

COLUMBIA PROJECT ON  
**ASIA**  
IN THE CORE CURRICULUM



**MASTERWORKS  
OF ASIAN LITERATURE  
IN COMPARATIVE  
PERSPECTIVE**

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**A Guide for Teaching**

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Edited by  
**Barbara Stoler Miller**

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An East Gate Book

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# Preface

The Project on Asia in the Core Curriculum began in 1984 to support the introduction of material on Asia into the core curricula of undergraduate institutions throughout the country. Three "Guides for Teaching" are the result of dialogue between Asian specialists and colleagues specializing in the Western tradition who most often teach the introductory, general education courses in the various academic disciplines. There was no attempt to stress Asia at the expense of the West. The purpose was to identify texts, themes, and comparative concepts that would provide avenues of entry for Asian material into core courses in literature, history, and the social sciences.

The guides are entitled: ***Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective***, ***Asia in Western and World History***, and ***Asia: Case Studies in the Social Sciences***. Each volume contains approximately forty essays by leading specialists that suggest a range of possibilities for introducing material on Asia. The essays are arranged to provide the widest choice of approaches to meet the reader's pedagogical needs. While the guides are discrete publications, they form a series that facilitates interdisciplinary teaching: An instructor who chooses, for example, to draw upon Rajagopal Parthasaraty's essay on "Samskara: The Passing of the Brahman Tradition," in this volume on literary masterworks, will also find much of interest in Ainslie Embree's review of South Asian history (in ***Asia in Western and World History***), in Lawrence Babb's overview of religion in India and in Owen Lynch's discussion of the caste system (both of which are in ***Asia: Case Studies in the Social Sciences***).

The Project on Asia in the Core Curriculum has involved over one hundred scholars from seventy-five public and private undergraduate institutions throughout the United States. It has been chaired at Columbia University by a panel composed of Wm. Theodore de Bary, Ainslie T. Embree, and Carol Gluck.

The National Endowment for the Humanities, the Henry Luce

Foundation, the Panasonic Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education have sponsored the project. We are deeply indebted to these sponsors for their continuing support.

We welcome any and all contributions to this ongoing curricular dialogue.

**Roberta Martin**  
**Project Director**

# Guide to the Reader

***Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective*** includes two tables of contents, one which groups the texts by country and a second which groups them by genre. The "Summaries of the Masterworks," found at the end of the volume, provide brief background on each of the texts discussed for the instructor seeking the appropriate text(s) for a specific course. The reader is also referred to the first section of the volume, "The Worlds of Asian Literature," where introductory essays on the imaginative universe of each of the three literary traditions can be found. These essays provide both context for reading the individual texts and points for comparison among the three traditions.

Topics for discussion follow each essay. A list of references, containing recommended translations and other background works, concludes each entry. The list of references is designed to facilitate the compilation of a syllabus, whether the work is being chosen for a core reading in a literature course or a supplementary reading in a history course.

To illustrate the complex issues involved in translation of lyric texts, transliterated poems are translated and explicated in the essays on lyric. In addition, specifically for classroom use, there are four examples of poems in Hindi, Urdu, Chinese, and Japanese, giving the original language, the transliterated version, a word-for-word translation, and one or more poetic renditions in English. These can be found on pages 93, 104, 244, and 376.

Timelines of Indian, Chinese, and Japanese history are included at the end of the volume for reference.

# Principles of Transliteration and Pronunciation Guide

## TRANSLITERATION

Because the English renderings of Chinese, Indian (Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, Tamil, Urdu), and Japanese words are not always consistent, certain spelling variations require explanation.

In this volume, non-English words which appear in *Webster's 3rd International Dictionary, Unabridged* are written with Webster's spelling. Non-English words not included in this dictionary are written in italics with diacriticals where appropriate, proper names excepted.

Spelling variations occur particularly in the transliteration of Chinese words because there are two systems of transliteration still in use for Chinese words. The older is called Wade-Giles after its two originators and the more recent, developed in the mid-twentieth century by the People's Republic of China for international use, is called *pinyin*. In this volume, the pinyin system of transliteration is used to render Chinese terms. In some essays, however, when the primary references listed at the conclusion of the essay employ the Wade-Giles system of transliteration, then in the essay the pinyin is followed by the Wade-Giles rendering given in the brackets: for example, *Shi jing* [*Shih ching*]. The exception to this format is the essay "Chuang Tzu" by Shuen-fu Lin. Professor Lin requested that the primary transliteration of certain names and titles be given in Wade-Giles. In these cases, the *pinyin* follows in parentheses: for example, *Chuang Tzu* (*Zhuang zi*). (This procedure has also been noted at the end of the chapter.)

Further spelling differences occur in Chinese, Japanese, Sanskrit and other Indic language words that appear in titles of works under "References" or within quoted sections of works under discussion. These spelling differences reflect inconsistencies in translations in either romanization or diacritical usage.

**PRONUNCIATION****CHINESE**

*Contributed by David D. W. Wang*

Vowels in Chinese are mostly like continental Spanish-German vowels with exceptions (as shown) occurring especially near final *n* or *ng*. (Note: In spoken Chinese, vowels are given one of four tonal inflections. Since such linguistic expertise is beyond the scope of this guide, information on the tonal system is not included here.)

<i>a</i>	as <i>a</i> in father	thus <i>ai</i> as <i>eye</i> in <i>eye</i> <i>ao</i> as <i>ow</i> in <i>how</i> <i>an, ang</i> as <i>a</i> in father plus <i>n, ng</i>
	exceptions:	<i>ian, yan</i> as <i>yen</i> in <i>yen</i>
<i>e</i>	as <i>u</i> in <i>up</i>	thus <i>en, eng</i> as <i>u</i> in <i>up</i> plus <i>n, ng</i>
	exceptions:	<i>ie, y</i> as <i>ye</i> in <i>yes</i> <i>ei</i> as <i>ei</i> in <i>eight</i>
<i>i</i>	as <i>ee</i> in <i>beet</i>	thus <i>in, ing</i> as <i>ee</i> in <i>bee</i> plus <i>n, ng</i> <i>ui</i> as <i>ui</i> in French " <i>oui</i> "
	exceptions:	<i>i</i> as <i>i</i> in <i>fir</i> in <i>shi, chi, zhi, ci, si, zi</i>
<i>o</i>	as <i>o</i> in <i>dog</i>	thus <i>uo</i> as <i>wa</i> in <i>wall</i>
	exceptions:	<i>ou</i> as <i>o</i> in <i>code</i> <i>ong</i> as <i>o</i> in <i>code</i> plus <i>ng</i>
<i>u</i>	as <i>oo</i> in <i>book</i>	thus <i>you, iu</i> as <i>yeo</i> in <i>yeoman</i>
	exceptions:	<i>un, ung</i> as <i>oo</i> in <i>boot</i> plus <i>n, ng</i>
<i>ü</i>	as German <i>u</i> in <i>über</i> or French <i>u</i> in <i>une</i>	Note: a <i>u</i> in <i>ju, qu, xu, yu</i> is always pronounced as <i>ü</i> and never <i>u</i> thus it is not necessary to spell these words with an umlaut.

Consonants are mostly as in English, except that some letters are put to separate use, because there are two kinds of *ch* (*q, ch*), two kinds of *sh* (*x, sh*), and two kinds of *j* (*j, zh*), and a single letter to represent *dz* (*z*) and *ts* (*c*).

<i>b</i>	as <i>b</i> in <i>bottle</i>
<i>c</i>	as <i>ts</i> in <i>cats</i>
<i>d</i>	as <i>d</i> in <i>dot</i>
<i>f</i>	as <i>f</i> in <i>food</i>
<i>g</i>	as <i>g</i> in <i>gun</i>

<i>h</i>	as <i>h</i> in <i>hand</i>
<i>j</i>	as <i>j</i> in <i>jeep</i>
<i>k</i>	as <i>k</i> in <i>kid</i>
<i>l</i>	as <i>l</i> in <i>law</i>
<i>m</i>	as <i>m</i> in <i>moon</i>
<i>n</i>	as <i>n</i> in <i>nine</i>
<i>p</i>	as <i>p</i> in <i>pen</i>
<i>q</i>	as <i>ch</i> in <i>church</i>
<i>r</i>	as <i>r</i> in <i>runner</i>
<i>s</i>	as <i>s</i> in <i>song</i>
<i>t</i>	as <i>t</i> in <i>top</i>
<i>w</i>	as <i>w</i> in <i>way</i>
<i>x</i>	as <i>sh</i> in <i>sheet</i>
<i>y</i>	as <i>y</i> in <i>yellow</i>
<i>z</i>	as <i>dz</i> in <i>adze</i>
<i>ch</i>	as <i>tch</i> in <i>catching</i>
<i>sh</i>	as <i>sh</i> in <i>shoe</i>
<i>zh</i>	as <i>j</i> in <i>joke</i>
<i>ng</i>	as <i>ng</i> in <i>long</i>

## **SANSKRIT AND HINDI**

*Contributed by Barbara Stoler Miller*

Words in Sanskrit (a classical language) and Hindi (a modern language) are rendered in Roman script, using international conventions for transliteration. In the pronunciation of Sanskrit and Hindi words, the accent is usually on a syllable when this is heavy. A syllable is heavy if it contains a long simple vowel (*ā, ī, ū, ṛ*), a diphthong (*e, o, ai, au*), or a short vowel followed by more than one consonant. It should be noted that the aspirated consonants *kh, gh, ch, jh, th, dh, ph*, and *bh*, are considered single consonants in the Sanskrit/Indic phonetic system.

Vowels, except *a*, are given their full value as in Italian or German:

<i>a</i>	as <i>u</i> in <i>cut</i>
<i>ā</i>	as <i>a</i> in <i>father</i>
<i>i</i>	as <i>i</i> in <i>pit</i>
<i>ī</i>	as <i>i</i> in <i>machine</i>
<i>ṛ</i>	a short vowel; as <i>ri</i> in <i>rich</i> , but often rendered <i>ri</i> in Anglicized words
<i>e</i>	as <i>ay</i> in <i>say</i>

<i>ai</i>	as <i>ai</i> in <i>aisle</i>
<i>o</i>	as <i>o</i> in <i>go</i>
<i>au</i>	as <i>ow</i> in <i>cow</i>
<i>m̃</i>	nasalizes the preceding vowel and makes the syllable heavy
<i>ḥ</i>	a rough breathing vowel, replacing an original <i>s</i> or <i>r</i> ; occurs only at the end of a syllable or word and makes the syllable heavy

Most consonants are analogous to the English, if the distinction between aspirated and nonaspirated consonants is observed; for example, the aspirated consonants *th* and *ph* must never be pronounced as in English *thin* and *phial*, but as in *hothouse* and *shepherd* (similarly, *kh*, *gh*, *ch*, *jh*, *dh*, *bh*). The differences between the Indic "cerebral" *ṭ*, *ṭh*, *ḍ*, *ḍh*, *ṇ*, *ṣ* and "dental" *t*, *th*, *d*, *dh*, *n*, *s* are another distinctive feature of the language. The dentals are formed with the tongue against the teeth, the cerebrals with the tongue flexed back along the palate. Note also:

<i>g</i>	as <i>g</i> in <i>goat</i>
<i>ṇ</i>	as <i>n</i> in <i>ink</i> , or <i>sing</i>
<i>c</i>	as <i>ch</i> in <i>church</i>
<i>ñ</i>	as <i>ñ</i> in Spanish <i>señor</i>
<i>ś</i>	as <i>s</i> in <i>sugar</i>

Aside from the above, special conditions in some of the Indic languages require further detailed explanation.

In the case of Hindi, spoken in Northern India and relevant to the chapter "Devotional Poetry of Medieval North India" by John Stratton Hawley, the following pertains: The standard system for transliterating Indic words into the Roman alphabet was devised for Sanskrit, and certain modifications are required for Hindi. Two innovations are especially prominent. First, in spoken Hindi the neutral vowel "a" is usually inaudible, and is therefore not indicated in transliteration. Therefore one sees, for example, *rām* rather than *rāma* to indicate the name of the god of that name (cf. also *sāvaka* and, from a derivation outside of Sanskrit, *harām*). There are, however, instances when the final "a" is sometimes audible, as when preceded by the semivowel "y," and in that case the final "a" appears in transliteration (e.g., *vinaya*). I also retain the final "a" in the words *śaṅga* and *nirṅga*, because it has become customary to use them in their Sanskrit form. Finally, one often meets an audible final "a" in Hindi poetry. In the sample chosen for analysis here, however, Tulsidas apparently intends to keep close to the rhythms of speech. I have therefore transliterated

as if it were spoken prose, omitting the final "a."

The second innovation involves nasalization. Whereas Sanskrit indicates nasalization in a variety of ways, depending on the value of the succeeding consonant, Hindi simplifies. That simplification is registered in transliteration through the uniform use of a tilde ( ~ ). If a vowel is both long and nasal, both the macron and the tilde appear ( = ). If a diphthong is nasalised, the tilde appears over the first letter of the transliteration (āi).

Other variations from standard Sanskrit usage occur in a variety of ways, sometimes in response to metrical needs (e.g., *ātmārāma* > *ātamarām*), but these issues of transliteration as such need not be involved.

In the case of Urdu words, relevant to the chapter "Lyric Poetry in Urdu: the Ghazal" by Shamsur Rahman Faruqi and Frances W. Pritchett, the following should be noted: The Urdu sound system basically corresponds to that of Hindi. Special non-Indic diacritics used in this chapter include *kh*, a voiceless fricative (the sound of "ch" in Loch when said by a Scotsman, or the sound made when clearing one's throat); *gh*, the voiced counterpart of *kh*; °, an Arabic letter, romanized as *ain* or *ayn*, and pronounced in Urdu as one of a number of vowel sounds; and ʾ, a sign called a hamzah indicating a glide between two vowels. The Urdu *ṛ* indicates a modern retroflex liquid, a sound made by flipping the tongue forward against the roof of the mouth and is not to be confused with the Sanskrit semivowel *ṛ*.

For information on Tamil, see the beginning of "Classical Tamil Poetry and Tamil Poetics" by Rajagopal Parthasarathy.

## JAPANESE

*Adapted from H. Paul Varley, A Syllabus of Japanese Civilization, New York: Columbia University Press, 1972*

Japanese words and names have been transcribed according to the Hepburn system of romanization.

Vowels in Japanese are similar to those in Italian:

- a* as *a* in *arm*
- i* as the first *e* in *eve*
- u* as *u* in *rude*
- e* as *a* in *chaotic*
- o* as *o* in *old*

Long marks or macrons over the vowels *u* and *o* (*û*, *ô*) require

that the sound be held for twice its normal duration. Since there are no true diphthongs in Japanese, each vowel must be pronounced separately. For example, the word *kaí* is pronounced *ka-i*.

Consonants are pronounced as in English (*g* is always hard) with the exception of *r*, which is rendered like the unrolled *r* of Spanish. Double consonants should be sustained in the same fashion as the lengthened vowels mentioned above.

# **Introduction**

## **Masterworks of Asian Literature in Comparative Perspective**

***Barbara Stoler Miller***

"The very thought of a superior European culture is a blatant insult to the majesty of Nature," wrote the eighteenth century German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder in his *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*. Herder's study questioned the assumption of most historians of his time that "civilization" was a unilinear process, leading to the high point of eighteenth century European culture. The critique seems relevant two centuries later, in view of the debates going on in American educational circles between academics who interpret multicultural curricular changes in the humanities as a lapse into cultural relativism, and opponents who contend that the cultural imperialism that still dominates Western attitudes towards Asian, African, and Latin American cultures is at best anachronistic.

The issues are complex, but radical changes in American society over the past half century, wrought by factors of war, migration, and global communication, have altered what we call "Western culture," the range of beliefs and values that anthropologists refer to as patterns of and for behavior. New research in archaeology, geography, and literature suggests that the cultures of Asia and the West have historically been less indifferent to one another than is generally supposed. It has become increasingly clear that in order to understand what Western culture is, we need some understanding of non-Western cultures. Most of us live in multi-cultural environments in which we are constantly faced with ideas and practices that challenge our personal values. To be truly educated in the modern world demands the ability to make

translations from one time frame to another, from one language to another, from one code of communication to another. Human communication in its highest forms involves the translation of ideas, emotions, forms across barriers of time, place, and language.

The tendency to overgeneralize conclusions and judgments about a foreign culture can be countered by careful study of concrete examples of that culture, such as works of imaginative literature. When confronting literatures as vast and complex as those of Asia, it is impossible to limit the unit of understanding. One must pay attention to words, figures of speech, verses, episodes, epics, and whole imaginative universes. To some extent every reader of literature is a literary translator. In order to capture the meaning of a single image or concept the translator must draw in the entire culture and find ways to connect aspects of that culture with appropriate aspects of his or her own culture. This creates a dialogue between the original and the translated version, so that every modification of the translation takes its own context and the context of the original into fresh account. Like the translator, the reader is of necessity a comparatist, shuttling back and forth between ways of seeing the world, struggling to transcend the constraints of his or her own experience of time and place.

The essays in this teaching guide were written as part of a project on Asia in the Core Curriculum, based at Columbia University since 1984, but involving faculty from various colleges and universities throughout the country. The project included components on literature, history, and the social sciences. These essays reflect the collaboration of scholars of Asian literature with literary scholars of English and European literature. We examined Asian texts in translation as potential works for inclusion in courses surveying world literature. The essayists are translators and critics of Chinese, Japanese, and Indian literatures who have taught in undergraduate comparative literature programs.

Throughout our discussions, we confronted the conceptual challenges of comparison and cultural imperialism. The social critics of our time have made us acutely aware that cross-cultural understanding is ultimately grounded in one's experience and ideology. Hermeneutical sophistication and sympathetic imagination certainly enhance the possibilities of cross-cultural understanding, but the obstacles are significant. We recognized that the non-specialist is particularly handicapped by a lack of knowledge of the original texts and contexts. There is a difference between

Asian texts as artifacts of a specific culture and as works in the context of world literature. To address these issues, specific "master-works" are recommended in the teaching guide on the basis of their literary value within their own cultural contexts, their literary value as expressions of the human condition, and the quality of available translations. We also include introductory essays on the "imaginative universe" of each of the three major literary traditions represented in the guide.

David Damrosch of Columbia's Department of English and Comparative Literature set the tone of our discussions by raising the general question of how students and teachers come to terms with material from foreign cultures, when a detailed knowledge of the cultural context cannot be assumed. Damrosch observed that the issues raised by the inclusion of Asian works in surveys of literature are also present in any course which attempts to discuss works from a variety of periods and countries. He identified the double problem of dealing with perceptions of difference and sameness in a comparative approach. Readers may fail to appreciate the foreign literary values, modes of representation, or they may too readily appreciate similarities, assimilating the foreign material to familiar terms without perceiving its particularities. He advocated what he called "a dynamic reading, one which can see points of similarity and dissimilarity not statically but as moments on a larger trajectory."

Damrosch used the epic genre as an example of the challenges posed by difference and similarity. He pointed to the degree of continuity within the Western epic tradition, grounding direct comparison of works like the *Aeneid* and the *Divine Comedy* in a substantial core of similarities. By contrast, the Indian epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, are only loosely related to the wider Indo-European epic tradition and work so differently that any broader definition of epic must be modified to accommodate their elements of structure, action and character. On the other hand, the absence of anything that can be called epic in Chinese literature raises issues about genre as the basic category of comparison.

In view of such questions, our purpose in the guide is to suggest alternatives for different types of literature courses and provide a basis for selecting works. Each of the Asian works presented is meant to stand on its own or combine with others to suit the needs of a particular course. We offer different strategies for reading these Asian works and for integrating them into general education curricula. The approach is meant to enable readers

to gain access to some of the major concepts of Asian civilizations by studying examples of lyric, dramatic, and narrative works from classical and modern Asian traditions. The pedagogical intent of the guide made the choice of works highly selective in another way. The longevity and influence of the literary traditions of China, Japan, and India identify them as the dominant literatures of Asia. Each tradition has its own mechanisms for establishing and transmitting cultural values by selection and exclusion. These processes determined what it meant to be a "classic" in various parts of Asia at different times. Out of the bewildering array of extant literary works, we have selected those works from the past that have endured as "classics" in each civilization, as well as works of modern literature widely regarded for their literary merit. Despite our reservations about genre classification across cultures, the classical Asian works do fall within the broad categories of lyric, drama, and narrative. In the modern period, attention is focused on narrative works, which have been the main medium of literary innovation and experimentation.

All participants in the project, both essayists and discussants, contributed to these essays through their critical questions and ideas.

The success of the project at every level owes a great deal to Roberta Martin. I know that readers of this volume will join us in thanking her for bringing this material to a wider audience. Madge Huntington admirably managed every stage of the production process with the able assistance of Lynette Peck. Lori Stevens thoughtfully edited the essays and Barbara Gombach provided guidance in bringing consistency to diacritical usage in Indic terms. Nadine Berardi prepared the background notes on the literary works discussed in the essays. The project has been generously supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Henry Luce Foundation, the Panasonic Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education.

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