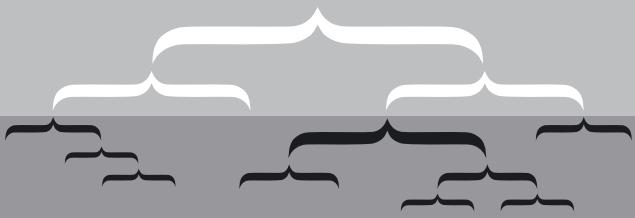


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# Allgemeinwissen und Gesellschaft



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# Uses of General Knowledge

Lala Nagendra Kumar Ray's Oriya Encyclopaedia,  
*Bibidha Ratna Sangraha*

## 1 The Long Way towards an Oriya Identity

### 1.1 Late Arrival of Encyclopaedia in Orissa

The emergence of the encyclopaedia in Oriya was delayed on account of a number of factors. The late arrival of colonial rule in Orissa (the British occupied Orissa in 1803, some fifty years after they colonised Bengal) delayed the spread of modern education there. Early attempts made by missionaries in the first few decades of the nineteenth century to spread modern education met with failure.<sup>1</sup> It was only after the notorious famine of 1860 that the colonial authorities were alerted to the need for the spread of modern education. The first college in Orissa came to set up in 1869. The first Oriya weekly, the *Utkal Dipika*, edited by an educated Oriya was launched in 1866, which was also the year in which a terrible famine decimated the population of the province. Another critical factor that had delayed the emergence of the encyclopaedia was the late arrival of printing technology in Orissa. The first printing press was set up by Christian missionaries in Orissa as late as in 1836.

### 1.2 Encyclopaedia as a Means of Defining Oriya Identity

By the first decade of the twentieth century the conditions under which compiling an encyclopaedia in Oriya would be possible were available. These were: the spread of modern education through schools and colleges; the gradual emergence of a reading public and the arrival of printing technology. The emergent middle classes in Orissa now had access to encyclopaedias written in English, especially the monumental *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. As the Oriya middle classes were increasingly engaged in the task of defining their identity in relation to their more prosperous and westernised Bengali neighbours, the publication of the massive 22-volume Bengali encyclopaedia, *Bangla Biswakosh* compiled by Nagendra Nath Basuu in 1911 was at once a challenge and an achievement to envy and admire. It is not surprising therefore to find Gopabandhu Das, an eminent writer and political leader of Orissa, lamenting the absence of an encyclopaedia in Oriya in 1918.<sup>2</sup> In the decades that followed a number of ambitious attempts were made to produce encyclopaedias in Oriya in response to this. Four encyclopaedias appeared in Orissa between 1923,

<sup>1</sup> Das moderne Bildungswesen setzte sich in dem von den Briten 1803 eroberten Orissa ebenso wie die Technologie des Drucks erst mit einer gewissen Verzögerung durch. Erste Versuche zur Herausgabe einer Enzyklopädie wurden dementsprechend relativ spät in Angriff genommen – die Voraussetzungen dazu waren erst anfangs des 20. Jahrhunderts erfüllt. Zwischen 1923 und 1947, als Indien unabhängig wurde, erschienen dann aber immerhin vier Enzyklopädien in Orissa. Eine davon, die von Lala Nagendra Kumar Ray herausgegebene *Bibidha Ratna Sangraha*, steht im Zentrum dieses Artikels. Sie war ursprünglich auf vier Bände geplant gewesen; effektiv publiziert wurde freilich nur einer im Jahre 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Padhi, *Encyclopaedia Making in the Oriya Language*, 19; Padhi, *Reference Sources in Modern Indian Language*, 91–115.

**2** Die 1930er Jahre waren eine Zeit grosser politischer Turbulenzen in Orissa. Die Gegend wurde damals eine gesonderte Provinz, und die Selbständigkeitstreiber nahmen allgemein zu. Ray, der Editor der Enzyklopädie *Bibidha*, gehörte einer Freiheitsbewegung an und opponierte gegen die britische Kolonialmacht. Seine Enzyklopädie bezweckte eine Stärkung der lokalen Identität und Sprache (Oriya) und versuchte ein Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl zu imaginieren. Das Ordnungsprinzip der Enzyklopädie geht vom Allgemeinen zum Speziellen und beginnt mit einer Beschreibung der Welt, verengt den Blickwinkel sodann auf Indien und fokussiert letztlich ganz auf Orissa.

when Lala Madhav Lal published *Bibidha Sangraha* and 1947, when India attained independence.

### 1.3 The Political and Cultural Context of 1930s

In this paper I shall focus on an Oriya encyclopaedia *Bibidha Ratna Sangraha*<sup>3</sup> (translated in to English the title would mean ›A Collection of Gems of Various Kinds‹) which was published in 1936. This was part of a four volume project but only the first volume got published. It took the author eleven years to prepare and contains 429 entries with illustrations. I propose to look at the ways in which it used general knowledge to assert and consolidate an embattled Oriya identity and at the same time undermine, subvert and critique colonial authority.

The 1930s, the period during which Ray's encyclopaedia was compiled, was a time of great political turbulence in Orissa as well as in India. The year 1936, the year of publication of this encyclopaedia, is of great significance in this context. In this year, Orissa became a separate province, and was no longer an appendage to Bihar or Bengal. It had achieved a distinct political identity after a long struggle. From a larger political perspective, 1936 is also very important. Orissa, like many other provinces of India, was going to elect native representatives to legislative assemblies, who would go on to form ministries and govern these provinces, albeit with limited powers. It was a major concession on the part of the colonial government to the nationalists and it gave the latter a degree of legitimacy. As I will show with the help of illustrations later, these two critically important developments give the encyclopaedia I am going to discuss its characteristic tone and structure.

## 2 The Need for a New, Unique Oriya Encyclopaedia

### 2.1 The Encyclopaedist as Political Rebel: Lala Nagendra Kumar Ray

Lala Nagendra Kumar Ray, who compiled the encyclopaedia, was born in the town of Cuttack of Orissa in 1898. He dropped out of college to join the freedom movement though he later obtained a degree in law. He was the author of about 50 books and he brought out a magazine called *Nirbhik* (Fearless) from Calcutta. He was given a suspended jail sentence for two years for having written a scathingly critical article on an Oriya who had helped the British conquer Orissa in 1803.<sup>4</sup> Not much is known about Ray. He is an almost forgotten figure today and the encyclopaedia he compiled so painstakingly is no longer easily available. All the same, even these few known facts relating to his life reveal two interesting facets of his character: his intimate connection with Calcutta, and his opposition to British rule. The first is responsible for exposing him to the tradition of encyclopaedia

<sup>3</sup> Ray (Ed.), *Bibidha Ratna Sangraha*.

<sup>4</sup> Dash, ›Lala Nagendra Kumar Ray‹, in: Jibananay, 227–245; Dora, Thesaurus of Events and Dates of Orissa, 298.

*This will not only prove useful to the general reading public, it will also cater to the needs of people seeking information on history, industries, science and politics.*

*This book contains information on history, geography, administrative systems, and social life of other countries.*

First Citation: Das Bhubanananda, Technocrat and Political Leader. Second Citation: Lingaraj Mishra, Educationist and Freedom Fighter

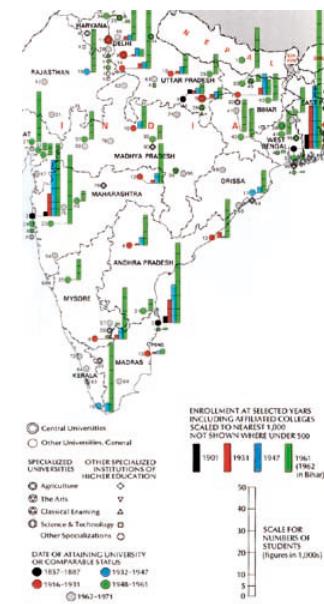
writing in Bengal, and the second gave his own encyclopaedia its subversive anti-colonial character.

## 2.2 Defining the Task of the Encyclopaedist

Ray subtitled his encyclopaedia, »A Collection of Various Kinds of Gems«. It consists of three parts: the first part dealing with the world in general, the second giving information on India and the final part focused on Orissa. The reader moved from the general to the particular. This way of organizing and presenting information would give way in later encyclopaedias to presenting information according to an alphabetical order. The encyclopaedia makes liberal use of photographs and pictures and includes a foreword by a distinguished lexicographer, Gopal Chandra Praharaj, testimonials by several eminent persons, a note from the publisher and an introduction by the author himself. It also includes a list of books and journals the compiler consulted and an alphabetical index at the end of the volume. These serve a number of important functions such as defining the role of the encyclopaedia, defining the historical moment when it appeared and indicating the need for patronage from the Oriya elite, which seemed divided along political lines at the time.

In his note, the publisher speaks of the dearth of reference books in Orissa. Publishing such books is difficult in his view on three counts: expenses, the hard work they involve and the need for expertise<sup>5</sup>. The compiler, who certainly possesses diligence and expertise, now sets out to define the task of the encyclopaedist in lofty idealistic terms. He begins by saying that man's curiosity grows as a country gets more civilized with the spread of education. He emphasizes the need to update knowledge in a rapidly changing society and refers to the Encyclopaedia Britannica and the Bengali encyclopaedia compiled by Nagendranath Basu. For the people of Orissa, who are too poor to be able to buy supplements or yearbooks, there is need for a particular kind of encyclopaedia. I quote Ray:

*What we need is a book which would suit everyone – a young boy as well as an old man, a school boy as well as the Vice-Chancellor of a university, a daily labourer as well as a millionaire; people from all classes and sections, in all conditions of life should find it useful. It would enable people sitting at home get news and information on everything happening in the whole world. [...] Again the book would be as enjoyable as a work of fiction, as fascinating as a Purana and above all else, must be full of useful lessons.<sup>6</sup>*



**Growth of Higher Education in India, 1872–1971**

© Schwartzberg, Joseph E. (Ed.), A Historical Atlas of South Asia, Oxford 1992

<sup>5</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, »Introduction«. (Translation: Jatindra Kumar Nayak.)

*To protect British interests and to govern Sudan a British High Commissioner is based in Cairo. The King has to act according to his advice, and he simply cannot defy the High Commissioner. Many issues remain to be resolved between Egypt and England. On the whole, the condition of Egypt is similar to that of India and a fierce nationalist struggle is going on there.*

Lala Nagendra Kumar Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangraha, 86.



#### The Oriya Alphabet

The Oriya script is developed from the Kalinga script, one of the many descendants of the Brahmi script of ancient India. The curved appearance of the Oriya script is a result of the practice of writing on palm leaves. It is a syllabic alphabet in which all consonants have an inherent vowel.

Picture © <http://pedroiy.free.fr/alphabets/oriya.htm>

(20.5.2005).

Informations © <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/oriya>

(20.5.2005).

One cannot help being struck by the ambition of the encyclopaedist here, and by the enormity of the task he sets himself. He goes on to refer to earlier attempts at compiling encyclopaedias in Oriya and finds them woefully inadequate. In emphasizing the uniqueness of his own encyclopaedia he says that he has toured many parts of Orissa and worked on it for eleven years in which he consulted 1100 periodicals in English made available to him by a Calcutta-based Oriya industrialist. The compiler is conscious of the absence of originality in his work. He is also aware that ventures on such a large scale should involve teamwork.

The Foreword contributed by an eminent man of letters, who was himself engaged at the time in compiling a massive seven-volume encyclopaedic dictionary, makes a few interesting observations. He first of all undertakes a comparison between this encyclopaedia and another entitled *Ratnakosha*<sup>7</sup>, which had appeared in 1935. Interestingly enough, he had also contributed a foreword to the encyclopaedia he now denounces as full of factual errors and inconsistencies. He gives a long list of such errors in his foreword. The writer of the foreword recommends the encyclopaedia for two reasons: First: every page in its carries a line from a couplet encapsulating traditional moral wisdom. (Binod Kanungo, who undertook the compilation of an 80-volume encyclopaedia in the 1960s, followed this practice of giving quotations at the bottom of a page in his encyclopaedia.) The inclusion of photographs in the encyclopaedia is considered a step in the right direction and particular mention is made of the photograph of Emperor Edward the Seventh, which adorns the first page of the encyclopaedia. The contributor of the foreword concludes by expressing the hope that this book would reach every household in Orissa, and that the encyclopaedist should go on to write a history of Oriya literature and Oriya language.<sup>8</sup>

The Foreword is followed by testimonials by nine men of consequence, who include kings, men of letters, and advisers to the British government in Orissa, leaders of the anti-British freedom struggle, a religious leader, a lawyer and a social worker. If one looks carefully at the opinions regarding the encyclopaedia expressed by these men, they seem to fall into two broad categories: Some who feel that the book will function as a window to the wider world by providing information on history, industry, science and politics. One of them describes it as a gateway to the treasure house of knowledge. Others hope that it will enable the people of Orissa to acquire an intimate knowledge of their own province. In other words, the

<sup>7</sup> Mohapatra (Ed.), *Ratnakosha*. See Bibliography for further details.

<sup>8</sup> Ray (Ed.), *Bibidha Ratna Sangraha*, Foreword.

encyclopaedia will also open a window on Orissa itself at a time when its separate identity had been accorded official recognition.

### 3 The Ambitious Aims of Ray's Encaclopaedia

#### 3.1 The Encyclopaedia as a Window on the World and a Window on Orissa

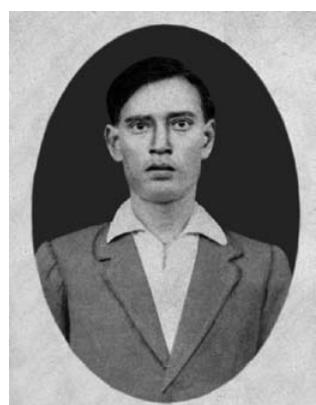
These two divergent responses to the role of the encyclopaedia shape my own approach to this book. I will attempt to demonstrate how the encyclopaedist seeks to assert Oriya identity by inserting facts about Orissa into accounts of India and the world and by providing carefully selected information on new dimensions of this identity. As a window on the world, the encyclopaedia, as I will go on to show, seeks to focus attention on facts, which undermine British rule in India. Facts here become powerful means for exposing the injustice of British rule in India. The encyclopaedia thus serves an important anti-colonial function. This, however, is not done in an explicit manner. Care is taken to express loyalty to British rule everywhere in the text of the encyclopaedia. I have already mentioned the inclusion of the photograph of Emperor Edward the Seventh in the text of the encyclopaedia. The encyclopaedia also features photographs of the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow, the English Revenue Divisional Commissioner of Orissa and his wife. In fact, it is mentioned in the Foreword that the Revenue Divisional Commissioner was to write the Foreword. His untimely death led to the decision to invite an eminent Oriya man of letters to contribute a foreword. The text itself is peppered from time to time with loud expressions of loyalty to British rule.

It is indicated in the compilers' preface that a copy of the encyclopaedia was presented to the Lieutenant Governor of Orissa and had received his approval. However, as I will go on to demonstrate a little later, all this does not deter the encyclopaedist from constructing a moral critique of imperial rule through strategic insertion of facts and statistics. How this escaped censorship is rather intriguing. I suppose, the grant of limited self-rule to the provinces under the Government of India Act 1935 had contributed to the relaxation of censorship laws to a certain extent in the late thirties.

#### 3.2 Assertion of Oriya Identity

As I have mentioned earlier, assertion and consolidation of Oriya identity is an important function of this encyclopaedia. Even where the encyclopaedist presents a fact about the world, he does not seem able to resist the temptation of bringing Orissa in. In page 199, for instance, per capita incomes of countries like America, Great Britain, France, Australia and India are given. At the bottom of the table, the per capita of income of Orissa, which was a province and not a country and certainly did not belong to that table, is provided. Similarly the entry on Buddhism, a

3 Rays Enzyklopädie, so die These dieses Artikels, muss sowohl als ein Fenster zur Welt wie auch als ein Fenster zu Orissa gesehen werden. Der Blick auf die Welt erfolgt also stets aus der lokalen oder regionalen Perspektive und Interessenslage heraus, und Informationen über die Welt werden stets in irgendeinen Bezug zu Orissa gesetzt, selbst wenn dieser nicht naheliegend erscheint. (Bsp: London hat 150mal so viele Einwohner wie Cuttack in Orissa.) Noch wichtiger ist, dass die Präsentation und Interpretation der ‚Fakten‘ meist implizit auf eine Unterminierung der britischen Macht abzielt. Ray verfolgte mit seinem Konzept folglich sowohl eine identitätsbildende Funktion als auch eine moralische Kritik des Kolonialismus.



**Lala Nagendra Kumar Ray**  
Encyclopaedist, Journalist  
and Translator (1898–1979)



### Gopal Chandra Praharaj

Lexicographer and Essayist (1874–1945), Author of the Encyclopaedic Dictionary Purachandra Bashakosh

world religion, gives us the information that a certain class of village teachers in Orissa is actually Buddhist.<sup>9</sup> In the entry on Taj Mahal it is claimed that master craftsmen from Orissa were engaged to construct this great monument. A longish entry on the city of London included in the closing part of the first volume of the encyclopaedia uses Orissa as a point of reference by stating that the population of London is 150 times that of Cuttack town in Orissa.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, while providing a chronicle of major historical events in India, the encyclopaedist takes care to include events relating to Orissa such as the 1866 famine, the imposition of martial law in Cuttack in 1868, the formation of the Bihar-Orissa province and the passing away of eminent Oriyas.<sup>11</sup> Wherever possible, the encyclopaedist also articulates resentment against Bengalis, who were perceived as agents of British rule in Orissa.

Recalling Orissa's past glory or locating it in a larger scheme of things was only one aspect of this identity-building initiative. In subtle ways the emergence of Orissa from its feudal past into the world of modernity gets celebrated in the encyclopaedia. This is done by directing the reader's attention to clusters of unusual and interesting facts. The part dealing with Orissa is full of the usual kind of information about history, geography, population figures, economy etc. In the middle of all this, one suddenly comes across information on three interesting new areas: Oriyas who have established themselves through their own initiatives or in other words, self-made Oriyas, whose prosperity or eminence had little to do with birth or inherited wealth;<sup>12</sup> Oriyas who now lived in other parts of India and abroad or the Oriya Diaspora;<sup>13</sup> and Oriyas who have married outside their caste, religion or community.<sup>14</sup> The encyclopaedist claims that there were 5 000 Oriyas in Fiji, Bahamas and Trinidad. He even claims that there was one Oriya in South America.<sup>15</sup> In 1920, according to the compiler, there were about 1 100 Oriya prostitutes in Calcutta. This leaves one wondering about the sources of his information. Anyway, inclusion of information on these categories of Oriyas celebrates mobility, a fluidity of identity, a refusal to become prisoners of the past even while expressing pride in one's own identity. The third group of Oriyas who married outside their religion includes the name of one who married a Swiss woman, Frieda Hauswirth in America in 1917. She came to live in Orissa, painted a portrait of Gandhi and wrote an autobiography and two novels on Orissa all in English.

<sup>9</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 221.

<sup>10</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 250.

<sup>11</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 273–280.

<sup>12</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 746.

<sup>13</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 762f.

<sup>14</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 745.

<sup>15</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 764.

### 3.3 Constructing a Critique of Empire

The other crucial task the encyclopaedia had set itself was the construction of a moral critique of empire and colonialism. This task was accomplished in a number of interesting ways. When one goes through the entries on various countries included in the encyclopaedia one cannot help being struck by the fact that the encyclopaedist takes care to mention the degree of political independence of this country. Morocco, for instance, is described

*Every year 5 hundred thousand cows are slaughtered in India. Of these, 3 hundred thousand are slaughtered to supply beef to the army. As milk cows are slaughtered in such large numbers, milk has become costly.*

Lala Nagendra Kumar Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangraha, 398.

as a semi-independent country. It is compared with a tributary state in colonial India.<sup>16</sup> In page 95 of the encyclopaedia a list of the small independent nations is provided. In his entries on countries, the compiler takes particular care to mention whether these are monarchies or republics. The encyclopaedia also provides information on anti-colonial struggles going on elsewhere in the world. In page 98, for instance, in the entry on Irish Free State, the compiler informs his readers that its people are engaged in a struggle to be free of British rule. Similarly, in the entry on Java, reference is made to the movement for independence launched there.<sup>17</sup> The entry on De Valera speaks approvingly of the anti-British activities of the Irish leader and goes out of the way to mention his friendship with an Indian leader.<sup>18</sup> The entry on the League of Nations makes this very interesting point: Although India is not an independent nation it ranks fourth among countries, which finance this international institution.<sup>19</sup>

The entries on Great Britain give a special edge to this moral critique of the empire. While the British masters are addressed deferentially throughout and claims are made that India has prospered during British rule, facts are introduced which present British in a very different light. Take the following entry on the love of luxury in England, which occurs at the very end of the part dealing with the world. The encyclopaedist here informs the reader that 160 crores Rupees are spent by the British on tobacco, snuff and cigarettes etc and that British women spend 80 crore rupees on cosmetics. The British spend 58 crores on cinema, 65 crores on sweets. The readers are then informed that there are 200 000 sweet shops in England.<sup>20</sup> This is followed a little later by a comparison of the salary of the Viceroy of India with the per capita income of his native Indian subject. The reader is told that the Viceroy's salary is 2 155 times the per capita income of an Indian. The compiler does not stop here. He goes on to mention that the USA president's salary is only 12 times the income of an American.<sup>21</sup> This information is followed by even grimmer statistics. In the entry on poverty in India the compiler holds exploitation by foreigners squarely responsible for India's condition. To make this dramatically vivid, he tells his readers how much grain gets exported out of India per minute.<sup>22</sup> He further informs him that, between 1793 and 1900, 32 500 000 people died from starvation and that between 1890 and 1900 19 000 000 perished because of starvation.<sup>23</sup>

In an entry titled the history of cattle in India, the compiler complains that milk has become expensive because three hundred thousand milch cows are killed every year to supply beef to the army in British India.<sup>24</sup>



**Sarala Devi**

Writer and Freedom Fighter  
(1904–1986)

<sup>16</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 87.

<sup>17</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 123.

<sup>18</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 149.

<sup>19</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 184.

<sup>20</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 256.

<sup>21</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 306.

<sup>22</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 347.

<sup>23</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 348.

<sup>24</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 397.

*Exploitation by foreigners is one of the chief factors responsible for India's poverty. Every minute 118 maunds of rice 50 maunds of wheat, 60 maunds of dal get exported abroad. Five hundred thousand healthy cows are exported every year to foreign countries to be slaughtered and consumed. Between 1793 and 1900, 3 crore 25 lakh persons have died of starvation. [...] The British have been ruling Orissa for 133 years now. 14 or 15 large-scale famines have devastated the province during this period.*

Lala Nagendra Kumar Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangraha, 347 and 609.

The encyclopaedist does not confine himself to only what is happening inside British India, he describes the condition of the Indian diaspora in Kenya, in South Africa, Australia and Canada. In the entry on Kenya the compiler openly says that the whites are intolerant of industrious Indians who have contributed so much to Kenya's prosperity.<sup>25</sup> Elsewhere he argues that Indians working in Canada and Australia cannot be protected against discrimination because India does not enjoy dominion status. He warns that this might lead to conflict between Asia and Europe for no Indian likes the way the Indian diaspora is being treated outside India.<sup>26</sup> However, the Indians are not always seen as victims. In the entry on Titles in India, the compiler wryly observes that some Indians are desperate to obtain titles conferred by the British.<sup>27</sup>

As the encyclopaedist sees his work primarily as part of an educational project, he comes down heavily on the neglect of education in British India. Whenever information on a western nation is provided, the compiler never forgets to give the exact number of universities there. Germany, for instance, is presented in a very favourable light because it has as many as 33 universities. The entry on USA mentions that it boasts of 975 colleges and universities and 259 006 schools. In the entry on education in India, he regrets that the primary education has not been made compulsory in British India.

#### 4 Closing Remarks or: A Vision of History

I will close by drawing attention to one interesting aspect of this encyclopaedia. While largely confining himself to provide information in a systematic way about the world, about India and about Orissa, the compiler has also taken time off to reflect on larger issues and has included a couple of essays. Of particular interest is his short account of historical change.<sup>28</sup> He has made use of the Hindu idiom of caste to explain historical processes. Ray divides history into four phases: one ruled by the Brahmins, that is by intellect. During this phase the world is under the domination of religious leaders such as the Pope or the Khalif. In the second, the world is ruled by the Kshatriyas or the warrior class, who rely on muscle power. In the third, it is ruled by the Vaisyas or the mercantile class, by implication the British, a nation of shop keepers. In the fourth phase, the shudras or the working classes take over, as has happened in the case of Russia. This es-

<sup>25</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 106f.

<sup>26</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 107 and 110.

<sup>27</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 452.

<sup>28</sup> Ray (Ed.), Bibidha Ratna Sangrah, 166f.

sentially Hindu view of history ends on an apocalyptic note: Deluge may follow the sins and acts of injustice of all these four groups.

In my paper, I tried to show how this encyclopaedia sought to function as an instrument of consolidating an embattled Oriya identity and, more importantly, how it used general knowledge to construct a scathing moral critique of imperial rule. It was followed by several other encyclopaedias in Oriya, but none of them set themselves such as ambitious task or executed it with such delightful eccentricity.

4 Obwohl Rays Enzyklopädie ein unvollendetes Projekt darstellt und angesichts ihrer Seltenheit das ursprüngliche Ziel, in jedem Haushalt Orissas zu stehen, bei weitem verfehlte, hatte sich keine andere Oriya-Enzyklopädie so hochgesteckten Zielen verschrieben und selbige mit einer derartigen Exzentrizität umgesetzt.

Jatindra Kumar Nayak, M. Litt. | Utkal University, Orissa, India

## Summary

The paper begins by describing the development of the encyclopedia in Orissa in the first half of the twentieth century. It notes the particular political significance of the year 1936, the year in which Lala Nagendra Kumar Ray's *Bibidha Ratna Sangraha* was published, and gives some brief biographical details about the author. Thus the context is set for its main thesis: that in his encyclopedia Ray seeks to assert Oriya identity and to subvert colonial authority. The layout of the encyclopedia is described: three main sections dealing with the world, the nation (India) and the state (Orissa). Particular attention is paid to the Foreword and the various testimonials which follow it. These reflect the ambiguity of the enterprise: on the one hand, a show of loyalty to the ruling colonial power, while on the other, an assertion of Oriya identity. Examples follow to illustrate the point: even in the world section, Orissa keeps popping up. The critique of colonial power, it suggests, is more subtle, with the careful juxtaposition of facts left to speak for themselves.

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## **Allgemeinwissen und Gesellschaft. Akten des internationalen Kongresses über Wissenstransfer und enzyklopädische Ordnungssysteme, vom 18. bis 21. September 2003 in Prangins**

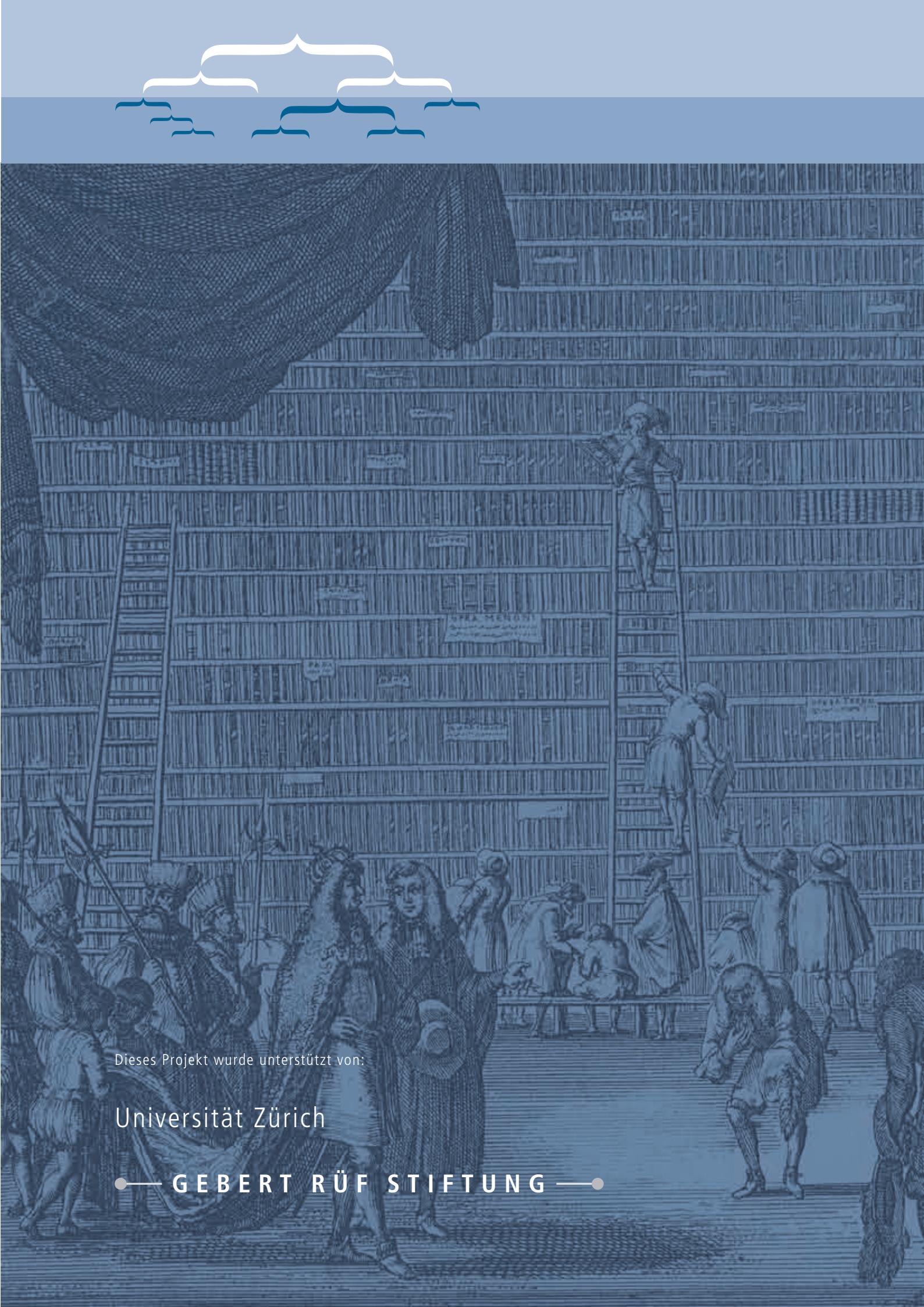
»Allgemeinwissen« ist ein gesellschaftliches Konstrukt, dessen Nachfrage ebenso erfunden ist wie seine Inhalte und die Formen seiner Anordnung – aber wer sind die Akteure im Prozess der Vermittlung von Wissen, Bildung und Information und in welchem Verhältnis stehen sie zur Gesellschaft? Der Band diskutiert die Problematik »Allgemeinwissen« am Beispiel einer scheinbar stabilen und angeblich einheitlichen Form des Wissens: den Enzyklopädien. Wie sich diese Medien des Kulturtransfers verändern, wie sie mit dem Dilemma umgehen, einerseits stabiles und andererseits aktuelles Wissen zu reproduzieren, ist Gegenstand einer Debatte, die sich weder auf die Enzyklopädien der Neuzeit noch auf ausschließlich europäische Beispiele beschränkt. Enzyklopädien tragen zur Popularisierung von Werten und Ideen im Alltäglichen bei, und ihre Erforschung erlaubt es, die Verbreitung von gesellschaftlichen und politischen Ordnungsvorstellungen nachzu vollziehen. Die Beiträge sind interdisziplinär und global vergleichend konzipiert, sie untersuchen Verlegerdynastien, fragen nach dem Einfluss von Zivilgesellschaften und thematisieren die Rolle politischer Machthaber bei der »Bildung« von Gesellschaften. Die nationalstaatlichen Interessen im Entstehungsprozess von Enzyklopädien in Indien und Australien stehen demnach ebenso zur Debatte wie die in die Antike zurückreichenden Vorstellungen, wie Wissen geordnet sein sollte. Die Mechanismen der Zensur in Frankreich des 18. Jahrhunderts wie auch Formen des Sammelns und Orderns in demokratischen und totalitären Systemen der Neuzeit werden genauso berücksichtigt wie die Frage, durch welche deontologischen Grundprinzipien die Suche nach Wissen gelenkt wird.

## **All you need to know. Proceedings of the international congress on knowledge transfer and encyclopaedic ordering principles: Prangins, 18–21 September 2003**

»General knowledge« is a social construction. All its aspects, ranging from the need for it, to its content and its forms of organisation, are invented. But who are the protagonists in the process of transferring knowledge, education and information and what is their role in society? This volume discusses the issue »general knowledge« using the example of an apparently stable and supposedly consistent form of knowledge: encyclopaedias. Questions like how these medias of cultural transfer change through time, how they deal with the dilemma of reproducing stable and at the same time current knowledge are treated through a wide range of examples, including non-European and non-modern texts. Encyclopaedias contribute to the popularisation of values and ideas in everyday life, and research on encyclopaedias can reveal notions about social and political order. The articles are designed to be interdisciplinary and comparative on a global scale. They examine publishing dynasties, enquire about the influence of civil societies and deal with the role of political rulers in efforts to »educate« societies. The interests of nation states in the production of encyclopedias in India and Australia are debated along with ideas dating back to the ancient world on how knowledge should be organised. Mechanisms of censorship in 18th century France and ways of collecting and organising knowledge in democratic and totalitarian systems of modern times are considered just like the question, through which deontological principles the search for knowledge is regulated.

## **Les labyrinthes du savoir. Actes du congrès international sur la transmission du savoir et les principes d'ordre encyclopédiques, 18–21 septembre 2003 à Prangins**

Le concept de »culture générale« est une construction humaine. Ses exigences, ses contenus et la forme de sa présentation sont des produits artificiels – mais qui sont les acteurs dans cette transmission du savoir, de la culture et des informations et quel rôle jouent-ils dans une société? Le volume présent pose ces questions liées à la »culture générale« à partir d'un exemple du savoir accumulé que l'on croit acquis et uniforme: les encyclopédies. Quels transformations ont subi ces médias du transfert culturel? Comment ont-ils géré le dilemme d'être à la fois garant d'un savoir acquis sans pourtant négliger l'actualité? Ce débat ne se limite ni aux encyclopédies des temps modernes ni aux exemples européens. Les encyclopédies apportent dans la vie quotidienne des systèmes de valeurs et des concepts intellectuels; leur analyse permet de reconstituer la diffusion des systèmes de classification d'ordre social et politique. Les contributions reflètent une approche interdisciplinaire et comparative au niveau global. Ainsi elles analysent des dynasties d'éditeurs, l'influence de la société civile ou du pouvoir politique sur le concept de »culture générale« d'une société. Le débat s'ouvre sur des thèmes aussi variés que les intérêts nationaux dans la création d'encyclopedies en Inde ou en Australie, les concepts de classification remontant à l'antiquité, la censure dans la France du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et les différentes formes de donner un ordre aux collections dans des régimes démocratiques et totalitaires. Enfin, nous trouvons la question cruciale de savoir quels sont les principes déontologiques qui nous dirigent dans notre recherche du savoir.



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