The *Mahabharata* Epic, Its Translations and Its Influence on Polish Intellectual Circles and General Readers

The *Mahabharata*, one of the two most famous Indian or, to be more precise, Sanskrit epics, is up till modern days not fully known to Polish intellectuals nor to general readers. It is, among other reasons, due to the lack of its comprehensive translation into Polish.

Even if the general information about Sanskrit literature, and in particular about the epics, or the *Mahabharata*, was circulating throughout Europe since the turn of 18th and 19th centuries, its way to Poland was a long one.

Nowadays in Poland it is obviously easier to find competent information on India and its literature but still in most cases the detailed descriptions of the *Mahabharata* epic are included in books directed to specialists rather than to general readers not to mention fragments of its direct translations into Polish which are till now extremely rare.

It is known that the Europeans became deeply interested in India when the British started to be present there. They were the first to raise the interest in their literature. In this context such names as William Jones, Charles Wilkins or Henry Thomas Colebrooke should be mentioned. Their works, mostly of linguistics character, started to circulate in Europe at the turn of 18 and 19th centuries. In France one of the first scholars who focused also on India was A. L. De Chezy and in Germany Franz Bopp. These were the first steps. At this period Polish intellectuals interested in India got information on it from these indirect sources. Later on, as it is widely known, India or Orient in general, became the subject of great interest not only for linguists but also for the European and Polish wider intellectual circles. This tendency appeared particularly in the period of Romanticism. To mention only some names important for this current in Western Europe, the Orient certainly became important for Goethe, Schiller,
Herder, Schelling, Schlegel brothers or Schopenhauer and, among the most famous Polish poets, for Mickiewicz and Słowacki.\(^1\)

As far as the *Mahabharata* is concerned, probably the first piece of information was focused on the *Bhagavadgita*, the famous philosophical poem included in this epic. In 1816, in *Pamiętnik Lwowski* we can find the text signed by W. Jachowicz entitled *Wiadomości o języku sanskrytańskim czyli starożytnym indyjskim, z porównaniem poematu epycznego Bagawat-Geeta z tegoż języka z Messjadą Klostocka, z francuskiego P. De Chateaubriand* which, among others printed simultaneously, shows that Sanskrit with its literary pieces had become one of the interests of Polish intellectual circles (Tuczyński 1981: 51).

Probably the most important Polish author of this period who tried to broaden the knowledge on India and its culture and who shared it with others was Walenty Skorochód Majewski (1764–1835). His works *O Sławnianach i Ich Pobratycach. Część I. Rozprawa o języku Sanskryckim…* (About the Slavs and their Kindred. Part I: The Dissertation on the Sanskrit language …) the text which he edited in 1816, the second one: *Rozprawa o języku sanskrytskim* (Dissertation about the Sanskrit language) published in 1817, and the third more detailed one *Gramatyka mowy starożytnych Skuthów czyli skalnych Gorali Indo-Skythów, Indyków, Budynow Herodota sanskrytem czyli dokładną mową zwaney…* (A grammar of the language of ancient Skuthians, i.e. Rock-mountaineers, Indo-Scythians, Indians, Buddhists [mentioned by] Herodotus; [of a language] called Sanskrit, i.e. The accurate speech…) edited in 1828 and its next, enlarged edition from 1833 contains the translation of a fragment coming from the *Rāmāyaṇa* (another Sanskrit epic). All of them together with his work *Brahma-Waiwarta Puranam…* (1830) were comparatively full of information based on the sources coming from European countries. He included a lot of information on India, Indian people, their customs and their ancient literature. Majewski was an active member of Towarzystwo Warszawskie Przyjaciół Nauk (Warsaw Society of the Friends of Science). He gave some lectures on Sanskrit there between the years 1813 and 1815 starting from the basic information on this language (alphabet, some Sanskrit words, some chosen Sanskrit texts) and finishing with the one entitled *O pierwszeistwie, doskonałości i obfitości języka samskrytu, tudzież o pożytkach i przyjemności, które z jego nauki mieć można* (About the priority, perfection and abundance of Sanskrit as well as about profits and pleasure which can arise from studying it).\(^2\)

\(^1\) For more information see e.g. Jan Tuczyński (Tuczyński 1981: 33–110 or Tuczyński 1970).

\(^2\) Detailed information on Majewski’s life and works together with the bibliography of them one can find in the article by M. Wielińska-Soltwedel (Wielińska-Soltwedel 2007: 157–170). The titles of his works, which sometimes can be translated in a slightly different manner I give here following her English versions of them. Look also at the newly published article by Cezary Galewicz where Majewski’s works are described and situated in the history of early European Orientalism (Galewicz 2011: 231–241).
In the 19th century the interest in India was growing to the result of comparatively large number of people (poets, historians, art critics, grammarians and other intellectuals) being involved with it. Indology as a separate branch of knowledge started to exist, chairs of indology appeared in major European universities. But, for a lot of information on Sanskrit literature and for only bits of translations of fragments and only sometimes the whole stories chosen from the *Mahabharata*, Europe, since the end of the 19th century, has also got the translations of the whole of this epic. However, the translations into English were made by Indian scholars and only then made available to the Europeans.³

At the end of the 19th century the Sanskrit to French translation also appeared. It was meant to cover the whole of the epic but finally failed to achieve that goal.⁴ The will and need to deal with the whole text of the epic started to be visible in Europe and this was to be continued in the next decades and in different countries. To mention here only the major projects from the contemporary attempts at least several have had and some of them still have the aim described as the translation of the whole of the epic. These are the Italian translation by M. Kerbaker, even if prepared during his lifetime (1835–1914), published only later in Rome in 5 volumes, between 1933 and 1939.⁵ Another one, still in progress is the translation undertaken by the group of Russian researchers who for more than 50 years have been working on the translation with the goal to have the whole of the epic translated into Russian. Every several years the next volume appears. The translators involved in the project have been V. I. Kalyanov, Y. V. Vasil’kov, S. L. Neveleva.⁶ One more translation worth mentioning is the one into English begun by J. A. B. van Buitenen⁷ and now continued by his pupil

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³ To mention here the ones which cover the whole of the *Mahabharata* text: one was prepared by Manmatha Nath Dutt and published under the title *Mahabharata Translated into English from Original Sanskrit text*, 7 vols., Calcutta 1896; reprint Delhi 1988. The second one *The Mahabharata Translated by Kisari Mohan Ganguli and published by P. C. Roy*, 19 vols., 1883–1896; 3rd ed. New Delhi 1972–1975; 4th ed. New Delhi 1981; last ed., 7 vols., Delhi 1988 (most probably the translator was P. C. Roy and K. M. Ganguli was the sponsor of the project). These two translations since their publication are widely read and used in Europe.

⁴ At the end of the 19th century H. Fauche started the work which aim was to translate the whole of the epic. His translation was being published successively between the years 1863–1870. However, finally it covers only the beginning books up to the 8th one called Karna parvan. His translation was entitled *Le Mahabharata, poème épique*, French translation by H. Fauche, 10 vols., Paris 1863–1870.

⁵ *Il Mahabharata*, which is the free verse translation by Michele Kerbaker, prepared by C. Formichi e V. Pisani, 6 vols., Rome 1933–1939.

⁶ The Russian translation includes the following books of the *Mahabharata* – I, II, VIII, IV, III – in the sequence of the date of their publication. I (Adiparva) 1950; (II) Sabhaparva 1962; (IV) Virataparva 1967; (III) Vanaparva 1987; (VIII) Karnaparva 1990.

J. Fitzgerald, who is one of the very active modern researchers working on the *Mahabharata*.\(^8\)

As is seen some of the European translators have had, at least at the beginning of their attempt, the ambition to translate the whole of the epic on their own but they did not managed (e.g. H. Fauche or J. van Buitenen) whereas others decided for a co-operative work and even with this mode of work they have not managed yet. As we have seen above, the Indian translators had done their job individually (at least it is the information given to the readers). The question which method, a translation made by an individual or the one made by the group of people working simultaneously or, finally, by translators coming from different generations, may be the best one, is still an open issue. The method of work has certainly had influence on the congensuity of the version of the text in all the respective languages into which the epic is being translated. On the other hand the *Mahabharata* itself is certainly the work of different people and of different époques in the history of literary tradition of Indians so it does not seem artificial to keep this characteristic feature in its modern translations.

As one can expect, since the beginning of the European tradition of translations of the *Mahabharata* there have obviously also been translations of many different excerpts of it, short episodes and longer fragments constituting separate stories. They are dispersed throughout Europe. Some of them are edited in the form of collections of these fragments. To mention only one chosen example of them such is the translation prepared by Jean-Michel Peterfalvi and published in Paris.\(^9\)

As our main theme is the *Mahabharata’s* translations and their influence on Polish intellectual circles and on Polish general readers and, as the effect of this, on its influence on Polish literature, from olden till modern days we should state here that the above-mentioned translations into the European languages certainly have influenced the knowledge of the Mahabharata epic in Polish intellectual circles. At least some of them were known and commented by Poles soon after their appearance. Of course the access of Polish general readers has always been a very limited one.

At this point just in order to show the situation as it looks now we will mention the latest translations into Polish. We do it just to show how little is done contemporarily in this field. More examples, coming from the past, together with a detailed analysis will be given below with the aim to show their historical development. As far as the published modern translations of fragments of

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\(^9\) This translation covers all XVIII books in the form of extracts chosen by the translator with the view to give the most important fragments. Its title goes as follows: *Le Mahabharata. Extrait traduit du sanscrit par Jean-Michel Peterfalvi*, 2 vols., Paris: Flammarion 1985–1986. It contains also the introduction and commentaries prepared by Madeleine Biardeau.
the *Mahabharata* are concerned, there is the one prepared by A. Ługowski, another one by H. Marlewicz and the one prepared by the author of this text, I. Milewska – all of them were published in 2004. In 2007 a book entitled *Światło słowem zwane* (The Light Called the Word) which is the selection of translations of texts from different periods of Vedic and Sanskrit literature was published. It includes a chapter of *Mahabharata* fragments translated into Polish. Among the modern translators we can find here: Joanna Jurewicz and Marek Mejor. To my knowledge also J. Sachse has already done a lot in the field of both *Mahabharata* studies and translations of parts of this epic but they have not been published yet. The only exception is the whole of the *Bhagavadgita* translated by her (Sachse 1988). In the Internet resources one can find a very interesting beginning (?) of the project where several of the old and of the newest translations of fragments of the *Bhagavadgita* into Polish are gathered together with the goal of comparison. More complex history of the *Bhagavadgita’s* translations into Polish will be given below.

As was already mentioned above, not only the translations but even the general knowledge on the Mahabharata was and still is not widely circulating in Europe even in intellectual circles, not to mention the general ones. The common belief is that it is too long to be read and known. This assumption is true as the *Mahabharata* consists of 18 basic books written mostly in verse but also in prose which altogether give nearly 75,000 verses (traditionally described as 100,000) as writes John Brockington in his book on Sanskrit epics (Brockington 1998: 2). The *Mahabharata*, in terms of its length equals to about 8 times of the length of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* when put together, what was established by Arthur A. Macdonell already in 1901 (Macdonell 1990: 237). The main plot of the *Mahabharata*, as is widely known, is the struggle

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15 Professor J. Sachse delivered a series of very inspiring lectures at the Jagiellonian University. They were focused on the chosen topics connected with the *Mahabharata* but, as far as I know, their written form was up till now also not published in a concise form. The exception is the article “Some Words on the Battle at Kuruksetra (Retardations and Replacements” (Sachse 2007: 90–97). As one of the participants of these meetings I own a small piece of her translation of some short fragments coming from the Mahabharata in a manuscript form.

between two Indian families coming from common roots namely of the Pandavas and Kauravas. However, to this main plot there are thousands of smaller episodes or even the whole stories added. The complex independent texts, like the already mentioned Bhagavadgita, are included. Some call the Mahabharata an encyclopaedia rather than an epic. As far as its dating is concerned, there are also long discussions among the researchers. The extreme is the view of some Indian scholars who put the dating back to ten or even more centuries BC. The common agreement for quite a long time was for the period between 4th century BC to 4th AD. The latest research though shortens this period to 2nd BC up to 2nd AD. Even with this dating it covers a long period of no less than four hundred years. A famous German scholar M. Winternitz in his History of Sanskrit Literature pointed to the fact that several fragments can come even from Vedic times that is about 10th BC while others may derive their origin from times later than IV AD (Winternitz 1990: 453–454).

If we try to look at the Mahabharata as a literary work conveying certain ideas and trying to fulfil certain goals in its major part it is by all means very similar to the Iliad and the Odyssey. It conveys the knowledge of heroic deeds of former generations. Often they appear in different versions sung by bards or rhapsods who modify particular stories in their own ways. Kazimierz Kumaniecki, the author of the book Historia kultury starożytnej Grecji i Rzymu (History of culture of ancient Greece and Rome) comments on the Greek epics as follows: “The myth popularized by it (the Homer’s poetry – I.M.) is also the oldest Greek history; it is a treasure-house in which the wisdom of the ages is kept. The heroes of this distant époque are the examples of behaviour for the next generations.” Still further on: “If you want to achieve this highest value which is the fame among the next generations, if you want to become the subject of the epic song, you have to behave like the old heroes … this is the knowledge which comes out of the myth” (Kumaniecki 1964: 55). The same is the role of the Indian epics. The Mahabharata is also the treasure-house of Indian wisdom and it gives ethical examples to be followed by next generations. It has also grown from “… the old tradition, shaped during ages” as, having in mind the Greek epics, writes Zygmunt Kubiak in his book on the literature of Greeks and Romans. He continues there “Aoidoi ‘the singers or bards’ playing many strings of their formingas, the epic liras, already in megarons of the Achayan castles were describing, in front of the klea andron (public), ‘famous deeds of the warriors’” (Kubiak 1999: 13).18

17 (transl. by I.M.): “Mit przez nią (poezję Homera – I.M.) popularyzowany jest również najstarszą historią grecką, jest skarbnicą, w której przechowuje się mądrość wieków. Bohaterowie tej odległej epoki są wzorami postępowania dla potomnych. [...] Jeżeli chcesz osiągnąć tę najwyższą wartość, którą stanowi sława u potomnych, jeśli chcesz sam stać się tematem pieśni epicznej, musisz tak postępować, jak dawni bohaterowie [...] oto nauka, która płynie z mitu.”

18 (transl. by I.M.): “[...] ze starej, przez wieki cierpliwe wykowanej tradycji. Aoidoi ‘pieśniarze’,потrzącając do wtoru swoich słów liczne struny formingas, epickiej liry, chyba już w megaronach (salach biesiadnych, świetlicach) zamków achaiskich opiewali wobec słuchanych klea andron, ‘sławne czyny wojowników’.”
As we know the Greek epics have a long-lasting tradition of their influence on the whole of European culture. The Indian ones played the same role in India. Have they had an influence on the European or, in particular, on the Polish intellectual tradition? We will try to look at this later on.

The mode of functioning of the separate songs of the epic and of the epics themselves, as was described by many authors, was the same both in Greek and in Indian traditions. In India the recitations were also directed towards particular circles of the audience and often, like in Greece, they were joined with music performances. The difference between Greek and Indian ways of sharing these songs with other people was that the Mahabharata often covered much wider variety of topics. The main plot was often only a starting point to different sort of inserted sub-stories or divagations of e.g. ethical or philosophical nature. We know that similar was also the way of some other epics of the European or Indo-European roots. The modes of their structure and ways of their circulation were already shown by the authors like Pavel Grintser (Grintser 1974).

It is not the place here to go into further details as far as the general information on the Mahabharata itself is concerned as we remember that our main topic is the Mahabharata’s influence on Polish intellectual circles and on Polish general readers. According to the task it seems to be the right time to give the bunch of more detailed information on the Polish tradition of translations of particular fragments of the Mahabharata which were edited since the 19th century, when the first ones appeared and then to show their history and development till nowadays.

The first fragments and stories were the ones which were already widely known in other European countries. They circulated through different European countries due to the fame of their importance, extraordinary beauty or both. The first English translation of any part of the Mahabharata was the one published in 1785. It was the Bhagavadgita by Charles Wilkins. It was soon re-translated into German, French and Russian.19 These were most probably the ones which inspired and influenced at least some European poets and scholars. Among them the most famous names were the ones of Johann Wilhelm von Goethe and Franz Bopp and via their versions they influenced the Polish authors.

As here we are focusing only on the Mahabharata we have to state that in its case there were two most famous stories which circulated comparatively widely in Europe since the very beginning of studies on the Mahabharata as a literary work namely the story of Savitri and the story of Nala and Damayanti.20 Both

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19 A very good short, modern survey of the translations of the Bhagavadgita to the European languages and of the main European studies on it is included in Mylius 2004: 98.

20 As early as in 1819 F. Bopp published the text of “Nala and Damayanti” together with its Latin translation.
of them are, so to say, separate unities included in the epic and they could have been presented to the European public as the entities in themselves.

As far as the story of Savitri, included in the third book of the epos, is concerned, in 1821 Kazimierz Brodziński (1791–1835), who was deeply interested in Indian matters, translated the whole of it and published with the title Sawitri. His translation was based on the one into German published earlier in Germany by Franz Bopp. Both translations were made in prose which did not resemble the original Sanskrit version. It seems that Brodziński’s translation was directed towards intellectual circles rather than to the general readers.

Some time later Polish wider public got another opportunity to get at least some taste of Sanskrit literature. Among other fragments coming from Sanskrit also the Mahabharata ones were present in the popular work on the history of Sanskrit literature. They were included in the history of Indian literature written for general readers by Julian Adolf Święcicki (1850–1932) and published in Warszawa as early as 1902 in the series entitled Historya literatury powszechnej (Święcicki 1902). But for the summary of the story of Savitri Święcicki includes here his own translation of other pieces from the epic. This time the translation, again not being the direct one, is done according to the earlier published English version of it done by M. Monier-Williams. To give just the taste of his Polish language used in the translation I will quote here some lines:

Na chłodnej przysiadła ziemi. Savitri łzami zalana
Głowę małżonka bezwładną na swoje kładzie kolana,
Proroctwo serce jej mrozi, skupia swą pamięć i liczy.
Wtem nagle widzi przed sobą przestraszny twór tajemniczy.
W odzieży krwawo-czerwonej z ściętą na główie koroną,
Postać ma ciemną-zarazem jak słońce wskroś rozpaloną.
Oczy podobne płomieniom, a sznurek z ręki mu spływa (Święcicki 1902: 237).

This is the description of the god of death – Yama. As mentioned above in his book Święcicki summarises the story of “Savitri”. He also includes there some other translations of fragments of the Mahabharata. Among them an epic version of the story inspired by the Rigvedic one, namely the story of Pururavas and Urvasī.\(^\text{21}\) In the Mahabharata we can find the modified version of this story where the main characters are Arjuna and Urvasī. In his translation of this fragment Święcicki follows the translation made by F. Bopp. We can notice that the Polish language of Urvasī and Arjuna used by Święcicki in this translation seems to be slightly different from the one used in the Savitri story.

It goes as follows:

\(^\text{21}\) RV. X, 95; Polish translation of this Rigvedic hymn one can find in Hymny Rigwedy (Michalski 1971: 107–110).
Święciecki, in his book, gives the general readers also example of the translation of a fragment of the Bhagavadgītā in this case done after the prose translation of E. Burnouf. For his version of the translation he uses both possible styles: prose (which is not in accordance with the original version):

Niewiasty Kurawów skierowały się ku polu bitwy. Żony poległych przybywają do Kurukszeta, ujrzały swych braci, synów, ojców i mężów leżących bez życia i pożeranych przez szakale, kruki i wrony, chciwe mięsa, przez Bhutów, Pisatczów, Bakszarów i innych lupieżców nocnych. Na widok pola rzeźi, podobnego cmentarzowi, niewiasty padają piknemi ciałami swemi bądź na trupy, bądź na ziemię, wydając krzyki rozpaczne [...] (Święciecki 1902: 247).

and poetry (which, even if not following the original version as far as metrics is concerned, is a try to convey the original form to Polish readers). It goes as follows:

...Precz z trwogą – druhowie moi – niech zbiegów sława powstrzyma.
Strzały świschające, jak roje płyną wciąż z łuku olbrzyma.
Przez stosy trupów zmiażdżonych, przez krwi zakrzeplej kałużę
Pędzi wciąż naprzód Ardszuna, podobien strasznej wichurze [...] (Święciecki 1902: 246).

Polish language used in these translations is full of beauty and in many fragments follows the poetic means of the original versions. Święciecki definitely shows his acquaintance with the European knowledge of his times as far as the Mahābhārata epic and its main European translations are concerned. He knows many of the most famous European translations of stories coming from the epic and chooses the ones he thinks the best as the basis for his own versions of these texts. Święciecki but for giving the summary of the content of all the books gives also the tastes of different styles in which separate fragments of the original text of the epic were composed. He did not keep to the original differentiation between prose and poetic fragments but followed the other European translations of his times. In his history of Indian literature, as said above, he showed a versatile knowledge of the Mahābhārata. His work might have been, and most probably was, one of the sources of information for his contemporaries and for the
next generations of Polish intellectuals and poets. It also gave basic knowledge
to the general Polish public interested in foreign literature or Indian literature
in particular. It is hard to say how influential was his work but certainly it was
an option for those interested in obtaining the information from a competent
author.

One of the first known Polish attempts of the direct Sanskrit to Polish
translation was the one of the *Nala and Damayanti* story. This work publish-
ed in the form of a small booklet was entitled *Nala. Powieść staroindyska* (Nala.
An Old Indian Story). The author of this translation was Jan Leciejewski (1854–
1929). Leciejewski translated the story from original Sanskrit ("Tłomiczy-
łem zaś wedle oryginału …") he writes in the introduction to his translation.23
Most probably translations into other European languages might also have been
a help for him. As the story of *Nala and Damayanti* was at this time already
included in the collection of literature pieces well known in Europe (e.g. the
translations of H.C. Kellner or M. Monier-Williams were already widely cir-
culating), it is strongly possible he had access to at least some of the already
existing ones.

The beginning verses of his version of the story went on as follows:

*Brhadaśwa rzecze:*

*Syn Wiraseny, Nala, królem był potężnym.*

*Bogaty w cnoty, piękny, znawca koni,*

*Przewyższał królów wszystkich, jako Indra bogów,*

*I jaśniał ponad wszystkich, jako słońce w blasku.*

*Cnotliwy książę ten Niszadhów znał i wedę*

*I choć grał w kostki, mówił prawdę, wojskiem silny.*

*Był mężom i niewiastom mily, bo uprzejmy,*

*Był łucznik celny, słowem: drugi Manu prawie.*

It seems that the circulation of his translation was of limited nature and it did
not inspire other Polish authors to get deeply interested in the topic.

We can say that the opposite was the role of historically next publications
which this time were prepared by a man also known as the one who knew San-
skrit. Most probably he learned it by himself and he was certainly acquainted
with the big bunch of main direct translations from Sanskrit into other than
Polish European languages. Probably his main reason as far as the *Mahabharata*
or other Oriental pieces of literature are concerned, was to give and popularise
the knowledge of Oriental cultures via chosen pearls of their respective litera-
tures’ pieces. Two stories which seem to be his favourite and which were com-
ing from the *Mahabharata* epic were again the story of *Nala and Damayanti*
and the story of *Sawitri* (the last one popularly called the story of a faithful

22 See: Leciejewski 1885.

23 Quotation, which in English goes like, “I translated from the original text […]” comes
from the introductory part.
The name of this man was Antoni Lange (1861–1929), a poet and an art critic himself, a person whose works were widely known and popular among the intellectual circles of the period of his life. In Poland this period was known as “Młoda Polska” (Young Poland) and one of its features was a strong interest in Orient and India in particular. But for the above mentioned two chosen stories which were edited first Lange meticulously prepared also a summary of the whole content of the Mahabharata epic and published it within the series entitled Epos. Zbiór arcydzieł poezji epickiej wszystkich czasów i narodów w streszczeniach i wyciągach (Epic: The Collection of Epic Poetry of All Periods and Nations in Summaries and Surveys). This series was his own idea and he has made an enormous work of covering the topics and at the same time gathering the fragments of translations prepared by other contemporary authors and then including them in the respective volumes. As far as the Mahabharata is concerned, the title of the book was Vyasa: Mahabharata and it was edited as the fourth volume of the series in 1911 (Lange 1911). It included the translation of the whole of the philosophical text, Bhagavadgita, which was done on the basis of other European translations by Bronislaw Olszewski. As we remember this summary of the content of the Mahabharata was preceded by the separate edition of two stories chosen from the Mahabharata and translated directly from Sanskrit, namely the story of Nala and Damayanti and the story of Sawitri. Lange, in his introduction, describes also his hesitations and final decisions as far as, but for the content part, his want to preserve the poetic value of these stories was concerned. As the most commonly used Sanskrit stanza (called śloka), for the epic period, is the 32 syllable one (16-syllable verse repeated twice), Lange tried different methods to keep it. However, he concluded that it was impossible without the harm to Polish taste of good poetry and he ended up with the mixture of 8, 9

24 These stories were edited by him for the first time in the form of two separate books. The story of Nala and Damayanti was entitled Pieśń o Nalu i Damajanti. Baśń staroindyjska z księg Mahabharaty, przekład z sanskrytu, przedmowa Antoni Lange, Warszawa: Gabriel Centnesszer i s-ka 1906; then Warszawa – Kraków: Jakub Mortkowicz 1913; 2nd ed. Nal i Damayanti. Baśń staroindyjska z księg Maha-Bharaty, z sanskrytu przelóżyl A. Lange, Warszawa – Kraków: Jakub Mortkowicz 1921; the story of Sawitri had the Polish title Sawitri czyli opowieść o wiernej żonie, przekład z sanskrytu Antoni Lange, Warszawa: Edward Wende i s-ka 1910.

25 But for the Mahabharata two years earlier Lange published the survey of the second Sanskrit epic namely the Ramayana (Lange 1909).

26 As Lange explains it in the introduction to the book (Lange 1911: XXXVIII): “Autor niniejszej książki, zamierzając przelążyć Bhagawadgítę z oryginału wierszem, tymczasowo powierzył przekład tego poematu p. Br. Olszewskiemu, który wywiązał się z zadania b. dobrze, tłumacząc podług E. Burnoufa. Korzystaliśmy również z innych tłumaczeń ‘Deussen, Garbe’” (“The author of this book who wanted to translate the Bhagawadgita from the original version in poetic form for the time being asked Mr. Br. Olszewski to do it. He (Olszewski) translated it according to the version of E. Burnouf very well. We have also used other translations ‘Deussen, Garbe.’”)
or 7-syllable scheme repeated twice (from time to time also other ones) in different stanzas for *Nala and Damayanti* and with the 8 or 13-syllables ones repeated 4 times for *Savitri*. As may be easily checked he was not consistent through the whole stories. The same was the case in other fragments, translated from different Sanskrit metres where he used different solutions.\(^{27}\) To give two short examples of the results of his decisions we will quote – the beginning of *Nala and Damayanti* story here:

*Był sobie król, imieniem Nal, syn Wiraseny, walny w dłoni, Wszech pożądanych pełny cnót, foremny ciałem, świadom koni, Królewskich mężów rzeszy stał na czele, niby młody bóg – Ponad wszystkimi wzwyż a wzwyż, jako promienny słońca łuk* (Lange 1911: 81)

(scheme: \(8 + 9; 8 + 9; 2 \times 8\)); and from the *Savitri* story:

*Był król na Madrach, sługa praw, król obowiązku mocy zdan, Pobożny, prawdomówny, cny, litosny, zmysłów swoich pan* (Lange 1911: 126)

(with the scheme \(4 \times 8\) syllables); and one fragment from the later part:

*Nie bez prawego dobra jest to twoje zdanie, Gdy inne łaski, dawco łask, wola twa zwęża. Łaskę wybieram: Niechaj żyw Satyavan wstanie! Bowiem, jako umarła jestem ci bez męża* (Lange 1911: 145);

(where the scheme is \(4 \times 13\) syllables).

As was already stated these stories were the pearls of Sanskrit epic style. The most probable reason for them being published in separate editions was the will to popularise them among Polish readers. They were known all over Europe as very beautiful ones and at the same time the ones which showed the common values of the Indo-European family as far as the literary motives, myths and legends are concerned. First of all, they underlined the importance of the good relations and faithfulness between wife and husband. The devotion which in the case of *Savitri* story goes beyond this world. The case of a desperate wife who wins her husband from the arms of death. Doesn’t it resemble the inverted motif of following the beloved one to the netherworld so well-known in the European tradition? We can see that Lange, on the one hand, cared for chosen stories, in his opinion the most significant and beautiful ones and, on the other hand, he wanted to raise a general interest in Orient and popularise it in both intellectual and more popular circles of readers. What is worth mentioning is the fact that his books were also beautifully edited which shows that he cared not only about the content but also of its visual presentation. Antoni Lange was also the one

\(^{27}\) Lange explains his reasons in the introductory part of his book (Lange 1911: LII–LVI).
who tried (in his other works) to present the opinion of a huge common spaces of the European and Oriental interests. Jerzy Poradecki in his introduction to the new edition of the book Rozmyślania i inne wiersze (Deliberations and Other Poems) containing the collection of Lange’s poems discusses his works, showing Lange’s inspiration coming also in the big part from the main European sources such as from the Bible and from the general ideas of European Romanticism (Poradecki 1979).

As far as Orient is concerned, one more of Lange’s publications was the work published in 1921 entitled Dywan wschodni. Wybór arcydzieł literatury egipskiej, asyro-babilońskiej, hebrajskiej, arabskiej, perskiej i indyjskiej (The Eastern Carpet. The Choice of Pearls of Egyptian, Asyro-Babylonian, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian and Indian Literatures) in which Lange showed the immensely wide spectrum of interest and knowledge about Oriental literature. He was the author of the novel Miranda which was certainly inspired by Indian motifs, strongly influenced by the love story of Nala and Damayanti (Lange 1924). A short analysis of this novel and its dependence on Indian culture is included in an article by Tomasz Winiarski entitled L’orientalismo in Miranda di Antoni Lange (Winiarski 2011).

More general and at the same time more detailed description of Lange’s orientalism one can find in the book by Franciszek Machalski entitled Orientalizm Antoniego Langego (Machalski 1937) or, more general, in the work by Jan Tuczyński Motywy indyjskie w literaturze polskiej (Tuczyński 1981). Lange’s works certainly were of inspiration for other poets of his times and they influenced at least some of them. These poets obviously did not know Sanskrit themselves so their sources were only indirect. Such was the case of Jan Kasprowicz (1860–1926) who but for reading the books of Lange was in direct contact with an excellent sanskritologist, Andrzej Gawroński (1885–1927).28 There is information that they were good friends and that Gawroński discussed Indian matters with Kasprowicz and suggested that he should try to include Indian motives in his works. As far as the Mahabharata is concerned, Kasprowicz wrote a poem entitled Sawitri which was mirroring the famous Sawitri story. It was included in the collection of his poems Ballada o słoneczniku i inne nowe poezje (The Sunflower Ballad and Other New Poems) which was published in 1908.

Another Polish writer, the novelist Waclaw Berent (1873–1940) but for his own attempts to translate some fragments of the Upanishads wrote a book entitled Próchno (Rotten Wood) in which later interpreters have seen a lot of Indian influences and they made a suggestion that its division into 18 chapters was inspired by the Mahabharata’s 18 books. His book was re-published in 1998 with an introduction written by Jerzy Paszek (Berent 1998).

28 More detailed information on Gawroński, his career and works one can find in an article by I. Milewska (Milewska 2011: 243–250). The article contains also the bibliography of Gawroński’s works and the list of languages known to him.
The next very famous Polish poet who was interested in different oriental stories and, among them, in Indian stories and myths was Bolesław Leśmian (1878/1879–1937). This interest was shown e.g. in the book entitled Przygody Sindbada Żeglarza (The Adventures of Sindbad the Sailor), a charming book directed to young readers and his interest in India was particularly visible at least in several of his poems. All of them have Indian indicators already in their titles not to mention their content. They are: Dżananda (with an Indian name as a title and in which Indian motifs appear in abundance), Pururawas and Urwasi (inspired again by the already described above famous Indian love story), Asoka (which in itself is the name of a famous Indian king who, most probably, was converted to Buddhism) and U wód Hiranjawati – nad brzegiem żaloby (At the Hiranyavati River: At the Edge of Mourning.) Dżananda, one of the poems directly inspired by India, belongs to the collection entitled Napój cienisty (The Shadowy Nectar). It was included again in the book prepared in 50-ties by Mieczysław Jastrun. This one was a collection of Leśmian’s chosen poems (Leśmian 1955) and entitled Wiersze wybrane (Chosen Poems). In Dżananda but for its Indian title and its mention of one of the Indian gods – Indra, Leśmian includes a lot of Oriental or Indian elements to add the flavour of East to this short and tragic episode of a sad love story. We can find here both animals and plants bizarre to the European reader. These are snakes, an elephant, monkeys, a lampart, a mango tree and a beautiful peacock. All these elements create the view of the Oriental forest in which the love story scene takes its place. The poem includes the story of the god Indra who, in one of his incarnations, tries to impress the earthly woman. This motif is also characteristic for some of the stories of the Mahabharata. Did Leśmian know these stories from the epic? We cannot state it with certainty, but it seems highly probable (Leśmian 1955: 160–164). As Leśmian is known for his own poetic language which, among other features, is full of neologisms I will give here again the fragment of it in Polish, in extenso:

Szedł Dżananda tym lasem, gdzie bywać nie mogę,
A miał drogę na oślep – Wiadomo: miał drogę!
Węże w blask się nicości wśniawały płamiście,
Słoń się wzgorzył w zarosłach, ciemniejszą iłmem w liście,
Małpy w jarach niechulnych pławiły wzrok dziki,
Ogonem nieprzytomne gmatwają storczyki,
Lampart futrem przezegrzanym polegał na grzbiecie
I ssał łapę, ślepiami gnuśniejąc w zaświecie […]

and another one:

…Dżananda, snem tracony, na polanę zboczył
I zaoczył dziewczynę… I znowu zaoczył…
Leżała, dłużeć w trawie swój dreszcz jednolity,
Paw z nią gruchał, a w pawiu tkwił Indra ukryty […] (Leśmian 1955: 160).
As told above one more poem is entitled *Pururawas and Urwasi* and it was again, as the one mentioned above, undoubtedly inspired by India. This time it was certainly based on the Sanskrit famous story which has re-appeared in many Indian works. As we remember the first Indian appearance was in one of the Rigvedic hymns (X, 95) where the hymn is given in the form of a dialogue between two lovers, a nymph Urvaśī and a mortal king Pururavas. Then the story, in its changed form, enriched by many details not existing in the previous one has had at least several variants in later works. There is e.g. a variant in the literature of the brahmana period, namely in the *Śatapatha-brahmana*. As mentioned above the story appeared also at least twice (in the abbreviated form) in the Mahabharata.

In Leśmian’s version it is a lovely story, where Leśmian uses his own poetic means to create charming vision of the pair of happy lovers, who are finally destined to unhappy end.

Here are some lines from the poem:

Pururawa w godzinie, gdy słońce mgły kras,
Ujrzał nimfę wód prześnionych – Indiankę Urwasi.
Wywurzycie dłoni z wody, a za dłonią – głowę,
A niedługo – popiersnią kibicę połowę.
Górowała rozbieżnej pierścieniami fali,
Palcamy z lekka pierśnych tykając korali.
Pururawa podpatrzył, jak nieśmiertelniało
Jej obciśle przywdziane powierzch ducha ciało […]

It was first included into the collection of his poems entitled *Łąka* (The Meadow) and then re-edited in 1983 by Jacek Trznadel in Leśmian’s *Poezje wybrane* (Leśmian 1983).

The motif of love between a divine heroine and a mortal man appears in a lot of Indo-European stories and myths so we certainly cannot conclude that its origin is strictly Indian. However, we can just notice it is well-known and often used in the ancient Indian literature and that this very version of Pururawas and Urwaśī inspired Polish poets to write their own Polish versions of it.

One more poem which found its place in the collection *Łąka* was again having an obvious Indian inspiration. It was entitled *Asoka* and was devoted to a famous Indian king Aśoka who lived in the 3rd century BC. There are many sources on the basis of which we know that this king was during his lifetime converted to Buddhism. In Leśmian’s poem we can find, first of all, the pacifistic ideas connected with Buddhism and the compassion shown towards all beings:

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29 Polish translation of preserved fragments of this hymn made by S. F. Michalski (Michalski 1971). His first translations of Rigvedic hymns were published in 1912 under the title “Czterdzieści pieśni Rigwedy” then the next 30 hymns in their Polish version were added and published in 1962. It is obvious though that the first publication could have been known to Leśmian.

30 Look the resume of this variant in the commentary attached to the translation of this hymn. The author of the resume is S. F. Michalski (Michalski 1971: 153–154).
I rzekł: ‘Odtąd niech wrogów nie będzie na świecie,
Niech łom stanie się zadość, niech spoczną zamiecie –
Tak przysięgam: po pierwsze, po drugie, po trzecie!’
I ukląkłszy na mieczu, jak klęczą mocarze,
Poukochał kolejno te rany, te – wraże,
I zgromadził w pamięci przewymarłe twarze
A na jego skinienie od owej godziny

Buddhist philosophy in many European countries, including Poland, started
to have an influence not only on intellectual circles but also on general public.
The last poem of Leśmian where Indian influence is easily visible is the one,
edited posthumously. It was entitled, as mentioned above, *U wód Hiranjawati – nad brzegiem żałoby* and included into the collection *Dziejba leśna."

In this poem he again describes life from the Buddhist perspective:

*U wód Hiranjawati – nad brzegiem żałoby*
Poległ Budda, trawiony mgłą ślepej choroby
Był w pobliżu tłum uczniów i był ptak na drzewie
I dziewczyna, o której nikt dotąd nic nie wie.
Śmierć opodal

and he continues:

*Z tym szelestem, z tym szmerem na pozór tak bratnim* [...]

But for the sad picture of the world Leśmian describes also the wonders of it,
beautiful women and the joys of love. However, he concludes that a sweet temp-
tation results in an inevitable end:

Nie umiera! Pieszczotą wyróżnię twe ciało,
By dla ciebie i dla mnie niezbędnym się stało!
Myśl zatopię w rozkoszy obłądnym bezkresie,
Aby nic nie myślała, prócz tego, że chce się [...] 
Białą szyję potrafię giąć do twej rozpaczy –
I zrozumiesz, że rozpacz nic wówczas nie znaczy.
Żyj póki me dłonie biełej na świecie,
Dwa narzędzia pieszczoty, a usta – to trzecie!
Twego bólu do życia żaden grób nie schłonie! –
I dziewczyna obydwie wyciągnęła dłonie
I usta doń zbliżyła, by go zmóc za chwilę.
Budda skinął. Śmierć przyszła. Fruwały motyle.
The detailed analysis of the possible liaisons between European philosophy and some of Leśmian’s poems together with the try to point to and give conclusions as far as the whole subject of Leśmian’s Indian inspirations are concerned one can find in an article by Halina Marlewicz entitled *Bolesław Leśmian – indyjskie inspiracje* (Bolesław Leśmian – Indian Inspirations) (Marlewicz 2010).

As we can see Leśmian was certainly acquainted and impressed by at least some of Indian stories and motifs coming from literary sources. He also became one of the exponents of Buddhism as a proposal of philosophy of life. This was the period when the ideas of Buddhism became influential or at least noticed by Polish poets e.g. Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska (1891–1945) starts her poem devoted to love and its sad sides, the poem entitled *Róże dla Safony* (Roses for Safona), with the verse “Budda głosił swoją naukę bez nadziei …” (Buddha taught without hope …). Certainly there were also other poets who compared their emotions and thoughts with the ones known from Indian culture. We know that Buddhist philosophy and Indian tradition have become of great influence not only on Polish but also on many other European modern poets, philosophers and general readers. It is impossible to cover this topic at full length in a short article like this. As far as the *Mahabharata* is concerned we can add that at least some of the ideas of Buddhism were known to the authors of the epic.

To sum up, in this period, as was shown above, the period which was called by the theoreticians of Polish literature the period of “Young Poland”, a great interest in Orient and particularly in India and its biggest epic the *Mahabharata* was visible in at least several works of some of the most important figures of these times. As was written later by one of the eminent Polish indologists Stanisław Stasiak in his sketch devoted to the relation between Indian and European science: “The Indian wisdom since the most remote times was legendary and this notion managed to be unchanged for long ages…”31 This time the interest started to be not only of general nature but it included also stronger and stronger will to discover the monuments of Indian literature, philosophy and mythology basing on direct sources. We may observe that during this period intellectuals cared about Orient not only for their own knowledge but they wanted to share it with larger circles of general public in different ways (books of general nature, histories of literature, poems and novels, lectures).

The interest in Indo-European dependencies was also shown in the works of one of the well-known indologist of these times that is of the first half of the 20th century. Her name was Helena Willman-Grabowska (1870–1957) and she was a professor of Sorbonne and the Jagiellonian University. Willman-Grabowska gave several presentations on the Indo-European common motifs which one can trace in different fragments of Sanskrit literature and presented them at the gatherings of Polish Academy of Skills (Polska Akademia Umiejętności – PAU). They

31 (transl. by I.M.): “Mądrość indyjska okryła się od najdawniejszych czasów legendą i zdołała ją przez długie wieki podrzymywać”.
were discussed there and then published in its proceedings. In 1934 the title of her presentation was Motyw z Odysei w Jataka indyjskiem (The Odyssey motif in an Indian jataka)\(^{32}\). She analysed there similarities between the Odyssey epic and one of the Buddhist stories. Her thesis was that if the same motif appears in two works created in two distant cultures there are at least three options to interpret it. It may be due to the common features of the imagination of people from the respective ones, to their common roots or one can try to trace their common dependencies. Her opinion was that if, but for the main subject, at least several minor details (that is if we treat the story in a structural way) re-appear, the details which can be called secondary, it is highly probable they have not been born independently. In this case her hypothesis is that this Odyssey motif influenced or gave birth to the details of Buddhist story. As mentioned above, one of the latest currents in the research on the Mahabharat is to find the Buddhist-Mahabharata dependencies and influences. In this context there appears a space for deeper studies on potential Buddhist-Mahabharata-European-Polish influences. The information given here on Willman-Grabowska’s article is to show possible future areas of research and to inform on her interests in Sanskrit literature (her main field of research was linguistics). In the same, 1934 year, she presented another topic with the analysis of Indian and Greek dependencies. The title was this time Prastary motyw zrękówin w literaturze indyjskiej i greckiej (The Old Motif of the Ceremony of the Choice of Husband ‘svayamvara’ in the Indian and Greek Literature). In this presentation, while giving the historical survey of the appearance of this motif in different chosen literary pieces she mentioned the ‘svayamvara’ of Damayanti in particular, using it as an example of similarities. She gave the description of the ceremony and analysed the details of it. She underlined that the girl had the right to choose her husband freely out of the bunch of candidates who had come for the ‘svayamvara’. She added that the sign of choice was the girland of flowers which was given to the chosen one. She stated that it resembles the well-known motif of kicking the ball in the direction of a favourite, chosen person used as sign of choice of favourite partner in European, mainly Greek, literature. Later on Willman-Grabowska, giving the details of the Savitri story, together with a fragment of the text with its translation, showed again that the free will of a wife-to-be in the choice of her future husband was accepted also in the Indian culture even if being in contradiction with the common rule of arranged marriages (Willman-Grabowska 1934b: 12–13, 15). I have found her translation of the fragment of the epic text, written with her own hand and inserted between the article’s pages. It goes on as follows:

Ręce złożąwszy pokłonnie, ta pięknobiodra dziewczyna u boku ojca stanęła.
Widzając ją w kwiecie młodości, urodą bogom podobną, a nie żadaną w małżeństwo, zasmucił się ludów władyska …

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Córko! Czas wydać Cię z domu; nikt teściem mnie dotąd nie uczcił,
Sama poszukaj małżonka równego tobie cnotami.
Kogo za męża zapragniesz, tego mi ziemię oznajmij (Willman-Grabowska 1934b: 16).

At the end of her article Grabowska compared the Indian elements of the choosing – husband ceremony with the Greek ones as shown in the Odyssey epic (Willman-Grabowska 1934b: 16–20). Her third lecture delivered at the gathering of Polish Academy of Skills touched one more motif common to the two traditions, namely the motif of marriage between a half-goddess and a human man (as we remember the motif appearing also in the Mahabharata epic). She analysed it together with its consequences as far as the fate of children born out of it is concerned. She compared it to the details given by Eurypides in the context of Alkmene’s fate. The article was entitled Echo Amfitiriona w poezji indyjskiej (The Echo of Amfitrion’s Motif in the Indian Poetry) and was one more example of Willman-Grabowska’s opinion of a number of common Indo-European roots which when proved by a researcher who worked on original texts should have convinced the circles of European intellectuals (or Polish intellectuals in this case) of the need of more attention to be devoted to these problems (Willman-Grabowska 1947). In order to enable it, but for giving the survey of her theoretical, comparative interests which, as we have seen, were focused on the ancient Indo-European influences Willman-Grabowska simultaneously tried to devote part of her time to translations of different pieces coming from Sanskrit literature works. One of these was her translation of fragments of the Mahabharata published in Rocznik Orientalistyczny (Willman-Grabowska 1957). It is only regrettable that her translation of the fragments of the Mahabharata were so short and that, being printed in the periodicals directed to small circles of researchers only could not have given a lot of information on this Sanskrit epic to the general public.\(^{33}\)

Meanwhile Europe was still deeply interested in the Nala and Damayanti story. We can see it e.g. from the work of Edgerton Franklin,\(^{34}\) Ladislao Boda\(^{35}\), or Albrecht Wezler.\(^{36}\) Regrettably, Polish readers do not have any new, modern translations of these or other stories prepared in the second part of the 20th century.

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\(^{33}\) In this context it is worth noticing that two of her translations were edited in the popular series. One was the translation of the book Vetalapaścavamsatika entitled Dwadzieścia pięć opowieści wampira, przekład i opracowanie Helena Willman-Grabowska, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1955, and the second translation focusing on the features of females coming from the work of Somadeva entitled Kathasaritsagara. It was the book O cnocie i niecnościerie niewiesce. Opowiadania z “Oceanu baśni” czyli “Katha Sarit Sagara”, chosen and translated from Sanskrit by Helena Willman-Grabowska, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1960.


\(^{35}\) Canto de Nala y Damayanti, transcription, lexico y traduction by Ladislao Boda, Mendoza: Universidad Nacional de Cuyo 1949.

As we could have seen even if not numerous nor versatile ones both the information on the *Mahabharata* and fragments of its translations appeared comparatively early in the Polish literary tradition. They have not been known to wide circles of readers but, most probably, at least they were the sign of the temptation of intellectual circles to include the knowledge on Sanskrit pearls of literature to their general knowledge. For some they have become inspiration for Oriental flavour added to their own works, for some they became the starting point for their thinking of common roots, for comparisons and analyses, for some they were the starting point to the search of other than European religious or philosophical systems and modes of thinking. We have not noticed any crucial influence of Sanskrit metrics on the style of Polish translations of the *Mahabharata* pieces which we can label as the new types included in the Polish tradition. There were some attempts, mostly done by A. Lange, but they did not result in new forms. The obvious need of finding at least some equivalent Polish words for some Sanskrit terms which are not understandable without the additional explanation was and still is an open area. Polish literary tradition has brought some solutions (e.g. the word “bramin” for Sanskrit “brahmana”) but there are many other problems connected with “untranslatable” words not solved yet. One of them is the problem of declination of Indian names, another, and very annoying one, the problem of the names of particular species of Indian plants. Many literary Sanskrit texts are full of different species of flowers, trees, etc. And the question is what to do with them not to lose the original flavour and not to lose the Polish reader who may be drowned in their undescribed multiplicity. Many similes and other poetic figures are based on the reader’s knowledge of the Indian details of different types of plants. How to deal with this problem while translating when we should keep the beauty of the original and, at the same time, if we want to avoid long additional explanations and we cannot think the general reader has this knowledge? If and how these problems influence the possibility of the reception of Sanskrit poetry? Can this Sanskrit poetry (in its 19th century form when the translations were made to the sort of Polish language which sounds artificial today) be influential in modern days? This is an open question.

We do remember that the second half of the 20th century, as we already have mentioned above, has not brought a lot in the field of new translations of particular fragments of the *Mahabharata* not to mention any attempt for a more complex work. But for the above-mentioned (Ługowski, Marlewicz, Milewska, Jurewicz, Mejor) hardly anything was published. Each of these translators tried to find different solutions as far as the language of the translation is concerned. Just to give some short, chosen examples.

A. Ługowski, Mbh VIII, 12:

H. Marlewicz, Mbh I, 15:

Śaunaka: Opowiedz mi o tym, jak bogowie sporządzili napój nieśmiertelności i jak zrodził się Ućchaśrawas, piękny i waleczny rumak boga Śłońca.

I. Milewska, Mbh III, 51:

Jaksza:
Któż od ziemi ważniejszy
Kto od nieba wyższy
Co od wiatru prędsze
A co od traw liczniejsze
Judhiszthira:
Matka od ziemi ważniejsza
Ojciec zaś wyższy od nieba
Umysł od wiatru prędszy
A myśl liczniejsza od traw.

Mbh III, 58:

Jaksza:
Co istotą jest człowieka
Kto przyjacielem przez los zesłany
Co jego sposobem przetrwania
A co celem najważniejszym
Judhiszthira:
Syn jest istotą człowieka
Żona przyjacielem przez los zesłanym
Deszcz jego sposobem przetrwania
A dawanie celem najważniejszym (Milewska 2004: 131, 133).

J. Jurewicz, Mbh II, 43:

Wajśampajana rzekł:
Kiedy Durjodhana bawił na dworze, po kolei wszystko wraz z Śakunim oglądał, o byku wśród Bharatów. A taka boska pomysłowość jawiła się oczom potomka Kurów, jakie nigdy wcześniej w Mieście Słoni nie widział … (przypis – Miasto Słoni [nagasahvaya – Hastinapura, stolica części królestwa, które przypadło Durjodhanie])

Mbh XI, 18:

Gandhari rzekła:
“Patrzej, Madhawo, na setki tysięcy mych synów niestrudzonych! Prawie wszystkich zabili Bhimasena swą maczugią! Ale jeszcze straszniejszy ból dzisiaj czuję, gdy widzę me młodzieńcze synów, których synów zabito, jak z włosem rozpuszczonym błądzą po tym polu bitwy …” (przypis – Cała wypowiedź Gandhari adresowana jest do Kryszny, obdarzanego różnymi przydomkami) (Jurewicz 2007: 180, 199).
Even from this short survey we can see the problems involved while dealing with Sanskrit texts. The spectrum of attempts to find appropriate language, the need of additional explanations and how to deal with it, inventing new words, usage or lack of usage of archaisms. These problems are not the only ones.

The relatively small number of modern translations obviously does not exclude the possibility of some more translations being yet not published; probably at least some are still in preparation. The basic information on the epic though has become the standard for Polish circles of intellectuals and it is also easily obtainable in case general public is interested in it. Of course in scholarly periodicals one can also find theoretical articles devoted to epic themes, to the Mahabharata or Bhagavadgita in particular.\(^\text{37}\)

When we try to look at the history of knowledge on the Mahabharata epic in Poland fortunately there is one exception, at least as far as Polish translations of the fragments of the Mahabharata are concerned. This exception is the history of Polish translations of the philosophical poem included in the epic namely the Bhagavadgita. This work, consisting of 18 chapters, constitutes as already mentioned, a whole for its own. It was translated an innumerable number of times to many different worlds’ languages so we will not cover the topic of other than Polish translations here. Our focus will be to present and shortly describe the last ones. Bhagavadgita, what is worth stressing here, is one of the most important texts of the Sanskrit or Indian culture. It is known not only by the circles of Indian upper classes but it is generally popular. It is often known by heart and recited at certain occasions. It can be interpreted in many different ways up to lower or deeper degree of understanding. It is a highly sophisticated proposal of the interpretation of the universe and the advise to people how to spent a good life here on the earth (it explains at least three possible ways to do it and for many Indians as far as probably for at least some of the Europeans it appeared to become a book of their lives). In this context it is very important that in the Polish tradition we can find also so many attempts to present it to different circles of recipients, coming from both intellectual as also from general public readers.

As stated above, the goal of most of the translations of this important text was to direct the Bhagavadgita text not only to specialists but also to the general public in order to share the knowledge of this extraordinary text, the text

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\(^{37}\) To mention only some examples. It is the already cited article by J. Sachse (Sachse 2007) or the one by I. Milewska (Milewska 2008).
of value comparative to the Bible, with Polish readers. The first translations, as we remember, were based on German or English versions of the poem (e.g. J. Święciecki and B. Olszewski who followed the translation of E. Burnouf) but most of them were direct Sanskrit to Polish translations. From these direct translations of the whole of the poem one should definitely mention the ones by S. F. Michalski-Iwieński (Michalski-Iwieński 1921) and the version with amendments (Michalski-Iwieński 1927) as his translations were the first ones based on the genuine manuscript and done with the usage of methodology accepted among the circles of scholars. The next one was prepared by Wanda Dynowska, the lady who spent many years in India and who co-operated with Indian pandits in the work on her version of the translation (Dynowska 1947). Her translation was re-edited several times (1956, 1957, 1972). These two are done with the utmost care even if the methodology used for translation is so extremely different. From the latest translations certainly the ones by J. Sachse (Sachse 1988), Marta Kudelska (Kudelska 1995) and A. Rucińska (Rucińska 2002) bring new perspectives and some other possible understandings of these multi-faceted text. But for the translations (often preceded by complex introductions and commentaries) we have also some fragments of the poem translated again from indirect or direct sources. If we want to give the whole list of translations into Polish in the chronological order it will be as follows: J. Święciecki – songs 1, 2, 3 (1902); J. Jankowski – song 12 (1910); B. Olszewski – the whole poem (1911); S. F. Michalski-Iwieński – the whole poem (1921); J. Lemański – song 12 (1921); S. Stasiak – song 11 (1930); W. Dynowska – the whole poem (1947); A. C. Bhaktivedanta – the whole poem (1979; re-edited 1981, 1982, 1986, 1993, 2006); J. Sachse – the whole poem (1988); F. Tokarz – songs 2, 7, 11, fragments of song 16 (1990); M. Kudelska – the whole poem (1995); A. Rucińska – the whole poem (2002); I. Szuwalska – the whole poem (2005); J. Jurewicz – song 11 (2007); G. Prema – the whole poem (2009); A. Stadnik – the whole poem (2010); M. K. Byrski – songs 1, 2, 3 (2011). The list of these translations can be found on the website (www.bhagavadgita.eu). But for information on the existence of different translations given there one can find, for the reason of comparison, also some examples of chosen excerpts. In these examples one can see the opportunities given by Sanskrit for possible options of translations. They show how, depending on the translators choice of Polish equivalents of meanings and poetic means, choices based on her or his knowledge and independent decisions can change the overall meaning of the text and, as a consequence, its possible reception. The research was not done yet as far as the reception of the Bhagavadgita in Poland is concerned. Certainly for such religious movements as “Hare Krishna”.

38 As far as the potential options for the interpretation of this text are concerned, it is worth mentioning that Professor Sachse, according to my knowledge, has the plan to publish her new translation of it, the translation after years of reading and re-reading the book. Such endeavour is expected with great interest by many potential readers.
which is quite popular in different countries including Poland, it is a text of value, which is often known at least partly, by heart. The importance of this text for believers, even in the free interpretation rather than translation (and in fact it was done by A. C. Bhaktivedanta), is visible also from the number of its re-editions.

In modern, globalised times all over Europe and the world which means also in Poland the information on India in general, its ancient past and the literature in Sanskrit in particular is available in large quantities not only among the circles of intellectuals, poets and novelists but there is an easy access to it for any interested person. The books treating different aspects of Indian and in particular Sanskrit culture are edited in popular editions, pocket book forms etc. These go simultaneously with more sophisticated publications prepared by specialists for specialists only. Translations of chosen pieces of the *Mahabharata* or of the whole of it, together with the text in Sanskrit are easily available online. The most reliable version of the original text of the *Mahabharata* in the Internet is the one based on the work of Muneo Tokunaga with the revision done by John Smith. The articles treating different aspects of the epic are published all over the world in scientific journals. Nowadays the circulation of books is easy and the costs of their printing are much lower than in the 18th and 19th centuries which enables their much wider availability.

Sanskrit epics now are also transcreated and presented to public in different, other than written forms. In the 20th century the *Mahabharata* in particular was given to the European public in the form of theatre performance prepared by famous European director Peter Brook. This theatre performance was then filmed and shown all over the world, also in Polish cinemas and in the Polish TV. The theatre performance itself everywhere where presented, was it at the Theatre Festival in Avignon or as an open-air presentation in Australia, gathered large crowds of spectators. The great interest in this Sanskrit epic was once again shown by the European public. In this endeavour Brook co-operated with a famous European playwright Jean-Claude Carrière and the actors came from different countries of the world. Two of them namely Andrzej Seweryn and Ryszard Cieślak were Poles. Their main idea was to show that the problems treated and described in the *Mahabharata* epic are generally human problems regardless of any cultural or other borders. Jean-Claude Carrière in his charming book *Dictionnaire amoureux de l’Inde* edited in 2001 in France under the entry “Mahabharata” writes that

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39 It is to be found under the heading bombay.indology.info/mahabharata/statement.html (28.08.2012).
40 To mention just one but very important series of books gathering the articles on epics. These are *Proceedings of Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Puranas*, several volumes of which have already appeared.
41 The description of the recipience of the European film version of the Mahabharata one can find in an article by the author of this text (Milewska 1999: 169–178).
42 The references below will be given to the Polish translation of this book published in 2009 under the title *Alfabet zakochanego w Indiach*, Warszawa: Drzewo Babel.
the *Mahabharata* is India itself: “The epic is unbelievably present everywhere: on the streets – in the form of comics, at schools, in the families (where children are often given the names of its heroines and heroes, in the temples, at the universities, even in the form of colourful dolls put on the trucks. The public TV is given the name Doordarshan (the one who can see from afar) in the memory of the king Dhritarastra who, even if blind, ‘saw’ the battle form afar... Mahabharata is everywhere. For the stranger to know it is like having the key to India. The key which opens invisible door, the key which enlightens, which makes the communication possible” (Carrière 2009: 201–202). This statement seems very true.

Taking all these facts into consideration one can conclude one more time that the *Mahabharata* was and still is one of the very important sources of information on Indian past and present culture and because of it should still be studied and read by both intellectuals and general readers’ circles. It has definitely influenced at least several of Polish poets and intellectuals not to mention wider public fascinated by Buddhism (e.g. popularity of literature on Buddhism or the increasing number of sanghas appearing also in Poland), Hinduism (e.g. Hare Krishna movement) or Yoga (treated mostly as the system of gymnastics). The roots of all the mentioned systems are present, but for other sources, also in the *Mahabharata*.

When we try to summarise shortly the basic sources which might have been a starting point for an interest of Polish intellectual circles and general readers in the Mahabharata epic we may make at least two remarks. Polish translations of fragments of the Mahabharata were and still are not abundant. If some knowledge of the epic as a whole is needed or searched it is to be found in other than Polish languages. However, probably the most important part of it, *Bhagavadgita*, does already have over 100 years of tradition of different translations and interpretations done by Polish scholars and poets. Last years have brought us four new translations of it (2002, 2005, 2009, 2010) which shows that there is still a strong interest in this text among Polish readers. It is not easy to indicate its possible influence on the philosophy of life of Poles or its influence on Polish literature. But the multiplicity of its translations is certainly the sign of an increasing interest in this very text.

Two famous love stories coming from the Mahabharata that is “Sawitri” and “Nala and Damajanti” have also been popularised by authors mostly at the turn of 19th and 20th centuries. They certainly influenced some of Polish endeavours to deal with the subject of love. Unfortunately nowadays, as already stressed above, not a lot of work is done to make this epic, or at least some of its most famous stories, known to the Polish readers. It is only to hope that the situation will change in future. However, the need of modern versions of translations of at least these two most famous *Mahabharata* stories seems to be obvious. Polish readers have the right to read *Nala and Damayanti* and *Sawitri* translated up to the modern rules of Polish language. It seems that only then, if published in popular versions,
they can influence modern readers of both intellectual and general public circles. Of course some more fragments of the Mahabharata, if only possible, will be welcome. Not to mention Polish modern version of the whole of the epic.

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Epos Mahabharata, jego tłumaczenia i wpływ na polskie kręgi intelektualne oraz na szerokie rzesze czytelników polskich

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule dokonany został przegląd tłumaczeń fragmentów eposu indyjskiego Mahabhaka na język polski, jakie powstały w ciągu wieków polskiej literackiej tradycji nowożytnnej.

Zawiera on również, poza informacjami na temat czasu ich powstawania, krótki opis dzieł autorów polskich, którzy w swojej twórczości bądź inspirowali się kulturą indyjską,
w szczególności *Mahabharata*, dokonywali tłumaczeń (pośrednich i bezpośrednich) fragmentów tegoż eposu na język polski, bądź opracowywali i przekazywali jego streszczenia szerokim rzeszom czytelników polskich. Analizie poddany został także wpływ, jaki dzieła te mogły wywierać na inteligencję polską oraz na szerokie rzesze czytelników. Dodatkowo podano przykłady fragmentów tłumaczeń na język polski oraz dokonano krótkiej analizy ich specyfiki i problemów związanych z przekazem tekstów sanskryckich polskiemu czytelnikowi (problemy używanego w nich języka, stosowania odpowiedniego nazewnictwa, pisowni imion własnych itp.).

**NOTA AUTORSKA**

Dr Iwona Milewska jest adiunktem w Instytucie Orientalistyki Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Jej projekty badawcze obejmują prowadzone od lat studia nad indyjskim eposem *Mahabharata* (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem występujących w niej opowieści milosnych) oraz studia nad historią europejskich gramatyk sanskrytu stworzonych w epoce nowożytnej. Autorka uczestniczy również w projekcie dotyczącym intelektualnych tradycji Orientu w ich relacji do kultury Zachodu oraz dziejów i sposobów przekazywania wiedzy przez kolejne pokolenia badaczy – czy to orientalnych, czy zachodnich cywilizacji. Obszarem jej szczególnego zainteresowania są badania dziejów orientalistyki polskiej (w tym opisy drogi naukowej i życiowej wybitnych indologów krakowskich).