

## Preface: India/Israel

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E. M. Forster's masterpiece, *A Passage to India* (1924), explores the complex reality of life in the British Raj, with its mixture of desires, anxieties, hopes and misunderstandings. The last paragraph of the novel depicts the Muslim Aziz and the British Fielding as they ride side by side on horseback, arguing over politics and wondering what lies ahead for India – and for the deep friendship that has developed between them. They long to remain together, but the reality insists on separating them: Their horses swerve apart, the earth sends up rocks through which riders must pass single file, the entire Indian landscape says, in a hundred voices, “No, not yet,” and the sky echoes, “No, not there.”

This ending could be juxtaposed with the title page of an earlier novel by Forster, *Howards End* (1910), bearing the well-known epigraph, “Only connect...” These two words (which stubbornly refuse a Hebrew translation) echo the more optimistic vision presented in this novel, which focuses on class-cultural clashes within Britain itself. But is this behest relevant to the later novel as well and to the political tensions it describes – tensions that will lead, two decades later, to the violent partition of the subcontinent? Only connect... but how? And at what cost?

Forster scholars have expounded at length on the moral, social and gender meanings of the epigraph and its possible relation to *A Passage to India*. Yet one can also think about Forster's dictum in connection with the current issue of *Theory and Criticism*, which examines various points of contact between India and Israel. How is it possible to connect, to bring together, these two realms?

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Here is one option: Last March, following Binyamin Netanyahu's victory in the Israeli election, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi quickly sent congratulations through his Twitter account. “Mazal Tov, my friend,” Modi tweeted (in Hebrew!), adding fondly, “I remember our pleasant meeting in New York last September.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Mazal tov, yedidi [Congratulations, my friend],” *Mako*, 18.3.2015.

India and Israel have become close strategic allies in recent years. India is the largest client of Israel's arms industry. The daily *Ha'aretz* recently reported that the estimated value of the arms deals is more than one billion dollars annually, nearly 15 percent of Israel's annual security exports. The relations began to warm up when the Congress Party was still in power, but since Modi's landslide victory in May 2014, the head of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has spearheaded an openly pro-Israel policy.<sup>2</sup> In June 2015 it was announced that Modi would visit Israel later this year – the first visit of an Indian Prime Minister in Israel. It seems that Modi's hearty congratulations to Netanyahu required no special diplomatic effort.

Indeed, one can trace the clear ideological proximity of the two leaders and the similarities in their public images. Reporting from New Delhi, the Israeli journalist Yoav Karny has described how liberal intellectuals “within India and in the large Indian diaspora” recoil from Modi's “biography, his long-time connections with the mystical-religious nationalist right, his (unproven) responsibility for the murder of Muslims, his manner of speech (his rivals are ‘termites,’ and ‘India must be purified/ cleansed’ of their existence), his widespread and discreet connections to the very wealthy.”<sup>3</sup> At least some of these observations could easily apply to Israeli leftists' views of Netanyahu. At the same time, one can draw parallels between the Indian Congress Party and Israel's Labor Party: Both were voted out for the first time in 1977, but it took several more decades for the right-wing nationalist leaders to crush, once and for all, the old ruling parties (which had long denounced the socialist ethos). Both Modi and Netanyahu did this while inciting the nationalist majority against the Muslim minority and denouncing the secular intellectuals (those who “have forgotten what it is to be Jewish” – or Hindu).<sup>4</sup> Modi at least promised his constituents new hope; Netanyahu, as usual, was satisfied with threatening and instilling fear.

2 Amos Harel, “Israel-India strategic ties are no longer a secret,” *Haaretz.com*, 18.2.15 (accessed electronically).

3 Yoav Karny, “*Hodu boheret mashiah* [India chooses a Messiah],” *yoavkarny.com*, 7.5.2014 (accessed electronically).

4 One may argue that the mixture of messianic nationalism and the extreme neoliberal ethos makes Modi similar to Naftali Bennett (Jewish Home Party), just as the BJP is to a great extent the “Hindu Home” Party. In any case, one must not forget that Netanyahu's victory was made possible, inter alia, by Bennett's supporters who flocked to the Likud Party after Netanyahu's public disavowal of the two-state vision and his verbal attack on Arab voters.

As noted above, the articles and essays in this issue of *Theory and Criticism* examine the relations between India and Israel as they are reflected from various perspectives and in a variety of disciplines. Naturally, work on this issue began before the last election in Israel, or even the one in India: The strengthening of the extreme right in recent years (a phenomenon discussed by Ayelet Harel-Shalev and Sarina Chen in this issue) is only one of several parallels between the two states, both of which emerged at the end of the 1940s following complex partition processes that were part of the dissolution and disappearance of British imperial rule. The thirty-year British Mandate over Palestine shrinks in comparison to the hundred-year British Raj (and certainly in comparison to the 350 years of Britain's involvement in the region, beginning with the founding of the British East India Company in 1600). But the events of the partition – and the violence underlying them – continue to shape the geopolitical, cultural and human landscapes in both territories – the huge subcontinent and the tiny coastal strip.

This shared colonial heritage constitutes the starting point for many of the texts in this issue. These explore various political aspects – the nature of the democracy, church-state relations, civil rights, attitudes toward minorities – and demonstrate the theoretical and methodological potential in a comparative reading of India and Israel, two countries in which most of the population (about 80 percent) belong to a single religious community (Hindu in India and Jewish in Israel), while the minority (mostly Muslim) is affiliated with a different national entity, which is in a state of continuous conflict with the dominant majority in the state. Other texts in this issue focus on the place of “India” – as a geographical space, but also as a wide-reaching set of images – in various cultural arenas in Israel or describe concrete human encounters (for example, in Zvi Triger's work on surrogacy in India).

Some of these topics have been examined in recent years in other venues, both popular and academic. Scholars have written about the place of Zionism in Gandhi's thought; Israelis' trips to India; the place of New Age culture in the changing forms of Judaism; or the development of East Asian Studies in the Israeli academia.<sup>5</sup> The

<sup>5</sup> See, inter alia, Dalia Markovich and Ketzia Alon (eds.), 2007. *Iton 77*, 320–321 (single-topic issue): *Hodu beyisrael, yisrael behodu* [India in Israel, Israel in India], May-June; Isaac Lubelsky (ed.), 2013. *Zmanim*, 122 (single-topic issue): *Hodu: Emunot, zehuyot, dimuyim* [India: Beliefs, identities, Images], Spring; Elhanan Nir (ed.), 2006. *Mehodu ad kan: Hogim yisraelim kotvim al hodu vahayahadut shelahem* [From India to here: Israeli philosophers write about India and their Judaism], Jerusalem: Reuven Mass; David Shulman and Shalva Weil (eds.), 2008. *Karmic Passages: Israeli Scholarship on India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

current issue of *Theory and Criticism*, which joins this wave of research, focuses on India in order to engage with questions that concern the journal's community of writers and readers. On the one hand, how can critical theory, as it has been shaped in the Israeli context in recent decades, shed light on the complex relations between India and Israel? And on the other hand, how might "a passage to India" shed new light on certain aspects of critical research, including the very analogy between the two countries?

The articles and essays in this issue use a variety of theoretical tools, but it is India's central place in postcolonial studies that receives much of the focus. As Edward Said demonstrated, Western Orientalism grew out of the work of Sanskrit scholars in eighteenth-century India. The anticolonial resistance movement that emerged in India in the first half of the twentieth century deeply influenced decolonization in other spheres and shaped early postcolonial thought. Finally, the development of postcolonial theory in recent decades is indebted to the contributions of Indian scholars working in various fields, from Subaltern Studies to literary criticism (Ranjit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, Gayatri Spivak, Homi K. Bhabha and others, many of whom migrated from India to large academic centers in North America).<sup>6</sup> Numerous articles published in *Theory and Criticism* over the years reworked and adapted postcolonial theory to the Israeli context. By turning our gaze to India we can restore this theory to its origins (just like the "Indian origin" that fascinated the European philosophers described in Ofri Ilany's article in this issue) and thus trace the theory's migrations and adaptations.

The juxtaposition of India and Israel is based, as I have noted, on a vast variety of encounters, dialogues, visions and daydreams that began long before the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992. These range from David Frishman's translations of Tagore to the close friendship forged between Mahatma Gandhi and the Jewish architect Hermann Kallenbach (two topics studied by Shimon Lev); from the work of seemingly marginal Zionist philosophers affiliated with the pan-Asian movement (explored by Hanan Harif) to Ben-Gurion's interest in India and in Buddhism (the focus of Avi Shilon's article in this issue); from the forgotten travelogues of Shulamit Flaum, Moshe Sharett and Bracha Habas to Ezriel Carlebach's *Hodu: Yoman drachim* [India: A travel account] (1956), which continues to mesmerize backpackers today.

6 See, for example, the special issue (40.2) of *New Literary History* (Spring 2009), devoted to "India and the West"; and Elleke Boehmer and Rosinka Chaudhuri (eds.), 2011. *The Indian Postcolonial: A Critical Reader*, London: Routledge.

Ronie Parciak, who has studied this travel literature, writes that India is constructed as the archetypal Other of Israeliness, the other against which it achieves priority and defines itself as an entity possessing solid cultural boundaries. Along with that, India also serves as the arena in which Israeliness desires to encounter itself in its full realness. Thus, India becomes the symbolic locus that constitutes a lost home for Israeliness and functions as the sphere where, miraculously, the latter can be repaired.<sup>7</sup>

Examining this duality, many of the texts in this issue depict the difficulty of transcending fantasies and stereotypes; they thus emphasize our obligation to turn India into more than just a mirror in which our own image is reflected. Acknowledging this self-reflection is a good start, but much more is needed in order to go beyond the inherent narcissism in this type of writing.

No less important is the need to remember that the pairing (or contrasting) of India/Israel conceals two other national entities that problematize a straightforward binary parallelism: I refer, of course, to Pakistan and Palestine. In 1947, the partition of the Indian subcontinent led to the establishment of two states (a third state, Bangladesh, achieved independence in 1971). A year later, in 1948, the United Nations' partition plan for Palestine was not realized: The Jewish state was established, but the Palestinians are still waiting for independence. This flawed symmetry reminds us that India/Israel is only one, limited, way of understanding the colonial legacy of 1947/48. Another way is proposed by Faisal Devji's book *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (2013). Devji's study (discussed in Arie Dubnov's article in this issue) describes how Jewish nationalism inspired the founders of the Pakistani nation. They looked at Zionism – the national movement of a persecuted minority, which viewed religion as a basis for nationalism and sought a territory in which it could settle – and saw themselves in it. Here, the doppelganger of the Jewish State is not the secular-socialist democracy but rather the "Muslim state" (whose founding, Devji writes, actually provided the legal precedent that led to the recognition of the State of Israel one year later, a precedent that turns Israel into a replica of Pakistan).

7 Ronie Parciak, 2008. "West Asia, South Asia: Travels to the Other Side of the Self," in David Shulman and Shalva Weil (eds.), *Karmic Passages: Israeli Scholarship on India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 192.

A similar challenge to the pairing at the heart of this issue is offered by leftist intellectuals in India, who sharply criticize the tightening of relations between India and Israel (for example, in the name of the “war on terror” in which both states are engaged). The contributors to the anthology *From India to Palestine: Essays in Solidarity* (2014), edited by Githa Hariharan, evoke Gandhi’s strong objection to Zionism, Jawaharlal Nehru’s commitment to the Palestinian cause, and India’s moral obligation to defend the victims of Israeli colonialism. The authors are dismayed by India’s embracing of Israel – expressed, for example, in Ariel Sharon’s visit to India in 2003 (during which the Israeli Prime Minister laid a wreath on Gandhi’s grave) – and lament India’s indifference to Palestinian suffering.

It is important, therefore, to emphasize that behind the slash – which both unites and separates India/Israel in the title of this issue – there are other, equally intriguing possibilities. As several articles in the issue demonstrate, these pairings (Pakistan/Israel, India/Palestine, Israel/the British Empire) give us a better understanding of the complex reality created by the incomplete partition of 1948, but also help us recognize that the supposedly-realized partition of 1947 is in fact a dynamic process, an act-in-progress that has yet to be concluded.

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The eight articles in this issue are engaged in complex dialogues that bridge across disciplines, methodologies and chronological divisions. It is possible, however, to trace three main research agendas. The first three articles could be said to constitute a distinct unit that employs postcolonial theory in a conscious attempt to understand the nature and meaning of the analogy between India and Israel. Even when they focus on historical episodes, the articles not only employ the postcolonial toolbox but also propose a careful examination of the tools themselves.

**Ofri Ilany** traces the shaping of the imagined relations between “Israel” and “India” in European Orientalism. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the ancient history and literatures of India have been studied, in the main, separately from the ancient history of the Israelites. However, as Ilany reminds us, this disciplinary division is relatively new: In the eighteenth century, the search for the “Indian origin” of Western culture was part and parcel of the study of the Old Testament and of the Semitic Orient – and always in relation to the “biblical origin.” European philosophers devised various ways of understanding the relations between the biblical Holy Land and India, which gradually replaced Palestine as

the “New” Holy Land, the ancient and true birthplace of culture and religion. At one pole of the Orientalist debate were philosophers like Voltaire, who declared that the Indian origin was a substitute for the Hebrew origin. Other philosophers, however, primarily those identified with German Romanticism, sought to discover the continuity between the two origins: The traditional Orient, where the events of the Scriptures took place, was widened farther and farther to the east – until eclipsed by another mythical space, loaded with new spiritual qualities. Ilany emphasizes the central role played by Christian thought in shaping Orientalist discourses. In doing so, he proposes a fascinating new way of thinking about the relations between “the Ganges and the Jordan, Varanasi and Jerusalem.”

Moving forward to the twentieth century and beyond, the following two articles consider various aspects of the partition and its legacy. **Arie M. Dubnov** starts out by considering two research strategies for examining the connection between the British Raj and Mandatory Palestine. The first strategy, perfected by postcolonial theorists such as Aamir Mufti, explores the cultural baggage of the European colonialists. The second strategy, represented here by Devji, focuses on the perceptions of the colonial subjects. Dubnov then demonstrates how these strategies open up possibilities for writing a transnational and nonlinear history of the processes of decolonialization. Such a history undermines the official narratives that sanctify the nation-state as a compulsory political formula, present the establishment of the nation-state as the direct and inevitable result of a heroic anticolonial struggle, and see partition as the perfect realization of a predictable plan of action. Only an undermining of these axioms, Dubnov argues, enables us to recognize that this linear and teleological story is not yet complete: After all, “in both territories, the partition was not a final and fully-realized act of separation, but rather a continuing project, still in the making.”

**Ayelet Ben-Yishai**, who teaches English literature at the University of Haifa, examines the theoretical, ideological and methodological tensions that characterize the comparison of India to Israel. These tensions arose in a seminar she taught in 2011, exploring the English-language literature of the South Asian Partition. The seminar was not planned as a comparative course, but comparisons to the Nakba, on the one hand, and to the Holocaust, on the other, kept arising. In her article, Ben-Yishai shows how the class discussions ultimately led to the formulation of a pedagogical-research model that does not relate to the Indian context and the local context as totally separate arenas, but rather as arenas that exist in the shared

colonial and postcolonial space. Ben-Yishai thus pays special attention to the English language – the language of colonialism and neo-imperialism, the language in which the novels were written and in which they were studied in the seminar. The English language created a distancing that helped dim the aura of “authenticity” of the Indian novels; it drew attention to the cultural mediation between the event and its representation; and it exposed the parallels between the ideological complexity of the texts and the context in which they were studied – in English, in the Department of English, in the city of Haifa, today.

The next three articles constitute a separate unit in that they focus more narrowly on specific issues or test cases. The theoretical foundation enables the authors to clarify legal, political and cultural issues that resonate with the themes raised in the preceding articles.

**Yael Berda** focuses on the shared legacy of the emergency laws that the colonial governments promulgated in the British Raj and in Mandatory Palestine. To employ the emergency legislation, colonial bureaucrats classified the population according to the level of their loyalty or threat to the regime. This classification (which Berda calls the “axis of suspicion”) blurred the boundaries between “security threat” and political threat. Following independence, in both India and Israel, this same institutional logic and these same emergency laws shaped the perception of minorities as alien, hostile and dangerous populations. There was, however, one major difference: In India, the colonial laws were used against citizens, even those from the Hindu majority; in Israel, these same laws were used primarily against Palestinian subjects (even after they were granted formal citizenship). This difference, Berda argues, could be traced back to the specific form of the legal/bureaucratic mechanism developed in both states to deal with the colonial inheritance. In India, the emergency laws were incorporated into the constitutional framework, while in Israel they remained as a bureaucratic legal toolkit, limiting the scope of legitimacy for state violations of citizens’ rights. The proposed War on Terror bill, which has already successfully passed its first reading in the Knesset, will make the legal situation in Israel parallel to that of India, enabling extensive violations to the civil and political rights of citizens on the basis of identity and political affiliations.

**Avi Shilon** describes David Ben-Gurion’s attitude toward India and Buddhism, highlighting his Orientalist approach. This is evident first and foremost in the distinction Ben-Gurion made between Buddhism, which he identified with rationalism and Western philosophical values, and Hinduism, which he saw

as having a mystical and Oriental aspect and which he consequently considered inferior. Shilon shows that Ben-Gurion found the ideological key to this dichotomy in the Zionist view of “the negation of the Diaspora.” It is not surprising, then, that Ben-Gurion maintained that India should return to its Buddhist origin and reject Hinduism, just as Zionism had rejected its Diaspora past. Shilon demonstrates that this view enabled Ben-Gurion to emphasize modern Israel’s superiority to India – which apparently had not yet learned to free itself from its Hindu past – and to justify his attempts to persuade India to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

The article by **Ayelet Harel-Shalev** and **Sarina Chen** deals with the tendency of democracies to apply double standards or to adopt an ambivalent policy – in this case, with regard to ultranationalist movements within the majority group. This ambivalence, known as “normative dualism,” is particularly typical of deeply divided societies such as India and Israel. The article examines how the two states contend with the activity of ultranationalist groups that seek to broaden the state’s ethno-religious definition at the expense of its democratic nature: How does the state navigate between its obligation to the dominant ethnic community and its commitment to liberal values? To what extent does the regime fight the extreme ultranationalist forces that challenge it? And does the official, legal definition of the state affect the nature of its response? The legal definition is important because India is a secular democracy whereas Israel is “Jewish and democratic.” Despite this difference, however, it appears that in both cases the state relaxes its basic position, accepts the superiority of the ruling group, and takes a lenient position with regard to ultranationalist movements. And thus it transpires that the secular state – supposedly neutral in religious and ethnic terms – acts in a manner similar to that of its peer, the ethnic state. Instead of Israel adopting the Indian model, India is copying the trends evident in Israel.

The last two articles can be viewed as a third unit that focuses on Israelis’ travels to India – not necessarily young backpackers (already the focus of studies by Haim Noy, Daria Maoz and others) but rather different kinds of travelers whose experiences suggest how the encounter with India plays into constructions of Israeliness.

**Zvi Triger** writes about the interactions between Israelis who chose to use surrogacy procedures in India in order to become parents and the chain of suppliers within the Indian surrogacy industry: surrogacy agencies, fertility clinics, doctors and, of course, the surrogate mothers. Triger argues that this encounter calls for renewed thought about the power relations between the “West” and the “Third

World”; between patriarchy and feminism; and between the pro-natalist Israeli culture (which is willing to accept same-sex couples as long as they bring children into the world) and its hostile approach to surrogacy abroad.<sup>8</sup> Like the researchers who studied the Israeli backpackers in India, Triger also demonstrates that the gaze and the stereotyping are often mutual. Thus the article diverges from the Marxist perception of power, which is used by most critics of surrogacy, and in its place adopts Foucault’s more fluid model, that treats power as a strategy rather than as a possession.

**Oren Livio’s** article, which concludes the articles section, focuses on an Israeli TV reality show, *Kokhav nolad* (“A star is born,” Israel’s version of “American Idol”), which, in its sixth season, traveled to India to discover musical talent among the Israeli backpackers. India is depicted in the program as an ambivalent space that reflects certain aspects of the familiar Orientalist narrative, but “filtered” through the prism of self-awareness, irony and reflexivity that seems to serve as an antidote to that selfsame narrative. In spatial terms, India is constructed as the ultimate “other”: primitive, undeveloped and filthy. However, on the temporal axis, “positive” Orientalist representations, such as simplicity and “authenticity,” foster a nostalgic temporal yearning for an “undamaged” hegemonic Zionism – thus introducing a model of sentimental commercial nationalism. In this way, the dialectic of repulsion and attraction gives birth to a hybrid model of Zionist nostalgia that uses the Indian space and the practices of neoliberal tourism to define Israeli identity.

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Livio’s observations bring us back to India’s role as a space that Israelis use to define themselves and to the question of how one can rise above this instrumental use. The texts in the “Essays and Criticism” section of this issue develop this question further, while presenting a range of voices, sources and points of view.

The section opens with an essay by the novelist and philosopher **Yaniv Iczkovits**, who returns to an episode at the end of his military service – namely, an accidental encounter with the philosophy of Descartes. This, in turn, evokes his

<sup>8</sup> In April 2015, just as this issue was going to press, Nepal was stricken by a massive earthquake. The Israeli media dealt at length with the Israeli parents trapped there with their children who were born to Indian surrogate mothers (who had had to cross into Nepal because of restrictions the Indian government had placed on surrogacy within its borders). The reports sparked a public debate over many of the issues discussed in Triger’s article.

post-army-service trip to India that begins with a search for freedom and light but ends with the discovery of “the grip of necessity and the clutch of violence.”

**Daniel Raveh** writes about Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955), the most important twentieth-century writer in Urdu (the language of the Muslims on the Indian subcontinent), whose short stories depict the violence that underlay the foundations of partition. Raveh reads Manto’s works alongside Emil Habibi’s book *The Pessoptimist* (1974) and thus emphasizes the connection between the events of 1947 and the Nakba of 1948. The essay ends with a text by Manto himself: the brief story “Open It,” translated into Hebrew by Achia Anzi.

**Pnina Motzafi-Haller** describes her research on the Banjara, a nomadic group in Rajasthan. She depicts the personal, professional and political process that led her to develop a flexible and fragile model of ethnography “that is not satisfied with documenting the other, but instead seeks to adopt aspects of the nomad’s life that are fluid and unexpected and lend themselves to improvisation.” Indeed, one of the climaxes of the process occurs when the anthropologist crosses the boundary separating her ethnographic nomadism from the nomadism of her objects of research.

Anthropological issues are at the heart of another essay, by **Assa Doron** and **Nir Avieli**, based on their ethnographic work in India and Israel that juxtaposes the perception of waste in both spaces. Although the launderers in Varanasi seem to be very distant from the members of the moshavim in the northern Negev in Israel, in both cases waste is not only “matter out of place” (to use Mary Douglas’s highly influential formulation) but rather “people out of place” – that is, populations that are excluded and weakened as a result of modernization.

**Ktzia Alon** examines the affinity between representation, exclusion and geographical distance in her essay on representations of the Jewish-Indian body as reflected in two collections of photographs. The first is *Kebilot umishpahot Cochin be’eyn hamatzlema* [Communities and families of Cochin in the eye of the camera] (2014), a collection of photographs taken by members of the community between 1940 and 1950, before immigrating to Israel. These representations, in which the “Orientals” document themselves, are juxtaposed against another corpus, official photographs from Israel’s Government Press Office that document the Jewish-Indian immigrants’ first encounters with the Israeli sphere.

**B. R. Ambedkar** (1891-1956) is almost unknown in Israel. In India, however, he is celebrated as one of the leading politicians and intellectuals to emerge from the Dalit caste (the so-called “Untouchables”). A jurist and economist, Ambedkar

was India's first justice minister and the architect of its constitution. In this issue we present portions of his speech to India's founding assembly on November 4, 1948, in which he justified the shaping of the constitution. In an explanatory essay that precedes the Hebrew translation, **Hanna Lerner** explains the importance of the speech and its relevance to the political and legal situation in Israel.

Questions about the place of the constitution are evoked by **Ahona Panda**, a graduate student at the University of Chicago, whose essay traces the intense debate in India following the publication of Wendy Doniger's *The Hindus: An Alternative History* (2009), a debate that ultimately led to the decision of the publisher (Penguin India) to remove every copy of the book from Indian soil. According to Panda, secular and liberal groups need to rethink how to cope with the challenge posed by nonliberal religious groups. In a brief preface to Panda's essay, **Ella Glass** and **Yaniv Ron-El** situate this discussion in the local context.

**Marianna Ruah-Midbar** describes the role of Indian spirituality in the New Age culture in Israel. Focusing on Colin Campbell's insights in *The Easternization of the West* (2007) – and particularly on the sharp criticism of Campbell's thesis – Ruah-Midbar tries to explain how their encounter with India allows so many Israelis to rediscover Jewish traditions and restore their Jewish identity.

The issue concludes with an essay by **Yigal Bronner** and **David Shulman**, which deals with messenger poems, the most common poetic genre in Sanskrit. The founding poem of the genre, Kalidasa's "Cloud Messenger" (fourth or fifth century CE), presents the basic formula, adopted in subsequent centuries by similar corpuses in other Indian languages: The lover sends a messenger – a bird, a cloud, or some other flying entity – to the home of his beloved. While putting a poetic message of love into the mouth of the messenger, the speaker imagines a road map that depicts, in great detail, an entire geographical space. Like the speakers in the poems, Bronner and Shulman send us a "message from the Indian subcontinent" – a dispatch that begins with Bialik's "*El hatzippor*" [To the bird], ends at the Givat Ram campus in Jerusalem, and reminds us of the importance of the overview that connects geographic, cultural and political spaces. After all, Kalidasa knew well: Only connect...