

# Of similes and metaphors in Buddhist philosophical literature: poetic semblance through mythic allusion

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In memoriam Dr Isobel Julia Leslie (1948–2004)\*

## Abstract

It is a common supposition that to understand a philosophical writing, knowledge of the philosophical sources on which it draws suffices. Yet, abstract subtleties are often suitably dressed in poetic comparisons, whose threads are spun from a different source. While the body of logical argument appeals to the intellect, the dress of literary tropes allures the emotions. Philosophy is not simply mathematics, for it involves a sentiment, which in Mahāyāna Buddhism means susceptibility to its religious ethos embodied in its path, bodhicitta, and bodhisattvas. Through Candrakīrti's comparison of buddhas and bodhisattvas to the king of geese, I shall here examine the use of similes and metaphors in Indian Buddhist philosophical writing. The analysis illustrates the subtle influence that popular narratives eulogizing the deeds of saints had on such texts, and proposes to revisit philosophical texts as literary works.

Animals are often used for comparison in Indian literature. In this vein, the king of geese (*haṃsarājan*)<sup>1</sup> is not only a beloved trope in poetry and drama, but also figures in poetic comparisons to embellish expositions and arguments in the genre of philosophy. Poets and playwrights craft similes and metaphors of

\* This article is dedicated to the late Dr Isobel Julia Leslie, Reader in Hindu studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, who fostered a keen interest in the issue of the ornithological identity of the Indian *haṃsa*, as she expressed in her 1998 article as well as in 2002 on the Indology List. The present article was originally planned to be co-authored with Dr Leslie, but her untimely death sadly prevented this approach. For an obituary, see Radice 2005.

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1 Throughout the paper, the Sanskrit word *haṃsarājan* and its English counterpart *the king of geese* will be used interchangeably but synonymously. It should be underlined that I shall here exclusively discuss *haṃsarājan* comparisons, and will therefore not treat any issues concerned with geese (*haṃsa*) in general, e.g., the Indian belief in the goose's ability to extract milk from water, which notably are not tropes associated specifically with the *haṃsarājan*. For a broader study of geese in Indian narratives, see Vogel 1962.

great power and beauty to induce the overall sentiment of their poetry or story, while philosophical writers engage in a genre devoid of this underlying artistic ideal. The *haṃsarājan* soars in the heavenly vault of philosophy for a different purpose, related to neither aestheticism nor plot. As I will illustrate here through the writings of Candrakīrti, the classical Indian philosophical authors used poetic devices for the sake of ethos rather than pathos – an ethos closely tied to the scriptures that formed the religious fundament of their thought. When a simile or metaphor of philosophical works is analysed in terms of its semblance, it is in some cases possible to reveal the subtle presence of this scriptural tradition through what has here been labelled “mythic allusion”. This concept draws intangible bonds between philosophical writing and religious scripture, particularly spiritual narrative literature, which necessitate the reader’s familiarity with the popular religious stories of the time of the text’s composition to augment an appreciation for its poetic rhetoric. The three *haṃsarājan* comparisons that appear in Candrakīrti’s texts demonstrate this case in point.

Candrakīrti (c. 600–650 CE, henceforth C) was a Buddhist Mahāyāna commentator, thought to have lived in northern India. He was perhaps born in the kingdom of Samatāṭa in the coastal area north-east of the mouth of the Ganges River within the present-day Chittagong Division of Bangladesh, and may have worked as a scholar at the Buddhist university of Nālanda, situated some 90 km south-east of present-day Patna in central North India.<sup>2</sup> He is known to have written seven works, five of which are extensive philosophical commentaries on the Madhyamaka texts by Nāgārjuna (second/third centuries) and Āryadeva (third century), among which *Madhyamakāvātāra*, *Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti*, and *\*Catuḥśatakavṛtti* contain *haṃsarājan* comparisons.<sup>3</sup>

To establish the vocabulary needed to analyze C’s comparisons, the article will commence with a brief introduction to the literary theory of similes and metaphors. Thereupon, his *haṃsarājan* comparisons will be presented in part two through a literary analysis with particular emphasis on the issue of their problematic semblances. This problem opens up the question whether the comparisons are enabled through actual physical and behavioural semblances between the bodhisattva and the *haṃsarājan* bird, or instead via an association formed mythically in earlier Buddhist sources. Part three incorporates a discussion of *haṃsarājan* comparisons in earlier Buddhist texts, where it will be argued that the only source that establishes a clear connection between bodhisattvas or buddhas and the *haṃsarājan* is the *Haṃsajātaka*, and that C’s comparisons are therefore enabled through a mythic allusion rather than any actual semblance. The concept of mythic allusion will be discussed in comparison with Ānandavārdhana’s notion of “suggestion” (*dhvāni*), thereby juxtaposing the use of poetic devices in philosophical writing versus poetry and drama. In the fourth and last part, the connection between the *Haṃsajātaka* and C’s *haṃsarājan* comparisons will be presented, which also involves a discussion

2 Regarding the purely Tibetan evidence for his association with these places, see Scherrer-Schaub (1991: xxxi–xxxii, 97, 312–13). For the location of Samatāṭa, see the historical map by Schwartzberg and Bajdai (1992: 31).

3 For a list of C’s seven works, see Tillemans (1990.I: 14).

of the significance of the bird-species intended by the word *haṃsarājan*. It will be argued that C was little concerned with the ornithological detail of his comparisons, since his primary objective was to allude to the *haṃsarājan* as embodying the bodhisattva – an association that had become known from the highly popular Buddhist *jātaka* narrative.

The great linguist and Sanskritist Murray Barnson Emeneau (1944: 333) once suggested that Indologists ought to make an encyclopaedia of Sanskrit tropes; this was followed by Gonda's (1949) detailed study of similes in Sanskrit literature.<sup>4</sup> Jean Philippe Vogel took up the image of the goose in his 1962 monograph *The Goose in Indian Literature and Art*, where he also made a few general remarks on the expression “the king of geese”. Paul Thieme (1975) and Julia Leslie (1998) have since discussed the poetic significance of a few other bird-tropes in notable articles. The present study attempts to supply a discussion of the *haṃsarājan* particularly as found in Buddhist literature, thus forming a tiny contribution to Emeneau's ambitious proposal.

## Of similes and metaphors

Comparison has been dealt with in both Western and Indian literary theory (*alaṃkāraśāstra*), and it is valuable to study C's use of this literary device according to both, especially given that the Western notions provide a familiar model, whereas the Indian system offers details and clear definitions.<sup>5</sup> The Indian taxonomy and definitions formulated by the Kashmirian theoretician Mammaṭa (eleventh–twelfth centuries) and adapted by the South Indian scholar Appayyaḍikṣita (sixteenth–seventeenth centuries) are particularly compatible with Western terminology. Although perhaps more renowned, the seventh-century poet-scholar Daṇḍin committed to writing classifications that are less distinct than those of his successors. Nonetheless, his definitions are a helpful supplement.

In his principal treatise *The Light of Poetry (Kāvyaṃprakāśa)*, Mammaṭa understands a comparison to be built of up to four constituents: *upamāna*, *upameya*, *sādhāraṇadharmā*, and *upamāpratīpādaka*.<sup>6</sup> In the Western system, these respectively correspond to comparatum, comparandum, semblance and comparative phrase.<sup>7</sup> For example, in the comparison “The water sparkled like diamonds”, the “diamonds” are the *comparatum* (*upamāna*), i.e. the poetic image or object to which the water is compared. “The water” is the *comparandum* (*upameya*), i.e. the subject of the comparison. “Sparkled” is the *semblance* (*sādhāraṇadharmā*), namely the common quality of the comparatum and the comparandum, whereby the comparison is enabled. “Like” is the comparative phrase (*upamāpratīpādaka*) that effects the comparison. Knowledge of these

4 Gonda's study does not concern the use of comparisons in *śāstra* literature, as dealt with in the present contribution.

5 For a discussion of the basic use of similes in the Sanskrit language beyond the definitions provided by the literary theorists, see Gonda (1949: 1–14, §1).

6 See *Kāvyaṃprakāśa*, ad X.87 (Jha 2005: 349). Appayyaḍikṣita uses the term *upamāvācaka* instead of *upamāpratīpādaka*; see his *Delight of the Night Lotus (Kūvalayānanda)*, verse 7 (Vasudevaśarmā 1903: 7).

7 Other terms employed for *comparatum* and *comparandum* are *vehicle* and *tenor* (Richards 1936: 96–7).

four terms facilitates all further distinctions, thereby allowing a discussion of the types of comparison used by C.

When distinguishing comparisons, the fundamental trait to look for is the relationship between the comparatum and the comparandum. While in a metaphor (*rūpaka*) the two are as if identical, in a simile (*upamā*) they are separate. A metaphor is characterized by the identical comparatum and comparandum as well as by the absence of a comparative phrase. Further, depending on whether the comparandum is mentioned or omitted, metaphors can be explicit or implicit. In the explicit metaphor “The sea is a sparkling diamond”, the diamond and the sea are identical. The fact that the sea equals a sparkling diamond renders the application of a comparative phrase impossible. In the implicit metaphor, “The ship sailed through sparkling diamonds”, the comparandum “water reflecting sunlight” is implied. Although the comparandum is absent, the reader understands diamonds as identical to water.<sup>8</sup>

A simile, by contrast, is characterized by separation of the comparatum and the comparandum, necessitating the use of a comparative phrase. Further, a simile that consists of all four constituents of a comparison is a full simile,<sup>9</sup> while similes that leave out any of the constituents other than the comparatum are elliptical similes.<sup>10</sup> In the full simile “The sea is like a sparkling diamond”, the diamond and the sea are not equal; they are compared as separate entities. In the elliptical simile “The sea is like a diamond”, without the word “sparkling”, the simile does not indicate how the sea resembles a diamond, effecting ellipsis of the semblance. In this case, only one constituent of the comparison is omitted, though in principle it is possible to omit one or two more constituents.

The identity or separation of the comparatum and the comparandum, being the principal difference between the metaphor (*rūpaka*) and the simile (*upamā*), is the focus of Mammaṭa’s definitions. In the earlier Indian tradition, there was no absolute distinction between *rūpaka* and *upamā*. Daṇḍin, who predates Mammaṭa by 500 years and Appayyaḍīkṣita by a millennium, defined the *upamā* as “that involving some kind of semblance”,<sup>11</sup> which could in fact include any kind of comparison. Consequently, he understood the *rūpaka* not

- 8 The implicit metaphor is called *utprekṣā* in Sanskrit. Mammaṭa defines it as “the imagination of the comparandum by means of a similar thing” (*Kāvya prakāśa* X.92; Jha 2005: 366; *saṃbhāvanam athotprekṣā prakṛtasya samena yat!*). Daṇḍin has a more elaborate definition as: “something of an entirely different disposition that stands in place of something else, animate or otherwise” (*Kāvya darsa* II.221; Böhtlingk 1890: 58; Banerjee 1939: 55, v. 218: *anyathaiva sthitā vṛttis cet anasyetarasya vā anyathotprekṣyate yatra tām utprekṣām viduryathā!*). Cf. the Tibetan translation of *Kāvya darsa* (D4301.329b<sub>1</sub>; Z vol. 110, p. 1058).
- 9 The full simile (*pūrṇopamā*) is an Indian concept not found in Western literary theory. Mammaṭa defines it as a comparison “complete with comparatum, comparandum, semblance, and comparative phrase (*Kāvya prakāśa*” ad X.87; Jha, 2005: 349; *upamānopameyasādhāraṇadharmopamāpratipādakānām upādāne pūrṇā!*).
- 10 The elliptical simile (*luptopamā*) is likewise an Indian concept. Mammaṭa defines it as a comparison in which one, two or three of the constituents found in a full simile have been omitted. See *Kāvya prakāśa* ad X.86 (Jha 2005: 349): *ekasya dvayostrayāṅām vā lope luptā!*.
- 11 *Kāvya darsa* II.14 (Böhtlingk 1890: 21; Banerjee 1939: 55): *yathā katham cit sādṛśyaṃ yatrodhbhūtaṃ pratīyate! upamā nāma*. Cf. the Tibetan translation (D4301.322b<sub>2-3</sub>; Z vol. 110, p. 1040).

as the *upamā*'s opposite, but as an *upamā* wherein the separation between the comparatum and the comparandum has been concealed, such as arm-creeper, hand-lotus, or foot-bud.<sup>12</sup> In the later Indian tradition, the *rūpaka* and *upamā* came to be seen as opposites. The *rūpaka* was thus defined by Mammaṭa as a comparison without separation between the comparatum and the comparandum.<sup>13</sup> "Without separation" (*abheda*) is glossed by "identity" (*tādrūpya*) in Appayyadīkṣita's *Delight of the Night Lotus*<sup>14</sup> and it is in the latter meaning that the metaphor has come to be defined in Western theory.<sup>15</sup> Contrary to *rūpaka*, Mammaṭa defined the *upamā* as a comparison wherein the comparatum and the comparandum are separate but possessing a common quality.<sup>16</sup>

Understanding the opposition between metaphors and similes is a general precondition for comprehending C's comparisons. They are like conceptual snares for capturing poetic images. Still, the quintessence of any comparison, whether metaphor or simile, is semblance, a fact stressed by neither Indian nor Western theory. It is semblance that unites the image with its subject, and creates wholeness in the comparison. It also bestows meaning: comparing dissimilar diamonds to darkness is senseless. When struck by the sun, water resembles diamonds by its sparkling quality and this similarity enables the comparison. Many a poet leaves the semblance tacit, challenging the reader to form the fitting association. If the association is obvious, it is normally understood independently of its background, whereas if culturally bound, it can only be apprehended within its own context.

When reading C's texts today, 1300 years after they were written and so far removed from their historical and social setting, it is crucial to determine what semblance he saw in using the king of geese as a poetic image to understand the significance of making this comparison.

## Haṃsarājan comparisons in Candrakīrti's works

The richness of comparisons allows the poet to visualize thoughts through images captivating the audience's imagination. Even a literary landscape as arid as Madhyamaka philosophy becomes moistened and inhabited by numerous creatures in the hands of C's poetic wizardry – easing the journey for the reader. Deer, dogs, ducks, elephants, horses, jackals, monkeys, peacocks and geese thus roam in the pages of C's works.<sup>17</sup>

12 *Kāvyaadarśa* II.66 (Böhtlingk 1890: 30; Banerjee 1939: 77): *upamaiva tirobhūtabhedā rūpakam ucyate/ yathā bāhulatā pāṇipadmam caraṇapallavaḥ*/. Banerjee's edition reads *iṣyate* instead of *ucyate* in agreement with the Tibetan translation and *°pallavam* instead of *°pallavaḥ*. Cf. the Tibetan translation (D4301.324a<sub>5-6</sub>; Z vol. 110, p. 1044).

13 *Kāvyaṣaṣṭakā* X.93 (Jha 2005: 369): *tad rūpakam abhedo ya upamānopameyoḥ*/.

14 *Kuvalayānanda*, verse 17 (Vasudevaśarmā 1903: 16; Schmidt 1907: 23): *viṣayabhedatādrūpyaraṇjanam viṣayasya yat/ rūpakam*. Contrary to Mammaṭa's use of the terms *upamāna* and *upameya* for comparatum and comparandum, Appayyadīkṣita here uses the terms *viṣayin* for comparatum and *viṣaya* for comparandum, perhaps just for metrical reasons, since elsewhere he employs *upamāna* and *upameya*.

15 The possibility that the Middle Eastern Islamic tradition of literary theory served as a link between the Eastern and Western literary theories in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, thereby accounting for some of their similarities, has been left unexplored here. Appayyadīkṣita's (sixteenth–seventeenth centuries) definitions, however, postdate any such link.

16 *Kāvyaṣaṣṭakā* X.87 (Jha 2005: 349): *sādharmyam upamā bhede*/.

The king of geese is used three times for making comparisons, first in C's \**Catuḥśatakavṛtti*<sup>18</sup> being a commentary on Āryadeva's *Catuḥśataka*. While elucidating a verse on the importance of not treating a low born person with contempt, since s/he might be a saintly reincarnation who has compassionately chosen an inferior birth to help others, C summarizes the following *jātaka*-story of the Buddha's former life as a bodhisattva.<sup>19</sup>

Once upon a time, a king begot an illegitimate son with a maid outside the palace. Other children derided the boy, who was in fact the bodhisattva, for not knowing his father. Upon being questioned by her son, the mother let it be known who fathered him. The boy demanded to be taken to the king and be recognized as his son. Although the mother feared punishment, not being able to bear her son's tears, she finally agreed to do so. The king, however, disavowed the boy. At this point, the boy decided to disclose his supernatural powers, and it is here – at the plot's dénouement – that C evokes the *haṃsarājan* image:

Holding whips in their hands, the guards arrived. The bodhisattva, like a king of geese with spread wings, leapt up from his mother's lap, and remaining in midair said to the king: "Aren't you pleased that I am the king's son?" At this, with a hair-raising feeling, the king shed a few tears.<sup>20</sup>

By the clause "the bodhisattva, like a king of geese with spread wings, leapt up", C created an elliptical simile with three of the four constituents. Using the image of a bird taking off for the boy's act of levitation, he likened the comparandum "the bodhisattva" to the comparatum "a king of geese" (Skt. \**haṃsarājan*, Tib. *ngang pa'i rgyal po*). Since the comparandum and comparatum are treated as if separate and are juxtaposed by the comparative phrase like, the comparison is a simile. The simile's elliptical constituent is the semblance, i.e., the common quality (*sādharma*) that must be shared by the comparandum and the comparatum to enable the comparison. The semblance cannot be the explicit action-verb "leapt up" or "flew up" (Skt. \**utpatya*, Tib. *'phar te*), since it is hardly to be imagined that the boy took off in flight in the horizontal running-like fashion of a goose. Hence, the semblance appears only to be the

17 For general remarks on the use of animal similes in Sanskrit literature, see Gonda (1949: 66–9, §39).

18 \**Catuḥśatakavṛtti* is extant in some Sanskrit fragments (Shāstrī 1914) and a Tibetan translation made by Pa tshab lotsā ba Nyi ma grags (c. 1055–1140) and Sūkṣmajana (eleventh century).

19 See *Catuḥśataka*, verse V.17 (Lang 1986: 58–9; Sonam 1994: 142–3).

20 \**Catuḥśatakavṛtti* ad V.17 (non-extant in Sanskrit; Tibetan translation Q5266.214.4<sub>1-2</sub>; G mdo vol. ya 137b<sub>5-6</sub> p. 274; D3865.101a<sub>3-4</sub>; Z dbu ma vol. ya, p. 1173): *de dag kyang lag na lcaḡ thogs te mngon par lhags pa dang/ byang chub sems dpa' des ngang pa'i rgyal po 'dab gshog rgyas pa ltar ma'i pang nas 'phar te nam mkha' la bsdad nas rgyal po la bdag rgyal po'i bu yin par mi dgyes sam zhes smras so/ lde la rgyal po des ba sbu lang mchi ma cung zad phyung/*. Textual variants: pang D: phang GNQ. nam mkha' DNG: namkha' G. bsdad nas D: brten nas GNQ. smras so D: smos so GNQ. For the whole story in English and a slightly different translation of this passage, see Sonam (1994: 143).

general quality of flying. It is also notable that the gander is envisioned with spread wings, a repeated pattern in C's imagery. It should be underlined that the employment of a *haṃsarājan* simile within this particular story appears to be a novelty of C's own making, since it is not an element recycled from any earlier known version of the tale.<sup>21</sup>

The second time the king of geese flies out from C's pen is in his *Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti*, a commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. In its twenty-fifth chapter scrutinizing the ontological status of *nirvāṇa*, Nāgārjuna concludes in verse 24 that *nirvāṇa* neither exists nor not exists, is not a combination of the two, nor something other than the two; and since *nirvāṇa* cannot be described by any concept at all, it cannot be taught verbally by the buddhas. C expands the meaning of Nāgārjuna's words by pointing out that it is exactly because of *nirvāṇa*'s indefinable nature that it is possible for someone to remain within it. When illustrating this conundrum, he draws the following comparison:

The sublime buddhas rest in *nirvāṇa*, the auspicious, the state free of all subjective proliferation, by their yoga of non-rest, just like *haṃsarājans* can rest in the sky, their wings soaring on the wind, because space really is nothing at all.<sup>22</sup>

- 21 C's story corresponds roughly to the Pāli *Kaṭṭhahārijātaka* (Fausbøll 1877: 133–6; Chalmers 1895: 27–9; Grey 1990: 55), and parallels more distantly the *Śakuntalā* tales found in the *Mahābhārata* (1.62–9; Johnson 2001: 107–37; van Buitenen 1973: 155–71; Doniger 1998: 438–44) and in the *Padmapurāṇa* (Shivaramaiah 1993: 126–30), Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* (Gajendragadkar and Pralayankar 2004; Johnson 2001; Grey 1990: 56; Doniger 1998), as well as the *Avadāna of Āmrāpālī and Jīvaka* (T553) translated into Chinese by Ān Shigāo (second century) (French translation by Chavannes 1911.III: 325–61), thus tying the present theme in with the several different versions of the story of the courtesan Āmrāpālī of Vaiśāla. None of these stories contains any *haṃsarājan* comparison.
- 22 *Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti* (de La Vallée Poussin 1903–1913: 538 = V; the five primary Sanskrit manuscripts 𑀩187<sub>a2-3</sub>, 𑀩101<sub>a7-8</sub>, 𑀩218<sub>a6-218b1</sub>, 𑀩161<sub>a6-7</sub>, and 𑀩106<sub>a5</sub>); *Buddhā bhagavantaḥ sarvaprapaṅcōpaśāntarūpe nirvāṇe śive 'sthānayogena sthītā nabhasīva haṃsarājānaḥ sthītāḥ svapakṣapātavāte gaganasyākīncanatvāt*. Cf. the Tibetan translation by Pa tshab Nyi ma grags (Q5260.84.2<sub>1-3</sub>, G dbu ma vol. 'a 253b<sub>5-254a1</sub>, N mdo 205<sub>a6-7</sub>, D3860.181<sub>a7-181b1</sub>): *sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das rnams nam mkha' la ngang pa'i rgyal po dag rang gi gshog pa brdabs pa'i rlung la gnas pa'am/ nam mkha' ci yang ma yin pa nyid kyi phyir rlung nam mkha' la gnas pa ltar/ mya ngan las 'das pa spros pa thams cad nye bar zhi zhing/ zhi ba'i ngo bo la mi gnas pa'i tshul gyis gnas pa/*. For a description and stemma codicum of the Sanskrit manuscripts, see Kragh (2006: 35–9). The Sanskrit variant readings are: caivam]: caiva 𑀩. After bhagavantaḥ]: / 𑀩: // 𑀩. °prapaṅco]: °prapamco° बजल. 'sthāna]: asthāna° 𑀩. °yogena]: °yogema 𑀩: yogana 𑀩. sthītā] 𑀩 Tib. omitted बदजल V. nabhasīva]: nabhasī 𑀩. °rājānaḥ] emendation Tib. (de Jong 1978: 247): °ranaḥ बजल: °rājāḥ V (bad emendation): lacuna 𑀩. After sthītāḥ]: / 𑀩: // 𑀩. svapakṣa] emendation (Tib.): svapunyañānasambhārapakṣa° बदजल: svapunyañāna(lacuna) 𑀩; the reading °punyañānasambhāra° is probably a collaborative interpolation (on this term, see Tarrant 1989). °pātavāte]: (lacuna)vāte] 𑀩: °yotavāte बजल. After svapakṣapātavāte]: vātaś ca gagane बदजलप (Tib.): vātagagane [vā] V; the phrase must be an interpolation, because its presence disturbs the correspondences within the comparison. This claim is strengthened by the fact that *ca* has been translated by 'am in Tibetan, indicating the

This comparison is a full simile, complete with the four constituents. The comparandum *buddhas* is treated as separate from the comparatum *haṃsarājans*, and is compared by means of the comparative phrase “just like” enabled by the explicit semblance expressed by the double use of the word “rest” (*sthitāḥ*). The semblance is the philosophical key to the statement, since it holds the conundrum to be illustrated. In terms of the comparandum, the paradox is signified by the tension between the words rest and non-rest (*asthāna*). A similar polarity is seen in the description of the comparatum, since the kings of geese rest in the sky, while simultaneously advancing by soaring with spread wings on the wind. The semblance is therefore stillness and action combined. It should also be noted that the geese are again portrayed as flying with spread wings.

The king of geese is last sighted in the final verse of the sixth chapter of C’s *Madhyamakāvātāra*.<sup>23</sup> The verse is a poetic culmination of the text’s exposition on the perfection of insight (*prajñāpāramitā*) to be achieved through the Madhyamaka view. The writer expresses the opinion that once a bodhisattva reaches the sixth spiritual level (*bhūmi*), s/he surpasses the *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* in compassion towards sentient beings and through insight into reality. He proceeds to exemplify this doctrinal point with a poetic metaphor:

Induced ahead by its geese subjects,  
With outstretched wings, broad and white, of the conventional and the real,  
The king of geese flies by the force of the wind of wholesome actions  
To the supreme shore across the sea of the Jina’s good qualities.<sup>24</sup>

The image is that of a gander with broad white wings which, carried by the wind, flies as the point bird ahead of its flock towards the far shore of a sea. The verse leaves the comparandum hidden, treats the omitted comparandum and the comparatum as identical, and has no comparative phrase, which makes the comparison an implicit metaphor (*utprekṣā*). The omission of the

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Tibetan translators’ difficulty in making the interpolated Sanskrit phrase fit in. °kiṃcanatvāt]: °kiṃcinatvāt 𑖦: °kiñcanatvāt V. The Tibetan translation has no variant readings. For another English translation, see Stcherbatsky (1927: 219–220).

23 The text has hitherto been available only in a few Sanskrit fragments and in its two eleventh-century Tibetan translations respectively by Nag tsho Tshul khriims rgyal ba (1011–1064) and Pa tshab lotsā ba Nyi ma grags. Editions have been produced by de La Vallée Poussin (1907–1912) and Tauscher (1989). A Sanskrit manuscript has now been located in China and is currently being prepared for publication in Vienna, but was not available in time for this article.

24 *Madhyamakāvātāra* verse VI.226, Sanskrit text currently not available, Tibetan translation by Pa tshab Nyi ma grags (Tauscher 1989): *kun rdzob de nyid gshog yangs dkar po rgyas gyur pa / l ngang pa ’i rgyal po de ni skye bo ’i ngang pa yis / mdun du bdar nas dge ba ’i rlung gi shugs stobs kyis / l rgyal ba ’i yon tan rgya mtsho ’i pha rol mchog tu ’grol*. Textual variant (Tauscher 1989: 40): *rlung gi: rlung gis* GNP editions of *Madhyamakāvātārabhāṣya* (Q5263; G *dbu ma* vol. ’a 481a<sub>6</sub>–481b<sub>1</sub>; N *mdo* vol. ’a 388b<sub>5-6</sub>; Tauscher 1989: 40). The earlier *Madhyamakāvātāra* translation by Nag tsho Tshul khriims rgyal ba reads *don dam* instead of *de nyid* in the first *pada*, and *brdar* instead of *bdar* in the third *pada* (Q5261.106.2<sub>4-5</sub>; N *mdo* vol. ’a 241b<sub>7</sub>–242a<sub>1</sub>; G *mdo* vol. ’a 295b<sub>4</sub>; Tauscher 1989: 1, 40). For other translations, see Ogawa (1977: 354), Tauscher (1981: 104–5), Huntington (1989: 183–4), and Fenner (1990: 282).

comparandum accords with Daṇḍin's definition of the implicit metaphor,<sup>25</sup> since *the king of geese* having an entirely different disposition stands in place of the comparandum, animate or otherwise. Only the context and the verse's several additional comparisons bring out the unspoken comparandum, *a bodhisattva* traversing the Mahāyāna path. The migrating birds carry the sense of being on a journey, which represents the bodhisattva's career through the ten spiritual levels. Even the *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* must – according to C's understanding – eventually undergo this trip. Like the geese subjects, they trail behind the bodhisattva, who is their superior in compassion and wisdom, just as the point bird is the most experienced traveller in the flock. The leader is said to possess thorough knowledge of the conventional and the real, thus knowing the path. His spiritual practices of wholesomeness fuel his progress like a wind carrying the birds forth to the destination of buddhahood, picking up good qualities on the way. The implicit metaphors “geese subjects” and “shore” as well as the explicit metaphors “wings”, “wind”, and “sea” thus lend meaning to the king of geese, prompting the connotation of its implicit comparandum, *a bodhisattva*.

The verse offers three possibilities for understanding the intended semblance of the bodhisattva's comparison to the king of geese. Literally, it might be expressed by the phrase “induced ahead”, or, metaphorically, it can be taken as articulated either by the noun “wings” or by the phrase “flies across the sea”. In his auto-commentary *Madhyamakāvātārabhāṣya*, C provides only two explanatory sentences to this verse, and either sentence might indicate the semblance:

Even the conventional good qualities of the [bodhisattva] radiate more powerfully. The twofold reality belonging to him, who has gone to the far shore of the great sea of a jina's good qualities, accompanied by his goose-subjects who have engendered excellence, is his two broad wings.<sup>26</sup>

The first sentence of the auto-commentary expresses the view that a bodhisattva of the sixth bodhisattva-level has become more advanced than *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, which harmonizes with C's opinion that such practitioners must eventually reach complete buddhahood, but that the bodhisattva advances to this goal ahead of them.<sup>27</sup> In the verse, this view is expressed with the metaphor “induced ahead by its geese subjects”. The verbal phrase “induced ahead” (\**puroniśītya, mdun du bdar nas*)<sup>28</sup> carries a double meaning in Sanskrit. On

25 See n. 8.

26 *Madhyamakāvātārabhāṣya* ad VI.226 (D3862.325a<sub>6-7</sub>; G *mdo* vol. 'a 381b<sub>1-2</sub>; N *mdo* vol. 'a 388b<sub>6-7</sub>; de La Vallée Poussin 1907–1912: 342): *de'i kun rdzob kyi yon tan rnams kyang ches lhag par rab tu 'bar bar 'gyur ro/ | gang gi na 'di skye bo'i ngang pa phul du byung ba skyed pa rnams dang lhan cig rgyal ba'i yon tan gyi rgya mtsho chen po'i pha rol tu 'gro bar 'gyur ba bden pa gnyis po de ni 'di'i gshog pa yangs pa gnyis yin no//*. Variant readings: gang gi na GNQ: gang gis na D. skyed pa GNQ: bskyed pa D.

27 See *Madhyamakāvātārabhāṣya* ad I.1 (de La Vallée Poussin 1907–1912: 1–7).

28 On its own, the Tibetan verbal root *bdar* has the meanings of “to cut, sharpen, grind, file or sweep” (btsan lha 1997: 353–4), and corresponds to Sanskrit *ni-√śi* “to sharpen, whet, excite, strengthen”. This correspondence is attested in *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (Hirakawa 1978.III: 124, 229), where the Tibetan expression *mtshon cha bdar ba* is

one hand, *\*puroṇiṣītya* means “sharpened in front”, thus indicating the shape of a skein of geese with the point bird, the *haṃsarājan*, flying ahead of its flock. On the other hand, *\*puroṇiṣītya* also means “induced ahead” with the sense that the flock urges the point bird on to lead the way. The image of geese migrating in their typical v-shaped formation is further evoked by the contrast between the words *king* (*\*rājan*, *rgyal po*) and *subjects* or *men* (*\*jana*, *skye bo*), emphasizing the point bird’s leader role. In the auto-commentary, the comparandum of the metaphor *geese subjects* (*\*janahaṃsa*, *skye bo’i ngang pa*) is identified as *those who have engendered excellence* (*\*prakaraṣotpādāḥ*, *phul du byung ba skyed pa rnam*), which probably refers to the *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* mentioned in the text’s preceding verse (VI.225).<sup>29</sup> Given that a bodhisattva is induced ahead on the Buddhist path by the *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, who eventually follow his lead, and that this is similar to how the goose leader is induced ahead by his flock when migrating, the phrase “induced ahead” could be understood as the semblance of the metaphor.

The semblance could also be sought in the noun “wings”, if read metaphorically as referring to the Mahāyāna notion of a twofold reality (*\*dvayasatya*), i.e., the conventional reality (*\*saṃvṛtisatya*, *kun rdzob bden pa*) and the highest reality (*\*paramārthasatya*, *don dam bden pa*), being the only point in the verse that is stressed by the auto-commentary. Or, the semblance might be found in the verb “flies”, given that the metaphor of the bodhisattva crossing a sea to achieve buddhahood is common in Buddhist literature, e.g. in the epithet “he gone to the farther shore” (*pāraga* or *pāragata*, *pha rol tu phyin pa*) used of the Buddha and *arhants*.<sup>30</sup>

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used as a translation for Sanskrit *niṣītaśāstra* “a sharpened weapon”. In the present verse, the verb *bdar* is used within the longer verbal phrase *mdun du bdar* meaning “to head, to lead the way”, just like a general leads his troops into battle (Zhāng 1984: 1380). This probably corresponds to Sanskrit *\*puroṇiṣītya*. The agent of the verb is the *geese subjects* (*skye bo’i ngang pa yis*) as indicated by the ergative particle, thus forming a passive construction. The only two extant Indic commentaries on this text, viz. C’s auto-commentary and Jayānanda’s *ṭīkā*, provide no clue on this somewhat difficult phrase. Ogawa (1977: 354) has suggested the Sanskrit reconstruction *\*puroṣkṛta* “placed in front”, which in terms of meaning is possible too, but offers no attestation for such a Tibetan-Sanskrit correspondence. On Jayānanda, see van der Kuijp (1993).

29 This is, nonetheless, not how the comparandum of geese subjects has been understood in the later Indo-Tibetan commentarial tradition. The Kashmirian commentator Jayānanda (twelfth century) took the geese subjects as signifying other accompanying bodhisattvas (D3870.II.331b<sub>3-4</sub>). Several later Tibetan commentators interpreted the geese subjects as referring to the bodhisattva’s own disciples; e.g. Red mda’ ba Gzhon nu blo gros (1349–1412) in his *dbu ma la ’jug pa’i rnam bshad de kho na nyid gsal ba’i sgron me* (Sakyapa Students’ Union 1995: 310); or, Tsong kha pa (1357–1419) in his *bstan bcos chen po dbu ma la ’jug pa’i rnam bshad dgongs pa rab gsal* (TBRC, W22272, volume Ma, folio 275a<sub>1</sub>); or, Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–54) in his *dbu ma la ’jug pa’i rnam bshad dpal ldan dus gsum mkhyen pa’i zhal lung dwags brgyud grub pa’i shing rta* (Rumtek xylograph, folio 352b<sub>4</sub>).

30 Edgerton (1953.II: 341). In *Prasannapadā*, C mentions this epithet in a quotation from the *Samādhirājasūtra*, where it is glossed with “one who has crossed” (*tīrṇaḥ*): “one who has crossed is called he who has gone to the farther shore”. See *Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti* (De La Vallée Poussin 1903–1913: 143): *tīrṇaḥ pārāga ity ucyate*.

To conclude this overview of C's use of *haṃsarājan* similes and metaphors, it may be observed that all three comparisons have similar comparanda: in *\*Catuḥśatakavṛtti* and *Madhyamakāvātāra*, the comparanda are "a bodhisattva", while in *Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti* the comparandum is "buddhas". In all cases, the comparanda are thus what in Buddhism may be termed *noble beings* (*ārya*), i.e. advanced practitioners of the path. It is further noteworthy that the *haṃsarājan* in all three comparisons is depicted as flying with spread wings, and there is consequently little variety in the formulation of the trope. Finally, it is evident that all the comparisons only contain phrases expressing very general semblances. In *Catuḥśatakavṛtti*, the semblance is the quality of *flying*; in *Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti*, it is a combination of "stillness and action"; and in *Madhyamakāvātāra*, it is either to be "induced ahead", "wings", or "flying".

Yet none of the passages provides any compelling reason why the bodhisattva or buddha is compared to the *haṃsarājan* bird in particular, and this is a problem, because – as expressed succinctly by Appayyadiḥṣita – "a comparison is where a striking similarity of two things jumps to mind".<sup>31</sup> Since a striking similarity appears to be lacking in C's comparisons, he might as well have compared the bodhisattva or buddha to any other type of flying creature, for instance another bird, an airborne insect, or even a supernatural being capable of flight. Nevertheless, C consistently chose the *haṃsarājan* as his comparison, and there must accordingly exist a clear affinity between the *haṃsarājan* and buddhas or bodhisattvas, which would have had to be sufficiently obvious to seventh-century readers to render his comparisons successful, even if it may not be self-evident to the modern reader. Hence, to appreciate the comparison with its intended association, it is now necessary to investigate its background in the broader Buddhist literature.<sup>32</sup>

### Haṃsarājan comparisons in earlier Buddhist literature

The majority of *haṃsarājan* comparisons in the Buddhist literature predating C involve a concrete physical semblance between the buddha or bodhisattva and the king of geese. The most common and best-known case concerns the incomplete, simple syndactyly, i.e. partially webbed fingers and toes, with which all buddhas are supposed to be born and which is included as one of the thirty-two major bodily marks of a great person (*dvātriṃśan mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇāni*). In the list of these thirty-two features found in numerous Buddhist scriptures, the webbed fingers and toes are compared to the webbed feet of the king of geese.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, in the equally well-known list of the eighty minor marks

D3860.48b<sub>1</sub>: /brgal ba pha rol tu phyin pa zhes bya'ol/. For a French translation and the identification of the quotation's source, see May (1959: 104).

31 See *Kuvalayānanda*, verse 6ab (Vasudevaśarmā 1903: 3): *upamā yatra sādṛśyalakṣmīr ullasati dvayoḥ!*.

32 On the method of tracing the background and possible origin of a given comparison, see Gonda (1949: 113–21).

33 To locate comparisons involving the *haṃsarājan* in the earlier Indic Buddhist literature, I have relied on an electronic search for the word *haṃsarājan* (鵞王 *érwáng*) in the Taishō Chinese canon, acknowledging all the limitations this approach certainly involves but

of a *tathāgata*, the Buddha's manner of walking is compared to the gait of the king of geese.<sup>34</sup> Other physical semblances include comparisons of a bodhisattva's unstained body to the white colour of the *haṃsarājan* in the *Sannipātasūtra* and elsewhere,<sup>35</sup> and a comparison of a bodhisattva's speech to the powerful, trumpeting cry of the king of geese, e.g. in the *\*Bhikṣuṇīvinayavibhaṅga*.<sup>36</sup> It is noteworthy that all of these comparisons are based on simple physical resemblances between the buddhas or bodhisattvas and the *haṃsarājan*, and in this regard differ from C's *haṃsarājan* comparisons and therefore cannot aid in explaining the lack of a pronounced semblance in his poetic figures.

Instead, C's trope is akin to another type of *haṃsarājan* comparison in the earlier Buddhist scriptures, where levitating buddhas, bodhisattvas or other forms of saints are compared to flying kings of geese. With twenty-seven attestations alone in the Chinese canon, ranging from Mahāyāna sūtras to Vinaya texts, the flying *haṃsarājan* comparison was frequent and clearly popular even before the seventh century.<sup>37</sup> For example, in the *Āṅgulimāliyasūtra*, the

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deeming it sufficient for the present purpose of illustrating the general Buddhist associations related to the *haṃsarājan* as found in an educated reader of the seventh century. The comparison of the webbed fingers and toes to the feet of the *haṃsarājan* is attested twenty-one times within lists of the thirty-two traits in the following texts: *\*Dūṅghāgama* (T1.5b<sub>1</sub>), *\*Mahāsammatarāja* (T191.940b<sub>5</sub>), *\*Suvikrāntavikrāmaparipṛcchā Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* (T231.723a<sub>14</sub>), *\*Buddhāvataṃsaka Mahāvaiṇyāsūtra* (T293.703a<sub>11</sub>), *\*Bodhisattvapiṭaka* (T316.781c<sub>22</sub>), *\*Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (T374.353a<sub>1</sub>, T375.780a<sub>1</sub>), *Fó rù nièpán mǐjì jūngāng lǐshì āi liàn jīng* (佛入涅槃密迹金剛力士哀戀經 T394.1117a<sub>20</sub>), *Chán bíyào fǎ jīng* (禪祕要法經 T613.255b<sub>22</sub>), *\*Śuvarṇaprabhāsottamarājasūtra* (T663.344a<sub>29</sub>, T664.385b<sub>11</sub>, T665.432a<sub>16</sub>), *\*Anuttarāśrayasūtra* (T669.474a<sub>5</sub>), *\*Mahāyānābhisamayāsūtra* (T673.641c<sub>7</sub>, T673.649a<sub>8</sub>, T674.654a<sub>9</sub>), *\*Dharmokadhāraṇīsūtra* (T1340.673c<sub>20</sub>), *Fó shuō zàoxiàng liángdù jīngjiē* (佛說造像量度經解 T1419.944a<sub>22</sub>), *\*Daśabhūmivibhāśāsāstra* (T1521.65a<sub>5</sub>), *\*Mahāvibhāśāsāstra* (T1545.888a<sub>23</sub>), and *\*Ratnagotravibhāga* (T1611.817c<sub>6</sub> & 844b<sub>27</sub>).

- 34 This comparison is attested twenty-seven times in the Chinese Tripiṭaka: *\*Saṃyuktāgama* (T99.161b<sub>14</sub>), *\*Āṅgulimāliyasūtra* (T120.513a<sub>10</sub>, T120.513c<sub>21</sub>, T120.523c<sub>11</sub>), *Dà fāngbiàn fó bào'ēn jīng* (大方便佛報恩經 T156.164c<sub>10-11</sub>), *\*Lalitavistarasūtra* (T187.557b<sub>22-23</sub>), *Guòqù xiànzài yīnguǒ jīng* (過去現在因果經 T189.643c<sub>9-10</sub>), *\*Abhinīskramaṇasūtra* (T190.696a<sub>15</sub>), *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (T220.06.968a<sub>19</sub>, T220.07.377a<sub>16-17</sub>, T220.07.726b<sub>26-27</sub> and T220.07.960c<sub>20-21</sub>), *\*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* (T223.396a<sub>21</sub>), *\*Suvikrāntavikrāmaparipṛcchā Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* (T231.723b<sub>13</sub>), *\*Bodhisattvagocaropāyaviṣaya Vikarvānanirdeśasūtra* (T272.331b<sub>9-10</sub>), *\*Ratnakūṭa* (T310.184c<sub>7-8</sub>, T310.352b<sub>17</sub>), *\*Rāstrapālaparipṛcchāsūtra* (T321.2a<sub>29</sub>), *\*Upāsakābrahmacārya Dharmaparyāyasūtra* (T579.960b<sub>3</sub>), *\*Mañjuśrīparipṛcchāsūtra* (T661.329c<sub>5</sub>, T662.332a<sub>6</sub>), *\*Anuttarāśrayasūtra* (T669.475a<sub>9</sub>), *\*Ghanavyūhasūtra* (T682.749b<sub>9-10</sub>), *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* (T1509.684c<sub>06</sub>), *\*Daśabhūmivibhāśāsāstra* (T1521.69c<sub>14</sub>), and *\*Bodhisattvabhūmi* (T1582.973c<sub>14</sub>).
- 35 See *\*Mahāvaiṇyāmahāsanipātasūtra* (T397.152a<sub>5</sub>) and *\*Śatapañcaśatikastotra* (T1680.759a<sub>15</sub>).
- 36 See *\*Bhikṣuṇīvinayavibhaṅga* (T1443.914b<sub>25-26</sub>), as well as *Fó shuō fó míng jīng* (佛說佛名經 T440.178a<sub>21</sub>, T441.28c<sub>25-26</sub>), and *\*Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayakṣudrakavastu* (T1451.234c<sub>10</sub>).
- 37 See *\*Āṅgulimāliyasūtra* (T120.523c<sub>20</sub>), *\*Sumāgadhāvadānasūtra* (T130.847a<sub>2-3</sub>), *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (T220.951a<sub>19</sub>), *\*Suvikrāntavikrāmaparipṛcchā Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* (T231.714c<sub>23-24</sub>), *\*Ratnakūṭa* (T310.327a<sub>21-22</sub>, T310.327a<sub>29-b1</sub>, T310.597c<sub>9-11</sub>), *\*Tathāgatācintyaḡuhyā Mahāyānasūtra* (T312.713b<sub>7-8</sub>, T312.713v<sub>10-11</sub>).

following passage occurs when Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, two of the Buddha's close disciples, arrive on the scene:

Thereupon, the elders Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, using their miraculous powers, came flying through the sky, like *haṃsarājans*. Having arrived to where the Buddha was, they bowed to the Buddha's feet, and seated themselves at his side.<sup>38</sup>

In this full simile (*pūrṇopamā*), the comparandum is the elders (*\*āyusmant*, 尊者 *zūnzhe*)<sup>39</sup> Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana. It is here observable that Buddhist saints of other types than bodhisattvas and buddhas may be compared to flying *haṃsarājans*. The comparatum is the *haṃsarājan*, the comparative phrase is “like”, and the semblance is “flying”. Like C's comparisons, the comparison in the *Āṅgulimāliyasūtra* also conveys only a most general semblance of flying and fails to provide any unequivocal association of the *haṃsarājan* to the comparandum. The same is indeed the case for all the other comparisons to flying *haṃsarājans* in the earlier Indic Buddhist literature found in the Chinese canon, and these cases, therefore, do not solve the fundamental problem of the lack of a conspicuous semblance.

There is, however, a single earlier source which provides an unequivocal link between the bodhisattva and the *haṃsarājan*. It clearly treats the bodhisattva and the *haṃsarājan* as identical – not metaphorically but literally. This is the popular story about a former life of the Buddha as a king of geese entitled the *Haṃsajātaka*, and it is arguably this story that holds the key to clarifying the flying *haṃsarājan* comparisons in Buddhist literature.

The *Haṃsajātaka* exists in several different recensions. The *Jātaka*-section of the *Khuddaka-nikāya* of the Pāli canon includes three different versions: a short narrative entitled *Haṃsajātaka*, a middle-length narrative entitled *Cullaḥaṃsajātaka*, and a long narrative called the *Mahāhaṃsajātaka*.<sup>40</sup> The Chinese Tripiṭaka too supplies an early version within the *Vinayavastu*.<sup>41</sup>

T312.738b<sub>26-28</sub>, T312.743b<sub>9-10</sub>), *Fó shuō chū fēnshuō jīng* (佛說初分說經 T498.767b<sub>12-13</sub>), \**Suvarṇavarṇavadāna* (T550.892c<sub>17-18</sub>), \**Mahāyānābhisamayāsūtra* (T673.641c<sub>6-7</sub>, T674.654a<sub>8-9</sub>), \**Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* (T1050.50c<sub>7-8</sub>), \**Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayavibhaṅga* (T1442.657c<sub>29-658a1</sub>, T1442.698b<sub>12-13</sub>, T1442.718c<sub>14-15</sub>, T1442.859c<sub>29-860a1</sub>, T1442.865b<sub>14-16</sub>), \**Vinayavastu* (T1448.23b<sub>5-6</sub>), \**Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayakṣudrakavastu* (T1451.252b<sub>1-2</sub>, T1451.252b<sub>9-10</sub>, T1451.331a<sub>25-26</sub>, T1451.362c<sub>25</sub>, T1451.368c<sub>24-25</sub>), and *Fó jíxiáng dé zàn* (祥德讚 T1681.764c<sub>6</sub>).

38 *Āṅgulimāliyasūtra*, non-extant in Sanskrit, Chinese translation (T120.523c<sub>11-14</sub>): 爾時尊者舍利弗大目犍連。猶如鶴王。以神通力乘虛而來。來至佛所頂禮佛足卻住一面。Tibetan translation (D213.148a<sub>2-3</sub>): /*de nas de'i tshe sh'a ri'i bu dang/ maud gal gyi bu gnyis rdzu 'phrul gyi stobs kyis ngang pa'i rgyal po bzhin du nam mkha' las 'ongs te/ bcom ldan 'das ga la ba der phyin pa dang/ bcom ldan 'das kyi zhabs la mgo bos phyag 'tshal te/ phyogs gcig tu 'dug nas/*.

39 The epithet is not attested by the Tibetan translation.

40 *Haṃsajātaka* (Fausbøll 1887: 423–30; Francis 1895a: 264–7); *Cullaḥaṃsajātaka* (Fausbøll 1891: 333–54; Francis 1895b: 175–86); *Mahāhaṃsajātaka* (Fausbøll 1891: 354–82; Francis 1895b: 186–202).

41 T1450.199a<sub>5</sub>–199c<sub>3</sub>.

Around the fourth century, the tale was included in a poetic anthology of the most popular birth-stories entitled *Jātakamālā* authored by Āryaśūra.<sup>42</sup> According to the Chinese pilgrim Yijing (義淨, 635–713), who visited India in 671–695 shortly after C lived, the *Jātakamālā* was one of the most popular Buddhist texts in India at the time.<sup>43</sup> There is also a later poetic rendering in the *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā* by the Kashmiri poet Kṣemendra (eleventh century), who thus postdates C.<sup>44</sup>

The *haṃsajātaka* is a story of loyalty and self-sacrifice. In Āryaśūra's prevailing version, it is said that a flock of geese lived at Lake Mānasa. The flock was well cared for by its king, the *haṃsarājan* or the king of geese, and his loyal minister named *Sumukha*. The renown of the flock and its leader spread wide and roused the curiosity of king Brahmadata of Benares. Wishing to see these special and rare birds, his courtiers advised him to build a pond more splendid than the birds' native Himalayan Lake and told him that he should declare the pond to be a bird sanctuary. This having been done, the geese came to visit the pond and seeing its magnificence decided to stay. When the king heard that the birds he desired to see had come, he ordered a fowler to catch the *haṃsarājan*. The fowler caught it in a snare, but its minister Sumukha

42 Story 22 (Kern 1891: 127–42; Speyer, 1895: 181–200). For a general description of Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā*, see Winternitz (1920.II: 212–4). The *Haṃsajātaka* is not contained in the later *Jātakamālās* by Haribhaṭṭa and Gopadatta (on these *Jātakamālās*, see Hahn 1992).

43 Winternitz (1920.II: 214). See Yijing's *A Record of Buddhist Practices Sent Home from the Southern Sea* (T2125.227c<sub>27</sub>–228a<sub>11</sub>):

其社得迦摩羅。亦同此類(社得迦者。本生也。摩羅者。即貫焉。集取菩薩昔生難行之事。貫之一處也)。若譯可成十餘軸。取本生事而為詩讚。欲令順俗妍美讀者歡愛教攝群生耳。時戒日王極好文筆。乃下令曰。諸君但有好詩讚者。明日旦朝咸將示朕。及其總集得五百夾。展而閱之。多是社得迦摩羅矣。方知讚詠之中。斯為美極。南海諸島有十餘國。無問法俗咸皆諷誦。如前詩讚。而東夏未曾譯出。English translation by Takakusu (1896: 162–3):

There is another work of a similar character called *Jātakamālā*. *Jātaka* means 'previous births,' and *mālā* means 'garland;' the idea being that the stories of the difficult deeds accomplished in the former lives of the Bodhisattva (afterwards the Buddha) are strung (or collected) together in one place. If it were to be translated (into Chinese) it would amount to more than ten rolls. The object of composing the Birth-stories in verse is to teach the doctrine of universal salvation in a beautiful style, agreeable to the popular mind and attractive to readers. Once king Śīlāditya, who was exceedingly fond of literature, commanded, saying: 'Ye who are fond of poetry, bring and show me some pieces of your own tomorrow morning.' When he had collected them, they amounted to five hundred bundles, and, on being examined, it was found that most of them were *Jātakamālās*. From this fact one judges that *Jātakamālā* is the most beautiful (favorite) theme for laudatory poems. There are more than ten islands in the Southern Sea; here both priests and laymen recite the *Jātakamālā*, as also the verses above mentioned; but the former has not yet been translated into Chinese.

Takakusu's Sanskrit transliteration system has been changed in the above quotation to accord with the system used here. Takakusu (1896: 163, n. 2) notes that King Śīlāditya died around 655 CE.

44 See Speyer (1895: 200). The theme of the story is also found in *Kathāsaritsāgara*, vol. II, 506 (ibid.).

offered its own life to the fowler in return for letting the king of the geese go free. The fowler was so moved by Sumukha's noble character that he released the *haṃsarājan* unconditionally. Wanting to reward the fowler for his sympathy, Sumukha and the king of geese decided to be carried voluntarily by the fowler to the palace, where they were shown to king Brahmadata. After Brahmadata had heard the story of Sumukha's loyalty to his king, he was greatly moved and the *haṃsarājan* then spoke in human voice to Brahmadata about the true conduct of a king. Having told the story, the Buddha revealed that he, as a bodhisattva, was that king of geese in a former life, while his attendant Ānanda was Sumukha.

The *Hamsajātaka* establishes a definite coupling of the bodhisattva and the king of geese, an association of the Buddhist saint with this particular bird. Given the story belonged to Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā*, which in the words of Yijing was one of the most popular Buddhist texts in India in the second half of the seventh century, it is reasonable to assume that the narrative was well known to Buddhist readers of the time. The tale's linkage of the bodhisattva and the king of geese makes the *haṃsarājan* a particularly befitting comparatum for buddhas and bodhisattvas. What is remarkable here is that a popular narrative may have served as the basis for a poetic figure. If so, the *haṃsarājan* similes and metaphors in the writings of C and other Buddhist sources are not normal comparisons where, in the words of Appayyadiṅṅita, "a striking similarity of two things jumps to mind". Rather, they are comparisons with only vague semblances that are nevertheless enabled through a mythic association, viz. the belief that the Buddha in a former life was born as the king of geese. Hence, a reference to the king of geese in a Buddhist context evokes this legend.<sup>45</sup>

This aspect bespeaks a subtle difference between the use of comparisons in philosophy and poetry. Aside from literal and figurative meanings, a metaphor or simile may carry a third level of purport, namely a sphere of allusion or suggestion. Later Indian literary critics developed an extensive theory of suggestion, first formulated in the *Dhvanyāloka* written in the ninth century by the Kashmiri Ānandavārdhana. Ānandavārdhana argued that good poetic figures give rise to suggestions (*dhvani*, literally "tone" or "echo") serving to evoke the poem's overall aesthetic mood (*rasa*, literally "flavour"), i.e., its pathos.<sup>46</sup>

Some religious philosophers, including C, mobilized poetic figures in their terse writings to imbue their texts with beauty and sentiment, thus making readers susceptible to their religious spirit. By, for example, invoking the

45 For general remarks on mythological similes in Sanskrit literature, see Gonda (1949: 77–80, §45–6). The above specification of the Buddhist context is significant, because in non-Buddhist Indian contexts the king of geese carries a different range of connotations, particularly since the goose (*haṃsa*) in Hinduism is generally understood as a symbol of the soul (*ātman*) and is a title for recluses, as seen in the widespread epithet "Supreme Goose" (*paramahaṃsa*) used of highly recognized ascetics. The parallelism between Hinduism's use of the goose as a metaphor for sages and Buddhism's use of the king of geese as a metaphor for buddhas and bodhisattvas has been left unexplored.

46 The eight aesthetic moods are the erotic (*śṛṅgāra*), comic (*hāsyā*), pathetic (*karuṇā*), furious (*raudra*), heroic (*vīra*), frightful (*bhayānaka*), disgusting (*bībhīṣa*), and wondrous (*adbhuta*), to which may be added a ninth mood of quiescence (*sānta*) (McCrea 1998: 48, 54).

*haṃsarājan* with its mythic allusion to the *haṃsajātaka*, the writer induced the devout reader to think of the Buddha's former lives as a bodhisattva, the hardships he had to undergo in the course of attaining enlightenment, the noble qualities developed on that path, and, in particular, the qualities of leadership, loyalty and self-sacrifice embodied by the king of geese and his goose minister in this specific tale. Still, mythic allusions are not entirely equal to Ānandavārdhana's poetic concept of *dhvani* because the use of poetic figures in religious philosophical writing does not serve to call forth one of the particular aesthetic moods of the Indian literary tradition. The principle at hand is similar, since the mythic allusions created by comparisons in philosophical texts also are intended to arouse sentiment, albeit a religious ethos rather than pathos.

The negligible affective difference between mythic allusion and *dhvani* is of great consequence, for it reveals a fundamental disparity between the objectives of the two genres. While traditional Indian poetry is based on aestheticism, the use of poetic figures in philosophical writing is rooted in a religious universe codified by scripture and exemplified by religious narratives. Consequently, the poetic figures employed in religious philosophical texts require familiarity with popular religious narratives to be fully understood.

### Mythology versus ornithology

If C used the *haṃsarājan* comparison with the *Haṃsajātaka* in mind, it ought to be possible to detect an influence of this tale on his writings, even though he never referred directly to this particular *jātaka*. This is indeed possible, and it is an issue connected with the significance of the ornithological identification of poetic bird-tropes, a discussion of which has been raised by Julia Leslie.

The *haṃsarājan*, “the king of geese”, sometimes also called the *rājahaṃsa* “the king-geese”, may be used as the name of particular bird-species. Occasionally, it refers to the flamingo (*Phoenicopterus minor* or *Phoenicopterus roseus*),<sup>47</sup> which does not apply to the present context, but most notably it is the name for *Anser indicus*, the Indian bar-headed goose (Dave 1985: 438 ff.). The bar-headed goose measures roughly 80 cm and weighs 2–3 kg. Its colour is pale grey and it is characterized by two prominent horseshoe shaped, brownish-black bars on the back of its head. The wing is grey in front with distinct black primaries and secondaries to the back. Being one of the world's highest-flying birds, at altitudes of up to 9,000 metres above sea level, *Anser indicus* is the only Indian goose with a wingspan wide enough to migrate over the Himalayas. It thus spends the summer months in the wetlands of Tibet or Siberia, and returns in the fall to northern India, where it spends the winter and spring. (See Figure 1.)

In Indian literature, the *haṃsarājan* or *rājahaṃsa* can often be identified as the bar-headed goose simply on the basis of the bird's association with its summer habitat north of the Himalayas, which in narratives and poetry particularly is

47 For a description of the flamingo see Leslie (1998: 466–7).



Figure 1. Indian bar-headed goose, *Anser Indicus*. Photo by Rajiv Lather ©. Reproduced with permission.

associated with the Tibetan Lake Mānasa. An example of this tie is seen in Kālidāsa's poem *The Cloud Messenger*:

And having heard your delightful thunder, which makes the unsparing earth sprout with mushrooms, the king-geese longing for Lake Mānasa, carrying bits of lotus roots and sprouts as travel provisions, will fly along as your companions in the sky as far as Mt Kailash.<sup>48</sup>

Kālidāsa characterizes the king-geese as “longing for Lake Mānasa” (*mānasotkāḥ*), and his commentators Dakṣiṇāvartanātha (thirteenth century) and Mallinātha (c. 1350–1450) described the birds as the geese that have Lake Mānasa as their summer habitat.<sup>49</sup> On the basis of their association with Lake Mānasa, Kālidāsa's *rājahaṃsa* birds can be identified as Indian bar-headed geese.<sup>50</sup>

The geese are here mentioned in the plural, meaning that Kālidāsa necessarily uses the word as the name for a bird species. Similar usage is attested in some Buddhist sources, e.g. the *Āryaṣivyaśaparipṛcchāsūtra*: “Fragrant flowers

48 *Meghadūta* verse I.11: *kartuṃ yac ca prabhavati mahīm ucchilīndhrām avandhyām, tacchrutvā te śravaṇāsubhagaṃ garjitam mānasotkāḥ/ ā kailāsād bisakīsalayacchedapātheyavantāḥ, saṃpatsyante nabhasi bhavato rājahaṃsāḥ saḥāyāḥ* // (Hultsch 1911: 8–9; Devadhar 1984: 4; Karmarkar 2001: 8).

49 See Karmarkar 2001.

50 For a similar example of geese associated with Lake Mānasa, see the *Bhīṣmaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* (VI.114.91).

covered the earth. Cuckoos, sparrows, and flocks of *haṃsarājan*s rested there in harmony”.<sup>51</sup>

By contrast, C’s *haṃsarājan* comparisons contain little indication of features that would allow for an immediate ornithological identification. In *Prasannapadā* the plural form is used, which could suggest that C employed the word in this passage as a species name. In spite of this, none of his writings associates the birds with Lake Mānasa or other summer habitats north of the Himalayas, which would have made the species association evident.

Only *Madhyamakāvātāra* makes use of words describing a physical feature of the bird, namely the mention of the *haṃsarājan*’s “broad, white wings”. The characteristic of having white wings is problematic, because neither of the birds normally referred to by the name *haṃsarājan*, viz. the flamingo and the Indian bar-headed goose, has white wings. The wings of the flamingo are scarlet and black, while those of the bar-headed goose are silver-greyish in front and black towards the back. If only considering aquatic birds (*Anseriformes*), white wings might refer to the swan (Whooper swan, *Cygnus cygnus*, or Mute swan, *Cygnus olor*) with its full white wings. Still, the swan is completely absent in classical Indian art and there do not seem to be any passages in Buddhist scriptures where a *haṃsarājan* can be clearly identified as a swan.<sup>52</sup> It is therefore unlikely that the *haṃsarājan* of *Madhyamakāvātāra* should be a swan only on account of the mention of white wings. The best explanation may be that the colour was mentioned for purely symbolic reasons as representing purity, and the indication of just a single feature may indeed be too little to secure a clear ornithological identification. Hence, just as C’s comparisons lack any distinctive semblance, the specific bird species he had in mind is equally unpronounced.

The unclear species-indication flies in the face of how bird-metaphors have been employed in a number of poems and epics where, as demonstrated by Julia Leslie (1998), the poet’s particular choice of fowl is closely tied to the mood and plot of the text. Leslie’s study concerns the episode of the *krauñca* killing, which sets the scene for the entire story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In brief, the story goes that the sage Vālmīki spots two *krauñca* birds engrossed in their mating ritual in the forest. As he admires the couple, a hunter suddenly appears and kills the male bird. The heart-rending distress of the female affects Vālmīki so deeply that he curses the hunter, his curse spontaneously emerging in the verse-form that will carry the epic poem he is about to compose (Leslie 1998: 455). Commentators and translators of the passage have either failed to name the species of the *krauñca* or have come up with a bewildering array of identifications without any argument for their choice. Leslie extracted all the information in the passage pertinent to the bird’s identification, reviewed the different possibilities, and concluded that the word *krauñca* here must refer to the Indian Sarus Crane (*Grus antigone antigone*), renowned in India for its life-

51 T310.678c<sub>17-8</sub>: 香花布地。拘枳羅鳥。迦陵伽鳥。鵝王群蜂。棲集和鳴。 The Chinese passage corresponds loosely to the Tibetan version (D93.278a<sub>2-3</sub>).

52 C’s mention of the white colour is not unique in Buddhist literature because, as mentioned above (n. 35), the *Samnipātasūtra* and the \**Śatapāñcaśatikastotra* make similar comparisons of the bodhisattva’s unstained body to the *haṃsarājan*’s white colour.

long mate bonding. As Leslie argues, this is highly significant for *Rāmāyaṇa*'s romantic plot, in that the Sarus Crane becomes a portent of the strong love relationship of Sītā and Rāma that forms the crux of the epic. The death of the male bird during their intense mating ritual, the grief of the female bird, and Vālmīki's subsequent curse are all forewarnings of the epic's tragedy, where Sītā is abducted by a villain, and after the couple are finally reunited, Rāma is so terribly plagued by doubt about the innocent Sītā's faithfulness during her abduction that it destroys their relationship. The Sarus crane is crucial for setting the epic as a story of sorrow and tragedy, resulting in the sentiment of pity and compassion (*karuṇa*) (Leslie 1998: 475–7). In other words, the Sarus crane serves to suggest (*dhvani*) the poem's aesthetic mood (*rasa*), and Leslie (1998: 459) consequently argued that the poet's choice of bird "was governed by ornithology rather than mythology or convention".

In C's writings, a similar choice of the *haṃsarājan* as a plot device is not in evidence. The bird is not depicted in sufficient detail to warrant a clear ornithological identification and his comparisons do not function to establish an aesthetic mood. His employment of the *haṃsarājan* in the metaphor from *Madhyamakāvātāra* carries, as shall now be demonstrated, a distinct sense that is particular to the narrative of the *Haṃsajātaka*. This underlines the use of mythic allusion, thus showing that his pick of bird – unlike Vālmīki's *krauñca* – was governed by mythology rather than ornithology or convention.

The *Haṃsajātaka* gives detailed descriptions showing that the birds in question are Indian bar-headed geese.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, it is noticeable that the story never employs the word *haṃsarājan* in the plural and hence as the name for this species. Rather, it is used in singular as an epithet, "the king of geese", to signify the leader of the flock. For example, in the *Cullahaṃsajātaka*, the story begins:

At this time, Dhatarat̥ṭha, the king of geese (*haṃsarājan*), with a following of 96,000 geese, dwelt in the Golden Cave on mount Cittakūṭa, and his commander-in-chief was named Sumukha.<sup>54</sup>

Later in the story, in the longer version entitled *Mahāhaṃsajātaka*, when the fowler has spotted the leader of the flock, he thinks to himself:

"...This must be their king, and this one I will seize." And the king of geese (*haṃsarājan*), after feeding over a wide field, disported himself in the water, and then surrounded by his flock returned to Cittakūṭa.<sup>55</sup>

53 The *Mahāhaṃsajātaka* (Fausbøll 1891: 358; Francis, 1895b: 189) specifically mentions the characteristic brownish-black bars on their necks, thereby securing their ornithological identification.

54 *Cullahaṃsajātaka* (Fausbøll 1891: 337): *Tasmim kāle dhatarat̥ṭhahaṃsarājā channavutīhaṃsasahassaparivuto Cittakūṭapabbate Suvanṇaguhāyaṃ vasati, Sumukho nām' assa senāpati ahoṣi.*

55 Translation by Francis (1895b: 189). *Mahāhaṃsajātaka* (Fausbøll 1891: 358): "...iminā etesaṃ raññā bhavitabbaṃ, imam eva gaṇhissāmiti" cintesi. *Haṃsarājāpi bahuṃ gocaraṃ caritvā jalakīḷaṃ kīḷitvā haṃsagaṇaparivuto Cittakūṭam eva agamāsi.*

In both passages, *haṃsarājan* is an epithet for the flock leader and is not used as the name of a species of geese.<sup>56</sup> The same usage is reflected in the *haṃsarājan* metaphor of *Madhyamakāvātāra*, where C depicted the king of geese as “induced ahead by its geese subjects”, thus clearly distinguishing the “king” or “leader” from the other geese. This congruity establishes a unique link between the *Haṃsajātaka* and *Madhyamakāvātāra*, and indicates the *Haṃsajātaka* to be C’s source of inspiration. It shows this story as the basis for a mythic allusion that enables the otherwise vague *haṃsarājan* comparisons in his texts.

When the choice of bird in a comparison is governed by mythology rather than ornithology, mythic allusion may indicate a noteworthy difference between the use of poetic comparison in the writings of Indian religious-philosophical commentators and in the genres of poetry, drama and epic. Leslie’s study convincingly demonstrates how the poet’s choice of the *krauñca* bird in the *Rāmāyaṇa* functions as a plot device giving rise to an emotional sentiment. It accords with the Indian literary theory, requiring any suitable poetic device to evoke the poem’s overall aesthetic mood. Yet, similar literary features do not apply to the poetic figures occurring in C’s philosophical writings. His tropes lack a clear indication of the intended bird species, display no striking semblance clearly enough to allow the comparison to spring to mind, and do not evoke any global feeling of the text. For – unlike poetry and stories – philosophical writing cannot, to begin with, be characterized as involving an overall aesthetic mood or plot. While poets and playwrights draw on poetic figures with striking semblances to evoke pathos, C’s mythic allusion is intended for ethos – to call forth the religious attitudes embodied in the didactic narrative literature on which he draws. In other words, his images only come to life through familiarity with stories.

In conclusion, the standard Indian literary theories applied to poetry and drama cannot capture the use of poetic comparisons in philosophical writing. Rather, the literary adornments featured in many Buddhist texts written after the end of the Gupta Dynasty in mid-sixth century, including the writings by Candrakīrti, Śāntideva, and Haribhadra, need to be understood by means of a different type of literary theory that may be applied specifically to the genres of *śāstra* and *vr̥tti*. Parting from the existing scholarship that has hitherto tended to study Indian philosophical writings purely for the sake of their philosophy as well as from Indian literary studies that have focused exclusively on poetic and dramatic texts, the new literary model at hand, which is drawn from the *śāstras*’ own aesthetic premises, makes it possible to read philosophical *śāstras* from a literary point of view.

Although the frequent use of poetic devices in abstract treatises betrays strong influence on the religious genres of doctrinal compositions from the then prevalent *ālaṃkārasāstra*, the additional literary dimension – if appreciated – can

56 For another example in Buddhist texts of *haṃsarājan* not used as a species-name, see *Vinayavastu* (T1450.141c<sub>25</sub>) describing how the Buddha is surrounded by his flock of disciples: “...like lions gather around the lion-king, like geese gather around the king of geese...” (如師子王師子圍遶。猶如鵝王諸鵝圍遶). For further examples, see T1451.212a<sub>8-9</sub>, and D3, vol. *ja*, folios 72a<sub>2-3</sub>, 120b<sub>4</sub> and 180b<sub>5</sub>.

shed new light on the historical and cultural significance of these texts beyond their philosophical value.

## Sigla, symbols, and abbreviations

a	folio recto	Z	<i>bstan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma</i> published by <i>krung go'i bod rig pa zhib 'jug lte gnas kyi bka' bstan dpe sdur khang</i> (1994–2001)
b	folio verso	ब	Sanskrit <i>Prasannapadā</i> manuscript, NGMPP E1294/3
C	Candrakīrti	द	Sanskrit <i>Prasannapadā</i> manuscript, NGMPP C19/8
D	sde dge <i>bstan 'gyur</i>	ज	Sanskrit <i>Prasannapadā</i> manuscript, Tokyo University Library no. 251
G	Golden Manuscript <i>bstan 'gyur (bstan 'gyur gser bris par ma)</i>	ल	Sanskrit <i>Prasannapadā</i> manuscript, Cambridge University Library add. 1483
N	snar thang <i>bstan 'gyur</i>	प	Sanskrit <i>Prasannapadā</i> manuscript, Bodleian library
NGMPP	The Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project	*	Sanskrit manuscript no. 1440 reconstruction
Q	Peking <i>bstan 'gyur</i> ; facsimile print by Suzuki (1955–1961)	:	separates the adopted reading from variant readings in text critical notes.
Skt.	Sanskrit	/	<i>daṇḍa</i> or <i>shad</i> punctuation marker in Sanskrit or Tibetan editions
T	Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō		
TBRC	<i>Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center</i> at <a href="http://www.tbrc.org">www.tbrc.org</a>		
Tib.	Tibetan		
V	vulgate <i>Prasannapadā</i> edition by de La Vallée Poussin (1903–1913)		

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