colonial programmes of gradually devolving political authority to Indians, as well as in the context of agrarian power structures which moulded Rajavamshi notions of labour, wealth, exploitation, and material self-reliance. Finally, the essay compares the Rajavamshi record to Hegel's celebrated Herr-Knecht dialectic. It argues about the world-historical significance of the Rajavamshi discourse in demonstrating the subaltern and extra-European roots of modern globalized dialectical thinking about material, political, and ethical autonomy. It is argued that this subaltern globality still carries a tremendous intellectual power, one which charges us to unbind the world from varying forms of servitude.*

Introduction

How does a subject negate servitude? Stated in this unornamented abstraction, shorn of specific referents – how anyone in any position of bondage, abjection, can become autonomous, negating the servitude to a master – to most intellec-

tual historians, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* would perhaps first come to mind, including the afterlives of his *Herr* and his *Knecht* in Marx and beyond. (This is not to deny that Hegel's dialectic has been historicized and particularized, from in relation to colonial slavery and the Haitian Revolution, to in relation to structures of landed lordship and serfdom in *ancien régime* Europe: see e.g. Buck-Morss 2009; Cole 2014). However, soon enough, the question arises as to whether this famed dialectic could have arisen only in Hegel, or whether it is possible to identify other originary points for similar movements (points which had no direct familiarity with Hegel's text). In this essay, I begin a preliminary response to this question by interrogating an (unfairly) obscure archive: a corpus comprising records of meeting proceedings and associated reports from the 1910s to the 1920s which – unlike other similar records which were burnt down during a massacre in 1971 in Rangpur (then in East Pakistan, now in Bangladesh) – survived thanks to the efforts of the educationist and researcher Dharma Narayan Bhakti Shastri. These records were ultimately transferred to the Rajavamshi intellectual, bureaucrat, and legislator Sukhvilas Barma (Barman 2017: ix–x).

The troubled life of this significant archive certainly serves as an index for the vulnerable lives of the (so-called 'lower caste') Rajavamshi peasants who produced them, and for the obscurity to which the intellectual production of subalternized actors is often deliberately reduced, in South Asia and elsewhere. Without minimizing in any sense the importance of Hegel and his successors, it is necessary to underline the comparable political prowess and conceptual ambition of subalternized peasant discourses in offering tools for unbinding servitude. To re-author world-history from its limits (Guha 2002) – or to put this more *à* la mode, to stress the globality of a certain dialectic, in terms of global intellectual history (Moyn & Sartori 2013) and beyond – is something this Rajavamshi archive may well train us to do. Since I had started working on this archive for my doctoral dissertation (2010–14, published as Banerjee 2018), in the supervision of Gita Dharampal-Frick, this essay also offers a libation to her, as she always enjoined me to focus on political thought in the vernacular.

The Rajavamshi Dialectic

Let us begin in 1918, with a record from the annual proceedings of the Kshatriya Samiti, the premier early-mid twentieth century association of the Rajavamshi community of sub-Himalayan northern Bengal, the princely state of Cooch Behar, and adjacent parts of Assam (on the history of the Samiti, see Basu 2003). The annual session of the Samiti that year was held in Dinajpur, a town in northern Bengal. The record began by describing an originary state of nature

(*prakriti*) to which the world (*jagat*) was subject. Nature was always active (*kriyashila*); in it all things (*vastu*) were mobile (*chanchala*). Of these things, living creatures (*jiva*) were particularly active, as well as characterized, due to their sensations (*anubhava*) and knowledge (*jnana*), by feelings of attraction (*akarshana*) and repulsion (*vikarshana*) towards known objects (*jnata vastu*). Of living creatures, human beings had particularly well-developed faculties of knowledge and sensation. Hence, whenever there was a gathering (*samagama*) of human beings, the unrestrained actions (*uddama kriya*) of each human being came into conflict (*virodha*) with similar uncontrolled actions of others. Such a gathering of human beings was therefore reduced into a state of mutually antagonistic (*paraspara virodhi*) and pain-inflicting (*paraspara yantranadayaka*) mass of animals (*jantupunja*) (Samiti 1918: 27–28).

As this pain (*yantrana*) became intolerable, human beings sought escape from it. So they made attempts to tame/subdue (*damana*) or regulate (*niyaman*) their hitherto unregulated efforts. In the first effort (*prathama cheshta*), a single person (*ekjan*) or a group of people (*janasamuha*) was necessary (*avashyaka*), who would have the power (*kshamatashali*) to tame/subdue (*damana*) both the one who hurt (*ghati*; originally in Sanskrit, the term referred especially to a killer) and the one who counter-hurt (*pratighati*). By imposing rules (*vidhi*) or prohibitions (*nishedha*) backed by force (*balanusrita*), that person or group of persons was able to offer protection (*raksha*) to the antagonists as well as to everyone related (*samsargi sakalke*), and could thus deliver people from a state of pain into a state of greater happiness (*sukhatara avastha*) and joy (*sphurti*). This was the rule of the master (*prabhushasana*) (Samiti 1918: 28).

The master on top (*uparistha prabhu*) thus subdued the antagonisms (*ghata-pratighata*; literally, blows and counter-blows) of the person below (*adhahstha vyakti*) and brought about a more peaceful state. Antagonisms were increasingly replaced by feelings of union (*milanabhava*), amicable feelings towards each other (*paraspara anukula bhava*), and happiness (*ananda*). This generated respect (*shraddha*) towards the master. Hence the name of the master (*prabhu*) was king (*raja*). The master also felt affection (*sneha*) towards the people (*janasamuha*) – as if the people were the son (*putra*) of the master. Hence they were named *praja*. (Samiti 1918: 28). In fact, in colonial Bengal, the word *praja* ordinarily meant subject, in relation to the state, but was equally used to refer to tenants of the quasi-kingly *zamindar* landlords. But, as this Rajavamshi discourse underscores, the term has an original connotation of "offspring", since the Sanskrit root, *prajan*, implies "to be born or produced", "to bring forth, generate, bear, procreate" (Monier-Williams 1960: 658).

The report went on to describe that the king-subject-relation (*raja-praja-samvandha*) kept each in attraction to the other. The rule of the king (*rajar shasana*), by removing antagonisms, allowed the subjects (*prajavarga*) to come together and develop (*paraspara miliya unnati*). But the rule of the master was unable to achieve more than this. It was unable to regulate well the relations between subjects or to bring under control feelings like affection and love (*sneha-mamatadi bhava*). However, these feelings were innate to human beings, and held people together in relation. These relations (*samvandha*) could be seen as the root of society (*samaja-mula*), and the feelings of society (*samajabhavaguli*) could be called social feelings (*samajika bhava*). But, developing unrestrained, these social feelings came into antagonism with each other, resulting in pain. To escape this pain, people developed rules and prohibitions through which society (*samaja*) was regulated. These were social customs or rules (*samajika achara ba niyama*). The rule of society (*samajer shasana*) was directed against the individual who went against these social rules and who thus hindered the social happiness (*samajika sukha*) of another or the happiness of society. The rule of society (*samajashasana*) could thus prohibit or regulate some social feelings. But it was often incapable of purifying (*shuddhi*) these feelings. Given an opportunity, one tried to advance one's own aims and the harm of the other. Without self-rule (*atmashasana*) or self-control (*atmasamyama*), these feelings could never be purified (Samiti 1918: 28–29).

The report underlined that "to achieve self-control one needs to rule oneself" (*atmasamyama karite haile nije nijake shasana karite haibe*). The rule of the outside (*bahirer shasana*) was unable to achieve influence here, so there was no alternative other than the rule which emerged from the self (*atma haite udbhuta shasana*). If one engaged in thinking with a calm mind, one heard a wonderful voice (*apurvavani*) which was magnified by its own grandeur (*nija mahimay mahimanvita*). The rule of the outside (*bahirer shasana*) was like a mere slave/servant (*kimkara matra*) of this voice. This voice, shining in the virtuous mind, was right/good precept (*sanniti*) (Samiti 1918: 29).

Human life (*manavajivana*) or the life of human society (*manavasamaja-jivana*) moved through certain stages (*stara*) of expanding happiness. In the regulation of human behaviour, the application of exterior force bore the name of rule (*bahyashaktir prayoger nama shasana*), while the application of interior force bore the name of education (*abhyantarika shaktir prayoger nama shiksha*). In the course of human life or the life of human society, the influence of rule (*shasana*) was gradually reduced, while the influence of education (*shiksha*) grew. In the end, the operation of both rule and education came to an end. As a human being approached the ultimate goal (*charama lakshya*), both rule and

education ceased to be. Human behaviour became stainless (*nirmala*); the self (*atma*) found its own blossoming. The human being achieved fullness of desire (*purnakama*), fullness of happiness (*purnananda*), fullness of satisfaction (*purnatripti*). The human being achieved fullness (*purnatva*) (Samiti 1918: 29–30).

Produced in the remote interior of northern Bengal, the extraordinary sophistication of this discourse produced by peasant-origin activists compels our attention, in the way it imagines a periodized transition from heteronomy (*bahirer shasana*, the rule of the outside, comprising both *prabhushasana*, the rule of the master, and *samajashasana*, the rule of society) to autonomy (*atmashasana*, self-rule), and finally the extinction of all rule in the fullness of joy. There is a fascinating dialectic at work here, whereby the rule of the master becomes – through biting and unavoidable irony – a slave: a slave or servant (*kimkara*; indeed, nothing but a slave/servant, *kimkara matra*) of self-rule. In parallel, the subject (*praja*) – unambiguously described as the person who is at bottom (*adhahstha vyakti*) – comes out on top, indeed reaches the ultimate goal. If one wanted, one could compare this with Jean Hyppolite's famous description of Hegel's dialectic: "The dialectic of domination and servitude [...] consists essentially in showing that the truth of the master reveals that he is the slave of the slave, and that the slave is revealed to be the master of the master." (Hyppolite 2000: 172).

In the Rajavamshi discourse, being under is an abjection, but as it turns out, also a privilege, one which is denied to the master who is on top (*uparistha prabhu*) and who is phased out of the forward movement of the dialectic. Being the bottom becomes a preparatory discipline to achieve a certain – I would call it, revolutionary – agency: revolutionary because it ends up erasing governance. Thus the ultimate (literally, anarchic) withering away of government provides the most paradoxical conclusion to this trajectory which began with a seemingly iron-clad justification for government. The rest of this essay will be devoted to analysing some of the components and possible sources of this dialectic.

From Nature to the Birth of the State

Let us turn to its first movement. I use the word 'movement' consciously, drawing on terms like *chanchala* (mobile) and *kriyashila* (active) through which the Rajavamshi discourse conceptualizes the cosmos. The term dialectic is also appropriate, given the historical charge it has acquired by now of not only bearing the sense of dialogue, but also of opposition, confrontation, contradiction, and synthesis. Much of the Rajavamshi discourse is precisely about such encounters: attraction (*akarshana*) and repulsion (*vikarshana*), blow (*ghata*) and counter-blow (*pratighata*), conflict (*virodha*), and ways of resolving them. The

first reversal in this dialectic is from a state of nature (*prakriti*), which is also a state of apparent freedom, or at least of unrestrained action (*uddama kriya*), to a state of domination, of restraint, of loss of freedom to do whatever one wants.

The bestiality of the originary state of nature in the Rajavamshi discourse (the fear that human beings are reduced to a heap of beasts, *jantupunja*) reminds us strongly of Hobbes' famously negative description of the state of nature in *Leviathan*, as well as (in his *De Cive*) of the saying *homo homini lupus*, man is a wolf to man. In the Rajavamshi discourse, from this anomic condition, the state offers relief. This involves a process of taming and subduing, both these senses captured by the Sanskrit/Bengali word *damana*. The word and proximate terms have strong animal-related connotations, and are used in Sanskrit, for example, in relation to taming horses, bullocks, and so on (Monier-Williams 1960: 469). This process of taming and subduing is the birth of mastery. One could also narrate this as a process of domesticating bestial wildness. As an aside, one remembers that, in Latin, *domus*, household, whence domestication, is etymologically related to *dominus*, master, whence domination (de Vaan 2008: 177–78). In general terms, as James Scott has most recently reminded us, the domestication of human beings is intrinsically related to the birth of the early historical state (Scott 2017). The Rajavamshi discourse alludes to all these processes. In this discourse, the master (*prabhu*), which may be a single person or a group of people, brings about the taming, the eradication of the original wildness of nature, creating thereby the state. This is the birth of rule (*shasana*), or more specifically, of the rule of the master or of the king. The people will to escape endless antagonism and mutual infliction of pain. Through their desire and through their self-conscious first effort (*prathama cheshta*), the state is born.

What could be the possible sources for this quasi-Hobbesian narrative of a movement from an originary state of nature to the time of the state which offers protection (in the Rajavamshi discourse, *raksha*) from anomie? The Rajavamshi text itself, in its majestic referent-less abstraction, offers no obvious answer. But if we look at the Kshatriya Samiti archive in general, we perceive a transparent Sanskritic basis for many of the discourses. In part, this had to do with the training of the Rajavamshi leadership. For instance, Panchanan Barma, the main leader of the Rajavamshi movement in this period, acquired university degrees in Sanskrit and law in the 1890s, and practised as a lawyer in northern Bengal in the 1900s, before heading the Kshatriya Samiti (Barman 1980: 1–16; Barma 2017). Such training perhaps equipped the Rajavamshi leadership to interpret ancient Sanskrit texts about the origins of the state through modern-Western legal-political lenses. In fact, across the 1910s and early 1920s, in the

context of widespread discussions about devolution of governmental powers to Indians (leading up to, and going beyond, the Government of India Act of 1919) as well as rising waves of anti-colonial struggle (from older streams of militant Indian nationalism to newer waves of Gandhian nationalism, pan-Islamic Khilafat agitation, and peasant and working class insurgency), several Indian (including Bengali) historians began re-reading ancient Indian texts through the lens of social contract theory. They included prominent figures like Pramathanath Banerjea, K. P. Jayaswal, D. R. Bhandarkar, and U. N. Ghoshal (Banerjee 2018: 228–33).

To justify their aspirations for a liberal-constitutional state, and to critique British discourses about Oriental Despotism, these historians identified articulations of social contract theory in ancient Sanskrit and Pali texts like the *Mahabharata*, Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, the *Manusmriti*, the *Digha Nikaya*, and the *Mahavastu*. The Indian scholars sought an indigenous lineage of constitutionalist thinking which embedded the state in the 'rational' desire of people to escape mutual destruction. They found elements of Hobbesian social contract theory in some of these two-millennia old texts, whereby the state was born through a kind of social contract made by people to remove a violent and antagonistic state of nature. Thereby these scholars, drawing on ancient Indian political thought, embedded the state in the contractual will of the people. They often argued that state power was justified only as long as the government actually brought about the welfare of the people (providing a subtle critique thereby of British colonial rule which, in the perceptions of many Indian nationalists, exploited the people, instead of offering genuine welfare and protection) (Banerjee 2018: 228–33).

I have not yet discovered any direct evidence that these works of historical scholarship were read by Rajavamshi politicians. However, we do have evidence from a 1911 Rajavamshi text, authored by Jagat Mohan Devsimha Barman, that one of the main narratives in which these elite-Indian historians of the 1910s located a social contract theory – the story of Prithu, the primordial 'good' king, in the *Mahabharata* – was also discussed in Rajavamshi circles in order to show that a ruler (*raja*) was so called because he pleased (*ranjan*) his subjects and pursued their well-being (Barman 1911: 34–36). It seems likely that ancient Indian textual descriptions of an originary state of nature and mutual antagonism, and the birth of the state/kingship in response to the contractarian desire of the people to get rid of this stage of violence and fear, influenced the Rajavamshi discourse of 1918. Both the general familiarity that many Indians had with these texts, especially the *Mahabharata* – but also, at least ones with some contact with Sanskrit, with the *Manusmriti* (the latter was however very

controversial in relation to debates about caste and gender) – as well as the specific traction of these texts in the 1910s would lend some plausibility to this hypothesis. Whether there was in addition any influence of the Bengali/Indian historical scholarship of the 1910s – scholarship which was acutely conscious of European social contract theories, including Hobbes – remains an open question.

In parallel, there may have been an indigenous Bengali strand of thinking – though that may also have reworked in part the Sanskritic tradition – influencing the Rajavamshi discourse. In the *Chandimangal* tradition of early modern Bengal – of which the late sixteenth/early seventeenth century version of Mukunda is the best known variant – there is a fascinating description of an originary forest (*vana*) of mutually antagonistic and destructive animals. The animals worshipped the goddess Chandi and petitioned her to remove their condition of incessant fear (*sashanka*), and to bestow on them lack of fear (*niratanka*). In response, the goddess created a state, whereby rules were made to reduce violence amongst the animals, indeed to institute some measure of non-conflict (*avirodha*). Further, every animal was given a particular office, beginning with kingship (the lion) on to other positions (Mukunda 2007: 105–106; Banerjee 2010; Banerjee 2016a; Banerjee 2016b). The *Chandimangal* tradition was widely known across Bengal from at least the sixteenth century; in the context of northern Bengal, the text was cited in the famous Cooch Behar political chronicle about the birth of kingship in the region, Radhakrishna Das's *Gosanimangal* (1823–24) (Das 1977, pp. 2–3). The Rajavamshi discourse of 1918 – about the transition from an animal-like state of nature to the epoch of the state – may have had some roots in this widespread vernacular popular tradition about the transformation of bestiality – a literal forest of animals killing each other – into the order of the state. Finally, given the Western education received by a small section of the Rajavamshi elite, some direct exposure to European social contract theory, especially its Hobbesian variant, is of course also possible.

It needs underlining that the Rajavamshi report discussed above begins with the affirmation of the inevitability of the rule of the master/king. The discussion on the state of nature prepares the ground for this. This perspective differs from that of someone like Muhammad Ali, the celebrated anti-colonial Khilafat revolutionary, who, in the course of his trial in 1921 by the British, denounced the argument that the British had rescued Indians from a Hobbesian state of nature (Banerjee 2018: 359–60): an argument which purportedly justified colonial sovereignty as a neutral umpire between supposedly conflicting races, creeds, and castes. In contrast, the Rajavamshis affirmed loyalty both to the

British colonial state, and especially to King-Emperor George V – the *raja* who loomed most large in the Kshatriya Samiti's imagination in the 1910s – as well as to the ruler of the princely state of Cooch Behar. Like many similarly placed 'lower caste' movements in contemporaneous India, they saw the British as an ally who would give them employment (Rajavamshis joined the colonial army in large numbers during the First World War; many served in Mesopotamia, Egypt, France, and Belgium); access to higher education (hitherto often monopolized by high-caste elites); and above all, political representation. Rajavamshis had constituted a dominant social group in precolonial sub-Himalayan northern Bengal. But, in the colonial era, they had gradually lost control over land as well as political and administrative power in the face of immigrant Western-educated higher-caste (especially, Bengali) elites. Indeed, the very crystallization of 'high' and 'low' in the caste hierarchy, here as elsewhere in British India, was shaped in part by colonial interventions. The loss by Rajavamshis of social, economic, and political-administrative power was due to structural transformations wrought by colonialism: revenue maximization, demilitarization of martial-peasant groups, administrative modernization, growth of a strong and interventionist state, and the premium placed on Western education in the growing state apparatus. Nevertheless, the Kshatriya Samiti still saw the British as a possible ally who would rescue them from their current epoch of decline. By the 1930s, they were classified by the British as a Scheduled Caste, and they managed to wrest from the colonial state significant political representation at the provincial level, as well as some employment and educational benefits. They were also able to promote some pro-peasant measures through the colonial legislature. Moreover, the Rajavamshis ideologically positioned themselves as a kingly Kshatriya community with an aptitude for political authority. Indeed, the very name Rajavamshi means "of the royal lineage". This name is related to the role which various martial-peasant groups played in precolonial state formation in sub-Himalayan Bengal and western Assam, and especially in the birth (during the end-fifteenth/early-sixteenth century) and consolidation of the Koch kingdom (the ancestor of the Cooch Behar princely state and of various other ruling lineages across northern Bengal and Assam) (Banerjee 2018: 312–31). Given this overall context, it is understandable why the Rajavamshi discourse of 1918 would see the rule of the master or king as a structural necessity in the forward movement of history.

From the Rule of the Master to the Rule of Society

Yet, the Rajavamshi dialectic moves through a series of negations. The first negation – of unrestrained action (*uddama kriya*) – led to the rule of the mas-

ter, to the birth of restraint and domination. In the second negation of the dialectic, the rule of the master promoted feelings of union (*milanabhava*) among the people, which led the latter to gather together with the aim of bringing about progress (*paraspara miliya unnati*). But the rule of the master was unable to contain these feelings of sociability. Hence, gradually, the rule of society (*samajashasana*) came to acquire more importance than the rule of the master in the forward movement of humanity. The very success of the rule of the master sowed the seeds for its progressive negation. The rule of society offered the point of mediation between the rule of the master and self-rule. In historical terms, we can see this rule of society as a reference to precolonial-origin forms of community (*samaja*) organization which ensured some measure of group autonomy, as well as to the early twentieth century associational life of the Kshatriya Samiti itself. For example, one of the Samiti's main methods of consolidating the Rajavamshis was through the organization of *milana mahotsavas*, "great festivals of union" (Banerjee 2018: 328; on the discourse on *samaja* in colonial Bengal, see also Gupta 2009).

Further, the Rajavamshi discussion about *samaja* was a response to British devolution of powers to Indians. This is evident from a letter (preserved in both English and Bengali variants) that Panchanan Barma sent on behalf of the Samiti to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal in November 1917, seeking to meet the visiting Secretary of State for India Edwin Montagu. The British war-time promise, emblematized by Montagu's declaration of August 1917, to ensure "self-governing institutions" and "responsible government" in India (House of Commons 1918: 5) offered the immediate instigation for this. Expropriating the British concept of "self-governing institutions", and juxtaposing it with Rajavamshi concepts and practices of communitarian rule, Barma suggested that the "Kshatriya Community"/*kshatriyasamaja*, as a part of "Hindu Society"/*hindusamaja*, had traditionally been

> "*internally governed by small Samajas or Societies each with its controlling head and a Panchayat or a council composed by the Pramanikas [...]. These Samajas were in their respective spheres self-governing and representative, and worked by love [...], blending the people as if in one body, making them respect the order and law [...]. Their leaders as also the king himself were completely under the control of the law and order.*"

This allowed the Kshatriyas to be "loving confederates with all other similar Samajas as also the rest of mankind." The letter advocated that the British revitalize this heritage of local governance, of which elements still existed, by fostering "self-governing and self-improving (in Bengali, *atmashasani o atmotkarshi*) Institutions", and rendering "village Communities and Panchayats"

as "the basis of popular representation." Barma underscored that in government councils, "the representation must be thorough and every community high or low, and every interest", especially "of the small communities or interests", should be given due regard. Otherwise, there would only be "a rule of one part of the people over the other" (Samiti 1918: 50–55). The Kshatriya Samiti's objective, like that of many other 'lower caste' and minority community organizations of late colonial India, was to aim for a devolution of powers which would be truly representative, and not be merely monopolized by high-caste Hindu elites.

Lineages of Self-Government

The reference to *atmashasana* in this 1917 letter, which has come down to us as part of the same annual proceedings as the 1918 report we had been discussing so far, reveals the seeds of the third negation. This is the graduated negation of all exterior rule (*bahirer shasana*) – both *prabhushasana* and *samajashasana* – by *atmashasana*, self-rule. This self-rule had an ethical component, beautifully presented in the 1918 report as *sanniti* (*sat*+*niti*). *Sat* refers to "being, existing, […] being present" (Monier-Williams 1960: 1134): in other words, to 'what is'. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak observes, *sat* thus implies "the True, the Good, the Right" (Chakravorty Spivak 1999: 302–303). Spivak draws on an older philosophical analysis by Martin Heidegger of the Indo-European etymologies of 'being' – which, apart from the Sanskrit variants, include Latin *esse/est*, English 'is', and German *sein* (Heidegger 2000: 74–76). *Sanniti* is thus not merely right/good precept (as I had translated it earlier, in a preliminary fashion). Rather, it is the precept/conduct (*niti*) which truly is, which is in conformity with Being itself. It allows our being, our self (*atman*), to manifest itself in its full presence. This government is *atmashasana*, the epiphanic thunderclap described as *apurvavani*, the wonderful (literally, unprecedented) voice. This is the rule which came out of one's inner being (*atma haite udbhuta shasana*). The rule of the outside prepared the ground for this. *Atmashasana* was prefigured – as the very use of the word for both institutionalized local self-governance as well as for a more abstract ethical-political mode of self-control (*atmasamyama*) shows – in the institutions, demands, and plans for representative governance. The moment of this prefiguration was the necessary mediation whereby the rule of the outside, and especially of the master, gradually became a slave/servant of self-rule. Representative governance cleared the ground for a deeper autonomy of the self.

As visible from the Samiti's emphasis on non-majoritarian political representation – especially of subaltern and minority communities, the "low" and

the "small" of the 1917 letter – *atmashasana* sketched a "democracy to come". (I borrow this phrase with its messianic connotations from Jacques Derrida: see Derrida 1994.) Simultaneously, the discourse on *atmashasana* also had a material, especially agrarian, grounding, which is obscured by the abstract elegance of the 1918 report. In various interwar Rajavamshi discourses, we find a strong emphasis on being *atmanirbhara* (self-reliant). The discourse on *atmashasana* cannot be completely understood without this other materially-grounded perspective. Rajavamshi activists saw themselves as the true generators of wealth (*dhana*) in society. Drawing on precolonial South Asian traditions, they presented the act of ploughing the soil as a sacred act, which rendered peasants similar to gods and kings. Rajavamshis claimed that their agricultural activities supported society, and yet the elites did not give them due recognition. They resented the way in which they were being displaced from ownership and control of land, while their labour (*shrama*) was being robbed (*apaharana*) by the elites, such as by big companies and moneylenders. Immigrant elites were cast as "foreign" (*bhinna deshiyera*) colonizers who sought to reduce peasants into an animal-like state (*pashur nyaya*, *pashubhava*). Rajavamshis criticized the modes of production and exchange through which raw materials and semifinished products were extracted from them by merchants and industrialists from afar, while finished commodities were sold back to them at high prices. A new discourse on exploitation (*nishpeshana*) developed in reaction to these processes. A novel class consciousness emerged as well, pitting the rich (*dhani loka*) against the poor (*garib*, *nirdhana*): Rajavamshis identified themselves as part of the latter category. Simultaneously, sections of peasant elites sought to form their own companies, cooperatives, banks, and so on, whereby they could empower themselves economically against high-caste immigrant elites (Banerjee 2018: 322–324, 328–329). I have not yet detected any overt references to Marxism in these discourses. However, the Russian Revolution of 1917 generated enormous excitement in India, including in Bengal, in the interwar years; the Communist Party of India was founded in 1920. There is a high probability that the Rajavamshi discourse about exploitation of the poor drew on Marxist – or at least, broadly, socialist – debates. Even if the Rajavamshis had never directly read Hegel (as is likely the case), there could have been an indirect left-Hegelian imprint, via Marxism, on their dialectic.

Admittedly, the Kshatriya Samiti's interventions were marked by inequality: the concerns of peasant elites were often prioritized over those of lower class peasants, including sharecroppers and landless labourers (Basu 2003). Nevertheless, in a very fundamental sense, a new discourse on self-rule was generated which derived its material charge from the claim that Rajavamshi

peasants ploughed the land, generated the true wealth of society, gave support (*avalambana*) and shelter (*ashraya*) to the whole of society, and therefore deserved economic empowerment, political representation, and social recognition. From the Rajavamshi perspective, the rich and the powerful too thus depended (*bharsa*) on the peasants. It was their labour (*shrama*), their work (*kaj*) – whether as peasants or as soldiers – which rendered Rajavamshis into divine and kingly beings, into those capable of *atmashasana*. The demand for political representation was rooted, in part, in the claim of labour. This is starkly visible, for example, in the Rajavamshi activist Upendranath Barman's poem 'Langaler Dabi' (The Claim of the Plough): a manifesto for the 1937 legislative elections which marked the coming of age of 'lower caste' peasant politics in Bengal (Banerjee 2018: 316–330, 410). Re-reading the 1918 report through this long-term lens, we clearly see how the movement of the dialectic from heteronomy to autonomy was necessarily mediated through labour. Peasants' labour gave substance to their claim for political autonomy. Through their agrarian and military labour, as well as through their political and conceptual work in self-organization, they achieved *atmashasana*. Labour, which was initially a marker of their servitude, their low status, which allowed elites to denigrate them, turned through the dialectic into the marker of self-reliance and freedom. (For a striking example of this inversion, see Nabinchandra Barma's arguments in a 1919 meeting: Banerjee 2018: 322–323). We cannot but be reminded of Hegel's celebrated lines from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807):

> *"The truth of the independent consciousness is accordingly the consciousness of the bondsman. […] But just as lordship showed its essential nature to be the reverse of what it wants to be, so, too, bondage will, when completed, pass into the opposite of what it immediately is: being a consciousness repressed within itself, it will enter into itself, and change round into real and true independence"* (Hegel 1910: 184).

Emancipation, Self, and the Negation of Rule

In the final stage of the Rajavamshi dialectic, all rule, even self-rule, is negated. Like every other previous phase of rule, self-rule (*atmashasana*) sowed the seeds for its own negation. The self became so stainless (*nirmala*) as it approached the ultimate goal (*charama lakshya*) that both exterior rule and interior rule withered away. All government simply ceased to be, like so many shackles that disintegrated to dust. What was this ultimate goal? The 1918 report speaks in seemingly individuated terms. The self realises its fullness, it reaches plenitude of desire, of satisfaction, of joy. But Panchanan Barma's 1917 letter to the Government of Bengal gives another elaboration more engaged

with alterity. It noted that, for the Samiti, "final emancipation of the souls (*jivatmar vimukti-sadhan*) by the finding of the great soul in all we see (*drishyaman jagat madhye paramatmar darshan*), is the goal (*charama ud-deshya*)" (Samiti 1918: 51, 54). Ostensibly, this is pure metaphysical language, rooted in precolonial Indian, especially Vedantic, worldviews. Scholars have studied in granular detail the rise of Vedantic thinking in early modern and colonial India, and related this trajectory to ideological imperatives of elite Indian actors (e.g. Sartori 2008; Nicholson 2010). But there is still significant research vacuum regarding the traction of Vedanta-inflected conceptual vocabularies in non-elite political thought. One could here mention the interwar Bengali poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, who related Vedantic and Islamic structures of thought in order to formulate a non-sectarian grammar of anti-colonial democratic revolution, geared especially towards the empowerment of peasants and other labouring classes as well as women (Banerjee 2018: 239–240, 363–368, 371, 384). The Rajavamshi actors I have analysed embody another strand of this Vedanta-inflected popular politics. Their vision of non-majoritarian subalternized democratization was grounded in a metaphysics of seeing the divine in all, and of thus achieving emancipation (*vimukti*).

Conclusion

Where does one place the Rajavamshi dialectic of 1918 within global intellectual history? In terms of studying "sites of citation" (Manjapra 2014: 288, citing Ricci 2011), the inexorable abstraction of the dialectic gives us little scope for absolute certitude. Influences of Sanskritic as well as Bengali traditions about the transition from an originary state of anarchy to the epoch of the state; indirect influence of Hobbes; British promises of self-government; some amount of (perhaps in part, Soviet-origin) Marxist, or at least broadly socialist, understanding about labour, wealth, and exploitation; Vedantic metaphysics: all these may have converged in the Rajavamshi dialectic, though we cannot pinpoint the exact sources. We may, without too much error, conceive of the Rajavamshi discourse as the product of transcontinental exchanges of ideas. However, in my opinion, what makes the Rajavamshi report of 1918 'global' in a very fundamental mode is its format of relentless generalization. The way in which it conceptualized the dialectical transition from heteronomy to autonomy could speak to anyone, anywhere in the world, and lose none of its traction. By divesting itself of specific communitarian or national referents, this dialectic made itself potentially useful to any subaltern. (This does not hold true for many other parts of the Kshatriya Samiti's archive, which often also remained bounded within communitarian horizons.) When read with other interwar

Rajavamshi discussions, we realise that, at certain moments, the Rajavamshi archive could generate a 'global' way of thinking because this archive grounded itself in categories – the world (*jagat*), nature (*prakriti*), the rule of the outside (*bahirer shasana*), self-rule/autonomy (*atmashasana*), end of rule, labour/work (*shrama/kaj*), exploitation (*nishpeshana*), the human being (*manusha*), the animal (*jantu*, *pashu*), the self (*atma*), emancipation (*vimukti*) – which could, in principle, appeal to anyone in the world in a condition of heteronomy, and even to anyone outside the colonial universe of commercialized agriculture which the Rajavamshis inhabited.[1] I suggest that the Rajavamshi archive achieved its abstraction and globality – above and beyond any question of South Asian, European, and Soviet intellectual 'influence' – because it emerged out of the actual experiences of degradation (loss of land, proletarianization, caste humiliation, and so on), the life-worlds of agrarian and military labour, as well as the conditions of collective social and political organization, of a peasant community in revolt. Even if there were variegated 'external' influences on Rajavamshi concept-production, the more significant question – as to why these sources at all gained traction within, and were transfiguratively re-authored by, Rajavamshi thought – can only be answered through a deeper probing of Rajavamshi political ethics itself, and not through a mere study of pathways of intellectual pollination.

This grand tendency towards subaltern-oriented abstraction and generalization does not imply that the Rajavamshi peasant community did not bear its own internal hierarchies, especially along lines of class and gender. In interwar Rajavamshi politics, peasant elites were generally prioritized over small peasants, sharecroppers, and landless labourers; men had much greater political and intellectual agency than women. Further, Rajavamshi politics, in affirming loyalty to the British colonial state, limited the possibilities of its revolutionary transgressiveness. Apart from having obvious practical consequences, the socio-political limitations of Rajavamshi thought also had deep conceptual implications. Thus, unlike Muhammad Ali (see above), the Rajavamshis accepted the inevitability of a Hobbesian transition from anarchy to state as well as, concretely, loyalty to the British sovereign. In imagining themselves to be a kingly Kshatriya community, they continued to offer some (circumscribed) validation for caste hierarchies. In terms of modes of labour and production, the act of

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[1] See, however, Sartori (2014) for a discussion on the relation between colonial agrarian commercialization and Bengali Muslim peasant thinking about autonomy. Sartori identifies in these Muslim discourses ways of thinking about the constitutive nexus between labour and property, comparable to certain Lockean and Marxian strands: he pins responsibility for this parallelism on the global dynamic of the capitalist mode of production.

ploughing (associated with men) received far more reverence and dignity than the act of sowing seeds (where women also participated). We could multiply instances of such limits of Rajavamshi political thought.

Nevertheless, we should be wary of dismissing the Rajavamshi break-through. That Rajavamshis could conceptualize a world where every epoch of rule sowed the seeds of its own destruction, until finally all government and exploitation would cease in anarchist joy; that it could hold out the promise of an era when everyone would be materially and spiritually free, and realise their social and ethical connection with each other: this embodies a majestic intellectual achievement. Such grand thinking remains outside the limits of most political discourses regnant today. Here, the progressive stages of negation of negation ultimately led to a plenitude (*purnatva*) of being. The revolutionary potency of this dialectic has scarcely diminished with time. For intellectual historians interested in tracking the multi-sited provenance of modern globally-oriented thinking, this peasant dialectic, produced from a remote corner of agrarian Bengal, should have at least as much value as the contributions of Hegel and other canonical thinkers. Here we find a fascinating register of subaltern globality. In impelling us to relentlessly negate every condition of servitude – whether imposed by the state or by the community and society, or even by the fetters we impose on our own selves – this dialectic of 1918 still carries a tremendous power to unbind the world.

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Cooperation and Pacifism in a Colonial Context: Service Civil International and Work Camps in Bihar, 1934–1937[1]

Eleonor Marcussen

Abstract

After a major earthquake in Bihar and Nepal in 1934, the Swiss peace and relief organisation Service Civil International (SCI), would for the first time set up work camps in India. This chapter examines how the work camps in Bihar materialized through an exchange of ideas, networks, and cooperation in Europe and India. While several factors conspired to elicit the idea of reconstruction camps in Bihar at that particular time, SCI would for the practical implementation of the project depend on the support of a network of people that included Indian politicians, British Quakers and members of the Indian Conciliation Group. The thoughts and agency of SCI's founder, Pierre Ceresole serve not only as a window into the life of an internationalist and pacifist of the time, but also illustrate the importance of political networks and ideological motivation in the internationalisation of disaster relief in the 1930s. In this context, the chapter discusses the organisation and motivation behind setting up work camps in India.

International Cooperation and Peace Building: From Europe to India

The period from the early 1800s to the Second World War has been dubbed the 'Age of Imperial Humanitarianism', characterized by ideologies of humanity and a belief that Christianity and the West defined the value of the internatio-

nal community (Barnett 2011: 30). International cooperation in both disaster relief and humanitarian aid increased significantly in the inter-war period following the First World War but despite the founding of the League of Nations and vibrant internationalism in the inter-war period, a lasting peace failed. Not until in the Second World War II, the establishment of international cooperation in war reconstruction by United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in 1943 marked what is commonly viewed as a first success in establishing an international relief community (Reinisch 2011: 260–262). Amidst a growing consciousness of international cooperation as a tool for peace, Pierre Ceresole (1879–1945) founded the Swiss-based international voluntary peace organisation Service Civil International (SCI) in 1920 (Rodriguez 2000: 1, 3). With the organisation Ceresole aimed to effectively put an end to war by setting up internationally composed work camps with foreign volunteers and local labour in disaster reconstruction, as a remedy for the conflicts he perceived to have been created by nationalism.

In this contribution I examine how SCI's work programme and strategies expanded beyond Europe to India in 1934 after Ceresole received the news of a large earthquake in Bihar and Nepal.[2] In all, Ceresole came to visit Bihar four times during the period 1934 to 1937, but the organisation would in the end send only a handful of volunteers from Europe. SCI's reconstruction camps in Bihar should not be noted foremost for the scope of the work, which was modest, but as a beginning of SCI's lasting presence in carrying out work camps in the region after independence, ranging from refugee aid in the wake of partition 1947 and 1971, cyclone rehabilitation in Bangladesh, a leprosy colony in Orissa and agricultural rehabilitation in Sri Lanka, to setting up long-term projects for "community development" (for examples see Müller 1993: 53, and Sato 2002: 1). The main part of the work between 1934 and 1937 involved the relocation of villages threatened by floods as a direct result of the changed land levels and riverbeds after the earthquake. The cooperation between the government, the Bihar Central Relief Committee (BCRC) and the SCI resulted in the Joint Flood Committee which carried out the resettlement of about one thousand families on three new village sites in November 1934.[3] Of specific

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[2] The earthquake started between 2:13 pm and 2:14 pm Indian Standard Time, 15 January 1934, and continued to be felt for a period of five minutes in the central tract (Dunn et al 1939: 1–2).

[3] The scheme was worked out by three representatives from the government, the SCI and the Bihar Central Relief Committee (BCRC) respectively: Memorandum of Discussion held on 7th December 1934, Memo No. R 5554-55, J. E. Scott, Commissioner, Tirhut Division, 8 December 1934, Muzaffarpur. Lausanne University Library (LUL), Pierre Ceresole (PC) 999. Archival material from the private papers of Pierre Ceresole in Lau-

interest in this chapter, is the way Ceresole's plan for work camps in Bihar materialized through an exchange of ideas, networks, and cooperation in Europe and India. While several factors conspired to elicit the idea of reconstruction camps in Bihar at that particular time, Ceresole would for the practical implementation of the project depend on the support of a network of people that included Indian politicians, British Quakers and members of the Indian Conciliation Group. In this context M. K. Gandhi's views on non-violence and non-cooperation would feature as an important inspiration to Ceresole, at the same time as his political contacts were important for getting the approval of setting up work camps in Bihar. The thoughts and agency of SCI's founder, Ceresole serve not only as a window into the life of an internationalist and pacifist of the time, but also illustrate the importance of political networks and ideological motivation in the internationalisation of disaster relief in the 1930s. In this context, the article discusses the organisation and motivation behind setting up work camps in India.

Ceresole's vision of the work camps in India as well as his experiences from India (1934–1937) are partly documented in his private and SCI correspondence, diaries and publications from the period. Some of Ceresole's first-hand accounts were, after being translated, edited and abridged, published in a range of newspapers in India, in England, on continental Europe, and in the SCI publication *Bulletin de 'Association du SCI* (published in French and in German). In addition to the International Archives of the Service Civil International and the private papers of Pierre Ceresole at Lausanne University Library, the most comprehensive description of Ceresole's experience in Bihar can be found in the edited letters of Ceresole, of which parts have also been translated into English.[4] It is noteworthy that his biographers (Bietenholz-Gerhard 1962; Mo-

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sanne University Library are referred to as 'PC'. The work was based from Sonathi and encompassed the transfer and rebuilding of villages from the areas Sonathi and Minapur in the district of Muzaffarpur. The committee's task of shifting villages threatened by flood was financed by the government with 50,000 rupees from the Viceroy's Earthquake Relief Fund; 43,500 rupees were granted by the BCRC, and the SCI contributed with European volunteers and the salaries for local workers. BCRC: Proceedings of the Managing Committee (11 January 1935, Sadaqat Ashram, Patna), 2 pages, PC 1006: 1.

[4] Some of Ceresole's published letters, pamphlets and reports are issued by the Service Civil International. He also wrote a number of brief accounts published in newspapers. The publication En Allemagne et aux Indes pour la paix (English translation by Palmer s.d., In Germany and India for Peace) was printed before the first collection of Ceresole's edited letters from his three longer journeys to India 1934 to 1937 were published (Andrews & Ceresole 1935, En Inde Sinistrée; Ceresole 1936: En vue de l'Himalay: Lettres du Bihar; Ceresole 1937, Aux Indes pour la paix vivante: Lettres du Bihar 1935–1937). Ceresole's widow, Lise Ceresole, with the help of friends published an edited volume of extracts from his notebooks in 1960 (Hélène Monastier, Lise Ceresole, Edmond Privat,

nastier 1946, 1960; Monastier *et al* 1960) and editor of his published notebooks (Harvey & Yates 1954) are mainly 'Friends', i.e. members of the Fellowship of Friends, or Quakers as they are commonly referred to, a community that Ceresole joined not until in 1936,[5] only nine years before his demise and after spending the preceding two years organising work camps in Bihar.[6] Like the SCI publications of the organisation's history, his biographers inevitably emphasise Ceresole's Christian spiritual inspiration while his interaction with Romain Rolland (1866–1944), and Edmond Privat (1889–1962), who were also his friends, as well as his support of pacifism and the political use of non-violence, independent of religion remain of secondary importance in these accounts. Although the inspirational source for pacifism was 'almost exclusively Christianity' in Britain in the inter-war period, socialism played an important role from the late nineteenth century (Ceadel 1980: 13). Gandhi's influence on Ceresole may also have been underplayed due to the fact that mainly members of the Society of Friends have authored Ceresole's biographical accounts. To Ceresole, the practice of non-violence was an expression of true Christianity; silent worship and prayer, on the other hand, were secondary to practical work as a means "to see and to serve God with heart, eyes and hands

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Samuel Gagnebin (eds.), Pierre Ceresole: d'après sa correspondance). According to Harvey and Yates (1954), Lise Ceresole had published the same of material under the title Vivre sa Vérité, but this is probably an confusion regarding the source: Vivre sa Vérité: Carnets de route was the name of a journal which Pierre Ceresole published from 1909 to 1944. Extracts from these publications as well as from his three volumes of letters from India mentioned above, have been translated and published in Harvey and Yates (eds), For Peace and Truth: From the Notebooks of Pierre Ceresole (1954). The International Archives of Service Civil International has produced a number of documents about Ceresole's life and ideas as well as the work of the SCI, with special reference to his experiences and its work in Asia (see for instance Sato 2002).

[5] According to Monastier, he joined the Society of Friends in 1935 (1946: 32). His letter attached with the application to join the Society of Friends is, however, dated 1 September 1936. For extracts from the letter and correspondence regarding the application, see Bietenholz-Gerhard 1967: 61–65.

[6] Most of the literature about SCI or Ceresole is written by SCI members, or former members, and 'Friends' (Quakers), for example the President of the SCI (1954) and head of the British branch of the SCI in the 1930s, John W. Harvey, who is editor and translator of Ceresole's letter (see reference to Harvey and Yates 1954). Hélène Monastier, his 'lieutenant', close friend and 'Friend', has written or edited several publication by or about Ceresole (biography by Monastier 1950). A later biography of Ceresole is dedicated to Hélène Monastier (Bietenholz-Gerhard 1962). The work camps in Bihar are described by John Somervell (J. S., also known as 'Jack' among family and friends) Hoyland (1887–1957), Quaker, former missionary, author and friend of both Ceresole and C. F. Andrews (Hoyland 1940).

as widely possible [and] not shut in any way."[7] At the same time as he was eager to explore Gandhi's method and ideas about non-violence, he was disappointed with the Christian churches' failure to actively work for peace in Europe, a feeling that grew on him during the 1930s and captured in a letter sent from the work camp in Bihar 1937:

> *"'Follow the truth where it leads' is a thing sung in hymns but which Christian Churches in a general way are constitutionally incapable of practicing. I have no doubt that the religion of Gandhiji whether it may be truly called 'Hinduism' or not – is much superior with its consistent and practical affirmation of 'Ahimsa' as foundation for the discovery of a good international political order and with its main tenet 'Truth is god' for the free honest and courageous pursuit of truth than anything which the vast majority of the present so called Christian churches may offer."[8]*

When Ceresole officially joined the Society of Friends, he was convinced by their ideals but held critical objection to certain spiritual practices of "silent service". As he wrote to Gandhi in 1936, just after he had applied and was still waiting for a reply, his request to join had contained a "very frank letter" about his difficulties with the Society's spiritual practices ("mysticism is not my strong point").[9] If they could not accept his doubts and would refuse him membership, he suggested in a letter to Gandhi that "some great advanced Hindu community might receive me".[10] Since he was subsequently accepted by the Society of Friends, the question of joining a "Hindu community" would never arise but his words underline Ceresole's openness towards other schools of thoughts.

Meeting Gandhi, Meeting Mussolini: The Political Application of Cooperation and Non-Cooperation

Three years before the earthquake, Ceresole met Gandhi in Lausanne in 1931. Like many other pacifists at that time, he took great interest in Gandhi's political philosophy and work against British colonial rule by means of non-cooperation, a method he partially practiced by refusing to pay military tax and was thereby regularly imprisoned for (Monastier 1945: 31). Their meeting and discussions, however, highlighted fundamental differences in the application of

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[7] Letter from Ceresole, Sonathi (Bihar), to Samuel Ched Phillip, 5 May 1937, PC 972.

[8] Letter from Ceresole, Sonathi (Bihar), to Samuel Ched Phillip, 5 May 1937, PC 972.

[9] P. Ceresole, Gland (Vaud), Switzerland, to M. K. Gandhi (Ashram, Wardha, C.P.) 28 October 1936, PC 976:5.

[10] P. Ceresole, Gland (Vaud), Switzerland, to M. K. Gandhi (Ashram, Wardha, C.P.) 28 October 1936, PC 976:5.

non-cooperation between the two; yet it appears to have been an exchange that inspired Ceresole with a deeper interest in Gandhi's political struggle and ideals. The two met as Gandhi was staying at Romain Rolland's home in Geneva after the Round Table Conference in London in 1931. Rolland, Nobel Prize laureate in literature in 1915, was a close friend of Ceresole and also a vocal pacifist, whose biography of Gandhi from 1923 made Europe aware of the 'Mahatma' and his work (Francis 1999: 133). Ceresole and other pacifists and conscientious objectors spent a day (9 December 1931) in Lausanne with Gandhi and discussed the "theory and practice of non-violence".[11] According to Rolland's diary extracts and correspondence recapturing the meetings, some of Gandhi's statements and ideas seemed to "profoundly shock and disturb" Ceresole and members of the International Civil Service who could not support all his ideas about non-cooperation but had been given "much painful food for thought".[12] The group of staunch pacifists seemed "afraid of everything and everyone, while he [Gandhi] fears nothing." Alongside Gandhi, "Pierre Ceresole and his phalanx of the International Civil Service [i.e. Service Civil International], looked like timid and stammering children".[13] The main difference of opinion was Gandhi's critic towards the pacifists method of resistance against a state with a "military organization"; according to Gandhi the conscientious objectors still cooperated with the state's military if they supported it in other ways by accepting the services of the state, such as schools, hospitals etc:

> *"[...] simply refusing military service is not enough. To refuse military service when the time has come is to leave action until the time available for combating the evil has practically passed. Military service is just a symptom of a deeper evil. All those not inscribed for military service still participate equally in the crime if they support the state in other ways. Anyone who supports, directly or indirectly, a state with a military organization participates in the crime"[14]* (italics in original, edited diary extract).

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[11] The discussion in the meeting was narrated to Romain Rolland by his sister Madeleine Rolland who was present at the meeting since he could not attend due to health problems. A report of the meeting by Desai is also found in Young India, "Letters from Europa (sic)". Gandhi arrived Geneva 6 December 1931. 'Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary (December 1931)' in Romain Rolland and Gandhi, p. 162.

[12] 'Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary (December 1931)' in Romain Rolland and Gandhi, p. 187. Also mentioned in letter "413. Romain Rolland to Lucien Roth (France), 24 December 1931", Ibid., pp. 451–452.

[13] Letter "413. Romain Rolland to Lucien Roth (France), 24 December 1931", Romain Rolland and Gandhi, pp. 451–452.

[14] 'Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary (December 1931)' in Romain Rolland and Gandhi, p. 185.

Ceresole, contrary to Gandhi, took a partial approach to the method of non-cooperation, arguing that "not everything in the state is bad, and that one can co-operate with the things it does which are good and useful to the community". Gandhi flipped the argument in his reply, arguing that he had faced this question in the movement of non-co-operation with the colonial government, and had come to the conclusion that "*there is no state, even run by a Nero or a Mussolini*, which has no good things in it. But we must reject the whole from the moment we decide not to co-operate with the system".[15] Ceresole, acknowledging Gandhi's experience up against colonial rulers, claimed that there was "a profound difference between an independent nation and a subject nation", yet defended his position. Gandhi agreed to the difference but clarified his views with regards to getting rid of the "military mentality." In order to do so, he meant it was necessary to give up privileges, by not sending your children to school, not sending your sick to hospital, not keeping your jobs and your salaries, not using the post and the public services, etc. Finally, "non-payment of tax is too easy, and should not come until much later", Gandhi stated. This seemingly radical move to publicly announce to refuse to pay military tax now appeared less daring in comparison to Gandhi's method that rejected any cooperation with a state supportive of violence.[16]

Ceresole's and Gandhi's respective applications of cooperation and non-cooperation thereby contained not only fundamental differences in its acceptance of violence, but could be counterproductive if cooperation was seen as tool to prevent violence in a situation where non-cooperation was used to protest violence. Ceresole's conviction that regardless of ideological outlook, cooperation between people and nations was a successful means of achieving peace and preventing war, is evident from his persistent attempts to organise work camps in Germany during the 1930s until the time of his death in 1945. Only three months before the earthquake, he set off and crossed the border in November 1933 with the intention to meet the chancellor Adolf Hitler and make inquiries into the situation in Germany (Ceresole 1934).[17] This might at first

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[15] Gandhi cited in letter by Rolland, italics in original, "412. Romain Rolland to Georges Pioch (France), Villeneuve, 23 December 1931", in Romain Rolland and Gandhi, p. 450. Again, similarly paraphrased in another letter: "417. Romain Rolland to Esther Marchand (France), Villeneuve, 30 December 1931", Ibid., p. 461.

[16] 'Extract from Romain Rolland's Diary (December 1931)' in Romain Rolland and Gandhi, p. 187.

[17] The contradictions and sometimes blind enthusiasm for his idea transpire from reading the title of the pamphlet he published in 1934, after having visited Germany and India: En Allemagne et aux Indes pour la paix. Service Civil International. Chez les réservistes du 246me d'infanterie a Stuttgart; Mon petit-neveu chez le ministre Gœring; Service aux Indes (Ceresole 1934) and later translated to English by a SCI Archives

seem like an unrealistic endeavour, but one should not forget his political connections and family networks that granted him, however briefly, access to fascist leaders as for instance after he returned from his first journey to India in 1934, he met Mussolini with the intention to persuade him about setting up international work camps for peace. In hindsight, and with the benefit of historical research outlining the violence fascism unleashed, such an attempt might have seemed doomed from the very beginning. Ceresole was however acutely aware of the dictator's fascist ideology and preference for violent solutions; indeed, he viewed Mussolini to be on the far end of the other side of the political spectrum, but nevertheless he was regarded a potential cooperation partner.[18] In the light of this display of his seemingly utopian belief in the power of relationships developed at works camps – no matter what other differences may have prevailed – the endeavor to initiate work camps with European volunteers in Bihar comes across as less of a wonder.

The Role of Political Agendas and Political Networks

Ceresole introduced the idea of setting up work camps in Bihar to C. F. Andrews with the help of his friend Lilian Stevenson, a close friend and Irishwoman in the U.K.[19] Well-connected among Quakers and missionaries in the U.K., her enterprise in introducing the idea to C. F. Andrews and a number of Quakers who were also members of the "Indian Conciliation Committee",[20] i.e. the 'Indian Conciliation Group' (ICG) would be crucial for implementing the work camps in India as they saw it as a cooperation that served their political

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volunteer, see Palmer s.d., In Germany and India for Peace. Service Civil International. With the Reservists of the 246th Infantry in Stuttgart. My Great-Nephew with Minister Goering. A Workcamp in India.

[18] "[Mussolini] did not seem to notice the contradictions and the logical gaps in his standpoint. They do not interest him. Nevertheless I have the impression to have done as much as I could and what I had to do. I think with gratefulness on this peaceful and pleasant conversation with the man whose principles in reality condemn us to death." Pierre Ceresole's Besuch bei Mussolini, am 23. Okt. 1934. Gekürzt aus Ceresole's Briefen. s.d., La Chaux-de-Fonds City Library, International Archives of Service Civil International (SCI) 10101 (in German).

[19] Stevenson was one of the founders of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in 1914. Together with her brother, a missionary who had worked in Gujarat, she had taken part in famine relief activities in India. P. Ceresole to M. K. Gandhi, Geneva, 30 March 1934, PC 976: 5. Copy of letter from the Reverend W. E. S. Holland to L. Stevenson, 17 March 1934, PC 906.

[20] Later in the summer of 1934 or 1935, Ceresole had at least one meeting planned with the group, to which 60 members were invited. 'Indian Conciliation Committee Meeting with Pierre Ceresole' on 13 June, 14 June, 19 June [no year mentioned, presumably from 1935 since Ceresole was in Bihar in June 1934], PC 1042.

agenda. The ICG, a loosely knit group of informal character, formed in Oxford in connection with the Round Table Conference in London in 1931 where its principal members had come to provide support for M. K. Gandhi at the conference (Tinker 1976: 226). On the incentive of Carl Heath, the president of the Society of Friends in London, the group of mainly Quakers began meeting in mid-October 1931, to discuss how to best inform the British public about developments in India (Carnall 2010: 102). Heath acted as a chairman, and the foundational members were C. F. Andrews, Henry Polak, and not to forget, Agatha Harrison in the role of secretary. The membership was informal and *ad hoc*, likewise the financial support for travel costs and secretarial tasks largely consisted of donations by its wealthier members. Though the group's principal idea was to work for conciliation between the British Government and Indian nationalists, it mainly focused on its closest link, M. K. Gandhi, whom they tended to equate with nationalist politics in India (Tinker 1976: 225–227; Carnall 2010: 102). Andrews was the one who first grasped the possibility of using Ceresole reconstruction camps to further the aims of the ICG by displaying the willingness of Indian nationalists to cooperate with the colonial government.[21] Cooperation in the relief work between the BCRC and the government was at that time (March 1934) being negotiated, and according to Andrews, "every gesture from non-British sources is a help in the appeasement of India",[22] could possibly help in balancing the unstable relationship.

Ceresole's close relationship with the British Quaker communities began with the inception of SCI. When Ceresole founded the SCI in 1920, he did so after gaining support for his vision of an international civil service among the communities of Christian pacifists, many of them Quakers, at the conferences of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation in Bilthoven in 1919 and 1920 (Rodriguez 2000: 2–3). It was organised pacifism guided by Christian ethics in the context of World War I that spurred him into setting up the SCI, yet his biographers and his diary entries claim that his dedication to follow a spiritual path began much earlier with private spiritual experiences as a teenager (Bietenholz-Gerhard 1962: 7). Until 1917, Ceresole had paid the taxes for men exempt from military service but the decision to refuse to pay these taxes led to estrangement from "many friends" and prison sentences (Harvey & Yates 1954 : 59–61). To him, military tax indirectly meant a contribution to war, which he,

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[21] Carl Heath, London, to Bertram Pickard, Geneva, copy sent to P. Ceresole, 12 March 1934, PC 903: 1; C. Heath, London, to B. Pickard, Geneva, copy sent to P. Ceresole, 19 March 1934, PC 903: 2.

[22] C. Heath citing Andrews' support of the cause. C. Heath to B. Pickard, 19 March 1934, PC 903: 2.

according to his biographer Monastier, found to be against his Christian consciousness and an act of "idolising" the nation-state (Monastier 1945: 31). Even if the outbreak of World War I had deeply strengthened Ceresole's Christian pacifist ideology he did not find a platform to share his ideas about an international civil service until the conferences in Bilthoven (Archives Documentation 2010: 5). Similar to SCI, these Christian associations organised a wide range of social activities for which the energies of the youth, instead of being used in warfare, were mobilized in something akin to a Franciscan tertiary order (den Boggende 2004: 609, 613). To begin with Ceresole referred to the first work camps as "international civil service" for "peace constructive" work.[23] The original name, however, was '*Service Civil*' and the organization did not gather momentum until in 1924 when it took the name of 'Service Civil International' (Harvey & Yates 1954: 79). At this point of time, the growth and institutionalisation of the SCI is likely to have been fuelled by the failure to legislate for civil service as an alternative to military service in Switzerland. A petition with 40,000 signatures for the provision of civil service as a legal provision for conscientious objectors fell through in 1923 (Ceresole 1924: no page), which although rejected, bear witness to the contemporary interest in alternatives to military service (Harvey & Yates 1954: 77–78). In 1928 the organisational scope of Ceresole's endeavour increased: SCI organised the first major international work camps with 710 volunteers from 28 countries after heavy floods in the Rhine Valley of Lichtenstein (Andrews 1935: 119; SCI timetable 20th century). The same year Ceresole argued for civil service as a manifestation of active pacifism, an alternative to military service and an antidote to war, where "faith and service" based on the principles of non-violence and physical labour laid the foundation for SCI's etho (Schermerhorn & Ceresole 1928: 336–337). To Ceresole, Quaker work camps served as an inspirational model for developing a community service that promoted "friendship" and advocated "international reconciliation". SCI would however come to differ mainly with the Quaker ideas of work camps in its emphasis on fostering an *international* community spirit (Schermerhorn & Ceresole 1928: 336–337).

The political and international context in India thereby posed a completely different scenario of 'reconciliation'. ICG members were well aware of political tensions and possible friction in organising any kind of cooperation between European pacifists, the colonial government and Indian nationalists. This is evident from the advice given to Ceresole not to mention Edmond Privat in connection with the plan, a close friend of his who had at first come up with

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[23] To begin with, in Lichtenstein, France and Switzerland, and England (Ceresole, 1934 / Trans. by Palmer s.d., p. 1).

the idea of setting up SCI camps in India.[24] Staunch in his criticism of British politics in India, Privat had fallen into disfavour with the British government.[25] Mentioning Privat's name, as a member of the ICG said, "would not help us with the Government of India", and in support of the government's perception of Privat, he too felt that "he [Edmond Privat] only saw one side of the shield."[26] Thus, the ICG's sensibilities in navigating the political environment guided as well as restricted Ceresole in choosing cooperation partners.

C. F. Andrews was the ideal facilitator for the envisioned work camps, not only because of his central role in the Indian Conciliation Group and as one of the closest European friends of Gandhi,[27] but also as the foremost campaigner for earthquake relief funds upon personal requests by Rabindranath Tagore, M. K. Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad (Chaturvedi & Sykes 1949: 276). After Andrews had gained the support of the leading ICG members for Ceresole's plan, he hurried to Switzerland to help Ceresole prepare for India by introducing him to a number of Indian politicians and their networks, which effectively set up the arrangements for Ceresole's arrival in India.[28] Having secured the support of Rajendra Prasad, Ceresole had already in Geneva prepared for meetings between the Government of Bihar and Orissa, the BCRC and the SCI.[29] In Patna, he met with government officials, first the Relief Commissioner Brett who had

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[24] According to Ceresole, Edmond Privat had sent him a note: "What about our Indian friends in Behar [i.e. Bihar]? Is the I[nternational].V[oluntary]. S[ervice]. not going to move?" P. Ceresole, Geneva, to M. K. Gandhi, 30 March 1934, PC 976: 5. See also Andrews and Ceresole 1935, p. 62.

[25] Privat actively worked for India's independence from 1932 to 1939 in the role as chairman for "the European Committee for India's Independence" which he founded upon his return to Switzerland after a tour in India with M. K. Gandhi (Roy Choudhury 1976: 7). In 1932, Privat criticized British colonial policy; this had apparently given him a bad name with the British government. Copy of letter from R. M. Gray [Reverend Robert M. Gray] to Lilian Stevenson, 14 March 1934, PC 905. According to Stevenson, C. F. Andrews agreed with Gray's standpoint that it was better to keep Privat's name out of the plan. 'Information about Bihar given by C.F. Andrews to Lilian Stevenson', 16 March 1934, L. Stevenson to P. Ceresole, and with his notes. PC 990.

[26] Copy of letter from R.M. Gray to L. Stevenson, forwarded to P. Ceresole, 14 March 1934, PC 905.

[27] In later accounts from 1935, the respective narratives of Andrews and Ceresole credited the other with extending a "request" or an "offer" for relief workers to be sent to Bihar. (Ceresole in Appendix 'A Letter from Pierre Ceresole' in Andrews 1935, pp. 118, 123)

[28] Questions by Ceresole prepared for a meeting with Andrews in March 1934 (with notes), 22 March 1934, PC 1053. "Lettre Générale II, Bombay 25 April 1934" in Andrews and Ceresole 1935, pp. 50, 56; Andrews 1935, pp. 11, 118–119.

[29] However, Ceresole's stay was overshadowed by the passing away of Rajendra Prasad's brother Mahendra Prasad, leaving little time for Rajendra Prasad to discuss the matter with Ceresole. R. Prasad to P. Ceresole, P.O. Zeradai, 6 June 1934, PC 865:3.

been informed about his plans by the Information Bureau in Simla (Andrews & Ceresole 1935: 56). Not only ICG's good connections with Indian nationalists proved to ease the work of Ceresole and the SCI; their contacts also included influential persons high up in the British administration at the India Office. Spreading information and getting access to high officials was the ICG's main strengths, according to Tinker (1976: 225), an asset well tendered for the SCI work camps. In the context of ICG's informal networking with British colonial officials, they emphasised Ceresole's family of 'influence and standing', most notably his father, a Colonel in the Swiss army and a federal judge, was the President of the Swiss Confederation in 1873 (Hoyland 1940: 101), as well as his profession as an engineer and mathematician with degrees in mechanical engineering from the university in Zürich and post-graduate work in mathematics and physics at the universities in Göttingen and Munich (Harvey & Yates 1954: 16–17). In New Delhi, Agatha Harrison, the secretary of the India Conciliation Group,[30] had approached the government and requested to information about Ceresole's visit to be passed on to the Government of Bihar and Orissa. Boiled down by the India Office, information about his status as "a Swiss of good family and a pacifist", a man with connections in Europe, the son of a former President of the Swiss confederation was passed on to the Government of India. The account described his work as a way "to give practical expression to the international co-operation movement." In addition to the unequivocally supportive information provided by the ICG, the India Office cautioned the Government of India to pay attention to his whereabouts and "keep him the right way" but thought him unlikely to be "troublesome politically".[31] ICG's heavy lobbying for Ceresole's work as that of a pacifist and of having practical concern for the earthquake victims helped to portray his work as non-political. His reluctance to associate himself with political parties is reflected in the Local Government's description of him as "a friend of Gandhi, Prasad and Andrews, but not necessarily pro-Congress."[32] Although Ceresole's movements and contacts were monitored by sub-inspectors[33] and the Commissioner of Tirhut,[34] his elevated status evidently protected him as "strict orders" prevented the police from

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[30] 'Agatha Harrison's visit to India' The Friend, 30 July 1934, p. 669.

[31] H. MacGregor to I. M. Stephenson (Director, Public Information, Home Department., New Delhi, Government of India,) Air mail, Information Officer's Department. India Office, Whitehall, London, 10 April, 1934.

[32] 'Visit of Pierre Ceresole, a Swiss, to the earthquake areas of Bihar.' April 1934, Patna, Bihar State Archives (BSA), Political Department – Special Branch (PS) 94–1934.

[33] Copy of a Special Branch Sub-inspector's report dated Patna, 15 December 1934, BSA, PS 140–1934.

[34] G (?) to Scott, DO NO 1433-C, 1 April 1935, BSA, PS 5–1935.

interfering in his work.[35] Even after some of the camp's workers were accused of a minor dacoity and relief distribution was believed of going towards "political agents", the police was told "not to antagonize" people from his work camp.[36] The ICG were in this way instrumental in facilitating Ceresole's good relationship with the government by introducing him in a politically favourable light.
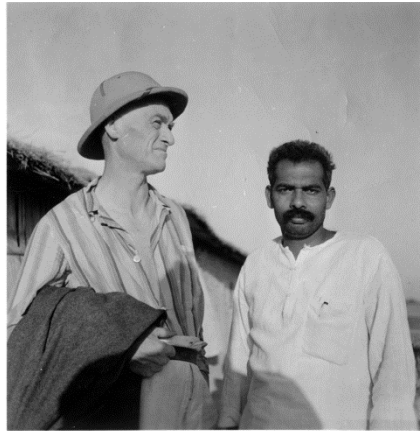
Fig. 1: "The two managers" ("Die beiden Manager"), Pierre Ceresole and Phanindra Mohan Dutta at Sonathi centre, also called Shantipur, the "Peace Village" (Photo album 'Zivildienst in Indien', section two 'Im Camp', 1935, SCI 60501:1)

Before sending volunteers to work in Bihar, Ceresole had with the help of Andrews first to convince the members of the ICG who were from the outset divided in the vision of what the undertaking could achieve.[37] The idea of peace

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[35] C.B.D. Murray, police superintendent, Muzaffarpur to Ceresole. Answer to letter of 22 December 1934, 23 December 1934, PC 943: 1.

[36] Extract from the DIG's (CID) weekly report, Sd/- R.E. Russell, 8 January 1935, also mentioned in the April and September reports, BSA, PS 5-35.

[37] Ceresole, in a letter to M. K. Gandhi (30 March 1934) listed a number of persons in support of the plan: "Percy Bartlett, secretary of the British F.O.R.; Carl Heath of the Friends International Service; Bertram Pickard, secretary of the Friends center in Geneva; Herbert Gray, leader of the "Peace Army" in London; R. M. Gray, his brother, formerly missionary in India; W. E. S. Holland, formerly head of a Missionary College in

building by cooperation needed explanation since they perceived the work camps as a means for providing material aid to the earthquake sufferers. One of the very few publications focusing on SCI in South Asia, the chapter 'Friedensarbeit und Dritte Welt. Der Service Civil International (SCI) in Indien, 1934-1937 und ab 1950' ('Peace Work and the Third World. Service Civil International (SCI) in India, 1934–1937 and from 1950') by Regina Müller argues that M. K. Gandhi's work with "untouchables" and socio-economic village improvement programmes inspired Ceresole to build "model villages" and thereby shift the organisational focus to material outcomes rather than mainly peace building and reconciliation in the "third world" (Müller 1993: 49). According to sources utilized for this article, Gandhi's political application of non-violence and non-cooperation served as inspiration to Ceresole, but a change in the organizational goals was mainly due to the fact that the camps were run largely by the BCRC and only a small number of European volunteers participated. The number of European volunteers were only a handful due to the cost involved in the passage to India, and not since labor in India was cheap, as Müller appears to have argued (1993: 50).

The cost of volunteers and the role of Europeans as worker or leaders were however concerns raised by members of the ICG. C. F. Andrews' enthusiasm for the work camps as "above material help" was important in order to convince Carl Heath, the influential co-founder of the ICG, its chairman and the president of the Society of Friends in London.[38] Heath's first reply upon hearing about the idea was outright in the negative: it was impractical and expensive to send labour, enough relief fund collections were in place and the "Imperial government" had taken action in administering funds, besides there were "hundreds of capable Indian people to engage", and therefore the cost of sending volunteers all the way from Europe made little sense.[39] After having met with Andrews only a few days later, his attitude towards the idea had changed completely. Heath was however still worried that this "help" in the form of reconstruction camps might be misinterpreted. Apart from practical inconveniences for the Europeans, such as the approaching heat and the infrastructural

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India; Jack [J.S.] Hoyland, author of prayers for an Indian College; Horace Alexander, Mr. Polak, Alec Wilson." In addition Romain Rolland, as well as "the [International] Committee for India" in Geneva with the members Madeleine Rolland, Mrs. Hörup Madame Kretschmer, de Light, also supported the idea. Letter, Pierre Ceresole to M. K. Gandhi, 30 March 1934, PC 976: 5.

[38] C. Heath, London, to B. Pickard, Geneva, copy sent to P. Ceresole, 12 March 1934, PC 903: 1; C. Heath, London, to B. Pickard, Geneva, copy sent to P. Ceresole, 19 March 1934, PC 903: 2.

[39] C. Heath to B. Pickard, 12 March 1934, (copy sent to P. Ceresole), PC 903: 1.

breakdown in the earthquake area, the endeavour might be regarded as having what he called a "dominating attitude". Even though Heath understood that the people involved claimed to have no such intention, he meant that "the fact of people going, and being Europeans, might have that sort of tendency".[40] Confirming Carl Heath's suspicion that sending European volunteers might be understood as a paternalistic enterprise rather than as the intended act of solidarity, other ICG members regarded the role of European volunteers as resembling leaders or supervisors. Doubts regarding the Europeans' roles as anything but supervisors were expressed in other comments, more explicitly stating the perceived differences between Indians and Europeans. Percy W. Bartlett, an active Quaker and leading member of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (Bartlett 1932), had initially discarded the idea of SCI going to Bihar for several reasons – the hot season was coming, the amount spent on the journey to India would by far surpass the value of the labour provided by the Europeans, while "there is no lack, far from it, of labour [in Bihar and/or India]."[41] As criticism against the cost of sending volunteers from Europe to India was common, Andrews' enthusiasm for Ceresole's plan as "extending beyond material help" helped to convince them to support the endeavour.[42] Ceresole was well aware of not only the ICG members', but also the public's common conception that sending Europeans to Bihar as volunteers would financially be a wasteful project. When questioned about the sense in sending more or less unskilled volunteers all the way from Europe to Bihar, considering the costs of such an endeavour, Ceresole described the work as "beyond and above material help" (Ceresole in Andrews 1935: 125).

The power relationship between Europeans and Indians was of concern to Andrews who shared Ceresole's understanding that cooperation between Indians and Europeans was central to the plan. Later as he outlined the motivations for the first volunteers to be sent, he emphasised that it was important for the Europeans to work side-by-side with the Indian workers, not taking the role of leaders. He had from the outset emphasised that if sending Europeans to India,

> "[they were] not going to 'direct a sector' [...] but [should be] ready to serve under the Indians and to be mixed and scattered among them, [and] not work in a 'block' of themselves.[43]

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[40] C. Heath to B. Pickard, 19 March 1934, (copy sent to P. Ceresole), PC 903: 2.
[41] Copy of letter from Percy W. Bartlett, to Lilian Stevenson, 13 March 1934 (copy sent to P. Ceresole), PC 904: 1.
[42] C. Heath to B. Pickard, 19 March 1934, PC 903: 2.
[43] C. F. Andrews to L. Stevenson, 31 July 1934, PC 930: 2.

In order to prevent work conditions where Indians acted as workers and Europeans as leaders in the envisioned work camps, C. F. Andrews unofficially made it clear to the ICG and Ceresole that certain preconditions had to be fulfilled for a volunteer to be considered. A volunteer would have to accept "to serve under Indian leadership, as well as to lead any such work", and "no leader will go out from Europe who is unacceptable in India itself."[44] Apart from Ceresole's appreciation of the peasants' positive attitude to having European volunteers (Ceresole in Andrews 1935: 125), little is known about the reception of the idea among the earthquake-affected in Bihar. Ceresole described the work in Bihar as an extension of the voluntary "peace service" in Europe in terms of methods and desired outcome (Ceresole in Andrews 1935: 125), yet it is unclear if the idea was further explained to the Indian workers who took part.

Despite Andrews' and Ceresole's initial intention to make European volunteers work together with Indian local workers, the European volunteers were in the end only a handful of so-called "leaders". In the end, the cost of the journey to India restricted the number of volunteers from Europe to India, although Ceresole to no avail tried to get a "working passage" for the recruited team members.[45] Upon returning to Europe from his first visit to Bihar, Ceresole explained to the media that he had no plans of "recruiting bands of relief workers in Europe", but would assign one man of "wide international and practical outlook" to lead "a band of fifty Indian peasants". This man would be required to labour, "to work together on the hard manual work needed with spade and basket". In addition there would be an interpreter present and enough funds to support the workers for six months.[46] Despite the contradictory guidelines regarding the nature of the work the European volunteers would take on, Ceresole held on to his vision of Europeans taking part in the manual labour, like in the work camps carried out in Europe.

Conclusion: Cooperation as "Beyond and Above Material Help"

The work camps in Bihar were to a great extent made possible by Ceresole's connection with British Quakers, a relationship based on their shared dedication for pacifism. The Quakers in the extended friend circles of Ceresole were at the same time engaged in colonial politics through the Indian Conciliation

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[44] C. F. Andrews to L. Stevenson, 31 July 1934, PC 930: 2.

[45] The attempt to acquire "working passages" was carried out with the help of A. D. Henderson and Percy Bartlett. A. D. Henderson to Percy Bartlett, London, 28 August 1934, PC 936; Geo. Hancock (Aberdeen & Commonwealth Line) to A. D. Henderson, London, 27 August 1934; Geo. Hancock (Aberdeen & Commonwealth Line) to A. D. Henderson, London, 22 August 1934, PC 937.

[46] 'A Plan for Indian Earthquake Relief', The Friend, 27 July 1934, p. 686.

Group, by them viewed as a form of pacifist work in informal diplomacy to conciliation. For Ceresole and the SCI, the ICG's influence by lobbying and networking helped to set up the cooperation with the local Indian nationalists in Bihar as well as with the colonial government. Contrary to Ceresole, who was outspokenly apolitical in his application of reconciliation, ICG had a political agenda of conciliation that strived to avoid public confrontation between the colonial government and Indian nationalists. Ceresole's vision of the work camps' reconciliatory effect between the colonial government and Indian nationalist was in this regard used as a political tool by the ICG, as a display and a means to 'show' that cooperation was possible, rather than them being concerned with actual improved relations.

The idea of work camps as a space where 'friendship' between participants would lead to reconciliation and peace building, was not only doubted as feasible in the case of India but sending international volunteers turned out to be finically unviable due to the travel costs. Although the organisers involved in sending international volunteers accepted the idea to be "beyond and above material help" as Ceresole emphasized (in Andrews 1935: 125), many questioned if it was possible for the Europeans to have a friendly cooperation without dominating or being perceived as imposing themselves on Indians. The suitability of the volunteers in terms of understanding the political situation and showing a willingness to work with Indians rather than giving orders was therefore a primary concern. In the European context the international volunteers and local workers cooperated in rebuilding material assets and relations to reconcile losses in war and disasters, while in India, Europeans labouring together with Indians turned out to be envisioned as a minor component of the work camps.

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Sketching a Forgotten Cartoonist:
Mohanlal Mahto 'Viyogi' (1901–1990)

Prabhat Kumar

Abstract

This short paper is an introductory sketch of a cartoonist who is lost in history but found in the archives. His name is Mohanlal Mahto 'Viyogi' (1901–1990). The paper begins with a brief biographical note. It then looks into his cartooning practice. It provides a glimpse into the relationship between the cartoonist and his editors, and examines the cultural lineages of his artistic repertoire. The paper focuses on the political cartoons dealing with anti-colonial and reformist politics during the high tide of Gandhian nationalism. It highlights the anomaly of nationalist politics from the cartoonist's standpoint, and in turn, reconstructs his political views and visions.

Cartoon, which is an indispensable part of a variety of journalistic production in India, from film and fashion to politics and business, is a development less than one and a half centuries old. The cartoon as a literary-artistic genre was introduced and popularized in the late nineteenth century colonial India. It came, firstly, through English language satirical periodicals like the *Punch,* which were published in England, and subsequently by British owned Indian satirical journals. Very soon cartoons became a significant part of not only English as well as vernacular language satirical journals owned by Indians, but also of non-satirical magazines. From the first decade of the twentieth century onwards, cartoons started appearing regularly in most Indian language periodicals – literary or political – and were assigned a fixed space within their pages.[1]

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[1] Cartoon or for that matter any visual illustration appears relatively late (not before 1880s) in Hindi periodicals. Modern Hindi prose in the nineteenth century was only in its formative stage, attempting to distinguish, define and develop itself against the rich literary tradition of Urdu. Hindi periodicals were also in the nascent stage and lagged far behind their Urdu and Bengali counterparts in terms of appearance and attractiveness of format. Lack of readership, the slow expansion of the Hindi middle class, and the slow growth of the concomitant new literary and political institutional spaces (which were yet to be expanded through the politics of Hindi nationalism), put a great economic constraint on Hindi publicists. The richness of formats like visual illustrations, cartoons etc., which demanded the mobilization of bigger editorial teams and greater financial

Cartoons were also printed and circulated widely in the form of independent booklets and single block prints from the start of the 1920s.[2] In recent years scholars have turned their attention to the history and culture of cartoon production in colonial India (see Harder & Mittler 2013). While the existing works have begun to illuminate the history of cartoons, there is surprisingly little knowledge about the cartoonists in colonial India, except the famous ones like K. Shankar Pillai or Gaganendranath Tagore (see for example Khanduri 2014; Suderson 2017). If cartoons were published in almost all major vernacular periodicals roughly from the turn of twentieth century (and certainly so in the case with Hindi print about which I am more familiar), there must be many more cartoonists at work. For example, if we look at the initials below the cartoons published between 1920s and 1930s in major Hindi monthlies and weeklies,[3] we can easily notice that there were more than half a dozen cartoonists contributing regularly. They signed variously as D. N. Verma, Shiksharthi, Bakshi, Goswami, M. K. Verma, Hakim Muhammad Khan, Mohanlal Mahto Gayawal, Rameshwar Prasad Varma, etc. But we know little about them beyond their initials or names.

This short paper presents an introductory sketch of one such cartoonist who is lost in history but found in the archives. His signature is unmistakably

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backing to employ specialist illustrators, remained a rare phenomenon and seem to have started only at the turn of the century. Stray attempts by the editors to draw and publish cartoons began in the 1890s. This situation changed from the early years of twentieth century, as voluntary associations loosely connected with each other and working to establish Hindi libraries in small and big towns of North India had created another public space for the consumption of Hindi journals. Along with a substantial increase in the number of educated middle class Hindus as a result of the spread of the colonial education system, these sections were becoming increasingly aware of their community identity and we find that literary institutions were striving to educate and serve the Hindi nation through periodicals. Furthermore, between 1920 and 1940 the rise of anti-colonial mobilization under middle class leadership in the aftermath of the First World War, there was a massive increase in the number and circulation of periodicals. Publisher-editors could now survive, although with huge difficulty, without official or institutional patronage. They could rely on the subscription of (nationalist) readers and institutions. Not only did periodicals increase in numbers but their circulation figures rose as well.

[2] Several antecedents of cartoon publications can be traced before 1920s. Radhacharan Goswami's journal Bhārtendu used to publish cartoons in 1890s. Similarly, Amritlal Chakravarti, the editor of Hindi-baṃgavāsī, mentions in his memoir serialised in Viśāl Bhārat that his periodical used to publish cartoons targeting Congress politicians. Amrtlāl Cakravartī, "Ātma-saṃsmaraṇ -10", Viśāl Bhārat, December, 1935. Cartoons on literary subject matters were regularly published in the initial years of Sarasvatī (1902–1903) but then discontinued.

[3] I have consulted Prabhā (Kanpur 1920), Mādhurī (Lucknow, 1924), Sudhā (Lucknow, 1927), Cānd (Allahabad, 1922), Matvālā (Calcutta, 1923), Hindu Pañc (Calcutta, 1926), Sarasvatī (Allahabad, 1900), Viśāl Bhārat (Calcutta, 1926), and Gaṅgā (Bhagalpur, 1930).

noticed in the leading Hindi periodicals of 1920s and 1930s. Although he finds mention in the twentieth century literary history as a Hindi writer and poet, he is no longer remembered as a cartoonist. His name is Mohanlal Mahto 'Viyogi' (1901–1990), who signed also as Pandit Mohanlal Mahto Gayawal or as Pandit/Shri Mohanlal Mahto.[4] We shall first provide a very short biographical note; we shall then look into his cartooning practice. Further we shall dwell upon the relationship between the cartoonist and his editors, and examine the cultural lineages of his artistic repertoire. Needless to say, all of his available cartoons are not practically possible to discuss in this paper. We shall mainly focus on his political cartoons dealing with anti-colonial and reformist politics during the high tide of Gandhian nationalism. This will help us see the anomaly of nationalist politics from the cartoonist's standpoint, and in turn enable us to reconstruct his political views and visions.

Biographical Note

Mohanlal was born in the orthodox family of Gayawal Brahmin, an educationally backward but rich and landed endogamous priestly community, connected with the death ceremony of Hindus. His father, like a typical patriarch in Gayawal household, was a feared strongman in the holy town of Gaya. His mother died when he was very young. An emaciated, motherless boy was not the beloved son of his macho father. An atypical male Gayawal child, Mohanlal preferred reading and art over wrestling and other masculine pursuations. He learned the art of drawing from his step-mother, a Marathi woman who, unlike her Gayawal counterparts, did not observe *parda* and had literary-artistic interests. Mohanlal tells us in his memoir that he could not withstand the company of his father and, by extension, the lumpen brashness and the culture of violence which marked the Gayawal economic and social life. After elementary education in Persian, Hindi, and English at home, he learned Sanskrit for some years with a famous Pandit-scholar of the town. He also went to study in Rabindranath Tagore's *Shanti Niketan* where he learnt Bengali and exposed himself to Bengali literary tradition. Later he learned Pali in close intellectual association with Kashi Prasad Jayaswal, a barrister and nationalist historian, and was introduced to Indian philosophy by Pandit Ramavatar Sharma, a towering intellectual and professor at Patna College. He was part of the circle of young Patna/Bihari Hindi intellectuals like Rambriksha Benipuri, Shivpujan Sahay, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, Gangasharan Singh and Rahul Sankrityayana.

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[4] Biographic information given below is sourced primarily from Parimalendu, 2007 and Vibhākar, 2018. For ethnographic details on the economic and cultural life of Gayawal Brahmins see Prasad, 1952.

Most of them were young anti-colonial nationalists with strong socialist leanings. Alongside trying his hands on cartoons and children's literature, he wrote romantic poetry and short stories with progressive socialist leanings in his literary career between 1920s and 1940s. To cite a few examples, *Ek Tārā* (The Lone Star), is a collection of romantic/mystical (Chāyāvādī) poetry, which finds mention in the canon of Hindi literary history (Viyogī 1927). Similarly, *Rajᵏkaṇ* (The Dust) published around 1930s is a collection of his stories. The title story is a belles-lettres which celebrates the dust over the jewel. The stories in this collection deal with a variety of issues pertaining to rural lives. They focus on poverty class-caste oppression, infant mortality, childhood and childlessness, social implications of natural calamity, illness and accident, love, sacrifice and rebellion by protagonists belonging to lower as well as upper castes; and stories allegorically illuminating the questions of authorial commitment to progressive literary aesthetics, agenda and sentiments. (Viyogī n.d.).

Later in 1950s he published his historical researches on India in the age of *Jatakas* (Viyogī 1958), a novel on ascendency of the westernized cultural-moral ethos and decline of traditional virtues of Indianness in India (Viyogī 1957), and a long epic poem on cultural history of India based on the medieval Hindi epic Prithvirājrāso (Viyogī 1955). He was one of the rarest Gayawals active with Indian National Congress and was closer to the socialist intellectuals and political leaders of Bihar. After independence, he went on to become the president of Hindi Literary Conference of Bihar, and was also nominated as a Member of Legislative Council (MLC) by the Congress government in Bihar.

The Freelance Cartoonist

In the first decade of the last century the editor, for example Mahavir Prasad Dvivedi, would conceptualize the cartoon and give direction to the artist with elaborate detail. On editor's notice the artist would supply him the cartoon as per the order (see Siṃh 1951). While editors could still solicit cartoons from editorial artists, from 1920s a cartoonist could draw on his own and supply his art-piece to an editor and journal of his choice. Available letters of Mohanlal provide the impression that he was a freelance cartoonist who also wrote stories, poems, criticism, etc., for Hindi periodicals. To him, making cartoons was also part of the larger nationalist project of filling in the empty treasure of Hindi. He was not an artist employed for doing artwork, illustration, or cartoon as part of an editorial team of any particular journal. He did not draw on editor's demand. Typically, he sketched the cartoons on his own and asked his editors if they were interested in publishing them. On receiving an affirmative reply he sent them with his comments to publish. At least this seems to be the

case in the early part of his career. We, however, do not know the exact amount of remuneration he got for his cartoon. What is certain, as per his letters to his friend and editor Shivpujan Sahay, is that he received payment for his cartoons which he sent through Value Payable Post (VPP).

Following is the excerpt from a long letter, dated 5 Feb 1931, written to Shivpujan Sahay, the editor of *Gaṅgā* (see Shivpujan Sahay Papers):

> "*Dear brother Shivpujan, [...] Two cartoons are sent in your service. First one is Sanātan Dharma. Mr. paṇḍā and Mr. mathādhīś of the pantheon are begging for the revival of Sanātan Dharma. The style of begging is worth looking at. Sanātan Dharma himself is standing in between the two. I have written my name beneath the visual, send that for [printing] as well, lest it is missed while its bloc is being made [...] Hope you keep both the visuals for Gaṅgā, will send the story soon.*"

Fig. 1: *The patrons of Sanātan Dharma! (Gaṅgā, March 1931)*
Caption: *How long will Sanātan Dharma live on its patrons' hold? If patrons are callous, they are bound to suck their protégée's blood[1])*

That the visual was accepted for publication is evident from the fact that it appeared in the March 1931 issue of the literary monthly *Gaṅgā*. The same cartoon was printed with an edited caption which succinctly summarized what the cartoonist Mohanlal wished to communicate through his description of the cartoon. See Figure 1, *Sanātan Dharma* resembles an old emaciated Hindu peasant patriarch and stands sandwiched between a *paṇḍā* and a *mathādhīś* who look similar to a debauch and cruel landlord and a corrupt priest. They are sitting luxuriously and collecting money to rejuvenate *Sanātan Dharma*. Similarly, in another undated letter Mohanlal described a cartoon to his editor as follows:

"In this cartoon I have tried to show how [the vitals of] cow like Hindu jan'tā (masses/people) are being sucked by the tīrtheś (the priests of pilgrimage centers). On looking at the eyes of the cow you will realize that jan'tā are now paying attention towards [such exploitations]. She no longer is willing to be sucked..."

Fig. 2: Sucking Milk or Blood? (Gañgā, March 1931)

This cartoon (see Figure 2) was also printed in the same issue of Gañgā with an edited caption:

"Keep sucking to the maximum, unaware of the impending tempest.
You will vanish without a trace, in a fraction of a moment."

Many of his cartoons, like the two shown above, scathingly attacked exploitation of Hindu believers and the pitiable condition of their 'eternal' religion by the priestly class which managed powerful religious establishments. It could

not have been a coincidence, but a self-conscious political move by Mohanlal to critique his own community of Gayawal Brahmin priests and the latter's outrageous treatment of the Hindu pilgrims in the holy city of Gaya.

Transcultural Genealogies of Cartoon

Cartoon as an art form was introduced to India and other countries beyond Europe via the nineteenth century English satirical weekly, the *Punch*. The Indian cartoonists developed this art form further drawing simultaneously on the multiple indigenous literary and visual resources and representational repertoire (see Kumar 2013). In his cartooning practice in general Mohanlal too mined the traditional Indian conventions of representing the corrupt socio-religious establishment. Side by side he productively mobilized the language and representational practices of popular nationalism. On the one hand, he invoked the convention of ridiculing and criticizing the figure of a rich, fat, debauch, greedy, dishonest, airhead Brahmin priest, a tradition widely prevalent in Sanskrit, Pali and vernacular literary as well as oral and performative traditions (see Novetzke 2011; Siegel 1987). On the other hand, he unmistakably used the modern political vocabulary which divided the world between the class of exploiters and the mass of exploited, the corrupt incompetent elites unaware of historic forces of transformation and the awakening mass as harbinger of change. The usage of terms like "awakened and angry Hindu masses (*janˈtā*)", "priests (*tīrtheŝ*) sucking into the vitals of the people", depiction of the body language of a *pañdā* as arrogant indigenous landlord-moneylender, etc. was clearly marked by deep socialist overtones. Such representational strategies reinscribed the domain of the traditional and religious with new meanings, and rendered it into overtly political and modern.

Fig. 3: Loyalty (Mādhurī, July 1926)
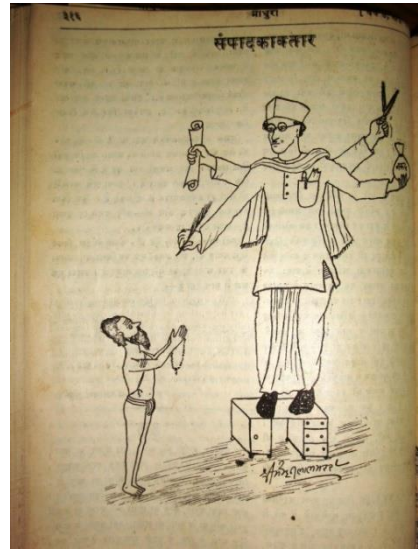
Fig. 4: Editor-incarnate (Mādhurī, February 1926)

In cases of cartoons on explicitly modern political subjects involving political and literary power, such eclectic borrowing is equally salient. For example, see figure 3 and 4 above. *Loyalty* draws upon the popular classic, the *Ramayana* and refigures it with contemporary colonial politics. Like the legendary monkey-god Hanuman, lord Rama's loyal servant and devotee par excellence, the Indian elite opens his chest to show his master that deep inside his heart resides no one but the lord himself. *Editor-incarnate* likewise, invokes the tale of Lord Vishnu's incarnation. It shows the all powerful editor, like the four-armed Vishnu, in possession of money, editorial snip, pen and paper. His god-like larger than life gaze falls on his awestruck worshipper, a begging Brahmin sage – the writer.

Cartooning Indian Nationalists and Gandhi

Mohanlal made cartoons on all kinds of topical issues, literary and religious to social and political. Needless to say, he drew cartoons attacking British imperialism and its exploitation of India. For example see figure 5 below.

An Indian, represented as a barely clothed frail man resembling a Brahmin beggar who is standing on the map of India, is shown as lifting on his shoulders the burden of a fat European who is carrying gigantic war ships. Taking cue from the title it is suggested that the Indians are nothing but the victims of the hunter, i.e. British imperialism, and his expeditions. The empire, arguably, sustained itself by piggybacking and exploiting its colony's human and material resources. Beyond delivering strong political message, this cartoon is also innovative in its representation of India. It is obvious that the Indian map has acquired a degree of familiarity amidst the print reading public. Its tiny size is no hindrance to its representation. Yet, what is strikingly different is that the cartography of *Bharatmata* (Mother India) is neither imposing nor iconic like a goddess. It

Fig. 3: The Hunter and the Prey (Mādhurī, March 1926)

is a flattened and crushed landscape holding her son perishing under the burden of imperialism. The flattened and crushed cartography of *Bharatmata* seems to be Mohanlal's artistic innovation. He uses it in many of his cartoons including the next one given below.

Mohanlal's political cartoons attacked not only British colonialism and Indian loyalists as seen in figure 5 and 3 above, but took to task even the Indian nationalists, especially those who were purportedly compromised and not radical enough in their opposition to the alien government. They were, arguably, working inside the colonial political institutions for petty political gains. They were, in the cartoonist's eyes, hungry for power and money. As a militant nationalist he lampooned constitutionalists, the Swarajists as well as the new breed of corrupt congressmen.

Prabhat Kumar
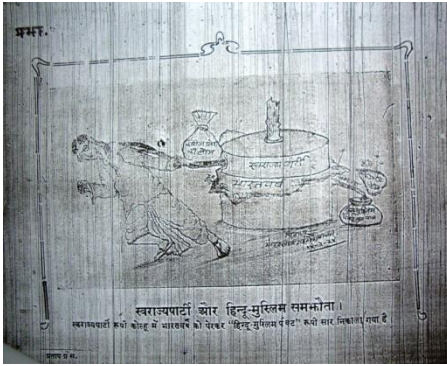
Fig. 4: Swaraj Party and Hindu-Muslim Pact (Prabhā, April 1924)
Caption: After crushing India in the oil pressing machine of Swaraj Party, the extract has come out in the form of "the Hindu-Muslim Pact"

Fig. 5: Untitled (Gaṅgā, November-December 1934)
Caption: In 1919 – While running around I wish to die
In 1929 – While going to prison I wish to die
In 1934 – While protecting Harijan-fund I wish to – He He He

Figure 6 attacks the Swaraj Party, which wished to participate in the colonial political institution to voice the nationalist political opinion in the legislative assembly. Such cartoons projected the Swaraj Party leaders as those deviating from the ideals of self-less dedication to the cause of uncompromising anti-colonial nationalism. Ironically, the Swaraj party leaders or the Congressmen who were in favour of participation in colonial representational bodies in gen-

eral, the cartoon highlighted, were working hard to enjoy the power of those electoral bodies, that too for monetary benefits! The cartoon lampooned the fact that even after working so hard and crushing [the rising tide of] anti-colonial Indian nationalism what has come out in the end is a "useless" *Hindu-Muslim Pact* and the financial allure of entry into the Councils.[5] Similarly, figure 7 chastised the fall of the congressmen and rampant financial corruption in the rank and file. While the typical congressman wished to be the indefatigable gentleman spreading nationalist messages across the nation in 1919 and was more than willing to take the risk of being imprisoned by the colonial government for anti-colonial activities as self-sacrificing Gandhian, in 1934 he has acquired opportunist proportions. He is now a slothful congress leader amassing wealth from the funds collected for nationalist reconstruction programmes. He is now fat and happy to be the treasurer of the funds collected for *Harijan*/untouchable welfare.

The cartoonist Mohanlal, however, was also not uncritical of Mahatma Gandhi and his politics. At times Gandhi enters into his cartoons, either as a saintly contrast to corrupt congress rank and file or he is portrayed as a lone figure chanting his noble message against such odds. See for example figure 8. The captions are self-explanatory.

Fig. 6: *Earner and Consumer (Gaṅgā, November-December 1934.)*
Caption: *Gandhi the Earner is lean and thin like dry ginger, and the donation-devourer's belly is spreading endlessly*

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[5] The Bengali nationalist leader Chittaranjan Das was instrumental in the making of the Pact in 1923. It was a compromise between Hindu and Muslim politicians in Bengal with regard to distribution of power in local bodies on the basis of the formula of separate electorate for each community. According to the pact, the majority/Muslims would have got 60% and the minority/Hindus 40% of the seats. This could have led to Muslim leaders in power in 16 districts and Hindus in 9 districts. This pact was never implemented due to fierce opposition within and outside Congress by the Hindu leaders. See Ray (1983: 310–316).

Fig. 7: Mahatma Gandhi (Gaṅgā, November-December 1934)

Caption:
Now I shall only chant the name of lord Rama.
I'll be in service of untouchables, shall not insist on going to jail.
Now I shall only chant the name of lord Rama.

However, it appears that Mohanlal, like many of his other male upper caste nationalist/socialist comrades, seems to be critical of Gandhi; he was particularly critical of Gandhi's take on the socio-religious question. He did not quite appreciate the Gandhian programme of rural reconstruction, especially his organization called *Harijan Sevak Sangha* (Society for the service of 'untouchables'/people of god) for two interrelated reasons. One, he found in it a diversion from the popular militant anti-colonial struggle. Two, instead of waging anti-imperialist agitation, leaders were mired in corruption and slothfulness. See, for example, figure 9 above. It depicts Gandhi as a *vaishnava* devotee ecstatically engrossed with the 'religious' question of untouchability and thus, it is insinuated, turning away from the political question of freedom and anti-colonial agitation. The language of the caption, *brajbhasha*, is also suggestively emblematic. Gandhi is singning in the language of medieval *Bhakti* poetry!

Mohanlal was not only skeptical of Gandhi's social programme but he was not very enthusiastic about the prospect of Hindu-Muslim unity as evinced by Gandhi and the Congress either. As per his own understanding the cartoonist laid bare the problems underlying the implementation of such an agenda. Two examples will suffice. See figures 10 and 11.

Fig. 8: How is unity possible?
(Prabhā, October 1924)

Mohanlal believed that the public controversy over the issues of cow-slaughter, śuddhi (purification and [re]conversion of Muslims into the fold of Hinduism), etc., had wedged a deep cleavage and an atmosphere of mutual suspicion amongst the two communities. Unless they were addressed adequately and resolved, the goal of unity would remain merely an exercise in political verbosity. Figure 10 is especially illustrative of the fact that Hindu (represented as a Brahman) and Muslim (represented as a butcher) hearts are pierced with each other's dagger (namely, cow-slaughter and shuddhi). They are looking in the sky, suggestively unwilling to come closer to each other. Yet the Hindu [Congress] leaders are pushing the two communities into an embrace. Mohanlal did not fail to subtly underline his deep seated suspicion that the attempt of unity is basically a sign of Hindu initiative, not of the Muslim leaders. Figure 10 shows clearly that a Hindu leader, who resembles none other than the Bengali leader Chittaranjan Das, is pushing the Muslim towards unity.


Fig. 11 Hindu Muslim unity and the Muslim leaders (Prabha, September 1924)
Caption: In Delhi, before the riots + In Delhi, after the riots

The suspicion is clearly and boldly voiced in the cartoon Hindu-Muslim Unity and Muslim leaders. The reason behind the failure of Hindu-Muslim unity and the communal enmity and riots, according to this cartoon, lay in the fact that the Muslim leaders were not sincere and impartial. Figure 11 clearly castigates the Indian Muslim leaders of Khilafat movement (signified by Turkish fez) as unscrupulous. They were sleeping or turning a deaf year to the cry of Hindus who were being killed by the Muslim rioters in their backyard. After the riot they are speaking aloud for the cause of unity. In short, the cartoonist was suspicious of the intentions of Muslim leaders who spoke for communal harmony.

Conclusion

A sneak peek into the scattered artistic oeuvre of the cartoonist Mohanlal has allowed us only a partial reconstruction of his cultural-political ideas during 1920s and 1930s. It is fair to conclude that his cultural and political imagination was conspicuously anti-colonial and militantly non-cooperationist. His nationalism was deeply informed by upper caste Hindu perspective. Following and reaffirming the representational conventions of his times, he figuratively visualized (the self of) India nation and Hindu community as the Brahmin man. Mohanlal's nationalism was also suspicious of Muslims, their political sincerity and commitment to composite nationalism. It was, moreover, skeptical of a Gandhian politics, which strove for socio-religious reform and put a premium of self-purification on the high caste Hindus through programmes like social uplift and religious equality of 'untouchables' in the Hindu religious order (Nagraj 2010). Although he was in favour of religious reform and targeted the older religious aristocracy, he perceived Gandhian social programmes at best secondary or digression from the course of political struggle. This is not to suggest that he was in favour of caste discrimination as such. His collection of stories Raj'kaṇ, referred to earlier, gives the impression that some of his stories boldly captured the phenomenon of caste-class atrocities in rural society. Unlike many of his friends and contemporaries, Mohanlal, however, did not write or sketched cartoons around "the women's question and patriarchal oppression" during 1920s and 1930s. Women characters enter into his short stories as impoverished/ childless parent or mother. Problems of infant mortality and childhood run through many of his stories.[6] We shall refrain from making fur-

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[6] Interestingly, he wrote a dystopian novel Nayā yug: nayā mānav (New era: new human) in 1957 which celebrated the vanishing tribe of caring, obedient, educated, sexually reticent, homely woman as ideal and representative of the good old Indian tradition. It demonized the westernized Indian women as sexually lascivious morally degenerated

ther assertions on the cartoonist Mohanlal's ideas in relation to Indian nationalism, its political agenda and social programme, etc., during the 1920s and 1930s. For it is beyond the scope of such a short essay to comment on his entire oeuvre. A more comprehensive intellectual biography will have to take into account all his later works: literary, journalistic and historical writings alongside private papers spanning the changing historical contexts of more than six decades of the twentieth century.

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Colonial Discourses and their Legacies. Concepts, Categories and Reflections

Die koloniale Ausgrenzung der indischen Astronomie. Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von indischer Gelehrsamkeit und britischem Orientalismus in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts

Michael Bergunder

Abstract

During the second half of the 18th century, numerous Indian scholars aimed at appropriating the latest developments of European astronomy within their circles of traditional Persian and Arabic or Sanskrit learning. The few British mathematicians and astronomers, however, who were active in the environment of the East India Company and with whom those Indian scholars were in contact with, had quite opposite intentions. They were particularly looking for distinguished forms of mathematics and astronomy of ancient India that had already perished. They were not at all interested in the contemporary works of Indian sciences – be it in Persian, Arabic or Sanskrit. This very limited approach to Indian astronomy has hence become the focal point of the colonial marginalisation of Indian sciences. From then onwards, true science was considered to be something exclusively European that related to Indian traditions of science as something "foreign" and completely novel.

In der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts versuchten zahlreiche indische Gelehrte, sich die neuere europäische Astronomie aus Europa innerhalb ihrer traditionellen persisch- und arabischsprachigen oder sanskritischen Gelehrsamkeit anzueignen. Die wenigen britischen Mathematiker und Astronomen, die im Umfeld der Ostindienkompanie tätig waren und mit denen diese indischen Gelehrten in Kontakt traten, verfolgten jedoch genau gegenläufige Absichten. Sie suchten vor allem nach Belegen für eine hochstehende, aber inzwischen untergegangene Mathematik und Astronomie im alten Indien. An den zeitgenössischen Werken der indischen Wissenschaft – sei es auf Persisch, Arabisch oder Sanskrit – waren sie nicht interessiert. Dieser eingeschränkte Zugang zur indischen Astronomie wurde damit zum Dreh- und Angelpunkt der kolonialen Ausgrenzung der zeitgenössischen indischen Wissenschaften.

Michael Bergunder

Persisch- und arabischsprachige Astronomie in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts

Die höheren islamischen Ausbildungseinrichtungen (Madrasa) im 18. Jahrhundert orientierten sich zumeist an einem Lehrplan, der den sogenannten rationalen Wissenschaften (*maʿqulat*)[1], die in der Tradition von Aristoteles standen, einen überaus hohen Stellenwert zuschrieb (Malik 1997; Robinson 2001). Im Rahmen der rationalen Wissenschaften wurden auch die Grundlagen von Mathematik, Physik und Astronomie gelehrt. Einige der persischsprachigen Verwaltungsbeamten im Umfeld der Ostindienkompanie entwickelten in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts eine persönliche Leidenschaft für diese drei Themenfelder und begannen sich zugleich für den europäischen Forschungsstand zu interessieren. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit wurde dabei der Astronomie zuteil. Sehr gut fassbar wird diese Entwicklung an dem Gelehrtenkreis, den Tafazzul Husayn (ca. 1727–1800) um sich versammelte. Tafazzul Husayn spielte eine zentrale Rolle in der Politik Awadhs im letzten Viertel des 18. Jahrhunderts (Anonymus 1803; Rizvi 1986, Bd. 2: 227–230; Cole 1988: 52–55; Guenther 2010: 132–133). Allerdings verbrachte er dabei die meiste Zeit im Exil, wobei er sich zum größten Teil in Kalkutta aufhielt und dort engen Kontakt zu den Briten hielt. Er hatte rationale Wissenschaften in Delhi und dann an der Farangi Mahal in Lucknow studiert, um sich danach bei dem berühmten Gelehrten Hazin in die schiitische Theologie einführen zu lassen. Obwohl bekennender Schiit, lehrte er bis ins hohe Alter neben den Grundlagen der schiitischen auch die der hanafitischen Rechtsschule (Rizvi 1986, Bd. 2: 228; Cole 1988: 55). Er war zudem wie sein schiitischer Lehrer Hazin ein Universalgelehrter, der sich nicht nur für Theologie, sondern auch für Philosophie, Medizin, Mathematik, aber vor allem auch für die Astronomie interessierte. Während seiner langen Aufenthalte in Kalkutta sammelte er dort einen größeren Kreis von gleichgesinnten Gelehrten um sich, die alle ein besonderes Interesse an der europäischen Astronomie entwickelten.

Einer der hervorragendsten Gelehrten dieses Kreises war Muhammad Husain Isfahani (gest. 1790), über dessen Leben leider wenig bekannt ist (Khan 1998: 92–95). Seine Familie hatte schiitisch-iranische Wurzeln und diente am Hof der muslimischen Regionalherrscher von Awadh und Murshidabad. Er besaß eine umfassende höhere islamische Bildung mit dem üblichen Schwerpunkt auf den rationalen Wissenschaften. Darüber hinaus entwickelt er aber ein ganz besonderes Interesse an der Astronomie. Wahrscheinlich kam er in

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[1] Der vorliegende Artikel richtet sich an eine allgemein globalhistorisch interessierte Leserschaft. Deshalb verzichtet die Darstellung auf Diakritika und möglichst weitgehend auch auf originalsprachige Zitate oder Begriffe.

den 1770er Jahren in intensiveren Kontakt mit den Briten, denn unter Vermittlung eines britischen Offiziers namens Elliot konnte er um das Jahr 1775 herum eine zweijährige Englandreise unternehmen. Dort studierte er vornehmlich die europäische Mathematik, Physik und vor allem die Astronomie, wobei er genug Englisch erlernt hatte, um auch die entsprechende wissenschaftliche Literatur zur Kenntnis zu nehmen. Nach seiner Rückkehr ließ er sich in Kalkutta nieder. Im Verlaufe der 1780er Jahre stieß er zum Kreis um Tafazzul Husayn, in dem er den Ehrentitel „Aristoteles des Islam" trug (Khan 1998: 94; Storey 1970/1972: 878). Zugleich hatte er in Kalkutta auch engen Kontakt zu orientalistisch interessierten Briten. Auf ausdrückliches Verlangen seiner wissenschaftlich interessierten indischen Gelehrtenkollegen, verfasste er nach Rückkehr aus England einen kurzen Reisebericht auf Arabisch und übersetzte ihn anschließend für ein breiteres Publikum auch ins Persische. Die große Zahl und geographische Streuung der erhaltenden Manuskripte deutet auf eine eifrige Leserschaft in ganz Indien hin (Khan 1998: 114–115). In seinem Reisebericht pries Muhammad Husain Isfahani das „neue Denken" und die „neuartigen Entdeckungen" in der europäischen Mathematik und Astronomie, welche die griechische Philosophie und ptolemäische Kosmologie, die der arabischsprachigen Wissenschaft zugrunde liege, in vielen Punkten korrigiere (Khan 1998: 93). Er erläuterte die wissenschaftliche Entwicklung seit Kopernikus und gab einen ausführlichen Überblick über das neue Modell des Sonnensystems (Khan 1998: 223–224). Seine besondere Wertschätzung galt Isaac Newton, dessen *Principia Mathematica* die neuen Erkenntnisse in Mathematik, Physik und Astronomie zusammenfassten. Newtons Lehre beruhe auf festen „Naturgesetzen", und er habe eine „neue Schule" begründet. Die „Natur" habe ihm ihre „Geheimnisse" enthüllt und ihn zum „Verkünder" derselben gemacht (Khan 1998: 281).

Muhammad Husain Isfahani hatte von seiner Reise einige englischsprachige wissenschaftliche Publikationen mitgebracht. Für deren Übersetzung ins Persische bemühte er sich vergeblich um finanzielle Mittel bei den muslimischen Notablen in Murshidabab und bei der Ostindienkompanie (Tabatabai 1902/1903, Bd. 3: 76–77). Dagegen scheint er mit seinem Anliegen im Kreis um Tafazzul Husayn auf offene Ohren gestoßen zu sein. Es war Tafazzul Husayn höchstpersönlich, der in den 1780er Jahren begann, wissenschaftliche Standardwerke aus Europa zwar nicht ins Persische, dafür aber sogar ins Arabische zu übersetzen. Auch Tafazzul Husayn beschäftigen besonders astronomische Fragen, und er war mit den entsprechenden arabischen Klassikern bestens vertraut. Zur Vorbereitung seines Übersetzungsprojektes lernte er die englische Sprache, die er bald ausweislich des Zeugnisses zahlreicher britischer Gewährsleute ausgezeichnet beherrschte (Anonymus 1803). In einem Brief an seinen britischen

Freund David Anderson in England, mit dem er einst für die Ostindienkompanie erfolgreiche Unterhandlungen bei den Marathen geführt hatte, zählte er die wichtigsten Titel auf, an deren Übersetzung er Ende der 1780er Jahre arbeitete (Anonymus 1803: 7; Schaffer 2009: 57). Im Zentrum seines Interesses standen die Principia Mathematica von Isaac Newton, wobei Tafazzul Husayn wahrscheinlich die entsprechende englische Standard-Übersetzung zugrundelegte (Schaffer 2009: 60). Tafazzul Husayn lernte aber zusätzlich auch noch etwas Latein, so dass er auch die Originalversion zu Rate ziehen konnte (Anonymus 1803: 8). Vor dem Hintergrund seiner mathematischen und astronomischen Vorbildung war es Tafazzul Husayn - genauso wie vor ihm bereits Muhammad Husain Isfahani - problemlos möglich, die Erkenntnisse der europäischen Wissenschaft nachzuvollziehen.

Zum Kreis von Tafazzul Husayn in Kalkutta gehörten mindestens noch zwei weitere gelehrte persischsprachige Verwaltungsbeamte, die die Newton'sche Physik ausdrücklich begrüßten. Der eine war Abd al-Latif Shushtari (1758–1806), ein im Iran geborener Schiit, der nach Indien kam, weil Teile seiner Familie schon länger zu den traditionellen Verwaltungseliten des Mogul-Reichs gehörten (Khan 1998: 100–105). Bereits im Iran hatte er eine umfassende Ausbildung in Logik, Mathematik und Astronomie erhalten. Er kam um 1789 nach Kalkutta und stieß dort zu dem Kreis um Tafazzul Husayn wie er auch intensiven Umgang mit den führenden Angestellten der Ostindienkompanie pflegte. Bald wurde er von Hyderabad, wo Familiengehörige von ihm besonderen Einfluss am Hof hatten, zum offiziellen Gesandten bei der Ostindienkompanie ernannt. Zum Ende der 1790er Jahre verließ er Kalkutta und ließ sich schließlich um 1800 in Hyderabad nieder. In seiner kurz vor seinem Tod auf Persisch verfassten Autobiographie berichtete er ausführlich und kenntnisreich über die neue Newton'sche Wissenschaft, deren Ergebnisse er rückhaltlos bejahte. Lediglich die Gesetze der Schwerkraft ließ er aus, da er sie mutmaßlich nicht ganz durchdrungen hatte (Khan 1998: 281–290). Schließlich ist noch Abu Talib Isfahani (1752–1806) zu nennen. Seine ebenfalls schiitisch geprägte Familie zählte zur persischsprachigen Verwaltungselite in Awadh (Storey 1970/1972: 144–146, 704–705, 878–880; Khan 1998: 95–100). Als er im Jahr 1787 Awadh verlassen musste, ging er nach Kalkutta und stieß dort zum Kreis um Tafazzul Husayn. Seine Versuche, eine Anstellung bei der Ostindienkompanie zu erlangen, waren nur teilweise erfolgreich. Im Jahre 1799 bot sich ihm die Gelegenheit zu einer Englandreise, worüber er nach seiner Rückkehr 1803 einen persischen Bericht verfasste, der auch bald ins Englische übersetzt wurde (Storey 1970/1972: 878–880; Khan 1998: 116). Zwar hatte auch Abu Talib Isfahani eine umfassende Ausbildung in den rationalen Wissenschaften erhalten, persönlich

war er aber nicht übermäßig an Mathematik und Astronomie interessiert. Sein Reisebericht enthielt deshalb auch kaum nähere Angaben zu diesem Themenfeld. Erst als ihn Farad-ud Din, ein Schüler von Tafazzul Husayn und erster Vorsteher der Calcutta Madrasa, um einen Bericht über den Stand der modernen Wissenschaft in England bat, verfasste er eine eigene, literarisch anspruchsvolle Schrift auf Persisch über die Newton'sche Lehre. Sie war in Versform gehalten, versehen jeweils mit einem entsprechenden Prosa-Kommentar zu den einzelnen Versen (Khan 1998: 320). Obwohl nicht sein Hauptinteressengebiet, gab er hier einen kompetenten und umfassenden Überblick über den neusten Stand der europäischen Mathematik und Astronomie (Khan 1998: 288–289). Auch Abu Talib betonte die uneingeschränkte Gültigkeit der modernen europäischen Erkenntnisse und verwies zum Beleg nachdrücklich darauf, dass sie auf nachprüfbaren Beobachtungen durch moderne Instrumente beruhten. Das Festhalten indischer Astronomen am ptolemäischen Weltbild sei deshalb irrational.

Den Gelehrten aus dem Kreis um Tafazzul Husayn ging es darum, die neuen wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnisse aus Europa bei einer persisch- und arabischsprachigen Leserschaft in Indien bekannt zu machen. Vor dem Hintergrund ihrer eigenen Ausbildung in den rationalen Wissenschaften hatten sie keine Schwierigkeiten, die neuere europäische Mathematik und Astronomie zu verstehen und entsprechend zu würdigen. Ihren Einzug in die persisch- und arabischsprachige Wissenschaft hielten sie für ohne weiteres möglich und vor allem für unbedingt notwendig. Sie standen mit diesem Anliegen offensichtlich nicht allein. Sowohl Muhammad Husain Isfahani als auch Abu Talib Isfahani verfassten ihre Darstellungen der europäischen Wissenschaft auf ausdrückliches Verlangen anderer indischer Gelehrter, ein Umstand, der besondere Beachtung verdient, da sie das große Interesse an jenen Erkenntnissen deutlich unterstreicht. Die Zahl und Verbreitung der erhaltenen Manuskripte lässt ebenfalls auf eine breite Leserschaft schließen. Auf die breite Rezeption deutet auch hin, dass der Iraner Aqa Ahmad Bihbahani Kirmanshahi (1777–1819), ein bekannter schiitischer Gelehrter, in seinem Reisebericht über seinen Indienaufenthalt von 1805 bis 1810 ein ganzes Kapitel der kopernikanischen Astronomie widmete. Er betonte dass sie auf der griechischen Philosophie beruhe, aber es sich zugleich um ganz „neue Ansichten" handele, deren Gültigkeit für ihn ebenfalls außer Frage stand (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 13–14).

Auffällig ist auch, dass in diesem Zusammenhang nur ganz am Rande theologische Konsequenzen gezogen werden. Zwar waren alle genannten Autoren aus dem Kreis um Tafazzul Husyan Schiiten, aber keiner von ihnen beteiligte sich an den theologischen Debatten der Zeit, sondern sie standen in der ratio-

nalistischen Tradition der muslimischen Notablen des Mogul-Reichs, die religiösen Fragen keinen zentralen gesellschaftlichen Stellenwert einräumten. Muhammad Husain Isfahani war ein Freidenker, dem es gefiel, sich einmal als Schiit, das andere Mal als Philosoph und ein anderes Mal als Theologe zu bezeichnen, und der sich nie zu einer bestimmten Rechtsschule bekannte (Khan 1998: 94). Seine theologischen Überlegungen zu den Implikationen der Newton'schen Wissenschaft beschränkten sich darauf, die Erkenntnis der Unendlichkeit des Universums als Bestätigung der Allmacht Gottes zu bezeichnen (Khan 1998: 285). Ähnlich gelagert scheint die Einstellung von Abu Talib Isfahani gewesen zu sein. Bei ihm ist ebenfalls nachzulesen, dass hinter dem unendlichen Universum der Eine Gott stehe. Dem fügte er noch eine religionskritische Pointe hinzu. Alle Unterschiede in Sprache, Verhalten und Glauben seien durch äußerliche Rechtsschulengelehrte erschaffen und perpetuiert worden, die keine Kenntnis von wirklicher Religion hätten (Khan 1998: 289). Wie Tafazzul Husayn äußerte er sich überhaupt nicht zu potentiellen theologischen Implikationen der neuen Erkenntnisse der europäischen Wissenschaft. Auch Abd al-Latif Shushtari war ein bekennender Schiit, der sich aber ebenfalls jeglicher kontroverstheologischer Diskussion enthielt. Als er auf die theologische Konsequenz der Newton'schen Wissenschaft zu sprechen kam, bemühte er den Sufi-Dichter Rumi, wonach der Verstand grundsätzlich unfähig sei, Gott wirklich zu erkennen (Khan 1998: 290; Cole 1992: 11–12). Im Umkehrschluss etablierte er damit zugleich den konzeptionellen Raum für eine von der Theologie unabhängige Wissenschaft von der Natur.

Austausch zwischen indischen und britischen Astronomen in Kalkutta

In den 1780er und 1790er Jahren gab es im Umfeld der Ostindienkompanie nur wenige Personen, die in höherer Mathematik oder Astronomie bewandert waren. Tafazzul Husayn war in Kalkutta deshalb ständig auf der Suche nach kompetenten britischen Ansprechpartnern. Zunächst musste er anscheinend mit dem umtriebigen Ralph Broome (1742–1805) vorliebnehmen, der bis 1785 in der Ostindienkompanie als Offizier diente. Ralph Broome konnte Persisch und interessierte sich lediglich als Laie für Mathematik oder Astronomie, ohne es je studiert zu haben (Anonymus 1803: 3). Als 1794 James Dinwiddie (1746–1815), der weltweit durch seine öffentliche Vorführung wissenschaftlicher Experimente Aufsehen erregte, nach Kalkutta kam, ging Tafazzul Husayn sofort bei ihm in die Lehre. Er ließ sich von Dinwiddie in der Anwendung geometrischer Rechenmethoden und der Benutzung moderner astronomischer Instrumente unterweisen (Nair 2013: 66–69). Für theoretische Fragen war Dinwiddie dagegen keine geeignete Auskunftsperson. Nur in Reuben Burrow (1747–1792), der

im Jahre 1782 nach Kalkutta gekommen war, stand Tafazzul Husayn ein vergleichsweise kompetenter Gesprächspartner zur Verfügung. Burrow stammte aus niederer Familie und hatte weder eine höhere Schule noch die Universität besucht. Als bei ihm aber eine entsprechende Begabung festgestellt wurde, erhielt er als Jugendlicher einen regulären Unterricht in höherer Mathematik (Stephen & Wallis 2004). Dies ermöglichte ihm in der Folge eine Anstellung als Assistent am Observatorium in Greenwich, bei einer Landvermessungsexpedition in Schottland und schließlich in der Kartenwerkstatt des Towers in London. Weiterhin gab er in England sechs Jahre lang eine populärwissenschaftliche mathematische Zeitschrift heraus, bevor er nach Indien aufbrach. Die Ostindienkompanie stellte ihn zunächst als Mathematiker in ihrem Ingenieurskorps ein und ernannte ihn später zum Leiter der Landvermessung. Reuben Burrow sollte für Tafazzul Husayn der wichtigste europäische Gesprächspartner für mathematische und astronomische Fragestellungen werden. Seinen eigenen Angaben zufolge half er Tafazzul Husayn bei der arabischen Übersetzung der *Principia Mathematica*, indem er Newtons Text mit zahlreichen erklärenden Anmerkungen und Erläuterungen versah (Anonymus 1803: 7). Wahrscheinlich Anfang der 1790er Jahre wurde Tafazzul Husayn von Burrow dann zu einem neuen Projekt überredet. Es ging um die arabische Übersetzung einer Abhandlung über Kegelschnitte des hellenistischen Geometer und Astronomen Apollonios von Perge (ca. um 200 v. u. Z.) (Anonymus 1803: 7). Der Text behandelt besonders komplexe geometrische Probleme, aber das griechische Original gilt als verschollen. Anfang des 18. Jahrhunderts veröffentlichte ein Schüler Newtons einen in Latein verfassten Rekonstruktionsversuch dieser Abhandlung, der sich auf eine arabische Übersetzung des griechischen Originals stützte. Seine Veröffentlichung enthielt auch weitere Abhandlungen von Apollonius über Kegelschnitte, von denen die griechische Originaltexte und auch Kommentare erhalten waren. Diese wurden im griechischen Original abgedruckt und ebenfalls mit einer lateinischen Übersetzung versehen (Halley 1710). Von der eigentlichen lateinischen Rekonstruktion aus dem Arabischen veröffentlichte Reuben Burrow im Jahre 1779 eine englische Übersetzung, die Tafazzul Husayn nun seinerseits ins Arabische übertrug (Anonymus 1803: 7). Tafazzul Husayn war offenbar begeistert von diesem Projekt, denn er lernte in diesem Zusammenhang sogar etwas Griechisch (Anonymus 1803: 8). Latein hatte er sich, wie oben erwähnt, bereits angeeignet. Auf diese Weise konnte er nicht nur die lateinische Vorlage mit der von Burrow verfertigten englischen Übersetzung vergleichen, sondern auch die anderen Ausführungen von Apollonius zur Frage der Kegelschnitte nebst den späteren Kommentaren im griechischen Original heranziehen. Es entbehrt dabei nicht einer gewissen Ironie, dass ihm

ausgerechnet die arabische Version, auf welcher die lateinischen Rekonstruktion fußte, nicht vorlag.

Leider hat Tafazzul Husayn nirgends ausgeführt, warum ihm ausgerechnet Apollonius so sehr interessierte. Es ist denkbar, dass Tafazzul Husayn in Apollonius eine interessante Schnittstelle zwischen der griechisch-arabischen Gelehrtentradition, der er selbst entstammte, und dem modernen Newton'schen Systems erblickte. Wahrscheinlich hatte Reuben Burrow ihn aber vor allem davon überzeugt, dass ein vertieftes Studium von Apollonius helfen könnte, die geometrischen Grundlagen der Newton'schen Mathematik, die seiner Astronomie zugrundelag, besser und genauer zu verstehen (Schaffer 2009: 89–90). Burrow ging davon aus, dass die geometrische Mathematik Newtons der bisherigen europäischen Algebra weit überlegen war (Schaffer 2009: 58). In dem Anliegen, die mathematischen Grundlagen des Newton'schen System genauer zu erforschen, trafen sich wahrscheinlich die Interessen von Reuben Burrow und Tafazzul Husayn.

Brahmanisch-sanskritische Astronomie im 18. Jahrhundert

Bereits im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert fertigten zahlreiche brahmanische Gelehrte Sanskrit-Übersetzungen persischsprachiger Astronomie-Klassiker an, um deren Ergebnisse in das eigene System zu integrieren. In der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts erreichten diese Bemühungen eine neue Qualität durch die umfangreichen astronomischen Forschungen am Hofe von Jai Singh II. in Rajasthan. Unter Jai Singh II. wurde die sanskritsprachige mit der persisch- und arabischsprachigen Astronomie systematisch zusammengeführt und zugleich mit dem neusten europäischen Forschungsstand abgeglichen (Pingree 2003; Horstmann 2009; Johnson-Roehr 2011). Gita Dharampal-Frick hat darauf hingewiesen, dass hierbei auch astronomisch gebildete christliche Missionare aus Deutschland aktiv involviert gewesen waren (Dharampal-Frick 1994: 92, 302). Bei diesem überaus bemerkenswerten Forschungsprojekt war das Hauptkriterium die empirische Überprüfbarkeit der mathematischen Modelle und nicht etwa deren geographische oder sprachliche Herkunft. Selbst der Heliozentrismus wurde bereits, wenn auch nur im allerersten Ansatz, erkannt (Pingree 1999: 81). Obwohl das Projekt von Jai Singh II. aufgrund der turbulenten politischen Verhältnisse keine Nachfolger fand, gab es in Banaras auch im weiteren Verlauf des 18. Jahrhunderts nach wie vor bemerkenswerte Bemühungen der brahmanischen Sanskrit-Astronomie, zum persischsprachigen Forschungsstand aufzuschließen. Um das Jahr 1765 bearbeitete ein unbekannter brahmanischer Gelehrter ein aus dem 17. Jahrhundert stammendes Sanskrit-Werk, bei dem es sich um die Übersetzung einer einschlägigen persischsprachigen Abhandlung

zur Astronomie handelte. Er fügte in das Manuskript durchgehend Passagen aus einer klassischen Sanskrit-Abhandlung zur Astronomie ein und ergänzte diese durch eigene Überlegungen (Pingree 1996: 476). Offensichtlich war es ihm ein besonderes Anliegen, die persischsprachige und sanskritische Astronomie miteinander abzugleichen. Noch einschlägiger sind die Werke von Mathuranatha, der sowohl Sanskrit als auch Persisch ausgezeichnet beherrschte und in Banaras Astronomie unterrichtete. Unter der Patronage des dortigen Hindu-Herrschers, der im Namen der Ostindienkompanie die Region regierte, verfasste er im Jahr 1782 zwei aufeinander bezogene Einführungen in die theoretische und praktische Astronomie (Pingree 1970–1994: IV.349–350; Pingree 1996, S. 480–481). Diese beiden Abhandlungen waren für den Unterricht gedacht und können als Abbild des aktuellen Stands der brahmanisch-sanskritischen Astronomie in Banaras gelten. Auch wenn sie von der Forschung bisher nicht näher untersucht worden sind, so ist doch klar, dass hier ebenfalls die sanskritische und persischsprachige Astronomie auf systematische Weise zusammengeführt wurden. Von daher spricht einiges dafür, dass führende brahmanische Sanskrit-Gelehrten in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhundert weitgehend zur persischsprachigen Astronomie aufgeschlossen hatten. Potentiell hätten sie über diese Brücke, ähnlich wie Tafazzul Husayn, auch die neue Newton'sche Astronomie in ihre Gelehrtentradition integrieren können. Jai Singh II. hatte diesen Weg ja bereits vorgezeichnet. Es gibt überdies deutliche Hinweise darauf, dass gebildete Hindus in Kalkutta am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts sich auch genau darum bemühten. Jedenfalls berichtet James Dinwiddie, dass bei ihm neben Tafazzul Husayn auch Hari Mohan Tagore und Gopi Mohan Deb in die Lehre gingen (Nair 2013: 66). Beide waren prominente persischsprachige Hindu-Notable, die sich zugleich um die Förderung der Sanskrit-Gelehrsamkeit und der brahmanischen Tradition insgesamt bemühten. So gehörten sie zu den Initiatoren des 1816 gegründeten Hindu-College, und Gopi Mohan Deb wurde später auch noch zum Mitbegründer der brahmanisch-traditionalistischen Dharma Sabha (Kopf 1969: 194). Von Gopi Mohan Deb ist zudem ausdrücklich überliefert, dass er sich um eine Zusammenschau persischsprachiger, sanskritischer und europäischer Zugänge zur Astronomie und Geographie bemühte (Editors of the Raja's Sabadkalpadruma 1859: 15–16). Noch bemerkenswerter ist ein handschriftlicher Vermerk von William Jones, der sich in seinem Nachlass findet. Demnach verlangten um das Jahr 1791 brahmanische Gelehrte von ihm, dass er für sie das zentrale Kapitel Scholium Generale aus den *Principia Mathematica* von Isaac Newton ins Sanskrit übersetzte. Als Gegenleistung waren sie bereit, ihm das vedische Gayatri-Mantra zu erklären (Cannon 1990: 354). Dabei ist zu beachten, dass William Jones von seinen brahmanischen Pandits verlangte,

dass sie ebenfalls des Persischen mächtig waren (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 24), d. h., diese Anfrage kam wahrscheinlich von brahmanischen Sanskrit-Gelehrten, die auch Persisch beherrschten. In jedem Fall haben wir hier ein unumstößliches Indiz dafür, dass sich auch die traditionellen brahmanischen Pandits im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts für die Newton'schen Astronomie interessierten.

Europäische Astronomie und deistische Historiographie

Im Unterschied zu Tafazzul Husayn und seinen indischen Gelehrtenkollegen, denen es nur um die mathematischen und empirischen Aspekte der Newton'schen Astronomie ging, spielten für den Briten Reuben Burrow auch die von Newton angestoßenen geschichtsphilosophischen Überlegungen eine entscheidende Rolle. Burrow vertrat eine „deistische Historiographie" (Harrison), wie sie für das europäische 18. Jahrhundert kennzeichnend war und maßgeblich von Newton mitgeprägt wurde (Harrison 1990: 92–98). Newton ging davon aus, dass die neue Kosmologie, die er propagierte, in Wirklichkeit eine alte sei. Der Heliozentrismus und das kosmische Gravitationsgesetz seien ursprünglich zentraler Bestandteil der Lehre Noahs gewesen und durch antike Reisende weltweit bis nach Indien verbreitet worden. Aus der Verfälschung dieser ursprünglichen Lehren seien der ptolemäische Geozentrismus und die Idee von unveränderlichen Himmelssphären zusammen mit einer Vergöttlichung toter Herrscher im Sinne des Euhemerismus hervorgegangen. Tyrannei und Aberglauben seien die Folge gewesen. Newtons Anliegen war nun, die alte und verlorengegangene Kosmologie wiederherzustellen (Harrison 1990: 93–94; Schaffer 2009: 74–75). Nicht nur Reuben Burrow teilte diese Geschichtssicht, sondern auch die meisten frühen britischen Orientalisten in Kalkutta, darunter kein anderer als William Jones (App 2009). Burrows Interesse an Apollonius war zum großen Teil auch von diesem Anliegen bestimmt. Er hoffte, bei Apollonius Spuren der alten, verlorengegangenen geometrischen Mathematik zu finden, von der Newton geglaubt hatte, sie wieder auferstehen zu lassen.

Reuben Burrow entwickelte deshalb ein rein ursprungsorientiertes Interesse an der indischen Astronomie. Er hoffte, dass in Indien noch mathematische und astronomische Sanskrit-Schriften erhalten seien, die auf der alten Lehre Noahs beruhen. Deshalb begann er sich intensiv für die antike Mathematik und Astronomie der Hindus zu interessieren. Bereits kurz nach seiner Ankunft hielt er in einem unveröffentlichten Manuskript fest, dass Pythagoras den Heliozentrismus von den alten Brahmanen vermittelt bekommen habe. Die alten chaldäischen und persischen Astronomen seien demnach in Wirklichkeit reisende Brahmanen gewesen (Schaffer 2009: 91). Im Laufe seines Indienaufenthalts setzte Burrow nach und nach die antiken indischen Astronomen mit den Bud-

dhisten gleich (Schaffer 2009: 94–98). Schließlich erklärte er sogar Stonehenge zu einem buddhistischen Tempel (Burrow 1790: 488).

Eine einschneidende Konsequenz dieses besonderen Interesses für die antike indische Astronomie war, dass Burrow dadurch dem zeitgenössischen Forschungsstand der indischen Gelehrsamkeit keinerlei Bedeutung beimaß. Er suchte nach möglichst alten indischen Schriften zur Astronomie, die noch nicht von den vermeintlichen späteren Verfälschungen – welche die deistische Historiographie im Sinne Newtons behauptete – korrumpiert worden waren. Seine Wertschätzung der indischen Wissenschaft bezog sich ausschließlich auf das indische Altertum. Die alten Buddhisten betrachtete er als Entdecker des Heliozentrismus und der Schwerkraft, und er sah in ihnen Vertreter des „Deismus". Die Lehre der zeitgenössischen Brahmanen, die das ptolemäische System lehrten, gleiche dagegen den „papistischen Dogmen" und seien damit ohne wissenschaftlichen Wert (Burrow 1790: 488–489; Schaffer 2009: 99–100). Die persisch- und arabischsprachige Astronomie, in deren Tradition der Kreis um Tafazzul Husayn stand, interessierte ihn überhaupt nicht, da sie in keinem Bezug zum indischen Altertum stand bzw. ptolemäisch korrumpiert war.

Dieses vollständige Desinteresse und prinzipielle Geringschätzung der zeitgenössischen indischen Wissenschaft kann gar nicht genug betont werden und hat in der Forschung bisher nicht die nötige Beachtung gefunden. Es betraf zum einen die persisch- und arabischsprachige Astronomie, wie sie im Kreis von Tafazzul Husayn gepflegt wurde und deren Anliegen es war, die Newton'sche Astronomie in den persisch- und arabischsprachigen Diskurs einzuspeisen. Mindestens genauso folgenschwer tangierte dieser Perspektivwechsel auf das indische Altertum aber auch die zeitgenössische sanskritische Astronomie, die inzwischen zum persischsprachigen Wissensstand aufgeschlossen hatte.

Reuben Burrow ging es nur darum, die alte, vermeintlich unverfälschte, brahmanische Astronomie wieder zu entdecken, da sie Spuren der Lehre Noahs enthalten könne. Er wollte deshalb auch hinter jegliche brahmanische Rezeption der persisch- und arabischsprachigen Wissenschaften zurückgehen, welche aus seiner Sicht die alte Hindu-Astronomie nur verfälscht haben konnten. Dabei ist zu beachten, dass Burrow damit zugleich restaurativen Strömungen innerhalb der brahmanischen Gelehrsamkeit das Wort redete (Bergunder 2016). Eine Minderheit brahmanischer Gelehrter entwickelte in der Mogul-Zeit die Auffassung, dass es Brahmanen verboten sei, das Persische zu erlernen. Hinzu kamen gewisse klassizistische Tendenzen innerhalb der brahmanischen Gelehrsamkeit des 18. Jahrhunderts, die eine Neubewertung des brahmanischen Gesellschaftsideals im Zeitalter des Kaliyuga vornahmen, insbesondere in Rajasthan und unter der Peshwa-Herrschaft (Horstmann 2009; Deshpande 2010).

Diese anti-persische Fraktion der brahmanischen Gelehrten konnte sich durch die neue orientalistische Perspektive bestätigt fühlen, die nach einer alten und reinen Sanskrit-Tradition suchte. Diesem Zusammenhang kann hier leider nicht genauer nachgegangen werden, aber er ist unbedingt im Auge zu behalten, da er eine wichtige Voraussetzung auf brahmanischer Seite benennt, der die erfolgreiche Durchsetzung britisch-orientalistischer Vorstellungen im kolonialen Indien des 19. Jahrhunderts erleichterte.

Die deistische Historiographie verwehrte der indischen Astronomie den konzeptionellen Spielraum, unter Rückgriff auf ihre eigenen Traditionen zum europäischen Forschungsstand aufzuschließen. Die moderne zeitgenössische Astronomie verwandelte sich in eine dezidiert europäische Astronomie, die den Indern nur als ihnen fremde und völlig neue Wissenschaft vermittelt werden konnte. Klar ausformuliert findet sich diese Konsequenz bei William Hunter (1755–1812), einem Arzt und Diplomaten in der Ostindienkompanie, der sich auch als Orientalist einen Namen machte. Er war 1781 nach Indien gekommen, beherrschte Persisch und Hindustani und fungierte längere Zeit als Sekretär der Asiatic Society. Sein besonderes Interesse galt dem Observatorium in Banaras, dessen Funktion und Herkunft damals zahlreiche britische Beobachter beschäftigte (Schaffer 2009; Johnson-Roehr 2011). Wurde es zunächst als antiker Überrest der alten Hindu-Astronomen betrachtet, entstand eine gewisse Irritation, als sich herausstellte, dass es nur einige Jahrzehnte zuvor von Jai Singh II. gebaut worden war. William Hunter ging dem nun genauer nach und präsentierte seine Befunde im Jahre 1796 auf einer Sitzung der Asiatic Society. Er hatte neben Banaras auch die Observatorien in Delhi, Ujjain und Mathura besichtigt und sich eingehend mit einem von Jai Singh II. auf Persisch verfassten Sternenkatalog befasst. Umso verblüffender ist es, dass er im Ergebnis die astronomischen Forschungen unter Jai Singh II. zu nichts weiter als zu einer frühen Rezeption der europäischen Astronomie erklärte. Für William Hunter gab es in Indien nur eine alte Astronomie der Hindus und eine moderne der Europäer, wie er in seinen einleitenden Bemerkungen unmissverständlich klar machte:

> „Obwohl [...] die Bemühungen der Asiatic Society besonders darauf gerichtet sind, die Kenntnisse der antiken Bewohner Indiens zu erforschen, verlangt es die Hochachtung einem verwandten Geist gegenüber, diejenigen ihrer Nachkommen in der modernen Zeit dem Vergessen zu entreißen, die über die Vorurteile von Erziehung, Nationalstolz und Religion hinausgewachsen sind und danach gestrebt haben, ihr Land mit wissenschaftlicher Wahrheit zu bereichern, die aus einer fremden Quelle stammte" (Hunter 1799: 177).

Für Hunter zeichnete sich das Forschungsprojekt des „verwandten Geists" Jai Singh II. also dadurch aus, dass es die europäische Wissenschaft als „fremde

Quelle" rezipierte. Er erklärt es damit zum bloßen Vorläufer des dezidiert kolonialen Projekts, den Indern die Überlegenheit der europäischen Wissenschaften aufzuzeigen:

> *„Nachdem wir die östlichen Nationen von unserer Überlegenheit in Politik und Bewaffnung überzeugt haben, denke ich, dass nichts unseren nationalen Ruhm mehr vergrößern kann als unter ihnen einen Sinn für die europäische Wissenschaft zu wecken"*(Hunter 1799: 210, vgl. Schaffer 2009: 61).

William Hunters Ausführungen zeigen deutlich, wie sehr das neue orientalistische Interesse an der alten Hindu-Astronomie mit der Vorstellung einherging, dass es in der zeitgenössischen indischen Wissenschaft für die europäische Astronomie keine Anknüpfungspunkte gebe, sondern diese als etwas völlig Neues zu vermitteln sei. Diesen orientalistischen Zeitgeist brachte der Leiter des Observatoriums der Ostindienkompanie in Madras sehr gut auf den Punkt. Anlässlich der Anbringung einer Granittafel mit einer Inschrift, welche die offizielle Einweihung im Jahre 1792 dokumentierte, notierte er:

> *„Die Nachwelt möge auch nach tausend Jahren noch erfahren, zu welchem Zeitpunkt die mathematischen Wissenschaften durch britische Großzügigkeit zuerst in Asien angesiedelt wurden"* (Kochhar 1985: 289, vgl. Schaffer 2009: 67).

Eine exemplarische Umsetzung dieser kolonialen Vermittlung der überlegenen europäischen Wissenschaften sah William Hunter ausgerechnet in der arabischen Newton-Übersetzung von Tafazzul Husayn. Für Hunter war Tafazzul Husayn nichts weiter als ein Übersetzer, der die europäische Astronomie den Anhängern des „islamischen Glaubens" auf Arabisch zugänglich macht (Hunter 1799: 210). Tafazzul Husayn zentrales Anliegen, das Newton'sche System in die traditionelle persisch- und arabischsprachige Gelehrsamkeit zu integrieren, ignorierte er vollständig. Der Kreis um Tafazzul Husayn und andere ähnlich gesinnte indische Gelehrte vermochten diesem neuen orientalistischen Paradigma aber anscheinend nichts erfolgreich zu entgegnen. Der Versuch, die Newton'sche Astronomie in den persisch- und arabischsprachigen Diskurs einzuspeisen, blieb ohnmächtig. Der Zusammenhang bedürfte allerdings der genaueren Erforschung, wozu sich die Calcutta Madrasa als Studienobjekt anböte. In den 1790er Jahren wurde sie von Farid al-Din (1747–1828) geleitet, einem Schüler von Tafazzul Husayn und wie dieser besonders in Mathematik und Astronomie ausgewiesen (Hardy 1972: 94). Wie bereits erwähnt, gehörte Farid al-Din zu denjenigen, die einst Muhammad Husain Isfahani dazu aufgefordert hatten, einen Bericht über seine Englandreise zu verfassen, der den Stand der europäischen Wissenschaften referiert. Er kannte also die neue Newton'sche Mathematik und Astronomie, und, da er zum Kreis von Tafazzul

Husayn gehörte, bejahte er sie sicherlich ebenfalls. Jedoch gibt es keine Hinweise dafür, dass er versuchte, die neuen astronomischen Erkenntnisse in den Lehrplan der Calcutta Madrasa zu integrieren. Er war allerdings wohl nur kurz im Amt, denn schon 1803 wechselte er wieder in den Verwaltungsdienst der Ostindienkompanie (Rizvi 1986, Bd. 2: 364–365). Spätestens mit seinem Weggang von der Calcutta Madrasa scheint der Lehrplan den Anschluss an die europäische Wissenschaft verpasst zu haben. Die rationalen Wissenschaften, welche die Lehre in der Calcutta Madrasa dominierten, wurden eingefroren und verwandelten sich zu einer vormodernen „islamischen" Tradition. Berichte der britischen Aufsichtsbehörde aus den 1810er Jahren monierten entsprechend ausdrücklich, dass die „europäischen Wissenschaften" im Lehrplan fehle (Sanial 1914: 90). Vielleicht im Zusammenhang mit dieser Entwicklung sponsorte kein anderer als William Hunter eine kurze persischsprachige Zusammenfassung der europäischen Astronomie, die 1807 erschien (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 14). Da Hunter jedoch, anders als der Kreis um Tafazzul Husayn, kein Interesse an einer organischen Integration in die bestehenden rationalen Wissenschaften hatte, wurde dieses Werk zumindest an der Calcutta Madrasa nicht rezipiert. Über das Werk und den Übersetzer ist bisher kaum etwas bekannt, aber es wäre interessant zu erfahren, wie sich hier Hunters Anliegen und das des Übersetzers zueinander verhielten. Der Konflikt erreichte seinen späten Höhepunkt in den 1850er Jahren, als das britische Aufsichtsgremium der Calcutta Madrasa vorschlug, die Lehre der Naturwissenschaften (physical sciences) aus dem arabischsprachigen Lehrplan zu verbannen und stattdessen dafür auf englischsprachige Bücher zurückzugreifen, die gegebenenfalls in die Regionalsprachen übersetzt werden könnten (Sanial 1914: 100–101). Damit war der schon Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts eingeleitete Bruch zwischen „islamischen" rationalen Wissenschaften und modernen „europäischen" Wissenschaften an der Calcutta Madrasa endgültig vollzogen.

Die brahmanisch-sanskritische Astronomie nahm eine parallele Entwicklung. Ähnlich wie im Falle von Tafazzul Husayn interpretierte William Hunter die wissenschaftlichen Interessen von Jyotishray, einem brahmanischen Astronomen, den er auf einer diplomatischen Mission ins Marathen-Reich kennenlernte. Jyotishray war der Enkel eines führenden Astronomen am Hofe von Jai Singh II. Sein Großvater beteiligte sich an Sanskrit-Übersetzungen aus Teilen des persischsprachigen Sternenkatalogs von Ulugh Beg und aus den lateinischen Sterntafeln des Philippe de la Hire, verfasste aber auch mindestens eine eigene Abhandlung auf Sanskrit zur traditionellen brahmanischen Astronomie (Johnson-Roehr 2011: 42). William Hunter lobte die detaillierten astronomischen Kenntnisse von Jyotishray, aber entscheidend für ihn war etwas anderes.

Er vermeinte in dessen Besitz „Sanskrit-Übersetzungen verschiedener europäischer Werke" entdeckt zu haben, die am Hof von Jai Singh II. entstanden waren (Hunter 1799: 209). Namentlich nannte er allerdings nur eine Euklid-Übersetzung. Diese geht aber wahrscheinlich gerade nicht auf ein europäisches Werk zurück, sondern hier handelte es sich wohl um Jagannatha Samrats Sanskrit-Übersetzung einer arabischen Euklid-Interpretation von Nasir al-Din Tusi (Pingree 2003: 131, 143–144). Genau diese Zusammenführung der sanskritischen mit der persisch- und arabischsprachigen Astronomie am Hof von Jai Singh II. blendete William Hunter aber strukturell aus. Für Hunter ging es lediglich darum, dass Jyotishray „den Geist von Jai Singh in solch einem Maße geerbt hatte, dass er die Überlegenheit der europäischen Wissenschaft einsah und anerkannte" (Hunter 1799: 209, vgl. Schaffer 2009: 88). Aufgrund dieser Einschätzung hatte William Hunter gehofft, Jyothishray dafür zu gewinnen, für „die Schüler des Brahma", also die Brahmanen, Werke der europäischen Astronomie ins Sanskrit zu übersetzen. Der frühe Tod von Jyotishray habe das allerdings verhindert (Hunter 1799: 209–210).

Fazit

Zusammenfassend lässt sich also festhalten, dass die zeitgenössische indische Astronomie zum Ende des 18. Jahrhundert sich auf einem Wissensstand befand, der es ihr potentiell ermöglicht hätte, die neue Newton'sche Astronomie in die eigene Wissenschaftstradition zu integrieren. Für die persisch- und arabischsprachige Gelehrsamkeit sind solche Versuche umfangreich dokumentiert. Die brahmanisch-sanskritische Astronomie wäre dazu ebenfalls in der Lage gewesen, da sie in der Mogulzeit den persisch- und arabischsprachigen Forschungsstand umfangreich rezipierte und seit Jai Singh II. auch ein dezidiertes Interesse an der europäische Astronomie zeigte. Die frühen britischen Orientalisten waren aber an der zeitgenössischen indischen Astronomie nicht interessiert, sondern suchten nur nach den ältesten erhaltenen sanskritischen Schriften zur Astronomie, um in ihnen Hinweise auf die vermeintlich alte hochstehende Astronomie des auf Noah zurückgehenden Urvolkes zu finden. Zugleich waren sie davon überzeugt, dass zu ihrer Zeit die europäische Astronomie die einzig wissenschaftlich gültige war. Aus beiden Gründen ignorierten sie die Versuche der indischen Gelehrten zum europäischen Wissensstand aufzuschließen. Unter den Vorzeichen des Kolonialismus führte diese Ignoranz der Kolonialherren unmittelbar zur Ausgrenzung der zeitgenössischen indischen Astronomie aus dem wissenschaftlichen Diskurs. Wahre Wissenschaft war fortan ausschließlich europäisch und trat den indischen Wissenschaftstraditionen als etwas „Fremdes" und völlig Neues gegenüber. Ein kolonial erzwungener Zirkelschluss war vollzogen.

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Domesticating Sanskrit Drama: H. H. Wilson's *Select Specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus* (1826–1827)

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Abstract

This essay seeks to recover the historical significance of H. H. Wilson's Select Specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus. *It reviews Wilson's participation in the English amateur theatre in Calcutta and his directorial contribution to the first proscenium-style Bengali theatre, a personal involvement that challenges the notion of the* Select Specimens *as a purely academic work. The heart of the essay examines two overlapping sets of European intellectual influences on Wilson: British literary antiquarianism and German Romantic nationalism. The first can be traced in the countless notes to the* Select Specimens *exploring Sanskrit drama as a repository of manners, sentiments and expressions. The latter is evident in the explicit references to national character and culture, as well as in the implicit valuation of Sanskrit drama as a treasury of the nation. Wilson's exposure to the works and ideas of key British antiquarians and German Romantics (particularly A. W. Schlegel) is explored in detail. These intellectual influences suggest possibilities for further investigation into Wilson's place in the history of the modern Bengali theatre. They also shed fresh light on Wilson's defense of British support for Sanskrit (and Arabic) studies against critics such as James Mill and T. B. Macaulay. The essay concludes with a brief look at how contemporary Scottish cultural nationalists – also interested in literary antiquarianism and influenced by German Romantics – recognized in the* Select Specimens *the work of a kindred spirit.*

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[1] It has been my pleasure to know Gita Dharampal-Frick for nearly twenty-five years. Her fascinating study of early modern German cultural encounters with South Asia first brought her to my attention, and since then we have had welcome opportunities to engage each other on research matters of mutual interest. Indeed, I consider myself fortunate to have shared the stage with Gita at academic conferences in my country and at the seminar table with her students in Heidelberg, as well as for other opportunities for scholarly exchange. In appreciation of Gita's collegiality and contributions to our shared field of study, I offer this essay on the flow and counterflow of ideas between Britain, Germany, and South Asia.

Lynn Zastoupil

Introduction

H. H. Wilson's three-volume *Select Specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus* (Calcutta, 1826–1827)[2] has attracted scant attention. Initially Indologists recognized its foundational importance for the study of Indian literature, with French and German translations and multiple English editions adding to its stature (Weber 1876: 224; Konow 1920: 1; Solomon 2004: 113–114). But since the early twentieth century it has been largely relegated to the status of obligatory reference for scholars examining various features of drama in the subcontinent (Gray 1912: 59–60; Charpentier 1923: 586; Dasgupta 1935: 114–115; Goodwin 1988: 131; Walker 2004: 1). The few who have given Wilson's volumes more than perfunctory mention have criticized its inattention to staging matters and omission of non-Sanskrit drama (Solomon 2004: 114) or its neglect of the Indian commentary tradition (Sullivan 2007: 435). A supposedly Orientalist view of Sanskrit theatre as "exotic, changeless, and timeless" is another charge (Solomon 2004: 114). As for Wilson's aims in producing the volumes, little has been suggested beyond noting a desire to champion Sanskrit drama as great literature (Solomon 2004: 114) or repeating his twice-stated ambition "to secure to the Hindu theatre, a place in English literature"[3] (Raghavan 1993: 9–10).

Wilson also crops up briefly in the history of Bengali theatre. Wilson himself noted in 1835 that the manuscripts he used for the first edition of his translations formed the basis of a Sanskrit edition of the dramas prepared by Jayagopala Tarkalankara of Calcutta Sanskrit College and published by the Bengal government's General Committee of Public Instruction (GCPI) (Wilson 1835, I: vii–viii). In 1831 or 1832 Wilson also produced and directed a version of *Uttara Rama Cheritra* – his English translation of Bhavabhuti's *Uttararamacharitam* – that was performed alongside scenes from *Julius Caesar* at the first Bengali proscenium-style theatre. That theatre – Prasanna Kumar Tagore's Hindu Theatre – lasted but a year, but it gets credit as "[t]he first genuine Bengali theatre" (Guha-Thakurta 1930: 46) or "the first Bengali private theatre" (Trivedi 2005: 14). As enthusiasm for the western-style theatre grew, the plays produced were initially mostly English ones (Shakespeare being ever popular), but these were replaced in the 1850s by vernacular translations or adaptations of Shakespeare and of San-

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[2] The title pages of the three volumes list the date of publication as 1827. Each of the dramas translated, however, is given with its own full-title page and pagination (because apparently intended for publication separately), and these individual title pages are dated either 1826 or 1827. The introductory essay and appendix also have separate pagination. Citations from this edition will give volume number, title of item, and page numbers.

[3] Wilson 1826–1827, I, "Preface," pp. x–xi; Wilson 1835, I, p. vii.

skrit dramas, and eventually original vernacular dramas. Among the Sanskrit dramas chosen for vernacular translation/adaptation were at least three that Wilson had included in his *Select Specimens* (Guha-Thakurta 1930: 49–87; Chatterjee 2007: 69–75, 88–92; Trivedi 2005: 15–17).[4] Bengali versions of Sanskrit dramas that Wilson had mentioned, but not translated, were also published in 1828 and 1840 (Dasgupta 1935: 114–115).

Poonam Trivedi has noted that "the study and performance of Shakespeare in India coincided with the revival of Sanskrit drama" (Trivedi 2005: 33). A closer look at Wilson's theatrical activities and scholarship helps with understanding this phenomenon. It also uncovers intellectual influences ignored in the scholarly literature on Wilson. These influences situate the *Select Specimens* in the cultural currents of contemporary Europe and cast new light on the ambition to find a place in English literature for Sanskrit drama. Those currents, in turn, may not be irrelevant to the history of modern Indian theatre.

Wilson, Stage and Page

The theatre was not only an academic subject for Wilson. Since the fourteenth century, plays have been performed in England by youth at colleges, schools and the Inns of Court (Warton 1774–1781, II: 374, 377–406). Wilson was exposed to this tradition. He began his education at London's Soho Academy – known for the Shakespeare performances staged by its pupils – and it seems Wilson's enthusiasm for the theatre began there (Courtright 2004–2012; Devereux 1998: 15–16). He then trained in medicine and went out to Bengal as a surgeon in the East India Company's service. After arriving in Calcutta in 1809, he became active in the local British theatre scene. In 1813 he helped found the Chowringhee Theatre – the managers described Wilson as its "parent" – and was important to its early success.[5] He also appeared on stage and was noted for his portrayal of elderly men (Devereux 1998: 36). Wilson also acted the part of a bohemian member of the theatre scene, scandalizing some by living in a

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[4] Kalidasa's *Vikramorvasiyam*, Bhavabhuvi's *Malatimadhava* and Harsa's *Ratnavali* were Sanskrit dramas that Wilson had translated into English before they appeared on stage in Bengali.

[5] A printed copy of the "Rules and Regulations of the Chouringhee Dramatic Society," dated 30 June 1814, has Wilson first on the list of trustees: British Library, Asian, Pacific and Africa Collections, Mss Eur E301/1, ff. 9–16. A letter from J. Young and other managers of the Chowringhee Theatre, dated 16 October 1815, notes with regret that Wilson had given up his stage management duties, but holds out hope that he would still help with the general management and perform on stage. The managers call Wilson the parent of their theatre and stress his importance to its success: British Library, Asian, Pacific and Africa Collections, Mss Eur E301/1, ff. 23–24.

"'state of notorious concubinage'" with a married actress which resulted in two children and nearly cost him the Boden chair of Sanskrit in 1833. One critic decried Wilson as the "chief ornament and supporter of the Calcutta Theatre," a cultural scene supposedly immoral beyond anything imaginable in Britain (Devereux 1998: 37, 52). In 1829 Wilson married in Calcutta Frances Siddons – granddaughter of Sarah Siddons, the famous actress from the Kemble acting family – whose father was in the Bengal civil service (Courtright 2004–2012).

The Chowringhee Theatre figures prominently in the history of the modern Bengali theatre. British theatres were an important part of the Calcutta cultural world from the 1750s onwards, bringing English-language dramas, British theatre professionals, and European theatrical traditions to the emerging capital of British India. English plays performed in private residences and proscenium-style theatres became popular, with increasing numbers of professional actors and actresses from London joining the local amateur performers. The Chowringhee Theatre was at the center of this for nearly two decades, producing mostly productions of Shakespeare and drawing frequently on the talents of noted figures of the London stage (Guha-Thakurta 1930: 40–43; Trivedi 2005: 13–14; Chatterjee 2007: 17–24; Majumdar 2005: 260–263). It also attracted the interest and capital of Bengalis, most notably Dwarkanath Tagore who rescued the theatre from financial ruin in 1835 by purchasing it. Fire destroyed the Chowringhee in 1839, but its star actress founded a new theatre, the Sans Souci, to replace it (Kling 1976: 160; Chatterjee 2007: 24–25).

All this argues for reading the *Select Specimens* as more than an academic work. It is unlikely that the man who stage managed both English and Sanskrit (in translation) dramas in Calcutta would have "completely ignored practical staging matters" (Solomon 2004: 114) in volumes produced while he was still close to that city's theatre scene. Indeed, Wilson is quite attentive to staging matters in the *Select Specimens*. Sanskrit theatre prohibited both sleeping and dying on stage, he claimed (incorrectly regarding the latter [Sullivan 2007: 423, 435–436]).[6] He addressed the length and settings of productions, staging/set design, costumes, props and the like.[7] He opened his volumes with dramaturgical observations regarding the arrangement, aims, plot devices, character depiction, dramatis personae, etc. of Sanskrit theatre.[8] And his translations of individual dramas are laced with notes addressing stage directions, plot develop-

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[6] Wilson 1826-1827, I, "On the Dramatic System of the Hindus," p. 12; III, "Appendix," p. 45.

[7] For but a few examples from the first volume see: Wilson 1826–1827, I, "Preface," p. vii, "On the Dramatic System of the Hindus," pp. 13, 27, 74–75; and *The Mrichchakati*, pp. 18, 42, 44–45, 119.

[8] Wilson 1826–1827, I, "On the Dramatic System of the Hindus," pp. 23–44.

ment issues, character stratagems or depictions, music, and related matters.[9] Even metatheatrical elements were explained, such as company members speaking directly to the audience as introducers or interpreters.[10] The experienced eye of someone involved in theatre production is apparent.

British Antiquarianism and the *Select Specimens*

Scholarly interests were at work too. Wilson's volumes are replete with references to the theatre, dramatic works and playwrights of Europe from classical Greece to the contemporary era. This comparative perspective extended to dramaturgical issues as well as to production matters such as frequency, length and social settings of performances, stage design, special effects, and actors' entrances and exits.[11] Wilson owned copies of George Steevens' *Twenty of the Plays of Shakespeare* (1766), Francis Douce's *Illustrations of Shakspeare* (1807) and Thomas Warton's monumental *History of English Poetry* (1774–1781) (Anonymous [1861]: 19, 64, 76). The first was a pioneering effort to republish the quarto editions from Shakespeare's day by the man who later co-edited critical editions of the Bard's works (Walsh 2012: 31–34). The last two works offered historical observations on venues, sets, casting, costumes, props and other production matters of the sort that pepper Wilson's volumes (Warton 1774–1781, II: 366–406; Douce 1807, II: 315–330). The scholar and the amateur actor-director obviously found common ground in the comparative history of dramatic production.

There is, however, a deeper significance to this engagement with drama-related scholarship in Britain. The *Select Specimens* reveals a manifest debt to a British antiquarian mindset that viewed literature as the repository of important historical, cultural, and linguistic material. This outlook would in turn feed into a Romantic perspective that linked literature and national character. As we shall see, Wilson imbibed this perspective from German sources and employed it to defend Sanskrit literature from British critics. This combination of antiquarian research and Romantic insight is also central to understanding his desire to secure a place in English literature for his subject.

John Brand's *Observations on Popular Antiquities* was an antiquarian work on Wilson's bookshelves (Anonymous [1861]: 8). Originally published in 1777

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[9] For examples from each volume see: Wilson 1826–1827, I, *The Mrichchakati*, pp. 15, 44–45, 52, 203-204; II, *Vikrama and Urvasi*, pp. 34–35, 63–64, 71, 104–105; and III, *Mudrá Rákshasa*, pp. 2, 155-156.

[10] Wilson 1826–1827, I, "On the Dramatic System of the Hindus," pp. 27–28.

[11] For some examples, see: Wilson 1826–1827, I, "Preface," pp. vi–viii, "On the Dramatic System of the Hindus," pp. 9–13, 23–24, 32, 74, *The Mrichchakati*, pp. 29, 44–45; II, *Malati and Madhava*, pp. 14, 60, 63–64, 101; and III, *Mudrá Rákshasa*, pp. 46–47, 156.

as a revised edition of an earlier work by Henry Bourne, Brand's work popularized the study of what a later generation would call folklore. Brand continued collecting new materials for a planned expansion of his book and these would be used by Henry Ellis to produce an influential posthumous edition in 1813. The 1810 edition that Wilson owned was a posthumous reprint of the 1777 edition. In his work Brand demonstrated how deeply old customs, manners, ceremonies and superstitions permeated English life, using a vast array of written sources, including literary works, to uncover the richness and longevity of popular culture. One of his notable contributions was illuminating "the debts of poets, dramatists, and prose-writers to the bubbling springs of popular tradition" (Dorson 1968: 13–25; Boyer 1997: 56). Shakespeare, for instance, drew upon folkish beliefs about the witching hour, animal cries as bad omens, and haunted houses or walking spirits (Brand 1810: 74, 101, 119). Wilson's familiarity with Brand's approach is evident in the *Select Specimens* where he offers up similar examples of popular superstitions given voice in Sanskrit drama.[12]

Warton's *History of English Poetry* was also important here. René Wellek credits Warton with establishing in Britain "the whole conception and possibility of literary history." In the execution, however, Warton fell short. His work was less a narrative history than a bibliography and an anthology with notes, often antiquarian in its approach. To Warton, poems were historical documents illuminating the social life of past times, "'pictures of ancient manners'" basically "'painted from the life'." This documentary function was the main entertainment value of old poetry. Hence, analysis often gave way in Warton's *History* to a descriptive use of literature to illustrate "'manners and customs, modes of life, and favourite amusements'" (Wellek 1941: 174–176, 196–201).

What Wellek criticized as a shortcoming attracted Wilson. The *Select Specimens* is awash with notes in the spirit of the *History of English Poetry*. Where Warton noticed legendary tales preserved in poetic verse or song (Warton 1774–1781, I: 13–19; II: 175), Wilson found legends from the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the Puranas and other sources preserved and embellished in numerous works of Sanskrit drama.[13] If Warton thought Chaucer's tale of the squire a historical source regarding the education and acquirements of young gentlemen, found a Henry Bradshaw poem interesting for its account of an Anglo-Saxon royal feast, or pointed out the presence of Wycliffe's doctrines in

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[12] For examples see: Wilson 1826–1827, I, *The Mrichchakati*, p. 93; II, *Malati and Madhava*, pp. 10, 123, and *Uttara Rama Cheritra*, p. 50; III, *Retnavali*, p. 15.

[13] Wilson 1826–1827, III, "Appendix," pp. 1–107. The appendix is devoted to brief accounts of various Sanskrit dramas not included for translation; Wilson begins many of these accounts with a reference to the legend upon which these plays are based.

Piers Plowman and like-named poems (Warton 1774–1781, I: 306–307, 448; II: 181–188), Wilson noted that *Uttara Ram Cheritra* offered "curious pictures of the beau ideal of heroic bearing, and of the duties of a Warrior and a Prince" while *Malati and Madhava* depicted features of pre-Islamic society such as the public roles of women of status, Buddhist ascetics with access to the great and employed as science teachers, the linga worship of Shaivites, and the presence of yogis.[14] Wilson and Warton were also akin in claiming that drama preserved bits of its own history, the latter arguing that *Hamlet* evidenced the tradition of school plays performed in Latin (Warton 1774–1781, II: 387–388) and Wilson noting that *Vikrama and Urvasi* gave proof of Indian playwrights anterior to Kalidasa.[15] Additional parallels in the two men's works can easily be found. Suffice it to say, the antiquarian tendencies lamented by Wellek clearly animated Wilson, who patiently detailed all manner of pre-modern customs, habits, and rituals – such as gambling games, the tricks of thieves, home interiors, fire rituals, and the horse sacrifice – on display in Sanskrit drama.[16]

This conception of literature owed something as well to Douce, whose *Illustrations of Shakspeare, and of Ancient Manners* was also in Wilson's library. As the subtitle indicates, these volumes reinforced the dominant tendency of Warton's work. A prominent antiquary and collector, Douce also published *The dance of death* (1833), supplied other scholars with materials or collaborated on their projects, and bequeathed to the Bodleian a massive personal library and antiquarian collection. Douce was animated by an "illustrative imperative" to exhibit popular "manners, customs and beliefs" over the ages (Hurst 2004–2012). This imperative likely explains why he produced the first type facsimile edition of Shakespeare's plays in 1807 (Walsh 2012: 38). Douce's collections, collegiality – he loaned Brand many rare works – and diverse interests located him at the center of the intellectual trend that was transforming literary antiquarianism into folkloristics (Dorson 1968: 22–23, 57–61, 109).

Douce also followed Brand and Warton in explicating obscure phrases, idiomatic expressions, and forgotten words. Brand offered etymologies, original usages or alternative meanings for such words and phrases as "witches," "carlings," "second sight," and "deuce take you" (Brand 1810: 317, 325–326, 382, 387–388). The 1813 posthumous edition of *Popular Antiquities* was especially rich in this area, mining seventeenth-century dramas for colloquialisms of the

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[14] Wilson 1826–1827, II, *Uttara Rama Cheritra*, p. 113; *Malati and Madhava*, p. iii.

[15] Wilson 1826–1827, II, *Vikrama and Urvasi*, p. 15.

[16] Wilson 1826–1827, I, *The Mrichchakati*, pp. 52–54, 69, 92, 125; II, *Uttara Rama Cheritra*, p. 39.

day (Dorson 1968: 23).[17] Warton's *History* took note of similar matters. Anglo-Saxon alliteration and idioms long persevered in English verse. The medieval meaning of "magister" has overlap with the words mystery and mastery. A 1547 poem was "a repertory of proverbs" (Warton 1774–1781, I: 314; III: xxxvii, 91–92). For his part, Douce sought to clear up obscurities in the Bard's plays. "Scrape-trenchering," "day-woman," "Winchester goose," and other expressions were illuminated using philological, literary and cultural analysis and evidence (Douce 1807, I: 17–18, 215–216; II: 64). He also weighed in on scholarly debates regarding the origins, import or contemporary usage of words and phrases in Shakespeare, such as "man in the moon," "henchman," and "wassel" (Douce 1807, I: 15–17, 188–189; II: 206–216). Allusions to old proverbs, customs or popular superstitions preserved in mysterious words or phrases – such as "Some men must love my lady, and some Joan," or "This is that very Mab/That plats the manes of horses in the night" – also attracted Douce's antiquarian attention (Douce 1807, I: 225; II: 180–182).

Mysterious phrases, dim allusions, forgotten references – these too brought out the glossarist in Wilson who, of course, wrote for an audience ignorant of most things Indian. A line about "a monkey tied as fast as a thief" alludes to using those creatures as scape goats in Indian stables, and the phrase "*Indra* carried forth" to some now forgotten ritual observance for the god.[18] Longing for a woman with tresses of "[t]he Jasmine's golden hue" is very strange, given the modern Indian prejudice against all but black hair.[19] A description of a family preserves the various ways Brahmans were then distinguished, such as taking precedence at festivals, maintaining the five fires, drinking soma juice and being learned in the Vedas.[20] "Smells their heads" is "a mode of expressing intense affection – parental yearning – still common in India."[21] The belief that delight stimulates body hair to elevate explains a simile using the Kadamba flower, while describing someone as "White with protecting flour" adverts to the practice of applying white mustard powder to the heads of newborns to ward off evil.[22] "Lucky knot" comes from the custom, still practiced, of tying a knot every year in the string binding a person's nativity scroll.[23] The puns in one particular exchange of dialogue are too obscure to recover, but why a con-

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[17] Dorson gives a striking example from a Thomas Heywood play listing the multiple ways the English of his day described a drunkard.

[18] Wilson 1826–1827, I, *The Mrichchakati*, pp. 93, 181.

[19] Wilson 1826–1827, II, *Vikrama and Urvasi*, pp. 79–80.

[20] Wilson 1826–1827, II, *Malati and Madhava*, pp. 6–8.

[21] Wilson 1826–1827, II, *Malati and Madhava*, p. 43.

[22] Wilson 1826–1827, II, *Malati and Madhava*, pp. 84–85, 123.

[23] Wilson 1826–1827, II, *Uttara Rama Cheritra*, p. 50.

juror calls out "Reverence to *Indra* who lends our art his name" is easily explained by parsing the word for conjuror into its parts ("Indra" and "net").[24]

Wilson's work can thus be read as a contribution to literary antiquarianism. It also illustrates how this intellectual tradition could evolve into cultural nationalism. Brand, Warton and Douce were implicitly interested in English national manners, beliefs and localisms. And Warton's project was clearly driven by the idea that English poetry had a distinct history and course of development. This may very well have inspired Wilson's claim that Sanskrit drama demonstrated "original design and national developement [sic]."[25] But Wilson went beyond the hints of cultural nationalism found in his eighteenth-century British sources and did so in ways that connect him to German Romanticism.

German Romanticism and the *Select Specimens*

The *Select Specimens* refers directly to the relationship between literature and the nation. In the works he translated, Wilson noted, "[t]he manners and feelings of the people are delineated living and breathing before us."[26] Hindu myths, legends and epics – particularly the "national mythology" found in the *Ramayana* – were the wellspring of this drama.[27] The plays illustrated Indian political mores, historical events, domestic culture, religious rituals and popular beliefs.[28] In them, "national manners," "the national creed," "national peculiarities," and the "national character" were on display.[29] Sanskrit drama, Wilson seemed to be saying, was a great repository of national culture.

These comments indicate a frame of reference different from that of Wilson's British sources. The 1777/1810 editions of Brand preserved and expanded upon Henry Bourne's earlier work, which was predicated by the conviction that English popular culture was full of heathen superstitions – perpetuated by, or originating with, the Roman church – and thus was of little value to modern, Protestant Britain (Bauman & Briggs 2003: 80–85). Brand shared the sentiment, though he recognized that "useful knowledge" could be gained from studying

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[24] Wilson 1826–1827, III, *Retnavali*, pp. 14, 62.

[25] Wilson 1826–1827, I, "Preface", p. iv.

[26] Wilson 1826–1827, I, "Preface," p. ii. This is true of every nation's drama, Wilson noted.

[27] Wilson 1826–1827, II, *Uttara Rama Cheritra*, p. 112. Wilson's volumes are replete with references to the myths, legends and epic literature that dramatists drew upon. For but a few examples, see: II, *Vikrama and Urvasi*, pp. 3, 9–11; and III, "Appendix," pp. 63, 80, 86, 93.

[28] For some examples of his many notes on these aspects of Sanskrit drama, see: Wilson 1826–1827, I, *The Mrichchakati*, pp. 11, 92, 125; II, *Vikrama and Urvasi*, p. 25; III, *Mudrá Rákshasa*, pp. 1–13; and "Appendix," pp. 48–49, 75–79.

[29] Wilson 1826–1827, I, *The Mrichchakati*, p. 7; II, *Vikrama and Urvasi*, p. 104; and *Malati and Madhava*, pp. 131, 133. Substituting "Hindu" for "national," as he was wont to do, Wilson made a similar point elsewhere: III, *Mudrá Rákshasa*, p. 2.

popular culture, and wisdom extracted from "the follies and superstitions of our forefathers" (Brand 1810: vi; Bauman& Briggs 2003: 85–89). This more generous spirit led to occasional suggestions of enduring national culture and traditions, as in the custom of April Fools' Day (Brand 1810: 398–402). But the general story line from Bourne remained intact, with its negative sense of pagan traditions and vulgar superstitions held over from barbarous times due to the early church's accommodations. Such a master narrative is at odds with a view of literature as a national treasury. Wilson's debt to Brand was clearly limited.

Douce and Warton are also unreliable sources for the origins of Wilson's nationalist musings. *Illustrations of Shakspeare* suggests a close connection between Shakespeare and popular culture, and it implicitly presents the Bard's works as a depository of the sort that Wilson found in Sanskrit drama. The stress, however, is on explicating the obscure. Warton was interested in the rise and development of a literature distinctively English. This led to commentary that can be read as nationalist in nature, as in references to "our poetry" and "our writers" (Warton 1774–1781, III: 494). But Warton's narrative prioritizes the rise of refined literature and polished language at the expense of the rude and vulgar. Hence Anglo-Saxon poetry is largely ignored, early English language and culture denigrated, and Latin, French and Italian influences praised for their civilizing influences (Warton 1774–1781, I: 2, 457; II: 122–123; III: 70, 487). As with Bourne/Brand, the narrative is of overcoming the primitive, with major progress coming through foreign influences. By preserving "antient manners," old literature could only provide antiquarian entertainment (Warton 1774–1781, II: 264). A modern literature, however, bore the universal marks of refinement.

Seeing Sanskrit drama as a national literary treasure places Wilson in a different intellectual tradition. Many German thinkers such as J. G. Herder and the early Romantics believed that literary heritages were vital to national cultures. Friedrich Schlegel gave clear expression to this perspective in his 1812 lectures on ancient and modern poetry. Nothing is as necessary to a nation's future development and, indeed, its entire intellectual existence

> *"as the possession of a plentiful store of those national recollections and associations, which are lost in a great measure during the dark ages of infant society, but which it forms the great object of the poetical art to perpetuate and adorn. Such national recollections [are] the noblest inheritance which a people can possess"* (Schlegel 1818, I: 15; Eichner 1970: 117–119).

It is not clear that Wilson was familiar with these lectures (although, as we shall see, they had a major impact on Scottish cultural nationalists with an interest in the *Select Specimens*). But Wilson did own a copy of Herder's *Ideen*

zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit (Anonymous [1861]: 41). There he would have found a similar sensibility extolling ancient sagas as national literary treasures (Herder 1791: 29–30). Wilson's main access to German cultural nationalism, however, came through the work of August Wilhelm Schlegel.

The elder Schlegel came to British attention through Germaine de Staël-Holstein, whose *De l'Allemagne* had first appeared in two 1813 London editions, the original French and an English translation titled *Germany*. The volumes were a "'bestseller' in the winter of 1813–14" and Madame de Staël became "the hit of the social season" in London circles (Sauer 1981: 58–60). *Germany* owes something to A. W. Schlegel, who was at Madame de Staël's side while she composed parts of it. Schlegel was tutor to her children and her intellectual companion for many years. He also gave influential lectures on drama in Vienna that his patroness had arranged. The lectures and *Germany* share a concern for the linguistic and literary features of cultural nationalism (Paulin 2016: 337–340). Both also opposed aping of foreign literature and culture, with Madame de Staël citing Schlegel on the point (Staël Holstein 1813, I: 91–95; II: 385–386; Schlegel 1815, II: 356–357). A debt to Schlegel and other Germans is also evident in her views on language, folksongs and national character; on discovering the spirit of a nation through its language; and on national differences in literary tastes (Staël Holstein 1813, I: 89, 123, 257, 280–281; II: 366–367; III: 411).

Germany also introduced British audiences to Schlegel. In it Madame de Staël praised him as a translator, literary critic, and opponent of Napoleon, and gave a brief introduction to his Vienna lectures on drama. She also talked up the lectures in salon circles during her winter in London (Staël Holstein 1813, I: 286, 373; II: 366, 370–386; Sauer 1981: 60). All this led to an 1815 English translation of the drama lectures that catapulted Schlegel to literary fame in Britain. During the ensuing fifteen years Schlegel's lectures were read by "[j]ust about everybody who was anybody in British literary circles" (Sauer 1981: 112). As James Mackintosh wrote Schlegel in 1821, "I know no book so generally read and followed or opposed as your lectures on Dramatic Poetry. You are become our National Critic" (Körner 1929: 70; Sauer 1981: 112).

Schlegel not only took Britain by storm, he also reached audiences in British India. The *Select Specimens* makes clear that Wilson had read Schlegel's lectures and was aware of the German's celebrity back home. This is evident in his appeal to Schlegel's authority on reading Sanskrit drama in the right spirit. *The Mrichchakati*, Wilson noted in 1826, should not be judged wanting by contemporary theatrical conventions or dismissed for contravening "our social institutions." Instead, "[w]e must judge the composition after the rules laid down by *Schlegel*, and identify ourselves, as much as possible, with the people

and the time to which it belongs."[30] Wilson was undoubtedly referring here to the opening pages of Schlegel's first lecture on drama, where the Romantic critic stated that no one "can be a true critic or connoisseur who does not possess a universality of mind, who does not possess the flexibility, which, throwing aside all personal predilections and blind habits, enables him to transport himself into the peculiarities of other ages and nations, to feel them as it were from their proper central point" (Schlegel 1815, I: 3).

The influence of Herder is clear in the reference to finding this central point. In *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* Herder had famously written that "[e]ach nation has its *center* of happiness *in itself*, like every sphere its center of gravity!" (Herder 2002: 297).[31] Schlegel's lecture also reveals a more general debt to the idea of *Einfühlung* as popularized by Herder. In his early years Schlegel had been deeply influenced by Herder's work, including the latter's historical method with its stress on *Einfühlung*. One must appreciate different historical periods and civilizations on their own terms, rather than judge them by supposed universal norms. Individual artists in turn were products of their time and culture and should be evaluated accordingly (Zehnder 1930: 65–78, 100–101, 186; Schmidt 1917: 35, 42–43). An author, Herder wrote, "stands in his own century like a tree in the earth in which he is rooted, out of which he draws sap, with which he dresses the limbs of his emergence" (Zammito 2009: 72). Responding to the *Sakuntala* craze set off by William Jones' translation, Herder hence urged that "[i]m Indischen, nicht Europäischen Geist muß man also auch die Sakontala lesen" (Herder 1886: 577). Schlegel knew Herder's Sakuntala essay very well (Schmidt 1917: 43), and he echoed its sentiments in an essay on Dante where he insisted that one must imagine oneself in the Italian's time and place – become a Guelph or Ghibelline – to grasp *The Divine Comedy* (Zehnder 1930: 72).

Wilson thus situated himself squarely in the German hermeneutical tradition with his plea to read *The Mrichchakati* in the spirit of the people and times for whom it was intended. Schlegel's influence on Wilson continued – despite critical scholarly differences – as the Romantic reinvented himself in the 1820s as an Indologist and engaged Wilson on matters relating to Sanskrit studies.[32] In an 1822 review of Wilson's Sanskrit dictionary, for instance, Schlegel posited

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[30] Wilson 1826–1827, I, *The Mrichchakati*, p. 203.

[31] This allusion to a distinctive idea buried deep in one of Herder's works was typical of Schlegel (Schmidt 1917, p. 39).

[32] Their at times bitterly contentious intellectual relationship is beyond the scope of this essay. Good glimpses of it can be found in the voluminous notes to Rocher & Rocher 2013 and in Rocher & Rocher 2012, pp. 187–189. For Schlegel's turn to Indology see Herling 2006, pp. 157–201, and Paulin 2016, pp. 478–519.

that Sanskrit was once a living *Volkssprache* (Schlegel 1822: 331).[33] Wilson endorsed the idea in the *Select Specimens*, but doubted that it ever was spoken across all of India, adding that it had ceased to be a living language at some point, kept in use by elites only. Thus vernacular dramas, now lost, were likely more numerous and popular, and therefore "more strictly speaking national." The sanctity of performances and the Sanskrit language, along with popular stories, helped Sanskrit plays maintain an appeal. But this only made them akin to the "Latin plays of *Ariosto*, or the scholastic exhibitions of Westminster," where scholarship was a "sorry substitute for universal, instantaneous, and irrepressible delight." Still, the Sanskrit theatre was self-generated, not derivative, and "strongly evidence[d] both original design and national developement [sic]." Schlegel was right, Wilson added, to suggest that it should be categorized as Romantic rather than as classical. This was an autonomous development, however, because Sanskrit drama was already in decline when modern European theatre emerged.[34]

Wilson's Cultural Nationalism

Wilson's deepest debt to Schlegel is manifest in his repeated references – already noted – to Sanskrit drama as a repository of national mythology, creeds, manners and character. Schlegel's lectures on drama, as Roger Paulin notes, were infused with a cosmopolitan spirit of cultural nationalism. The type of drama Schlegel celebrated was rooted in the spirit of a people, reflected the national character, and helped build the nation. This was true of Greek and Spanish drama and especially Shakespeare's history plays, which "supplied the English with their national epic." It might too be true of his homeland, if only a German historical drama would be fashioned (Paulin 2016: 302–314, 339). The theatre, Schlegel lectured, is "where the whole of the social cultivation and art of a nation, the fruits of centuries of continued exertions, may be represented in a few hours" (Schlegel 1815, I: 37). Powerful drama results when artists draw their language from life around them, as with the "great poet" Shakespeare, whose characters speak almost "in the tone of their actual life" (Schlegel 1815, II: 146–148, 159). Bad art results from aping foreign manners and culture. The "wretched imitations" of French theatre in early eighteenth-century Germany proved this. Great drama was in the offing, however, if German dramatists would look to medieval German history for inspiration. "What a field for a poet

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[33] Wilson owned a presentation copy of the bound volume in which the review was republished in 1823 (Anonymous [1861], p. 56).
[34] Wilson 1826–1827, I, "Preface," pp. iv–viii. For Schlegel's view of Romantic literature and of *Sakuntala* as akin to modern Romantic drama, see Schlegel 1815, I, pp. 8, 25.

who, like Shakspeare, could discern the poetical side of the great events of the world!" (Schlegel 1815, II: 356–357, 388–390).

This sensibility – sans the express interest in (re)building a national theatre – is evident in the *Select Specimens*. But if Schlegel's concern with creating a national theatre was absent from Wilson's published translations, it may help explain the latter's participation in the fledgling modern Bengali theatre, which, as noted, began with translations of Sanskrit drama. If so, Wilson was not alone in imbibing Schlegel's message about a national theatre. Translators, critics and dramatists in France, Spain and Eastern Europe were led by the lectures on drama to a newfound interest in Shakespeare and nationalist themes in theatre. Among those so inspired was Alexander Pushkin (Paulin 2016: 425–430; Körner, 1929: 69–74; Clayton 2003: 33–35). Along with his theatrical activity, Wilson's *Select Specimens* ought at least to be considered in the context of the literary nationalism that Schlegel's Vienna lectures helped unleash across Europe.

So too should be Wilson's insistent plea for preserving Sanskrit studies during the EIC's education debates. His work on the *Select Specimens* coincided with a long stint on the GCPI. Wilson was a key member of that committee from its establishment in 1823 until his retirement to England in 1833. He also was instrumental in the founding of Calcutta Sanskrit College in 1824 and crafted its early curriculum. In his educational work Wilson promoted the policy of engraftment, whereby European knowledge and the English language would be slowly added to the traditional curricula at madrasas and Sanskrit colleges. One important reason for this approach was recognition of the fact that Indian educated elites were strongly attached to traditional learning and thus would not take to European subjects until an interest in these had been cultivated (Zastoupil & Moir 1999: 17–21; Dodson 2011: 73–76).

Twice Wilson came to the defense of engraftment when the policy was challenged by liberal reformers. Each time he went beyond common arguments for engraftment by endorsing a version of Romantic cultural nationalism. The first instance was in 1824 after James Mill and the London authorities lambasted the engraftment policy for promoting the study of useless subjects, some of which were "worse than a waste of time … either to teach or to learn." This included poetry, which Mill thought inappropriate for college education. Such a program was based on undue attention to local prejudices when the focus should be on teaching useful subjects (Zastoupil & Moir 1999: 21–22, 115–117). Wilson and the education committee responded with a defense of Indian science and literature and an appeal to Indian sentiments. Anyone knowledgeable about Indian public opinion is aware of the "very slight estimation" in which all

Indians regard European literature and science. Pandits and maulawis in particular are "not disposed to regard the literature and science of the West as worth the labour of attainment." The "actual state of public feeling" hence necessitated upholding Indian languages and literature, including the poetry that James Mill found objectionable. The GCPI defended the study of this subject in language drawn from the vocabulary of Romantic cultural nationalism. "[A]s the source of national imagery, the expression of national feeling, and the depository of the most approved phraseology and style, the poetical writings of Hindus and Mohammadans" are legitimate subjects of study at colleges established for them (Zastoupil & Moir 1999: 22–23, 118–123).

The strong resemblance between these sentiments and ones that Wilson soon published in his *Select Specimens* is alone reason to think that the last passage was his doing. Conclusive evidence came a decade later when he again defended engraftment, this time from the onslaught of T. B. Macaulay and other Anglicists. These reformers introduced a new educational policy in Bengal stressing the study of English and the promotion of Western knowledge at the expense of traditional Sanskrit and Arabic studies. Their antipathy to Sanskrit was openly expressed. Wilson, who had retired from India in 1833 to take up the Boden chair of Sanskrit at Oxford, led the counteroffensive in Britain. He collaborated with Indian allies regarding strategies of resistance and challenged the new policy in an 1835 letter to the editor of the *Asiatic Journal*. Among those taken by the 1835 letter was John Stuart Mill, who sought, unsuccessfully, to undo the Anglicist reforms from his position in the London offices of the East India Company. Wilson's arguments in that 1835 letter included ones that the GCPI had employed against James Mill in 1824, as well as fresh ones addressing changing circumstances and new criticisms of engraftment (Zastoupil & Moir 1999: 26–49). Among the familiar arguments was a more strident appeal to cultural nationalism. Wilson went beyond merely defending the importance of Sanskrit and Arabic poetry as repositories of national sentiments and imagery to positing their essentiality for forging a modern national literature. This project could not be realized using an imported foreign language. It needed Indians drawing on "forms of speech which they already understand and use" to dress modern ideas in familiar garb. This could be accomplished only by those versed in the classical languages of Sanskrit and Arabic. Sanskrit and Arabic philology were thus "indispensable," not only for acquiring those languages, but "for the perfection of the current forms of speech and the formation of a national literature." Although the Anglicists believed they could annihilate Indian literature, "[sweep] away all sources of pride and pleasure" among Indians in their own intellectual efforts, and render "a whole people

dependent upon a remote and unknown country for all their ideas and for the very words in which to clothe them," this was simply not possible.

> *"[W]e shall never wean [Indians], nor need it be attempted, from the congenial imagery and sentiments of their poetry – from the intelligible and amusing inventions of their dramatists and tale-writers – from the, to them, important facts of their history, and the interesting and not uninstructive legends of their tradition."*

The plan to import "English literature along with English cottons" and bring it into universal use in Bengal was "chimerical and ridiculous. If the people are to have a literature, it must be their own. The stuff may be in a great degree European, but it must be freely interwoven with homespun materials, and the fashion must be Asiatic" (Zastoupil & Moir 1999: 219–221).

If Indians are to have a modern literature, it must be fashioned in good part from their own heritage. Might this sentiment explain Wilson producing and directing his English translation of Bhavabhuti's *Uttararamacharitam* for Prasanna Kumar Tagore's Hindu Theatre? Whether the Bengali theatre that developed from Tagore's initial effort owed anything to Wilson's engagement with German Romantic nationalism is beyond the bounds of this essay. Instead, let me close with a brief look at how Scottish cultural nationalists were drawn to Wilson's *Select Specimens* and what this suggests about its larger import.

In the early nineteenth century, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* became associated with a Romantic perspective akin to that of Wilson's. In its pages, writers familiar with German thought – and in some cases inspired by Madame de Staël – helped in their own way transform literary antiquarianism into Romantic cultural nationalism. Friedrich Schlegel's lectures on ancient and modern literature were particularly important to contributors celebrating the preservation and promotion of Scottish national character in and through literature (Duncan 2007: 46–50, 57–62). John Lockhart translated Schlegel's lectures and drew from them conclusions that H. H. Wilson's defense of engraftment would later echo: literature should have reference to religion as well as to national history and character; literature is the great "conservator" of national associations and, since "every nation has its own mental character and constitution propagated from generation to generation, no traditions or poetry can be so congenial" to a people as their own; and a "great national character" can only be maintained by a literature that keeps alive the "characteristic spirit" of ancestors and rivets the impressions peculiar to the nation ([Lockhart] 1818: 500).[35] John Wilson claimed that same year that "[e]very people has … its own individual character" and that this character is revealed in their literature

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[35] For Lockhart's authorship, see Strout 1954, p. 37.

which presents "the picture of their minds." Sanskrit drama was a good example. *Sakuntala*, he noted in 1820, "makes us feel in the heart of ancient India" ([Wilson] 1818: 797; [Wilson] 1820: 418).[36] In an 1833–1834 two-part review of the *Select Specimens*, John Wilson went one step further, citing *Sakuntala* as evidence that "the Hindus had a National Drama." He also lavished praise on H. H. Wilson's volumes for "unfold[ing] before us the whole of the finest part of a national literature, and thereby illustrat[ing] a highly interesting national character." In addition, John Wilson called for a reprint edition because copies of the Calcutta work were hard to find in Britain ([Wilson] 1833: 716.).[37] As it turns out, a second edition did appear in London two years later.

The existence of that 1835 edition is revealing. Essays, reviews and commentaries on drama were common enough in *Blackwood's* during this period, and Wilson did cite the magazine in the *Select Specimens* on a staging issue.[38] Familiarity with *Blackwood's* could explain why his 1835 defense of engraftment used the same argument about the congeniality of a national poetic heritage that Lockhart had used in 1818. If a regular reader, H. H. Wilson might then have seen in John Wilson's review the possibility of using a London edition of the *Select Specimens* to bolster the engraftment policy against its critics. After all, Scottish intellectuals championing the vital connection between literary heritage and national character were praising Wilson for illuminating this fact as regards India. At the very least John Wilson's review suggests a domestication of Sanskrit drama. H. H. Wilson had brought home to British audiences long attuned to literary antiquarianism, and newly captivated by German Romanticism, the notion that Sanskrit drama was a repository of Indian national character and a crucial part of Indian national literature. These currents in British literary criticism are the neglected context for Wilson's desire "to secure to the Hindu theatre, a place in English literature."[39]

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[36] For John Wilson's authorship of these, see Roberts 2013, pp. 257–258.
[37] For John Wilson's authorship of these, see Roberts 2013, pp. 260–263.
[38] Wilson 1826–1827, I, *The Mrichchakati*, p. 42.
[39] Wilson 1826–1827, I, "Preface," pp. x–xi.

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Negotiating Identity in Colonial India:
The Case of Ramabai Mary Dongre Medhavi

Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach

Abstract

This paper will focus on Pandita Ramabai's attempt to question and expose the caste-race interlinkage prevalent in colonial India. Like her contemporaries, Ramabai too does seem to have believed that caste was a distinguishing feature of Indian society. Nevertheless, she apparently rejected the idea that it was a rigid and unchanging feature of Hinduism.

Introduction

In their article "Interrogating Caste and Race in South Asia", Gita Dharampal-Frick and Katja Götzen (2011) draw attention to the entangled, colonial history of caste and race. The "ideological inter-linkage" of these concepts, they claim, continues to dominate over relevant debates till today (Dharampal-Frick & Götzen 2011: 193). This article will use the example of Ramabai Mary Dongre Medhavi (1858–1922) to reflect upon this interlinkage. The article is divided into four parts. After a brief biographical sketch (section 2), section 3 traces how the interlinkage alluded to above impinges upon this Brahmin widow's and Christian convert's relationship with two of her Christian friends in England. Even a brief analysis of this relationship offered within the scope of this paper seems to suggest that Dharampal-Frick and Götzen are right in stating that "'caste' as a hermeneutical phenomenon has to a certain extent been racialized" (Dharampal-Frick & Götzen 2011: 194).

The trajectory of caste as we know it today can be traced to its colonial history. It was projected as an exact, scientific conceptual category, which could capture the supposed essence of Indian social reality. Refracted through the touchstone of modern science (read: the racialised discipline of anthropometry), this attempt at "social engineering" (Dharampal-Frick & Götzen 2011: 203), ironically, stultified the very social setup it sought to understand. Caste became *the* essential marker of a rigid and backward Indian social life. Having internalised this category, many Indian social actors interpreted it as the main distinguishing feature of their own society, which set it apart from contemporaneous

societies in Europe. As we will see in section four, however, some public personalities explicitly rejected the tacit Othering which ensued from such an interlinkage. The sources analysed in this section suggest that Pandita Ramabai was not wholly "entangled […] in the net of [this] colonialist rhetoric" (Dharampal-Frick & Götzen 2011: 204). Her resistance to colonial and patriarchal hegemony was based on questioning this interlinkage to some degree.

From Exile to Becoming a Pandita and Back

Ramabai Mary Dongre Medhavi, or as she is most famously known Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati, was born in 1858 to self-exiled parents. Her father as she narrates (Ramabai 1946 [1907]: 4), hoped to carry on his educational work and "engage in devotion to the gods in a quiet place". Soon, this Sanskrit scholar faced the ire of his Madhava Vaishnava sect because he chose to teach his child-wife Sanskrit (Ramabai 1977: 15–21). To stave off excommunication from the community, the father engaged with the pandits in a protracted debate to demonstrate that female learning was not always condoned by the scriptures. Ramabai was born in this ashram in Gangamul (today in Karnataka); her guru was her mother, who made her learn Sanskrit and memorise dictionaries, commentaries, classical texts. But the family did not earn enough to maintain this place of learning. They began wandering through colonial India as public narrators of the *puranas*, i.e., *puranikas*. The money they procured through this activity ran out. The parents suggested that the family follow certain religious rites to improve their financial condition; but as Ramabai crisply notes, "the gods did not help us" (Ramabai 1946 [1907]: 9). Soon, the so-called 'Great Famine' of 1876–1878, which broke out in the Madras Presidency claimed the lives of her parents and older sister; only she and her older brother survived. With him, she continued to travel through India. In 3 years, she narrates, they covered several thousand miles by foot.[1] One of these stations was Kolkata, which they reached in 1878. The local Sanskrit scholars and pandits, being impressed by her learning, conferred the title 'Pandita' and 'Saraswati' (goddess of learning) on her. This title does not seem to have completely reconciled her with the Pandit community; she mistrusted it given the treatment meted out to her parents.

Kolkata was an exotic place for the siblings. She narrates her shock at seeing "some of the Brahmins" "eat food with the British" (Ramabai 1946 [1907]: 11). Her year in Kolkata was an eye-opener in another regard too: Some of the

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[1] Her *Testimony* (Ramabai 1946 [1907]: 10) claims that they walked 4000 miles, while in her *Englandcha Pravas* she records 2000 miles (Kosambi 2016: 105). This latter distance is corroborated by a sister of the Community of St. Mary The Virgin in Wantage, England (Ramabai 1977: 17).

siblings' acquaintances, who were Brahmin priests, requested Ramabai to lecture to the women in Purdah on the "duties of women according to the Shastras" (Ramabai 1946 [1907]: 11). For her preparation, Ramabai began reading the *Dharmasastra*s and other relevant material on law. For the first time she was confronted by textual material of the Hindu tradition, which in her view unequivocally attributed an inferior status to women and to other "lower" castes. In addition, these texts denied an equal access of these societal groups to spiritual liberation.[2] In stark contrast to the ethos of gender equality she had imbibed from her father, the texts, furthermore, did not allow her to make sense of her experience as a woman. "I was waking up to my own hopeless condition as a woman, and it was becoming clearer and clearer to me that I had no place anywhere as far as religious consolation was concerned: I became quite dissatisfied with myself. I wanted something more than the *Shastra*s could give me,[3] but I did not know what it was" (Ramabai 1946 [1907]: 14–15).

While in Kolkata, the siblings were invited by the Brahmo Keshab Chandra Sen (1838–1884) to his house too. Ramabai narrates how Sen initiated her study of the Vedas and Upanishads by presenting her, a female, with a copy of one of the Vedas. While she initially worried that she could be flouting the rules of the Hindu religion if she as a female were to read the Veda, Ramabai soon overcame this worry. Her dissatisfaction with the Hindu religion did not abate after studying it and other relevant texts. Meanwhile, upon the sudden death of her brother, Ramabai married one of brother's good friends in Kolkata, Bipin Behari Das Medhavi; he died within two years of their civil marriage. While her marriage to this non-Brahmin earned the wrath of the pandits, some male Indian reformers sought to promote this young widow with a baby child (cf. Chakravarti 2000: 308). However, principal differences between her and the reformers became apparent soon. One possible cause of this rift was her belief that their efforts at uplifting Indian women were superficial; they were incapable of effectuating systemic changes. These men were, in her eyes, complicit in the very structures they purported to overcome. She decided to study medicine so that her work as a female doctor could initiate lasting, systemic changes. For

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[2] Ramabai (1946[1907]: 25) makes a distinction between the promise (even if vague) made by Hindu priests who claim that females and other castes can in principle achieve spiritual liberation and the texts, which in her reading, do not allow for this liberation. If females were to read the relevant literature, "we [would] find that there is nothing – no, nothing whatever, for us".

[3] At least at this point in time, Ramabai seems to have believed that religion could not simply be a human artefact. While she seems to have largely agreed with the Brahmo religion, she also laments that "it was not a very definite one. For it is nothing but what a man makes for himself" (Ramabai 1946[1907]: 17).

this purpose, Ramabai took English lessons from an English missionary belonging to the Community of St. Mary The Virgin after her relocation to Pune. She was quickly invited by the mission to Wantage, England. Ramabai agreed to go on the condition that she was not forced to convert. Her passage to England in 1883 was covered by the royalties of her book *Stri Dharma Niti* written in 1882 in Marathi.[4] She and her daughter Manorama were baptised soon after their arrival. However, the mission proved to be too narrow for her too. She thought of herself both as a Hindu and as a Christian; the mission's sisters imposed a conformist Anglican faith upon her. From there on, she sailed to the United States in 1886; ostensibly to attend the graduation ceremony of a female member of her extended family.[5] Soon after reaching the USA, she began a series of lectures on the status of women in India. This series was published as *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* in 1887. In the same year, the Ramabai Association was founded in Boston in December. Its Board members pledged to secure funds over 10 years for a secular girls' school in India. In some ways, this association complemented the 'Arya Mahila Samaj', which she had already set up in Pune in 1882 for the upliftment of women (Kosambi 2016: 28). After more than two years in the States, Ramabai returned to India (via Japan and Hong Kong) as a bigger public personality, albeit with a "cleft social status" (Kosambi 2016: 35). She was soon to break away from the largely Brahmin-dominated Hindu public in Maharashtra too. This time, the cause of controversy was an epiphany, which led some of her charges in her school to convert to Christianity too, on their own will as she stressed. The school's Board members, both in America and India, objected.[6] Despite these differences, she had 2000 female students enrolled in her schools in Kedgaon by 1900 (now Maharashtra). She died in 1922, a few months after her daughter's death.

Ramabai's Attempt at Making Sense of Freedom in Anglican Christianity

During her years in England, Ramabai spent 2 years (1884–1886) studying at the Cheltenham Ladies College. The principal of this college, the suffragist Dorothea Beale (1831–1906), was entrusted by the sisters of the Wantage mission, especially Sister Geraldine, to look after Ramabai. Their correspondence (i.e., between Ramabai and these women as also their letters to each other)

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[4] The title literally means the "morals of women" (for excerpts see Kosambi 2016: 38–79). Kosambi critiques Ramabai's tone of a "surrogate male reformer" in this text (Kosambi 2016: 30).

[5] Anandibai Joshi (1865–1887) graduated from the Women's Medical College of Philadelphia (USA).

[6] For her next project, educating widows and stray girl children from all castes, she had to procure funds from Australia.

reveals how both Geraldine and Beale try to negotiate a tight, and safe, space for their protégé Ramabai during her stay in England. They perceived themselves as being her close friends (Beale) and allies (Beale and Geraldine). And yet, she was projected by both, albeit in varying degrees, as a "native", a person who on account of her Hindu background principally differed from them (cf. Ramabai 1977: 78).

Although both Geraldine and Beale seem to have believed that Ramabai's Hindu identity hindered her from wholly accepting Christian truth, there were subtle differences in the manner in which these women perceived Ramabai, and vice-versa. At least in the analysed correspondence with Ramabai, Geraldine tends to foreground the cultural superiority of Britain as compared to the Hindu background of this Indian female convert. Beale, on the other hand, seems to take pains to understand Ramabai on the latter's own terms. The differences in their manner of communication are not lost on Ramabai, who points out to Beale that their conversation is based on another footing.[7]

In a letter to Beale in summer 1885, Ramabai suggests that the sisters in Wantage (like Geraldine) having already found truth are not open to questioning it. As a result, they regard Ramabai's questioning of the same as being "sinful". For Ramabai, Beale is, in sharp contrast, a "fellow-labourer" in truth; she is someone, who like herself is still searching for it. Precisely on account of this observed commonality, Ramabai requested Beale to follow one rule in argumentation: "I should at the same time expect you or any other with whom I may argue to be generously prepared to acknowledge the truth if it be proved on my side" (Ramabai 1977: 135). Nevertheless, their own social positionality in colonial England seems to have influenced this relationship too (see below).

One point of contention[8] between Geraldine and Ramabai seems to have been the latter's view that her new faith proclaimed, and allowed her to make use of, pure liberty. No ecclesial authority could infringe upon – or restrict – this liberty. Only an individual's conscience was binding. As a consequence, Ramabai be-

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[7] Ramabai is more candid in her conversation with Beale. In her letters to the latter, she often draws on Hindu philosophical resources (cf. Ramabai 1977: 128, 136) and does not shy away from expressing her distaste of colonial politics, especially when it comes to the status of women. Drawing Beale's attention to the hypocritical practices of the colonial powers in India, she notes the discrepancy between its promise of female education and its permission of "native customs", which cement gender differences. The "English Government comes to break her [an educated female's] spirit allowing its law to become an instrument for riveting her chains" (Ramabai 1977: 178; letter dated 22 May 1887). From Ramabai's perspective, this exchange seems to be more symmetrical than the one with Geraldine.

[8] Some other differences between them touched upon the Anglican dogma, the miraculous birth and divinity of Christ as also on how best to educate Ramabai's daughter.

lieved that only divine guidance would show her the way to realise this freedom. In July 1884, she wrote to Geraldine "I cannot do a single thing without knowing what I am to do. [...] I am always surprised when I see or hear people troubling themselves to decide my future, when my Lord is All Powerful and knows best to do with me whatever he likes" (Ramabai 1977: 25). Geraldine's letters to Ramabai (as well as to other correspondents) are rife with instructions on how this fresh Hindu convert should behave appropriately (see below). Ramabai, she wrote to a bishop, should not act independently, but "must defer her judgement to those in authority" (Ramabai 1977: 29; letter undated).

Although Beale shared Geraldine's views that Ramabai could be a good conduit between Indian women and the church,[9] she was more measured in judging Ramabai's blatant disregard for established ways of conducting oneself. Beale painstakingly pointed out to Geraldine in her letter of 22 April 1885 that this convert from India must "study Christianity as a philosophy. She cannot receive it merely as an historical revelation" (Ramabai 1977: 32). In addition, Beale went on to make arrangements at the college so that Ramabai could teach female students Sanskrit and other Indian languages.

Matters came to a head, however, when an English male student requested to be instructed by Ramabai. The-then Bishops of Lahore and Bombay unanimously objected to this proposition. Geraldine chose to follow their instructions. Ramabai was warned that if she were to teach male students in England, this would affect, or weaken, her influence on Indian men after her return, since very few women taught in public institutions in India.[10] Geraldine expected Ramabai to "accept the authority of those over her in the Church", as she wrote to Beale on 6 May 1885 (Ramabai 1977: 47). In her response penned on 8 May 1885, Beale, however, attempted to make a case for her. Ramabai, she reasoned, was already used to throwing down "pernicious caste restrictions and those barriers which wrongly separate men and women" in her life in India. It was understandable that she was now not willing to accept the decision of the

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[9] In a letter to Geraldine in August 1884, she states that Ramabai's "main thought of her life" is "helping her countrywomen to lead a higher life, and preparing them to receive the truth, and indirectly helping them by showing us better how to understand and help them" (Ramabai: 1977: 27).

[10] The correspondence between Geraldine, Beale and the bishops reveals another perspective. As Rev. Dr. Mylne, the Bishop of Bombay, stated in his letter of 21 May 1884 to Beale: "A native Christian (Anglicised) is ruined for life as far as future usefulness is concerned. I consider that if Ramabai begins to lecture in this country, the hope of doing good work among her countrywomen is at an end. [...] Publicity of that kind is fatal to them" (Ramabai 1977: 39). For her part, Ramabai dismisses the argument offered to her as being "simply absurd" and writes to Beale on 8 May 1885 that she feels "personally insult[ed]" by the sister (Ramabai 1977: 124).

Anglican Church authorities, who objected to her teaching "mixed assemblies" in England (Ramabai 1977: 49). In her letter to Geraldine on the same day, Ramabai interpreted the sister's unrelenting stance on this matter as a breach of trust and a direct interference with her "personal liberty" (Ramabai 1977: 50).

Given Geraldine's belief that faith had to guide reason, she failed to be convinced by Ramabai's persistent appeal. In addition, she reminded Ramabai on 10 May 1885 that a convert (and possibly colonial subject too) like her could hardly understand the "true sense" of the term 'liberty'. Enclosing a passage from Ruskin, "one of the wisest and most literate of England's people on the subject," Geraldine instructed Ramabai to ponder about it and wrote: "You will see in its corrupted sense it means licence, lawlessness and on the other hand, true liberty means obedience to law" (Ramabai 1977: 53).[11] This letter to Ramabai was backed up by another one to Beale written on the same day in which the sister reiterated that Ramabai "being a convert and a foreigner and one who has everything to learn both as regards Faith and as regards the manners and customs of English people", needs "careful guarding" (Ramabai 1977: 54).[12]

In this heated exchange between them, Geraldine, furthermore, sought to expose Ramabai's "caste prejudices". She attributed Ramabai's strict vegetarian practices (like not eating pudding made of eggs) as "clingings to caste prejudices which ought to have been thrown to the winds" when Ramabai embraced Christianity. This "fostering of pride", she adds in her letter of 5 October 1885, "has held you back from accepting the full teaching of the Gospel" (Ramabai 1977: 101).[13] Ramabai is quick to respond to this charge. Noting the irony of how the sister uses pies and puddings among other material goods to trace

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[11] Geraldine's reproach also incorporated a direct warning to the person Ramabai: "The most unhappy person of my acquaintance, and one who has made shipwreck of her life is one who in independent circumstances and without family ties can do pretty much as she pleases. She made fair promise of good at the outset of her career, but in consequence of having no restrictions is unprofitable to the world" (Ramabai 1977: 53).

[12] Ramabai's response of 12 May 1885 indicates that she seems to have been relatively undaunted by the sister's instruction in the true meaning of liberty. "It seems to me that you are advising me under the WE to accept always the will of those who have authority etc. This however I cannot accept. I have a conscience, and mind and a judgement of my own, I must think and do everything which GOD has given me the power of doing. [...] If it pleases you to call my word liberty as lawlessness you may do so, but as far as I know myself, I am not lawless. [...] I have just with great efforts freed myself from the yoke of the Indian priestly tribe, so I am not at present willing to place myself under another similar yoke by accepting everything which comes from the priests as authorised command of the Most High" (Ramabai 1977: 59).

[13] Geraldine's compilation of Ramabai's correspondence begins with some unflattering comments on Ramabai's "keen delight in intellectual fencing" as also her pride and vanity (Ramabai 1977: 4).

Ramabai's pride, she retorts: "I confess I am not free from all my caste prejudices, as you are pleased to call them. I like to be called a Hindoo, for I am one, and also keep all the customs of my forefathers as far as I can. How would you an Englishwoman like being called […] proud and prejudiced if she were to go and live among the Hindoos for a time but did not think it necessary to alter her customs when they were not hurtful or necessary to her neighbours?" (Ramabai 1977: 109; letter dated 15 October 1885)

Again, Beale's reaction was more measured than Geraldine's. In fact, she reminded the sister on 16 June 1885 that Ramabai was "teachable" (Ramabai 1977: 63). All three women were, after all, united in their love of the same god and by the fact that he guided them. In her letter to Beale in January 1886, the sister worried that Ramabai's understanding of Christianity, which the latter wanted to transport back to India, had "no claim to the name of Christianity" (Ramabai 1977: 114). In this letter, Geraldine also traced one root of Ramabai's problems: her being a Hindu. "I should think at one time she was an exception to the generality of the Hindoos; truthfulness was one of the traits of character in which she was an exception to the generality of her countrywomen; but she has both, in word and in letter, proved that she can no longer be accredited with this virtue and her great lack of this makes one feel that there is great difficulty in the way of true conversion" (Ramabai 1977: 115). Nevertheless, Ramabai's "noble" character, the sister hoped, would help her find her way to truth.[14]

Beale, as we see, endeavours to be judicial in her dealings with the Indian female convert Ramabai. However, her correspondence with the bishops reveals another aspect: Conceding to the Bishop of Bombay that Ramabai "may of course be spoilt by her stay in England" (Ramabai: 1977: 41), she draws the bishops attention to one decided advantage: Ramabai, she reasons, offers a good opportunity to engage with the "native mind" in England (cf. footnote 9). For this reason, she encouraged Ramabai's teaching activities at the Cheltenham Ladies College, thus enabling college students to engage with "native language, religion, philosophy", rather than picking up "the language only from

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[14] In her own ruminations on Ramabai, the sister traced Ramabai's behaviour to the latter's social positionality. For one, her Hindu religion lacked notions of the societal which enabled virtues in Christianity like "justice, strength, courage, truth, loyalty etc." (Ramabai 1977: 404). For another, the colonial subject Ramabai was wont to suppress bitterness, which "must out at times". The sister related this bitterness to the attitude of the missionaries who are "hateful to a people because they are their conquerors" (Ramabai 1977: 405). As Kosambi rightly observes: "Geraldine had been conditioned to believe implicitly in the racial, cultural and religious superiority of Britain over India. But Ramabai refused to adhere to the inferior stereotype provided for her" (Kosambi 2016: 88).

the talk of the Ayahs" (Ramabai 1977: 41; letter to the Bishop of Bombay, 22 May 1885). Her opportunistic tendency in her dealings with Ramabai is further corroborated in her correspondence with Reverend Canon William Butler.[15] In the summer of 1885 she, expressed her "anxiety" to him about Ramabai's behaviour and underscored that she was "grieved" by the tone of Ramabai's letter to the Reverend (Ramabai 1977: 77–78). However, she warned him that their impatience with Ramabai could propel her to return to the Brahmo Samaj. This appraisal of the situation led her to recommend: "[O]ne has first to *learn* her thoughts, and then apply *argumentum ad hominem*" (Ramabai 1977: 78). Such points of friction, especially with the ecclesial authorities, prompted Ramabai to leave England and sail to America.

Positioning One's Self: Ramabai in North America

Ramabai seems to been aware of the "racial and ethnocentric Othering of Indians" (Kosambi 2016: 2), which played out in her exchanges with the mission authorities in England.[16] The warm reception she received during her talks in North America allowed her to free herself from the role of a "native" and present herself more fully as an Indian.[17] *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* (1888) gives us an impression of what must have transpired in these talks. In general, this book can be read as a concerted effort at mapping out her own identity as an Indian, Brahmin, Christian female. Let us analyse it now.

In her *High-Caste Hindu Woman,* Ramabai seems to have been very aware of her own positioning. She is presented to her American audience as the Pandita, a verified source of knowledge about Hinduism and India, and a female at that. Presumably, she must have realised that India was a distant, and wholly

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[15] Reverend Canon William Butler was the founder of the Community of St. Mary The Virgin. He officiated over Ramabai's conversion and was opposed to Ramabai's teaching too for the reasons espoused by the bishops mentioned above.

[16] She had already experienced the Othering of male reformers in India, prior to her arrival in England. After her return to India, the Christian community too was highly skeptical of her selective understanding of Christianity, which one Indian Christian priest called a "squeezed-out residue of religion" (Kosambi 2016: 185).

[17] Upon her arrival in England, Ramabai approached Sir Bartle Frere, former governor of the Bombay Presidency despite her rudimentary English skills then. She justified this move by claiming that she had a "right" to his friendship given that he had spent more than half of his life in her country. Colonial officials like him, she wrote, were morally responsible for the plight of Indian women and added: "You have conferred various boons on Hindoostan and in return she has made your country wealthier. You ought not to treat us with contumely. The help that we ask from you ought not to be considered by you as a mere gift. We take you for our brothers and all assistance from you as a matter of right" (Ramabai 2000 [1883]: 111–112).

alien, place for her American audience; she could take on the role of a conduit to open up a window for them on this distant land. Reading these lectures today, one is struck by the stark contrast between her nuanced portrayal of the life of an average female in India and the blunt, even bitter, appraisal of Hinduism, or rather of some of its customs.

Interestingly, caste is used as a significant marker in her depiction of Hinduism. Nevertheless, she carefully points out how customs in this religion "take the form of religion" when they are "old enough" (Ramabai 1888: 5). Very subtly, the attention of the audience is, thus, directed towards a religion which differs from Christianity. Hinduism, she tells her American audience, is a faith in which "a man is liable to be born eight million four hundred thousand times" before he can be born a Brahmin (Ramabai 1888: 3). Furthermore, it is an all-pervasive religion. "There is not an act which is not performed religiously by them, a humorous author has said, with some truth that 'the Hindus even sin religiously'" (Ramabai 1888: 4). She then proceeds to distinguish between "canonical writings" and such customs; as also the possible disconnect between the two.

Drawing on the custom of not accepting food cooked by someone of an "inferior" caste, she notes how textual evidence for this prohibition may be scanty; in fact, it may even contradict this custom (Ramabai 1888: 5). She also stresses that the social institution of caste, "the tyrant", had pervaded Islam and Christianity in India too. Caste, she lectures, was initially based on individual merit; however, after being adopted as a custom, it became inflexible and "assumed formidable proportions" (Ramabai 1888: 7). An "outgrowth of social order, [caste] has now become the first great article of the Hindu creed all over India" (Ramabai 1888: 9).

Ramabai, as we see, follows the general trope in marking out caste as a central feature of Hinduism, while simultaneously distancing herself from it. She draws attention to its contingent development within Hinduism, as well as to its prevalence in other Indian religions like Christianity and Islam. In one stroke, thus, caste is rendered a problematic, but widespread, custom in the whole of colonial India. It is not a problem specific to Hinduism.

In order to internationalise the problems faced by Indian women, Ramabai is keen to use the stage afforded to her by her North-American audience. Consequently, she does not explicitly break away from the general line of reasoning about caste. However, a close reading of the text illustrates her tight rope-walking between a nuanced description of her home in India and contemporary America.

Talking about marriage, for example, she draws attention to the practice of *svayamvara*, in which a female Hindu had the liberty to choose her own spouse

and even propose to him before he did, a custom which, in her reckoning, probably shocked her audience's sensibilities, both of men and women (Ramabai 1888: 30). She analyses how *svayamvara*, although present in the Indian imagination, had given away to the arranged marriage system in which "the yoke [was] put on her neck forever!" (Ramabai 1888: 43) Not all marriages in India, she stresses, are unhappy: "In spite, however, of all these drawbacks, there is in India many a happy and loving couple that would be an honor to any nation. Where the conjugal relation is brightened by mutual love, the happy wife has nothing to complain of except the absence of freedom of thought and action; but since wives have never from the beginning known what freedom is, they are generally well content to remain in bondage" (Ramabai 1888: 48).

But why should one strive for this freedom in the first place? Ramabai's answer is clear: Reasons for "keeping women in ignorance and dependence" […] have been put to the fiery proof of science and found wanting" (Ramabai 1888: 94). And why should one heed science in this respect? Ramabai seems to lean on science to warn about the larger societal impact of female degradation. Society as a whole, she asserts, stands to suffer when large sections of the population are kept in ignorance and bondage "crushed under the weight of social prejudices and superstition, and their minds starved from absolute lack of literary food and of opportunity to observe the world" (Ramabai 1888: 96).[18]

Proceeding thus, Ramabai is able to deliver a nuanced sketch of life in India, while simultaneously delineating some common interests with her North-American audience (like faith in science). Against this background, she then launches her main argument. She vividly depicts the disadvantages which ensue for Indian women due to the male solidarity she sees developing between English colonial officials and Indian husbands. Wryly she notes how British rule allowed Hindu husbands to lawfully claim their right to their wives as "marital property" by appealing to Hindu custom (Ramabai 1888: 62). "We cannot blame the English government for not defending a helpless woman; it is only fulfilling the agreement made with the male population of India. How very true are the words of the Saviour 'Ye cannot save God and Mammon'. Should England serve God by helping a helpless woman against the powers and principalities of ancient institutions, Mammon should surely be displeased and British profit and rule in India might be endangered thereby. Let us wish it success, no matter if that success be achieved at the sacrifice of the rights and the comfort of over one hundred million women" (Ramabai 1888: 67–68). Being "slavery-loving creatures" themselves, Indian women beget sons "who desire to

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[18] In her *Stri Dharma Niti* (1882) too, she urges Indian women to become independent and learn to develop a sense of community (Kosambi 2016: 40–41).

depend upon some other nation, and not upon themselves" (Ramabai 1888: 98). The "Hindu nation," she anticipates, will "die a miserable and prolonged death if timely remedy is not taken to them" (Ramabai 1888: 98).

With broad strokes, Ramabai is able to depict Indian women as human beings, who, in general, still have to learn the vocabulary of freedom. But the socio-political situation in contemporary India was not conducive to this learning. Colonial officials and/or Indian husbands directly profited from female oppression. They simply did not have a motivation to change the status quo. Ramabai appeals to Americans as citizens of this "highly-favored land" to redeem their "most sacred" duty to humanity (Ramabai 1888: 117). Regardless of "nation, caste or creed", they should do their utmost best to help establish education institutions in India, for women (Ramabai 1888: 119).

Nonetheless, while Ramabai promises that these institutions will aim for the "combined advantage of Eastern and Western civilization and education" and hopes to enlist the help of her "Western sisters" in this regard, her educational plan only foresees a limited role for the latter (Ramabai 1888: 114, 101). Why? Her answer is unequivocal: "All experience in the past history of mankind has shown that efforts at the elevation of a nation must come from within and work outward to be effectual" (Ramabai 1888: 106). She places the burden of elevating the Indian women on the shoulders of Brahmin women since these, despite a prolonged generational disuse of intelligence, still possess – to some extent – the cognitive powers to observe and understand why their fathers value(d) knowledge (Ramabai 1888: 108). This is why she calls upon Americans to help women in India in the name of their, as she calls it, "sacred responsibilities as workers in the cause of humanity, and, above all, in the most holy name of God" (Ramabai 1888: 119).

To recapitulate: Ramabai lived in a period of history in which the race-caste interlinkage was relatively common. However, her writings, work and life indicate that, unlike Indian male reformers of this period, she did not accept the tacit Othering of Indian women on culturalist grounds, which ensued from this interlinkage. Rather, she deftly deployed the spaces given to her as a public personality to expose and question it. She used these spaces, furthermore, to fight male and colonialist hegemony, and reclaim her own agency. As Uma Chakravarti (2000: 308) aptly observes: The so-called progressive groups she engaged with in India and abroad "set an agenda for her in relation to uplifting other women but did not conceive of a situation in which Ramabai could go beyond it according to her own understanding".

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A Hindu Conservative Negotiates Modernity. Chandranath Basu (1844–1910) and Reflections on the Self and Culture in Colonial Bengal

Amiya P. Sen

Abstract

This is the first study in the English language of the Hindu conservative writer and literary critic, Chandaranath Basu. In 1891, Basu invented the term 'Hindutva' but with a very different set of meanings than what is taken taken to be today. This essay specifically examines his seminal work "Sakuntala Tattwa" (1881) in which Basu attempts to compare select characters from Shakespeare with that of principal character from Kalidas's well known play Shakuntala, in terms of both literary creation and cultural argument. In so doing the author also questions some of the postulates of western modernity such as prioritizing a man centered universe over a cosmic understanding of things. Also significant here is his contesting a temporal view of 'tradition' and 'modernity' whereby tradition is taken to precede modernity in time. In Basu's view, however, they are densely interwoven both in terms of time and typical values that they are capable of generating.

This paper was inspired by Sudipta Kaviraj's remark that in the inverted world of colonialism, it took greater courage to stand outside the reigning discourse on 'modernity' and reformist change than to be with these (Kaviraj 2010: 287). At a time when the western educated Hindu intelligentsia was actively engaged in evaluating their own tradition in the light of 'reason' and 'utility', heuristic devices they had been repeatedly asked to imbibe and integrate with the emerging 'modern' self, questioning positivist prescriptions for change did certainly amount to swimming against the tide. Such courage or conviction, as I argue in this paper, originated not in a blind rejection of the 'modern' per se but in a deeper self-reflection than had been possible in the first flush of intellectual excitement of the early 19th century. The substance of Chandranath Basu's writings overturn the idea suggested earlier in time that the modern Hindu's hopes lay in suitably imitating the ways of the English (Chattopadhyay in Bagal 2003: 178–179). On the contrary he argued that meaningful change began with the self itself and not with the social or political environment in which it was historically located. This also represents an interesting shift from

theories earlier put forth by deists like Akshay Kumar Dutta (1820–86) who had strongly urged that man abide by 'Natural Laws', a theory he had selectively borrowed from George Coombe's (1788–1858) *The Constitution of Man* (1828).[1] In Dutta's perception, man's growth and social advancement lay in comprehending and turning these 'laws' to his advantage. Chandranath's thesis, by comparison, was the conquest of nature by culture, a scheme under which man was required to shift his attention from what lay outside him to that which constituted his very self. In the third quarter of the 19th century, by when the racial arrogance of the ruling class had deepened feelings of political subjugation among Indians and the mechanisms of colonialist extraction were progressively reducing the economy and society to a state of depravation, even the colonized mind was forced to look back upon its lost selfhood and bemoan the blighting of hopes as had been once raised by the arrival of a new political and social order. There now grew an alternate indigenist discourse which, for lack of a better word, I have called 'revivalist'. Contrary to claims made in certain quarters, this discourse, even when revealing a penchant for tradition and the past, spoke in the language of modernist 'reform'; it repudiated not change per se but the ideological substance of change generated within colonial modernity.[2] This discourse was characterised by a wide array of social and cultural reflexes or attitudes. Excluding the openly reactionary and xenophobic rejection of the West and organized reform, it reveals the growth of two intellectually vibrant trends: first, the subtle yet purposive politicization of elements of indigenous thought and culture and second, the production of new, indigenous social theories.

Of the first, the finest examples come from the writings of the writer and novelist, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838–94). In Bankim's *Krishnacharitra* (The Life of Krishna, 2nd ed. 1892), God is made to enter human history with a palpably political purpose. For Bankim, Krishna was both God and man and his assuming human form as an *avatara* was meant to facilitate not so much an understanding of God as of man himself. The declared objective was the fulfilment of the modern man's social and political destiny guided by God as moral exemplar. In an earlier work, the *Dharmatattwa* (1888), Bankim had recast the traditional paradigm of Dharma, whereby, rather than be defined in terms of contexts or what was contingent, it assumed a form that was de-contextualized

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[1] Dutta in Basu, 2008.

[2] The debate on the conceptual meanings of 'revival' was begun by Tapan Raychaudhuri in 1988 with the argument that something 'far from dead' (Hinduism) could not be revived. See his Introduction to *Europe Reconsidered*. 1988. Suffice to say here that it is the dying that could possibly be revived, not the dead. 19th century literature is replete with suggestions of a languishing Hinduism.

and normative. This enabled Bankim to transform the concept of selfless action in the world (*nishkam karma*), hitherto a metaphysical concept meant to sink the individual human ego, into a scheme of collective political thought and praxis. Quite tellingly, the *Dharmatattwa* concludes on the note that patriotism was the highest dharma (Bagal 2003: 607). The second trend was what I would broadly call the construction of a Hindu sociology. Here the engagement with the political was more liminal, the focus being on recovering from the archives of the past, righteously 'Hindu' ways of re-ordering social and cultural life. Essentially, this agenda was founded on the premise, first argued by the educationist and social theorist, Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay (1827–94), that in the Indian tradition, the community *(samaj)* took precedence over the political nation (*rashtra*). Bhudeb took the social organism to be founded on timeless and immutable principles and hence, an embodiment of the Divine (*devsharira*) (Mukhopadhyay 1968 [1892]: 47). This constituted the substance of a counter-Orientalist discourse in a first rate treatise titled *Samajik Probondho* (Essays on Society, 1892), supported by two shorter treatises, the *Paribarik Probondho* (Essays on the Hindu family, 1882) and *Achar Probondho* (Essays on Hindu rites and customs, 1894), perhaps the best known works of the kind in 19th century Bengal (Mukhopadhyay, 1968 [1892]: 443–536). Modelled on the lines of older *smriti* treatises, these sought to regulate the everyday life of the Hindu in conformity with traditional social prescriptions. For Bhudeb, it was in the everyday running of organized community life that the individual realized his true identity. The Hindu self, regardless of the individuated freedom available in the domain of the spiritual, had to abide by the structure of the collective will in everyday social life. Whereas individual human nature did serve to define the qualities of a particular community, it was the community alone that could secure the moral and social behaviour required to perpetuate itself. However, at a time when the domestic economy of the Hindus, especially in urban Calcutta, had undergone significant changes, producing consumerist habits, new ideological loyalties, the visible restructuring of man-woman relationships and the progressive dismantling of the extended family, such works, but especially the *Paribarik Probondho,* eventually brought more infamy to Bhudeb than public cheer. A modern *Grihya Sutra* such as he tried to put together for the Hindu Bengalis became increasingly unacceptable under conditions that substantively eroded the very concept of a 'Hindu Home' (*griha*).

Many of the social issues that constituted the conservative rhetoric in Bhudeb also appear in Chandranath's writings but with dissimilar results. Both Bhudeb and Chandranath, who considered the former as his mentor, defended social hierarchies based on *varna* and *jati*, discouraged late marriages in wom-

en, pinned the successful running of the Hindu domestic economy on the skills of the child bride carefully groomed into becoming a competent housewife, expressed great anxiety about the sinister implications of pre-marital or extra-marital romance allegedly entering Hindu homes through the increasingly popular Bengali novel and deeply distrusted European conceptions of history and culture. Interestingly enough, it was not so much Bhudeb that drew the ire of critics on these issues as Chandranath. Whereas the poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) had two extended controversies with Chandranath on the subjects of Hindu marriage and the Hindu diet respectively,[3] Bhudeb does not at all figure in his recurring critique of Hindu orthodoxy. It is tempting to explain this with reference to their respective ages; Bhudeb was roughly forty years older than Rabindranath: a status perhaps also accentuated by his Brahmin birth, holding high public office and the reputation that he enjoyed both in European circles and the Indian. On the other hand, neither a Brahmin birth nor a considerable difference in their ages stopped Rabindranath from accusing Bankim, also a highly respected figure, of misreading and misinterpreting Hindu social ethics (Chattopadhyay in Bagal 2003: 837–842). Arguably, Chandranath's writings appeared more provocative for three related reasons. First, unlike Bhudeb, Chandranath quite obtrusively used the public platform to propagate his views; some of his well-known essays on the subject of Hindu domesticity and marriages were first delivered from literary forums and debating clubs. Second, unlike Bhudeb again, Chandranath quite manipulatively employed literary criticism as a medium for articulating his social thought. This, I imagine, agitated both literary circles in Bengal and those concerned with organized social reform. Third, it was consistently Chandranath's effort to situate his ideas within the larger polemic of competing cultures and ways of life. Whereas Bhudeb attempted to produce modern manuals on ideal Hindu social life but without also being polemical or insular; Chandranath almost unfailingly evaluated social ideas and practices in the comparative scale of civilizations and his conclusions, predictably enough, proudly acclaimed the 'superiority' of Hindu life as against the European. In 1892, he was to invent the term 'Hindutva', which he took as constituting the vital and defining qualities of 'Hinduness' In doing so, he took a long stride towards glossing over highly differentiated perceptions and practices within 'Hinduism'. Such a term had hitherto not been in vogue in Bengal and looks surprising especially in view of the fact that around the same time, a man no less than Bankim, usually identified with the hardening of Hindu attitudes, had the insight and intellectu-

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[3] The controversy on the two issues stretched between 1887 and 1892. Tagore's rejoinder to Basu's views on Hindu marriages is available in English translation in Sen, 2003.

al honesty to admit that Hinduism was but a label conveniently foisted on a wide variety of beliefs and practices (Sen 2011: 41).

Chandranath's early education was in a school run by Christian missionaries but which he quit very soon for fear of being weaned away from his ancestral religion. The cultural label of a 'Hindu' remained important for him, even in sartorial matters, for at one place he tells us of his reluctance to wear glasses for fear of being mistaken for a Brahmo![4] Chandranath was a diligent student, specially drawn to the study of English language and literature and it is with some pride that he narrates how his English writing had drawn praise from even the *Englishman.* We also gather that he joined the neighbourhood school called Oriental Seminary especially because it offered the services of a teacher who took care of English pronunciation among Hindu students. Chandranath took graduate and post-graduate degrees in history and his earliest writings in English were on Cromwell and the Glorious Revolution. Like Bankim, Chandranath was well read in European philosophy and literature and his Bengali writings too are replete with references to contemporary authors and thinkers from the European continent and America, but especially those dissatisfied with the reigning social and political ideas in the West itself. In this category are included August Comte (1798–1857), for a time also a favourite with Bankim, and William Hanwell Mallock (1849–1923), the author of the satire *The New Republic* (1877). The latter, as we shall presently examine, was particularly important for Chandranath for consistently advocating the need for personal restraint as against natural human impulses.[5] This indeed is an instance of an Indian discourse using the resources of the West to critique the West itself.

Chandranath Basu emerged as an influential Bengali writer and literary critic only in 1881, by when he had all but given up the use of English except in his official correspondence as translator to the Bengal government. His English tracts, of which about 18 have so far been located, address several issues ranging from a critique of Bengali peasant life (in which he anticipates Bankim's well known *Bangadesher Krishak / The Peasantry of Bengal*, 1872) to the promotion of Indian manufactures where again he appears to have been a pioneer.[6] By comparison, his Bengali writings, quite prolific after 1881, were almost exclusively on Hindu society, literature and in a broader sense, the Hindu world view. Chandranath's religious life appears to have followed a trajectory similar

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[4] It is widely rumoured that in the mid-19th century, wearing glasses was a fashion that young men took after the Brahmo leader, Keshab Chandra Sen.

[5] Biographical details on Chandranath have been culled from the following works: Majumdar, 1984; Basu, 1908; Bandopadhyay, 1963.

[6] Basu, 1869; Basu, 1871; Basu, 1874; Majumdar, 1984: 98.

to that of Bhudeb, beginning with deep scepticism towards Hindu deities but progressively moving towards a defensive attachment to the Hindu tradition. Unlike Bhudeb though, he admits to have been initially attracted by the religious discourses of the Brahmo theologian, Keshab Chandra Sen (1838–84), albeit only briefly, since he found Sen's profuse borrowing from Reed, Hamilton and other philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment to be insufferably dull and unintelligible (Majumdar 1984: 65). What might have also irked him was Keshub's deep attachment to Christ and Christianity, which many Hindus and Brahmos of the time found culturally alienating. The turning point in his life came when (some time in 1884) at the Calcutta residence of Bankimchandra, he happened to meet the orthodox Hindu writer and publicist, Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachudamani (1851–1928), a man who reportedly had taken the city by storm with his unique and culturally aggressive pseudo-scientific theories on Hindu religion and philosophy. Recollecting his memories of this meeting, Chandranath tells us how he was greatly impressed upon hearing Pandit Sashadhar define Dharma as something that supported and held together every element of human life, effectively linking man to the cosmos. To Chandranath this appeared a better way of understanding man's place within creation rather than to simply rely on dualistic theories speaking of a Creator and His creation. For one, such ontic theories as he had heard Christian evangelists propagate did not bring to light the cosmic view of man (Basu 1892: 2–15). Not surprisingly, in his magnum opus, *Hindutva. Hindur Prakrita Itihas /Hindutva, the Authentic History of the Hindus* (1892), Chandranath leaned strongly on the side of monistic Vedanta which, reportedly, presented all phenomena in a seamless unity. Significantly though, despite being impressed with the theories of Pandit Sashadhar, Chandranath distanced himself from both a ritualistic and mythology ridden religion as was the Pandit's forte as also the active and aggressive Hindu missionary propaganda that had been successfully launched by the 1880s by some of his co-workers. Also extraordinary are his attempts to re-establish Tantra as a religious discourse and praxis, given the revulsion expressed by the genteel society of Calcutta against the alleged 'moral horrors' in esoteric tantric practices. For Chandranath, however, the revival of Tantra was the panacea for restoring the strength, daring and manliness in the Hindu Bengali. It was only the bold, subversive and extraordinary methods of Tantra he believed that would prepare the Hindu to more effectively fight his subjection and conquer the onset of effeminacy (Basu 1908: 22–23). Such thoughts clearly set him apart from his friend Bankimchandra, who was closer to the neo-Vaishnava revival in 19th century Bengal. Implicitly, Chandranath may have shared with many fellow Bengalis, the sense of revulsion and disquiet about the

licentious pastoral god, Krishna, the visible loosening of man-woman relations, disregard for *jati* hierarchies within popular Vaishnava communities and the highly emotionally charged character of Bengal Vaishnavism. For him, the preference lay in reading Sakti (Power) both as a metaphysical category and the political.

Chandranath's disapproval of modernity was centred on a sharp critique of European man-woman relationships that allegedly had penetrated Hindu homes and was utterly ruining the Hindu domestic economy. Following Bhudeb, he produced two short, albeit little known manuals on Hindu domestic life[7] but his most powerful and popular arguments on this question came from a somewhat tendentious re-reading of older Indian classics in the light of modern predicaments. Of these the best known are his re-telling of two stories that first appeared in the *Mahabharata*: those of Sakuntala and Savitri and which he named *Shakuntala Tattwa* (1881) and *Savitri Tattwa* (1900) respectively. In the case of the former, Chandranath chose to comment not on the epic version of the story but on its well-known adaptation by the poet-dramatist, Kalidas (c. 5th CE), the *Abhigyana Shakuntalam*. It is to the study of this commentary that the rest of this paper is devoted (Basu 1881).

Sakuntala: The Two Versions

In the *Mahabharata*, the story of Sakuntala and Dushyanta appears in the Adi Parvan chapters, 68–74. This is a simple story but with dramatic turns and morally instructive lessons. King Dushyanta of the Puru dynasty, once out on a royal hunt, is led into deep forest in which is situated the (*ashrama*) hermitage of the sage Kanva. The hermitage represents nature in its pristine beauty where all forms of life are in harmony with one another. Having entered the hermitage, Dushyanta meets Sakuntala, a woman of bewitching beauty, made all the more beautiful by her simplicity and innocence. Strongly attracted by her beauty and innocence, Dushyanta declares his love for Sakuntala which, she then returns, albeit in more subtle and suppressed forms. Despite her initial reluctance, Dushyanta prevails upon her to agree to Gandharva marriage, a marriage that is essentially the passionate union of lovers, consummated with our without the consent of the community or the immediate family. Hereafter, Dushyanta travels back to his palace, assuring Sakuntala that he would arrange for her to join him at an appropriate time. The story now takes a dramatic turn with Dushyanta making no effort to claim Sakuntala as his wife and eventually, the anxious sage Kanva and other inmates of the *ashrama* decide to send Sa-

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[7] These are the *Garhyastha Path* and the *Garhyastha Vidhi*, published successively in 1886 and 1887.

kuntala to her husband, more so since a son had been born to her in the meantime. When Sakuntala presents herself before Dushyanta, the king refuses to acknowledge her as his wife or for that matter, even the son. On the contrary, he accuses her of deceit and untruthfulness, which, at some point, develops into a general indictment of the frailty and the lack of moral integrity in women. What follows is perhaps the most spectacular part of the story with Sakuntala reprimanding her husband in the strongest terms, her anger and indignation reportedly assuming the properties of a flame that threatens to burn and reduce the offending husband to ashes. Here, Sakuntala is not just the wronged woman claiming her social and legal rights but also the author of a sophisticated moral and metaphysical discourse which, among other things, suggests that 'Truth' need not always be protected by material witnesses since the human soul was always a witness (*sakshin)* to righteous and unrighteous acts in the world. At this point there appears a message from the gods (*daivavani)* upholding Sakuntala's claims and beseeching Dushyanta to accept her as his wife and their son. Upon this, Dushyanta performs a volte face, explaining to his ministers and courtiers, how he had known Sakuntala's identity all along but nevertheless subjected her to a public ordeal only so that society would not mistake him for a man who had fallen prey to lust.[8]

The *Abhigyana Sakuntalam* of Kalidas introduces certain changes to this plot of which the most dramatic and consequential is the curse inflicted on Sakuntala by the sage, Durvasa. The play describes how Sakuntala, lost in the thoughts of her husband, from whom she is separated, neglects to extend hospitality to Durvasa, a visitor to the *ashrama* upon which the sage curses her saying that he (the husband) of whom she had been thinking to the neglect of her social duty, would one day fail to recognize her. Upon persistent pleading by the companions of Sakuntala, the sage relents a little by suggesting that the only way to restore Dushyanta's memory would be to show him the royal insignia (a ring) which the King had once lovingly gifted to Sakuntala. However, when at the royal court, Sakuntala fails to produce the ring since she had unwittingly lost it in the river while bathing. The ring, swallowed by a fish is ultimately recovered through a fisherman who discovers the ring in the belly of the fish and upon seeing the ring, the memory of Sakuntala and of their relationship is fully restored to Dushyanta. In the meantime, spurned by the king, Sakuntala retires to another hermitage where she gives birth to her son and spends her days in austere separation. Dushyanta is now full of remorse and anxious to be re-united with Sakuntala. He is providentially rescued from this

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[8] Summary of the Mahabharata version as it appears in Kalipasanna Singha's Bengali translation. See Singha, 1987, Chapter 68 to 74.

state of mind when, in the course of his many kingly duties and adventures, he happens to arrive at the ashram where Sakuntala and their son are located. The play ends in a happy re-union of Dushyanta and Sakuntala with their son eventually becoming a mighty emperor after whom India takes the name Bharata.[9]

Old Texts and Modern Readings

While the epic version of the story had been in circulation for a long time, this appears to have been clearly overtaken by the popularity of Kalidas's play. Judging by the information available to us the popularity of the *Abhigyana Sakuntalam* was indeed enormous: when the Orientalist Sir William Jones asked his pandits which Sanskrit play deserved to be translated most, the answer was clearly in favour of Kalidas (Jones in Thapar 2010: 220). In modern Bengal, the original play was edited and first published (in Bengali script) by the Indologist Premchandra Tarkavagish (1805–1867) in 1839, followed by an edition (including a *tika*) from the Sanskrit College, Calcutta, by the educationist Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820–1891) in 1871. We also know of three contemporary translations into Bengali: by Vidyasagar himself (in 1854), Nanda Kumar Ray (in 1855) and by Jyotirindranath Tagore (around 1900). The nationalist figure Bipin Chandra Pal tells us that for much of the 19th century, the English educated Bengali Hindu took little interest in Sanskrit literature. While classics like *Bhattikavya*, *Sakuntala*, *Kadambari* and *Uttarramcharita* had been included in the University syllabi, very few students were known to develop a literary or aesthetic taste for these works. In Pal's view, it was Bankim who first initiated a serious literary interest in comparative literature, first, with his review of Bhavabhuti's *Uttararamcharita* and subsequently, by an attempt to critically compare Kalidas and Shakespeare as poets and dramatists.[10]

Bankim's essay, titled "Sakuntala, Miranda O Desdemona" (1876), compares Sakuntala of the play with two female characters from Shakespeare (Miranda from *Tempest* and Desdemona from *Othelo*) and makes interesting reading in the ways it anticipates in good measure, the neo-conservative view on ideal man-woman relationships that was to emerge in his own time. Miranda and Sakuntala, as children of nature, Bankim argues, have none of the compulsive traits of women brought up in society. They are not anxious to seek men who will be enamoured of their beauty or find suitors who profess their love. A natural simplicity and innocence are the distinguishing features of their charac-

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[9] Summary of Vidyasagar's translation of *Abhigyan Sakuntalam* (1854). In Rachanabali, 2006, pp. 353–394.

[10] Pal, B. (n.d.) Bankim Sahitya. 2 Vols. combined. In Mukhopadhyay 2000, pp. 228. Bankim's essays are reprinted in Bagal, 2003, pp. 141–162 and 179–183 respectively.

ter. On the other hand, the error that they both allegedly committed was in surrendering themselves to a heroic male figure without the consent of elders and the larger community (Chattopadhyay 1876a: 181). The critique of Gandarbha marriage, based on mutual love and passion that was to assume far greater intensity in later writings as in Tagore (Tagore 1902b: 729) is already foretold in Bankim's critique. However, for all her shortcomings, Sakuntala did appear to Bankim as the ideal wife. While the contemporary housewife forgot her husband when fondling her pet, Sakuntala had risked the devastating curse of Durvasa by focusing all her thoughts on Dushyanta (Chattopadhyay 1876a: 181). In Bankim's perception, however, Sakuntala's virtuous chastity was eroded by the way she reprimanded Dushyanta, "like a venomous serpent with a raised hood" and at this point, Bankim takes care to remind his readers how Desdemona had the strength and self-control to overcome all her anger or remorse even upon being spurned by Othelo. Evidently, Bankim's critique of Sakuntala as mentioned above was based on the epic version, not that of Kalidas, where she is but a demure woman who unprotestingly suffers her fate. In his re-telling of the story, Chandranath was to come to Sakuntala's rescue by drawing attention to the way she allowed respect for the husband (*patisambhram*) to brush aside all cause for unhappiness (Basu 1881: 98). Chandranath's focus was exclusively on the play; the indignant Sakuntala of the *Mahabharata* does not figure in his discourse at all.

What appears as hints and tangential suggestions in Bankim's writings develops into a fuller theory in Chandranath. For one, he extends the comparison between Kalidas and Shakespeare by also examining other plays like *Romeo and Juliet*, if only to demonstrate how, in one case, unbridled love and passion subjected men and women to tortuous ordeals whereas in the other, self-restraint, arising in a sense of *dharmic* knowledge, helped to overcome or at least to considerably mitigate, the ill effects of such ordeals. In this view, the daring and 'indiscrete' passion of Romeo and Juliet typifies the first, the innate wisdom of Dushyanta, the second (Basu 1881: 28). Chandranath's arguments, as mentioned above, drew not on Indian thinking alone but also contemporary European thought. For his critique of European gender relations he relies on at least three sources. His views on Shakespeare are drawn partly from the study by the German literary scholar Hermann Ulrici (1806–1884), supported by the writings of Harriet Martineau (1802–1876), a gifted writer who translated the works of Comte and W.H. Mallock's "A Dialogue on Human Happiness" (1879) (Basu 1881: 52, 65, 98). Chandranath takes some delight in the fact that Sakuntala bears no comparison with Portia, Rosalind or Isabella. Thankfully, she had neither the rationality nor the learning of these ladies and the genius of Kalidas

justly and befittingly chose to portray her as the 'ideal' woman whose mind and heart were anchored in the family and domesticity (Basu 1881: 65). Chandranath also uses Kalidas's play to draw attention to the innate vulnerability of man towards feminine charm for, even such a wise and heroic man as Dushyanta succumbed to it. Hence, while the personal tragedy of Romeo and Juliet could evoke sympathy in us, the tale of Dushyanta raised anxieties for all humanity (Basu 1881: 110).

Ironically, the conservative rhetoric on man-woman relations that had begun with Bankim and Chandranath finds its exaltation in Tagore. I find this ironic especially given the fact that Tagore and Chandranath had otherwise differed so sharply and consistently on issues vitally determining the Hindu way of life. In 1902, Tagore wrote two successive essays, the first on the plays *Kumarasambhava* and *Abhigyana Sakuntala* by Kalidas taken together, and the second, on the *Sakuntala* alone. [11]

The first of these essays begins with the claim that Kalidas was a poet not of aesthetic excellence alone but of abstinence and renunciation and though acknowledging the overwhelming power of love, he never surrendered before it. For Tagore, the moment Sakuntala became oblivious of her social obligations to a guest (Durvasa) the tender and benign qualities of love deserted her. The curse inflicted on the couple and that which constituted the most dramatic element in the play, was but an allegory, the real cause being the clandestine union. Durvasa's curse therefore represented just punishment for the breach of accepted social conventions, not the irascible temperament of an unpleasant man (Tagore 1902a: 719). Tagore's conservatism in the second essay exceeds the first. Here, as the argument goes, the trauma perpetrated by Durvasa's curse is already foretold in the inherent weaknesses of Dushyanta's character, notwithstanding all his self-restraint. Hence, had Dushyanta promptly accepted Sakuntala as his wife without subjecting her to the test of character, Sakuntala might well have ended up as only one of the King's several concubines (Tagore 1902b: 731).

The substance of what Bankim, Chandranath and Rabindranath argue reveals didacticism and an underlying social intent that, significantly enough, cuts across reformist and orthodox camps. This may well be put down to the advancement of Hindu nationalism which palpably weakened the urge for social reform and brought the defence of traditional ways of life as the foundation on which to rest the political. If, allegedly, Gandarbha marriage was social-

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[11] Tagore, R. 1902. Kumarambhava O Sakuntala. In Rachanabali, 2004, pp. 717–723, hereafter Tagore, 1902a; Sakuntala. In Tagore, 2004, pp. 723–733, hereafter Tagore, 1902,b.

ly irresponsible and constituted a fall from the ideal, this was also a comment on the undesirability of love freely expressed between two individuals, perhaps more so given the man's 'demonstrated' vulnerability towards female sexuality. As a popular novelist, Bankim was to propagate this with telling effect; no male character in his novels which went outside marital love and conjugality is spared a depressingly traumatic fate.[12] Chandranath himself gave a metaphysical twist to the argument with the warning that whereas Man (*Purusa*) represented quiescent spirituality, in worldly life it was the Woman (*Prakriti*) who ruled (Basu 1881: 115). Second, all three writers approvingly mention how Sakuntala of the play had not a single unpleasant thought for her husband; rather than reprimand Dushyanta she chose to chide her own fate. Bankim, as one might recall, took care to praise Desdemona for precisely such qualities as he found absent in the epic Sakuntala. In a deeply insightful analysis of the two versions of the Sakuntala story, the historian Romila Thapar rightly brings out the perceptible loss of woman's empowerment over time (Thapar 2010). It is my feeling though that she somewhat exaggerates the difference in the discursive intent behind the two with the argument that notions of chastity and the woman's self-denial would have been known to Kalidas, not to the author of the epic version (Thapar 2010: 238). Prima facie, this is problematic since the *Mahabharata* also includes the tale of Savitri[13] whose exemplary chastity succeeded in bringing back a dead husband to life. In the epic, both Sakuntala and Savitri are persuasive women who courageously stand their ground, perhaps more so in the case of the latter as she manages to win over even Yama, the Lord of Death. Thapar's thesis, therefore, survives only on the premise that the two tales were made a part of the epic text under palpably different social and historical settings, reflecting significant shifts within the brahmanical social and cultural discourse. While this is not improbable, one ought also to acknowledge an underlying commonness in concerns or themes of which attaining motherhood was certainly an important one.[14] It also appears to me that in both versions, the use of the supernatural imparts to the work the dramatic quality. In Kalidas's version, the lost ring and its recovery was certainly critical to the story but so was the *daivavani* in the epic. In the *Mahabharata* version, this is the catalyst that changes Dushyanta's behaviour towards Sakuntala, perhaps no less dramatically than what the lifting of Durvasa's curse

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[12] See in particular the treatment of male characters in his novels, *Bishbriksha* and *Krishnakanter Will*. The two novels were reviewed by Chandranath Basu under the title Duiti Hindu Patni (Two Hindu Wives). In Basu, 1891.

[13] *Mahabharata*, Vana Parva, chapters 293–299.

[14] For typical examples, Basu, 1900, p. 190.

does to the play. The question to ask here is whether even without this heavenly intervention, Dushyanta would have still come around to accept Sakuntala's rightful claims.

Chandranath used his modern reading of the Sakuntala story to also comment on the qualities of European literary theory as against the Indian, in the process also drawing upon his comparative assessment of the two civilizations. The European, he alleged, was far too preoccupied with the world outside him, the Hindu with the inner self. Both these represented extremes that inhibited human progress. The Hindu, by blindly conforming to his inherited tradition and not creatively employing his personal judgement, only brought society to a standstill. The European, on the contrary, excessively exercised his individual judgement to the point of unleashing a state of perpetual revolution (Basu 1881: 37). The European was obsessed with the empirical habits of mind, ignoring the spontaneous outpourings of the soul. He viewed man in isolation, not in his larger relationship with the cosmos. For Chandranath, this explained the European's obsession with biographies. Whereas anything worth remembering about a man always remained as part of public memory, the egoistic celebration of human agency in modern biographies took away from both his social moorings and larger ties with the cosmos (Basu 1891: 92; Basu 1900: 214–215). What was required therefore was a synthesis, between the self and not self, between social conformity and personal judgement. In the *Abhigyana Sakuntalam*, the personality of Dushyanta clearly overshadowed that of Sakuntala (Chattopadhyay 1876a: 38) for it was he who embodied this creative synthesis and thereby rose above any other character available in world literature (Basu 1881: 38).

It occurs to me that the life and work of Chandranath Basu attempted to contest and controvert three related assumptions in European modernity. First, it rejected the man centred universe that was driving out alternate conceptions of time and society. Second, it critiqued the three major components of the modern self: reason, certitude and cognition. But perhaps most importantly, it denied the temporal view of tradition which created a sharp discontinuity between the past and the present, between modernity and tradition. For Chandranath, tradition was a precious resource which was inherent in the modern and intuitively helped man to lessen the perpetual conflict between the self and that which lay outside the self.

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Nostalgia and Autobiographies: Reading Rabindranath Tagore's *Jībanˈsmr̥ti* (1912) and *Chelebelā* (1937)[1]

Hans Harder

Abstract

Nostalgia as a form of consciousness or a feeling is in more than one way connect-ed with literature and the arts. Fred Davis in his foundational monograph Yearn-ing for Yesterday *claims a two-way relationship between them: "[…] in its cultur-ally crystalized, symbolically transmuted form, nostalgia is as much a device of art as an effect of its exercise" (Davis 1979: 74). Indeed, not just literature and the arts, but also film, fashion, architecture, and so many other fields of cultural pro-duction display a marked propensity to ally with nostalgia in their relation to the past. In narratives, it does not seem far-fetched to surmise that this link is particu-larly strong in genres that are explicitly designed to commemorate the past, such as biographies and, even more, autobiographies.*

The present article is thus an attempt to explore the notion of nostalgia and the mechanisms of autobiographical writing, and link the two to each other. There-upon I will gauge the role of nostalgia in Rabindranath Tagore's (1861–1941) autobiographical writings, a story that gains complexity by Tagore's cult status in Bengali culture and his concurrent proneness to be appropriated as an object of collective nostalgia. In a separate step, some of Tagore's ideas about remembrance and the literary process will be compared to nostalgia, yielding the somewhat paradoxical finding that though these have a lot in common, nostalgia as a con-cept is unassimilable to Tagore's aesthetical ideas and remains an external catego-ry. As such, however, nostalgia operates on various levels in Tagore's life-writings and their reception, creating nostalgic loops and resulting in what I call a form of hyper-nostalgia that has come to wrap the Tagore experience.

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Nostalgia

Nostalgia, in today's current usage, is an affective kind of remembrance that bestows the thing that is remembered with an emotional surplus and combines a rather positive memory with a sense of loss, usually resulting in a "bittersweet" sensation. One of the most prominent features of such nostalgia is the filtering of the past in view of the present. It is safe to say that in modern societies, nostalgia, like history, is one of the dominant modes of handling the past in both individual and collective domains, and forms a part of what we may more generally refer to as cultures of remembrance. One could even say that the mechanisms of narrativization, of balancing in- and exclusions, following Hayden White's insights, are something that nostalgia and history share – while of course one must hasten to add that these function to very different degrees and tend to be very differently valued.

A category in many ways related to, and yet quite distinct from and opposed to historical thinking, nostalgia has a very curious history. The conceptual development of nostalgia, literally "pain for the far-away", displays some interesting turns and shifts which, though well-known,[2] deserve to be shortly introduced.[3] Nostalgia was originally coined in 1688 by a Swiss physician, Johann Hofer, from Greek *nostos* (home) and *algia* (disease), as a denomination for a physical illness that beset Swiss mercenaries in those days once they were away from home (Davis 1979: 1–3). Nostalgia proved contagious and spread to other populaces. Scotts, English, Laplanders, Austrians, and Napoleon's army suffered from it, and it became a familiar diagnosis with 19th century psychologists. As Kimberley Smith emphasizes in extension of Davis's argument, nostalgia was not just a new name for something that had always existed, but evolved into a syndrome that was related to the rise of modernity (Smith 2000: 510). The rapid change of living conditions and the increasing requirement of geographic mobility connected with modernity crucially contributed to the spread of nostalgia.

Two major shifts happened to the concept in the process. One was its altered definition in terms of time rather than space:

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[2] Cf., e.g., the Wikipedia entries in languages like English, German, Italian, Russian and French (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nostalgia, accessed on February 26, 2018), which all give versions of the history of the concept (but not so those in Danish, Spanish and Dutch).

[3] I follow Fred Davis (1979) and Kimberly Smith (2000) who both present detailed genealogies of the concept and discuss the delineations of nostalgia in medical, psychological and sociological literature from the 17th to the 20th century.

"Once defined simply as a desire to return home, to a specific place, nostalgia was gradually being conceptualized as a longing to return to a former time – and usually a time the patient only imagined to be better" (Smith 2000: 512).

The other shift was the aestheticization of nostalgia, i.e. its making into an emotion with mildly melancholic but also soothing qualities to be relished leisurely. Kimberley Smith exemplifies this shift by pointing at a passage of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* of 1906–22 (Smith 2000: 514). In a way, this hint at Proust signals yet another shift by demonstrating that nostalgia had developed into a bourgeois, classy sentiment, potentially in line with other strategies of self-alienation for aesthetic effect such as the dandy-like practice of flânerie. Nostalgia was now also a "privilege of the sensitive, introspective (and largely inactive) intellectual" (Smith 2000: 518) and had thus covered a long way from its first hosts, the Swiss mercenaries.

Nostalgia can assume individual or collective forms. Freed from its limiting and dismissive uses that imply some kind of manipulation and deny nostalgia any proper legitimacy in representing the past ("just nostalgic"), nostalgia emerges in Fred Davis's research as an extremely widespread and fundamental form of consciousness or feeling for the past, particularly in modern societies that are characterized by rapid change. Putting into perspective the general prejudice that nostalgia is false consciousness[4], Davis normalizes it as a mechanism with identity-stabilizing functions, helping to tackle individual or collective ruptures in life, and common not to particular age-groups or classes, but pretty much all-pervasive in modern societies.[5] He also introduces a useful distinction between three levels of nostalgia: the first level catches nostalgia in the act, while the second denotes reflexive nostalgia that questions the accuracy of the nostalgic effect, and the third features interpreted nostalgia that involves meta-level theorizing about nostalgia (Davis 1979: 17ff.).

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[4] Particularly from a Marxist and leftist vantage point; cf. Davis (1979: 109) and Smith (2000: 507).

[5] Davis's reference is mainly to US American society in the 1970s but he cautiously generalizes his findings for modern (western) societies; he does so in sharp contradistinction, however, to traditional societies as he asserts through a supportive quotation from Russell Baker: "Asian villagers living for generations in one place would be baffled by nostalgia. It is an affliction of traveling races who do not like where they have arrived and have no taste for the next destination." (Davis 1979: 50) – a strong and evocative statement that, however, appears to be far too sweeping and would only apply to certain forms of collective nostalgia. As for the identity-stabilizing function of nostalgia seen from the angle of trial-based experimental psychology, cf. the recent publications of a team of US and UK psychologists, such as Constantine Sedikides et al. (2008), or Matthew Vess et al. (2012).

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Nostalgia and Autobiography

As I claimed initially following Fred Davis, nostalgia is intricately connected with arts and literature, and particularly, as I conjecture in extension of his remarks, with genres that reflect about the past such as the autobiography. Belonging to the larger category of life-narrations, autobiography is special in that it implies as a rule the splitting of the self into a narrating and an experiencing I.[6] The former addresses the latter in a mode of retrospection and usually engages in an attempt to construe some kind of identity and continuity across the crevices and ruptures of life. As Monika Horstmann points out, autobiography encompasses the writing self's present and future as well (Horstmann 2003: 143), which supply the frame for reflections about the past. This basic structure of autobiography is very similar to what Davis calls "life review", i.e. the retrospective evaluation and explanation of one's life usually taking place in its last third. Such life reviews are an exercise which serves settling issues and making peace with oneself and one's environment, and is inherently nostalgia-bound (Davis 1979: 79f.).

So on the one hand, autobiographies may very well cover extravert aspects such as the dutiful documentation out of ethical considerations, the didactic function of conserving one's example and insights for posteriority, or the articulation of status claims or self-assertion through authoritative representation. As Gita Dharampal-Frick remarks, Gandhi, true to his slogan "my life is my message", consistently strove to set up an example for society in his life (Dharampal-Frick 2011: 560), and this is quite literally true for his famous autobiography as well. [7] On the other, however, autobiographies may also turn out to be literary versions of rather introvert life reviews. In turn, if such introvert life reviewing on the basis of individual remembering can be made out as the driving impulse of an autobiography, we have to ask how this introversion is extraverted by an author's act of making it public rather than keeping it hidden in the manner of a diary, and whether and how this brings back collective remembering through the backdoor. In a nutshell, how do authors tackle the paradox of meaning something to be private and personal and still exposing it to a larger public?

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[6] Vogt (1990: 71): "erzählendes" and "erlebendes Ich" are the German terms. For a discussion, cf. Schaflechner (2018: 114f.).

[7] Gandhi's *Experiments with Truth* (written from 1925-29 in their original Gujarati version) would seem to be driven by a mix of these three motivations. According to Monika Horstmann's interpretation, Gandhi in this text and elsewhere re-appropriated techniques of hagiography and thereby promoted the idolatry that had developed around his person (Horstmann 2003: 150f.).

Quite naturally, then, making accounts of one's life public raises doubts about the introspective nature of the exercise and may make it seem hypocritical. A breach of a basic distinction between private and public seems to lie at the root of autobiographic writing, which by its very structure converts the one into the other. Such display of something usually kept concealed evokes misgivings of centering attention on the self in undue measure and thus of being self-aggrandizing. Hence, and even more than authorial prefaces in general, introductory paratexts to autobiographies can be expected to be a fertile ground for disclaimers of all kinds.

This seems all the more true for South Asia where the autobiography is a rather late arrival in the canon of literary forms. Life narrations of the hagiographic kind abound in the classical and modern literatures, right from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and Buddhist literature via an immense output of hagiography to the present day (Horstmann 2003: 145f.). But full-scale autobiographies – barring very few examples such as some Persian works by kings and nobles at the Mughal court, or exceptional texts such as Banarsidas's 17th century *Ardhakathānak* – enter the scene only in the 19th century by way of colonial contact. Be it due to the contention made by some critics (too obviously ideological not to be questioned) that modesty and the lack of individualism prevented such initiatives, or to the acute awareness of the paradoxical nature of the enterprise, the genre seems to have been held in suspicion by many of its South Asian practitioners. Calaṃ (1894–1979), for instance, a central protagonist of Telugu literature in the twentieth century, supplies a good example of a disclaiming paratext by boldly proclaiming in the introduction to his autobiography:

> *"I hate autobiographies. By writing an autobiography one thinks that he is someone important to the world, did great service to the people; if he did not tell the world about it, his greatness would not be known; [and] if it is not known, it would be a damage to the world, I think.*
>
> *Why was I born? Once I was born, why did I not die immediately? Why did I pollute my surroundings [English in the original] for such a long time? To write one's story shamelessly is a thing that cannot be forgiven"* (Calaṃ 1994: 4).[8]

Adopting a genre despite hating it, molding it to one's needs and concerns, adducing exterior motivations in the service of society, using the form to set up models to follow or – more interestingly – not to follow, or even resisting the appellation "autobiography" were some of the options open to authors that

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[8] I thank Heiko Frese for the English translation of this passage.

somewhat paradoxically served a common goal: that of carving out a space in vernacular writing cultures for what I would still call the autobiographical mode.

Nostalgia and Autobiography in Bengal

If modernity brought abundant change and much disruption, colonialism brought no less change and arguably more disruption: ideal conditions, one should say, for nostalgia to thrive. With 19th and 20th century Bengal being the epitome of a culture under the impact of colonialism, it is not far-fetched to explore nostalgia in Bengal. And indeed, the idea of looking at the role of nostalgia in aspects of Bengali culture along such lines is not exactly new. Dipesh Chakrabarty, to quote just one example, in his chapter on *āḍḍā* in *Provincializing Europe*, identifies this practice of informal spirited gatherings, thought of as "quintessentially Bengali", as a major topos of cultural nostalgia triggered by anxieties of the present (Chakrabarty 2000: 181f., 213) – anxieties that Bengalis and particularly Calcuttans, as common stereotypes have it, are sometimes said to be particularly prone to. In another context, though without explicitly referring to nostalgia, Chakrabarty deals with literary historian Dinesh Chandra Sen's sentimental return to the pre-modern Bengal of Chandidas, resulting in what in the present context one might describe as nostalgic historiography. Chakrabarty compares this with poet Jibanananda Das's turning to a *rūpasī bāṃlā*, beautiful Bengal, that would equally yield an analysis in terms of nostalgia, also since Jibanananda's poems are satiated with folk images (Chakrabarty 2004: 678–679) which are, as Fred Davis remarks, often used for the creation of nostalgic sentiments (Davis 1979: 92).

The present article aspires to add to such studies by making the focus on nostalgia explicit and precise, and by examining the concept in the light of two particular texts so as to establish the link between nostalgia and autobiography. What it cannot do, though extremely desirable, is to go beyond the trappings of the nostalgia paradigm by looking out for its semantic equivalents in Bengali. A word like *pichuṭān* comes to mind, literally the "pull behind". The word's etymology is unclear but it is not unlikely that it is of recent origin and was invented to function as an equivalent of nostalgia. Beyond analysing the more or less successful career of such a neologism (though admittedly a very nice and elegant one), the real task would be to sketch the semantic field of emotional vocabulary in Bengali around notions of loss, remembering, retrospective longing and incorporation, together with a diachronic genealogy in texts and narratives. Only then can one hope to locate nostalgia properly in Bengali idioms, or alternatively show how its space is blocked by other overlapping or competing notions. Such a two-way approach would be needed to balance the all-too-

pervasive measuring of particular cultural enunciations against perceived global categories. Such 'measuring against' global categories with a European legacy is a biased procedure that can only be balanced by doing the reverse simultaneously. I would not call this 'provincializing', but perhaps 'balancing Europe' in a kind of counterfactual trial set-up, given that beyond any doubt it is mapping against concepts of European origin that is the order of the day, both in research and in the "field". Having laid out these limitations in tackling "nostalgia", and without any nostalgic remorse for a study-that-could-have-been (if nostalgia can also inhabit the conjunctive mode), I now proceed to outlining some further limitations with regard to the second key word of this article, autobiography.

Tagore is known as a pioneer in many fields, but he definitely was not the first autobiographer in British India or in Bengali literature. The first full-fledged specimen of this genre, preceding his first reminiscences by more than three decades, was Rassundari Debi's *Āmār jīban* ('my life', 1876), the spectacular life report of a self-taught literate house wife.[9] Also other women's autobiographies had started to appear.[10] Among male autobiographers, Brahmo Samaj notables were particularly active. In the Tagore family itself, Rabindranath's father Debendranath Tagore had published his *Ātmajībanī* in 1898, and Rajnarayan Basu's *Ātmacarit*, written in or shortly after 1875, appeared in 1909.[11] However, if it were our task to chart out precisely the location of Tagore's writings in the greater context of life narrations on the Indian subcontinent, then such a genealogy of the autobiography could not stop at name-dropping these references but would have to admit for precursors in various literary forms. Alokeranjan Dasgupta has argued, in an article on biography in India, that autobiographical accents are spread over a large body of pre-19th century *bhakti* literature in Bengali and other new Indo-Aryan literatures, even though the autobiography proper was a "derivative *genre*" (Dasgupta 1979: 4). Similarly, from a postmodernist viewpoint, Malhotra and Lambert-Hurley, in their introduction to a book on gender and autobiography in South Asia, take in the criticism that the term 'autobiography' may cause exclusions and in fact amount to an act of epistemic violence if forced upon South Asian articulations

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[9] Cf. Tanika Sarkar's detailed study of this text (Sarkar 1999).

[10] Women's autobiographies on the Indian subcontinent have recently found a lot of attention, not only in the English sphere but also in vernacular research. For two Bengali expositions, one dealing exclusively with Hindu women's autobiographies and the other an anthology containing also "life writings" of a majority of Muslim women, see Datta (2006) and Ākhˡtār & Bhaumik (1998).

[11] See Basu (1995: 1–171) for the text and Baridbaran Ghosh's editorial remarks: Bāridˡbaraṇ Ghoṣ: 'Sampādakīẏa'. In: Basu (1995: V–XI), IXf.

of the self (Malhotra and Lambert-Hurley 2015: [4]). These precautions are apt to heed in the following, particularly given Rabindranath's denial of the genre assignation.

In approaching the topic, I assume that Tagore's writings operate in a climate that is fully aware of the newly established genre of autobiography and thus entertain a highly reflected and dialectic relationship with it. While taking his denial of the genre seriously, I however also contend that the normativity inherent in Tagore's perception of the genre (let us call this autobiography[i]: a quasi-historical, self-centred and factual life report) is far more confined than what recent debates on the topic would allow to be included under the term (autobiography[ii]: life-narrations in which the self splits up into an experiencing and a narrating I). Therefore I stick to calling his writings autobiographical – deemphasizing the designation by restricting it to adjectival use – in this latter sense of autobiography[ii], and will use the concept in order to designate the narrative mode and particular structure of self-reference it entails.

Tagore's Autobiographical Writings

Rabindranath Tagore was thoroughly aware of the autobiographical production in Bengali, but nevertheless foreshadowed above-quoted Chalam in being suspicious of a genre that for him seemed to bear testimony of an undue European infatuation with life writings. In his *Cāritra-pūjā* (1907) he claimed that "In Europe, considerable energy is spent in writing biographies of men in power. We may indeed call Europe biomanic" (quoted from Bhattacharya & Chakravorty 1979: 23). When he wrote about his life at different points, he did so by distancing himself from the genre: in sharp contradistinction to some of the then existing autobiographies, Rabindranath Tagore's autobiographical writings refused to be called thus and thereby to fall into the category of such promotional documents of men in power, claiming instead to be exercises in literature (in the sense of *belles lettres*).

To be sure, there was no reason for his autobiographical texts to promote their author's popularity – Tagore was all-too well-known in Bengal even in 1912, aged 50, when he set about writing his *Jīban'smṛti* (reminiscences of life), a year before the Nobel award; and he had become a monumental celebrity in 1937, four years before his death, when he authored *Chelebelā* (childhood). These two are the texts coming closest to a common understanding of autobiography; the essays written between 1904–1940 that were compiled under the

title of *Ātmaparicaẏ* in his works (Ṭhākur 1996[2]) contain random reflections on his role as a poet but little life narratives.[12]

What motivated Tagore to pen down his reminiscences in both cases was different: a wish to collect the "raw material of literature" his life had yielded in the first, and the behest of an editor to write something for children in the second. It certainly was not any claim to fame, for famous he already was; nor was it any strong urge to force his own explanations on any events or give his own spin to certain narratives, because he had already had ample space in the abundance of his other writings to achieve such things. He had no such weapons to wield, it appears. And indeed, in keeping with his claims as stated in his foreword, there is a certain genuine humility about Tagore's autobiographical texts that appears to ward off any misgivings about self-aggrandizement. There is a certain casualness to his narration and a complete lack of any self-gratulatory rhetoric – this very casualness in general being one of the outstanding qualities in Tagore's writings, or at least prose writings.

The Paratexts

But before taking a closer look at Tagore's life narrations proper, the respective authorial prefaces deserve some attention. Both are very self-conscious and programmatic, and it is in them that Tagore sets out to settle the status and generic confines of his texts. Here are excerpts from the one to *Jīban'smṛti*:

"I do not know who paints the pictures of life on memory's canvas. But whoever it may be, what he is painting are pictures, meaning that he is not sitting there with his brush simply to make a faithful copy of all that is happening. He takes in and leaves out so many things according to his own taste. He renders so many big things small and small things big. He doesn't hesitate at all to arrange earlier things later and later ones earlier. In short, painting pictures is his task, not writing history [itihās]. [...] But though the attempt to gather precise history from memory's storehouse may be fruitless, there is an intoxication [neśā] in looking over the pictures, a fascination which got hold of me. [...] There is nothing in these memories which is worthy of being eternally remembered. [... But] if that which has blossomed into pictures in one's own memory can be made to blossom in words, it is worth a place in literature. [...] These memory pictures are also such literary material. To take them as an attempt to write an autobiography [jīban'bṛttānta] would be a mistake. In such a view these writings are incomplete and useless" [Ṭhākur 1994: 411f.].

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[12] Another source of autobiographical information, but of course very different in nature from an autobiography, is the corpus of Tagore's travel accounts and letters.

In these lines, apart from the typical display of modesty ("nothing in these memories which is worthy of being eternally remembered") so common in authorial prefaces,[13] what is most conspicuous is the setting apart of memories, or "pictures of life on the canvas of memory" (*smṛtir paṭe jībaner chabi*), from history (*itihās*). Unlike history – and strikingly close to nostalgia –, these memories do not obey any rigid chronology and cannot claim faithfulness in representing the outer facts of life. They are processed differently and adhere, to paraphrase Tagore's words, to a separate level of consciousness, thereby gaining representativeness of a different order. Therefore he denies them the status of autobiography, a genre he subsumes under the larger regime of history.

We can connect these remarks with other statements on the role of literature in Tagore's essays to find a clue to his project. In 'Literature and its Judge', written in the first decade of the 20th c, i.e. shortly before *Jīban'smṛti,* he argues that literature is not representation of the world but rather a transformative reassemblage, built by selectively appropriating the world through the human mind. "The mind makes natural things into mental ones; literature makes these mental things into literary ones."[14] The true poet, according to Tagore, is the one who manages to isolate the true bits and pieces of reality, whatever is emotionally and aesthetically relevant, and who from these bits and pieces creates a truer-than-life picture of mental substance to the readers – truer than life because the irrelevant, superfluous details of reality have been filtered out. This procedure constitutes literature, whose purpose is to distill artistic truth from the flow of time, thus immortalizing it and making it into a common property of the literary community or, more generally, humanity. In this way, *Jīban'smṛti* becomes an exercise in trans-creating recollections of his personal life into literary substance. The same is true for his *Chelebelā*, written 25 years later. In the introduction Tagore states an overlap with *Jīban'smṛti*, although *tār svād ālādā – sarobarer saṅge jhar·nār mato:* "Its taste is different, like a lake is different from a creak" (*Chelebelā*, p. 4).

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[13] Cf. my article on introductory paratexts in modern South Asia (Harder 2016) for a general examination of such displays of modesty. See also the introductory sentences to Tagore's *Ātmaparicaẏ*, a text not anywhere coming close to an autobiography, but apparently commissioned as such: "I have been asked to write my autobiography. I will not take any extra space here to display unnecessary modesty. I have to state in the beginning that only certain special people have the special characteristics required for writing an autobiography – I don't. There is no harm in that, though, because I cannot see anybody's benefit in [reading] a detailed description of my life." (Ṭhākur 1996[2]: 137). This passage is a perfect example for the paradoxical inversions of modest gestures that one can encounter in introductory paratexts or passages.

[14] I take this quotation from Rahul Peter Das's translation in Tagore (1997: 112).

We will get back to these statements and link the ideas of literariness and nostalgia that together, I argue, are the central impulses that drive Tagore's rather ego-weak autobiographical writings. But before jumping to the conclusions, let me now present the texts.

Jīban'smr̥ti (Reminiscences, 1912)

Tagore's *Jīban'smr̥ti* (*JS*), though disqualified from being called an autobiography by the author himself, is a rather chronological account of Tagore's childhood, youth and early adulthood. It is divided into 44 chapters of quite heterogeneous nature, the range of titles being from "The normal school", "Beginning to write poetry" and "The atmosphere at home" to "An essay on songs" and "Bankimchandra". Broadly speaking, and in accordance with his personal trajectory, the dominant topics in the early chapters are his schooling, domestic life and family, whereas in the later ones more emphasis is placed on his literary endeavors, travels and contemporaries. He depicts the life in the huge Tagore mansion in Jorasanko, ironically reports his school life and furnishes humorous portraits of his teachers, narrates his travels to the Himalaya with his illustrious father Debendranath Tagore (1817–1905), the Brahmo Samaj leader – and passages like these have arguably become some of the best-known pieces of Bengali literature to this day.

When setting out in search of nostalgia, it needs to be said that Tagore's reminiscences are anything but excessively sentimental. Or if there is sentimentality, it is mitigated by a certain mild irony that is typical of much of Tagore's prose – in such a way that some parts read like a picaresque novel (*Schelmenroman*). What finds the narrator's approval in the boy he once was is his highly unorthodox habit of reading things he would not fully understand, filling the gaps with his imagination, and more generally his deep-seated dislike for all school learning (*JS*: 437–39; *R*: 73–77).[15] But on the whole, the adult, middle-aged narrator looks back upon the capricious, naughty, dreamy and sometimes conceited child of the past and passes lots of critical judgments on him.

This is particularly so when it comes to the erstwhile boy's writing skills. To quote just a few examples, his mind in his young days, Tagore writes, consisted of "hot vapor" and "lazy fancies" (*JS*: 458f.; *R*: 130). His review of Michael Madhusudan Datta's *Megh'nād'badh'kābya,* written at age 16, makes the 50-year old narrator remark: "As acidity is characteristic of the unripe mango so is abuse of the immature critic" (*JS*: 466; *R*: 150). "The writings of an age like the

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[15] I give references for both *Jīban'smr̥ti* (JS) and the *Reminiscences* (R), the latter being the English translation of the former. The quotations given in this section are usually translated from the Bengali original by me (HH), though in a few cases I have followed *R*.

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one when I started writing cannot possibly be fit for publication", he adds (*JS*: 467; *R*: 152). He is ashamed of besmirching the pages of the *Bhāratī*, "not just because of immature writings but because of its haughty impudence, its weird excesses and its high sounding artificiality". The only thing that was laudable was the enthusiasm that drove him (*utsāher bisphār*) (*JS*: 467, *R*: 153).

So Rabindranath strongly counteracts the idea of any supposed literary genius in the young boy he once was, and there is no sense of loss, constitutive of any nostalgic feelings, in his re-visiting the early stages of becoming a writer. The nostalgia sits in other niches of the reminiscences: not on the level of his expressions, but rather his *im*pressions at that age – his dreamlike imaginations, contemplations and feelings in a world of the past that was now lost. In the first pages of *Jīban'smṛti*, he describes a huge banyan which he had imagined as the home to various ghosts and supernatural beings:

> *"But alas, where is that banyan tree now! Neither is there the pond which served to mirror the presiding goddess of this forest-lord; many of those who used to bathe there have also followed the shade of the banyan tree. And that boy has grown up and is counting the shade and sunshine of good and bad days in the immense complexity after having pulled down the roots from all around him"* (JS 415).[16]

This loss hints also at the larger process of speedy urbanization that Calcutta witnessed during Rabindranath's lifetime, and comes up again when he comments upon what formerly used to be the house's garden and likens this childhood's garden with paradise. There also used to be a husking pedal in that garden: "Accepting the absolute defeat of village life in Kolkata, this husking pedal had some day silently covered its face [out of shame] and died" (*JS* 417).[17] All these images are intense enough to be perceived as first level nostalgia according to Fred Davis's scheme introduced in the beginning, but they also come with various degrees of reflection and thus simultaneously arch into the second level of reflexive nostalgia.

A similar loss Tagore deplores is that of social institutions like the *maj'lis,* refined social gathering, which he sees on the verge of extinction. The stream of visitors coming into the house now seemed like a thing of the older generation, and was not being seen to be replaced by European-style sociality since

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[16] The imagery of the last sentence is not quite clear; cf. the smoother, but less exact translation in the *Reminiscences*: "And that boy, grown older, is counting the alternations of light and darkness which penetrate the complexities with which the roots he has thrown off on all sides have encircled him." (*R* 13)

[17] Cf. the smoother English translation: "This last vestige of rural life has since owned defeat and slunk away ashamed and unnoticed." (*R* 18)

none had the means to establish it; the visitors in the house now were like "visitors from some other country" (*JS*: 456f.). This description is nostalgic indeed and tallies with Dipesh Chakrabarty's observation that *āḍḍā* has so often been imagined in terms of a gradual disappearance and a kind of residue of the premodern (Chakrabatry 2000: 182).

But rather than such outer material and social changes, it is a particular vision of childhood that drives Tagore's occasional fits of nostalgia in *Jīban'smṛti*. This announces itself in the first pages already when he describes the acrimony with which he kept watering some custard apple seeds in that garden and, all wonder-struck, observed their gradual sprouting into plants, summarizing that childhood was the period of wonder and adulthood came as disillusionment (*JS*: 418, *R*: 21). Elsewhere, he evokes the "great advantage of first vision [*paricaẏ*]" (*JS*: 444, *R*: 92) which, in its freshness and intensity, is unparalleled by anything that might follow. Further on, he offers an analogy of youth by likening it to the history of the earth: the human youth, like that of the earth, is equivalent to the turbulent times before things go crusty (*JS*: 466, *R*: 149f.). And he adds metaphors of seasons in the end of *Jīban'smṛti*, in a sort of summary of his reminiscences, by portraying his life thus far as a sequence of the monsoon and the autumn – the rains, as we hardly need to spell out, standing for turbulences, fluidity and fermentation, and the autumn for reaping, completion, perhaps containing also a bit of the (European) seasonal nostalgia of looking back before things go into their winter sleep (*JS*: 511f.; *R*: 264f.). Again most of these instances can be assigned to Davis's reflexive nostalgia.

What is striking is Rabindranath's almost complete silence about his wedding and marital life: he just takes one sentence to soberly record the fact that he got married (*JS*: 501; *R*: 239) and adds a remark, a little later, on his *nabayauban*, "new-born youth" (*JS*: 501; *R*: 241), leaving open all kinds of interpretations, and thereby perhaps also consciously signaling the limits of what, in such reminiscences, can be confided to a reading public.

Chelebelā (Childhood, 1937)

The sentiment of nostalgia, we may suppose, is easily transmitted to an adult reading public sharing a disrupted past and a childhood to revisit. But how about nostalgia when addressing children? Let us shortly turn then to *Chelebelā* (*CB*), the "creak" version of the "lake" of Rabindranath's reminiscences, as it were. The subject matter of both narrations being largely the same, we can neglect a summary of its contents and turn to the differences in its treatment right away.

In *Chelebelā*, the difference between then and now is very prominently marked, more so than in *Jīban'smṛti*, and to the point of becoming a constitutive pattern on which the narration rests. This makes sense insofar as children can be assumed not to share the past as a template of reflection for the present and need to be attuned to thinking in different temporalities. The introduction of old-day Calcutta from the first chapter of *Chelebelā*, would indeed seem trivial for an adult audience: the narrator here explains that there was then no current, and in the evening lamps and candles had to be lighted; nor was there tab water, all water had to be brought from the river; people were far less busy, also the babus going to work (*CB*: 10).[18] The former scarcity of entertainment in the city prompts a similar kind of passage:

> *"Today, entertainment in the city is like the stream of a river. There are no breaks in between. Every day there is cinema somewhere at some time, whoever wants attends for little expenses. In those days, a yātrā performance was like digging into the sand of a dry river every two-three kilometers to draw some water in a bucket. It lasted only for a few hours, wayfarers suddenly turned up and thoroughly quenched their thirst"* (*CB* 30).

Also changes in the public space are carefully noted down, e.g. the disappearance of itinerant traders, snake charmers etc.

> *"The quietness of the noontime is no longer, nor the pherioẏālā [itinerant trader] of that time – who perhaps pulls a riksha today"* (*CB*: 50).

Likewise there are passages on snake charmers and performers with dancing bears who are all no more but "left the country, greeting the cinema from afar" (*CB*: 52). The crevices of rurality in the city, whose gradual disappearance also features in the reminiscences, as well as the roof-tops gain comparatively more space as the realm of the supernatural in *Chelebelā*:

> *"We can clearly see that a difference between those days and today has come about when we see that nowadays, neither are people frequenting the roofs of the houses, nor are ghosts. I told before that the Brahmadaitya, not being able to stand on atmosphere of excessive learning, had run away. The rumour about the corner of the roof being the place where his leisurely foot rested gave way for the quarrel of crows over the left-over kernel of a mango. The life of the humans had become restricted to the quadrangular pack boxes made of the walls of the lower floors"* (*CB*: 45).

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[18] Again in *CB*, p. 24: "When we were small, the city of Calcutta was not as awake in the evenings as it is now."

The way the adults in those days used to keep the children away from their activities (*CB*: 26f.) is narrated to the young readers with a sort of complicity. And finally, there are very visual, indeed picture-like passages like the following at the end of chapter 10 (*CB*: 58):

> "*The evening meetings came to an end. I always was a late-waker. Everybody went to bed, and I kept wandering around like the disciple of the Brahmadaitya-ghost. The whole neighborhood was quiet. In moonlit nights, the shadow of the rows of trees on the roof were like works of mosaic [ālpanā]. Beyond the roof the Sisu tree top was wavering in the breeze, the leaves were rustling [jhil·mil·]. I have no idea why the thing that held my gaze most was a little rooftop chamber with a sloping roof on the sleeping house in the front lane – standing there as if pointing its finger at something.*
>
> *It became 1, 2 o'clock at night. From the main street in front came the sound of balo hari! Haribol!*"[19]

It is hard to be sure about the effect such a passage had on young readers. The appreciation of the nostalgic impulse necessitates a distance of perspective that young readers would not usually dispose of. In greater likelihood it was the uncanniness of the situation on the roof at night, like a ghost, that impressed his readers. One can suppose, however, that the emotionality of the memory on the author's side, an instance of first-level nostalgia, translates into a heightened intensity of the depiction. As a matter of fact, it appears that it is in such passages that Tagore comes closest to the particular desire that motivated him to write down his memories: writing about his own childhood for children as an excuse to revisit it himself and to cast it into literature. This allowed him to collect the still lives he himself experienced, with the self pretty much receding into the background, becoming mere witness, spectator or container of an enchanted world greater than himself.

Tagore's Nostalgia

It results from these observations that Tagore's life-writings rely on nostalgia as one of their main emotional foundations. The adult revisits the congealed images of his past and finds enjoyment in casting them into an aesthetic form. But if such a statement may by now seem quite unproblematic, it does not imply that Tagore would have subscribed to such an understanding of his reminiscences as nostalgia. We have stated the correspondences between the par-

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[19] The same scene is described in *Jīban'smr̥ti,* p. 466 (*R*: 149): the experiencing I is up all night and hears the *haribol*s from the Nimtala burning ghat on the roof above Chitpur Road, but in direct comparison the evocative effect of the *Chelebelā* version is greater.

ticular kind of filtering past memories that underlies nostalgia, and the mental processing behind Tagore's "pictures of life". Both are selective, undergo some amount of editing and transformation and are emotionally charged. However, the evaluations of these transformed experiences are different. What is at stake is the truth value, or the ontological status, of nostalgic remembrance.

Following Davis, nostalgia is to be acknowledged as a fundamental way of dealing with the past. It is a social fact on individual and collective levels, and needs to be taken into account seriously in social sciences and cultural studies. Nostalgia plays an important role in identity constructions by bestowing continuity on them. But its truth value in terms of adequate representation of the past is questionable since it lacks the critical tools of historical inquiry. And it is a sense of loss and absence that is constitutive of nostalgia – all it can achieve is a virtual proxy-presence, a faint reflection or *Abglanz*.

For Tagore, by contrast, those pictures of life are a presence. He conceives of them as a truer-than-life essence. This seems quite in tune with his humanist belief in the centrality of beauty as constituted *exclusively* through the human mind and finding its abode in literature and art.[20] In this sense, Tagore's literary images assume a sort of hyperreal status – even though we may doubt that he would have agreed to see them as *simulacra* in the postmodernist sense.[21] For the present argument that means that reading Tagore's recollections as nostalgic may claim validity as long as the difference between the ontological baggage that comes with this concept and Tagore's humanist and idealist conceptions of art is made transparent.

Another point that deserves attention is whether or not Tagore's nostalgia is a leisurely and privileged sentiment that can, from a Marxist point of view, be debunked as false consciousness. For even though Davis dispels the notion that nostalgia is inherently non-progressive, one can still argue that in its Proustian sense, nostalgia flourishes in a settled and wealthy milieu. Given his upper-class background, Tagore would seem to be an easy target for such an interpretation. As a member of one of the most affluent families of Bengal at his time, he had sufficient leisure to afford reveling in nostalgia. Perhaps he also had reason to look back because in terms of finance and property, because the heyday of the Tagore family was already a thing of the past, just as the "old world" of the late 19th century.

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[20] This is a point Tagore made at various times, most famously perhaps in his conversation with Albert Einstein at Caputh in 1930.
[21] A thorough discussion of this question seems fascinating but would require another full-length article at least.

However, a closer look at the texts does not support such an interpretation. Some of his memories, such as the vanishing of the old-style *maj́lis*, have distinct upper-class contents, but it is not the loss of classiness that Tagore deplores in his retrospection but, to the contrary, the loss of a certain informality and genuineness in these gatherings. In most of the other overtly nostalgic passages, the substance matter of the recollections is younger Rabindranath's emotional attachment and response to the world, not any longing for a past social status. Of course he was privileged in that he did not have to suffer any disruptive losses, and his living conditions certainly put his autobiographical impulses at a huge distance from the self-asserting motivations we find, for instance, in Dalit life writings that start to appear half a century later. But the loss of privileges is not what his nostalgia was about, and it does not seem that the privileges he enjoyed had any direct bearings on the nature of his nostalgia.

Hyper-nostalgia

A discussion of nostalgia and Rabindranath Tagore could not possibly come full circle if we did not at least mention the various additional loops connected with it. For Tagore is not only a producer, he is also an object of nostalgia.

In 2010, Chandranath and Mausumi Chattopadhyay edited a little book titled *Byaṅgadarśane rabīndranāth*, "Rabindranath in satirical perspective", a collection of little doggerel verses and cartoons by various authors. Rabindranath did become the target of satire during his life and after, be it in the pages of the German *Simplicissimus* or in the Bengali periodical *Śanibārer ciṭhi*. But contrary to expectations of finding traces of that alternative reception history, this book features mostly mild and humorous poems, written with a twinkle in the eyes, and more celebratory than satirical. Alakendushekhar Patri, for instance, in his "Rabi Thakur in eight lines", states that "In word and deed, in song and soul / Everywhere is he enmeshed / Bengal's water, Bengal's image / Bengal's soil, Bengal's sun".[22] Shyamali Basu contributes a poem I render in my austere prose translation:

> *"Young or old, Ravi Thakur is everyone's favorite poet / There are thousands of well-known pictures of happiness and sadness in his writings / Everybody revels in his verses, plays and stories / We got to know the world in the words and melodies of his songs / It is not easy to talk about the poet in a line / All age groups walk on the path of the poet's writings."[23]*

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[22] Alakenduśekhar Patrī: ‚Āṭ lāiner rabi ṭhākur'. In: Caṭṭopādhyāẏ (2010: 51).
[23] Śyāmalī Basu: 'Tã̄r̊i sure bhuban gaṛi'. In: Caṭṭopādhyāẏ (2010: 47).

Learning to see the world through Tagore, through the *pictures* in his writings, with him infused into Bengal's water, image, soil and sun – these are strong words indeed. Paraphrasing these lines, Tagore appears as one with Bengali culture and nature, and the *pictures* of his literature supply *us* – the Bengali readers or Bengali people, we are to understand – with our vision of the world.

Perceiving Tagore in terms of Bengali or Indian identity is of course not limited to the Bengali literary context, but extends into South Asian writing in English and the Bengali/South Asian diaspora. Bernd-Peter Lange (2015) presents instances from eight writers. He quotes from Anita Desai ("reading Tagore, I recreated my parents' world" – Lange 2015: 361), discusses Tagore in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* as an "identitarian prop" for preserving culture and heritage, and cites Aravinda Adiga's protagonist Mr D'Mello for whom, thinking of his youth, "the whole world seemed to be singing Tagore's verses" (Lange 2015: 363–364). Thoroughly nostalgia-driven, according to Lange, is Sunetra Gupta's *Memories of Rain* (1992), a novel narrating a return to Bengal and to childhood with Rabindranath as leitmotiv (Lange 2015: 364–366). As for critical engagements with Tagore nostalgia, Lange singles out Amit Chaudhuri who has one of his protagonists amalgamate Tagore, Vaishnava poetry, bullock carts, terracotta and Calcutta into a "primitive past". Indeed, Chaudhuri supplies many instances of what we can term second and third-order nostalgia about Tagore. And he also mentions reading Tagore's *Chhelebelā* with a mentor as a text that was first forced upon him but later made him acknowledge that "the music of a piece of writing becomes richer with the passing of time".[24]

These examples must suffice here to hint at the gigantic field of Tagore's reception, a terrain that is of course not restricted to literature but spans over practically all cultural spheres – but the present argument is limited to the realm of reading and literature. What the texts mentioned just now have in common is that all of them, naively or critically, deal with the identification of Tagore with Bengal or India. Whether Tagore actively promoted or refuted any parallelism between himself and any Bengali or Indian "mind" or "soul" is a moot point. What counts is that the cultural community of his readers (and non-readers, too) have construed him as a signifier of Bengaliness and Indianness, removed in time but still thoroughly entrenched with the present. Such strong identification added to temporal displacement or loss, as it were, creates perfect conditions for nostalgia to arise. No wonder, then, that in the reception of Tagore, cultural nostalgia is a big factor indeed.

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[24] Lange (2015: 367), referring to Chaudhuri (2002: 12).

If we focus on Tagore's autobiographical writings, we can note very clearly that retrospection is involved on more than one level. The postcolonial reader looks back at Rabindranath who, in turn, looks back at his own past – or actually, to make it more complicated, the contemporaries look back at one or two parents' generations looking back at Tagore, who looks back at his life. Nostalgic retrospection multiplies. Such retrogressive moves, I argue, produce loops and cause a subtle echo effect, amplifying the resonances and blurring the temporal fixities. Fred Davis has pointed out that nostalgia itself can become the object of nostalgia in the neat phrase concluding his book, "nostalgia ain't what it used to be" (Davis 1979: 142). This is part of what is happening here: the present-day Tagore reader somehow senses that he or she is less alone than with other texts, that he or she is part of a larger community that has been engaging over generations in a continuous revisiting of Tagore and the past.

In such a perspective, reading Tagore's autobiographical writings means re-reading them, and visiting his past means re-visiting, or actually re-re-visiting it through his literary voice, our readings and those of our seniors. Feeling nostalgic in the process can mean many things at once: experiencing Tagore's nostalgia about his youth, deploring the passing away of Tagore and his times, sharing the nostalgic Tagore reception of one's seniors or of society at large. These levels overlap and interfere with each other and render the experience multidimensional; it becomes richer and more opaque at the same time. At the risk of overstretching the acoustic metaphors, one might say that the loops of nostalgia make the echoes of a murmuring collective resound with ample overtones. Such loops produce a heightened sensation, a *hyper-nostalgia* that occurs regularly with classics, but most forcefully with those classical texts that are intrinsically nostalgic themselves. Cultivating nostalgia with its affective proxy-presences can thus come close to a ritual of collective remembrance. The Tagore experience, for sure, is quite thoroughly wrapped in hyper-nostalgia today. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why indeed, with texts like *Chelebelā*, "[t]he music of a piece of writing becomes richer with the passing of time", as Amit Chaudhuri put it.

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The Wartime Paternity of India's 'Licence-Permit Raj'

Indivar Kamtekar

Abstract

It is often believed that the economic policies of the government of India, from independence in 1947 till the liberalization of 1991, were a manifestation of 'Nehruvian socialism'. This paper argues that these policies had earlier roots, which it seeks to make visible, in the regime of economic controls which was spawned in India by the Second World War between 1939 and 1945. In general, modern Indian history has not given much weight to war; in particular, standard works on post 1947 India – like Morris Jones Government and Politics in India, *Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph* In Pursuit of Lakshmi, *Paul Brass* The Politics of India Since Independence, *and Bipan Chandra* India After Independence *– have overlooked or neglected, the contribution of the Second World War to moulding the shape of the emerging state (Morris-Jones 1964; Rudolph & Rudolph 1987; Brass 1990; Chandra 1999). Yet precisely here, in the transformations unwittingly accomplished under British rulers during the Second World War, are to be found some of the foundations of the new government of independent India.*

Although our existing textbooks imply otherwise, the threat of the Japanese attack on India frightened the British more than the Congress ever could. On his appointment as Viceroy in 1943, Lord Wavell received from the British War Cabinet a directive which began by telling him: "Your first duty is the defence of India from Japanese menace and invasion".[1] The new war priority of the colonial state often overrode its earlier law and order concerns. Every official, in every department of government, was meant to respond to the needs of the war effort. The war brought new tasks, and made the old ones secondary.

District officers now had to encourage recruitment for the army, collect contributions for war funds, track down army deserters, provide help to refugees, organize air-raid precautions, supervise rationing, and procure foodgrains – jobs unknown to the old district administration. This load stretched the re-

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[1] Directive of war cabinet to viceroy-designate, 8 October 1943, in Mansergh (editor-in-chief). *Constitutional Relations Between Britain and India: The Transfer of Power, 1942–1947.* 12 vols., London, 1970–1983 (henceforth *TOP*). The quotation is from vol. iv, document no. 172.

sources of the state, preventing it from functioning normally. "Work as a Magistrate had to be almost completely abandoned in favour of new burdens", recalled one officer, who found that "touring had to be cut down to a series of lightning forays, often to track down and requisition stocks of hoarded rice."[2]

While most of India never became a battlefield (only the eastern fringe was an active centre of operations) the whole country was sucked into the war effort. Most war factories were concentrated in Bengal. At times, especially when refugees poured in from Burma, invasion seemed imminent. Parts of the province became virtually a military camp, with an endless demand for land and buildings, as many thousands of troops from Britain, the United States, African countries, Australia and China were stationed there. The army required and received supplies of food, guns, ammunition, uniforms, sheets, blankets, tents, boots, medicines, drink and tobacco. India's chief industrial contribution was textiles. Substantial amounts of steel were also manufactured by the Tata Steel Works, which were the largest in the British Empire. The army was a voracious consumer, and India's contribution was considerable.[3] Contributing heavily with men and materials, India became a major supply base in the Second World War.

The relatively slender pre-war state would have lacked the ability to lift up the enormous economic burden of a world war. To do so required the state to change rapidly, in many ways beyond recognition. New government posts and departments proliferated, employing very large numbers of people; new policies were announced; and new legislations were promulgated. A stream of ordinances was issued under the Defence of India Rules. There emerged an official grandly titled the Controller of Capital Issues; a less loftily named Supply Department; a policy of price control, a foreign exchange control, as well as control of imports and exports. Massive amounts of money had to be raised. Balancing the budget was forgotten, deficit finance undertaken.

The end of the war did not end instability. Demobilization of soldiers, strikes by workers, communal riots and partition, rehabilitation of refugees, integration of the princely states, and continuing shortages and inflation preoccupied the state. Controls therefore continued. For example, foreign exchange control was first introduced in September 1939, with many officials of the Finance Department hoping that it would be dispensed with once the war ended. While it began under the Defence of India Rules, in March 1947 legislation in the form of the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) was passed to put

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[2] Swann, R. S. n.d. *Memoirs of R. S. Swann.* MSS.Eur.F.180/25, p. 4. India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London (hereafter IORPP).
[3] For details, see Government of India, 1947.

exchange control on a statutory footing for five years. After five years it was extended for another five, and then in 1957 it was made permanent (Balachandran 1998: 808).

Later, the issue of government economic controls was much debated in India. On one view, such controls enabled the Indian nation to take its first steps, and later guided the economy towards maturity. By the end of the twentieth century, the opposite view became more fashionable. An economy capable of racing ahead of competitors was, it was argued, tripped by red tape. Praise was awarded, or blame accorded, to the idea of planning and the ideology of socialism.

History shows however, that controls – often assumed in independent India to be the outcome of a socialist ideology – were actually sired by a war economy. One Indian Civil Service Officer put this point unequivocally:

> *"Many observers of the Indian scene are apt to take it for granted that the system of economic controls is the result of the avowed and oft-repeated aim of the Government of India to create a socialistic pattern of society by means of national planning … This is not really so…it is just not historically true … practically the entire paraphernalia of controls was already in existence before the age of planning was ushered in 1951 … Economic controls in India do not, therefore, owe their origin to planning nor have they continued and developed merely because of planning"* (Bhoothalingam 1985: 37).

In other words, economic controls were happily adopted by Indian planning, but were not its biological offspring. And the war economy also fathered other children, who grew up to have lives of their own: very high rates of taxation; sales tax as a major source of revenue; very widespread tax evasion, and a bureaucratic mindset convinced that businessmen should do as they are told.

Adding to his memoirs an appendix titled 'The Long Shadow of the Second World War', the economist I. G. Patel summarized his view as follows:

> *"In short, the post-war preference for price-stability vs. growth, management and planning vs. free markets, closed economy vs. freer international trade, public sector as against private enterprise, and the on-again/off-again flirtation with controls and high taxes all had some roots in our war-time experience"* (Patel 2002: 191).[4]

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[4] Indraprasad Gordanbhai Patel (1924–2005) began his career as a professor of economics; he was later – among many other positions – Chief Economic Advisor of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Advisor to the Planning Commission, and Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. As an international civil servant he worked for the International Monetary Fund and other institutions. As an educational administrator, he was the director of the Indian Institute of Management at Ahmedabad, and the London School of

The world war ended: the controls and mindsets engendered, remained. They encouraged living with shortages rather than overcoming them; damaged the ideology and practice of the market; and opened the door to what C. R. Rajagopalachari dubbed the 'License-Permit Raj'. The effects of war on the state were profound and prolonged.

The State and the Stomach: Food Controls

This was particularly evident in controls over food. The British rulers of India boasted of the Pax Britannica, of the sense of security which they claimed had been engendered by imperialism, and of how visceral fears of anarchy had been allayed by their rule. The colonial state took the credit for peace. Responsibility for curing poverty was quite another matter. While famine relief might occasionally be organized, the regular of feeding the people of India seemed to depend more on the will of God, than on the actions of a government. It was this assumption which the 1940s overturned.

It was during the 1940s that the state in India undertook a huge new responsibility, which subsequently it could neither easily discard, nor properly fulfil. In the early phase of the war, as the state stumbled into various commitments, no one foresaw where its path would lead. The first steps seemed innocent and innocuous enough. In an uncoordinated way, at local levels, government officials' began to intervene in the grain market.

For example, when grain prices began to rise in the United Provinces in 1941, anxious district magistrates began to impose price controls. Similarly, in 1942 in Punjab deputy commissioners were empowered to fix maximum prices when they thought the situation demanded it. The results were unhappy. In the United Provinces, district officers often fixed prices without consulting each other, with the result that adjacent districts often had different fixed prices. Chaos resulted. Stocks moved to districts where controlled prices were high and disappeared from districts where prices were low. Then the districts short of grain had to increase their own controlled price levels: and so a spiral began.[5] Government action was also the cause of rising prices in Orissa at a time when supplies were not short. None of this followed from any theory. "By conviction I hold with Adam Smith but in a crisis like this I am prepared to accept 100 % control", confessed one governor.[6]

Economics. He is said to have declined P.V. Narasimha Rao's offer to become Finance Minister, before the post was offered to Manmohan Singh.

[5] From the script for a radio broadcast on 23 December 1946 titled 'Food Shortage and the Rationing', Banks Collection, MSS.Eur.D.919, IORPP.

[6] T. Stewart (Bihar) to Linlithgow, 23 Sept. 1942, *TOP*, iii, document no. 295.

Then the Great Bengal famine of 1943 occurred, in which two to three million people died. Apart from the human cost, the military implications of famine worried the state. If the economy was wrecked there might be internal disorder and riots, munitions production would stop, the armed forces' food supply would dry up, and instead of fighting the enemy, soldiers would have to be used to maintain law and order inside the country. Moreover, the morale of troops would fall if they were stationed amid so much hunger and disease. (British and Indian soldiers, affected by the sight of starvation, had already begun to disobey orders and feed beggars with their rations.) Expressing his view that the country's utility as a war base was in jeopardy, Auchinleck, the army Commander-in-Chief in India, said "the import of food is to my mind just as if not more important than the import of munitions from the point of view of the coming operations against Japan".[7] The British chiefs of staff agreed with him.[8]

A Foodgrains Policy Committee was quickly appointed, and with alacrity it recommended government procurement, rationing and price controls. Rationing was extended to cover sugar, edible oils, coarse cloth and kerosene, in addition to foodgrains. A huge public distribution system sprang up after 1942. The degree of government control over the economy changed remarkably. Ironically the colonial state wished to interfere as little as possible, to stick to its laissez-faire policy. A crisis, caused by military demands and expenditure, prevented it from doing so, and overturned its policy. The rationing apparatus of the government of India was a child of the Second World War.

The extent of rationing increased towards the end of the war, and – this is an important point – accelerated after the war was over. Apart from foodgrains, kerosene and sugar, the Government of the United Provinces also controlled cloth, iron and steel, paper, gur, salt and wood-fuel – a wider range of commodities than ever before.[9] The total number of people in India dependent on government rations was a hundred and thirty million in April 1946.[10] The colonial state had, for the first time in its history, directly committed itself to feeding a large section of the population.

The new interventionist role of the state was challenged after independence. Several politicians had misgivings about the responsibilities the state had acquired during the war. They felt that if the state divested itself of these responsibilities, it would return to a healthy normality. Administrative personnel

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[7] Auchinleck to General Brooke, 8 September 1943, *TOP*, iv, document no. 102.

[8] *TOP*, iv, document no. 139, 24 September 1943.

[9] *United Provinces Administration Report, 1946*, 23. V/10/191, IORPP.

[10] The caloric value of the allowed ration of 12 oz. of cereals was 1,200. Telegram, Government of India food department to secretary of state for India, 24 April 1946. L/E/5/75, IORPP.

engaged in controls would be released for other more productive tasks. Constantly debated in the press and among the public, the issue of controls caused the deepest divisions in independent India's cabinet, coming up at almost every cabinet meeting.

The decision to lift controls, taken in December 1947, was due mainly to the influence of Gandhi. The corruption which controls gave birth to disgusted him: he was horrified that officials could take bribes in matters affecting the food of the people. Gandhi vehemently opposed controls, denouncing them at his prayer meetings. He made speech after speech in which he condemned corruption in the matter of food and asked that controls on food as well as cloth be abolished.[11] Rajendra Prasad, the food minister, duly put up a formal proposal that food control be withdrawn.

Most bureaucrats thought this was a wrong step to take. The secretary of the food department took the unusual step of opposing the proposal of his minister. Disagreements were sharp and genuine: this was the only meeting of the early cabinet at which a vote had to be taken. Six ministers voted for control and seven against it. As a result of this close vote, controls on foodgrains, cloth and sugar were lifted.[12] A new policy came into being (or rather the old one was restored). The government's hope was that decontrol would prove a better way to get food on to the market. It was hoped that it would bring out more stocks than the system of controls did, and that these stocks would be distributed without serious hoarding or profiteering. On the other hand there was a strong fear that if things went wrong the consequences would be grave. The economic structure of the country might be shaken severely and plans for development might suffer a serious setback.[13]

The experiment in decontrol turned out to be an utter disaster. Prices shot up and rationing and food controls had to be re-imposed in October 1948. A series of failed harvests between 1947 and 1952 prevented further such experiments. Thus activities intended to be temporary turned out to be permanent. Controls were established haphazardly in the early years of the war; they began to be effective in 1943; and, despite interludes without rationing, the pro-

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[11] For example, on 30 December 1947, one month before he was assassinated by Godse, he said in a speech at a prayer meeting in Delhi: "I will say that control should go. Some people argue that rationing has brought much relief to cities. I think it should be removed from the cities too. If everyone conducts himself honestly there will be no need for controls." Gandhi, 1984, p. 328. Also pp. 182, 197, 243, 309–312.

[12] Iengar was the private secretary to the prime minister, and claimed that he attended every cabinet meeting.

[13] Nehru to chief ministers, 2 December 1947. Parthasarathi, 1985, pp. 30–31.

curement and distribution of food remained, for the next five decades, one of the major tasks of the Government of India.

To conclude: wartime economic controls inaugurated an economic policy regime which persisted in India till 1991. History shows that controls – often assumed in independent India to be the outcome of a socialist ideology – were actually sired by a war economy. Thus, strangely, an imperial war effort moulded the shape of an independent nation state. Among other changes, as a result of rationing during the 1940s, about one third of the population of India began to look to the state for its food supply. This was indeed a profound change: it meant that the state and the people met more often. Moreover, while a police *thana* was almost always a place to avoid; a ration shop was a place to go to without fear, and regularly.

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The Early Textbook Controversy and R. S. Sharma's Concept of Indian Feudalism: Some Historiographic Reflections

Hermann Kulke

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is neither a detailed presentation of R. S. Sharma's involvement in the textbook controversy nor an in-depth depiction of his concept of Indian Feudalism. Its intention is to highlight R. S. Sharma's unique and even dominant role as a politically active intellectual and as a research scholar. This is paradigmatically comprehensible by his active role in the textbook and Babri Masjid controversies and by his creation and shaping of Indian Feudalism, doubtlessly India's most important concept of post-colonial historiography. Another concern of this paper is that contrary to the frequently expressed opinion, R. S. Sharma not only took note of critique but was also willing to integrate new ideas in his allegedly monolithic concept. This will be illustrated by a short analysis of his last major publication, a selection of his articles under the title 'Early Medieval Indian Society. A Study in Feudalization' (2001). The term "feudalisation" instead of "feudalism" is indicative of the progression of his concept.

As a historian of Early Medieval India it is a pleasure for me to contribute an article on R. S. Sharma to the Festschrift of Gita Dharampal-Frick with its focus on Modern History. Ram Sharan Sharma, commonly known as R. S. Sharma (1919–2011), was not only, together with Romila Thapar, the most prominent and influential historian of pre-colonial Indian history in post-independence India. He was also, again together with Romila Thapar, an outstanding intellectual and virulent critic of Hindu nationalism and its cultural 'saffronisation' and the 'Aryan myth' of the Indus Civilization (Thapar 1989a and 1989b, Sharma 1989 and 1995). And, as will be shown below, as the chief editor of *A Historians' Report to the Nation* Sharma also fought, although finally in vain, against the destruction of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in December 1992 (Sharma 1991b, 2001b).

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R. S. Sharma's *Ancient India* and the Early Textbook Controversy

R. S. Sharma's political-intellectual fame since the seventies was closely associated with the 'textbook controversy'. Since the late sixties the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) published textbooks for different classes in schools. With her textbooks for class VII on *Ancient India* and *Medieval [Muslim] India* in 1966 and 1967 Romila Thapar was among the first. In the seventies Sharma, S. Chandra and B. Chandra followed with textbooks on *Ancient India, Medieval India* and *Modern India.* These textbooks and their secular-leftist and Marxist authors soon became the target of Hindu nationalistic accusation. They were blamed for their allegedly anti-Hindu and anti-national depiction of Indian history and culture, e.g. by denying India as the homeland of the Aryans and claiming that they were beaf-eating in ancient time (Rudolf 1983; Jaffrelot 1996, R. Kulke 2008). It came to heated controversies in the parliament and Parliamentary Consultative Committees about the demand to correct the textbooks. But the acute textbook controversy was sparked off soon after the publication of Sharma's Ancient India for class XI. Only few months after Moraji Desai and his Janata Party had come to power in March 1977, an anonymous memorandum was handed over to Desai with severe criticism of "anti-national" textbooks and the demand to withdraw them from the schools. Desai forwarded the memorandum to the Minister and suggested the withdrawal. The heated debates in the parliament and general public were further boosted by the publication of Sharma's *Ancient India* in November 1977. As he had meanwhile become the dominant historian-cum-intellectual of the allegedly anti-national secular leftist-Marxists, he became the main target and in July 1978 his *Ancient India* was withdrawn from the syllabus (R. Kulke 2008: 58–61). Sharma was prohibited by the Government to participate at an international conference of historians in the Soviet Union and answered with his well-balanced booklet *In Defence of Ancient India* (Sharma 1978). *Ancient India* was several times reprinted[1] and Sharma republished it in 2005 thoroughly revised and enlarged under the title *India's Ancient Past.* It's worth quoting its Preface at some length because it depicts in a nutshell Sharma's personal history of the textbook controversy.

> "*The present book is based on a good portion of my Ancient India, which was first published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training*

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[1] Only during my working on this paper, I rediscovered that Prof. Sharma presented me the second reprint of his *Ancient India* (1991) during a meeting at the JNU with the dedication "For Professor Kulke with best wishes. RS Sharma 14 Nov 1992" – just few weeks before the destruction of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya.

in 1977, but the obscurantist elements got it withdrawn from the circulation by the same body in 1978. The book was restored in 1980 [after the fall of the Janata Government], and several lacs were printed for school students. However, when in 2001 the NCERT published it, some passages were removed without the author's consent. Finally in 2002 the NCERT withdrew the book because of extreme conservatism.[2] When the Oxford University Press approached me for publication, I decided to get a revised copy of the existing edition published by them. I substantially revised the book and added four new chapters to it. In doing so I took account of new ideas and material available to me." (Sharma 2005: v)

The Background of R. S. Sharma's Concept of Indian Feudalism: Colonial Historiography, A. L. Basham and D. D. Kosambi

The intention of writing this article is not to highlight again well-known details of Sharma's concept of Indian Feudalism. While 'revisiting' Sharma in his writings during the preparation of this paper I realized again the one-sidedness of the general appraisal and evaluation of his feudalism concept largely or even solely on the basis of his magnum opus, *Indian Feudalism: c. 300–1200.* I was surprised to detect distinct evidence of an advancement of his perception of Indian feudalism, without, however, deviating from the central points of his concept. And I was again fascinated by his openness to accommodate other historians and their views, including those who contested aspects of his ideas of Indian feudalism and, on the other hand, to enter into heated debates with historians who flatly denied the existence of feudalism in India.

Therefore I made up my mind to trace certain aspects of Sharma's concept with an emphasis on his modification in his later publications. In order to assess them in the context of his core statements it is unavoidable to have at least a short look at its early development. The starting situation of the feudalism debate in the late fifties of the last century is well known. Suffice it to mention that on the one hand there existed the British colonial historical writings on India that ignored or even disdained the early medieval regional kingdoms. Thus Vincent A. Smith's hegemonic *Oxford History of India: From the Earliest Times to the End of 1911* devoted the same number of pages to the five hundred years of these kingdoms as to Alexander's Indian campaign. And the 2nd volume of the multi-volume *Cambridge History of India* which was supposed to

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[2] It is significant that Sharma uses the term conservatism instead of nationalism here. It is left to us to speculate whether he denies BJP and its excesses nationalism at all or whether he, being himself an Indian national, denies the Hindu nationalists the legitimacy to eliminate his work as anti-national.

comprise the post-Gupta period until the Delhi Sultanate, was 'under preparation' since 1922, but never appeared. On the other hand there existed the Indian national 'imperial model', depicting the pre-colonial Indian state as a powerful unitary, territorially clearly defined state, centrally governed by a hierarchically organized administration. This concept emerged during the Indian freedom movement, when Indian historiography became a major ideological tool of the national claim that classical Indian culture had produced political and social institutions that were equal if not superior to those of their imperial masters. But it has to be mentioned that this school also produced excellent standard works, too, like e.g. K. A. N. Sastri's and A. S. Altekar's histories of the Cholas and the Rashtrakutas.

Since the late fifties and in the sixties, research on early medieval India witnessed a significant paradigmatic change. A strong impetus came from A.L. Basham at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. In the 'Basham School', the historiographic focus shifted from dynastic-political to economic and social history for the first time. His Indian students authored significant dissertations on the economic and social history of early India that, for the first time, were based on a systematic analysis of the epigraphic sources. Apart from Romila Thapar's standard work on *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (Thapar 1961), of particular note are the works by A. L. Adhya on the pre-Gupta economic history of North and West India (Adhya 1967), by S. K. Maity on the economy during the Gupta period (Maity 1957) and by L. Gopal on the economy of early medieval North India (Gopal 1965). It is not surprising that out of this circle also R. S. Sharma's work on Indian Feudalism emerged which became the most influential and lasting contribution to the reorientation of present day studies of early medieval India.

Early colonial administrators had referred to a 'feudal system' in India in their reports as, for instance, James Tod in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (Tod 1832). Even Max Weber assumed feudal structural elements to have existed in most parts of India during the medieval period (Weber 1978: 1054f). But in 1956 Daniel Thorner still rightly asserted in his essay 'Feudalism in India', published in the volume *Feudalism in History*, edited by R. Coulborn, that 'there is no single work solely devoted to feudalism in India; nor is there even a single article on the place of feudalism in the historical evolution of India' (Thorner 1956: 133). It is a curious coincidence that in the same year D. D. Kosambi initiated the debate on Indian feudalism with his essay 'On the Development of Feudalism in India' (Kosambi 1956b) and in his *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History (*Kosambi 1956a). As it is well known, he differentiated between 'feudalism from above' in the early medieval Hindu kingdoms from

the sixth to the thirteenth centuries, and 'feudalism from below' during the period of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire.

Kosambi's book was reviewed in the first volume of the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* (JESHO*)* by A. L. Basham, one of its founding board members. It is worth quoting his review at some length, as it predicted the further course of the debate on Sharma's *Indian Feudalism* and Kosambi's role in this debate:

> *"Kosambi's book will find numerous critics both in India as elsewhere. Many Indian historians, writing in a period of resurgent nationalism, will be horrified at Prof. Kosambi's attacks on many dogmas cherished in the undergraduate classes of Indian history. Marxists of the orthodox school may well find fault with several of his conclusions. Many passages of the book will be found irritating by non-Marxists while professional Indologists will be quick to point out errors in detail. In fact the book will please no one [...] Nevertheless, we believe that this book is in its class, a great book"* (Basham 1957: 341–342).

In the following years, *JESHO* published two more of Kosambi's papers on Indian Feudalism that, too, did not tally with the mainstream of the Marxist debate on feudalism in India. His paper on Indian feudal trade charters emphasized the administrative decentralization through *samanta* chiefs whose rise in the post-Gupta period accelerated the conversion of communal property into feudal property (Kosambi 1959). His second article on social and economic aspects of the *Bhagavadgita* stressed cultural values, particularly *bhakti*, fostered by India's medieval feudal regimes (Kosambi 1961). Kosambi may have to be regarded as the first historian to draw attention to the political dimension of bhakti faith when he wrote: "To hold this type of society and state together, the best religion is one which emphasizes the role of bhakti, personal faith". It is worth mentioning that Kosambi emphasized in his writing the importance of the *samantas* and of *bhakti* for the nature of Indian Feudalism that were taken up only later and stepwise by adherents of Indian Feudalism. Although Kosambi is considered as father of Marxist historiography in India, his undogmatic interpretation of Indian Feudalism found only little support from Marxist historians. It is remarkable that the two Kosambi commemoration volumes, published in 1974, don't refer in detail to his concept of Indian Feudalism (Prof. D. D. Kosambi Commemoration Committee, 1974; R. S. Sharma 1974). I. Habib rightly pointed out in his article in one of these volumes: "Interesting as this [Kosambi's] theory is, there has been no adequate discussion of it so far"

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(Habib 1974b: 278).[3] In his edition of Kosambi's articles, B. D. Chattopadhyaya, too, points out that "there has hardly been an attempt to analyze them [Kosambi's ideas on Indian feudalism] in the context of the differences of approach" (Chattopadhyaya 2002: xxiii ff).[4]

The Impact of R. S. Sharma's Indian Feudalism on Post-colonial Indian Historiography

The following years witnessed instead the seemingly irresistible rise of Sharma's concept of Indian Feudalism based on the orthodox Marxist progressive modes of production and the rebuttal of the Asiatic Mode of Production, "the unfortunate theses that Marx had once propounded" (Habib 1974a: 38).[5] Already in 1958, in the first volume of *JESHO* in which Basham had also reviewed Kosambi's *Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Sharma published his first article on the origins of feudalism in India between 400 and 650 CE (Sharma 1958). It was followed by an article on 'Land Grants to Vassals and Officials' in the fourth volume of *JESHO*, a particular controversial aspect of his concept (Sharma, 1961). The successive issues of *JESHO* contain several important articles by L. Gopal, N. Karashima, U. Thakur, V. K. Thakur that support directly or indirectly Sharma's concept of Indian Feudalism, – and also one "dissenting vote" by B. Prakash (see Kulke 1994). In 1974 Sharma and D. N. Jha took up again in JESHO the whole range of different issues of the debate in a comprehensive article (Sharma & Jha 1974a). It is noteworthy that during the early years of the Indian Feudalism debate *JESHO* played an important role and became its international forum for a short time – a role that, as will be shown in a moment, was soon taken over by its new Indian mouthpiece, the *Indian Historical Review*.

Sharma's early contributions to *JESHO* were followed by a series of new articles (e.g. Sharma 1960) that were partly revised and included in his magnum opus, *Indian Feudalism*. Published in 1965, it covers the period between 300 and

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[3] Habib even concluded: "Sharma appears to reject – for he does not explicitly take issue with Kosambi on this point – the supposition." (Habib 1974: 278).
[4] It is interesting that K. M. Shrimali, too, does not refer to Kosambi's ideas of Indian Feudalism in his review of Chattopadhyaya's edition of Kosambi's writings (Shrimali 2002).
[5] I. Habib clearly explicates this point: "Certain Marxists of western European countries have begun to insist that they know better and have 'reopened' the debate on the subject themselves. [Habib refers in a fn. to Hobsbawn and M. Goldelier]. [...] The essential purpose in the attempted restauration of the Asiatic Mode is to deny the role of class contradictions and class struggles in Asian societies, and to emphasize the existence of authoritarian and anti-individual traditions in Asia, so as to establish that the entire past history of social progress belongs to Europe alone" (Habib 1974a 38f).

1200 CE and became the classical standard work of the 'Indian Feudalism School'. As Sharma points out, the growth of Indian feudalism can be traced back to the third and fourth centuries CE during the decline of pan-Asian trade and urban economy. The direct cause for the emergence of economic and social (and consequently political) feudal structures were the steadily increasing number of land endowments to Brahmin, religious institutions and, albeit less often, to court officials. This created a class of landowners who were not cultivators, yet eternally furnished with innumerable immunities similar to those in the European medieval period, as for instance, the right to levy taxes and pass laws. The transfer of these rights to landlords and the increasing commitment of the village population to the tracts of land cultivated by them resulted in a gradual bondage and enslavement. This development led to an increasing fragmentation and weakening of political power, caused by the widespread practice of granting big and small territories to vassals and officials who entrenched themselves territorially and ended up as independent potentates (Sharma 2001: 77–118). Later on, Sharma substantiated his theory with several important detailed studies on particularly controversial aspects of his concept like 'Paucity of Metallic Coinage between 500–1000' (Sharma 1968 and 2001: 119–163) and particularly in 1987 on '*Urban Decay in India (c. 300–1000)*' which has to be regarded as of one of his most important contributions to Indian history. Both publications doubtlessly strengthened his thesis, although, as predictable, also raised vehement objections. Few of them may be correct in certain details (e.g. Chattopadhyaya 1974). But more important is that these publications, too, are "bold ventures" (U. Singh 2011) which led to serious theoretical debates about hitherto neglected issues of central importance for early Indian history.

The 'Indian Feudalism School' and its Conceptual Discourses

Already shortly before its expected publication, Sharma's *Indian Feudalism* aroused a strong controversy. During the conference on 'Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India', organised by himself at Calcutta University in December 1964 (Sircar 1966a), it was not only met with approval (e.g. B. P. Mazumdar and B. N. S. Yadava) but also with vehement rejection (e.g. S. K. Maity). The critique was most explicitly brought forward by D. C. Sircar in his essay 'Landlordism Confused with Feudalism'. He concluded that feudalism was 'a misnomer in the early Indian context' (Sircar 1966b: 62). In the ensuing dispute during this conference, the carefully nurtured unity of Indian historians during the independence struggle fell apart in two feuding groups with a national-conservative and a 'progressive Marxist' focus.

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Except for an irritating schoolmasterly review of Sharma's book by R. Coulborn (Coulborn 1968), the debate on Indian feudalism appears to have calmed down considerably over the following years. The discussion gathered momentum again in the early seventies. A strong impetus came in 1973 from B. N. S. Yadava's study on northern India during the 12th century. It focused more strongly on European theories of feudalism than Sharma ever did. Yadava quotes in detail the list of social divisions in European feudalism as described by Marc Bloch in his seminal work *La société féodale.* Yadava demonstrates how Bloch undermined Marx's position as a relevant theoretical source of the Indian Feudalism School. Under the influence of Bloch as well as that of Max Weber, Yadava located the focus of his analyses on the political dimensions of feudal structures. Thus he pointed out that the position of the subordinated but largely autonomous Samanta chieftains may be held as the "key word of Indian feudalism" (Yadava 1973: 136). 'Samantisation' of the early medieval states has therefore been regarded as an 'Indian variant' of feudalism (Gopal 1963; Kulke 1995: 11). Moreover, Yadava emphasized with reference to Kosambi that "the doctrine of bhakti with the unflinching loyalty to a god suited the feudal ideology in which loyalty linked together in a chain serfs and retainers to feudal lords, barons to duke and king" (Yadava: 378). He was the first to take up Kosambi's ideas about the political and ideological dimensions of *samantas* as chieftains and little kings and of devotional *bhakti* religion. But, as will be pointed out soon, it took some time until they entered the mainstream of feudalism debate.

Already a year later, in 1974, Indian feudalism returned clearly and noticeably into the limelight of India's historical discourses through the new journal *The Indian Historical Review* (IHR). It was published by the newly established Indian Council of Historical Research with R. S. Sharma as its first Chairman and, together with V. Jha, the Editor of the *IHR*. Not surprisingly, the *IHR*, particularly its first volume, became the new mouthpiece of the Indian Feudalism School. But it also allowed dissenting votes like B. D. Chattopadhyaya's article on 'Trade and Urban Centres in Early Medieval North India' (Chattopadhyaya 1974).

Even more important was that during the next two years altogether three Presidential Addresses were devoted to the theme of Indian Feudalism at the Indian History Congress, by D. N. Jha and H. Mukhia in 1979 and by B. N. S. Yadava in 1980. Indian Feudalism had clearly become the major issue in premodern India's historiography during these years, although in 1980, too, a new and competing concept of early medieval state formation in south India had entered the stage with B. Stein's segmentary state theory put forward in his magnum opus (Stein 1980).

In all the three Presidential Addresses certain theoretical deficiencies in the Indian Feudalism discourses were admitted. D. N. Jha pointed out that "the explanation of feudal development only in terms of foreign trade, whose decline to a large extent depended on factors external to the Indian situation [...] has recently led to a rethinking on the part of the exponents of the Indian feudal model from the vantage point of internal social contradictions" (Jha 1979: 6). However he justified the application of the concept of feudalism to Indian history with amazing openness in the following words: "What needs to be adequately appreciated is the fact that Indian Marxist historiography, opposed to the British view of Indian [unchanging] past, has used the European model of feudalism to explain social change in India from the middle of the first millennium" (Jha 1979: 11). Yadava adopted a more critical tone when he stated that the study of Indian Feudalism "has yet to achieve greater theoretical sophistication in historical analysis" (Yadava 1980). As the feudal mode of production coexisted in India with non-feudal elements, its socio-economic structure was not as pronounced as in medieval Europe. He rightly demanded to look more closely for the causes of the subjection of peasants by landlords through non-economic coercion, thus underlining again the relevance of religion in Indian feudalism.

Whereas Jha and Yadava tried to advance Marxist as well as non-Marxist theories in defence of the concept of Indian feudalism, H. Mukhia on the other hand fundamentally questioned the very existence of feudalism in India in his Presidential Address with the suggestive title 'Was there Feudalism in Indian History?' (Mukhia 1979). After a detailed classification of various theories about the origin of feudalism, he pointed out that it had emerged in Europe from a social crisis and far-reaching social transformations. And he doubted that serfdom was a dominant feature in medieval India. Sharma and his followers, on the other hand, defined the excessive increase of land endowments as the primary cause of the emergence of feudalism in India. But according to Mukhia, a complex social structure like feudalism could not have been caused by administrative measures of the state. He thus questioned the very sense of a concept "which has so little relevance to our history."

Mukhia's critique caused a strong dismay in the Indian Feudalism School[6] as it was brought forward "in a strongly assertive Marxist mould" (Mukhia 2000: 9).

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[6] This became again evident by K. M. Shrimali's review of Sharma's anthology of articles (Sharma 2001): "Sporadic critiques apart, the first major offensive against the feudal paradigm was undertaken in 1979 when Harbans Mukhia sought to establish that a free peasantry' existed in the relevant period. This led to the now famous 'Feudalism Debate' carried in *The Journal of Peasant Studies* in 1981 [...]. Prof. Sharma's intervention 'How

Unlike earlier, the controversial debate on this issue of Indian feudalism was for the first time of great interest for international Marxist circles, too. After intensive preparation, a special issue of the *Journal of Peasant Studies* was edited in 1985 by T. J. Byres and H. Mukhia under the title *Feudalism in Non-European Societies*. As stated in its introduction, it took the controversy on Indian Feudalism "to a new level within a Marxist analysis" (Byres & Mukhia 1985: 2).

By no means beaten, the Indian Feudalism School was quick to react. In his well known disputatious mode, R. S. Sharma came forward with his seminal article 'How Feudal was Indian Feudalism' (Sharma 1985), published in the volume of the *Journal of Peasant Studies* just mentioned as a "spirited and eloquent defence of [Indian] feudalism", as Byres remarks in his Introduction. In this comprehensive article Sharma took up the gauntlet not only against H. Mukhia but especially against B. Stein's segmentary state concept that he denounced as an 'Asiatic Mode of Production' concept in disguise. Stein reacted in the same volume with a vehement defence of his 'Segmentary State' concept and a harsh rejection of Sharma's concept of the Indian Feudalism by an article with the explicit title 'Politics, Peasants and the Deconstruction of Feudalism in Medieval India' (Stein 1985). This confrontation between Sharma and Stein reminds one of the textbook controversy in the late seventies, however, this time fought out by the concerned scholars in a "strongly assertive leftist-Marxist mould".

Mukhia's rejection of an Indian feudalism and his "faulty premise of the absence of a dependent peasantry" in India was again heavily criticised in 1989 by V.K. Thakur in his *Historiography of Indian Feudalism* (Thakur 1989). But otherwise one gains the impression that the feudalism debate lost its vigour since the late 1980s and in particular during the 1990s. This holds true, at least partly, as the great encounters had been fought out. But more momentous was the rise of a new political Hindu nationalism with different foci, like 'epic archaeology' and the imagined Ramajanmabhumi at Ayodhya. I remember very well the atmosphere in India in 1992 when I stayed as a visiting fellow at JNU. Heated debates about 'nationalistic images' of Indian history continued to absorb the scholarly and 'civic energy' of the adherents of Indian Feudalism and non-Marxist sympathisers before and after the painful destruction of the Babri Masjid on December 6th. Already in October 1989 twenty-five scholars of the Centre of Historical Studies at JNU had come forward with the comprehensive brochure *The Political Abuse of History. Babri Masjid-Rama Janmabhumi Dispute* and in May 1991 R. S. Sharma submitted together with D. N. Jha, A. Ali

Feudal was Indian Feudalism?' effectively demolished the model of the 'free peasantry' by invoking unimpeachable data" (Shrimali 2001).

and S. Bhan to the already mentioned the paper *Ramjanmabhumi-Baburi Masjid. A Historians' Report to the Nation* to the central Goverment (Sharma 1991). The four authors of the *Historian's Report to the Nation* also acted as nominees of the 'All India Babri Masjid Action Committee' in the negotiations with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. Although finally unsuccessful in preventing the destruction of the Babri Masjid in December 1992, these reports about political abuse of imagined history continued to remain influential statements against Government sponsored political abuse of 'epic archaeology'. Sharma continued his critical assessment of the 'Ayodhya fallout' (Sharma 2001). But a main concern of his research activities in the 1990s became the thorough survey of the linguistic, literary and archaeological data of the Aryans in the Euro-Asiatic context and their advent to India as breeders of horses that were unknown in the Indus Civilisation. As expected, his two small but comprehensive books raised again controversial debates that are, however, beyond the scope of this paper (Sharma 1996[7] and 1999).

During the late 1980s and in the following years the Indian Feudalism School kept silent by no means. The debates continued in a kind of fine-tuning of important conceptual aspects as can be detected in two anthologies of its two leading exponents. The first volume, edited by D. N. Jha (1987), comprises a large number of articles by different authors, whereas the second one contains a collection of R. S. Sharma's articles, edited by himself. D. N. Jha had obviously an essential concern to compile and edit his volume *Feudal Social Formation in Early India* (Jha 1987). As perceivable in his comprehensive Introduction (Jha 1987: 4–41) he emphasized again his thesis that external factors (e.g. the decline of international trade) and state measures (e.g. conferring land tenure to Brahmins) were not the main causes of the emergence of feudalism in India. The volume contains three major sections. Its first, 'Transition to Feudalism', is silent about 'external factors'. The two papers of Sharma (1982) and Yadava (1979) emphasise instead social unrest and peasant uprisings and the socio-economic crisis of the Kali age. The second part on 'Feudal Society and Economy' repeats well-known concepts, though based partly on new material. The final section on 'Feudal Ideology' contains articles on religious-ideological issues like K. Veluthat's paper (jointly with Narayanan 1987) on the Bhakti Movement in South India and R. S. Sharma's meanwhile famous article 'Material Milieu of Tantrism' (Jha 1987: 376–390). These subjects were not completely new. After all, already Kosambi had emphasized the significance of bhakti

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[7] This book was reviewed in *IHR* 1992: 121–124 by Suraj Bhan, Archaeologist of Kurukshetra University and co-author of the *Historians' Report to the Nation.*

for the ideology of feudalism. But initially religious topics were not part of the mainstream debates of Indian feudalism.

The thoroughly revised new edition of this volume of the year 2000 confirms and strengthens this new trend (Jha 2000). Thus the last chapter on Feudal Ideology contains six instead of four articles, adding Sharma's new important 'The Feudal Mind' and R. N. Nandi's article on the 'Origin of the Virasaiva Movement'.

New Ideas: R. S. Sharma's Advancement of his Concept of Indian Feudalism

Even more gainful observations can be made from Sharma's *Early Medieval Indian Society. A Study in Feudalisation* (2001), the long-standing desideratum of his articles. His short but profound introduction situates his concept in the context of more recent Marxist and non-Marxist theories of Indian feudalism (Sharma 2001: 1–14). As the book had come out more or less exactly on the fiftieth anniversary of Sharma's 'initiation' into the study of feudalism at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, it reflects not only the larger part of his own career, but also comprises in a nutshell the history of the most controversial concept of India's modern historiography since the publication of his seminal monograph *Indian Feudalism* (Kulke 2002: 157).

The particular relevance of this anthology is further enhanced by the fact that Sharma revised and enlarged several papers substantially for this coherently edited volume. Therefore they not only provide updated versions. A comparison with their original versions offers the opportunity to detect interesting aspects of the advancement of Sharma's concept of Indian feudalism. We may not be wrong to regard his *Study in Feudalisation* as his new magnum opus on this topic.

Let me explain this by a few examples. In his Introduction Sharma confirms the focus of his earlier writings: "In my understanding of feudalism I give the greatest weight to the economic factor". However, he adds that he "also included material on the social and cultural aspects of the early medieval period" (Sharma 2001: 1) Already Sharma's first article, 'Transition from Ancient to Medieval', is indicative. It consists of his extensively enlarged, in fact tripled, lead-article of the first volume of the new *Indian Historical Review* (Sharma 1974c) and reveals interesting modifications and enrichments of his concept. In both versions he repeated his thesis that the transition to the Middle Ages and the emergence of feudalism in India results from the practice of extensive land grants. But in the revised version he comes to a significant new conclusion that the practice of landgrants was also a measure to overcome, "a serious crisis that

affected the production relations" (Sharma 2001: 18). To my mind, this 'interpolation' reflects a paradigmatic change as it explains landgrants no longer primarily as an administrative measure of a 'moneyless' state administration, but as a reaction to the deep social crisis. This observation applies also to his newly added short concluding subchapters on 'Rise of Regional and Linguistic Units', 'Trends in Art and Architecture' and 'Bhakti and Tantrism' (see also Sharma 2005: 299–306).

The second chapter 'The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis' provides another case of 'comparative studies'. Originally published in the A. L. Basham Festschrift (Sharma 1982) and republished as the lead-article of the D. N. Jha's anthologies (1987, 2000), it has now been thoroughly recast and, according to the newly acquired conceptual status of the Kali age crises, its size has nearly been doubled. One may not go astray to argue that this article has now become a genuine contribution to social history of early medieval India. This is illustrated, for example, by two of its newly added passages which deal with "peasantisation of sudras" (Sharma 2001: 54 ff) and the growing importance of trade in the initial stage of the Kali age crisis (Sharma 2001: 56f). Sharma argues that, "traders in their anxiety to acquire a higher social status, assumed a leading role in fostering disaffection", and even infers from "repeated references to their predominance that traders and artisans had their hand in the social disorder".

The last chapter 'The Feudal Mind' has been published originally in *Social Science Probings* (Sharma 1996) and was reedited in Jha's revised anthology (Jha 2000: 455–467). It constituted another significant and fairly new – one may even add overdue – amendment to his concept, implemented by himself. It highlights the means to validate and legitimise social and economic inequalities of feudal hierarchies through 'ritual arrangements' and Bhakti. Particularly interesting is his observation that social inequality and feudal hierarchy seem to have been articulated and thus validated by the position and size (and thus hierarchy) that were allotted to various deities in the reliefs of temples (Sharma 2001: 267). Sharma admits in this article that religion and ideology had a much stronger share in the nature of Indian feudalism than suggested in his early conceptual writings, particularly in *Indian Feudalism*. His statement "Bhakti helped strengthen the existing feudal relationship" (Sharma 2001: 281) and the introductory sentence of his very short concluding chapter 'Summing-Up' that "the social crisis of the Kali age paved the way for the beginning of the early medieval period" (2001: 283) signify an important enhancement of his concept of Indian Feudalism and characterize the openness of his own 'feudal mind'.

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Let me conclude with a few additional remarks. Like R. S. Sharma, D. N. Jha adopts the designation 'Early Medieval India' in the new title of his revised anthology *The Feudal Order. State Society and Ideology in Early Medieval India* (Jha 2000). for the first time The concept of Early Medieval India was introduced and defined by B. D. Chattopadhyaya in his Presidential Address at the Indian History Congress in 1983 (Chattopadhyaya 1983). It has finally been accepted since the publication of his seminal work *The Making of Early Medieval India* in 1994. It was a necessary amendment to the conventional tripartite periodization of the Indian History Congress of Classical, Medieval and Modern Indian History in order to do justice to the period of the post-Gupta regional kingdoms. This change of nomenclature by Sharma and Jha may not be a mere coincidence but indicates, to my mind, an intended conceptual improvement. It clarifies the period to which the model of Indian Feudalism applies and, hopefully, facilitates the overdue improvement of communication between 'feudalists' and 'early medievalists'. After all, there are rays of hope that this may be possible. In his Presidential Address at the Andhra Pradesh History Congress 'Reflections on Recent Perceptions of Early Medieval India', K. M. Shrimali criticised Chattopadhyaya for speaking of a "samanta system rather than feudal polity" and for viewing "this system as an instrument of political integration and a counterpoint to the decentralized polity of the feudal" (Shrimali 1994). However, he concludes with the unexpected question: "Aren't the so-called alternative paradigms of 'segmentary state' and 'integrative polity' merely extensions of semantic differences rather than connoting any substantiative departure from the feudal model?" Nevertheless, one could easily retort to this question in the opposite direction. D. N. Jha, however, seems to be still rather reluctant to reduce this controversy to mere semantic differences. But he, too, admits that "the responses of Stein, Kulke and Chattopadhyaya to the feudal state model, it would appear, have at least one point in common: they all perceive the early medieval period as one of parcellized sovereignty and this brings them quite close to the idea of a feudal state" (Jha 2000: 24). There exists indeed closeness between these three models of state formation in early medieval India. They all are alternative models of the traditional model of unitary, centralized and territorially clearly defined kingdoms.

Feudalisation, as analysed by Sharma in his *Study of Feudalisation* pertains to processes that are indeed also central to the "processual model of integrative state formation" and related concepts of state formation in early medieval India from local chieftains to early and imperial kingdoms (Chattopadhyaya 1983, 1994; Kulke 1984, 1995; Panda 1990; Sahu 2012, 2018; Singh 2011). Even a kind of 'demilitarization' of the 'feudalist war' against Burton Stein and his segmen-

tary state model could be helpful as a closer de-ideologized analysis of his studies on rituals and nuclear areas might be quite revealing, too, as has recently been pointed by this author (Kulke 2012). And there are several other promising arenas for conceptual negotiations with processes of feudalization and integration, like 'feudal mind' and ideology, processes of legitimation, the political role of religious movements, institutions and sectarian leaders, integration and 'Hinduization' of tribals and their 'castification', the extension of the 'state society' into the periphery of royal centres, the role of 'little kings' and *samantas*, agrarian extension and urbanization – to mention only few. No doubt, Sharma's *Study of Feudalisation* opens new doors for promising future studies of early medieval India beyond conceptual barriers.

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Maritime History of the Indian Ocean

Java's Mongol Demon. Inscribing the Horse Archer into the Epic History of Majapahit[1]

Jos Gommans

Abstract

The temple of Panataran near Blitar in Java features a unique scene in which one of the Ramayana *demons, Indrajit, is depicted as a Mongol mounted horse-warrior. This essay explores the meaning of this representation on the basis of the multi-layered history and historiography of Java's Mongol invasion.*

> "Everything that happened in the *Ramayana* was absolutely real."
> Maheshvaratirtha, sixteenth century (cited in Pollock 1993: 279)

Panataran Temple

Walking anti-clockwise around the base of the main terrace at Panataran Temple, twelve kilometres north-east of Blitar in Java, the visitor is treated to the truly remarkable display of 106 relief panels carved with sequential scenes from the story of the Ramayana – the source of this particular series is the Kakawin version, which almost certainly dates from the ninth century CE, making it the earliest surviving work of Old Javanese poetry. Interestingly, the main character in this pictorial rendering is not the more customary figure of Rama, the exiled king, but instead his loyal monkey companion Hanuman. However, given the popularity of Hanuman in the Indic world in around the time the Panataran panels were made – the mid-fourteenth century – his prominence is perhaps not all that surprising after all (Lutgendorf 2007). Except for Hanuman's unusual role, the panels follow the conventional narrative, starting with the abduction of Rama's wife Sita by Ravana, the demon king of Lanka. Many of the panels depict Hanuman's heroic fights with demons (rakshasas), and the first series of battles culminates in panel 55, which shows Hanuman being attacked by Ravana's son Indrajit.

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[1] This essay profited from the comments of my colleagues Marijke Klokke at Leiden University (The Netherlands) and Tjahjono Prasodjo of Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta (Indonesia). Of course, all mistakes remain my own.

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Fig. 1: Relief 55: Indrajit as Mongol Horse Archer. Panataran Temple, Blitar. Photograph by Marijke Klokke

Seated on a horse with multiple snake-heads, Indrajit draws his bow and shoots a magic snake arrow (nagapasha) that first strikes Hanuman on the thigh and then constricts him, causing him to fall to the ground. Ravana then captures Hanuman, who subsequently escapes and then unleashes a new series of fights that dominates the remainder of the reliefs.[2] But it is the scene showing the demon Indrajit shooting his bow at Hanuman that is particularly remarkable, for reasons I will explore in this essay.

The relevant text in the Kakawin *Ramayana* tells us the following about Indrajit's vehicle: 'His chariot was strikingly large, wide and fast, and it was drawn by harnessed horses. Within his chariot were many sharp arrows and rakshasa guards walked before it.' (Juynboll 1924: 11–12). On closer inspection of panel 55, however, we see that the chariot so typical of Indic epics is in fact

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[2] For the Ramayana terrace at Panataran, see Stutterheim (1925); Klokke (2006); Kieven (2011). For a discussion of the Panataran temples as a whole, see Kinney, Klokke & Kieven (2003: 179–215).

absent. Indrajit is instead seated on a small, pony-like horse as he shoots his arrow, in a scene that clearly recalls the quintessential Mongol horse-archer who, in that same era, had conquered almost half the known world for Chinggis Khan (c. 1162–1227) and his descendants, who when the Panataran terrace was built ruled over powerful empires, from the Middle East under the Ilkhanids to China under the Yuan. Java, however, was far too distant from the Central Asian steppes to be part of this Eurasian Pax Mongolica, and as such the island did not share in the legacy of the Mongol horse-archer.[3] As far as I know, this is the only depiction of Indrajit as a Mongol horse archer and perhaps the only one of any horse archer in all Indonesia. This begs the question of how we might make sense of this scene, given that it is so wildly exotic from a Javanese perspective.

Fig. 2: Mongol Archer on Horseback ("Mongolischer Bogenschütze zu Pferde"). Signed (lower right): Muhammad ibn Mahmudshah al-Khayyam, Iran, early 15th century, Ink and gold on paper. Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung, Diez A fol. 72, 5.13; Photograph by Ellwandt

The Mongol Invasion of Java

The most obvious approach to solving this intriguing mystery would be to look to the historical record for evidence of the Mongols in Java. In fact there is barely any mention of them, apart from references to incidents of an inconsequential nature,[4] despite the fact that Mongol operations had huge repercussions for the power balance on the island and even engendered the emergence of Java's most extensive and most powerful empire, Majapahit. The best historical account of the relevant events is contained in the *Yuanshi*, the official his-

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[3] For this legacy, see Gommans (2018).
[4] See, however, Bade (2013). Much of this essay builds on Bade's discussion of the invasion.

tory of the Mongol Yuan dynasty, whose emperor Khubilai dispatched an army to Java in 1292 in retaliation for a serious diplomatic affront: Kertanagara, the ruler of the Javanese kingdom of Tumapel (r. 1268–1292), which at that time was based at the capital Singasari, had cut the face of the Mongol imperial envoy visiting Java to request tribute as recognition of Sino-Mongol suzerainty. A similar affront had previously prompted Khubilai to send a fleet to punish another recalcitrant ruler, resulting in two failed attempts to invade Japan in 1274 and 1281.

On arrival in Java the Mongols discovered that Kertanagara had been defeated already by Singasari's main rival kingdom Daha (or Kediri), which was ruled over by Jayakatwang (r. 1292–1293), who now laid claim to these two polities in the east of Java. Crucially for the purposes of our investigation, the Mongol army (comprising infantry *and* cavalry) initially campaigned against Jayakatwang with the support of Kertanagara's son-in-law, Raden Wijaya, who had offered his allegiance to the Mongols. Wijaya operated from his new base of Majapahit, which had been freshly cleared from the jungle situated between the delta and the hinterland of the Brantas River, affording easy access to the island of Madura, probably Wijaya's main area of military support and recruitment. Soon after the Mongols had routed Jayakatwang's forces, Raden Wijaya turned against the Mongols and successfully ambushed one of their detachments on their return to the fleet.[5]

The *Yuanshi* is silent on the repercussions of the Mongol invasion following their departure from Java, but we know from Javanese sources that Raden Wijaya (as King Kertarajasa, r. 1294–1309) established the Majapahit Empire that incorporated Kertanagara's and Jayakatwang's former kingdoms of Tumapel and Daha, respectively, and would flourish for almost two centuries under his descendants. Looking at the history of the Mongol invasion, it is perhaps not too farfetched to conclude that the Mongol scene at Panataran was inspired by the lived experience or memory of the military operations of the Mongol army in Java in 1293.

Javanese Histories

This brings us to the coeval Javanese sources and their take on the Mongol invasion. Do they offer us any further clues regarding the meaning of Java's Mongol demon at Panataran Temple? First of all, it is important to distinguish between various genres of Javanese history writing, each of which give meaning to the past in their own way; different genres represent different layers of

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[5] For the Chinese account of the invasion, see Groeneveldt (1876); in a modern survey of Chinese history: Franke & Twitchet (1994).

meaning that can be attributed to historical events. At one level we can perceive the events as they really happened. Perhaps the Chinese *Yuanshi* best represents this perspective for our purposes. At another, 'higher' level, however, those documenting history may have been more interested in a deeper and fuller significance to events, one that would make much more sense in a culture where meaning lay beyond the solely visual or material experience. Read in this way, then, the narrative of an epic can convey a 'more-than-real' meaning of events, but at the same time authors or their patrons may presume that they can impact on these same events by exploiting the magical powers of an epic – or any other spoken or written text for that matter.[6]

The Javanese source that most closely approximates our idea of an accurate chronicle is the *Pararaton* (often translated as 'The Book of Kings'). Written in Middle Javanese prose, it brings together early legend-oriented material for its early part and later, more down-to-earth contemporary history for its final part. An apparently equally trustworthy work for the conventional historian is that other major contemporary source of Majapahit history, the *Nagarakertagama* (or *Desawarnana*), written at the Majapahit court in the *kakawin* poetical form of Old Javanese. Unlike in the case of the *Pararaton*, we have a date, author and location for this work: we know that it was written in 1365 by Prapanca the head of Buddhist Affairs at the Majapahit court. Despite these concrete facts, however, the book itself belongs to the mirror-for-princes genre rather than the chronicle genre, and is therefore more concerned with how kings *ought* to behave than how they actually behaved – details on the latter are exceedingly thin on the ground in coeval Javanese sources. Nonetheless, it is precisely the ethical and aesthetic nature of most if not all Javanese sources that provides the historian with such priceless information regarding the mentality of the intellects that produced them.

We uncover yet one other layer of historical understanding in *kidung*, a genre of works written in a Middle Javanese verse-form that was linked to oral transmission and intended to be sung. The two most important examples for the case at hand are the *Rangga Lawe* (specifically its first part, the *Panji Wijayakrama*) and the *Harsa-Wijaya*. The latter is certainly the more elegant literary creation of the two, but both elaborate in a romanticised manner on historical events including the Mongol invasion. Their date remains contested but they apparently build on the same material as the *Pararaton* and the *Rangga*

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[6] In this interpretation I am inspired by the still somewhat controversial work of the late C.C. Berg, see in particular his 'Javaansche geschiedschrijving' Berg (1938). See also: Zoetmulder (1974) and for this particular era Robson (2013). This 'more than real' derives from David Shulman's recent *More than Real,* Shulman (2012).

Lawe may even be older than the *Pararaton* since it has been dated to 1334 (Damais 1958: 55–58). Although both works take a cavalier approach to what we would consider historical facts, the stories communicate a truth beyond the merely perceptual. An interesting case in point is the story of Panji, a Javanese hero who appears time and again in stories and narrative reliefs of the Majapahit period, in a tale that boils down to a rivalry between the Javanese kingdoms of Kuripan and Daha: the prince of the former kingdom and the princess of the latter become betrothed, but some mischief is then carried out that impedes their path to happiness – in many versions of the tale the princess is abducted by a foreign king, with whom the prince must then do battle to restore the happy union.[7] Javanese historians evidently exploited such narratives to give meaning to events they witnessed.

At what may be considered the highest layer of historical narration, we find the epic, the ultimate key to the meaning of the past as well as the present and future. Although epics and related mythical stories do not refer to lived historical events, they do give hidden, inner meaning to these events. Almost by definition all history follows a pattern that is revealed in the epics. Sheldon Pollock uses the term 'imaginary' for this purpose, defining it as "The construction and representation of reality through a more or less systematic historical fantasy" (Pollock 1993: 280). One such fantasy was the Old Javanese Kakawin *Ramayana* that served as the source for the Panataran reliefs. Although very different in detail from the Panji story, the Kakawin *Ramayana* also revisits the narrative of abduction, war and reunion, albeit at a different level. Given the richly layered nature of historical narratives in the Javanese context, it made and makes perfect sense to inscribe historical facts into fiction (or any other genre for that matter) and vice-versa, such that the distinction between the two forms is simply one between two genres that deploy their inherent strategies to seek historical meaning for the world in which we live.

The Mongols in Javanese Histories

The Javanese sources that concretely discuss the Mongol invasion are the *Nagarakertagama*, the *Pararaton*, the *Panji Wijayakrama* and the *Harsa-Wijaya*.[8] The *Nagarakertagama* confirms only that the Mongols fought with Kertarajasa to defeat Jayakatwang, and there is no mention whatsoever of Kertarajasa's betrayal. At varying length and in varying detail the other three sources present what seems to be the Javanese rationalisation of the Mongol invasion. The

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[7] For the Panji stories, see Kieven (2013).
[8] For the translations of these works, see Brandes (1920 [1897]); Pigeau (1960–1963); Berg (1930); Berg (1931).

major incentive for the 'king of Tatar' – the Javanese rendering of Khubilai – to invade Java was the promise given by Raden Wijaya (or rather his main ally Wiraraja) to receive the beautiful princesses of Tumapel as war booty. And while all the Javanese sources are silent about the maltreatment of the Chinese diplomat, they all agree that the main reason for the invasion concerned the princesses.

The sources also concur on the conflict between the 'usurper' Jayakatwang of Daha and Raden Wijaya following the death of King Kertanagara (r. 1268–1292). Kertanagara was a key figure in the Rajasa dynasty that had ruled Tumapel since the beginning of the century. Although Raden Wijaya himself was a member of the Rajasa dynasty, for a successful claim to the vacant throne it was crucial that he could connect himself directly to Kertanagara by marrying this ruler's two daughters. So obviously, according to our Javanese sources, these two daughters were destined to be Raden Wijaya's wives.[9] However, during the 'civil war' between the kingdoms of Tumapel and Daha, Jayakatwang abducted the younger of the two to Daha; the older one was saved by Raden Wijaya to be taken to Madura. Some facts in the part of the *Yuanshi* story that takes place after the Mongols entered the fray is confirmed by the Javanese sources: Raden Wijaya initially fought alongside the Mongols but later turned his back on them. The Javanese authors differ from the *Yuanshi*, however, in the reason for this volte-face. They again assign a pivotal role to the princesses, who were claimed by the Mongols against the wishes of Raden Wijaya, who needed them to set up an empire of his own (which could actually be regarded as a continuation of Kertanagara's kingdom). The further details of the story are not relevant for our focus here, but it is nevertheless important to note that its storyline corresponds to a striking degree with the Panji theme and the *Ramayana* – two narratives comprising texts, songs and pictures that were very popular in fourteenth-century Majapahit. All these genres tell the same recurring story about the Mongols and the making of the Majapahit Empire, although each does so in a differently imagined epistemological form. Again, depicting Indrajit in the *Ramayana* in the guise of a Mongol horse archer makes perfect sense. Neither Hanuman nor Raden Wijaya could avoid their fate: they were compelled to fight demons in their efforts to achieve royal union.

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[9] This follows the *Pararaton* version; other sources speak of four daughters.

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Revisiting Panataran Temple

The foregoing discussion offers only one possible interpretation of Indrajit as a Mongol horse archer at Panataran Temple. Many unresolved questions remain, such as why Hanuman features so prominently at Panataran if the story should actually be about the exiled, Rama-like king Raden Wijaya. Another important issue is the dating of the reliefs to the mid-fourteenth century, more than half a century after the Mongol invasion and at least four decades after the death of Kertarajasa. Should we regard the temple, or this part of it at least, as a Javanese *lieu de mémoire* for the foundation of Majapahit? We do know that two rulers who contributed significantly to the building of Panataran Temple were the queen-regent Tribhuwana (r. 1328–1350) and her son Hayam Wuruk a.k.a. Rajasanagara (r. 1350–1389), Kertarajasa's daughter and grandson respectively. In the period from 1361 to 1363 Hayam Wuruk restored Simping Temple (at Sumberjati, south of Blitar) believed to be the commemorative temple of Kertarajasa (Krom 1931: 369, 423). It is reported that in 1363 Hayam Wuruk consecrated the statue of Kertarajasa that depicts him as Harihara, a divine form combining the attributes of Shiva and Vishnu.

Fig. 3: The statue of King Kertarajasa (r. 1293–1309) as Harihara, originally located at Simping Temple, Sumberjati, Blitar. National Museum of Indonesia, Jakarta. Photograph by Marijke Klokke

From this we can surmise that the making of the Panataran reliefs may have been part of a courtly revival that commemorated the foundation story of the Majapahit Empire. Many options remain open and should be resolved by others

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with more philological expertise than the present author.[10] Nonetheless, what does emerge from the present exercise is that the Mongols were incorporated into Javanese history and as such gained meaning for Java's courtly society through the *Ramayana* as depicted in the mid-fourteenth-century Panataran Temple.

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[10] For a different interpretation that pays attention to the role of Kertanagara rather than of Kertarajasa, see Berg (1965: 97ff). For a possible association of Hayam Wuruk with the Krishna reliefs at Panataran, see Klokke (2000: 38).

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Liquid Geographies: India in the Oceanic Imaginary

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Abstract

In the construction of national space, is there a contrast between continental and oceanic determinants? I consider this question by looking at how India was conceptualized, conceived, imaged, and imagined in the first half of the 20th century, before it became independent. More specifically, how did the idea of India come to be articulated from two ends of the Indian Ocean, by M. K. Gandhi in South Africa, and, later, by Subhas Chandra Bose in Singapore? Gandhi was the author of the seminal anti-colonial and, some might add, anti-modern text, Hind Swaraj *(1909). Bose became the commander of the* Azad Hind Fauj *also known as the Indian National Army. Though these leaders belong to two different ideological and discursive traditions, what united them was anti-imperialism and "colourful" cosmopolitanism. I argue that their work was not just normatively constitutive of the Indian nation, but that it might more fruitfully be seen as part of an older, looser, and more fluid Indian Oceanic cross-currents of cultural formation and circulation. These networks are today almost forgotten, with the end of empire and the rise of independent nations in the Indian Ocean system. Yet, it is of vital importance to reconsider, if not resurrect, them if we wish to arrive at a better understanding not just of the Indian Ocean but of Asia. This paper, with the help of both textual and visual sources, illustrates how the national space was shaped by geo-critical politics, by oceanic hybridity, and by a special type of anti-imperial, colourful cosmopolitanism. The space which gave rise to such discourses constitutes a vital link between the world shaped by Western imperialism and the post-national world which we might regard as coming into being before our very eyes.*

Is there a contrast between continental and oceanic perspectives, especially in the way in which nations are imagined? I propose to raise this question by looking at how India was conceptualized, conceived, imaged, and imagined from two ends of the Indian Ocean, by M. K. Gandhi in South Africa and Subhas Chandra Bose in Singapore. Gandhi was the author of the seminal anti-colonial and, some might add, anti-modern text, *Hind Swaraj* (1909). Bose became the commander of the *Azad Hind Fauj* also known as the Indian National Army (INA), announcing the provincial government of free India from Singa-

pore in October 1943. Though these leaders belong to two different ideological and discursive traditions, what united them was anti-imperialism and "colourful" cosmopolitanism.[1] The term "colourful cosmopolitanism" itself is of recent coinage, first used by Sugata Bose "to evoke a kind of cosmopolitanism that springs from vernacular roots and is compatible with the best traditions of anti-colonial nationalism" (Bose 2012: 18). Nico Slate's *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Slate 2012) is a valuable contribution in this regard, showing transnational and trans-continental connections and alliances among blacks and Indians against colonialism. Such an idea of cosmopolitanism is quite at variance with Martha Nussbaum's 1994 essay in which she claimed that "Cosmopolitanism [...] offers only reason and the love of humanity, which may seem at times less colorful than other sources of belonging" (Nussbaum 1994: 161). Both Gandhi and Bose, eventually, constituted not so much discordant, but interconnected strands in India's freedom struggle. I argue that their work as not just normatively constitutive of the Indian nation, but that it might more fruitfully be seen as part of an older, looser, and more fluid Indian Oceanic cross-currents of cultural formation and circulation.[2] These networks are today almost forgotten, with the end of empire and the rise of independent nations in the Indian Ocean system. Yet, it is of vital importance to reconsider, if not resurrect, them if we wish to arrive at a better understanding not just of the Indian Ocean but of Asia.

I am also concerned with the dialogical relationship between imaging and imagining, specifically with how images contributed to national imaginaries in the first half of the 20th century, before it became independent. This paper, with the help of visual sources, illustrates how texts and activities by leaders like Gandhi and Bose helped to fashion the nation that India became. This nation was shaped not only by an oceanic hybridity, but by a special type of anti-imperial, colourful cosmopolitanism. The space which gave rise to such discourses constitutes a vital link between a world before Western imperialism and the globalized world of the future which we might regard as coming into being before our very eyes *after* Western hegemony.

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[1] I develop this idea at greater length in my book, *Cultural Politics in Modern India: Postcolonial Prospects, Colourful Cosmopolitanism, Global Proximities* (Paranjape 2016). An earlier version of this paper was published as "Liquid Geographies: India in the Oceanic Imaginary," Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series (Paranjape 2015). A German adaption appeared as "Fließende Räume: Indien in der maritimen Vorstellung." *Zeitschrift fuer Weltgeschichte: Interdisziplinare Perspektiven* (ZWG), 17.1 (Frühjahr 2016): 91–112.

[2] Throughout this paper, I use "oceanic" both as a cognitive metaphor and as an actual geo-spatial site, with the relation between the two left multivalent.

The Indian Ocean has been characterized as "the ocean of notions" and "cradle of globalization."[3] As it begins to reveal its own stories to us, we start seeing it not only as a geo-political, but cultural and conceptual space. It allows, even invites us, to evolve an alternative paradigm of area studies from the perspective of post-colonial societies so as to promote a holistic understanding of Asia, a vast and complex continent, which demands a multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual methodology to understand it.

It would be useful to invoke here a note circulated by the late *svarajist* scholar-researcher, Dharampal, several years back, but revised in September 2003. Dharampal argued that India's relations with its large neighbourhood both to its West and East constitute what might be termed as an enduring Indi-an Ocean oecumene. He advocated a reorienation of Indian scholarship so that this region could be studied more seriously, with a view to understanding the the social, cultural, political, and economic structure of this region. According to Dharampal:

> *"Such a recovery of knowledge and self-awareness requires a major scholarly effort to work on this past in all its manifestations and detail, say from 1500 AD backwards to 600 BC. Regaining of such knowledge would require search of original sources not only in India, but initially perhaps much more in China, Korea, Japan, S.E. Asia, etc, where such sources seem to be more known and perused by scholars in recent times"* (Dharampal 2003).

In this ambitious, even daunting project, scholars from several countries would need to work together. It is such a spirit of cooperation that will create a new, non-Western and truly Asian Asian Studies.

As much recent work in a variety of disciplines shows, region-making is comprised of multiscalar networks, marked by coalitional and conflictual web-bing. Prasenjit Duara, for instance, observes, "Networks in this sense are effec-tive carriers of circulatory histories not only because they can cross various boundaries of territories, institutions and ideologies but produce unexpected coalitional results" (Duara 2015: 242). He goes on to speak more specifically of how networks in maritime Asia produced space. When capitalism and imperi-alism triumphed over the vast breadth of the continent, these older networks were coopted and harnessed to the new "territorial organizational systems";

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[3] Shanti Moorthy and Ashraf Jamal adapt the phrase "ocean of notions" from Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* in their *Introduction to Indian Ocean Studies: Cultural, Social, and Political Perspectives*; like Rashid in Rushdie's story, the Indian Ocean too "becomes its own storyteller" (Moorthy & Jamal 2010: 3, 20). "Cradle of glob-alization" is used in by Cassanelli, Spooner & Nichols (2002) as well as Moorthy & Jamal (2010: 25).

even so, "these networks continued to maintain their transborder and multiscalar character, and in the current era of hyperconnectivity, net works have become a new force to be reckoned with" (Duara 2015: 242–243). Thus, Dharampal's older call, with its anti-imperialistic overtones, resonates with scholarly trends in recent times, trying to emphasize circulatory, global histories over nationalistically confined narratives.

Apart from attending more closely to oceanic rather than continental stories, my second major thrust in this exercise is that I wish to incline to visual in additional to textual sources. Such a move follows another strand of scholarship which examines the manner in which visual histories sometimes compliment, sometimes contradict, but always inflect the more official textual accounts. It would therefore be useful to see how the optical archives of the Indian Ocean impact the more authoritative and familiar textual histories. In *Photography's Other Histories* , Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Peterson (Pinney & Peterson 2003) offer a useful starting point that signals, to use Arjun Appadurai's phrase, "visual decolonization." What is implied is a way of reading visual images so that they become sources of an alternate history of modernity, or in this case, of nationalism. Pinney calls this "vernacular modernism," the manner in which the received practices of Western visual representation were resisted and subverted in the colonies by a radically different use of backdrops, depth, perspective, and style.

In *Photos of the Gods* (2004), his follow-up monograph, Pinney shows how such an alternate history "made by art" may be assembled and read. Pinney suggests that we regard visual culture not merely as a reflection of history made elsewhere but as actively shaping and influencing politics and religion in the subcontinent, in fact, "as an experimental zone where new possibilities and new identities were forged" (Pinney 2004: 8). If, as early colonial missionaries realized, what defines India is "idols, idols everywhere," visual icons certainly have the power to mobilize masses. They are also the site of complex contestations, articulations, and negotiations of power and ideology. That is why, such a way of regarding Indian visual culture forms the other subsidiary strand of this paper. Thus, the way India was *imagined* was also intrinsically linked with how it was *imaged*; visual narratives thus intersected, even collided, with textual accounts of nationalism. Though each of these is a complex discourse in its own right, I present here a preliminary account of how these two crosscurrents intermingle, opening up new ways of thinking about not just how India but the Indian Ocean came to be conceptualized in the first half of the 20th century. Such a task in inter-referencing will, it is hoped, deepen and strengthen our understanding of both India and of Asia. Verbal and visual cross-

currents thus combine in this very physical space of the Indian Ocean to offer two vantage points in the Indian Ocean system, South Africa and Singapore from which to conduct our inquiry.

There is a rich and growing body of work in Indian Ocean studies, notably that of K. N. Chaudhuri and, more recently, Sugata Bose. Chaudhuri, using the distinction made by Fernand Braudel, regarded the Indian Ocean as "a more meaningful human unit for historical analysis" (cited in Bose 2006: 286) than the geo-spatial construct of the continent. This "interregional arena" was a fertile "sphere of action and interaction" (Bose 2006: 6, 285) from where significant anti-colonial struggles could be waged. From such an examination it should be clear that it was the Indian Ocean not just the land-mass of the sub-continent which became the crucible of Indian nationalism and anti-imperialism. These networks of oceanic communication and exchange are to-day almost forgotten by many scholars, with the end of empire and the rise of independent nations in the Indian Ocean system. Yet, it is of vital importance to reconsider, if not resurrect, them if we wish to understand each other better in Asia. This paper, with the help of visual sources, illustrates how texts and activities by leaders like Gandhi and Bose helped to fashion the nation that India became. What emerges is that India was shaped not only by an oceanic hybridity, but by a special type of anti-imperial cosmopolitanism. The space which gave rise to such discourses constitutes a vital link between a world before Western imperialism and the globalized world of the future which we might regard as coming into being before our very eyes *after* Western hegemony. Verbal and visual cross-currents thus combine in this very physical space with oceanic perspectives from two vantage points in the Indian Ocean system.

To better understand the ramification of these developments in the first half of the twentieth century, it might be useful to consider a world before Western hegemony. In her 1989 book with the title "Before European Hegemony", Janet Abu-Leghod says that the world system in the 13th and 14th centuries, before the rise of the modern West, had three essential spheres: the European sub-system, the Mideast Heartland, and Asia (Abu-Lughod 1989). In this larger arrangement the Indian Ocean system played a crucial role because India was literally on "on the way to everywhere" (Abu-Lughod 1989: 261). During Western hegemony, which lasted for nearly five hundred years, from the rise of the Portuguese power in the last years of the 15th century, right up to present times, the Indian Ocean system continued to play a vital role. European powers such as the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British ruled these regions for centuries, also exerting their authority and influence on neighbouring territories. These imperial powers came to control not only the rich trade routes all the

way from Africa to China, but also the countries of the Arabian Gulf, the Indian peninsula, and the islands of Malaysia and Indonesia.

From Aden to Singapore, the British Empire ruled the Indian Ocean and its sub-regions, its supremacy being challenged, briefly, only with the Japanese conquest of much of oceanic East Asia during World War II. Japanese imperialism, of course, was hardly a better option, causing as it did untold miseries upon the peoples of Asia that it conquered and colonized. During the ascendancy and consolidation of the British Empire the earlier, looser and more fluid configuration of smaller states, trading settlements and coastal towns was replaced by massified colonial structures into which the earlier units were incorporated. This older Indian Oceanic space of cultural formation and circulation upon which imperial designs were superimposed was, in great measure, lost with the end of the empire. Yet, this space remains the vital link between a world before Western imperialism and the new world which is coming into being almost before our eyes after Western hegemony. Recent scholarship, including "Asia Redux," an influential paper by Prasenjit Duara, seeks to explore the possibilities inherent in such recuperation.

Colonialism more or less destroyed pre-modern societies and patterns of living. That is why post-colonial societies still struggle to understand who they are. Unable fully to be a part of the modern (Western) "universal" civilization, they are also cut-off from the roots that nourished their pre-colonial life worlds. In India's case, a better understanding of the Indian Ocean world would be a step in the right direction, helping it realign itself in its "real neighbourhood" in the Indian Ocean. Mohandas Karamchand (or Mahatma) Gandhi was deeply aware of this. His foundational text, *Hind Swaraj* (1909), was not only a critique of modern (Western) civilization, but also an appeal to return to a traditional and more "authentic" Indian civilizational narrative as a pre-requisite to freedom and self-rule. Such a civilization he called *sudhoro*, the positive or the beneficent stream of life as opposed to the *kudharo* (negative flow) of capital and machine driven, hence amoral, modernity.

Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj* between 13th and 22nd November 1909 on board the S. S. *Kildonen Castle,* on his way from England to South Africa. In that sense it was literally an oceanic text, written on a ship that traversed moving waters, not on solid land. The journey traversed two oceans, the South Atlantic and the Indian. Indeed, it reflects the tensions between these two worlds of the colonized and the colonizers. In her seminal paper, "The Black Atlantic Meets the Indian Ocean," Isabel Hofmeyr asks, what difference does the Indian Ocean make, "What broader theoretical issues does it raise? Does it unsettle and relativise some of the Atlantic categories that we have come to accept as 'normal'?"

(Hofmeyr 2007: 4). She goes on to answer that Indian oceanic intellectual circuits produced a world of crosscutting and contesting universalisms, producing a view of colonialism less as an encounter of the local and the global than as a contestation of different universalisms. The Indian Ocean provides an arena in which such universalisms of the south become apparent. (Hofmeyr 2007: 7–8)

Gandhi was quite in the middle of these circuits and contributed significantly to the creation of a colourful cosmopolitanism. The whole manuscript was written on the ship's stationary and fills 275 pages, of which forty were written with the left hand. It is clear that *Hind Swaraj* was very much not only an inspired but also, quite literally, a fluid text. I do not wish to create two Gandhi's, one oceanic and the other landed. Rather, I wish to suggest that the idealism, romantic non-violence, and uncompromising rejection of modern, mechanistic and capitalistic civilization was more in keeping with the moving, liquid, oceanic locus of this text.

"Hind Swaraj" literally means Indian self-rule. For Gandhi this was not merely political independence but the formation of a society of highly evolved individuals who insisted (*agraha*) on truth and non-violence, individuals who were self-regulating and self-governing, thus in need of little external control or supervision. *Hind Swaraj* was thus a programmatic proclamation of a new political methodology, soul-force as opposed to brute-force, non-violence as opposed to violence, not just to win India's freedom, but also to construct an alternate nation-hood and modernity.

Hind Swaraj was also the "Bible" of non-violent revolution. Addressed largely to expatriate Indians, especially those revolutionaries Gandhi had met in London who advocated a violent overthrow of British rule in India, *Hind Swaraj* takes the opposite stance and proposes a non-violent revolution to overthrow colonialism. Gandhi argues that counter-violence cannot be India's way, given her civilizational ethos; instead, the use of superior moral force would win India's freedom. In the process, Gandhi clarified the deeper meaning of *svaraj* or true liberty for himself and for Indians back at home.

Gandhi's intention's was clear. He felt that Indians could never be free until they overcame their awe and craving for modern civilization; hence his critique of modernity as a Godless, mechanistic, inherently violent, and dehumanizing system. Modernity was "merely dynamic," while traditional Indian civilization was "adaptive" and "contemplative." Gandhi regarded the British as representatives of a "belligerent civilization" (Introduction by Parel in Gandhi 1997: xx–xxii), which Indians should not imitate. In the process, Gandhi also connected colonialism with modernity, going a step farther from Lenin who had linked it with capitalism.

The text was published first in Gujarati in *Indian Opinion,* a multilingual newspaper that Gandhi himself had founded in 1903. Then, in early 1910, it was published as a book in English in Gandhi's own translation from native Gujarati in which it was originally composed, again by the Indian Opinion Press. Gandhi used the printed word, newspapers, periodicals, and pamphlets, to good effect as an alternative form of modernity. Hofmeyr in a more recent book, *Gandhi's Printing Press* (Hofmeyer 2013), calls it an *Experiment in Slow Reading.* Gandhi used hand-operated presses and labour-intensive and outdated printing techniques to emphasize reading as a mode of contemplation, with new and originally written material juxtaposed with carefully selected excerpts from various sources. This was a unique form of forging a communing, imagining a nation from the edge of the Indian oceanic diaspora, not so much through print capitalism, as through a self-help, self-service, and self-produced print culture.

But more germane to our argument here, I wish to emphasize that *Hind Swaraj* was an Indian Ocean text*,* though it is considered a foundational text of Indian nationalism. Moreover, if one considers not just the specific text called *Hind Swaraj* but also the overall idea of an alternate imagination of an Indian nation, then it is noteworthy that such a conception emerged not from an "imperial" or a "national" space, indeed not from a *continental* site, but from the fluidity of the oceanic system. This is all the more remarkable because Gandhi has now been appropriated as the "Father of the Nation."[4] Years later, Gandhi would return to the oceanic metaphor when he tried to conceptualize his notion of an independent India. In response to a question, he published a detailed account of his idea of India in the *Harijan* of 28 July 1946:

> *"In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units"* (Gandhi 1999, 91: 326).

From the oceanic textuality of *Hind Swaraj* early in his career to the oceanic circle of the latter days of his life, we can thus see a clear continuity in idea and metaphor.

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[4] According to Sugata Bose, it was Subhas Chandra Bose or "Netaji," who "had been the first to hail" Gandhi with this title (Bose 211: 1).

This brings us to the all-important issue of the relationship between nations and oceans. I have argued throughout this essay that the Indian nation was literally conceived from the seaboard of the Indian Ocean. Perhaps, only an alternate point of reference such as afforded by the Indian Ocean system could inspire Gandhi to discover a new political praxis and theory of resistance. Indeed, one could argue that most of Gandhi's key texts including *Satyagraha in South Africa* and *The Story of My Experiments with Truth,* were, in this sense, Indian Ocean texts because they were either written in or mostly depicted his life and experiences in South Africa. Though South Africa was a colony, oceanic labour, indenture, trade, and religious cross currents formed its various communities. Gandhi's own origins in Porbandar, Gujarat, another oceanic town that faced a greater world of trade and commerce, was the source of many who ventured across the waters. Indeed, Gandhi's little room on the third floor of his many-roomed home, faced the sea. He would have looked out across the waters wondering of the worlds that beckoned him from yonder. Though he first went to England, returned to India as a barrister, and only then left for South Africa, it was in the latter country that both his thought and praxis was formed in a vortex of anti-imperialistic, oceanic cosmopolitanism.

Gandhi needed and used creatively the distance offered by his Indian Ocean location to both understand and reconceptualize India. Judith Brown points out that South Africa enabled Gandhi to be a "critical outsider" to India (Brown 1985: 21–34). Even if the label outsider is debatable, I agree that the critical distance from India enabled Gandhi to evolve a unique, even original response to the task of freeing India. *Svaraj* and *satyagraha* were thus invented in the Indian Ocean region, not in India itself. Phoenix Farm, Gandhi's first ashram (experimental settlement) was a "nursery for producing the right men (and women) and right Indians" (Gandhi 1999, 9: 382). Hofmeyr, too, argues that "we need to think of the Indian Ocean as the site par excellence of 'alternative modernities,' those formations of modernity that have taken shape in an archive of deep and layered existing social and intellectual traditions" (Hofmeyr 2007: 13).

To get an idea of the "oceanic" founders of the Natal Indian Congress, which Gandhi created in South Africa in 1895, just a few years after the foundation of the Indian National Congress in India in 1885, let us observe a group photograph.

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Fig. 1: Group photograph of founders of the Natal Indian Congress, 1894

The varied dress, head gear, and postures of the figures suggests a sort of Indian Ocean cosmopolitanism, in which to be "Indian" in early twentieth century South Africa, was to be a part of several intersecting and different worlds. Another photo of the ambulance crops that Gandhi organized during the Boer War, in contrast, shows the homogenization that colonial dress imposed on these diverse people. Indian Ocean identity was thus a dialogic negotiation between colonial homogenization and native differentiation.

Here is another photo of the ambulance crops that Gandhi organized during the Boer War.

Fig. 2: Standing: H. Kitchen, L. Panday, R. Panday, J. Royeppen, R. K. Khan, L. Gabriel, M. K. Kotharee, E. Peters, D. Vinden, V. Madanjit. Middle Row: W. Jonathan, V. Lawrence, M. H. Nazar, Dr. L. P. Booth, M. K. Gandhi, P. K. Naidoo, M. Royeppen. Front Row: S. Shadrach, "Professor" Dhundee, S. D. Moddley, A. David, A. A. Gandhi
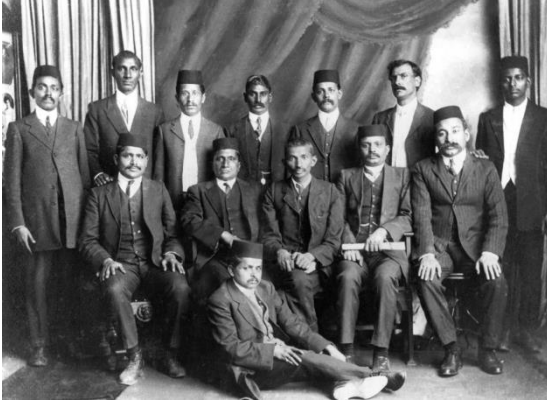
Fig. 3: Here is Gandhi (sitting, third from the left) with the leaders of the non-violent resistance movement in South Africa

A cartoon from that period captioned "Playing with Fire" satirizes the public burning of 1300 registration certificates at a Congress meeting of Indians at Fordsburg on Aug 16, 1908. This cartoon is among earliest such images of Gandhi to circulate outside South Africa. Gandhi is in a frock, but his native "difference" is emphasized by his headgear. Gandhi's call on 16 August 1908 at the Hamidia Mosque, Johannesburg, to publically burn the certificates of Indians registered under the "Black Act" is compared to the Boston Tea Party of 1773, which started

Fig. 4: "Playing with Fire"

the American Revolution against the British. A bonfire against the British at the rim of the Indian Ocean seemed to bear fruit thirty-nine years later when India became independent a day before, on 15 August.

Though in Indian dress, Gandhi wears many more clothes here, quite a contrast with the image of the Mahatma in a loincloth. No wonder this image was never iconized or became popular. Indeed, it was in September 1921, a few years after his return to India, that Gandhi officially adopted the loincloth as his official attire (Gandhi 1999, 24: 346).

From Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (Indian self-rule) to Bose's *Azad Hind Fauj* (Free India Force) is an interesting journey. *Swaraj* invokes ancient, Upanishidic ideals; it was originally a spiritual concept implying self-mastery and self-illumination, thus literally a kind of "enlightenment" (*rajdeepnoti; raj*=that which shines). Applied to the body politic, it implied a notion of enlightened governmentality. Many such modern political terms including *svatantrya*, the usual word for independence, have residual spiritual connotations, invoking a trans-political dimension to Indian nationalism. It always aimed at more than "mere" nation formation; Aurobindo, Tagore, Gandhi and others leaders who resorted to this word implied by it a much wider vision of

Fig. 5: Gandhi and Kasturba returning to India in 1915

society and human destiny (see Brown 1984). Svaraj to them was a cosmopolitan, not sectarian ideal.

Azad Hind, on the other hand, literally means "free India" – instead of the Sanskritic *svaraj*, Bose uses *azad*, a Persio-Urdu word, much more commonly understood by the masses. Under Bose, the Indian National Army's (INA) motto of *Ittefaq* (Unity), *Eitmad* (Faith), and *Kurbani* (Sacrifice) no doubt preferred Hindustani words of Persio-Arabic extraction. Could we argue that Bose's vocabulary was more appropriate to a unified India than Gandhi's? The invocation of spiritually-charged terms such a "faith" and "sacrifice," however, remained common to both. There was no mistaking the cause of nationalism as anything but sacred; nationalism was no less than a sort of religious cult.

Bose's Indian National Army was the second such army raised in Singapore; the first under the command of Mohan Singh, soon after the fall of Singapore in 1942, was unsuccessful. Mohan Singh, remarkably, started raising this army in Malaya, even before the fall of Singapore. He was "removed" by the Japanese when he was found not as amenable to their designs as they may have wished. Rash Behari Bose lobbied in Japan for Subhas's taking over of the INA, which he did after he sailed from Europe to Japan in a German submarine. This voy-

age, with Allied bombs going off about him, was quite as romantic and oceanic as Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* journey several years ago. Bose wrote a good deal of his ideas of independent India in the context of world politics during this trip. That much of it was actually underwater makes it submerged if not underworld history.

After Bose landed in Singapore from Japan on 2 July 1943, the entire atmosphere changed. He arrived to a tumultuous welcome, assuming command of the INA on 4 July 1943. Addressing his troops the following day, he gave them the resounding call, "Chalo Dilli" or "Onward to Delhi." Indian independence was proclaimed from Singapore on with the formation of an interim government on 21 October 1943, which several countries actually recognized. To accomplish this extraordinary feat, Bose had not only to flee from house arrest in India under disguise, undertake a long an arduous journey to Germany, but, in order to further the cause of India's independence, to align his anti-Anglo-American and anti-imperial rebellion much more decisively with the Japanese occupiers of Singapore. His alliance with the Japanese was not viewed favourably by most leaders of the time including Tagore, Gandhi, and Nehru. Nevertheless, Bose became a hero, even a cult figure in India. If the INA had not lost to Britain's Indian army in India's North Eastern front, one can only wonder what course history might have taken. Defeating the British and reconquering India by the force of arms would certainly have given Indians a different kind of self-confidence. A strong man at the helm of affairs in Delhi and the British thrust out might have also prevented the Partition of India. Bose's INA and Provisional Government were models of communal amity, a fact that Gandhi also acknowledged and lauded. The INA lost; several of its recaptured soldiers, once members of the British Indian army, were imprisoned and made to stand trial in the Red Fort in the capital. These INA soldiers became national heroes, supported by the Congress and Gandhi. Nehru himself donned his unused Barristers' robes to defend them. Though the defence lost, the days of British power in India were, however, numbered; the sentences against Bose's soldiers could never be carried out. Bose's slogan of "Chalo Dilli" had had an ironic fulfilment; his army had not stormed Delhi as victors but were brought there as captives. Yet, history had the last laugh; though Bose was dead and the INA defeated, its soldiers were released and India was soon free.

More pertinent to this paper than Bose's alliance with the Japanese imperialists or the fate of his mission is what we might call his "oceanic vision." Conceived from the other end of the Indian Ocean, Bose's idea of *Azad Hind* or "Free India" was especially influenced by the last three years of his life which he spent in Singapore, for which all his previous life can be seen as a prepara-

tion. What was impossible to conceive in India or even in Berlin, the heart of the Axis powers, seemed almost within snatching distance from sea-town Singapore. Bose actually believed that he could liberate India and go on to form a benignly authoritarian, Socialistic republic. Some of this idealism survived even reverses and defeats in North-East India and Burma and the long retreat away from the borders of India back to the as yet unreclaimed South East Asia.

There exist several images of Bose announcing the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind or Free India (Paranjape 2015: 15). It was a momentous act by any standards, but especially so by that of a people so colonized and dominated as Indians. The following photo of Bose on the left in military uniform was one of several such pictures widely circulated in India, a common pin up in patriotic families who developed a sort of cult of Bose as the "real" hero of the war for India's freedom, in contra-distinction to Gandhi. The heroic pose taken at a low angle makes his upward looking face all the more grand:

Fig. 7: Subhas Chandra Bose
(1897–1945)

Fig. 8: Flyer of Bose (Lithography)

On the right we see an artistic impression of the same pose. The painting was reproduced through lithograph prints all over India.

Almost presaging this historic eventuality, a much younger Bose was seen in full military uniform in the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress in December 1928 (this latter photo is available, courtesy of the Netaji Research Bureau, Bose 2011). Another image, from the archive of the Western powers, is quite in contrast to the heroic one we've just seen. Captioned the "Quisling of India," it shows a mild and scholarly looking Bose. The Western powers suppressed the circulation of Bose as a military commander, but the later image stuck in the popular Indian mind. Whatever he may have "really" looked like, Bose in military dress became a national icon in India. That is perhaps because

Indians, defeated and colonized for centuries, needed a heroic, manly, and military model to make them feel better about themselves.

The image of Bose in military uniform went "viral" in India, reproduced as a part of a national(ist) hagiography in calendars and popular art. It was India's way not only of acknowledging one of its great, now lost, sons, but also of defying the imperial narratives trough their own counter-deification of native heroes. Along with Bhagat Singh, a revolutionary hanged by the British for terrorist activities, Bose became the other representative of armed struggle against imperialism. In visual history, this violent strand of anti-colonialism was far more popular and celebrated than in the national histories sponsored by the Congress-led governments after independence. Gandhian non-violence, though very much the dominant and official narrative, could not erase its violent sibling; the nation's psyche had a place of honour for both. The visual, in this case, offered a counter-history to the textual accounts of India's freedom struggle. Images such as these entered a national visual imaginary, mass circulated through posters and calendar art.[5]

Images like these show how Bose continued to occupy a place in the popular imagination that was powerful enough for him to be incorporated into the national(ist) pantheon along with Gandhi and Nehru. In the popular imagination, the contradictory ideologies posed no difficulty. In another popular depiction Bharat Mata or Mother India herself bestows the sword upon Bose, her valiant and heroic son, who will fight to liberate her from foreign rule (Paranjape 2015: 18). This is an interesting fantastic corroboration of the real, if ceremonial, sword that Bose received from the Japanese after he had announced the Provincial Government of Free India in October 1943. The sword bore the legend "Destroy evil, establish justice," and was brought after independence to India by General Fujiwara Iwaichi. The sword made a symbolic journey from Kolkata to Delhi, greeted by solemn and reverential cries from Netaji's admirers, with flowers showered on the process that carried it to the historic Red Fort (Bose 2011: 12–13).

Later, postage stamps and feature films would be made on Bose, renewing his memory in public culture (Paranjape 2015: 19). A postage stamp, issued about twenty years after his disappearance, shows how Bose continued to occupy a place in the popular imagination that was powerful enough for the state to recognize him posthumously and incorporate him into the national(ist) pantheon.

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[5] For another version of this representation of Bose in military uniform compare the picture of Bose on a white horse as Kalki, the avatar of the future. The uniform is from the INA picture in the earlier figure (Paranjape 2015: 17).

A feature film made by Shyam Benegal also used INA imagery in its construction of Bose. The film concentrates on the last five years of his life, some of the most notable moments of which were here in Singapore (Paranjape 2015: 19). There were also several "alternate" readings of recent Indian history as a play by Singapore playwright Elangovan. Elangovan's poster also shows Bose in heroic profile (Paranjape 2015: 20). According to the play, forgotten and misunderstood, Bose is the victim of a conspiracy by Nehru, his old rival. At the end of the play, three soldiers in Gandhi masks, strangle Bose with a tricolor, thus suggesting how the nationalist state played a role in snuffing out Bose's legacy. In a startling case of another Indian Ocean connection, it seems as if Tiger Airways, Singapore's low-cost airline, has borrowed (without proper acknowledgement?) the springing tiger from Azad Hind, merely adding a slight twist in the tail and a tawnier pelt (Paranjape 2015: 20). Today, a statue of Bose at the Eden crossing, Kolkata, tries to capture the 'onwards to Delhi' slogan, with Bose in INA uniform. The statue is used by political groups from different backgrounds – including the CPI (M) – for their purposes (Paranjape 2015: 21–22).[6]

Fig. 9: Flag of "Azad Hind"

I have tried to show, supplemented by optics, two kinds of oceanic anti-imperialism in this paper, one represented by Gandhi's non-violent *satyagraha* or truth-force and the other by Bose's Indian National Army, which advocated an armed overthrow of British power. Both of these anti-imperalisms were cosmopolitanism rather than parochial or nationalistic, just as they were characterized by fluid networks rather than fixed or landed relations, whether agrarian or industrial. Both Gandhi and Bose, thus, instantiate not so much an oceanic hybridity, but a special type of anti-imperial cosmopolitanism which was central to the shaping of the new India and the post-colonial world. Such an alter-modern viewpoint was not the outcome of creolized admixture, but, paradoxically, of a rediscovery at a distance of a unique civilizational core as

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[6] In the iconography of post-independence India, both Gandhi and Bose have been trumped by B. R. Ambedkar, whose statues in "suit and boot" outnumber all other representations. Another paper would be required to tease out the implications of this proliferation.

far as Gandhi was concerned and how that might be cemented into a more practical coalition of soldiers and expatriates ready to fight for the Motherland in Bose's case.

Gandhi and Bose were able to mobilize both classes and masses in the diaspora for the cause of the incipient Indian nation, a phenomenon that we may find hard to explain today.[7] High modern forms of territorial, monolithic nationalisms vary from the diverse manifestations of pre-colonial patriotism or post-colonial circulation of both labour and elites. Today it is hard to comprehend the depth and fervour that Gandhi and Bose were able to evoke among expatriate Indians and people of Indian descent. Yet, even today, the crowds of enthusiastic expatriates who flock and range over the grounds of the Indian Embassy in Singapore on independence day offer a glimpse of how powerful the idea of India still is in these parts. As Sugata Bose says,

> *"It is impossible to fully comprehend Indian nationalism, sense of self, and mission without knowing the experiences of those who operated in the wide Indian Ocean arena. The oceanic dimension of anticolonialism may go some way in freeing the study of nationalism from its land-locked state"* (Bose 2006: 152).

Indeed, "land-locked" nationalism, as we have seen, can only tell one part of the story; the other part must include the oceanic cross-currents of ideas and people. Gandhi and Bose are, no doubt, iconic, even emblematic, examples of Indian anti-colonial nationalism. But for the fuller picture to emerge, their stories will have to be supplemented by those of thousands of others, some of whom went before just as many followed.

But the deeper question remains: did Gandhi and Bose *both* fail? The simple answer would, unfortunately, be "yes," if we wish to be realistic. We would have to admit that the India that came into existence after independence was quite different from what was conceived by either Gandhi or Bose. For one of the achievements of the cosmopolitan, oceanic anti-colonialsm of both Gandhi and Bose was its ability to "combat religious prejudice without making religion the enemy of the nation" (Bose 2006: 192). Somehow, this was not possible on the sub-continent, especially towards the end of the freedom struggle and upon the formation of the two independent nations of India and Pakistan. Once the genie of competitive religious *realpolitik* was unleashed in India, the inexorable compulsions of territorial nationalism resulted in the partition of India. The composite overseas nationalisms of both Gandhi and Bose were defeated by the demands of sub-continental politics. The idea of India as conceived by Gandhi

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[7] See Kaplan & Kelly (2006) and Kelly (1991), which show the diaspora origins of colonized national consciousness.

in South Africa and Bose in Malaya had an important similarity in that it was predicated on solidarity between all ethnic and linguistic communities, particularly between Hindus and Muslims. On the sub-continent, however, the different and rather deadly logic of the "two nation" theory prevailed. A divided India reached the altar of nationhood through an internecine bloodbath.

The dreams of oceanic nationalisms both in South Africa and in South East Asia were thus belied in more ways than one. These oceanic conceptions of India also had much less divisions across class and gender. Both Gandhi and Bose made especial efforts to involve women in the forefront of the movement, the latter even forming an all-women's regiment named after the Rani of Jhansi and lead by her namesake Lakshmi Swaminathan (later Sahgal). The fluid and flexible locations in the Indian Oceanic system enabled more idealistic and aspirational ideas of nationhood than the more pragmatic and entrenched (sub)continental sites could. Gandhi's androgynous resistance to the hyper-masculine imperialism of the British has already been commented on by Ashis Nandy.

Reverting to Gandhi, neither India nor the rest of the world have renounced modernity as he exhorted us to. Yet, the concerns that he raised have become central to us today, including the dignity of the downtrodden, crises of ecology, limits to growth, consumption woes, non-violent states and civil societies, and the quest for an ethical way of life. As to Bose, the political party that inherits his legacy, the Forward Bloc, manages but a few seats in the Legislative Assembly of Bengal, yet Bose himself remains a charismatic if mysterious figure, even identified sometimes with Kalki, the *avatar* of the future. His grand-nephew, the Harvard historian Sugata Bose, was elected to the Indian parliament from the prestigious Jadavpur constituency in Kolkata on a Trinamool Congress ticket.

The conceptualizing of both Gandhian and Boseian alternative nationalisms needed sites different either from metropolitan England, where both Gandhi and Bose studied, or the colonized territory of India, where they were born and raised. The looser, more fluid possibilities of the Indian Ocean world gave rise to their unique if not entirely new way of looking at world and conceiving a future for the Indian nation. Glimpses of this can be found not just in their writings and speeches but also in visual images and imagings of their activities that circulated both textually and visually from the Indian Ocean world. This is not to imply that Britain was a continental power; indeed, its mastery over the oceans was the source of its imperial might. British imperialism, too, was oceanic in many ways, evolving unique and rather different patterns of colonialism in its vastly diverse territories.

The Indian Ocean, nevertheless, remains our special site of study. As Jamal, following Andre Gunder Frank, observes,

"no body of water – given the density of its coves, the intimate proximities of its connections, the beneficence of its monsoon winds, and the fact, prior to 1500, that it was the most easily navigable and consistently traversed water –gestures more self-assuredly to its provenance as a watery cradle and substantive axis for the exchange of goods, cultures, beliefs" (Moorthy & Jamal 2010: 412).

This paper has tried to suggest that, in addition, the Indian Ocean offers a unique space to launch anti-imperial movements and discourses, which are still relevant to us today as alternatives to dominant "continental" discourses. The oceanic perspectives as I have outlined here offer us ways to fracture or at least inflect the hegemonies of these dominant discourses, especially in a post-imperial and fast-globalizing Asia, which nevertheless has not yet achieved a significant degree of intellectual autonomy.

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Perspectives on M. K. Gandhi

Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* as a Political Manifesto

Dietmar Rothermund

Abstract

Gandhi conceived of this text when discussing Indian politics with his friend Dr. Pranjeevan Mehta in London in 1909. He recorded the discussions with him as a Socratic dialogue. While young Indians at that time turned to terrorism, Gandhi advocated a rejection of all aspects of Western civilization and the practice of strict self-control, which was required for non-violent resistance to foreign rule. He argued that the British had not conquered India, but the Indians had given it to them and still kept them in India by cooperating with them. Gandhi mentioned the reasons for his later non-cooperation campaign in this text. It thus was truly a political manifesto. While he had earlier devoted himself to the Indian minority in South Africa, this text was his first announcement of his future work for Indian freedom.

Writing a Manifesto

The most famous political manifesto is the *Communist Manifesto* published by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1848. Gandhi did not call *Hind Swaraj* (1909) a manifesto and it was certainly a very different type of text but it was also written in order to convey the essential thoughts of its author. Gandhi had so far been the leader of the Indian minority in South Africa and he had not commented on the political fate of the Indian nation. This he now felt called to do as India was passing through a turbulent time. There was a coincidence of two currents of political events: the partition of Bengal in 1905 and the protest, which it aroused, and the victory of the British Liberal Party in the elections of 1906 and the hopes which India's liberal nationalists derived from this victory. The famous liberal political philosopher John Morley became Secretary of State for India in the new British cabinet and announced a reform of the Indian constitution. Gandhi's political mentor, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, was in the centre of the political events of the time. He was President of the Indian National Congress and Morley's main interlocutor concerning the reforms, at the same time he had to calm the National Congress many of whose members were upset by the Partition of Bengal and wanted to initiate measures of protest, which

could have stymied the reforms. This partition was originally an administrative affair, which should not have aroused political passions. The Province of Bengal contained at that time also Assam, Bihar and Orissa and was too large. It would have been easy to cut off these other three provinces and leave Bengal alone. But the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, wanted to spite the nationalist Bengalis, who had irked him, and deliberately cut off East Bengal from West Bengal, emphasizing that East Bengal would be a Muslim province. It actually paralleled Bangla Desh, which emerged in 1971. The British solicitude for the Muslims was then also expressed in the reforms when separate electorates were granted to the Muslims. Gokhale did not protest against this electoral operation as it had not yet any important significance at that time. The elected members had no powers, they could only criticize the government, but not affect its decisions. Only when the next reforms of 1919 introduced "responsible government" did the separate electorates become dysfunctional as the British themselves admitted. But they stated that they could not deprive the Muslims of them now as they regarded them as their precious right.

In 1907, even before the reforms were passed, the National Congress split. The "Moderates", led by Gokhale remained the majority and controlled the organization, the "Extremists" led by Gokhale's rival, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, rejected the reforms and also continued the protest against the partition of Bengal. The "Moderates" believed that India was not yet a nation, but had to strive to become one, for the "Extremists" India was a nation since ancient times and only had to shake off its fetters. Gandhi shared the views of the Moderates as far as the Indian nation was concerned, but in many other respects he was more of an Extremist. But when he was asked, whether he would start a third party in India, he said that he would serve both Moderates and Extremists. In trying to show how he would do this, he wrote his manifesto.

Socrates and Pranjivan Mehta

Before writing *Hind Swaraj,* Gandhi had translated the *Defence of Socrates* into Gujarati and published it in his journal Indian Opinion. The British authorities proscribed it as seditious literature, they did not mind the English version, which they thought would not reach the Indian people. Gandhi admired Socrates and called him a "satyagrahi". He was also impressed by the Socratic dialogue and used it as the template for the text of *Hind Swaraj.* His Socratic sparring partner in *Hind Swaraj* was no other than his old friend Pranjivan Mehta. Gandhi has revealed this later on. In his Collected Works he stated: "I wrote the entire Hind Swaraj for my old friend Dr. Pranjivan Mehta. All the argument in the book is reproduced almost as it took place with him" (Gandhi 1978: 238). Gandhi put

Mehta perfectly into the role of the Socratic dialogue partner. He probably reported his views faithfully and did not just use his utterances as a literary device. Earlier readers of *Hind Swaraj* did not know about Mehta who was hidden under the anonymous designation of "editor" in Gandhi's text. In the present article Mehta has been acknowledged as the partner of Gandhi, who presented his own views, which were often at variance with those of Gandhi.

Mehta was in many respects important for Gandhi. He was a learned medical doctor but also a lawyer and a rich diamond merchant. Born in 1864, he was only five years senior to Gandhi. He had received Gandhi in London when he had arrived there as a young student in 1888. In 1906 when Gandhi gave up his legal practice at the time of the Zulu Rebellion and dedicated his life to public work, Mehta had provided for his maintenance. The white citizens had mowed down the Zulus with their guns. The Zulus were only armed with spears. Gandhi had organized an unarmed medical corps of Indians who helped both sides. He was so shocked by the brutal slaughter, which he had to witness, that he took a vow to change his life. He pledged to adopt chastity and to give up his work as a lawyer and work only for public welfare. Mehta admired him for that and looked after his worldly needs. He was his friend, philosopher and guide. His views, which Gandhi reported in *Hind Swaraj,* often differed from Gandhi's. Unlike Gandhi, he did not believe in absolute non-violence. This became very obvious when they discussed the Italian freedom struggle led by Mazzini and Garibaldi in *Hind Swaraj.* Mehta had recommended the Italian movement as a good example for India. Gandhi argued that Italy was not yet free. He praised Mazzini's political philosophy who had stressed the duties rather than the rights of man, but he did not favor Garibaldi's reliance on violence. Moreover, if the Indians wanted to follow Garibaldi, they had to take up arms to which they had no access. Gandhi reminded Mehta of this. It is very likely that the discussion on Italy was due to Mehta's initiative, who was by no means a passive partner of this Socratic dialogue.

London, 1909: The Background of Writing *Hind Swaraj*

Gandhi's visit to London in 1909 was entirely due to his role as leader of the Indian minority in South Africa and in this respect it was not successful. He could not gain anything for his clients in the debates on the constitution of South Africa, but the time he spent in London was crucial for the development of his political thought. This was a time of revolutionary terrorism in India. Young nationalists assassinated British officers. They also extended their activities to London. Vinayak Savarkar, who later became the leader of the "Hindutva" movement in India, was in London at that time and is said to have procured

the weapon for Madan Lal Dhingra, who shot Sir Curzon Wylie, an officer of the India Office on July 1, 1909. Dhingra had arrived in London in 1906 and studied at University College. He lived in the India House with Savarkar and other young revolutionaries who were incensed in those days by the Partition of Bengal. Their mentor was Shyamji Krishnavarma, who had established the India House and edited the journal *Indian Sociologist.* Dhingra was captured and sentenced to death. He was proud of his patriotic deed, denied the authority of the British court, but faced death courageously. British politicians like Loyd George and Winston Churchill were impressed by his fortitude. Gandhi, however, disapproved of Dhingra's violent act and stated: "India can gain nothing from the rule of murderers" (Gandhi 1963a: 303). The discussions in London at that time must have sharpened Gandhi's arguments. The encounter with radical Indians radicalized him, too, but in a very different way. He was already an experienced satyagrahi, but now he began to think about applying his ideas to Indian politics.

The Lure of Western Civilization and Indian Freedom

Gandhi's radicalization was expressed in *Hind Swaraj* in his vehement criticism of Western civilization. A modern reader would wonder why this should be of major importance in a political manifesto aimed at the freedom of India. But for Gandhi it was obvious that the Indians had succumbed to the lure of Western civilization and had thus lost their freedom. The British had not conquered India, the Indians had given it to them and were still keeping them in India by cooperating with them. Reading the critics of Western civilization like John Ruskin and Max Nordau, was essential for Gandhi for finding an antidote to British rule. He had come across Ruskin's *Unto this Last* in 1904 and had built his community in Phoenix Farm, following Ruskin's principles. He believed that everybody should earn his livelihood with the work of his hands and did this himself. This went against the grain of all educated Indians who were proud of not having to work with their hands. The most prominent representatives of these educated Indians were the doctors and lawyers. It was a sign of Gandhi's recent radicalization that he attacked them most fiercely in *Hind Swaraj.* He blamed them for the way in which they practiced their professions. Only a few months earlier he had praised the Indian doctors and lawyers of South Africa as the limbs of the Indian community. At that time the authorities planned to stop their immigration. Now he condemned them as worse than useless in keeping with his attack on Western civilization, which is central to his political argument. In this context the doctors, practicing Western medicine, and the lawyers practicing Western law, were the agents of Western rule.

Moreover, the doctors provided only symptom cures and did not really heal their patients. The lawyers were even worse, instead of helping their clients to settle their conflicts, they augmented them to earn more money.

Gandhi highlighted the contrast between Indian and Western civilization. Whereas the Western one was totally evil, the Indian one was splendid. This provoked Mehta's contradiction. He argued that Indian civilization also had many faults. Children were married in India and, therefore, many young girls became widows at an early age and had to live a miserable life. There were also prostitutes in temples. Gandhi did not deny that there are such faults, but argued that nobody would attribute them to Indian civilization. The Indians know about these faults and try to correct them, but the votaries of Western civilization regard its faults as achievements and will not give them up. This sounds like specious pleading and Mehta could have pointed it out, but he let Gandhi get away with it. Gandhi was eager to show in his manifesto that the Indians could regain their freedom by jettisoning Western civilization and that they could easily do this, because they could fall back on their own civilization.

In this context, Gandhi welcomed the unrest caused by the Partition of Bengal in India. He compared it to the first twitching of the limbs of a man waking up from sleep. He was particularly impressed by the Swadeshi movement. The Bengalis boycotted British goods and started to produce such goods themselves. They built workshops in order to make products in their own (*swa*) country (*desh*). This was a step towards one's own (*swa*) rule (*raj*). In 1920 Gandhi practiced that during his Non-cooperation campaign and hoped that the Bengalis would support him in this. But in Bengal of all places Gandhi found the least support for "swadeshi". The Bengalis were disillusioned by their earlier campaign which had collapsed very soon.

Hindus and Muslims

Mehta's next challenge to Gandhi was his reference to the clashes between Hindus and Muslims, which made a united nation impossible. Mehta points out that the Hindus worship the cow and the Muslims kill it. The Hindus turn to the East while praying, the Muslims to the West. Even their proverbs reflect their differences, how can they be one nation? Gandhi replies that no nation contains only members of one religion. Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians must live together in their own interest. He argued that the common enemies had spread the idea, that Hindus and Muslims were hereditary adversaries. But Hindus had prospered under Muslim rulers, and Muslims under Hindu rulers. Only with the arrival of the British, they had turned against each other. Among

Hindus there were fights among the followers of Vishnu and Shiva, but nobody would say that they are not members of one nation.

Mehta then asks about the cow protection movement, which caused strife between Hindus and Muslims in those days. Gandhi said that he worships the cow, but also venerates his fellow human beings. In an agrarian country like India, the cow is of special importance. The Muslims would also understand that. But the cow protection movement had unnecessarily enraged Hindus and Muslims. The Muslims slaughtered cows the more they were protected. The cow protection movement had given rise to a cow killing movement. The British have added to the tensions. They are in the habit of writing history and like to trace conflicts. They are proud of their research. The Indians in their ignorance believe them and fall at their feet.

Machines

Just like his criticism of Western Civilization, Gandhi was also adamant about his rejection of industrial machines and of the railways. In the course of the dialogue, Mehta also asks Gandhi about this subject. Gandhi deplores the exploitation of millhands and would rather return to the traditional handlooms, but he admits that it would be difficult to do away with industry all at once. Mehta then asks him why he does not object to the printing of his very criticism on machines. Gandhi calls this using an antidote to combat a poison. Again this is an issue where Mehta scores a point and Gandhi finds it difficult to controvert his argument.

Gandhi had *Hind Swaraj* reprinted many times and never revised his text. He remained steadfast throughout. In the 1938 edition, however, he suspended some of the demands he had made earlier, but did not change his arguments. He openly admitted that the Swaraj he had aimed at earlier could not yet be achieved. His followers wanted a "parliamentary swaraj" at present, and he had to adopt that goal. Similarly he stuck to his rejection of industrialization and machines, but would not enforce it now. Mehta had died in 1932, if they had discussed these matters in 1938, the dialogue would perhaps have been different.

Gandhi's Quest to Counter Bad Deeds with Good Ones and Avoid Violence

Mehta endorses this quest, but asks Gandhi to show him historical evidences for the success of his "soulforce". Gandhi retorts that there can be no such historical proof, because history registers only conflicts and is thus devoid of evidence of love and soulforce. The daily equilibrium which makes up the flow of life is not noticed by history. Gandhi then discusses passive resistance and says, if one encounters an injustice one will refuse to support it. If one has to

suffer for that, one takes that upon oneself. This needs courage. A coward would not dare to disobey a law, which he regards as unjust. If one has that courage, one does not need any weapons, one must only control oneself.

The Uses of Education

Mehta started the discussion of this subject by praising the Maharaja of Baroda for introducing compulsory primary education in his princely state. Gandhi praised the Maharaja, but doubted whether compulsory education would be necessary. The peasant does not need to know reading and writing for earning his livelihood. He gets along without it and behaves well with his family. The so-called educated are enslaved by English education. Gandhi said that our newspapers are printed in English, that we write to each other in faulty English – posterity will curse us for this. Every educated Indian should know his regional language and Hindi, and Sanskrit if he is a Hindu and Arabic if he is a Muslim. Some Hindus should also know Arabic and Muslims Sanskrit. Indians from Northern and Western India should also know Tamil. English books, which are worth it, should be translated into different Indian languages. If we do this we can drive out English soon. This is important for us slaves.

Mehta then asks Gandhi about religious education, and Gandhi confesses that it gives him a headache. The Indian religious teachers of all faiths are selfish hypocrites, we have to deal with them. We have to lead India back to its original purity and first of all we have to drive out Western civilization. Gandhi was keenly aware of the fact that as a member of the educated elite he was out of touch with the Indian people. Addressing the members of the elite he stated: "Those in whose name we speak we do not know, nor do they know us" (Gandhi 1963b: 38). He asked the members of the elite to travel to the interior of India, which had not yet been reached by the railways. There they could become patriots. Gandhi points out again and again that Western civilization is the main impediment to *Hind Swaraj*. This is the main message of his manifesto.

Gandhi's Indifference to Constitutional Reforms

Conspicuous by its absence is a discussion of constitutional reforms, which should have been of importance considering the fact that *Hind Swaraj* was written in 1909, when those reforms were published. This neglect of the reforms was not accidental, but fundamental. Later reforms were also disregarded by Gandhi. He devoted his attention to the constitution of the Indian National Congress, which he regarded as the real parliament of India. While Gandhi sympathized with Gokhale and the Moderates in general, he shared the views of the Extremists with regard to the reforms granted by the British colonial

rulers. They only tightened the shackles, which held the Indians in bondage. Gandhi did not like it when the Congress politicians returned to the constitutional arena in order to turn agitational triumphs into success at the polls, but he had to give in to them out of political expediency. This is reflected in his remarks quoted earlier in his preface to the 1938 edition of *Hind Swaraj.* The National Congress had opted for "office acceptance" under the scheme of "provincial autonomy". Gandhi had even acted as a mediator in order to make this option possible. This is what Gandhi meant when he stated that the members of the Congress wanted him to work for "parliamentary swaraj" and thus he had to suspend the demands made in *Hind Swaraj.*

Due to his disregards of British constitutional reforms, Gandhi was not interested in British public law and was not well read in this subject. This showed up very badly in his talks with Jinnah in 1944. Gandhi had conceded Pakistan to Jinnah, provided that the two new states would sign a treaty which guaranteed their peaceful coexistence before undergoing partition. Jinnah replied that such a treaty would be possible only after partition, because it would require two independent contracting parties. Gandhi had no answer to this and had to accept defeat. Ever since this event he avoided meeting Jinnah again. P.C. Joshi, India's war-time Communist leader, a sincere patriot, published a pamphlet at that time: *They must meet again.* (Dec. 1944). But both of them were not interested in another meeting. Gandhi's basic conviction, so clearly revealed in *Hind Swaraj,* that individual human endeavor was the path to freedom, prevented him from appreciating the institutional preconditions of political life. He could be an institution builder as shown by the reconstruction of the Indian National Congress or by his work for Phoenix and Tolstoi farms in South Africa and his ashrams in India, but when it came to problems such as the treaty discussed with Jinnah his mental equipment was more restricted. *Hind Swaraj* shows both the strong points and the limitations of his thought.

Gandhi's References

The references, which Gandhi has added to his manifesto, reflect the pattern of his thought. These are both bibliographical references and quotations from important persons. He begins with the works of Leo Tolstoi, whom he admires. He adds the book by Robert Sherard, *The White Slaves of England* (1854), which describes the horrors of early industrialization. He then cites Edward Carpenter, *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure* (1889), in which Carpenter calls civilization a disease, which human beings have to endure and to overcome. A similiar author is the Zionist physician Max Nordau, who published *Paradoxes of Civilization* in 1896. He also called it a disease.

Henry David Thoreau, the American author, was important for Gandhi's campaigns of civil disobedience. He had published *The Duty of Cicil Disobedience* in 1849 and *Life without Principle* in 1863. Guiseppe Mazzini's *Duty of Man* (1860) taught Gandhi that the rights of man are derived from the fulfillment of his duties. John Ruskin, a critic of Utilitarianism, was of special importance for Gandhi. He quotes his *A Joy for Ever* (1857) and his *Unto this Last* (1862). The title of the latter refers to the biblical legend of the workers in the vineyard of whom the one who arrived last got the same wage as those who started their work earlier. Gandhi translated this book into Gujarati under the title *Sarvodaya* (The Rise of All). This subsequently became the designation of his social programmes. Godfrey Blount's *A New Crusade* (1900) was also recommended by Gandhi. Blount was an artist, a painter as well as a maker of woodwork and woven hangings. He founded the Peasant Art Society at Haslemere. Gandhi's campaign for village crafts reproduced in India what Blount had done in England.

The *Defence of Socrates* was, of course, also listed by Gandhi. Finally he mentioned two works on Indian economic history: Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901), and Romesh Chunder Dutta, *Eonomic History of India in the Victorian Age.* 2 vols. (1904). He also added Henry Sumner Maine, *Village Communities in the East and West* (1880). It is interesting to note that he did not mention John Stuart Mill, the great liberal philosopher, who would have invariably been cited by most of Gandhi's contemporaries.

In addition to the bibliographical references Gandhi cited quotations from famous writers. He started with Seymour Keay, who had written in 1883 that the British had not at all "civilized" the Indians, because they had already a civilization, which was several millennia old. A similar quote was given from the writings of the French philosopher Victor Cousins. The German Indologist Friedrich Max Mueller, teaching at Oxford, impressed Gandhi and also Friedrich Schlegel, who had published in 1808 *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians). The French missionary Abbé Dubois, who had visited Seringapatam in 1820, had reported about the competence of Indian married women, who excelled European women. Another witness, J. Young, was quoted with the assertion that the Indians were of great moral purity and also very frugal and after a hard day's work they were still in good spirits. Thomas Munro, the Governor of Madras, attested that the Indians had a good system of agriculture, their abilities as artisans were unrivalled and they had good schools in every village. Finally Gandhi quoted William Wedderburn, a friend of India, who had once been President of the Indian National Congress. He had praised the tradition of the Indian village community which for many centuries had proved to be a bulwark against political disorder.

Dietmar Rothermund

Gandhi's references showed that he was well read and could locate testimonies for the issues which were close to his heart. They showed that many causes for which he worked later in life were already important to him much earlier. He was only 40 years old when he wrote *Hind Swaraj.*

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On the *Hind Swaraj* Critique of Modernity

Satish K. Jain

Abstract

Gandhi's Hind Swaraj is a severe critique of modernity. The critique is essentially normative. He is critical of modernity because it exalts material comforts in sharp contradistinction with the higher ideals of limitation of wants and non-possession. Furthermore for Gandhi, modern institutions are undesirable on several counts. Modern institutions are so structured that they tend to increase violence and disharmony in the society. Also, they facilitate articulation of undesirable values; and tend to suppress desirable values. Implicit in Hind Swaraj critique is the idea of unsustainable institutional structures; and Gandhian belief that that any institutional structure which gives such a large domain to self-regardingness is bound to be unsustainable.

Hind Swaraj[1] is a severe critique of modernity. In Gandhi's own words (in the preface of 1938 edition of Hind Swaraj): "The booklet is a severe condemnation of 'modern civilization'. It was written in 1908. My conviction is deeper today than ever. I feel that if India will discard 'modern civilization', she can only gain by doing so." (Gandhi 1938: 13). From a close reading of *Hind Swaraj* it appears that there are at least three different strands of normative considerations from which his opposition to modernity is arising.

Although India, right from ancient times, has had many different streams of religious and philosophical thought, most remarkably certain core ideas have been common to all Indic religions and philosophical traditions. For instance, all Indic religions put renunciation on the highest pedestal. Anyone identifying oneself with this tradition is bound to be repulsed by a civilization that values material achievements the most. There can be little doubt that, notwithstanding many important Western influences on Gandhi, with respect to this core Indian civilizational idea he was quintessentially Indian. There is a considerable segment of his criticism of modern civilization that can be understood in terms of Gandhi looking at modernity as embodying negation of this core Indian civilizational idea. His personal asceticism and his life-long yearning for moksha are

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[1] *Hind Swaraj* is generally regarded as the most authoritative of Gandhi's writings.

also consistent with his having internalized the core ideas of Indic religious and philosophical traditions. In this context it is interesting that Gandhi differentiates between the modern West and the pre-modern Christian West. A part of Gandhian rejection of modernity can also be understood in terms of his commitment to non-violence. His antipathy towards modern technology to a considerable extent stemmed from his belief that it was inherently violent. Kumarappa (1945, 1951) in his writings has elucidated the implications of choice of technology for the degree of violence that can be expected in the society. Thus to a considerable extent Gandhian critique of modern civilization can be understood in terms of Gandhi's commitment to non-violence and his internalization of the idea of renunciation and non-possession as highest virtues in sharp contradistinction with exaltation of material achievements for enhancing bodily comforts.[2]

However, not all his criticism of modern civilization is explainable in these terms. A civilization that strives for material achievements and considers seeking of hedonistic fulfilment as rational and virtuous may not be a good civilization from the vantage point of view of a set of values that regard limitation of wants and non-possession as great virtues, but prima facie there is no reason why such a civilisation cannot last for a long time. Also there is no reason why such a civilization should not be able to deliver what it strives for, namely, material comforts. There are passages in *Hind Swaraj* to the effect that the modern civilization cannot last long[3] and that it would not be able to achieve what it strives for[4]. In order to understand Gandhi's belief in the transient nature of modern civilization and his belief that it would not be able to succeed in its goals, one has to analyze, and to a certain extent generalize, his understanding of and insights pertaining to the interplay between institutions and values on the one hand, and between ends and means on the other.

Gandhi's disapproval of modernity in *Hind Swaraj* extends to all its facets; modern institutions, particularly legal and political institutions, come in for especially sharp criticism. Gandhi's criticism of these institutions has been much discussed and commented upon. Gandhi is also highly disapproving of

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[2] "They saw that kings and their swords were inferior to the sword of ethics, and they, therefore, held the sovereigns of the earth to be inferior to the Rishis and the Fakirs." (Gandhi 1938: 57)
[3] Gandhi calls modern civilization "a nine days' wonder" (Gandhi 1938: 95). On p. 33, he says: "This civilization is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed."
[4] "Civilization seeks to increase bodily comforts, and it fails miserably even in doing so." (Gandhi 1938: 33)

the institution of market, the dominant institution of our times.[5] The Gandhi-
an critique of modern institutions, like that of other facets of modernity, is
predominantly normative in character. For understanding how Gandhi
viewed modern institutions the following passage regarding lawyers is ex-
tremely important:

> *"The latter's duty is to side with their clients and to find out ways and argu-
> ments in favour of the clients to which they (the clients) are often strangers. If
> they do not do so they will be considered to have degraded their profession. The
> lawyers, therefore, will, as a rule, advance quarrels instead of repressing them.
> Moreover, men take up that profession, not in order to help others out of their
> miseries, but to enrich themselves. It is one of the avenues of becoming wealthy
> and their interest exists in multiplying disputes. It is within my knowledge
> that they are glad when men have disputes. Petty pleaders actually manufac-
> ture them. Their touts, like so many leeches, suck the blood of the poor people"*
> (Gandhi 1938: 50–51).

Here Gandhi is making a significant point. He is saying that the modern legal
institutions are so structured that it is almost inevitable that they would lead to
social disharmony. If an individual is primarily motivated by self-interest and
finds fulfilment mainly in material things then the practice of law under a
modern legal system provides one way for the realization of such preferences.
On the other hand, if an individual has values and preferences which are more
geared towards truth and justice, and if he acts in accordance with them, then
his behaviour is likely to secure the disapproval of his peers in the profession
on account of its not being in conformity with the norms and ethos of the pro-
fession. In other words, the modern legal institutions are such that, while being
quite efficacious in giving articulation to preferences and values resulting in
social disharmony, they are quite unresponsive to individual values and prefer-
ences geared to the ideals of truth and justice. This particular point comes out
clearly in the following passage:

> *"Whenever instances of lawyers having done good can be brought forward, it
> will be found that the good is due to them as men rather than as lawyers. All I
> am concerned with is to show you that the profession teaches immorality; it is
> exposed to temptation from which few are saved"* (Gandhi 1938: 50).

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[5] "They wish to convert the whole world into a vast market for their goods. That they
cannot do so is true, but the blame will not be theirs. They will leave no stone unturned
to reach the goal." (Gandhi 1938: 37)

Generalizing Gandhi's observations on the legal profession, one reaches the important conclusion that social institutions play a vital role in both articulating and suppressing preferences and values of individuals comprising the society. Given a particular institution, not every kind of preferences and values can be articulated through it; and given certain preferences and values, not every institution can articulate them. In other words, for articulation of different kinds of individual values and preferences different institutions are required. Consequently it follows that the choice of the institutional structure is highly significant from a normative perspective. This point can be made more explicit by considering the example of the institution of market from this perspective. The institution of market is highly responsive to individual values and preferences provided the preferences and values are backed by money. If a set of preferences and values are not backed by money they would have little or no impact on the market outcome. Market, like any other institution, filters in only some kinds of preferences and values under certain circumstances and filters out the remainder. For instance, if left to market, a small number of individuals pursuing activities resulting in loss of biodiversity would have greater decisiveness on the eventual outcome than a large number of people interested in ensuring survival of species if resources at the command of the former are greater than the latter.

In view of the close relationship between the institutional structure and the values which get articulated, one could find an institutional structure unacceptable either because the values which get articulated through it are the ones one disapproves of or alternatively because the values which are important to one get filtered out by it. There can be little doubt that part of the reason why Gandhi found modernity unacceptable was because in his view, as enunciated in *Hind Swaraj*, modern institutions were to be faulted on both these counts. This point comes out repeatedly in *Hind Swaraj* when Gandhi is talking about lawyers, doctors and parliamentarians.

But the Gandhian perspective on the relationship between institutions and values is not confined to the above point only. In fact, a careful reading of *Hind Swaraj* makes it clear that the Gandhi's understanding of the relationship between institutions and values was both sophisticated and insightful. As mentioned earlier, one reason why Gandhi is so critical of modern civilization is that in his opinion it puts too much emphasis on bodily comforts.[6] Obsession

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[6] "Its true test lies in the fact that people living in it make bodily welfare the object of life." (Gandhi 1938: 31). According to Suhrud (2010: 73): "This is an inadequate rendering of the original Gujarati, which could be rendered as 'Its true identity is in the fact that

with bodily comforts was bound to be viewed negatively by someone like Gandhi, who devoted his entire life for higher purposes. So while an unflattering evaluation of a civilization mainly concerned with material benefits is quite understandable by someone who valued material benefits so little, his rather intriguing remark mentioned earlier to the effect that "Civilization seeks to increase bodily comforts, and it fails miserably even in doing so." (Gandhi 1938: 33) is not. Why should a civilization which seeks to increase bodily comforts fail in doing so? We will see that it is in the process of understanding this assertion by Gandhi that one begins to comprehend the normative framework within which Gandhi formulated his critique of modernity. There are two different, although interrelated, ways in which one can think of values in relation to their material implications. In the sequel we consider both these approaches.

When individuals act in accordance with certain ethical values material advantages of various kinds tend to flow for the society as a whole. For instance, truthful behavior on the part of individuals brings about tremendous reductions in social costs of acquiring information and doing things by diminishing or doing away altogether with the need for verification of information and supervision of activities. Thus behavior in accordance with certain ethical principles is instrumentally valuable for the society. From an analytical point of view it is important to distinguish between two kinds of situations which can give rise to behavior conforming to an ethical principle. An individual might act in conformity with an ethical principle because he values the principle for its own sake. One does not tell lies because doing so, other things being equal, will make one less happy compared to when one is telling the truth. When an individual values an ethical principle for its own sake, we will say that he has internalized the principle. It is, however, possible for behaviour to be in conformity with an ethical principle without the person having internalized the principle in question. If the circumstances are such that behaviour in violation of the ethical principle will result in a worse outcome for the individual compared to the behaviour in conformity with the principle then even if the person does not value the principle for its own sake he will find it in his own interest to act in conformity with the principle. If penalties for speaking untruths are severe then one can expect even potentially very untruthful persons to avoid telling lies.

A person who values an ethical principle for its own sake will suffer diminution in well-being if he acts in violation of the principle. In other words, a person who has internalized an ethical principle will incur internal costs in case of behavior violative of the principle. On the other hand, someone who does not value

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people seek to find in engagement with the material world and bodily comfort meaning and human worth'."

an ethical principle for its own sake does not face any such internal costs. Such a person however will face external costs in case of behavior violative of the ethical principle in question if there are penalties for such behavior. Thus, in one case the costs of behavior violative of the ethical principle are internal, possibly both internal and external, and in the other case purely external. This difference in the nature of costs has important material implications.

When one is dealing with persons who have not internalized a particular ethical value, behavior in conformity with the ethical value can in certain circumstances be obtained by instituting an appropriate set of rules and regulations. In connection with rules and regulations designed to induce particular kinds of behavior on the part of individuals two important points need to be noted. First, designing of appropriate rules and regulations and their implementation and enforcement require resources and consequently are not costless. Secondly, it is not always the case that one can find a set of rules which would induce the desired kind of behaviour on the part of individuals. Indeed, it would rarely be the case that there would exist a set of rules which would induce the individuals to act in conformity with a particular ethical principle notwithstanding the fact that they do not value the principle intrinsically.

Thus we see that when individuals value certain ethical principles for their own sake, i.e., intrinsically, then there are some unintended consequences of a positive and material character; and on the other hand when behaviour in conformity with these principles is generated by incentives and penalties then some of the positive consequences either do not obtain or obtain to a lesser degree. In other words, when a certain kind of behaviour is the product of non-materialistic motives we find that as a by-product it is conducive to material gains also; and on the other hand when the same behavior is the product of materialistic motives, the material gains tend to be smaller compared to the former case.

From this it follows that if in a society individuals by and large are motivated in their actions by material considerations, and not by ethical principles, then notwithstanding their desire for material gains, their realization by the society may not be proportionate to the actions. That is to say, if a society's obsession with material aspects crosses a certain threshold point then it will become incapable of realizing the very things it is obsessed with. Thus one way to understand the Gandhian belief that in the ultimate analysis the modern civilization will not be able to achieve what it is obsessed with can be understood in the terms discussed above. Gandhi believed that the modern civilization's obsession with the material comforts will eventually dilute the ethical

basis to such an extent that the very obsession because of which this dilution will take place will become unattainable.

Another, but related, way to understand the Gandhian belief of modernity not succeeding in its material goals is to focus on the prerequisites for an institutional structure to be conducive for the attainment of the goals for which it has been designed in the first place. Now, whether one considers a single organization or the society at large, for the smooth performance of myriad of functions which are required it is essential that individuals who have been assigned the task of performing these functions discharge their duties faithfully. If individuals are committed to the facilitating ethical principles one can expect that by and large they will perform their assigned tasks in the required manner. In the absence of internalization of the required ethical principles it is unlikely that the individuals will perform their assigned tasks faithfully unless there is external intervention. As noted earlier, in some cases interventions might be able to make the individuals perform their assigned tasks satisfactorily; but these interventions would require resources which otherwise could be used for material benefits. In other cases, however, it will not be possible to devise a way by which the individuals could be made to perform the assigned tasks as required for proper functioning of the societal institutional structure in question. Thus one will have to settle for an imperfectly working societal institutional structure. But this means that certain societal objectives will be unattainable. An excellent illustration of this is provided by the institutions of justice. It is immediate that unless judges and other important functionaries are committed to the ideal of justice and are able to transcend their self-interest while performing their assigned tasks there is very little possibility of judicial institutions being able to realize the objectives for which they are created.[7]

It is clear from the above that a certain minimum level of other-regardingness, i.e., consideration for others, is a necessary condition for any institutional structure at the societal level to continue to exist. If the domain of self-interest expands to such an extent that even this minimal level of other-regardingness does not obtain then the continued existence of the institutional structure will no longer be possible. Now, once one recognizes that the domi-

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[7] To give another example, the institution of parliament in theory finds its justification in terms of various ideals including that of as a locator of social good. If parliamentarians transcend their narrow interests and think of various alternatives facing the society solely from the perspective of common good, then it makes perfect sense to argue that, more often than not, what the majority will decide after debate and discussion will be the correct decision from the point of view of social good. But if parliamentarians, by and large, decide matters from the perspective of their own welfare, then it is highly unlikely that their decisions would be in the best interests of the society as a whole.

nant institutions of the society have profound influence on individuals, it becomes clear that if the dominant institutions are such that their functioning tends to increase the domain of self-interest and decrease the domain of other-regarding values beyond the acceptable limits then the entire institutional structure may become at risk.

This leads in a natural way to the idea of normative unsustainability of institutional structures. If the values which are induced by an institutional structure are such that they are inconsistent with the continued existence of the institutional structure which induced them in the first place, then the institutional structure in question is unsustainable. The idea of unsustainability of institutional structures helps us understand the Gandhian beliefs of a civilization centred around the idea of material comforts in the ultimate analysis being transitory in nature and not succeeding in its own primary objective.[8] At a deep level Gandhi understood the relationship between the expansion of market and the enlargement of the domain of self-interest. It is because of this reason that he made disapproving remarks regarding turning the whole world into a market.

Gandhi was a firm believer in the organic unity of means and ends. For him, change of means in general implied change of ends.[9] His understanding of the relationship between the nature of technology and the nature of its products parallels his understanding of the relationship between ends and means.[10] One of the most interesting insights developed by Gandhi, although in all likelihood

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[8] It is clear that if a society is ecologically unsustainable, or unsustainable in some other sense, then it must necessarily be normatively unsustainable. Thus normative sustainability is a sufficient condition for sustainability in other respects.

[9] "If I want to deprive you of your watch, I shall certainly have to fight for it; if I want to buy your watch, I shall have to pay you for it; and if I want a gift, I shall have to plead for it; and, according to the means I employ, the watch is stolen property, my own property, or a donation. Thus we see three different results from three different means. Will you still say that means do not matter?" (Gandhi 1938: 67–68)

[10] Gandhi's perception that many products of modern technology were inferior to the products of traditional indigenous technology was only one among several reasons because of which he was opposed to modern technology. For instance in a letter to Nehru he says: "I want to say is that the individual person should have control over the things that are necessary for the sustenance of life." Quoted in Dharampal (2003: 33) from Collected Works, Volume 81. Dharampal sums up Gandhiji's views on technology as follows: "Gandhiji had definite views about the desirable society and the norms within which it should function. Technology, according to him, should grow out of the requirements of needs of such a society and be fully woven into its social fabric quite in contrast to the way in which modern Western-inspired science and technology are said to be increasingly becoming wholly autonomous, or even said to be taking charge of the running of politics, and thus of societies themselves." (Ibid.)

of marginal importance in his own times, but of the greatest importance and relevance for the contemporary times, establishes a connection between the technology and the nature of products it makes possible. While in the general perception modern techniques of production are associated with increased productivity, it is not often that one differentiates between the product manufactured with the traditional technique and the product made possible with the modern technique. The occasions when one does differentiate, it is because one wants to draw attention to the superior quality of the product manufactured by the modern technique compared to that of the product made using the traditional technique. It is rarely the case that the product made using the modern technique is compared unfavourably with the product manufactured using the traditional technique. Gandhi considered most products of modern technology to be inferior to the corresponding products of traditional technology. During Gandhi's life-time not many subscribed to Gandhi's viewpoint. But in the contemporary context, at least with respect to food items, support for the Gandhian view may be quite substantial. Gandhian viewpoint regarding the nature of the relationship between technology and the products made possible by it becomes much clearer if one includes among products all the by-products as well, whether desirable or undesirable. In all likelihood, part of the reason why he believed that in the ultimate analysis even with respect to things that the modern civilization was striving for it would not be successful was due to his perception regarding the nature of modern technology and the kind of relationship that subsisted between it and what it could help produce.

We restate the above twin, and important, points emphasizing the crucial significance of the ethical for the material: In contemporary societies almost all social institutions find their justification in objectives which are predominantly materialistic in nature. From what has been said above it is clear that the successful functioning of these institutions depends on individuals performing their assigned roles. While in certain contexts it will be possible to make individuals perform their assigned roles, even when they have not internalized the idea of doing so, by appropriate incentives and penalties; it would not be possible to do so invariably. Thus, in the absence of internalization of the idea of doing one's duty it would be well-nigh impossible for most institutions to realize the objectives for the attainment of which these institutions supposedly exist. Furthermore, in the absence of commitment to certain fundamental ethical principles it is not clear why an individual will internalize the idea of performing the tasks assigned to him. Thus it seems that even for the purpose of attaining purely materialistic objectives, internalization of fundamental ethical

principles by individuals is quite crucial. It is in this context that Gandhi's identification of civilization with ethical conduct becomes comprehensible.[11]

Once it is recognized that it is the realized social objectives, and not the objectives conceived in theory, which play a crucial role in influencing the normative makeup of individuals, the significance of the fundamental ethical principles becomes even more clear. As we have seen above, in the absence of the requisite ethical principles, the outcomes which will generally obtain will be quite different from what they would have been had everyone performed the assigned tasks in the required manner. The divergence between the desired outcomes and actual outcomes, if persistent over a long period, can bring about a complete transformation of one's understanding of the very objectives for the attainment of which the various societal institutions are supposed to exist. Such a transformation in turn can have further negative consequences. As the normative makeup of individuals in general can be expected to be closely related to the institutional structure of the society and their normative implications, non-realization of important values at the social level can only result in the dilution of corresponding and related values in the normative makeup of individuals. This in turn can only aggravate the problem of institutions not delivering the desired outcomes. The dominance of the market in the contemporary context then has the implication that in the context of non-market institutions as well we should expect from most individuals self-regarding behaviour even though the design of these institutions might be such that their successful functioning depended on individuals performing their assigned roles, and not acting in their narrow self-interest.

To sum up, Gandhi's critique of modernity is essentially normative. He is critical of modernity because it exalts material comforts in sharp contradistinction with the higher ideals of limitation of wants and non-possession. Furthermore for Gandhi, modern institutions are undesirable on several counts. Modern institutions are so structured that they tend to increase violence and disharmony in the society. Also, they facilitate articulation of undesirable values; and tend to suppress desirable values. Implicit in *Hind Swaraj's* critique is the idea of unsustainable institutional structures; and the Gandhian belief that any institutional structure which gives such a large domain to self-regardingness is bound to be unsustainable.

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[11] "Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilization means 'good conduct'." (Gandhi 1938: 56)

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Premchand's Gandhi

Vasudha Dalmia

Abstract

Modern Hindi-Urdu's most famous writer Premchand (1880–1936) was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, whose most pervasive influence is to be seen in his third novel of note, Rangbhumi *(Theatre-stage, 1925). The novel is set in Banaras, as the city was known then, and its peripheral village Pandeypur, wherein lives the blind, Dalit beggar Surdas, whose personality radiates many aspects of the Mahatma's political and social thought, transferred to the local* satyagrahas, *which Surdas leads. The main struggle is over the land he has inherited, which is now to be used for industrial purposes, backed by the might of the colonial state. And later there is a tussle, for the very ground on which his hut stands, which is to be used for housing factory workers. The state adopts violent methods to set this through and Surdas is killed by a colonial officer's gun. My essay focuses on Surdas's life and words, as depicted in this novel.*

Modern Hindi and Urdu's most famous short-story writer and novelist, Dhanpat Rai Srivastava, known by his pen name Premchand (1880–1936), began his prolific writing career at the beginning of the twentieth century. He was deeply influenced by Tolstoy, whose thought and writing paved the way for his intense engagement and regard for Mahatma Gandhi. The Mahatma entered Premchand's work after his return to India in 1915 and his first successful *satyagrahas* in the teens of the century. In the aftermath of his Non-Cooperation Movement, he also went to Gorakhpur. His speech there in the open fields of *Ghazi miyan ka maidan* on February 8, 1921 to an audience of two lakhs, had an electrifying effect on Premchand, who was attending the event with his family. He now came to the conclusion that he could no longer serve in the government school-system. Not wanting to burden his family with the economic hardship that would ensue, he consulted his wife, who after some days of heartburn, decided to support her husband in his decision. He resigned from office on February 15. He was relieved of his duties the day after (Rai 1992 [1962]: 246–248).

Amrit Rai in the biography of his father, records the first traces of the Mahatma's influence in the short stories written in the first period of his career, as

also in *Premashram* (1921) his second novel of note (Rai 1992: 207, 220). It was, however, in his third important novel, the epic *Rangbhumi* (1925), which is nearly five hundred pages long, that we meet with the most extensive Gandhian imprint on his work, and it is on a close-reading of this that I focus in this paper. We have to recall, as Amrit Rai reminds us, that this was a period of lull in the Mahatma's own activities. He had called off his Non-Cooperation movement after the incident in Chauri Chaura, where a mob burnt a police station, killing the policemen trapped within (Rai 1992: 265, 266, 371). The country was not yet ready for non-violence, as the Mahatma saw it. However, once the movement was called off, once a major unifying factor receded, communal tension and communal riots erupted all over North India. Premchand's work was an act of faith in the Mahatma, to unite behind him in every sense of the word – bringing together Hindu and Muslim, touchable and untouchable, in protest against an unjust political order.

The title *Rangbhumi* has been translated variously as *The Arena of Life* and *Playground*.[1] Literally, it means 'theatre space' or 'stage'. It is in this sense that it used in a verse sung by the blind beggar, Surdas. We shall come to the verse presently. But first let us turn to the beggar himself, a powerful, charismatic figure, who represents and sustains Gandhi's principles though thick and thin, winning a moral victory in the end, even as he seems ostensibly to have lost the cause he fought for. In the author's note which prefaced the Urdu version of the novel, *Chaugan-e-hasti* or Arena of Life, written before the Hindi, but revised and published in1928, three years after the Hindi version, Premchand himself notes the fact that Surdas embodies the Gandhian spirit:

> *"Rangbhoomi's hero Soordas is a remarkable character in the history of the Indian novel. He has an extraordinary capacity to sacrifice himself for the public welfare. In brief, he is also an ideal Gandhian character."*[2]

He is a beggar, belonging to one of the lowest castes, the chamars, associated with leatherwork, tanning and shoe-making, but he is respected in the larger community he is part of in Pandeypur, a still rural *basti*, or settlement, on the periphery of Banaras, as the city was known then.

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[1] There are two excellent, recent English translations of the novel: King (2010) and Jain (2011). Unless otherwise noted, I have translated most passages from the original myself, based on the text in volume 3 of *Premchand Rachnavali*, Collected Works, henceforth PR with page number.

[2] Jain in the introduction to her translation Premchand (2011: xlv). Jain uniformly transcribes Surdas as 'Soordas', which I have retained in the passages cited from her translation.

Premchand's use of the epithet 'chamar' is no longer politically correct. However revered a figure Surdas may be in the narrative, he is placed low in the caste and by extension, class hierarchy. This depiction, along with the depiction of other Dalit characters in his most famous short stories, has been a cause of consternation in Dalit circles, leading to the dramatic act of burning of copies of the novel by members of the Bharatiya Dalit Sahitya Akademi (Indian Dalit Literary Association) on July 31, 2004. This act evoked critique by another, more inclusive Dalit organization, the Dalit Lekhak Sangh (Dalit Writers' Forum), triggering major debate in Dalit literary discourse about the significance, positive and negative, of Premchand's depiction of Dalit characters and themes in his fiction.[3] As Alok Rai has pointed out, while it may be possible to question the ghettoization implicit in the present Dalit demand of Dalit self-depiction as the sole authentic source of Dalit experience, the point being made now remains worth making. It is time to depart from the "available aesthetic models", given that they

> *"worked through a complex dynamic of inducing shame and guilt in the primarily savarna [upper caste] interlocutors, and Gandhi and Premchand were, in their very different ways, masters at working this dynamic – patiently, steadily, effectively. Effective, that is, within the possible limits of the historical conjuncture."[4]*

Today, Dalit discourse is seeking the alternatives to the older narratives in its myriad explorations of the subjective experience of brutal exploitation by the upper castes and its formulation of an alternative aesthetics. But meanwhile, there remains to be acknowledged the historic role exceptional people, such as Premchand, played in opening up new social and psychological vistas in their time:

> *"The manner in which these great originary figures work is by picking up disparate aspects of the life in their time and bringing them together in a provisionally viable narrative equilibrium. In that precise moment, a new cultural subject is born. New continents of experience open up, and become available for cultural appropriation and social action. The range and reach of the social imagination is significantly enlarged by the progressive inclusion of hitherto marginalized lives and experiences."[5]*

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[3] See Brueck (2017 [2014]: 1, 43–60), for an extensive discussion of the debate around Premchand in Dalit discourse.

[4] Alok Rai in the introduction to King's translation, Premchand (2010: xi).

[5] Ibid., xiii.

And it is in this spirit that we turn to Premchand's novel. This is how Surdas is described in the introductory passage:

> *"Blind men need neither names nor work in India. Soordas is their ready-made name, begging for alms their ready-made vocation. Their qualities and temperament are also universally celebrated; special interest in music, exceptional love in the heart, distinctive passion for spirituality and religious devotion are their natural traits. The outer vision shut and the inner open. Soordas was extremely frail, weak and simple."* (Premchand 2011: 1)[6]

In his physique and in his attire, which is confined to the bare minimum, Surdas resembles the Mahatma. And just as the Mahatma, he withstands with the moral power at his command, the unjust actions of a colonial state, hand in glove with the wealthy and the privileged. He reveres the songs of Kabir and other Nirguna poet-saints, which he sings in his melodious voice on his rounds and along with others in in the foreyard of the village temple. In the course of his narrative which spans the entire length of the novel, he emerges as a central figure, warm in his relations, capable of immense generosity of spirit, but also as all too human in his occasional frailties, such as for instance his intense attachment to his orphaned nephew Mithua, whom he spoils and indulges.

Two strands of narrative intersect in Surdas's person; the one has to do with the struggle over the ten *bighas* of land he owns in the centre of the village,[7] and the other with his giving shelter to Subhagi, a woman physically abused by her husband, who can find no refuge elsewhere in the community.

The question of land crops up in the very first scene. We meet the Sevak family, affluent Christians, seated in their phaeton, headed for Pandeypur, where they have a leather depot. Grandfather Ishvar Sevak is a devout Christian, father John Sevak the astute business man, his wife a shrew, observing only the niceties of religious ritual, the daughter Sophia, another central figure, a delicate, attractive, exceptionally intelligent young woman, with an enquiring mind, and poet son Prabhu, intent on versifying life. Surdas runs alongside the phaeton, begging for alms. Sophia and Prabhu are kind to him, but Mr. and Mrs. Sevak treat him roughly till Mr. Sevak realizes that Surdas is the owner of the land he fixes his gaze upon to set up his new cigarette factory. His tone changes then, he offers an enormous sum for the land, but Surdas declares that he cannot make any commitment to sell without first consulting his fellow

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[6] The last word in this citation from Jain's translation renders the original *saral* as 'simple.' Platts has several equivalents for this word: right, upright, honest, sincere, candid, ingenuous, artless, plain, simple; easy. All of them would apply to Surdas.

[7] *Bigha* is a measure of land, equal to approximately 5/8 of an acre.

villagers, who use it as the common grazing ground for their cattle. In all, ten villages use it for this purpose, there being no other land in sight suitable for it. The villagers take this right for granted, no one feels particularly indebted to Surdas for it. When he consults them, they are united in their opposition to John Sevak's plan. Surdas knows no doubt then. As he tells Tahir Ali, Mr. Sevak's agent, he inherited the land from his ancestors, he is merely the keeper of it, he has committed himself to *dharma kaj*, righteous action – cows are holy and he could do no better than serve them (PR: 60–61). He is also serving his fellow villagers. No amount of persuasion can budge him from this act of public good. He owns a valuable piece of property, yet he chooses to be a beggar, to live a life of poverty, with his material wants reduced to an ascetic minimum. Tahir Ali warns him that the Sahib will acquire this land by force if it is not readily made available to him. He has connections. His daughter Sophia is likely to marry the English District Magistrate, Mr. Clark. It can come to violence but Surdas is willing to risk his life, if need be.

When the head of the municipal board, Raja Mahendra Kumar Singh, whom Mr Sevak has roped into his cause, himself comes to look at the land and talk to him, Surdas voices his concerns about the changes in village life that this act of industrialization will bring with it:

> "Sahib is a Christian, he'll turn the dharmashala into a tobacco shop; the temple will be used by his labourers to sleep in, the well will become an adda for them, daughters and daughters-in-law will no longer frequent it. If Sahib doesn't do this, his son will. My ancestors' reputation will be destroyed. Sarkar, don't pull me into this quicksand" (PR: 77).

Surdas is echoing the general public distrust of Christians at large; there is prejudice at work here. But he is also concerned about the effects that bringing industry to the area will have on village life.

The second challenge to his relatively peaceful existence is Subhagi, a pretty young woman, whose husband Bhairo Pasi, the toddy-seller, beats her mercilessly at the slightest provocation. Subhagi is spirited, she protects herself the best that she can and runs to Surdas when it gets too much for her; he is the only person in the community kind enough to take her in. Though the villagers know his upright character, they talk. Bhairo does more than that, he comes to beat him, but discovers that though Surdas's frame looks feeble, he is made of steel. He can't be intimidated physically or for that matter morally. As Surdas ruminates:

> *"God sees what goes on inside one. It's one's dharma to console a person in trouble. And if observing dharma stigmatizes one, then may it do so, what do I care? How long can I cry because of that? Sooner or later, people will realize how I think"* (PR: 111–112).

But Bhairo is not to be held back. Surdas is sleeping in the temple foreyard one night, as Bhairo sneaks to his hut and sets it on fire and then runs for it. He has taken Surdas's bag of money, which he had hidden in the thatch.

Surrounded by villagers and a distraught Surdas, the hut is burnt to the ground in a matter of hours. Bhairo's deed does not go unremarked. Subhagi hears of it, she has been hiding in an orchard, and assures Surdas she won't rest until she gets the money back to him. But here is the dilemma for someone in Surdas's position. He denies that he has such substantial savings. He is no saint and this is his other frailty besides his beloved nephew Mithua – the money he will not publicly lay claim to. Yet he is in despair. Till he hears a boy tell Mithua that one does not cry in a game. Then he repeats to himself what he will say often in the course of the narrative:

> *"Surdas had been wallowing in the shoreless waters of disappointment, fatigue, anxiety and anguish; as soon as he heard this warning, he felt as if someone had caught his hand and stood him upon the shore. "Wah! I am crying in a game. How shameful is that…True players never cry, they lose in one game after another, suffer bruise after bruise, withstand jolt upon jolt, but they remain steadfast in the field, there is no furrow on their brow. Courage does not desert them, nor a drop of malice stain their hearts, they envy no one, allow no one to provoke them. Why cry in a game? Games are for laughter, to amuse the heart, not for tears"* (PR: 118).

And this, playing the game fairly, regardless of loss or gain, becomes, after his moment of weakness, Surdas's constant refrain in the face of adversity.

For, things don't get better for him. John Sevak has all the forces of the state on his side. With the help of Raja Mahendra Kumar, the head of the Municipal Board, the tacit support of Mr. Clark, the District Magistrate, and the application of the infamous Land Acquisition Act of 1894, the land is requisitioned for public purposes, that is, for setting up the cigarette factory.[8] Surdas wanders through the streets and by-lanes of the city, singing in powerful and lyrical appeal, mesmerizing all who hear him, including the novel's heroine, Sophia, who chances to hear him one day; she has not yet joined her family in church. The song transfixes her; it speaks directly to her heart – One has to remain

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[8] Cf. Jain's introduction to Premchand (2011: xxvii-xxviii).

steadfast in battle, whether in victory or defeat, to stay constant in the cause of dharma and *niti*, morality. One has to offer one's best in this cause:

> "You've come to the rangbhumi to show your maya, wondrous power" (PR: 184).

Rangbhumi here has several connotations – field of battle, playground, but also staging ground, where one has to play one's part fully. As the churchgoers collect outside the church, Surdas calls out to them, asking for fair play. He quotes a verse of Kabir:

> "Don't torment the one who is weak, his deep lament.
> In one breath will turn the cursed one's skin to ashes"
> (Premchand 2011: 236).

There is a buzz amongst the churchgoers. People talk. The indignation in the city mounts. Roughnecks in the city threaten violence at the factory site, though, characteristically, Surdas stems their violence. But the air is rife with righteous rage. Sophia puts Mr. Clark under pressure to see that this decision is reversed. She is acting against her father but she is deeply impressed by this philosophical and spiritually wise beggar, who is charitable even towards his enemies (PR: 195, 204). She is also acting against herself, for she is in love with Vinay Singh, son of another head of a *riyasat* and brother of Indu, the Raja's wife. This is another important narrative strand in the novel, which I don't follow here. The trio Sophia, Vinay, Clark, will play a major role in the last episode in Surdas's life. However, what concerns us at the moment is that Mr. Clark is a basically decent man, who is also moved by Surdas's plight. He is loath to take on the municipality in order to help him, but at Sophia's insistence, he sees to it that Surdas gets his land back, though she will cool off towards him once he has performed this task. But in the meantime, the village cattle graze again on Surdas's land.

Raja Mahendra Kumar loses public face. He has been defeated in battle by a beggar. When Sophia meets Surdas, she tells him that he should now so ruin the Raja, that he would leave the district. Surdas's response is measured:

> "No, Miss Sahib, this is not the principle (niti) of players. When the player wins, he does not mock the player who has lost, he embraces him, folds his hands and says – 'Brother, forgive me, if I have said anything improper to you or behaved improperly towards you.' So, the two players part ways, they become friends once the game is over, there is no rancour between them. I went to meet Raja Sahib today and folded my hands before him. He had me fed. As I was about to leave, he said, my heart is clear regarding you; harbour no doubt about me" (PR: 204).

As Surdas clarifies to Sophia, his battle is for *dharma* rather than for things, even if Raja Sahib was to betray him, he would not reply in kind. Sophia comes home and tears up the venomous satirical piece she had penned against the Raja.

Surdas seems to be on a winning spree, though the ever-fickle public opinion is less friendly now that he has his land back. And the game regarding his piece of land is also far from over. Raja Mahendra Kumar, instigated by Indu, his strong-willed wife, appeals this judgement to yet higher authorities – elite 'natives' carry some weight now vis-à-vis white superiors – and once again, the judgement is reversed. It is Mr. Clark who loses face this time. He is demoted and transferred away from Banaras. We will meet him again. Surdas is forced to accept money for his land. Characteristically, he does not keep it for his own use, he is a beggar, he says, it would just be stolen from his hut. He donates it to a social help institution, which was once run by Vinay Singh and now managed by Indradatt, who had worked with him.

Things get worse, when Subhagi steals the bag of money from her husband Bhairo and returns it to Surdas. This is no easy matter for someone who thinks as Surdas does: whose money is it now? He not only returns the bag to Bhairo, when asked, he tells him that his wife had taken it from him. There is violence once again, but Surdas swears before the village, that Subhagi has always been his *choti bahan*, younger sister. Surdas's determined celibacy, his *brahmacharya*, his choice to remain unattached, is a conscious decision. Bhairo takes the matter to court and attempts to persuade the villagers to bear witness against Surdas. But in the end it is only the factory workers who agree to do so. When the case comes up in court, the whole village has left work and turned up to watch the show. Questioned by the lawyer assigned to Bhairo whether he has kept Subhagi, Surdas repeats what he has been saying all along:

> *"Yes, I have kept her, just as a brother keeps his sister and a father keeps his daughter. If government makes her leave my house, it takes over the responsibility of protecting her honour"* (PR: 309).

Subhagi affirms that she goes to Surdas when there is unbearable violence at home. As far as the court is concerned, this is admission of guilt from both sides. Raja Mahendra Kumar, who is adjudicating the case, imposes a fine of a hundred rupees on Surdas, and if not paid, six months of rigorous imprisonment for him. Surdas, with his deep sincerity and eloquence, appeals to the *panch*, the village council, in this case, the public whom he considers his real judges, and asks them if they consider him guilty. If they don't trust him, he will be ready to bear the most rigorous imprisonment happily. People are stunned into silence; there is no immediate response. Outside the court, Surdas seats himself on the ground and says he will only move once he hears what the

panch think. The answer comes in a chorus: "You are guiltless, we consider you guiltless" (PR: 311). This seems to be the narrator's view point as well. But matters are far from resolved. Subhagi still refuses to go home and stays staunchly by Surdas's side. And he still offers her shelter. However such is his moral standing in village and city now, that no one points a finger at him.

Meanwhile, the plot twists and turns. Bhairo's drunken friends set Surdas's hut on fire. This is the second time his hut goes up in flames. In return, Surdas's nephew, Mithu, sets Bhairo's liquor-shop on fire, which also burns to the ground. No one knows who has done it, but the villagers see it as just retribution.

Surdas is set free, for the good hearted in the city's elite, led by Indradatt, who goes first to Indu, the Raja's wife, who had also come to witness the case, collect money for him, a sum that is in excess of what is needed to set him free. A good three hundred remain, which they offer to Surdas, who in his turn offers it to Bhairo to rebuild his shop. Bhairo cannot believe his eyes. What sort of a man is this? At first he refuses to take money from an enemy. Surdas's response mirrors his deeply held belief:

> *"What kind of enmity can there be between the two of us, Bhairo? I don't re-gard anyone as an enemy. Life is too short to harbour enmity towards anyone. You've done me no wrong. If I had been in your place and thought that you were seducing my wife, I would have done the same as you. Who does not love his honour? … I tell you the truth; I took the money because of you. For me, the shade of a tree would have sufficed…"* (PR: 323).

The ability to understand his opponent, to be generous, this is how Surdas fights his battles, till he wins over his opponents. Bhairo cannot withstand this kindness; he accepts the money and even declares himself ready to take his wife back, though she will not go with him yet. And Surdas persuades him to give up his liquor shop and start business in wood. As Bhairo tells his mother, "He is not an [ordinary] man, he is a sadhu" (PR: 327). One day, Subhagi will begin to trust Bhairo again. He and Subhagi will remain devoted to Surdas through thick and thin, for there will be further ups and downs vis-à-vis the village.

In the concluding pages of the novel, there will be one more public agitation – a climax to the struggle waged thus far, a *satyagraha*, of which Surdas will become the centre. Not content with requisitioning the village commons for his factory project, John Major, in looking for adequate housing for his factory workers, hits upon the idea of relocating the villagers of Pandeypur and setting up housing on the land thus freed. He has government backing. The villagers are resisting this move, which they are to carry out in three months. Sophia has in the meantime become great friends with Surdas, henceforth their tales are

closely entwined. She visits him often. Where the others feel lost, Surdas has a simple response, on which he will remain firm:

"I'll die where I was born. I won't be able to leave my hut while I am still alive. Once I die, they can take what they want. They took away my ances- tors' land, this hut is their only sign left to me, I won't leave it. I'll die along with it" (PR: 414).

This is not a plan the others can accept. They simply ignore the order for the time being. The compensation is nowhere in sight. The new District Magistrate orders that the villagers be evicted from their homes, the police are rough shod in their methods; they throw out household goods, breaking them. A huge crowd has gathered, they seem menacing; violence seems immanent. Raja Ma- hendra Kumar decides to do a good public deed and retrieve his reputation by paying the compensation from his own pocket. He begins to dole out money according to the list drawn up by the evaluating committee. Surdas refuses to accept any money for his hut. This action is not for the public good; the only person who stands to benefit from it is the Sahib:

"It only means ruin for the people. I won't leave my hut for something like this. If it had been work in the cause of dharma, I would have been the first to give away my hut. You have the right to use force, give the command to the police, how long does it take for straw to catch fire. But this is not justice..." (PR: 422).

This last is the key sentence. Laws don't become just because they stem from the state. As Surdas tells Indradatt:

"There may be a law, but I only know the law of dharma, make what law you like to enforce compliance. There is no one to halt the hand of govern- ment. Their advisors after all are seth-mahajan, bankers and money lenders" (PR: 423).

The *satyagraha* that now evolves is a spontaneous protest against the injustice of the state and Surdas is the inspiration behind it. In fact, because of the moral power he radiates, he becomes its involuntary leader. Thrice, the Superintend- ant orders the crowd to vacate the spot; thrice they refuse to move. Thrice the police fire; despite the Raja's pleas, and men fall. In the last round, Indradatt also falls. When the Superintendant orders a fourth round, the Havaldar drops his gun and refuses to follow the order. This is unprecedented in the annals of police. His fate will be dire; he will be court martialled. The crowd surges again and again to protect Surdas's hut from being felled, Surdas sits in front of it with his head bowed, "as if he were the living icon (*murti*) of steadfastness,

strength of mind, and peaceful glow."(PR: 426).[9] The agitation is citywide. That evening, a procession forms to cremate the dead. The Raja's wife, Indu, Sophia, and many others join it.

As the days pass, the agitation gathers ever more strength. Vinay Singh, Sophia's betrothed, and his army of volunteers support it, it is non-violent resistance; it is non-cooperation. Each day finds Surdas positioned peacefully outside his hut. No labourer can be found to fell the houses. Even those called from outside drop their spades when confronted by Vinay's peaceful men arrayed in front of the hut. Two months pass. Sophia fears for Vinay; she falls ill, and he stays with her, she keeps him away from the scene of action. Meanwhile Mr. Clark has been reinstated as District Magistrate to control this *satyagraha*, which seems untamable and which seems to gather ever more strength. One day, Sophia cannot bring herself to remain passive. She goes to the field of battle; Vinay follows. Instead of the village houses that have been pulled down, an encampment for factory workers has come up. Gurkha soldiers guard them.

> *"Thousands of people stand around in a circle like onlookers, as if to watch a vast play being enacted. In their midst stands Surdas's hut, as if set on a stage. Surdas stands with a stick before it, like a puppeteer about to commence the play..."* (PR: 438).

Surdas holds the threads of further action in his lean hands. Three canons face the hut; the government seems to have decided to stage a massive show of force and end the *satyagraha*. When he encounters Sophia, Mr. Clark tells her that it is not that he has changed his mind about Surdas, but that he himself is the arm of the state:

> *"We come here to rule, not to carry out our wishes and personal opinions. We erase our personalities the moment we alight from the ship. Everything has just one aim: our justice, our good-heartedness, our good wishes. Our first and last goal is to rule"* (PR: 440).

His whip lashes out mercilessly at the people gathered there, though they refuse to disperse. They begin to collect stones to pelt the army; many lives are going to be lost. Surdas asks Bhairo to carry him on his shoulders so that he can disband the crowd. He addresses the people one last time. You haven't come here to help me, he says, you have come here as my foes:

> *"The compassion, the dharma, that could have entered the hearts of the officials, the army, and the police, you have turned into anger by assembling here.*

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[9] Amrit Rai cites this sentence to stress once more, that he is the embodiment of Gandhi (Rai 1992: 334).

I could have shown the officials how a poor, blind man could have made the army retreat, shut the mouth of the canon, twisted the edge of the sword. I wanted to fight on the strength of dharma…" (PR: 441).

Surdas shuns violence; his is a moral battle, which he has planned to win by moral means. This is the voice of the Mahatma (Cf. Rai 1992: 335).

Seeing him seated above the crowd, believing that he is inciting the mob, Mr. Clark sees his chance to stem the agitation. As long the *atma*, the soul, lives, the limbs of the body will not cease moving. The agitation would be extinguished if the soul of it were gone. He aims his pistol at this *atma* and shoots. Surdas is not killed but he is mortally wounded, he falls from Bhairo's shoulders. Sophia sees that "there was complete peace, content and steadfastness in the light that emanated from his eyes, there was forgiveness, there was no sign of anger or fear" (PR: 442) This killing seems an uncanny anticipation of the Mahatma's own violent end, a good two decades before it actually happened.

The rest of the action can be summed up in a few sentences. Sophia has Surdas carried to the hospital. The crowd is enraged and seems on the verge of finally erupting into violence, when Vinay stops them. They taunt him for staying away so long, he puts his pistol to his own head and to prove how unafraid he is; he shoots himself. This action swings the mood of the crowd. A Muslim youth follows him in death. Hindu and Muslim perform the same act; they unite in their opposition to state-injustice.

A grieving Sophia stays by the side of Surdas at the hospital in his last hours. Bhairo and Subhagi are with him, looking after him. People come to visit him, many still engrossed in their own concerns. The Raja comes to apologize but also to protest his good intentions, Mithua comes to demand that he be compensated for his property, the land and the hut were also his, he vows to blow up the factory; this breaks Surdas's heart. Mr. Sevak comes to apologize for the grief his actions have unleashed, but also to lament his losses to Sophia. The city's elite comes and pays its respects; no one stays away. Surdas's opponents from the village come. This is the final act, he speaks no more, he can only fold his hands, a couple of tear drops flow on to his cheeks, and he slips away, "the player leaves the field" (PR: 462). The narrative pauses to pay him homage:

"… in reality he was a player who never lost his honour, never lost courage, never stepped back. He was cheerful when he won and cheerful when he lost; if he lost, he didn't harbour a grudge against the victor, if he won, he didn't ridicule the defeated. He was always ethical when he played, never cheated, never hid behind any scheming in order to attack" (Premchand 2011: 604).

The narrator lists his vices and virtues. But the vices become virtues, when they come into contact with his one great virtue.

> *"And what was that virtue? Love of justice, devotion to truth, philanthropy, compassion, or any other name that you want to give it. He couldn't tolerate injustice; immorality was unbearable to him"* (Premchand 2011: 605).

All the characters we have met so far and more – who are in the narrative but whom I have not brought up here – are present at Surdas's cremation. Even Mithua is there, weeping. In his death, Surdas and his errant nephew have come together. Mr. Clark says to the Raja that he is sorry to have killed such a good man:

> *"We are not afraid of people like you. We are afraid of people who rule the hearts of the people. This is the atonement we pay to rule that we have to kill people whom we would have honoured in England as comparable to the gods"* (PR: 463).

But there is also a human motive to this act of violence. When Sophia over-hears Mr. Clark and reproaches him, he says, though she has passed and does not hear his words: "This is the consequence of your unjust behaviour to me" (PR: 463). Sophia is not blameless. Premchand is too good a psychologist to have simplified his characters.

The hut is pulled down, and in its place the people collect funds to put up a statue of Surdas made by a sculptor from Poona. Mr. Sevak gladly gives permission to install it where his hut once stood. There is a ceremony at which villagers and city-folk alike are present and touchable and untouchable eat together, sitting in one row. "This is Surdas's greatest victory" (PR: 474).

The Raja, who in his heart has still not forgiven Surdas for having – however inadvertently – pulled his name into mud, comes one night to fell the statue. It falls, but on him, crushing him. This is the final act. The statue is put up again, but the expression of the face becomes distorted and the sign of violence remain on its feet. No victory is absolute.

It is time also for us to take leave of Premchand's village Gandhi, one of modern Hindi literature's most memorable characters. We leave him as we have met him in the narrative, with his deep regard for *dharma* and for truth and his abhorrence of violence. His attire, belongings, lodging, reduced to the essential, he radiates gentleness, love, compassion, and above all, moral power. He walks alone, singing the songs of the *nirguna* poet-saints in his melodious voice.

Vasudha Dalmia

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Critique of Conversion – Conversion as Critique: M. K. Gandhi, B. R. Ambedkar and the Prerogative of Interpretation

Martin Fuchs & Antje Linkenbach

Abstract

Although the notion of 'conversion' strongly refers to a Christian origin and meaning, conversion came to generally signify a process, in which individuals (or groups) adopt a particular religion, or abandon the adherence to one religion (or religious denomination) and affiliate with another. This article takes up debates regarding conversion in colonial and early post-colonial India. In the first half of the 20th century and in particular in the context of both the nationalist movement and the self-assertion of Dalits and their struggle for liberation, conversion became a highly contentious topic in the Indian political arena. The article discusses the positions of two protagonists of the conversion debate, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Bhimrao Ambedkar – the first voicing serious doubts with respect to conversion, while the second not only supported conversion, but, being himself a Mahar and belonging to an "untouchable" jati, led a mass movement of conversion to Navayana-Buddhism he himself had designed. To provide the intellectual background necessary to understand Gandhi's and Ambedkar's contrasting positions on conversion the article focuses on their concepts of religion, human sociality, equality and morality.

Introduction

The story of the experience of Paul on the road to Damascus has often been taken as prototype of 'conversion'. Paul himself did not refer to this incident as conversion, however the descriptions and references in various books of the New Testament (Galatians, Philippians, Ephesians, Acts) suggest that Jesus Christ's revelation to Paul "converted" the latter in the sense that it changed his commitment, values and identification. It "radically reversed the scale of his values and made his vision of all things utterly new" (Uwineza 2011: 2).[1]

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[1] Quoted by Marcel Uwineza from Marrow, S. B. 1986. Paul. His Letters and His Theology: An Introduction to Paul's Epistles. New York: Paulist Press, p. 30. Marrow's book was not available.

Paul's experience has several important implications vis-à-vis the significance and understanding of conversion as a Christian phenomenon: Firstly, getting converted was not the decision of Paul (the convert). Revelation, leading to conversion, was alone god's doing, a gift of the divine.[2] Secondly, with his universalistic message of "brotherhood of love" and "equality of all", Christ approaches Paul individually, as an individual person.[3] Thirdly, conversion goes along with extreme emotional upheavals, leading to a complete change of life.[4] Fourthly, conversion in its original (Pauline) meaning indicates the shift from paganism to Christianity. Fifthly, the revelation of Christ to Paul bears fruits insofar as it implies to proclaim the "good news" of Jesus to the Gentiles (Galatians 1). Paul's conversion goes along with an explicit missionary mandate: with the instruction to bring the Christian message to the world.

Regardless of its original Christian context and meaning, the notion of conversion came to generally signify a process, in which individuals (or groups) adopt a particular religion, or abandon the adherence to one religion (or religious denomination) and affiliate with another. Accordingly, conversions as widespread religio-historical phenomena have their particular reasons, histories, contexts and consequences, which may diverge from the Christian framework and therefore need to be meticulously explored. This contribution will take up *debates* regarding conversion in colonial and post-colonial India. We concentrate on two protagonists of the conversion debate, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Bhimrao Ambedkar – the first voicing serious doubts with respect to conversion, while the second not only supported conversion, but, being himself a Mahar and belonging to an "untouchable" *jati*, led a mass movement of conversion to Navayana-Buddhism he himself had designed.

In the following we start by briefly discussing the notion of religion and the question of the applicability of the idea of religious conversion in the historical contexts of multi-religious Indian life-worlds. In a next step we introduce Gandhi and Ambedkar, who both were central political players, but also sociopolitical thinkers with an ethical message. By focusing in particular on their

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[2] "It is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift of God: not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit" (Ephesians 2: 8). https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+2:8-9&version=NIV; accessed 17.02.2018.

[3] See Sharma, S. 2015: 458. Sharma refers to Louis Dumont, who argues in his 'Essay on Individualism' that Christianity is seen to signify for the first time the emergence and fusion in relation to God of "absolute individualism and absolute universalism".

[4] For William James conversions are "striking instantaneous instances of which Saint Paul's is the most eminent, and in which, often amid tremendous emotional excitement or perturbation of the senses, a complete division is established in the twinkling of an eye between the old life and the new" (James 1985: 217).

concepts of religion, we intend to give the background necessary to understand their contrasting positions on conversion. The last part will be dedicated to the presentation and discussion of their views, which is – in the case of Ambedkar – linked with the practice of conversion.

'Religion' and 'Conversion' in India – A Few Conceptual Reflections

It seems difficult to talk about conversion in the strict sense of the term with regard to India. The praxis of conversion presupposes the existence of clearly structured and distinguishable religions, the involvement of religions with missionary activities being an additional factor. Both conditions were not always given in India.

In western, Christian-influenced parlance and understanding 'religion' designates systems of belief with clear-cut boundaries. Paradigmatic are the Abrahamic or 'Semitic' religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These religions can be traced back to a founding figure (a prophet), they have a holy book, a uniform doctrine of faith, they are monotheistic, and followers congregate as community. Although Hinduism is classified as one of the 'world religions' and religion became a census category in British India, a number of scholars argue that Hinduism cannot be easily subsumed under the notion of 'religion': What has been essentialized as 'Hinduism' by the British colonizers but also by Brahmanic intellectual elites in the 19th century is a set of spiritual and ritual traditions, differentiated regarding divinities, ritual practices and teachings, some of which had taken the form of *sampradayas*, often translated as 'sects';[5] the boundaries between such 'denominations', but also the boundaries to other traditions are often blurred.

Throughout its history India was characterized by an enormous plurality of religious and philosophical traditions and perspectives with fluid boundaries, and people often acknowledged more than one position, engaging in multiple religious activities across the different strands. They even shared sacred spaces, worshipped the same divinity or saint under different names or developed other forms of religious inclusivism respectively hybridity.[6] All this did not exclude religious controversies and disputes, but assertion of one's own convictions was in the majority of cases not connected with attempts to suppress or even annihilate other religious forms. In such situations where religious orientation was inherently flexible it did not make sense to speak about 'conversion'

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[5] For this debate see e.g. Stietencron 1989, Shulman 1989, and many later authors.
[6] Convincing examples of multiple religious orientations and blurred religious boundaries are provided by the studies of Dominique-Sila Khan 1997, Shail Mayaram 1999, and Peter Gottschalk 2000 on Hindu-Muslim interaction.

in the strict sense of the term. Shail Mayaram, for example, uses the term in a more casual, informal way, indicating the possibility of movement between religious traditions at a time and in an environment without bounded religious universes:

> *"Conversion did not mean a conception of irretrievable entry / exit with respect to a fixed religious universe. Rather there was a constant movement back and forth across sects and also possibilities of multiple affiliation. … Identities were thus dynamic, subject to making and unmaking as they were renegotiated, re-assembled and drew upon several intersecting ethnic pluralities"* (Mayaram 1999: 385).

Colonial classification of Hinduism as a bounded religious universe has greatly changed the place and the relations of the traditions assembled under this term as well as the religious world and self-perception of the practitioners.[7] Increasingly conceived as a distinct entity, Hinduism was meant to exist alongside Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism, and the belief systems of non-Indian origin, Zoroastrianism, Islam and Christianity. While the flexibility in religious orientation and the practices of multiplying or changing religious allegiances were (and still are) often in place on the level of everyday interaction, the political rationale demanded for clear categorization. Governing the (colonial and national) subject requires demographic evidence of religious and social affiliation, of majority and minority status. As a consequence, *religion* and *caste*[8] have become important markers of identity and, increasingly, key drivers for identity politics. In this religio-political environment many of those who were at the lower end of the caste hierarchy (the so called 'Untouchables') and experienced Hindu religion as root cause of social discrimination and inequality, considered a change of religious affiliation to a non-Hinduist religion as realistic option when striving for social recognition.[9]

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[7] In contemporary India religion has been politically charged and instrumentalized. Communalistic rhetoric as well as activities of groups following the Hindu-nationalist ideology and willing to resort to violence have a strong media presence, dominate the political discourse in India and shape the perception of the country in the national and international public.

[8] In pre-British India caste was a fluid social category with often fuzzy boundaries and high regional variability. Under British colonial rule caste became a census category. Castes were ranked on a pan-Indian hierarchical scale, headed by the Brahmins (see Cohn 1987; Dirks 1992 and 2001).

[9] For scenarios and motivations of conversion of Dalits to Christianity see e.g. Oddie 2015, Robinson 2015, Oommen 2015. In earlier times, into the 19th century, several varieties of *bhakti* had provided spaces in which also members of the lower castes could experience basic forms of recognition as equal human beings (Fuchs 1999 and forthcoming b).

Under political conditions where religious boundaries, identities and demographics gain strategic relevance, conversion acquires a completely new meaning and importance. Gauri Viswanathan describes the social eruption caused by conversion as follows:

> *"Conversion is arguably one of the most unsettling political events in the life of a society. This is irrespective of whether conversion involves a single individual or an entire community, whether it is forced or voluntary, or whether it is the result of proselytization or inner spiritual illumination. Not only does conversion alter the demographic equation within a society and produce numerical imbalances, but it also challenges an established community's assent to religious doctrines and practices. With the departure of members from the fold, the cohesion of a community is under threat ..."* (Vishwanathan 1998: xi).

In the first half of the 20th century and in particular in the context of the nationalist movement and the self-assertion of Dalits and their struggle for liberation, conversion became a highly contentious topic in the political arena in India. Two political key figures and influential leaders of those days, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Bhimrao Ambedkar, had strong, but contrary views regarding the role and meaning of religion as well as the idea and practice of conversion. Let us now consider these views, which gained prominence in the public discourse of the time.

M. K. Gandhi and B. R. Ambedkar, and the Significance of Religion

M. K. Gandhi (1869–1948) started his career as a practicing lawyer in South Africa after his graduation in London. The time in South Africa (more than 20 years) was formative for his personal development: having experienced humiliating treatment as a non-white person himself, he engaged in anti-discrimination politics and evolved into a civil rights activist and self-conscious political leader; he developed *satyagraha*, the idea and method of non-violent resistance, which he would use during the Indian struggle for independence to mobilize the masses.

Back in India (since 1915), Gandhi travelled the country in order to learn about Indian realities, about the socio-religious diversity, the political situation, but first and foremost about the everyday life of the people in their rural or urban environments. Only years later he started to actively intervene in politics on a broad base. With public actions like the non-cooperation movement in 1920, the civil disobedience campaign initiated with the salt march to Dandi in 1930, and the Quit India movement in 1942 he successfully challenged the colonial power. As key word and slogan for the Indian independence movement

Gandhi adopted the term *swaraj*, a translation of 'home rule' and already used in the Irish freedom struggle against the British. For Gandhi however, *swaraj* did not only indicate the demand for political liberation, but also for economic, intellectual and spiritual emancipation (see also below: *swadeshi*). This brings us to the core of Gandhi's work and message. His campaigns, strategies and methods were inspired by ethical convictions, by a philosophy of a good and moral life (as individual, but also as group, community, or nation), which was grounded in a critical stance regarding social imbalances and modern civilizational developments. Gandhi was a social reformer, envisioned an alternative modernity and was engaged in a life-long struggle for self-discipline and truth.

"The concept of Truth (*Satya*) is fundamental to the thought of Gandhi", states Glyn Richards (1991: 1), and Gandhi himself subtitled his autobiography 'The story of my experiments with Truth'. When once asked "what is truth", Gandhi replied: Truth is "what the voice within tells you" (Ibid.: 9). Scholars agree that with his answer Gandhi does not refer to a self-authenticating subjective principle, an individual conscience detached from all reference to a particular life-world; rather he recognizes that the way a person thinks and acts is deeply influenced by religious and ethical concepts embedded in the respective environment. Truth, for Gandhi, therefore can only be aspired and sought-for within the context of a particular culture and way of life. Moreover, it is beyond possibility to reach absolute truth; human beings can only try to get closer to it.[10] The same applies to an individual's relation to God, because "Truth is God". Truth seems for Gandhi the "most correct and most fully significant term that could be used for God" (Ibid.: 2), and God is perceived as "unseen power pervading all things". The concept of an impersonal Absolute. Truth, and God, can be only contextually approached.

Understanding God as an appellation for Truth had consequences for Gandhi's perception of *religion*. In the same way as (absolute) Truth is only approachable through relative truth, (perfect) Religion is perceivable only through historical religions:

> *"The one, true and perfect Religion Gandhi refers to is beyond predication and not capable of being realized within finite existence. No particular religion can ever embody the perfection of Religion or lay claim to a monopoly of Truth. Yet particular religions, it might be said, are necessary to convey the meaning of Religion in the same way as particular truths are necessary to convey the meaning*

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[10] Certain practices laid down in Hinduist traditions Gandhi regarded as "paths" of getting closer to Truth: *bhakti* – personal devotion; *yoga* – disciplined action; *ahimsa* – non-violence.

of Truth. But as particular truths do not embody the fullness of Truth so particular religions do not embody the fullness of Religion" (Richards 1991: 17–18).

Gandhi believes that all existing religions possess some truth, but at the same time they are also erroneous to some extent. All religions – though imperfect – are different ways to the same goal; and herewith Gandhi's approach can be compared with that of Hindu reformer Vivekananda, who is convinced that the different viewpoints of historical religions manifest different facets of Truth. Consequently, all religions have legitimacy and deserve respect and it is an essential part of a person's freedom to live socio-cultural and religious difference (see Dharampal-Frick 2015: 268). Gandhi's take on conversion is very much influenced by this attitude, as we will discuss below.

B. R. Ambedkar (1891–1956) was born into the ('untouchable') Mahar community, but he later became one of India's most prominent leaders and statesmen during the struggle for independence and the first decade of post-colonial India. Ambedkar was highly educated; he received two doctoral degrees in economics from prestigious universities in New York and London and he was widely read in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and in cultural and political history. Besides being a scholar, lawyer, publicist and statesman, he was a political activist and leader and the founder of a major religious movement.

Ambedkar had strong convictions concerning the condition and the future perspectives of society, the political development of India, and the struggle for Indian independence. In all his actions and decisions he was spurred on by the desire to achieve equality *and* social recognition for every member of society and to overcome segregation within Indian society. The main issue and driving force behind his efforts was, of course, the hope for emancipation and full recognition of the people called Untouchables, many of whom today prefer the designation 'Dalits' ('broken people'). Ambedkar succeeded in creating self-awareness and a sense of self-assertion among large sections of Dalits as well as in mobilizing them to fight against the oppressive caste system and for recognition and respect. In 1927 he led spectacular actions like the burning of the *Manusmriti*, and protest marches demanding temple entrance for Dalits and equal use of water sources. Politically he (unsuccessfully) fought for separate constituencies of Dalits, in the context of which he clashed with Gandhi (see below with regard to the 'Poona pact' of 1932).

The agenda of thorough social reconstruction led Ambedkar, towards the end of his life, to concentrate all his energy on two very different but at the same time closely related endeavours, the drafting of the Indian Constitution (adopted on 26 Nov. 1949; becoming law on 26 Jan. 1950), to which he prominently contributed as the chairman of the drafting committee, and his initiative

to revive a universalist religion of Indian parentage, i.e. Buddhism. Both seemingly very different enterprises were in Ambedkar's views meant to essentially support each other: the Constitution would provide the legal framework of (social) cohabitation, while Buddhism would teach the social values, actions and beliefs that lie at the heart of human relationships, in order to create a good life and generate concepts of the common good.

Ambedkar's take on religion is inherently linked to his ethical, moral and social outlook.[11] The way he conceived of the individual in relation to society frames his ideas of religion and possible futures. For Ambedkar it is the mode of human coexistence, of sociality, that is decisive for whether an individual can live a decent life in dignity and develop her/his capabilities, or has to suffer non-recognition and insecurity in many areas of life. It is also the mode of coexistence that determines the ability of a society to function and thrive, securing well-being for all its members. Ambedkar's ideal society has first and foremost to be *just* – and justice in his view encompasses ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity (Ambedkar 1987: 25). This has implications also for his view on democracy (Linkenbach forthoming). Though having an eye on all dimensions of a just society, it is fraternity that for Ambedkar stands at the heart of his vision. An integrated, cohesive society is based on social bonds, commonalities, common activities, solidarity and communication. This stands in clear opposition to a religious outlook that supports the segregated caste society which fosters an 'anti-social spirit' and precludes fellow-feeling, emotional imagination, and sympathy especially with the deserving and the sufferer.

While Ambedkar's deep humanist convictions, his ideas of equality, liberty as well as fellow-feeling were implied in his very concept of the human being and in what scholars today call the primary sociality of humans, he discovered the final grounding of his thought in Buddhism. Here he found the humanist values comprehensively expressed for the first time: in the concepts of *karuna* (translated by him as loving kindness) and *maitri* (which he translated as fellow feeling for all living beings), and in the messages Buddha gave to the world to overcome suffering and inequality, to change and reconstruct the world and to erect a moral order.

Ambedkar's concept of religion thus mirrors the opposition between a humanist and an anti-humanist order. He distinguishes between 'true' and untrue religions. In his view, religious ideals in general have a hold on mankind that secular ideas never have. What concerns him is the moral dimension of religions. It is not religion as such that is moral in his eyes, but only such religion

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[11] For an extended discussion of Ambedkar's concepts of sociality and religion see Fuchs (forthcoming b).

that is true to what should be the centre of religion: true to universal "spiritual" (Ambedkar 1989a [1936]) or "moral" (Ambedkar 1992 [1957]) principles. Ambedkar opposes religions that are predominantly prescriptive, enforce "commands and prohibitions", claiming eternal validity of their laws, and are not based on universalist ethical principles (Ambedkar 1989a [1936]).

At the same time he considers the idea of religion as an individual, private and "purely personal matter between man and God", as one-sided, being based on aspects of religion that are "purely historical and not fundamental" (Ambedkar 1989b: 406, 409). Religion for Ambedkar is social in several respects. Like language it is "essential for social life[,] and the individual has to have it because without it he cannot participate in the life of society"; true religion is also social with regard to its main message, as it is emphasizing and even "universalizing" social values (Ibid.: 407, 409). In the context of debating conversion Ambedkar's plainly states: "... religion exists not for the saving of souls but for the preservation of society and the welfare of the individual" (Ibid.: 420–421).

Gandhi's and Ambedkar's Views on Conversion: Significant Differences

If one looks at *M. K. Gandhi's* various statements regarding conversion, it seems that they oscillate between approval and rejection. To kick off his discussion of Gandhi's thoughts on conversion, Sudhir Chandra contrasts two different statements of the Mahatma: the one in which he says, "I am against conversion, whether it is known as *shuddhi* by Hindus, *tabligh* by Muselmans or proselytizing by Christians", the other in which he declares, "It [religion] is a matter for every individual to decide for himself to which faith he will belong" (Chandra 2005: 184). These statements, obviously, were made in different contexts.

Under the premise that none of the existing (historical) religions embodies absolute but only relative truth, no religion can claim to be better than the others. All religions are legitimate, though imperfect ways to God and to Truth. Why then should a person change religion – especially given the fact that religion is part of the cultural life-world in which this person is rooted? Moreover, when being bothered by certain shortcomings of one's religion, instead of converting, the follower should try to reform the religious system. Concerning his own religion – Hinduism – Gandhi is ready to admit serious weaknesses, and he refers in this context to untouchability, which he considers an ethical aberration. Instead of leaving Hinduism because of this defect, he suggests that the critical follower should "serve it by purging it of its defects" (from 'The Gospel of Swadeshi', quoted in Chandra 2005: 189).

However, there seems to be a moment when Gandhi nevertheless accepts conversion: this is when a person deep in his/her heart feels, when the "inner

voice" tells him or her, that changing religion would be the right thing to do. Conversion, Gandhi says, is "a heart-process known only to and by God". *Only* in the case of deep conviction and as result of a truly autonomous decision conversion seems an understandable and righteous move in the eyes of Gandhi, but not if it is triggered by human agency (see Chandra 2005: 185–186).

Gandhi vehemently rejects conversion motivated by outside influences, and in this context Christian missionaries in particular were targeted; and this despite (or probably because of) the fact that he stood in continuous and intensive exchange but also dispute with them. Gandhi's aversion against conversion is very much grounded in his experience with missionaries and their activities in colonial India. He saw Christian Missions indissolubly linked with colonial rule and foreign power, imperialistic exploitation and western materialism. Al-though Gandhi had to acknowledge Christianity as one path on the search for Truth and respected, even accepted, some Christian ethical ideals[12], he had strong reservations regarding the way Christianity and Christians performed in India. One of his arguments against proselytizing was that conversion damages the social fabric of a society, since it leads to cultural alienation and denationalization.

Even the thought of an indigenized version of a religion of non-Indic origin, as that of an Indian Christianity, went against Gandhi's idea of *swadeshi*, a concept that was originally developed as an economic strategy against British rule in the 19th century in Bengal, and after 1918 adopted by Gandhi and also applied to the realms of politics and religion:

> *"Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition, I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion. That is, the use of my immediate religious surrounding. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects."[13]*

The idea of religious *swadeshi* results in Hinduism taking on a double legitimation: as pan-Indian national religion it is shared by the majority of Indian people; and, as the most tolerant and inclusive religion it accepts other religions as equally valid paths to God, is ready to incorporate positive elements of

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[12] *Ahimsa*, understood as soul-force, nonviolence, "reflects a great deal of the teaching of the New Testament on love and it is not really surprising that Jesus should be referred to as one who manifested ahimsa in its perfect form" (Richards 1991: 34). Gandhi admits that the Sermon on the Mount "competes almost on equal terms with the Bhagavad Gita for the domination of my heart" (quoted in Chandra 2005: 192).

[13] See https://www.mkgandhi.org/indiadreams/chap31.htm (The Gospel of Swadeshi). Published as E-book: Gandhi, *India of my Dreams*; accessed 11/03/2018.

other religions, and does not engage in missionary activity. With that Gandhi brings Hinduism to a position of superiority and thus in the end undermines his own thoughts of equal paths to Religion and Truth.

To round off the topic of conversion in the thoughts and works of Gandhi, we have to address two further aspects: the issue of mass conversion, and Gandhi's understanding of conversion as persuasion. Both topics provide a bridge to our subsequent discussion of Ambedkar's approach to conversion.

Gandhi rigorously condemned so-called 'mass conversion' – regardless which religion the converts chose. The debate was triggered in 1935 by the conversion of a whole village predominantly of Harijans to Christianity.[14] While Gandhi claimed to fully understand why a Harijan, experiencing untouchability, would want to change his religious affiliation as an individual and out of personal conviction, he strongly argued against conversion of a whole group or a village of Harijans. He basically denied most of the Harijans the capacity to understand the Christian message and "what change of religion can mean"; and in a debate with the Methodist missionary J. R. Mott he asked: "Would you, Dr. Mott, preach the gospel to a cow?" He continued: "Some of the untouchables are worse than cows in understanding. I mean they can no more distinguish between the relative merits of Islam and Hinduism and Christianity than a cow" (quoted in Chandra 2005: 201). Gandhi's outburst had apparently two reasons. Firstly, he reacted to a speech given by B. R. Ambedkar in October 1935, in which the latter announced to break with Hinduism[15] and encouraged other Dalits to do the same. Secondly, accepting Dalits leaving the Hindu fold meant conceding that efforts to reform Hinduism from within had failed. Gandhi himself engaged genuinely in attempts to remove the excesses of untouchability (*not* caste as such) through influencing the mind-sets of the upper castes; but with his engagement he consciously denied Dalits to stand in for themselves and fight for their rights.

This leads us to the issue of conversion as persuasion, as change of mind and reform. Such an understanding of conversion predominates for example in the context of Gandhi's reflections on *ahimsa* (see Iyer 2000, chapter 8). For Gandhi the "votary of *ahimsa*"*,* that is the person who decides to follow the path of non-violence and changes his/her moral and practical attitude accordingly, experiences a "second birth" or conversion. Such a person, standing for example up against political or economic injustice, will be able to attempt for

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[14] *Hari-jan* – 'persons of God' – the name Gandhi gave to the so-called Untouchables.

[15] Ambedkar oscillates between considering 'Untouchables' as outside the Hindu fold, and excluded from many areas and practices, and seeing them as encompassed by Hinduism in its modern shape.

"peaceful conversion" of the adversary: "Ahimsa is intended to replace coercion by persuasion and to result in the conversion of a violent opponent" (Iyer 2000: 209). Conversion as persuasion is not meant to result from an appeal to reason, "but rather through *tapas* and self-suffering" (Ibid.: 333). Gandhi himself admitted that non-violent strategies, like fasting, exert moral pressure, and here one has at least to pose the question how far such strategies imply a certain element of coercion (see Richards 1991: 61).

This question is relevant in the context of Gandhi's ambivalent relation to *B. R. Ambedkar*, which resulted from contrary views regarding how to eliminate untouchability, the question of the representation of Dalits, and conversion. In 1932 Gandhi undertook a fast unto death to cause Ambedkar to drop his demand for separate electorates for Dalits. Ambedkar comments that this fast placed him in a great and grave dilemma, that he was made the "villain of the piece" (Ambedkar 1989b: 341), as he had to decide whether Gandhi lived on or died. Naturally, Ambedkar stated, he responded to "the call of humanity" and saved Gandhi's life by negotiating the 'Poona Pact', which satisfied Gandhi, and gave reserved seats to the Untouchables, instead of separate electorates. One may assume that experiences like this one confirmed Ambedkar in his conviction not to die as a Hindu – a decision he first voiced publicly, as mentioned, in 1935.

B. R. Ambedkar's approach to conversion links theory and practice. He voiced strong support of "conversion to equality" and he headed the biggest 'conversion' movement, or movement to change one's religious affiliation, in independent India. The new religion that he and his followers adopted at a ceremony on October 14, 1956 was Buddhism, more precisely, a particular form of Buddhism, sometimes called Navayana, that he himself had shaped with his book *The Buddha and his Dhamma*, which appeared posthumously in 1957. For all of those who participated in the ceremony, conversion from Hinduism indicated the exchange of the old for a new body; it was meant helping to achieve a "new life", a "complete change of values of life" (Ambedkar 1989a [1936]: 78).

Why did Ambedkar consider such a tremendous shift being necessary? The answer lies in the way Hinduism treats those who as Untouchables are on the one hand considered part of the fold, but on the other hand and because of their subordinate position are excluded from many areas of life and regularly experience humiliation. He rhetorically asks:

"Does Hinduism recognize their worth as human beings? Does it stand for their equality? Does it extend to them the benefit of liberty? Does it at least help to forge the bond of fraternity between them and the Hindus? Does it teach the Hindus that the Untouchables are their kindred? ... Does it tell the Hindus to

love them, to respect them and to do them no wrong? In fine, does Hinduism universalize the value of life without distinction?" (Ambedkar 1989b: 412)

The definite answer to all the question would be 'no', and Ambedkar locates the reason for it in the traditional teachings of Hinduism: "That Hinduism is inconsistent with the self-respect and honour of the Untouchables is the strongest ground which justifies the conversion of the Untouchables to another and nobler faith" (Ibid.: 412). It goes without saying that the new religion had to be carefully chosen, as it must allow to end the social isolation, remove the inferiority complex and raise the general status of those so far called 'Untouchables' (Ibid.: 412ff).

For Ambedkar these fundamental requirements were to be fulfilled by Buddhism.[16] According to his interpretation, *dhamma*, the teachings of the Buddha, emphasizes morality and thus represent what is, or should be, true in religion. With its focus on morality, *dhamma* stands in opposition to (the other) religions with their fixation on God: "Morality is Dhamma and Dhamma is Morality. In other words, in Dhamma morality takes the place of God although there is no God in Dhamma" (Ambedkar 1992 [1957]: 322). It is the relationship between humans on which morality has to centre: "Morality in Dhamma arises from the direct necessity for man to love man. It does not require the sanction of God. It is not to please God that man has to be moral. It is for his own good that man has to love man" (Ibid.: 323). On the basis of morality human beings are free to establish kinship and form a community, to meet as fellow human beings and become part of a brotherhood; in this way they can gain self-respect and can start seeing themselves as no longer degraded, worthless outcastes (Ambedkar 1989b: 413ff).

Ambedkar's renderings of Buddha's insights and teachings look like a very modern concept of religion, a post-religious religion (Fuchs 2001: 261). Ambedkar dismisses God, as well as religion in a conventional sense of the term. But what he emphatically emphasizes is that morality, to be socially accepted and valid, has to be made or regarded as not just universal but *sacred.*

As far as conversion is concerned, Ambedkar was adamant that the decision to convert was an active choice, and search, of each Dalit and therefore absolutely 'genuine'. The new religion emphasizes community, mutual recognition and respect as values, and signals a social awakening of a previously oppressed group. That is why it seems appropriate that the actual conversion ceremony could be held as a group event. Religion in the sense of *dhamma* is to help human

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[16] For a discussion of Ambedkar's Buddhism see Fuchs 2001. Ambedkar is quite critical of the fact that conversion to Christianity did not raise the status of Untouchables, but perpetuates humiliating practices and status inequalities even among Christians.

beings to organize, and thus revolutionize, their mode of social co-existence: While the purpose of religion is to explain the origin of the world, "the purpose of Dhamma is to reconstruct the world" (Ambedkar 1992 [1957]: 322).

Concluding Remarks

Conversion as it is debated and assessed by both M. K. Gandhi und B. R. Ambedkar is strongly connected with their respective ideas and concepts of religion, human sociality, equality and morality.

At the heart of *Ambedkar*'s endeavour lies a *social project* in which pre-existing, anthropologically given, transcendentally grounded universalist values, grasped with the concepts of fellow-feeling and solidarity between equals, are considered the glue of sociality and human interaction. This social project can only be realized by sacralising it through a religion supporting these values. With his re-interpretation of Buddhism Ambedkar designs a religion, which is not about the relationship between humans and God but about the relationships between human beings. This post-religious religion has a paradoxical status, differing from that of all other religions. The core of Navayana Buddhism (or Ambedkarite Buddhism) is *karuna* and *maitri* – mutual love and brotherhood.

Ambedkar does not tolerate any form of social hierarchy, inequality, oppression and degradation of any member of society, and he also does not accept or want to be part of a religion that inherently allows such discriminatory ideas and practices. Living in a context where the ancestral religion sanctions social discrimination against certain groups, casting away such a religion seems for him a precondition for social emancipation; and he feels urged to convince others to do the same and establish allegiance with a universalist religion based on recognition and respect for all human beings.

Gandhi's core project is an *individualist* one: searching for and living according to Truth (or God). It is a religious project that requires a strong ethical stance and moral commitment of the individual, namely recognizing and lovingly accepting all human beings regardless of their status in social life. Gandhi's project at the same time has a *social impact* in a twofold sense: it has a social message and it demands devotion to this message from everybody, since for him a cohesive society can only be built if all its members follow the same path – and it is Gandhi who claims to show the path, expressed by his repeated statement that "my life is my message".

In difference to Ambedkar, Gandhi's idea of justice and sociality does not radically question hierarchical social (inter)dependencies, but considers them necessary for the functioning of society. As long as wealth serves public wel-

fare and people on all levels of society get recognition and respect in their respective positions and occupations, as long as they get the chances to develop themselves (to a certain degree) social stability is guaranteed. Implicit in Gandhi's approach is the conviction that social positions in society are somehow congruent with people's social and intellectual capacities and therefore everybody has the place in society, which he or she deserves and should accept.

The religious teachings of Hinduism are congruent with the sociocultural life-world of the followers. Therefore Gandhi demands that one should stick to one's ancestral religion as long as it does not hinder personal growth and reform.[17] Gandhi deeply believes in inner reform and in the capacity of Hinduism to incorporate new ideas, which improve religious and social life.[18] It is because of this that he understands Hinduism as a non-sectarian and inclusive religion, which on the one hand provides a historical path to Truth like all the other religions, but on the other hand seems to deserve a superior position.[19]

The contrary views of Ambedkar and Gandhi concerning the question of conversion, or of adopting a new religion, reflect their extremely different experiences with Hindu traditions and practices and the differences of their social positionalities within or, in Ambedkar's case, rather vis-à-vis the Hindu fold. Both critically evaluated the colonial impact, as well as the Hindu traditions. While Gandhi, in view of the humiliating practices of untouchability, which he saw as more recent negative excesses of an otherwise benign religion, criticised and demanded to reform Hinduism, Ambedkar targeted Hinduism in its entirety as a religious system built on systematic oppression and disregard of large groups of people. Given this background, Gandhi took a critical attitude towards conversion (to a non-Hindu belief system), while Ambedkar activated conversion as an act of critique, and as a signal of hope for a future of equal dignity.

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[17] "I prefer to retain the label of my forefathers so long as it does not cramp my growth and does not debar me from assimilating all that is good anywhere else" (Young India, 02 September 1926, p. 308).
[18] "Not being an exclusive religion, it enables the followers of that faith not merely to respect all the other religions, but it enables them to admire and assimilate whatever may be good in the other faiths" (Young India, 20 October 1927).
[19] Kumkum Sangari (forthcoming) claims that in his later years (1940s) Gandhi moved from a synthetic Hinduism to a discourse of multiple belonging. He started to claim to be everything – Hindu, Muslim, Christian –, but this discourse rested firmly on an I-claim and an ethical universalism grounded in the hope for a religiously pluralist nation.

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This Festschrift in honour of Professor Dr. Gita Dharampal-Frick assembles a number of innovative contributions by friends, colleagues and former students to the multiple research areas in the field of history of South Asia that Gita Dharampal-Frick has enriched over the last decades. The essays included in this volume address a broad number of topics and periods, ranging from transcultural encounters between South Asia and Europe, reassessments of colonial discourses and their legacies, novel approaches to the maritime history of the Indian Ocean, and to perspectives on M. K. Gandhi.

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