

Why the Dawn Volume?

The idea to prepare a volume devoted to the subject of daybreak delineation in Indian literature and art gradually dawned on me during the Pandanus international seminar held in Prague in May 2006. Two of the papers presented there, namely “The Description of Sunrise in Māgha’s *Śisupālavadhā* XI, 43-67” by A. Trynkowska and “The Description of Dawn in Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvamśā*” by A. Bonisoli Alquati⁵, were inspired by earlier presentations of the dawn *tōpoi* delivered at the *kāvya* seminar in Milan in 2004 (C. Galewicz, “On the Vedic Images of Dawn”; I. Milewska, “Dawn as Described in the *Mahābhārata*”; L. Sudyka, “The Descriptions of Dawn in the *Mahākāvya*-s”). It seems that this topic, although not so popular with Sanskrit poets as for instance its opposition – twilight, is worth paying attention. In David Smith’s words⁶: “Dawn is, in itself, a structural event of the highest importance for all creatures that live in the daylight. And it is only logical that it should play a part in the structure of literary works. Another factor to be noted is that the sky is the largest screen that any artist can employ. Given the importance of painting in classical Indian culture, for poets with a painterly sense, such as is Bāḍa [and not only him – L.S.], the sky at dawn and evening offers the broadest and grandest scope for visual imagination”.

All the contributions to the *Suprabhātam* volume are organised topic-wise. First comes up **poetry** starting from its earliest stratum created by the Vedic *kāvī*-s. This is the story of Purūravas and Urvaśī, which is examined by Cezary Galewicz in connection with dawn motifs present in it. The parallels between the images of Urvaśī and Uṣas, the Goddess of Dawn, are shown there, however it is the idea of the first daybreak of the year – a return *in illo tempore* which gains a lot of attention. The year and the day both live through cycles, including death and rebirth,

⁵Both papers were published in *Pandanus’06*, the publication of Charles University in Prague, 2006.

⁶D. Smith, “Action and anxiety: dawn in the *Kādambārī* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa and Bhūṣaṇa”, p. 147 of the present volume.

and this particular New Year's morning can bring a human being closer to the world of gods.

The next two articles transfer us from the realm of religious poetry to the Sanskrit court epic poems (*mahākāvya*, *sargabandha*). The paper "The descriptions of the dawn in the *mahākāvya* genre", after reviewing the approach of Indian theoreticians dealing with the definitions of a *mahākāvya*, aims at showing the tendencies developed by the writers of the Sanskrit epic poems in connection with the depiction of dawning day.

Anna Bonisoli Alquati's paper concentrates on the Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa*. Longer descriptions of daybreak are placed within the frames of King Aja's life story. Interestingly enough one can notice certain links with the love story of Purūravas and Urvaśī, as for instance it is due to the help of certain Gandharva that Aja obtains a magical weapon, which enables him to conquer (i.e. to put to sleep) the envious suitors of Indumafī. After a period of uninterrupted happiness, Aja's wife dies and the pair can be united only in heaven. The different descriptions are introduced into the narrative course, among them the song of royal bards depicting the dawning day (chapter V) preceding the self-choosing ceremony (*svayaṃvara*) of Indumafī. The repertoire of dawn motifs is also present in the next canto describing the *svayaṃvara*. The consideration is given to the role of bards and the choice of the metre suitable to imitate the rhythm of a song.

The paper of Daniela Rossella concentrates on love poetry and lovers' behaviour at dawn. It also shows those specimens of dawn poetry where eroticism touches religious approach. The same imagery, structure and motifs are present in both erotic and mystical texts of India. The authoress offers a comparative perspective to her analysis bringing to the scene Provençal troubadours and their *alba/aubade* or German Minnesänger with the Tagelied.

The first peep into the universe of Urdu poetry, and the ghazal as its important representative especially, assure us that we are going to stay in the realm of love, be it dedicated towards God or a mundane beloved and expressed in the convention proper for Urdu lyrics. The ghazals of Faiz Ahmad Faiz belong to this ghazal tradition "evoking the haunted intimacy of lost love in the true tradition of the genre"⁷, however, to understand the nuances and allusions present in Faiz poetry one needs to know also the historical background of his life and work, which is provided by Maria Skakuj Puri and Khurshid Afaque, the careful guides into the world of Faiz ghazals, in which dawn plays an important role.

⁷M. Skakuj Puri, K. Afaque, "When ghazal does not speak of love... Imagery of 'dawn' in poetry of Faiz Ahmad Faiz", p. 109 of the present volume.

The phenomenon of dawn and the activities which take place at that time as described in Sanskrit **prose** is discussed in three papers. As Anna Trynkowska notices, the nine short fragments of the *Daśakumāracarita* “do not constitute source material sufficient to draw any conclusions as to Daṇḍin’s descriptive technique and the presentation of dawn in Sanskrit court prose or in *kāvya* in general”⁸. Almost the same concerns Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita*. There is only one elaborate description of dawn in the military camp of King Harṣa. The reader can find interesting the concluding remarks of C. Rajendran, who points out that Bāṇa when writing an *ākhyāyikā* was not bound by the strict rules as to what sort of description should be present in it, which is the case of the *mahākāvya* genre. That is why he could “afford to be strictly functional in his approach to descriptions as they suit to the development of the story. It is, therefore, not surprising that the description in *Harṣacarita* of dawn in the camp becomes that of an army camp at dawn and not vice versa”⁹. It may be noted here that placing the dawn description in the military context favoured by some poets can be treated as a part of their endeavours in binding two lines of themes presented in court poems: those connected with love and with the activities of heroes in kingship and war. Interestingly enough the picture of an army marching in the dust raised by the hooves of horses and elephants can be described with the use of the same palette as in the case of delineation of the morning world bathed in reddish and yellow paints.

In his article devoted to the *Kādambarī*, David Smith calls it a novel of dawn, as the daybreak seems to catch the attention of the author as a time when people act or make a decision. It has also a symbolic meaning as it symbolises the early adulthood of its heroes. Smith concludes that “By looking at the thread of dawn as it runs through *Kādambarī*, we have the opportunity to see the poem in a new light, the light of dawn”¹⁰. What David Smith particularly underlines is the painterly attitude of Bāṇa and the striking precision of his colour terminology.

This statement brings us to the last article in the volume devoted to the dawn representations in Indian **fine arts** by Dorota Kamińska. The authoress concentrates on a woman at toilet – an art motif which has a long tradition in India, first in sculptural realization, then in Indian miniature paintings. Toilet can take place also at dawn, which is presented in agreement with *śilpaśāstra* prescriptions: red clouds in the bright blue sky or the sun with long rays, usually partly seen just above the

⁸A. Trynkowska, “Dawn in Daṇḍin’s *Daśakumāracarita*”, p. 137 of the present volume.

⁹C. Rajendran, “Business unusual: Bāṇa’s description of Dawn in *Harṣacarita*”, pp. 144, 145 of the present volume.

¹⁰D. Smith, “Action and anxiety: dawn in the *Kādambarī* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa and Bhūṣaṇa”, p. 171.

horizon. The heroine is portrayed according to the canons of Indian feminine beauty, so suggestively described by the poets of India in different ages and languages. The dawn theme appears also on the pages/leaves of illustrated manuscripts. This is the case of the illustrated manuscript of the *Rasamañjarī* by Bhānudatta¹¹ containing the portrait of a *mugdā nāyikā*, a young heroine depicted during her morning bath. However not only the nameless *nāyikā*-s were portrayed by the miniaturists. The ancient story of Nala and Damayantī as told by Śrīharṣa in his *Naiṣadhacarita* was illustrated by skilful painters. The drawing of Damayantī's morning toilet one can meet among the Pahārī paintings based on this *mahākāvya*.



Damayantī's toilet after the nuptial night. Fragments of a sanguine drawing.¹²

The dawn theme, as it was mentioned by Daniela Rossella and Dorota Kamińska, enters also the system of classical Indian music. There are dawn modes which express the feelings of the lovers parting at dawn. As Arnold Bake writes: "Even in our days, Vibhāsa and Lalitā (or, by the modern names, Bibhās and Lalit or Lalat) are still connected with the hour of the daybreak. The sequence of the Lalat notes, with an augmented second at the beginning, contrasting with an augmented fourth, gives it a haunting and wistful character, well in accordance with the sadness of parting lovers"¹³.

¹¹D. Kamińska, "At dawn and at dusk: a woman at her toilet. Many ways of interpretation of the art motif", p. 176, ill. 4 of the present volume.

¹²"Pahari Paintings of the Nala-Damayanti theme in the collection of Dr. Karan Singh", Essey and Notes by N. Goswamy, Foreword by Karan Singh, National Museum, New Delhi, Third Edition, 2006, fragments of the fig. 13.

These two modes or *rāgiṇī*-s have their pictorial representations. In this way literature, painting and music are entwined with each other in Indian culture.

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The present volume allows us to think about the cosmogonic dimension of this phenomenon of nature, step into the lovers' enclave at dawn, listen to the bards announcing the beginning of the new day and singing the glory of their lords, notice the *bhakta*-s expressing their devotion to the god and see Indian nature awaken at sunrise.

By no means the material collected in the present volume can exhaust the subject. There are still many possibilities to explore it more deeply and extensively, bringing further facts into readers' attention.

Perhaps it would be interesting to enlarge this picture with the ritualistic prescriptions for the beginning of the day also present to some extent in the depiction of the daily routine of a king, as we have it in Sanskrit *campū*-s and *mahākāvya*-s. Let us mention the *Colacampū*¹⁴. Its author Virūpākṣa describes the dawning day in a passage consisting of seven stanzas (64-80) and one prose piece, namely a thirteen-line sentence¹⁵. First he uses conventional images connected with the sunrise theme, then informs the reader or listener that King Kulottuṅga after getting up from his bed (the description of this bed is offered in stanza 64) and thinking about Śiva, studies his own image in a mirror and does some other auspicious things (as looking at two Brahmins, at milk in a golden pot or at a picture of Garuḍa¹⁶). After such a promising beginning of the day, the time for gymnastic exercises comes, then bath etc. Then he worships Śiva with delicate *bilva* (Aegle marmelos, L.) leaves gathered by himself as well as other sixteen offerings and also distributes gifts. Only then comes time proper for the meal in the company of his friends and after that, for fulfilling his royal duties¹⁷.

¹³ *Eos. An Enquiry into the Theme of Lovers' Meetings and Partings at Dawn in Poetry*, edited by Arthur T. Hatto, London – The Hague – Paris 1965, p. 158.

¹⁴ At the moment an MA thesis on the image of Kulottuṅga in the *Colacampū* is being prepared by Katarzyna Kuczaj, a student of mine.

¹⁵ *Cola Campū* of Virūpākṣa, Edited with Critical Introduction and Notes by V. Raghavan, Tanjore Saraswati Mahal Series No. 55, Madras 1951, pp. 28-30.

¹⁶ V. N. Rao, D. Shulman, S. Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance. Court and State in Nāyaka Period Tamilnadu*, Oxford University Press, Delhi/ Calcutta/ Chennai/ Mumbai 1998, p. 59.

¹⁷ *tataḥ samutthāya śayanīyāt śivasmaraṇapūrvakam ālokya maṅgalyāni darpaṇādīni, nirvartya vyāyāmaividhim, āsādyā snānasadanam viracitasnānādikṛtyaḥ, praviśya pūjagṛham*

It seems that the picture of a king “as he proceeds slowly through a typical royal day – typical, that is, in the highly ritualised and strictly patterned vision of the court”¹⁸, was especially popular in the South of India. It has its special place and meaning in Telugu literature and *abhyudayamu* genre.

The blend of the religious and secular is also visible in morning hymns (*suprabhātam*) conveying the glory of the god. The waking up ceremony of the Lord of Tirupati can serve as an example here. The stanzas awakening the God according to the tradition were composed by Prativādi Bhayaṅkara, a contemporary of Vedānta Deśika. It is a poem resembling with its structure the songs sung by the bards. Its creator cleverly applies the rhetoric of both secular and devotional literature. On the one hand we are offered with a litany, typical for *stotra*-type literature, of the god and goddess’s names-attributes, such as in stanza 2 and 4¹⁹:

uttiṣṭhotttiṣṭha govinda uttiṣṭha garuḍadhvaja |
uttiṣṭha kamalākānta trailokyam maṅgalaṃ kuru || 2||

Awake, oh! Govinda! awake! Thou with Garuḍa banner! awake! Thou beloved of Kamalā! Awake to bestow happiness on the three worlds!

tava suprabhātam aravindalocane bhavatu prasannamukhacandramaṅḍale |
vidhiśaṅkarendravanitābhir arcite vṛṣaśailanāthadayite dayānidhe || 4||

May this morning will be good for thee! Oh! Lotus-eyed! Oh! One with a bright orb of a moon-like face! Thou art praised by the consorts of Brahma, Śiva and Indra! Thou, Beloved of the Lord of the Vṛṣaśaila! Thou treasure-house of kindness!

On the other hand the images which are almost obligatory to employ in *kāvya* while describing the daybreak also appear:

svahastāpacitaiḥ komalair bilvapatraiḥ yathā vibhavasampāditaḥ ṣoḍaśabhir upacāraḥ ca sampūjya śivam, pradāya dānāni bhūrṇi, āptatamais saha kṛtabhojanas sa naranāthaḥ kulottuṅgaḥ praviśya dharmādhikāramaṅḍapam...., Cola Campū of Virūpākṣa, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

¹⁸V. N. Rao, D. Shulman, S. Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance...*, op. cit., pp. 59, 60.

¹⁹Pidatala Sitapati, *Sri Venkateswara. The Lord of the Seven Hills, Tirupati*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 1972, p. 111. Translations are my own. The VCD cum CD-ROM entitled *Sri Venkatesa Suprabhatam* has been recently released thanks to financial assistance of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams SV Recording Project, Tirupati. It contains a Sanskrit text and translation into Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, Bengali, Gujarati, Orija, Marathi, Hindi and English.

*padmeśamitraśatapatragatālivargāh
hartuṃ śriyaṃ kuvalayasya nijāṅgalakṣmyā /
bherīnādam iva bibhrati tīvranādam
śeṣādriśekhara vibho tava suprabhātam //*

The bees emerging from hundred-petalled lotuses befriended with the Sun, in order to steal the glory of dark-coloured lotuses with their bodily lustre, produce terrifying buzzing reminding the sounds of kettle-drums.
Oh! Lord of the Śeṣādri! Good morning to you!

May these examples encourage the attempts in further investigation into the dawn theme and perhaps its reversal – the twilight.

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