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A benevolent look at India of the 18th century- the Indian subcontinent in a few pages drawn from Duperron

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Un regard bienveillant sur l'Inde du XVIII^e siècle - Le sous-continent indien dans quelques pages de Duperron

Résumé

C'est Marco Polo qui a dit : « Je n'ai pas écrit la moitié de ce que j'ai vu, car je savais que je ne serais pas cru ». Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil Duperron, bien qu'influencé par Polo, a écrit tout ce qu'il a vu et ce qu'il croyait que ses oreilles avaient entendu pendant son séjour en Inde. Duperron, enfant du siècle des lumières, avait un intérêt profond et soutenu pour l'ensemble de l'Inde : sa culture et sa civilisation, passées et présentes et son avenir sous les maîtres européens. Un plus grand champion de notre nation est en effet rare ! Sa vision de l'Inde du XVIII^e siècle, est-elle en contradiction avec la version anglaise plus familière de nos autres grands colonisateurs ? Les grains intrigants de la perception de cet indophile après en avoir séparé l'ivraie des mythes et de ses prédilections, tempérés par l'arôme alléchant de la nostalgie composeront notre plat soigneusement préparé.

Mots-clés : travelogue, indologie, renaissance orientale, culture, Les Anglais

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Abstract

It was Marco Polo who said "I did not write half of what I saw, for I knew I would not be believed". Abraham Hyacinth Anquetil Duperron though influenced by Polo wrote of all he saw and what he believed his ears had heard during his sojourn in India. Duperron, a child of the siècle des lumières, had a deep and sustained interest in the whole of India, her past and present culture and civilisation and her future under European rulers. A greater champion of our nation is rare indeed! His vision of India of the XVIII century, is it at odds with the more familiar Anglo version of our other great colonisers? The intriguing grains of perception after sifting through the chaff of myths and predilections of this Indophile tempered with the tantalising aroma of nostalgia will make up this delectable dish.

Keywords : Travelogue, Indology, oriental renaissance, culture, English

And thus spake old Ulysses,

*I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore [...]*

*For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments, [...]*

in Alfred Lord Tennyson's eponymous poem. Words that were brought to mind when reading about the life and times of Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil Duperron so brilliantly documented in his books and unedited pages left behind for humanity to discover of a space, a time, an age gone by! Of an India during colonial rule - documented not by the ruler but by an enlightened Frenchman who dreamt of a world where Indians and Europeans would be trading partners on equal terms.

Until the lion learns how to write every story will glorify the hunter. African Proverb

Several colonial hunters stalked various corners of India - Spanish, Portuguese, the Dutch, the Persians, even the Danes and of course the French and the English. These hunters left various tales of these times. If we the Indian lions need to weave our tale these different narratives will help us fill in the blanks and disperse the chaff of myths allowing us to harvest the grains of truth that lie somewhere in between. It is in this context that the narrative of one of whom Blake Smith says, *Long an obscure figure outside of French language scholarship, the French Orientalist Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil Duperron (1731-1805) has been rediscovered in recent years by Anglophone historians who see him as an exemplar of liberal cosmopolitan and anti-colonial trends in eighteenth century thought.*

Though as an 'enfant du siècle des Lumières' (the Age of Reason) the purpose of going to India was, for Anquetil Duperron, the study of the religious and philosophical texts of the Orient; it really was his passionate curiosity and love for the East that saw him detailing and cross referencing material and travelling the length and breadth of the country on ships, skiffs, horseback, palanquin, and even on foot. *India calls to you* (I-E: ii) (*L'Inde vous appelle*) he explains at the fag end of his life. It was this call that probably made him undertake the fraught six month voyage by ship, described by Anquetil Duperron, during which it was quite normal in the 18th century to note that more than half the number of travellers lost their lives to sickness and accidents at sea (I-E: 9-11).

This much is obvious that Anquetil Duperron was not a diplomat, a trader, a missionary, a government officer, nor an adventurer. That he was not a diplomat was obvious from the number of run-ins he had with everyone he met where he sees himself as a victim in all those circumstances including one in which he holds a gun to the heads of his boatmen so that they take him safely across a river. Nor was he a trader as he uses the most vile terms to criticise those who sought to fleece the indigenous people in this case the Indians (whom he terms 'noirs'-Blacks or natives) for personal gain. It was not for *the immense fortune and enormous sums that one sees, squeezed like a sponge from the very rich Hindustan, flowing annually to England.* (I-E : vii) (*les fortunes immenses, les sommes énormes, que l'on voit le trop riche Indoustan, pressé comme une éponge verser tous les ans en Angleterre*). While Anquetil Duperron was Catholic and carried the Bible with him he was against the false prophets or priests who he felt had done more harm than good to the locals. Being choleric by nature he had a natural mistrust of the government officers. *Authority is like leprosy that alters the features of the upright man to the point of making him unrecognizable* (I-E: xviii) (*l'autorité est une lèpre qui altère les traits de l'homme probe au point de le rendre méconnaissable*) His dislike for all government representatives he met in France or in India, it appeared, is because they rarely responded to his impatient demands with the alacrity he expected of them. In *L'Inde en rapport avec l'Europe* he does have a good word for some of the personnel involved in his case as the Comte de Vergennes and Lenoir (*juste and polite men and friends of men of letters, 'hommes justes, polis, amis des gens de lettres'*) or the first secretary M Martin who showered him with respect and honour and affection (I-E: xvi-xvii). But he also felt they had not made enough of an effort to learn the local customs and languages and rarely did he have a good word for those who ran the Compagnie and the government offices. As for being an adventurer, his tales of being dropped by his palanquin bearers and abandoned by his servants in the middle of a forest or his adventures in the Kaneri caves are recounted with a tongue in cheek style, definitely not central to his narrative where he prefers to focus on the spiritual and cultural resources he was seeking at that time.

Anquetil Duperron was in fact a seeker of knowledge for the sake of knowledge. A rarity in those times as the records state that 135 travellers lived in India during this period, not counting the professional soldiers, missionaries, government officers, traders etc whose names do not figure on any official documents. Almost 60 travellers out of these 135 left no written evidences of their stay. 65 travellers have left behind correspondence, manuscripts and published texts and books and vast amounts of unedited manuscripts. Anquetil Duperron belongs to the small group of

contemporary travellers who left behind published works that are of immense sociological interest and that give us a true glimpse of India of those times. Among them were the astronomer Guillaume-Joseph le Gentil de la Galaisière, the buccaneer Louis Laurent de Féderbe de Modave, the adventurer Maistre de la Tour, the French army engineer who could be termed 'an industrial spy' François-Xavier Legoux de Flaix, the surgeon and wigmaker turned soldier of fortune, Pallobot de Saint Lubin and the two Missionaries with the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, Jean Charles Perrin and Jean Antoine Dubois. Anquetil Duperron is the first of these travellers who could be termed a true researcher, an Orientalist but more Indologist who had an almost scientific approach to the subject. He had an objective in mind: to conduct an in-depth study of the eastern mind. The methodology he used was to travel and to observe directly. He defines what a true traveller is in his *Dignité du Commerce*:

The true traveller, is the one who loves all men as his brothers, unmoved by either pleasure or need, equally untouched by grandeur or baseness, esteem or contempt, praise or blame, wealth or poverty and travels the world without any attachment that anchors him to any place: a spectator of good and evil, irrespective of who does it, or what any nation's motives are: this traveller, if he is educated, if he possesses sound judgment, immediately grasps the absurdity or the hollowness of a conduct, a practice or an opinion¹ (D du C:v).

Anquetil Duperron exhorts his countrymen to choose to go to India in large numbers particularly after the harsh years of the French Revolution: *India is a port that I offer them after the tempest. The country has enough to nourish you: go there and breathe freely in those happy climes. Never will a man who has lived in India spend long years in France without regretting it (I-E: xxii) (L'Inde est un port que je leur offre après la tempête. Le pays a de quoi vous nourrir : allez respirer librement sous cet heureux climat. Jamais homme qui a vécu dans l'Inde ne passe plusieurs années en France sans le regretter.)* And when they return they will bring with them he assures them "enchanted memories that their stay in India will often call to mind" (I-E: xxiii) (*les souvenirs enchanteurs que leur séjour en Inde rappellera souvent à leur mémoire.*)

Anquetil Duperron sought to glean knowledge from the Orient and take it back to Europe to benefit others. *Going to India, white stick in hand a haversack on my back, I had made a tacit commitment to enrich my homeland with the knowledge of this land. (I-E: xx) (Allant en Inde le baton blanc à la main, l'avresac sur le dos, j'avais contracté l'engagement tacite d'enrichir ma patrie des connaissances de cette contrée.)* And towards the end of his sojourn on this earth he states:

I spent eight years outside my homeland and almost six of them in India. I returned in 1762 poorer than when I left Paris in 1754 ... But I was rich in rare and old monuments and wealthy in knowledge that my youth (I was barely thirty years old) furnished me with the time to write at leisure. This was all the fortune that I had gone to seek in India²(V en Inde :478).

Little wonder therefore that Anquetil Duperron was a historian in the true sense of the term documenting what he saw heard or even believed to have seen or heard. He possessed at his death about 130 original manuscripts, 25 volumes running into thousands of pages of translation notes, Dictionaries, texts etc, 3 registers of correspondence and a library of 3000 books.

All of his writings have detailed references from various contemporary or earlier published works. In the *L'Inde en rapport avec Europe* we see a good example of how apart from his personal knowledge of the affairs of state in India as witnessed by him he quotes from a wide range of contemporary and past documents. They range from copious quotations from the *Gazette de France*, *Courier d'Europe* to historical works of Harry Verelst (a colonial administrator with the British East India Company and the governor of Bengal from 1767 to 1769) in his *A View of the Rise Progress and Present State of the English Government* or William Bolts (a Dutch-born eighteenth-century merchant who began his career as an employee of the British East India Company, and subsequently became an independent) in his whistle-blowing publication *Considerations on India Affairs*, or Alexander Dow, (an Orientalist, writer, playwright and Lieutenant-Colonel of the East India Company) in his voluminous *History of Hindostan*, particularly 'An Enquiry into the State of Bengal.' Apart from this he quoted from state documents regarding discussions in the National Assembly as well as the House of lords and House of Commons in England even extracting a couple of times from the Lord Advocate General's statements to the House too! So it would seem natural to conclude that Anquetil Duperron when he commented on contemporary happenings of the relationship of the British in India with the "natives" it was "en connaissance de cause!"

That Anquetil Duperron is a true historian with a love for details and anecdotes is obvious when perusing his works like *Voyage en Inde* or *L'Inde en rapport avec l'Europe*. In the latter in its Preface he quotes, for example, conversations in detail almost like reliving in the moment. But it is not as if errors do not exist in his works due to oversight due to ignorance or even due to a plain misunderstanding of the customs and habits of a foreign land. Wishing to document the reality of what he saw rarely did he commit a deliberate distortion of facts. When he did make a deliberate error we have proof that he hastened to correct the oversight. Kate March (*India in the French imagination* p.50) quotes the episode where he

appended a hand written note in the margin of his personal copy of his travel writings that he had not personally witnessed a *Sati* confessing:

I added this detail to free myself from the thousand and one questions that everyone was asking me about the customs of the country. In this I was untruthful. On his return the traveller has seen everything and provides evidence of everything out of fear that his eyewitness account is weakened in that which he knows to be really true³. (V en Inde : 268).

It does take intellectual honesty to be able to confess such liberties taken with facts and Anquetil Duperron therefore must be given the benefit of the doubt if and when we do find some lacuna in his large tract of work.

That Anquetil Duperron was perhaps naïve to the point of reposing implicit trust in the people who he felt could bring him closer to the knowledge he sought is perhaps best illustrated in the incident of the translation of the *Zend Avesta*. Having set out to translate the *Vendidad* whose four pages he chanced upon in Bodleian library in England he chose not to go to Persia but to come to India with the dual aim of also learning Sanskrit directly from the scholars here and studying the Vedas which even at the time of Pythagoras had inspired Europe. He did believe in the two Parsi scholars, Dasturs Darab and Kaous, he had chosen to teach him Persian and the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism couched in the Avestan language. This faith that was impelled by his burning desire to know and transmit perhaps blinded him to some of the facts and later laid him open to the mockery contemporary thinkers and academicians spear headed by his arch rival the Englishman and Orientalist (as they were termed then though today the more specific term Indologist is perhaps preferred) William Jones. In fact, it was the Danish Orientalist, Rasmus Kristian Nielsen Rasch who finally vindicated him and his work in 1820 restoring his true status as one of the first 'Indologists' of note.

Anquetil Duperron was also accused by his contemporaries of not recognizing the Persian inscriptions on the walls of the caves in India or not being aware the Nandi he stole from a temple as being of intrinsic value to the local people or of blindly recounting the myth of young virgins spearing themselves on the *lingam* and thus perpetuating a blatant inaccuracy. But in his favour lies the fact that in his immense body of work with the colossal research done including comparative details of information and dimensions and drawing up of maps of places visited, there appears to be far less mistakes than in the works of any other contemporary traveller.

It is perhaps further relevant to state here that Anquetil Duperron has been more than vindicated by posterity and his greatest contribution to the Orient and more particularly to India was in the form of getting the world to recognize

religious texts and organized religions that predated the Bible. P S Filliozat in his detailed *Présentation* to Anquetil Duperron's *Voyage en Inde* eloquently presents him as one of the purest Indologists and the founder of the profession (*L'un des plus purs indianistes et le fondateur de la profession*. V en Inde:16). He also states that Anquetil Duperron furthered the scientific understanding of India under all its aspects country, politics, trade, people, language, religion etc. (*fondé une science, l'indianisme ou connaissance scientifique de l'Inde sous tous ses aspects pays, politique, commerce, peuple, langues, religions etc* -V en Inde:19). And Filliozat concludes that it was indeed Anquetil Duperron's destiny to introduce the two greatest texts drawn from the very beginning of Humanity's literature into the domain of scholarly study. Anquetil Duperron, he claims, was the founder of the discipline of philology and the profession of research in this field.

Anquetil Duperron translated the *Vendidad* into French from Avestan and the Upanishad⁴ into Latin. Called the *L'Oupnék'hat* the work soon became a rage among the enlightened scholars of the time despite it being a mediocre translation couched in an utterly unintelligible style. However, it appears that the glimpses that one got of the Indian spiritual thought were so incandescent that they astounded the continent. While he may have been criticised for the quality of his translation one must remember Anquetil Duperron was a pioneer in the field. Schopenhauer's words on reading the Anquetil Duperron's translation of the *L'Oupnék'hat* (*Upanishad*) are perhaps the perfect vindication of his immense efforts. Using his lynx like perspicacity to discover a thread through such a labyrinth of thought and had the courage to proclaim to an incredulous age: *From every sentence deep original and sublime thoughts arise, and a high and holy and earnest spirit pervades the whole. In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads...They are destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people... Ex oriente lux. (Light of the East)* Schopenhauer further declared: *The Upanishads have been the solace of my life; they shall be my solace in death.* (MM).

Anquetil Duperron was thus as Deloche says the first and greatest artisan of the *Oriental Renaissance* as he introduced these great religious texts of the East to the West (V en Inde :43) thereby serving to dispel Montesquieu's notions of Oriental despotism based on one man, without law or rule, can do anything through his will and whims and the rest are slaves ([...] *un seul, sans loi et sans règle, entraîne tout par sa volonté et par ses caprices*).

It appears from his writings that Anquetil Duperron had a rather complex relationship with the English! Notwithstanding the natural animosity awakened in a true blooded Frenchman who was witnessing the ouster of the French colonial power from India, there appears underlying current of admiration, albeit a grudging

one, tinged with jealousy for the British. Lamenting the manner in which the great conquests and work of Dupleix and Labourdonnais had been inefficiently betrayed Anquetil Duperron's angst bewails the fact, that the two countries England and France did start on a level playing field in the game of colonisation. And yet the French see themselves worsted by what he considers at best a mediocre group belonging to an unworthy merchant state namely England.

What is curious as pointed out by Deloche (*V en Inde*: 42-43) is that Anquetil Duperron while in India and in his work *Voyage en Inde* is not so harsh in his criticism of the British and the East India Company India. However, on his return and once it became clear that the French had clearly lost their possessions in India, he becomes absolutely venomous and hostile to the English and it is then that his anti-colonial stance becomes very vehement and strong. This is clear as we will show in his later work *L'Inde en rapport avec l'Europe*. In point of fact his relation with the British authorities was more than cordial and in particular with Spencer who was the head of the mission for whom he reserves compliments regarding his "humanity, kindness and probity". When in September 1759, he killed a compatriot, Biquant, in a duel, he had to seek refuge in an English Lodge and refused to leave it even when his much martyred brother Anquetil de Briancourt who was the French consul at Surat beseeched him to do so. It was only after receiving assurances that he would not be arrested that he finally left the British protection. Even his return from India to Europe was on a British ship.

We also see that Anquetil Duperron's vicious attack on the English policy in India stands in stark contrast to his admiration for Indians in his *L'Inde en rapport avec l'Europe*. Here he begins by addressing the spirits of Dupleix and Labourdonnais and bewailing the fact that in a land that once resounded with their names and exploits *Audacious Albion has in these lands, usurped the trident of the sea, the sceptre of Hindustan. Cruel and treacherous England returns with interest to her rival France, the state of humiliation to which your military exploits and your political operations had reduced her*⁵ (I-E :i).

Even while exhorting the ancient heroes to fill the young Frenchman with the fire of reclaiming what Anquetil Duperron believes to have belonged to his motherland Duperron wishes them to respect the rich country and culture of India as he is filled with bitterness at their attitude and asks them to abjure: *The unjust and violent methods of European nations, established in its richest provinces, which fills with bitterness the few days that nature can accord the traveller*⁶ ... (I-E:ii).

And while he wants Great Britain to leave India he exhorts his fellowmen to go this land with the intent of joining hands : *with the Moors, the Marathas, the Malabars*

*and the Bengalis and to form with these nations solid liaisons that equality and humanity acknowledge and which are advantageous to the body as much as to the soul, for both the parties in question*⁷(I-E:viii).

This was to be the burden of his song in this remarkably detailed work *L'Inde en rapport avec l'Europe*. Anquetil Duperron reveals here a profound understanding and empathy for India - the size and variety of its topography, the diversity of cultures and castes, the deep spiritual heritage varied in its beginnings and its practice, the innumerable languages, the mingling of nationalities -in short the land in its pluri-linguistic, multicultural glory. In the six articles of varying length that make up the first of two volumes he discusses the situation of India under the various European powers concentrating obviously on the state of affairs of Bengal under the crushing yoke of the English. He explores what his country might do to free India of this choke hold and discusses possible native allies including Haider Ali and his son Tipu Sultan or the Marathas to dislodge their common enemy and bring about a more enlightened and respectful system of governance with the French at the helm. Of course, we are aware that in being antagonistic to the British he is seeking to portray his own nation in a fairer and more just light. But such is his intellectual honesty that Anquetil Duperron offers advice to his fellowmen on how to learn from the wrongs of the English colonisers and how to be more enlightened partners and not conquerors. Would that his nation and other Europeans particularly the English have listened to him!

We are inclined to agree with Kate March when she states (*India in the French imagination* :135-137) “The notion of the French as liberators appeared in reports written by French personnel who had travelled and worked in India before the Revolution.[...] This belief in the French as prospective liberators in India persisted at least until the defeat of Tipu Sultan by the British May 1799.[...]The idea of French as liberators was not confined to French personnel with experience in India; it was also evident in philosophical discourse. [...] French national interests were thus synonymous with universal human rights. [...] By the end of Napoleon’s Empire, India was no longer a locus for the philosophical concerns which had preoccupied Montesquieu and Voltaire. As France’s trade with India declined the subcontinent was increasingly seen in terms of British oppression. [...] Yet the image of India as a site of British oppression had philosophical implications of its own, stimulating counter factual speculation about enlightened French rule in India”.

And this is certainly what we see in Anquetil Duperron’s works particularly in *L'Inde en rapport avec l'Europe* but also in *Voyage en Inde* in which he goes so far as to say that the Indian view the English very differently from the way they view the French and that incidents like the Black Hole of Calcutta would never have occurred:

All these traits means that the French are viewed as generous warriors on whose word an unfortunate prince can count even when their interests are implicated... Despite our extensive conquests and the ills which have naturally followed never has a similar massacre to that of the English at Calcutta and Patna befallen us⁸ (V en Inde, p.169).

In Anquetil Duperron's criticism of the English he offers lessons to the French on how to behave with the Indians. He criticises the British for everything from their insatiable greed and overreaching ambition that their successes between 1776 and 1783 have instilled in them (I-E: 31). Like the Roman empire which became a victim of its grandiose splendour and size he feels that the immensity of British India is a scandal and a shame for the whole of Europe.(I-E:15) As exploring nations of the XVII-XVIII centuries discovering new routes to the East and crisscrossing the globe in ships that were subject to the vagaries of nature Anquetil Duperron goes so far as to accuse the English of inhuman dishonesty with the blessing of their authorities. When the British found a safe haven for the ships or an island with fresh water on the high seas they would refuse to share the latitude and longitude of the place until they had officially claimed it for their country. This would jeopardise other expeditions if their vessels were becalmed on the ocean and they could if they had the coordinates probably find a safe place to anchor. He contrasts the humanitarian attitude of the French government which issued orders that all help was to be extended to adventurers like Cook and others famous explorers(I-E:37-39). In short, the English could do no right as far as any other nation was concerned and this mean spiritedness in Anquetil Duperron's eyes was because they were a merchant nation with the mind of traders always looking for a commercial advantage as he repeatedly says throughout this work. And this was also evident in the manner in which they stripped India of all its wealth to feather the pockets of the directors of the Company among others, established a monstrous edifice in 1767 in Bengal (*les fondements de cet édifice monstrueux ont été posés en 1767* (I-E:14) and earned the hatred of a peaceful people:

Here too the hatred of a friendly people, inhumanly plundered is forged, a people who trembling, look at their body that bears the livid marks of fetters as the price they paid for their hospitality⁹ (I-E:14).

The British according to Anquetil Duperron wished to establish a two pronged system in India: Revenue from Trade through monopoly over the manufacturing units established on the one hand and through violent conquest and use of force to squeeze tributes on the other. To this end he says he has witnessed the construction of fortresses by the British from one end of the country, at the mouths of rivers and almost until the foothills of Tibet. (I-E: 13) This he says is what gives them absolute

power over the country and enables them to misuse these rights. And what is more the enormous money gained is spent not in India but instead completely removed to the home land leaving the rightful heirs the citizens of India poverty stricken and mistrustful of all Europeans.

The only way according to Anquetil Duperron to succeed in a country as far away from Europe and as vast as India is to present oneself as a friendly national being of use to the one with whom one seeks an alliance. Common sense humanity and respecting the right of the individual should be the approach to take in all dealings (I-E: 27) And Liberty above all which according to Anquetil Duperron is so dear and so essential to an individual's very being as well as to his physical and moral existence (I-E: 51). In the very first article Anquetil Duperron bewails the fact that just because Indians or natives in any colonised country have their own style of dressing, customs and habits so different from the Europeans they are considered bestial, different and uncultured. He goes on to remind the colonisers that every human being has a soul and further admits that perhaps the 'science of morality' that is used between clans and people and which has come to be known as politics, it is the Indians who know it best and practice most skilfully the most refined and profound aspect of this science (I-E: 59).

The unfair trade practices by the Europeans be they the Portuguese, the Dutch or even the French but more specially the English that strip India of her wealth and leave India and her inhabitants impoverished is the next target of Anquetil Duperron's ire. *Let us accumulate in three or four years and return to England* (I-E: 81) (*accumulons en trois ou quatre ans, et repassons en Angleterre*) apparently is the aim of every last Englishman in India. One day, predicts Duperron the natives will have had enough and *India horribly despoiled will ask for an account of its treasures wasted on the Newmarket races* (I-E: 83) (*L'Inde horriblement spoilée, leur demandera compte de ses trésors, prodigués aux courses de Newmarket.*) Indians have a right to their riches and they live in a land that produces enough for their needs. They labour the land and have a right to the fruit of their labour. However, should an exchange take place with Europeans, as it has from time immemorial, he warns that it should be free and fair. If not he declares, if the Indian treasures are transported 6000 leagues away without adequate compensation then:

*These are thus free men, injured on their lands, men who squeezed by need, whom only an iron yoke can restrain, but who, at the first sight of success, will spring like lions on their thieving, atrocious tyrants, who contravene all laws, natural, human and divine*¹⁰ (I-E: 83).

In order to avoid these mutual calamities and in order to practice a humanitarian approach to the process of trade between one country and another where the spirit of enlightenment and respect abounds for one's fellowmen irrespective of the culture he hails from or the colour of his skin, Anquetil Duperron suggest that it takes long and intense training from a very young age. And it is in this context that Anquetil Duperron presents what is in retrospect an extremely farsighted vision of diplomacy and the training of diplomats when he talks of the Academy he wishes to establish. One of his favourite themes that he harped on all his life was the *academie ambulante*. Giving precise details of the choice of students, the matter they had to study, who could train them, the number of years it would take, the evaluation of the yearly progress and also the fees to be paid by the students and the amount it would cost the government - Anquetil Duperron has created in his mind's eye this glorious structure to be emulated by all European countries seeking to have partnership with distant lands. Duperron devotes in fact an entire article spanning a hundred pages (I-E: 233-344) to this project.

The project for this institution that he proposes has as its aim:

This project conceived under the auspices of liberty, established on both sides of the continent and in the vast continent of America is independent of religious and national opinions. It is based on the human race forming a great family whose branches while separating and settling in foreign lands not only lose the memory of their relationships but even misunderstands them. What can be more beautiful than in bringing them closer to seek to understand them and to be able to say in the rapture of affectionate communication: we are brothers, our interests are the same¹¹ (I-E:238).

While students, he believed, should undergo rigorous training in all matters of subjects as per their natural flair for commerce government administration or the police the most important was to prepare "aides de langues," well qualified interpreters that was so important in establishing the strong lines of communication with the locals. And in this perhaps Duperron is truly farsighted. He details how knowledge of the language helps in adapting to a strange land, to comprehend the complex relations that exist in a foreign land between people of various classes and to understand and decode the intrigues of a court and the subtleties of negotiation. Interpreters are partly born and partly created after undergoing perfect training including an immersion in the land and society in which the language is used. He waxes eloquent on the benefits of actually living in far flung villages as young trainees so that they can understand and appreciate the profundities of thought and belief of a foreign people and at the same time undertake practical tasks such as documenting the topography and monuments of the area in which they are living.

Their service towards enriching the knowledge of vast and varied India would be manifold. Coming from one who had indeed undertaken such a venture and devoted a lifetime towards writing about it, this advice is indeed precious as it is the lived reality of the XVIII century. He understands subtleties of Indian society of the time. He states for example that Indians would not be happy to see a young man leading a mission as in their culture such onerous responsibilities could not be placed on young shoulders. So thus, he says the mission, must indeed to earn the respect of the locals not be led by callow, impetuous youth newly arrived from France but rather be led by older, experienced persons. Useful information that could only be gleaned by one who loved the populace, interacted with them, observed their gestures and attitude and imbibed their way of thinking.

Repeatedly Anquetil Duperron states that India has as much to offer in terms of knowledge as it has of concrete riches and that the Europeans should pay attention to that and treat the land and its people as one would equals not as the colonizer and the colonised. And so he beseeches his fellowmen:

This vast continent offers us very ancient monuments, precious books, sensible laws, interesting points of view, science and arts. For the benefit of Europe and Asia let us take advantage of the window that the knowledge of language offers to peek into these regions. The exceptional gifts allocated for useful discoveries serve as an encouragement that a decent and passionate soul will not disdain. By the benefits we can procure for them, let us make the inhabitants of India as concerned and eager to welcome us there as we are to visit the country. Perhaps they will be curious enough to learn our language and read our books when they see what they can gain from our customs and deeds¹² (I-E: 343-344).

In his conclusion the humanist that Anquetil Duperron is says: *Learning from the faults of our forefathers let us believe that the Indians are men with the same natural right that we have. And we will believe it, if we understand their languages. Let us believe that they are equal to us in some things and that in some other things they are even superior to us. [...] In addition to the pleasure that we will get from doing good, we will also enjoy in India the esteem that we have acquired in the rest of Asia from the great events that do us honour in the XVIII century¹³... (I-E :347).*

Anquetil Duperron thus believed that while India was a land that had much to learn from the West the lessons that could be learnt by the Europeans who respected her culture her language and her riches far outweighed anything brought to her shores.

In conclusion we go back to Tennyson's *Ulysses*:

*I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!*

Anquetil Duperron chose to see the world through the Oriental philosophy and spirituality he tried so hard to imbibe. Having tried to transmit it to his European fellowmen through his translations in his own words at the end of his life became “a part of all that” he had met. This frail old man who lived as a recluse from the world, devoid of any resource, selling his furniture and even some of his books to survive, living on “a daily diet consisting of a little bread, milk, cheese and well water, not using the fire in winter nor a mattress or even bed linen”, proudly declaring he was a Brahmin, a monk on the banks of the Seine wrote thus in response to Emperor Napoleon's requirement to swear the oath of allegiance explaining:

As a man of letters and nothing but that, I am a zero in the state. I have never taken an oath of loyalty, nor exercised any civil or military function: at 73, ready to end my career which has been laborious painful and stormy, I am not about to begin. Death awaits me and I contemplate it with sangfroid. I am and always will be subject to the laws of the government, under which I live and which protects me. But the soul that Heaven has given me is too great and too free for me to stoop and bind myself by swearing loyalty to my fellow man. The oath of fidelity, in my principles, is due only to God, by the creature to the creator. From man to man, in my eyes it has a character of servility which my Indian philosophy cannot accept¹⁴ [...] (PSF: 1279).

This letter that he wrote defiantly on May 28, 1804 was almost like a last will and testament professing his enduring faith in Indian philosophy as Anquetil Duperron died soon after on 19 January 1805.

And as for his beloved adopted land India he did passionately promise in his work *la Législation orientale* published in 1778 dedicated to the people of *Indoustan* :

Peaceful Indians, ancient proprietors of a fertile country who serenely collected the fruits she provided for your needs. And then the clamour of your riches penetrated climes where the simulated needs know no bounds! Soon waves of strangers arrive on your shores. Uncultured guests, everything they touch they claim for themselves ... The voice of equality is not heard. Unfortunate

Indians, you will perhaps learn in maybe two hundred years that a European who watched you, who lived with you, at the Tribunal of the Universe has dared to re-stake a claim in your favour for your injured rights, the rights of a humane race sullied by vile interest! ¹⁵ (PSF: 1277).

Somewhere up in the stars long after our land has been rid of the colonizers, a wise and far seeing prophet of anti-colonialism ignored and satirized in his epoch, battles the gods on behalf of the people of 'Indoustan'. He wore many hats as a founder of the science of Philology and of Indology but indeed it is as an ardent Indophile with a pure and unalloyed love for India and her ancient writings that his name we needs must carry in our hearts - Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil Duperron.

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Notes

1. Le vrai voyageur, c'est-à-dire, celui qui aimant tous les hommes comme ses frères, inaccessible aux plaisirs et aux besoins, au-dessus de la grandeur et de la bassesse, de l'estime et du mépris, de la louange et du blâme, de la richesse et de la pauvreté, parcourt le monde sans

attache qui le fixe à aucun lieu : spectateur du bien et du mal, sans égard à celui qui le fait, aux motifs propres à telle nation : ce voyageur, s'il est instruit, s'il a un jugement sain, saisit sur-le-champ le ridicule, le faux d'un procédé, d'un usage, d'une opinion.

2. J'avois passé près de huit ans hors de ma patrie et près de six ans en Inde. Je revenois en 1762 plus pauvre lorsque j'étais parti de Paris en 1754 [...] Mais j'étais riche en monuments rares et anciens, en connoissances que ma jeunesse (j'avois à peine trente ans) me donnoit le tems de rédiger à loisir et c'étoit toute la fortune que j'avois été chercher aux Indes.

3. J'ai ajouté ce trait pour me délivrer des mille et une questions que l'on me faisoit sur les usages du pays; en cela j'ai manqué à la vérité. Le voyageur de retour a tout vu, assure tout de peur d'affoiblir son témoignage dans ce qu'il sait réellement du vrai.

4. The original text of the *Upanishads* on which Anquetil Duperron's translation is based on Dara Shikoh's translation from Sanskrit into Persian. Dara Shikoh's greatest intellectual project was undoubtedly his Persian translation of the *Upanishads* which he completed in September 1657 and named the *Sirri-i-Akbar* or the *Great secret*. Duperron first translated it into French from Persian but the French structure did not satisfy him as he could not respect the order the words of the Persian version of the original Sanskrit text. It was then that he translated it into Latin.

5. L'audacieuse Albion a usurpé, dans ces contrées, le trident des mers le sceptre de Hindoustan. Cruelle et perfide, elle rend avec usure à la France, sa rivale, l'état d'humiliation où l'avoient réduite vos exploits militaires, vos opérations politiques.

6. ...les procédés injustes et violents des nations européennes, établies dans les riches provinces, répandent l'amertume, sur le peu de jours, que le cours de la nature peut accorder au voyageur.

7. ...avec les Maures, les Marates, les Malabars, les Bengalais etc; et à former avec ces nations des liaisons solides que l'équité et l'humanité avouent, et qui, pour le corps et pour l'âme, soient avantageuses aux deux parties.

8. Tous ces traits ont fait regarder les François comme des guerriers généreux sur les paroles desquelles un prince malheureux pouvoit compter, quand même leurs intérêts souffriroient... Malgré l'étendue de nos conquêtes et les maux qu'elles ont du naturellement entraîner, jamais il ne nous est rien arrivé de pareil au massacre des Anglois à Kalkuta et Patna.

9. ...où se forge la haine redoutable d'un peuple ami, inhumainement dépouillé, qui regarde, en frémissant, sur son corps, la marque livide des fers qu'il a reçus pour prix de l'hospitalité.

10. Ce sont donc des hommes libres, blessés dans leur propriété, des hommes que le besoin presse, qu'un joug de fer peut seul contenir ; mais qui, à la première apparence de succès, vont se jeter comme des lions sur leurs tyrans, ravisseurs atroces, infracteurs de toutes les lois, naturelles, divines et humaines.

11. Ce plan, conçu sous les auspices de la liberté établie sur les deux mers, et dans le vaste continent de l'Amérique, est-indépendant des religions, des opinions nationales. Il suppose le genre-humain formant une grande famille, dont quelques branches, en s'écartent, se fixant en pays étranger, ont perdu le souvenir de leur filiation, même la méconnoissent. Quoi de plus beau, que de se rapprocher d'elles, de chercher aies entendre, et de pouvoir leur dire, dans les transports d'une tendre communication : Nous sommes frères ; nos intérêts sont les mêmes...

12. Ce vaste continent nous offre des monumens très - anciens ; des livres précieux ; des loix sages ; des opinions intéressantes ; des sciences, des arts. Profitons, pour le bien de l'Europe, et de l'Asie, de l'entrée que la connoissance des langues peut nous donner dans ces belles contrées : les récompenses particulières affectées aux découvertes utiles, sont un encouragement, que l'âme honnête et ardente ne dédaignera pas. Rendons les habitans de l'Inde, par les avantages que nous leur procurerons, aussi intéressés, aussi empressés à nous avoir, que nous pouvons l'être à les visiter, à rester dans leur pays. Peut-être seront-ils curieux d'apprendre nos langues, de lire nos livres ?

13. Instruits par les fautes de nos pères », croyons» que les Indiens sont des hommes, qu'ils ont le même droit naturel que nous : et nous le croirons, quand nous entendrons leurs langues. Croyons même qu'ils nous valent en certaines choses, que dans d'autres ils nous

sont supérieures. [...] et, sans parler du plaisir qu'il y a à faire le bien, nous jouirons, dans l'Inde la considération que nous ont acquise dans le reste de l'Asie, les grands événemens qui honorent le dix-huitième siècle.

14. Je suis homme de lettres, et ne suis que cela, c'est-à-dire un zéro dans l'Etat. Je n'ai jamais prêté de serment de fidélité, ni exercé aucune fonction civile ou militaire : à 73 ans, prêt à terminer ma carrière, qui a été laborieuse, pénible, orageuse, je ne commencerai pas : la mort m'attend, je l'envisage de sang-froid. Je suis et serai toujours soumis aux lois du gouvernement, sous lequel je vis, qui me protège. Mais l'âme que le Ciel m'a donnée, est trop grande et trop libre, pour que je m'abaisse et me lie en jurant fidélité à mon semblable. Le serment de fidélité, dans mes principes, n'est dû qu'à Dieu, par la créature au créateur. D'homme à homme, il a à mes yeux un caractère de servilité auquel ma philosophie indienne ne peut s'accommoder...

15. Paisibles indiens, antiques possesseurs d'un pays fertile, vous recueilliez tranquillement les fruits qu'il fournissait à vos besoins... Fallait-il que le bruit de vos richesses pénétrât dans un climat où les besoins factices n'ont point de bornes ! Bientôt de nouveaux Étrangers abordent à vos côtes. Hôtes incommodes, tout ce qu'ils touchent leur appartient... La voix de l'équité ne peut se faire entendre. Au moins, malheureux indiens, peut-être apprendrez-vous qu'en deux cents ans un Européen qui vous a vus, qui a vécu avec vous, a osé réclamer en votre faveur, et présenter au Tribunal de l'Univers vos droits blessés, ceux de l'humanité flétris par un vil intérêt.