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## **GRT** INDIAN PHILOSOPHY IN GERMAN WRITINGS

P. Vasundhara Rao

**Abstract:**-Literature reflects the thinking and beliefs of the concerned folk. Some German writers came in contact with Ancient Indian Literature. They were influenced by the Indian Philosophy, especially, Buddhism.

German Philosopher Arther Schopenhauer, was very much influenced by the Philosophy of Buddhism. He made the ancient Indian Literature accessible to the German people.

Many other authors and philosophers were influenced by Schopenhauer.

The famous German Indologist, Friedrich Max Muller has also done a great work, as far as the contact between India and Germany is concerned. He has translated

Some other German authors were also influenced by Indian Philosophy, the traces of their writings.

Paul Deussen was a great scholar of Sanskrit. He wrote "Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie (General History of the Philosophy).

Friedrich Nietzsche studied works of Schopenhauer in detail. He is one of the first existentialist Philosophers.

Karl Eugen Neuman was the first who translated texts from Pali into German.

Hermann Hesse was also influenced by Buddhism. His famous novel Siddhartha is set in India. It is about the spiritual journey of a man (Siddhartha) during the time of Gautam Buddha.

Indology is today a subject in 13 Universities in Germany.

**Keywords:** Indian Philosophy, Germany, Indology, translation, Buddhism, Upanishads.

### INTRODUCTION

Learning a new language opens the doors of a different culture, of the philosophy and thinking of that particular society. How true it is in case of Indian philosophy having traveled to Germany years ago. Somebody must have learnt the language of the other community and thus the doors of Indian Philosophy must have become accessible to people of Germany - if not directly, indirectly through translations.

How else one could have – so long back - found any connection between Germany and Indian Philosophy? When was the connection established? Who were the pioneers of this? When writers and philosophers from Germany got some information about Indian Philosophy or ancient Indian Literature, they took special efforts to get in-depth knowledge about it. Some of them also learnt Sanskrit language in order to get the exact knowledge. He had written a book on Sanskrit Grammar, but it

was not published.) They did it also with the noble aim of making the knowledge they acquired, accessible to the world. When we start thinking about it, we would have to start with the German philosopher, journalist and novelist Arther Schopenhauer (1788 – 1860).

Arther Schopenhauer was the most important and consequential Philosopher of the 19th century. He opened the doors of the treasury of the Indian Philosophy to Germany. The influence of Buddhism on the Occident starts with him. A fruitful ground was prepared by him and he had great influence on the first German Buddhists. The ancient Vedic Literature of India is the foundation of the whole literature of India. But for the early translation, this literature – written in Sanskrit – could not have crossed the borders of India.

Dara Shukoh, the eldest son of Shah Jehan, translated – with the help of the Indian Pandits – 50 Upanishads from Sanskrit into Persian. He first heard about the Upanishads during his stay in Kashmir in 1640. The translation was ready in 1657. He was very much impressed by Philosophy in the Upanishads and wisdom”. He thought that they contained super-human conceptions.

This Persian translation was translated into Latin under the title "Oupnekhat" by a Frenchman and traveler, Anquetil Duperron. It was published in Strassburg in 1801-1802 under the name "Oupnekhat"

Friedrich Majer first introduced Arther Schopenhauer to the 1802 Latin translation. Majer and Schopenhauer had met in 1813-1814 in Weimar. (German Philosopher, theologian and poet) and was an early Indologist. Schopenhauer started with a serious study of Indic texts in 1814.

Schopenhauer had also another connection with Indian thoughts through a neighbor, Friedrich Krause, who was a philosopher. Krause those of ancient Indian wisdom. Unlike Schopenhauer, Krause had mastered Sanskrit.

Schopenhauer came across this translated book, when he was writing his main work the translated book became his Bible. It worshiped it before sleeping. In established him as a philosopher, he said:

“I feel the most perfect confidence in reading that translation, and that confidence soon receives its most perfect justification. For how entirely does the Oupnekhat breathe throughout the holy spirit of the Vedas! How is every one who by a diligent study of its Persian Latin has become familiar with that incomparable book, stirred by that spirit to the very depth of his soul! How does every line display its firm, definite, and throughout harmonious meaning! From every sentence deep, original and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit. Indian air surrounds us, and original thoughts of kindred spirits. And oh, how thoroughly is the mind here washed clean of all early engrafted Jewish superstitions, and of all philosophy that cringes before those superstitions! except that of the originals, Oupnekhat.

**In the same book he writes, in the preface to the first edition, p. xiii:**

(for I anticipate that the influence of Sanskrit literature will not be less profound than the revival of Greek in the fourteenth

Schopenhauer has mentioned that his own Philosophy is powerfully impregnated by the fundamental doctrines of the Upanishads.

Schopenhauer called he argued that human action is driven by the dissatisfied will and is ultimately directionless. The Chandhyoga Upanishad, with its Mahavakya, "Tat tvam asi" is mentioned throughout in this book.

Schopenhauer was a devotee of Plato and Immanuel Kant and a rival of Friedrich Hegel.

Many of the philosophers, who got spiritually acquainted with India, owed it to Schopenhauer. One amongst them is Richard Wagner (1813-1883) a German composer and theatre director. He was so much inspired by Schopenhauer in the 1850s that he went to the extent of saying that he had involuntarily almost become a Buddhist.

In 1854 Wagner was gripped by to which he had been introduced in 1854 by his poet friend Georg Herwegh. The philosophy of Arther Schopenhauer was a source of inspiration for Wagner's work "Tristan und Isolde". According to Schopenhauer, music should occupy a supreme role in the arts and he thought that it had a direct influence on the world's essence. Wagner, as against this, thought that music should play a secondary role in any drama. This view of Wagner was expressed in "Opera and Drama". But, under the influence of Schopenhauer, Wagner assigned a more important role to music in his later operas.

He read in 1855 the "Indian Legends" written by Holtzmann. His work "Die Sieger"(The Winners) is based on a simple legend of a Tschandala-girl.

In 1855 Wagner was introduced to Buddhism through Eugene Burnouf's book "Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism" (written in French). This book is based on Mahayana Buddhist Texts, that have been sent from Paris to Nepal in 1837. Wagner's brother-in-law, Hermann Brockhaus, was also interested in Buddhism. He edited and partly translated Hindu stories "Kathasritsagara".

Wagner was busy with Buddhism in the last years of his life. When in 1881 Indologist Hermann Oldenberg's book "Buddha - His life, his teaching, his community" was published, Wagner was so much impressed by it, that he "read it aloud at home with satisfaction". On the evening before he died, he expressed his wish to migrate to the Buddhist island of Ceylon.

Schopenhauer had found parallels between his pessimistic Philosophy and Buddhism. Schopenhauer's Philosophy considered the will (to live) as fundamental and advocated the as the path of deliverance. Wagner expressed these ideas in his dramas "Tristan und Isolde", "Die Sieger" and "Parcifal"(Mueller Houses). He himself had never traveled to India, he He will be always remembered for his publication of Rigveda, the holy Hindu texts. He remains He has accomplished the huge work of translating the in 50 volumes. his work still baffles the scholars. Max Müller once said, which and has thought the deepest about the biggest for some of these, which deserve the attention then I would point to India".<sup>1</sup>

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) was a German philosopher, Philologist and poet of the late 19th century who challenged the foundations of Christianity and traditional morality. Affirmation of life was the central idea of his philosophy. He believed in life, creativity and realities of the world. He is considered as one the first existentialist philosophers.

Nietzsche in detail. He said that awakened his philosophical interest and later he also

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1- F. Max Müller, India – What Can It Teach Us? Delhi 1991. P. 4

Paul Deussen (1845 – 1919), one of the followers and admirers of Schopenhauer was an inspired Sanskrit scholar and an orientalist. He wrote “Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie (General History of Philosophy)”.

The first of the four volumes of this book is dedicated exclusively to Indians, and it provided a classic illustration of monistic Vedanta system. It also offered reliable translations of Indian texts to philosophers, and thus the translation of 1882 (Oopnekhat) done by a non-indologist from Latin to German was finally overtaken. As an expression of his admiration of Hinduism, Deussen sanskritised his name as “Deva-Sena”. a life-long devotee of Deussen visited India and held discussions in Sanskrit with the Pundits, who praised him. He was also praised by Swami Vivekananda.

**Deussen wrote in his “Memories of India”:**

“The better knowledge and appreciation of this Vedanta doctrine has from my side contributed in removing the separating wall, which otherwise separates Indians from Europeans”.

One incident may perhaps help us to understand the popularity of Deussen. He used to get many letters from India. He once got a letter from India, which was written in Sanskrit. His name appeared in sanskritised form as Dewasena. The details regarding residence were missing. Even then the letter reached him – although after going to Leipzig first and reaching him afterwards.

Deussen’s book “Elemente der Metaphysik (Elements of Metaphysics)” was translated in 1912 by an Indian judge in classic Sanskrit verse, and thus the doctrines of Kant and Schopenhauer in Deussen’s views became accessible to Indians.

Karl Eugen Neumann (1865 – 1915) was the first translator to have translated a large part of the Pali canon of Buddhist scriptures into a European language (German).

He had actually started his career as a banker, when he happened to see the works of Schopenhauer. He gave up his career as a banker and started studying Indology, Religion and Philosophy.

German common man, as well as German thinkers, philosophers and politicians have always felt fascinated towards India. Walter Leifer, the famous German thinker has written, “Wir Deutschen haben immer zu Indien ein besonderes Verhältnis gehabt”.<sup>2</sup> (“We Germans have always had a special relationship to India”).<sup>3</sup>

Hermann Hesse (1877 – 1962), a German born Swiss poet and novelist became famous as an author of “Steppenwolf, Siddhartha and Glass Bead Game”. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1946.

Hesse developed interest in Buddhism. Schopenhauer and his philosophical ideas started drawing his attention and he discovered theosophy. This, in turn, renewed his interest in India. He was influenced by Indian culture:

„Hesse lernte Indien vielfach kennen, aus Büchern, aus eigenen Beobachtungen während seiner Asienreise und durch eigenen Meditationen über die indische Gedankenwelt“.<sup>4</sup>

(Hesse got to know Germany in many ways, from books, from his own experiences during his journey through Asia and through his own meditations about the Indian world of ideas.)

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2– Horst Ermann

Verlag, Tübingen and Basel, 1969, p.9

3- Leifer, Walter, India and the Germans, 500 years of Indo-German contact, Shakuntala Publishing House, Bombay, 1977, p.vii

4 – Ganeshan, Vridhagiri, Deutsche Dichter und Indien, Band 2-1997, p. 141.

His masterpiece “Siddhartha(1922)” was largely dependent on these influences.

Siddhartha is one of the most popular novels set in India. It deals with the spiritual journey of self-discovery of a man named Siddhartha during the time of the Gautama Buddha. It is written in a simple, lyrical style.

The word Siddhartha is a combination of two Sanskrit words “Siddha + artha” and it means “the one who has found meaning (of existence). It is the name of Gautama before renunciation. In India a film entitled “Siddhartha” was made in 1972. The main actor was Shashi Kapoor and it was directed by Conrad Rooks.

Some other famous German authors have also used Buddhism as the theme for their works, e.g. Ferdinand von Harnstein (Drama: Buddha,1912), Alfons von Czibula (Novel: Der Tod vor dem Buddha,1935) and Thomas Mann (A long story,Die vertauschten Köpfe, 1940).

#### CONCLUSION

After such studies about Indian Philosophy, Indology has now become The Sanskrit studies started in Germany in the beginning of 19th century. Germany was the first European country to introduce a

Today, there are Modern Indology is now more popular than classical Indology.

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- 6 [www.monsalvat.no/india.html](http://www.monsalvat.no/india.html), Wagner, Buddhism und Parcifal.



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