



PERSO-INDICA

*An Analytical Survey of Persian Works
on Indian Learned Traditions*

PERSO-INDICA WORKSHOP

Female Characters in *Śukasaptati* and its Persian Versions

December 14th 2015, 16.00-18.30

PROGRAM

- 16.00: **Fabrizio Speciale**, Introduction to the First Perso-Indica Workshop
- 16.15: **Iran Farkhondeh**, « “As long as You Know the Answer”- Women Characters in the *Śukasaptati*: Their Wits and Behaviours »
- 16.35: DISCUSSION
- 16.45: **Pegah Shahbaz**, « Women Characters and Their Roles in *Jawāhir al-asmār* »
- 17.05: DISCUSSION
- 17.15: COFFEE-BREAK
- 17.30: **Syed Akhtar Hussain**, « Thus Spake the Tūtī »
- 17.50: DISCUSSION
- 18.00: **Alain Désoulières**, « Wiles of Wives in the Urdu *Tuti Nāma/Totā Kahānī* »
- 18.20: DISCUSSION
- 18.30: CONCLUSION

PLACE: Salle des Placques, INALCO, 2 Rue de Lille, 75007, Paris.

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- ✿ **Iran Farkhondeh** (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Mondes iranien et indien, Paris), « “As Long as you Know the Answer”- Women Characters in the *Śukasaptati*: Their Wits and Behaviours»

To introduce the *Śukasaptati*, we will first give a sketch of the frame story. We will present in the main lines the elements of Indian civilization that are necessary to understand the whys and therefores of women’s behaviours in the Sanskrit text. We will suggest a typology of women’s characters in the book. Finally we will try to delineate the aims of the author. Is he of the opinion that, as long as a woman has the wits to get herself out of trouble, she could behave according to her wishes?

- ✿ **Pegah Shahbaz** (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Mondes iranien et indien, Paris), «Women Characters and Their Roles in *Jawāhir al-asmār* »

Jawāhir al-asmār (Jewels of Stories) is the earliest Persian translation, known thus far, of *Śukasaptati* (Seventy tales of the parrot) realized in 713-715 H. /1313-1315 A.D. by a secretary named ‘Imād ibn Muḥammad Ṭaḡarī at the court of ‘Alā al-Dīn Ḥalījī (r. 1290-1316). *Jawāhir al-asmār* could be the same Persian verbose rendering that Zīyā’ al-Dīn Naḥṣabī (d. around 751/1350-51) mentions in the introduction to his popular *Ṭūṭī-nāma*, as the most prominent source he used for preparing his Persian version of the tales of the parrot. This presentation will focus on female characters in Ṭaḡarī’s translation. Women’s inherent role in tales and their noteworthy strategies for overcoming the norms of male-dominated societies will be studied in detail. By means of concrete examples, we’ll discover how the use/misuse of imaginary by women could appear as a defensive tool for and against them in narratives.

- ✿ **Syed Akhtar Hussain** (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi), « Thus Spake the Tūṭī »

Since the translation of *Kalīla wa Dimna* into Pahlavi, Arabic and Persian, Indian Classics began to impact literature in the Middle East. Sanskrit texts namely the *Panchatantra* and *Śukasaptati* enriched Persian literature both in form and contents. The *Ṭūṭī-Nāma*, among others, is not only a translation of *Śukasaptati* but also a gem of Perso-Indic literature. Its translator Zia Naḥṣabī presents the wisdom of India in a more impressive and elegant manner than it appears in the Sanskrit text. The *Ṭūṭī-Nāma* develops “*Katha*” into pure Persian literature and swells more in size and gives a full size picture of the Perso-Indic world wherein *Prabhavati* and *Madan Vinod* transform into *Hujaste* and *Maymūn*. *Śukasaptati*’s narratives reproduced with a twist here and a turn there in the *Ṭūṭī-Nāma* but however it transpires that the Indian threads are deftly woven in the Persian tapestry of the *Ṭūṭī-Nāma*.

- ✿ **Alain Désoulières** (INALCO, Paris), « Wiles of Wives in the Urdu *Tuti Nāma/Totā Kahānī* »

Wiles of women is a current motif in popular and fairy tales, and the Indian tradition is no exception. We would like to reflect here on two different versions of the Urdu story known as *Totā Kahānī* (a.k.a. *Tūṭī Nāma* the Tale of the Parrot) that do exemplify the Wiles of women motif. For the sake of brevity we shall only quote the frame story itself, not the set of embedded tales (from 70 to 52 stories). That single story evokes the relationship of a newly wed young merchant (or prince) with his beautiful (faithful ?) young wife who is being advised by a wise Parrot [*Totā*], sometimes accompanied by a not so wise mynah female bird, a colourless Indian starling. But the woman proves to be much wiser if not cunning.

The Urdu authors refer to Persian models, but of course Indian tales are also in their mind, and they tend to illustrate their books with Indian images. That short tale is itself included into the Seven Viziers stories that are parts of the Arabian Nights tales. It was translated from Arabic into elegant French by Antoine Galland (1704) and then again from another Arabic Text by M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes (c. 1900), but Indian and Persian texts are never far. Now the cunning wives theme is far older than the Sanskrit and Persian medieval text. An one would like to be able to listen to village or caravanserai story tellers of yore who were a source of inspiration for the literati.