

# Introduction

The present volume is the outcome of the 3rd CEENIS<sup>1</sup> Conference, ‘Indian Culture and Society in Current Research in Central and Eastern Europe (International Conference cum CEENIS Meeting on the Occasion of the 5th Anniversary of Setting up CEENIS)’, organized in 2011, 27-29 October, by the Chair of South Asian Studies of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland, with the financial support of the Rector of the University of Warsaw, the Faculty of Oriental Studies and the Embassy of India in Warsaw. That meeting, which gathered scholars representing all the member institutions of the network, was yet another realization of one of the CEENIS objectives of bringing together specialists in Indian studies and providing them with a suitable forum for academic interaction in the region.

During the concluding session of the conference, all the participants unanimously agreed that extended versions of the papers read at the conference should be published in a volume initiating a new subject-oriented series. Though one year later than initially planned, this decision has now materialized as the first volume of the *CEENIS Current Research Series* published under the auspices of the Chair of South Asian Studies (Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw) with the author of the present words as its editor-in-chief. It is designed with the aim – as can be inferred from the title – of promoting and disseminating the results of research conducted at the CEENIS member institutions and as such it is basically meant as a forum for authors from the region for discussion that will stimulate and strengthen collaboration among member institutions. Nevertheless, it is also planned that non-member specialists in different subjects will be invited to contribute to future volumes as authors or guest editors.

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<sup>1</sup> For more about CEENIS, see Danuta Stasik, ‘Regional Co-Operation in Central and Eastern Europe: Overview and Appraisal’, *Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Philologica* 1/2011, *Orientalia Pragensia* XXVIII, *Understanding India – Indology and Beyond*, pp. 125-130 and the CEENIS website ([www.ceenis.uw.edu.pl/](http://www.ceenis.uw.edu.pl/)).

This first volume of the *CEENIS Current Research Series* includes sixteen articles, the majority of which were presented in their earlier versions during the conference.<sup>2</sup> They are specimens of scholarship from almost all CEENIS member institutions, i.e. the University of Bucharest (Romania), Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest, Hungary), Jagiellonian University (Kraków, Poland), Adam Mickiewicz University (Poznań, Poland), the Oriental Institute, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Charles University (Prague, the Czech Republic), Vilnius University (Lithuania), the University of Wrocław (Poland), the University of Zagreb (Croatia) and the University of Warsaw; the only exception is the University of Sofia (Bulgaria), which had its representative present during the conference but whose paper was not submitted for publication.

The articles included in the volume tackle, from different perspectives, wide-ranging aspects of Indian culture and society in such manifestations as literature, the visual and performing arts, philosophy, religion as well as language. They have been grouped into four chapters, underlining their common thematic and / or methodological traits:

- 1) 'Literature, Arts and Beyond' (Joanna Sachse, 'Some Remarks on the Fifth Book of the *Mahābhārata*', Ivan Andrijačić, 'Historical Analysis of Textual Layers in Ancient Indian Literature and Indian Cultural History', Sven Sellmer, 'Computer-Aided Detection of Unusual Passages in the *Mahābhārata*', Artur Karp, 'Who Sees Whom? A Note on *dasane* and *thaira* in Aśoka's Rock Edict VIII', Božena Śliwaczyńska, 'Death on the Stage in Sanskrit Classical Theatre: A Long-Sustained Misinterpretation', Monika Browarczyk, '*The Intimate Me in the Public Sphere*: Contemporary Hindi Autobiographies by Women (Maitreyi Pushpa and Prabha Khaitan)' and Danuta Stasik, 'The Indian Diaspora in Uṣā Priyamvadā's Fiction');
- 2) 'Linguistic Perspectives on India' (Máté Ittész, 'Light Verb Constructions vs. Simple Verbs in Vedic: *vimócanam kṛṇute* (RV 3,30,12d)' and Sabina Popârlan, 'The Ergative Construction and the Complexity of Hindi Syntax');
- 3) 'Religion and Society' (Marzenna Czerniak-Drożdżowicz, 'The *Pratiṣṭhā* Ceremony (Installation of an Idol) in Some Pāñcarātrika Sources', Valdas Jaskūnas, 'Imperial Temples, Purāṇic Sites. Arguments in Support of the Historical Setting of the *Agnipurāṇa* Ambulatory Temple', Jacek Woźniak, 'The Image of Viṣṇu as the Supreme Being in Tirumañkaiyālvār's *Maṭal* Poems', Pavel Hons, 'Literature – a Way of Strengthening Dalit Identity' and Zdeněk Štípl, 'Christian Ashrams in India: A Bridge Between Two Worlds?');

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<sup>2</sup> See the program of the conference at the end of the 'Introduction'. Please note that two papers by scholars from the University of Warsaw which were not read during the conference were added to the volume.

- 4) ‘Indian Texts from a Cognitivist Perspective’ (Joanna Jurewicz, ‘How General and Abstract Concepts Were Construed in the *R̥gveda* (Based on the Example of the Concept *ámhas*)’ and Anna Trynkowska, ‘Political Metaphors in the *mahākāvya*: The Conceptual Metaphor THE STATE IS CULTIVATED LAND’).

Even this cursory presentation of the volume contents, which deal with both ancient and medieval (eleven papers) as well as modern and contemporary India (five papers), should draw one’s attention to the fact that papers pertaining to earlier times considerably outnumber those that relate to the modern or contemporary period. A question can be posed if this is a mere coincidence or a meaningful reflection of the interest of academic institutions in the region? And how does this translate into our better understanding ‘the wonder that was India’,<sup>3</sup> and that – undoubtedly – still is? For me, as a scholar working with medieval and contemporary sources and closely collaborating with specialists in earlier Indian culture, there is no doubt that no serious synthesis or theorizing on any aspect of India’s culture, society, history or politics can be possible without being conversant with its rich and diverse past. Something that, in the time of India’s growing visibility in the global arena, and thus of things Indian, too often tends to be forgotten or simply ignored by more and more numerous ‘specialists’ on India (regrettably in academic circles as well)...

With the first volume of *CEENIS Current Research Series*, let us hope that in the future, this series, with its decided approach to combine a classical perspective with a modern one and to emphasize the use of available original sources in Indian languages, will become an important forum for thought exchange on India.

Danuta Stasik

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<sup>3</sup> A reference to the opening phrase of the title of Arthur L. Basham’s classic work *The Wonder that was India: A Survey of the History and Culture of the Indian Sub-continent Before the Coming of the Muslims*, London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1954.