ON THE MEANING AND USE OF THE WORD INDRAGOPA

As yet no satisfactory explanation has been given of Skt. indragopa which, as a matter of fact, is a well-known expression, but has escaped the notice of scholars for several reasons. The compound is transparent and its sense apparently clear, at least at first sight, as each of the two members consists of an extremely familiar word and thus does not seem to pose any problems.

To begin with, we must distinguish, as dictionaries do, between two different meanings of indragopa or, to put it more accurately, between two different types of compounds using the very same words. In reality, however, neither of the two senses of indragopa can be regarded as a sort of primary meaning from which the other was derived. As we shall see, the lexicographical entries represent two distinct lexemes which should be kept apart very clearly. I hope to demonstrate in this paper that the two words only happen to be identical in appearance and structure and that, in fact, they are homonyms. Neither the prior member of compound, that is to say, indra, nor the final member, that is to say, gopa, coincides semantically.

The first usage of indragopa does not raise any difficulties and, therefore, need not be treated exhaustively. It occurs in RV VIII, 46, 32, where it says: tē te vāyav imē jānā mādanti indragopā mādanti devāgopāḥ. The compound indragopa is here employed as «(those) men protected

1. It is, therefore, incorrect that the two homonyms indragopa are listed as different «meanings» of one common head-word as, for example, in R. L. Turner, A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-aryan Languages, Oxford, 1966: indragōpa, «having Indra as protector», m. «cochineal insect, fire-fly» (indra-, gopā-). The two words should, on the contrary, be registered as two separate entries, that is to say, indragopa¹ and indragopa².
by Indra» or, more literally, «(those) men having Indra as (their) protector». It should be quite clear, but nevertheless worth pointing out that the word indra, as used in the first member of this ṛgvedic term, is to be understood as signifying the god Indra, while the word gopā, too, the second member of compound, conveys its most expected and ordinary sense, which is cowherd, guardian, or protector. Structurally, ṛgvedic indragopa runs parallel with a number of similar compounds such as, for example devāgopa, «protected by the gods», appearing in the above-mentioned passage, áhigopa, «protected by the serpent» (RV I, 32,11), or vātagopa, «protected by the wind» (AV). In all these cases a first member-noun is compounded with gopā in the sense of protector.

In contra-distinction to the ṛgvedic use of the word, the meaning of the second compound is much less explicit and, moreover, is constructed differently. While the earliest passages containing this expression are to be found in the Brhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad and the Buddhist Canon in the Pāli recension, the same term has, ever since the Rāmāyaṇa, most frequently been used in poetical texts, where indragopa, and the associations connected with it, have developed into a favourite literary motif forming part of the imagery to be chosen by the poet when describing the rainy season or, more particularly, its beginning. indragopa, in this connexion, denotes a tiny velvety animal which, appearing in large numbers at the beginning of the monsoon, becomes an intensely red colour, and, on account of its colour, is often compared to red silk, lacquer, the glow of fire, a ruby or, perhaps most frequently, to blood. In Brhadāraṇyaka-Up. II, 3, 6 the red lustre of the indragopa serves, together with a few other objects of comparison, to describe the brilliant form of the Puruṣa (puruṣasya rūpa) which, inter alia, is said to be yathendra-grapa, while in another Upaniṣad, the Amṛtabindūpaniṣad, when explaining the colours of the various branches of the Prāna, i.e., Apāna, Samāna, Udāna and Vyāna, it is the brilliancy of the Apāna which is likened to that of an indragopa. Stanza 37 of this Upaniṣad ends: apānas (tasya madhye tu) indragopasamaprabhāḥ.

As has been mentioned before, early references to indragopa, in Pāli invariably called indagopaka, are also to be met with in several Pāli sources. The word is repeatedly used in the Jātakas, but also occurs, of course, in other Tipiṭaka texts, in commentaries and non-canonical writings. Quite a number of these Pāli passages give a far better idea of the animal in question than do the above-quoted two Upaniṣads. We are in several places informed that at the beginning of the monsoon, when the rains set in and the meadows grow green after the very first showers, indragopas arise from out of the ground. The newly moistened green earth is then covered, tinted, or even turned red, by vast numbers of
beautiful *indragopas*. The Critical Pāli Dictionary (= CPD) lists the following characteristic quotations:

*Ja. VI*, 173, 25: *mahī indagopakasāñchānām so bhātī hariti’uttamā,*
*Ja. VI*, 497, 227: *haritām dakkhiṣi mediniṇī indagopakasāñchānāṃ,*
*Ap. I*, 20: *lohitakā subhā indagopakavannābhā bhūmi,*
*Dhp-a. I*, 20, 1: *navavaṭṭhāya bhūmiya bahū indagopakā uṭṭhahimśu,*
*Ja. IV*, 258, 5: *etasmīṃ vanasañḍasmiṇī ambā sālā ca pupphitā (bhūmi) 3 indagopakasāñchānā.*

In *Theragāthā* 13, which was the first passage to arouse my interest in this topic 4, it is rocks that are described as covered with *indragopas*: *indagopakasāñchānā te selā ramayanti manī, « these rocks, covered with indagopakas, delight me ».*

Among the other references to be found in Pāli texts, these descriptive passages are especially worthy of notice, since they shed a much better light on the life and behaviour of that tiny creature than other, mostly shorter passages do. Naturally, the *indragopa* figures in some similes, too, although such comparative uses in Pāli are scarcely illustrative. There is, however, one passage contained in the *Vinaya*, which, in fact, is extremely important. In *Vin. III*, 42, 1 we are told that a large company of monks, when gathering for the *vassāvāsa*, built themselves huts of grass (*tiṇakutiṇīka*), which were all quickly demolished. The venerable Dhaniya, one of these *bhikkhus*, having failed three times to keep the grass hut he had constructed, finally, being the son of a potter, built a hut of nothing but mud and, the work finished, baked it with a fire of grass, pieces of wood and cow-dung. Now « it was », as the text proceeds, « a beautiful hut, pleasing to look at and as red as an *indagopaka* »:

*sā ahosi kuṭikā abhirūpā dassaniyā pāśādikā lohitikā seyyathāpi indagopako.*

This passage, too, informs us that the *indragopa* is a red-coloured and beautiful creature, though it may appear somewhat surprising that the hut of a *bhikkhu*, built as a temporary dwelling during the rainy period, should be compared with precisely an *indragopa*. On closer exa-
mination, however, the simile does not seem so far fetched. The comparison is supported by no less than three characteristics which are common both to the animal and the hut of a bhikkhu. Among these three tertia comparationis we may, firstly, take note of the rains, for both the indragopa and Dhaniya’s hut are connected directly with the monsoon. Secondly, we notice the red colour and, thirdly, the velvety outside which, as far as the hut is concerned, could be produced very easily. Certain kinds of mud, when well baked, become a shade of red and, moreover, if the mud is mixed thin, can even yield a velvety surface.

It is amusing to see that the Pāli descriptions of the rain-moistened earth covered by indragopas directly point the way to the imagery used in classical kāvyā. As, however, at least one example of a genuinely poetical use is already attested in a poem of the Pāli Canon, namely Therag. 13, which I quoted above, the motif must be ascribed to an ancient tradition which is perhaps of popular origin, but which is certainly anterior to kāvyā writing in Sanskrit. The fact that the indragopa forms part of the imagery for depicting varṣā and, more particularly prāvṛṣ, that is to say, the first half of the rainy season comprising the Month of Āśādha and Śrāvana, and as such was accepted quite early, is confirmed by no less an authority than the Bharatiya-Nāṭyaśāstra. The chapter on citrābhīnaya treating the representation of various things, such as of persons, animals, mountains, trees and, among others, the seasons, gives, as regards the early monsoon, the following rule:

\[
\text{kadambanimbakuṭajaiḥ śādvalaiḥ sendragopakaiḥ} \\
\text{kadambakair mayūrānāṁ prāvṛṣaṁ saṁnirūpayet} // (XXVI, 34)
\]

«One should represent the (first half of) the rainy season by Kadamba-, Nimba- and Kuṭaja-flowers, by (spots of) green grass abounding in indragopas and a number of peacocks». In Sanskrit poetry, the way of description developed in Pāli was to begin with, merely continued, not infrequently using partly identical words or patterns of thought, while, subsequently, the motif became elaborated and increasingly refined in its details. Thus stanzas from early kāvyā literature describing the advent of the rains like just to mention the wet ground or places abounding in fresh green grass (śādvala, śaśpa) which, as is said in the Pāli quotations, are thickly covered with indragopas. Many of these stanzas contain simple descriptions, while other already play upon similes which, at this early stage, are quite uniform: The poet will compare the earth with a beautiful woman and, extending this often used upamā, will liken the red indragopas on the ground either to the red spots of the lady’s dress or to the bright gems of her jewelry. I quote
only the following verses two of which make use, instead of the compound *indragopa*, of the synonymous term *sakragopa*.

*Rāmāyaṇa, Kīṣkindhāk. XXVIII, 41*

prahṛṣṭasannāditabarhiṇāni saṣakragopākulaśādvalāni /
caranti nīpārjunavāsītāni gajāḥ suramyāni vanāntarāṇi //

« Elephants pass through the lovely woodlands, fragrant with Nirpa- and Arjuna-flowers, where cheerful peacocks cry out and patches of green grass abound in *indragopas* ».

_Harivaṃśa_ LXVI, 55:

navavarṣāvasikātiṇi śakragopākulāni ca /
naśṭadāvāgnimārgāṇi vanāni pracakāśire //

« The woodlands are beautiful: they are sprinkled with fresh showers of rain and, while abounding in *indragopas*, have pathways where the forest fires are quenched ».

_Harita:*

nīlāsasyaharitojjivalā mahā kulyakāsalilasamplutā sarit /
indragopakavirājitā dharā paṅkabhūṣaṇavibhūṣitā ca sā //

« The earth shines green with dark rice, the waters of the river bubble in their bed, the ground is resplendent with *indragopas* and, (in places), is decorated with mud ».

_Rūtasaṃhāra_ II, 5 cd:

vibhāti śukletararatnabhūṣitā varāṅganeva kṣitir indragopa-
kaḥ //

« Earth shines forth with her *indragopakas* like a beautiful lady decorated with dark-coloured jewels ».

_Rāmāyana, Kīṣkindhāk. XXVIII, 24:*

bālendragopāntaracitrītena vibhāti bhūmir navasādvalena /
gāṭrānuvyṛṭtena śukkaprabheṇa nārīva lākṣokṣitakambalena //

« Earth, with patches of fresh and green grass, which in between are coloured with young *indragopas*, shines like a lady clothed in a tight-fitting, parrot-coloured and laquer-sprinkled dress ».

I do not intend to enlarge, within the narrow bounds of this paper, on the further literary development of this motif. *indragopa* imagery has been employed by a great many poets and it was also used in

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8. Many valuable references to its occurrence are to be found in V. RAGHAVAN, *Ṛṭu in Sanskrit Literature*, Delhi, 1972.
Classical Hindī, in Avadhī as well as Brajbhāṣā, where the word indragopa was either taken over as an unchanged tatsama or, more frequently, was substituted by the tadbhava bīr(a)bāhūti. The latter expression is traceable back to Skt. vīravadhūti which, semantically, is identical with an apparently more popular Sanskrit name of the indragopa or śakragopa, namely indravadhū or indravadhūti. This is corroborated by Dālhaṇa who, when commenting on Suśrutasaṁhitā 1,30, explains indragopa as: indragopāḥ prāvrtykālajā atiraktakrimayāḥ indravadhū iti loke, «indragopas are intensely red krmis (or krmis) which appear at the time of the early rains and are called indravadhū by the people». In poetical contexts no mention is made of the animal’s velvety surface, which, however, is indicated by the word makh(a)mali which is another denomination in Hindī. That our animal is a creature appearing in large numbers is shown by the fact that the word indragopa and its synonyms, except in comparative usage, are almost exclusively used in the plural and are also to be interpreted in the plural sense in a nonfinal position in word-compounds, as we have already seen in the Pāli expression indragopakasañchanna. It may also be mentioned that, as far as I know, Sanskrit and Pāli sources do not refer to the fact that indragopas are often devoured by birds as is shown in the Tamil quotation intirakōpaṁ kauviy iRakularkiINRa maṅnai in Civakacintāmaṇi 1819, where peacocks are said to snatch up with their beak the intirakōpam, which in Tamil is also called tampala(m) or tampalappūcci.

After thus discussing the main characteristics of the indragopa as they can be gathered from various texts, we now return to the starting-point of my investigation. The question arises: what is the exact meaning of this animal name? Is it really correct to render the word as «fire-fly» and «cochineal», as, amongst others, Monier-Williams’ Sanskrit-English Dictionary does 9, or to interpretē indragopāh, by taking up its apparently literal sense, as «Indra’s cowherds» or the «herds of Indra» 10 (indrasya gopāh)? When consulting dictionaries, translations, etc., we observe that, in fact, there exists an enormous confusion with regard not only to the meaning of the word, but also to the proper assignment of that creature to a definite order of the animal kingdom. Scholars have identified it variously as either a kind of insect or beetle in general or, more precisely, as the Coccus lacca, as the Coccus septempunctata, i.e., the lady-bird or coccinelle (PW), or the above-mentioned cochinéal. We are not better helped by the comment of Dālhaṇa either, who, as has already been stated, identifies the indragopas as krmis, for both the terms kṛmi and kīṭa, and in Tamil the word puccī, designate an extremely large zoological class comprising insects and beetles as well

9. Ibid., sub verbo: indragopa, or ā mfn. Ved. having Indra as one’s protector...; (as), m. the insect cochinéal of various kinds; a fire-fly (in this sense also indragopaka).

as worms. A similar interpretation is given in Dharmapāla's commentary on Therag. 13\(^{11}\) which describes indagopakas as coral-red krmis (indagopakasañcchannā ti, indagopakanāmakehi pavālavāmehi rattakimīhi sañchāditā), but adds to this explanation that the name indagopaka is also understood by some people to be a (kind of) red grass or, by still others, the tree karnikāra (keci pana indagopakanāmāni rattatiṇāni ti vadanti, apare kanikārarukkhā ti). It is difficult to account for the interpretation of indagopa as the tree karnikāra (Pterospermum acerifolium). It is possible, however, that indragopa is a name not for the tree itself, but for the flower, which resembles the indagopa with regard both to colour and form. Just as the indragopa is roundish and sometimes gold-coloured, so is the flower of the karnikāra golden yellow and looks like a saucer\(^{12}\). We can, on the other hand, comprehend without difficulty the remark made by Dharmapāla that the word indagopaka also can be taken in the sense of rattatiṇa. It seems natural, especially in popular imagination, to compare a kind of red grass with the red-coloured indragopas, which also cover the earth\(^{13}\), and thus to give to this grass the very same name.

We must, when trying to ascertain the meaning of the word indragopa, keep the two elements of the compound clearly separate and, accordingly, proceed in two phases: as regards the first member, we notice, by juxtaposition, that there exist, in fact, two distinct groups of compounds beginning with indra. While, in the first group, the word indra appears in its literal sense (in compounds such as, for example, indrajāla, indrapāna, indraśatru or our ṛgvedic īndragopa), it does not do so in the second group of compounds where the same lexeme is used metaphorically and, while emphasizing the rôle of Indra as a dispenser of rain, connotes not directly that god, but the rainy season or, simply, the rain\(^{14}\). Excellent examples are the various names for «rainbow» such as, for instance, āndracāpa, āndrakārmuka, āndradhanus, or āndrāyudha, which are often rendered directly as «Indra's bow». Hindu iconography proves quite clearly that this supposedly literal translation is erroneous or at least quite misleading, since, in icono-

\(^{11}\) Cf. (Mrs.) Rhys Davids, ibid., note 1; I. B. Horner, ibid.; K. R. Norman, The Elders' Verses I: Theragāthā, p. 122; CPD, sub verbo.

\(^{12}\) Cf. V. S. Apte, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, s.v. karnikāra. For the Pāli use of the karnikāra-flower (karnikārapuppha) «as typical emblem of yellow and of brightness» see The Pāli Text Society's Pāli Dictionary, sub verbo.

\(^{13}\) Cf. Ja IV, 258, 6: bhūmi indagopakavya rattāya sukhasamphassāya tinajātiyā sañchannā, «the earth, covered by a kind of grass, which is of the colour of the indragopa, red and pleasant to touch». Also the indragopa, on account of its velvety surface, is very soft and pleasant to touch.

\(^{14}\) It is noteworthy that, as far as phraseology is concerned, the simple statement «it rains» is in Pāli often expressed as devo (i.e., indo) vassati, in Sanskrit indro varṣati (besides parjanyo varṣati or meghā varṣanti).
graphy, Indra is not represented as carrying a bow\textsuperscript{15}. We can add to these words the expression *indrasalīla, « rain-water », used in medical texts, a few names for two of the trees or flowers which are considered as characteristic of the rainy season, namely *indrataru, *indradru(ma) and *indrarvkasa for the Arjuna-tree (Terminalia Arjuna) and *indrayava for the Kuṭaja-tree (Wrightia antidysenterica) and, finally, we may mention the compound *indrāgāra, « a masonry well » or, more exactly, « a rain-water cistern »\textsuperscript{16}.

It is evident that the terms I have quoted are related to rain and that, linguistically, this fact is expressed by the use of the word *indra which here serves as a qualifying noun and as such is employed as first member in all such compounds. Since this is the case, too, in the word we are studying, we may, for the time being, interprete *indragopa as the « *gopa of the rainy season » or, simply, « rain-gopa ». Variations of this name are, as we know, *sakragopa, surendragopa (Suśruta), harigopa, vajrāyudhagopa, and somewhat more difficult, tridaśagopa (Raghuv. XI, 42) which probably stands for some longer compound such as tridaśapatigopa. Monier-Williams in his English and Sanskrit Dictionary also lists, besides *sakragopa, the words *indrakīta, *śrakīta, tāmракrmi and agnika\textsuperscript{17}, while Hemacandra’s Abhidhānacintāmaṇī gives the following enumeration: *indragopas tv agnirajo vairājas titibho’gnikaḥ (1209). Among these synonyms only titibha is really difficult to explain. It can be divided in firstly tīti, which perhaps is expressive of the bright colour, and secondly the indo-european suffix bha (gr. φός) which often occurs in animal names. The expressions tām rakrmi, agnika and agnirajas describe the animal’s colour\textsuperscript{18}, but the bahuvrīhi agnirajas (or agniraja), « fire-dust », possibly also its velvety surface. The word vairāta is especially interesting and brings us back to the synonyms *indravadhu and *viravadhu(ti) I have already mentioned. Both names, preserved in Hindī as *indravadhu and *bīr(a)bahuṭi, are closely allied to each other. *indravadhu and *vrā-
vadhū(ṭi) substitute vadhū(ṭi) for gopa and thus visualize, as often happens in the popular names of small creatures, the indragopa as a «lady» or, more accurately, as is indicated by viṇa- and indra- respectively, as the «lady of the rains».

The words indra and viṇa are, in fact, interchangeable terms. Since viṇa not only denotes any hero, but also the hero par excellence, it is not infrequently used as a synonym for Indra, though, naturally, viṇa, too, when employed in this type of compound, is to be understood, not in its literal, but in its figurative sense. Accordingly, we find that the Terminalia Arjuna can be called indravṛkṣa as well as viṇavṛkṣa, or indradru(ma) as well as viṇadru(ma), the meaning being always «tree of the rainy season». We further observe that, occasionally, viṇa appears in the vṛddhi-form, as is clearly shown by the two compounds vairāntaka and vairātaṅka, which are also names for the Arjuna tree. This observation is basic, since it is only when seen from this angle that vairāṭa discloses its actual meaning. Any first-sight examination would certainly wish to explain vairāṭa, which is composed of vaira and ata (from the root at-) as something like «one that wanders about in hostility (vaira)», whereas vairāṭa, when used in the sense indicated by Hemacandra, actually means «one that creeps about (ata) and belongs to the rainy season (vaira)», which is, indeed, a very suitable name for the indragopa.

There now remains the problem of how to account for the second part of the compound we are treating. As the first member consisting of indra is merely employed to qualify gopa, we may conclude that, at least theoretically, not only the longer term indragopa as a whole, but also the very word gopa itself designates a particular animal of the zoological group of the arthropodes. indragopa being a «gopa related to rain», we may postulate an independent noun gopa which, though never used separately, presents the real animal name to be studied and,

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19. Two interesting adjectives are aindrāliśa and aindrādrśa. Both lexemes are given in Tārānātha Tarkavācaspṭi’s Dictionary, but are quoted in Monier-Williams’ Skt.-Engl.-Dictionary, too, which explains them as «made of Indraliśa (Indrādrśa respectively) or the cochineal insect». Although we cannot really judge these two terms, since no textual references are given, it seems possible that M.-W.’s interpretation is wrong and that indraliśa as well as indrādrśa are, in reality, synonyms of the word indragopa, the first having the sense of «(an animal) moving around (from ā+liś) in the rainy season», the latter that of «(an animal) to be seen (from ā+drś) in the rainy season».

20. In certain names of plants used in Indian medicine the words indra and viṇa do, however, not indicate «rain». Here their significance is, in fact, «Indra», since God Indra, on account of his associations with the Aśvins, who are said to have introduced him in medicine, is considered to be one of the masters of the medical science; cf. J. Filliozat, The Classical Doctrine of Indian Medicine (English Transl.), Delhi, 1964, p. 89.

21. Cf. aindrām ambu, «Indric water», «rain-water», in Vāgbhaṭa, Aṣṭāṅgahṛ-dayas. I, 5, 4. aindrām ambu, aindrāṃ salilam and similar phrases form of course, when compounded, aindrāmbu, aindrāsalila, etc.
therefore, is of the utmost importance when attempting to explain *indragopa*. The animal called *indragopa* is most assuredly not identical with the « fire-fly » or *khadyota*, other Sanskrit names of which are *khajyotis*, *guhmadiapaka*, *cilamilikā*, *jyotiriṅga(na)*, *jyotirbija*, *dhvāntonmesa* and *prabhākīṭa*. In Hindi it is also known as *khadyot(a)* or, more commonly, *jug(a)nī* or *paṭabīj(a)nā*. The *khadyota* could be confused with the *indragopa*, since the *khadyota*, too, is sometimes used in rainy season descriptions. It is, however, entirely different: it does not cover the earth in large numbers, as the *indragopa* does. It flies and, as it glows, is characteristic of the evening and the early hours of night 22, whereas the *indragopa* creeps slowly on the ground and is never referred to in connection with night-time. Due to the fact that the word *go* had acquired a number of senses as early as in Vedic times, the most important of these being « cow », « earth », « ray », « heaven », « speech » and « organ of sense » (*indriya*), the compound *gopa* can be understood in several ways. The most usual meanings are, of course, (1) « cowherd » and (2) « protector of the earth », i.e. « king ». Neither of them seems to agree very well with the contexts in which *indragopa* occurs. The sense of « cowherd », so often adopted in translations into English, may at first appear corroborated by the existence of Skt. *gopālikā*, Pr. *gaḷīḷa* 23 which is constructed in a similar way, but this denotes a kind of horsefly or gadfly, and, consequently, refers to a different creature. It cannot be doubted that the word *gopālikā* means « one who keeps to (or watches) the cows ». The *indragopa*, on the other hand, is never described as living near dung-heaps or cattle and, moreover, is said to be perfectly harmless. It is worthy of note that both species of animals are discriminated also by Hemacandra who in *Abhidhānac*. 1209, that is, in the half-śloka preceding the verse on the *indragopa*, catalogues the horsefly, in fact very strikingly, as: *gopālikā mahābhīrur gomayothā tu gardabhī, « the horsefly, the extremely terrible fly, the fly arising on dung-heaps, the ass-fly ».

The Pandits consulted by H.H. Wilson analysed the compound *indragopa* as *indra*, « best », *go*, « light » and *pa* or *pā*, « who nourishes or possesses », which, when taken together, would yield a meaning like « (an animal) that possesses the very best light ». It is obvious that the Pandits’ interpretation of *indra* is wrong. Their explanation of *gopa* as « one having light » can, in principle, be accepted, but is probably incorrect, too, since the *indragopa* is neither shiny nor luminous. The relevant texts do not refer to this circumstance either, but frequently mention as its most particular features that the *indragopa* appears in connection with the rains, that its colour is red, usually scarlet or crimson, and, as

we have seen especially often, that *indragopas* inhabit the earth in large swarms which, while forming red patches, contrast beautifully with the green colour of the patches of moist and fresh grass. Although I admit that the interpretation of an animal name need not necessarily be supported by evidence from purely textual sources, a satisfactory etymology of the word *gopa*, and hence *indragopa*, can be derived just from the last-mentioned characteristic. Employing various words such as *kṣiti, dhārā, bhūmi, mahā, mediṇī* etc., authors, when describing this favourite scene, make mention, over and over again, of the earth, another often used name for which is precisely the polysemantic word *go* occurring in *gopa*. Since, moreover, *indragopas* are wingless and, as I have stated, crawl slowly around, it is, to say the least, very tempting to understand *gopa* in the sense of «one protecting the ground», or, more adequately, «(an animal) that keeps to the ground».

Let us now turn to considerations of a more zoological nature. My argument might have already shown that the *indragopa*, first of all, does not denote several animals simultaneously, as the great variety of both Latin and popular names offered in dictionaries are so liable to suggest. *indragopa* denotes only one particular creature, but is definitely not an insect. Muhammad Jāyasī, in two of his verses 24, would not have likened the tears that the lonely lady (*virahīṇī*) is shedding to *bīr(a)bāhūṁ*, if these *bīr(a)bāhūṁ* really possessed a typical insect-like, tripartite body. The *indragopa* is thus not identical with the *Mutilla occidentalis* 25, nor with the *Buccella carniola* 26, nor with the *Coccus lacca* or *Coccus caeti* (i.e. the cochineal) both of which are known to be scale insects, but have apparently been identified with the *indragopa*, because red laquer is obtained from the *Coccus lacca* and vermilion dye from the *Coccus caeti*. All these animals, and the *Coccinella* as well, belong to the class of the insects 27. The *indragopa*, as has been rightly defined by both J. T. Platts 28 and Mousset-Dupuis 29, is an animal of the species of the *Trombidiiidae* (acarus). It figures in the zoological class of the *Arachnida*, and belongs to the order of the *Mites*. Most probably it appertains, following further divisions, to the sub-order of the *Trombidiformes* and, finally, to the family of the *Trombidiiidae* which are most abundantly represented especially in tropical countries, with about one thousand different species. A European genus of these *Trombidiidae* has been identified by Linnaeus (1758) as the *Acarus holosericus*, popularly known as the velvet-mite, which is crimson or scarlet in colour and appears

26. CPD, s.v. *inda-gopaka*.
27. The class *Insecta* comprises, among others, winged and unwinged insects, lice and beetles.
in profusion on grass during summer and autumn. Unlike many other representatives of the Trombidiidae, the indragopa, which belongs to a genus found in most parts of the Indian sub-continent, is harmless to men as well as to cattle. It is of a rather small size, approximately as big as a pea, and, being a mite, has a body, in which only the mouth-parts appear separate, while head and body are united. The word indragopa is distinct from its homonym found in the Rgveda. Sanskrit- and other dictionaries should catalogue the term indragopa and equivalent words like indrayadhū, vairāṭa, etc. as having the sense "the rain-mite", a species belonging to the Trombidiidae, and also list, thought it is only attested in the compound indragopa, the special zoological connotation of the word gopa which, in agreement with this examination, should be rendered as "a mite; literally, "an animal) that keeps to the earth", as, for example, a mite; see indragopa. To this may be added that, in Mahāyāna texts, the word indragopa has acquired the meaning "red" and in compounds with śiras or śīrṣa(n) signifies "redheaded". Both types of compound, indragopāśiras and indragopaśīrṣa, are used in describing certain (miraculous) elephants. In the Tibetan historical work rGyal.rabs the indragopa is most curiously mentioned as "one of the five divine jewels among the substances devoted to a costly Chorten." 

30. A class of the phylum Arthropoda which, in its majority, consists of land animals and, besides numerous other orders, includes scorpions, spiders, daddy longlegs, and mites.


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