

MODERN SOUTH ASIA: A SPACE OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND A DISTINCT AREA OF RESEARCH

EDITORS' PREFACE

In the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* – issued by the Council of Europe – intercultural dialogue is understood as *a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect*. In view of the same document, such a process *requires the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others*.

The present issue of *Politeja. The Journal of the Faculty of International and Political Studies of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow* focuses on intercultural dialogue within the region of South Asia and between South Asian countries and the West, regarding its various aspects. For the Contributors of the volume, this network of relationships becomes an important factor of political, social, cultural and economic integration as well as the cohesion of culturally diverse societies. The articles are divided into four main themes: history, culture, society and politics. The volume opens with a programmatic text by Klaus Karttunen, in which the author discusses the mutual importance of the classical and modern approach to the studies on India and South Asia, presenting a series of cultural phenomena constituted by the past and yet undoubtedly belonging to the present.

Historical issues, discussed by Shantanu Chakrabarti, Renata Czekalska, Robert Kłosowicz, Agnieszka Kuczkiewicz-Fraś and Xavier Romero-Frias, include an interpretation of the legacy of partition of the Indian Subcontinent from both Indian and Pakistani perspectives, interdependencies between Mahatma Gandhi's concept of *satyagraha* and the place where it was invented – South Africa, historical relations between

Afghanistan and South Asia with special attention given to the current situation in the area of the Khyber Pass, and the translation of 'Rules for Maldivian Trading Ships' accompanied by a personal account of the experiences in and around Gali (Galle, Sri Lanka) written by an old Maldivian trader.

The Authors of the articles related to various areas of South Asian culture – Carmen Brandt, M. Krzysztof Byrski, Marta Kudelska, Agnieszka Staszczyk, Agata Świerżowska, Halina Marlewicz, Iwona Milewska, Nicola Pozza, Guillermo Rodríguez, and Sergei Serebriany – dedicated their contributions to various factors which influence our perception of another culture (by reference to three dominant German images of India), the possibility of a theological dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism within the framework of an ancient Indian concept of "the eternal nature of things," the idea of the revival of Indian society and nation in the undertaking of G.D. Birla, the interrelations between existence, life and literature in Khushwant Singh's *Delhi: A Novel*, the possibilities of intercultural understanding between Europe and India, an analysis of the attitude towards the idea of multicultural or multireligious India in the texts by two prominent twentieth century Indian literary figures, select distinctive results of Polish fascination with the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore and also the reception of the same poet in Spain with special focus on the crucial role of Juan Ramón Jiménez and Zenobia Camprubí in promoting the poems of the "great Bard of Bengal," and the concept of "Indian philosophy" with reference to the analysis of this concept presented by W. Halbfass in his book *India and Europe*.

Diverse social issues – discussed by Mohammad Kamran Ahsan, Zbigniew Igielski, Kamila Junik-Łuniewska, Marek Moroń, Madhusudan Subedi, Mahmudul Sumon – comprise a critical analysis of Arundhati Roy's writings, the philosophical and practical understanding of the Sikh concept of *kirat karnī*, the social influence of female activists involved in the struggle for women's rights in Pakistan, the role of cities in creating the nationalisms in Bengal, the concept of caste analyzed as both the product of complex histories as well as a multimorphic contemporary phenomenon, and the links between the notion of majority/minority and the forms of colonial governmentality in South Asia.

Krzysztof Dębicki, Piotr Kłodkowski, Hubert Królikowski, Agnieszka Kuszewska and Michał Lubina contributed papers dedicated to contemporary South Asian politics, discussing the perceptions of the West created by the militant media in Pakistan and their impact on the Pakistani identity, the struggle for the Nepalese national identity analyzed in the regional context, specific features of the Indo-Pakistani Kargil war, the role of India in Pakistan's international strategy, and the political relations between Burma and India.

The Contributors of the volume, in various ways, address the challenges of intercultural dialogue as a condition fostering equality, human dignity and a sense of common purpose as well as a cause not only of developing a deeper understanding of diverse worldviews and of increasing co-operation and participation (or the freedom to make choices), but also of promoting tolerance and respect for "the Other." In this way, the articles gathered in this publication can also be understood as a justification that differ-

ent cultures of the World are united by common values yet, at the same time, they are enriched by cultural diversity.

We are deeply convinced that the present volume, being a platform for presenting the views of academics and intellectuals on the issue of intercultural dialogue and its implications for politics, economy, culture, identity, education etc., also proves the necessity of identifying a common intellectual ground for scholars of various academic disciplines who chose South Asia as the field of their research. Philologists (Indologists), historians, anthropologists, scholars of cultural studies as well as political and social sciences, who were kind enough to trust us with their contributions, presented a truly vast spectrum of themes and subjects which prove the need of an interdisciplinary approach in studying contemporary South Asia, encompassed in the umbrella term of Modern South Asian Studies. This reasonably young discipline, even though still much less established than its classical predecessor named Indology, is now a fairly developed, independent area of academic research comprising specialists in social and political sciences as well as philology, art and culture, and history of South Asia. It is a discipline of knowledge which not only draws from the previous research on the rich language traditions in South Asia, but also combines it with social, political and anthropological approaches, focusing on the processes of continuity and change in the political, social, cultural and intellectual history of the Indian Subcontinent.

The editors of the volume would like to express their deep gratitude to the Contributors whose works submitted to this publication justify the need for a truly interdisciplinary or perhaps even transdisciplinary approach, based on the dialogue between various areas of expertise and understood as the only effective method for comprehensive, specialized research of the dialogical diversity of South Asia.

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