

Chapter 1

Origin of Vampire Myths in Eurasian Narratives

1.0. Introduction

All we have to go upon are traditions and superstitions.... In old Greece, in old Rome; he flourish in Germany all over, in France, in India, even in the Chersonese; and in China, so far from us in all ways, there even is he, and the peoples fear him at this day. (Stoker 285-86)

In the above discourse on vampires, Dr. Van Helsing, the scientist-exorcist of Bram Stoker's epoch-making text *Dracula* (1897) endorses the existence of vampires in all ancient civilizations. His intention was to find the method to kill Count Dracula. However, the detailed account of the characteristics of the vampire and the references to its existence in different parts of the world generates inquisitiveness about the origin of the legend because it relates the myth of Count Dracula to similar myths in Asia and Europe. Did the vampire myth originate in Europe in the nineteenth century? Does it exist in Classical European and ancient Asian cultures? Did Stoker study those 'traditions and superstitions' from which he draws sustenance for his work? In this chapter, I will try to explore the origin of the vampire legend.

The opening chapter of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) located the Dracula Castle somewhere in Transylvania, situated in Central Romania. The Carpathian mountain range and Apuseni Mountains, which form its natural borders, surround the region. The reason for selection of this region as the locale of *Dracula* could be alluded to its ruler Vlad III Draculea, Prince of Wallachia, popularly known as Vlad the Impaler who reigned in the region in the fifteenth century (Dan 1). There are several assumptions that the character of Count Dracula is influenced by the character of Vlad the Impaler III who was notorious in history for his cruelty. (Dan 1)

The obscure location of the Dracula Castle in Transylvania of Romania may be attributed to the obscurity of the region. However, it is not merely the exotic and spooky atmosphere of Romania, which stirred Stoker's imagination. It is significant to note that Stoker does not provide geographical specificity to the Castle of Count Dracula. Jonathan Harker, the protagonist of the text failed to locate the Castle of his client in the map of Europe in the library of the British Museum:

I find that the district he named is in the extreme east of the country, just on the borders of three states, Transylvania, Moldavia, and Bukovina, in the midst of the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe. I was not able to light on any map or work giving the exact locality of the Castle Dracula, as there are no maps of this country as yet to compare with our own Ordnance Survey maps... (Stoker 9 – 10)

Such non-specificity of the Dracula Castle in the cartography available with the British Museum, often claimed to be the most authentic archive of the East, renders, as I observe, Stoker's deliberate narrative strategy of constructing a space beyond the limits of the cartographic knowledge of the European Enlightenment. Perhaps Stoker intends his readers to go beyond the acclaimed territory of European imagination to wander in an antique land where the faculties of 'reason' are suspended. In fact, the location of the district where the Dracula Castle is assumed to have been located, in the borders of three states, symbolizes the space comprising phenomena of the margin, which are yet to be explored. Moreover, such marginality of the location of the Castle and its geographical proximity to the East may historically be alluded to its cultural proximity to the Orient, the enigma of the West. In his postcolonial discourse *Orientalism* (Vintage Books: 1979), Edward Said defines the "Orient" as the "Other" (1) of Europe.¹⁹

1.1. Dracula as an Embodiment of the Subversion of Heteronormativity

I think that it is therefore discernible that the Orient, the ideologically constructed 'other' of the West, harbours everything that is non-normative: ideological, cultural, social, political and sexual. I would like to infer that in its representation of sexuality therefore, The Orient embodies the practices and form which are restricted, forbidden, marginalized and silenced. In his *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, Michel Foucault explains the shifting paradigm of sexuality since the eighteenth century.²⁰

¹⁹As Edward Said puts it: 'The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture.' Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1979, pp. 1-2.

²⁰According to Michel Foucault, 'Through the political economy of population there was formed a whole grid of observations regarding sex. There emerged the analysis of the modes of sexual conduct, their determinations and their effects, at the boundary line of the biological and the economic domains. There also appeared those systematic campaigns which, going beyond the traditional means-moral and religious exhortations, fiscal

In the milieu of the repressed sexuality in Europe, Stoker has chosen a locale on the margins of Europe and in close proximity to the Orient, to explore sexualities beyond the heteronormative paradigm. The term 'heteronormativity' is defined by *The Queer Dictionary* thus:

Heteronormativity is the belief or assumption that all people are heterosexual, or that heterosexuality is the default or "normal" state of human being. It tends to complement and accompany concepts like cisnormativity, gender binarism, and gender essentialism. A heteronormative society operates on the assumption that heterosexuality and specific gender features are the human "default." These assumptions can be hurtful because they are stigmatizing and marginalizing, making people who are LGBT+ feel like they are perceived as deviant or unnatural.²¹

Michael Warner who introduces the term, points out that it structures:

Gender, the family, notions of individual freedom, the state, public speech, consumption and desire, nature and culture, masturbation, reproductive politics, racial and national fantasy, class identity, truth and trust, censorship, intimate life and social display, terror and violence, health care, and deep cultural norms about the bearing of the body. (Quoted in Varela et al. 44)

Hence, the concept of heteronormativity predominant in late nineteenth century Britain seemed to structure the norms of sexuality within its own space. The sexual practices unsanctioned in that structure have not been allowed to feature in its territory. Such sexual practices, therefore, featured in spaces beyond the control of heteronormative structure. The location of Transylvania in the margins of three states and the unspecified location of the Dracula Castle could therefore be seen as the symbolic space to hold Dracula's sexuality, which transgresses the heteronormative paradigm.

measures-tried to transform the sexual conduct of couples into a concerted economic and political behavior'. Michel Foucault. *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*. Translated by Robert Hurley. Penguin, 1998, p. 26.

²¹ No page number available.

1.2. Migration of the Vampire Myth from India to Eastern Europe via the Silk Route

I question the originary myth of the Vampire being of European origin and would like to ask ‘Is it a mere coincidence that the myth of Dracula originated in Eastern Europe?’ Aubrey Sherman, in his *Vampires: The Myths, Legends and Lore* (Adams Media: 2009), considers that the vagabond gypsies have transported the myth of the vampire from India to Eastern Europe. As Aubrey Sherman points out:

Gypsies is the name given to the Romani people (in the mistaken belief that they came from Egypt), who originated in Northern India and spread across much of Europe. In their nomadic wanderings, they helped spread vampire legends, including some from Indian folklore, such as that of the fearsome vampire Kali. She was known among the Gypsies as Sara or the Black Goddess. (90)

Such observation, without adequate historical evidences may appear to be vague and far-fetched. However, I think that it is perhaps probable that the vampire myth evolved as the bi-product of the cultural exchange that took place over centuries during trade between Asia and Europe through the historical Silk Route, and Turkey was the space where the two continents meet (No wonder that historical Dracula had a close association with Turkey). Hence, Stoker’s Count Dracula appears to be the amalgamation of various Asian and European myths, which had been negotiating with each other for centuries. In what follows in this chapter, I will make a critical survey of the Indian, Tibetan, and Slavic myths to prove this assumption.

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, The Silk Route is the oldest and longest transport route to connect Asia with Europe. As it states:

Originating at Xi’an (Sian), the 4,000-mile (6,400-km) road, actually a caravan tract, followed the Great Wall of China to the northwest, bypassed the Takla Makan Desert, climbed the Pamirs (mountains), crossed Afghanistan, and went on to the Levant; from there the merchandise was shipped across the Mediterranean Sea. Few persons travelled the entire route, and goods were handled in a staggered progression by middlemen.²²

The route from China to Turkey passing through India, Tibet, and Persia was not only significant for trading of silk, but also for religious and cultural exchange. It is through this

²²Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Silk Road". Encyclopedia Britannica, 18 Aug. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Silk-Road-trade-route>. Accessed 5 December 2022.

route, Buddhism got transported to Afghanistan and Central Asia as well as Tibet and China and European travellers are said to have come to China and India. The Silk Route opens the gateway of the dialogue between the East and the West that resulted in the cultural encounter.

As UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) records:

Travellers along the Silk Roads were attracted not only by trade but also by the intellectual and cultural exchange taking place in cities along the Silk Roads, many of which developed into hubs of culture and learning. Science, arts and literature, as well as crafts and technologies were thus shared and disseminated into societies along the lengths of these routes, and in this way, languages, religions, and cultures developed and influenced one another.²³

The cultural encounter seems to comprise an export of the Indian ideas in the regions through which the Silk Route passed. Among the Indian ideas exported to Tibet, the most notable are Tantra and Yoga. As Sures Chandra Banerji notes in *Cultural Reciprocity between India and the World* (Sharada Publishing House: 1999):

Systematic knowledge of Yoga was, perhaps, imparted to the Tibetans by the Bengali scholar Dipamkara Atisa (10th -11th Cent.) who settled there.... Of the four sets of Tibetan Tantra, two are concerned with Yoga.... In yogatantra, the practitioner mainly relies on meditative stabilisation, and resorts to only a few external rites. (193)

In fact, the texts of Tantra had also been transported to Central Asia from Tibet with the spread of Buddhism in the region and translated in the languages of the region. Sures Chandra Banerji notes the translation of *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita*, a text on *Vajrayana Tantric Buddhism* and other Buddhist texts in Khotanese language, belonging to the eighth to tenth centuries (206-07). He also notes the translation of *Kathasaritsagara* (c. 11th century AD) in Persian language probably in 16th-17th centuries (Banerji 209).

I think that it is significant to note that not only the Classical Sanskrit texts of Indian literature, philosophy and religion got translated into the languages of the regions through which the Silk Route passed, the themes of such texts get manifested in the texts written by the writers of other languages. Such curious case of intertextuality appears in case of *Kathasaritsagara*.

²³ <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/about-silk-roads>. No page number available. Accessed 5 December 2022.

As Sures Chandra Banerji has noted:

In the *Kathasaritsagara*..., it is stated that, due to the presence of a rope in the neck of a person, named Bhavasarman, he is reduced to a bull. When some sympathetic person, out of kindness, throws away the rope from the neck, he is restored to his original human form. Similar motif is found in the (*Arabian*) *Nights*. As illustrations may be cited the second Kalenders' Tale..., Sidi Nu Uman. (229)

The story referred above, which has an Arabic equivalent, refers to the theme of shape shifting, one of the characteristics of vampires. Moreover, it is significant to note that the collection of tales, *Kathasaritsagara* contains the tales of *Vetala Pancavimsati*, which has the Vetala, the shape shifting animated corpse or *Pishacha* as one of its protagonists. Later in this chapter, we will discuss in detail the striking similarities between the Vetala and the vampire. Sures Chandra Banerji further notes the wide popularity of *Vetala Pancavimsati* in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, which is manifested in different versions of it in those regions:

In the *Kathasaritsagara* (Ch. 30), one Harisarman appears as omniscient; he is considered to be a repository of supernatural knowledge.... The story of Allwissened in the Grimm's Tales has considerable similarity with this story. Versions of these stories, sometimes with a little variation, are found in various eastern and western countries. As an instance, the Mongolian version, called *Siddikur*, of the Sanskrit *Vetala Pancavimsati* can be mentioned. The story, almost in its entirety, occurs in Schleicher's *Lithuanian Legends*. A version of it occurs in Henricus Belius's *Facetioe*. Some similarity of this story is found also in the *Nights*. (231)

Further similarities can also be found between stories of *Kathasaritsagara* and stories of Persian as well as Turkish *Tutinama* (Banerji 232). Following such wide popularity of *Kathasaritsagara* in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, I suppose that it would not be far-fetched to assume that the myth of the vampire may have been influenced by this popular Indian legend of the Vetala and the traders travelling by the Silk Route may have transported the myth. The travellers have always an inclination towards story telling as we gather from the host in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (composed between 1387-1400 AD). No wonder that the stories of *Kathasaritsagara* would gain popularity among them. However, I think it important to note that the myth of the vampire initially created mass hysteria because of its association

with disease and death. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* has mentioned an interesting point in this context:

With the gradual loss of Roman territory in Asia and the rise of Arabian power in the Levant, the Silk Road became increasingly unsafe and untraveled. In the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries the route was revived under the Mongols, and at that time the Venetian Marco Polo used it to travel to Cathay (China). It is now widely thought that the route was one of the main ways that plague bacteria responsible for the Black Death pandemic in Europe in the mid-fourteenth century moved westward from Asia.²⁴

It is relevant to note that Slavic Vampire myths flourished in the late medieval period, that is, in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries (Garza 11). Hence, it could be assumed that the vampire myth in Europe is probably an import from Asia. We will now analyse the characteristic features of Count Dracula and the existence of such traits in Tibetan, Indian and Slavic myths to find how the latter got assimilated into the former.

1.3. Motifs in Vampire Narratives

In Chapter XVIII of *Dracula* (1897), Dr. Van Helsing enumerated the characteristic features of Dracula, the vampire, which the alliance of warriors led by him had to encounter. Firstly, Dracula is un-dead; he resurrects and becomes stronger after every mortal death of himself. Secondly, he has the necromantic power to command the souls of the persons he killed. Thirdly, he can change shape, and can appear whenever and wherever he wishes with limitations. Fourthly, he can control elements and animals of prey. Fifthly, he can vanish and appear invisible. Finally, he lives on human blood, which gives him eternal life, vitality and power (Stoker 286-287).

He has some limitations as well. Firstly, he cannot go anywhere unless he is invoked. Secondly, he has no power in the day. Thirdly, he lives in a grave or in hell, “the place unhallowed” (Stoker 287). Fourthly, he is afraid of God and sacred items such as the Crucifix. The traits of Dracula, as a creature of darkness with an antipathy to the Christian God (His abhorrence of

²⁴Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Silk Road". Encyclopedia Britannica, 18 Aug. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Silk-Road-trade-route>. Accessed 5 December 2022.

the Crucifix and other sacred objects in the text exemplifies that) seems to have been constructed by Stoker as an 'Other'.

The 'Otherness' of Dracula is manifested by his participation in sacrilegious acts such as feeding on human blood, sucking (a metaphor of fellatio), his nearness to the East and his exotic appearance and lifestyle. Such traits, as I observe, make him a non-Christian and non-European 'other'. The threat of Dracula hovering over European modernity is symbolized by the natural disorder in Whitby following the arrival of the Count in the town (Stoker 101) and his desire to buy property in London is the threat of the transgressive oriental 'other', who attempts to invade and destabilize the façade of eighteenth century Enlightenment. Let us explore the oriental vampire myths to substantiate the above observations.

In his seminal essay "Approaching the Unconscious", C. G. Jung has conceived of myths and archetypes as parts of the human unconscious which have been sustained and developed in the human mind since the ancient times across cultures. Among the primary archetypes, the recurrent one is the fertility cult manifested in various myths (Jung 69).

The fertility cult demonstrates its integral relationship with 'the feminine', which resulted in the worship of the Mother Goddess in pre-historic civilizations in many cultures. In his seminal work on Indian mythology, *Myth and Reality: Studies in the Formation of Indian Culture* (People's Publishing House: 1962), D. D. Kosambi observes the existence of several Mother Goddesses in the rural areas of Maharashtra along with their consorts who later have made their entry into the mainstream Hindu pantheon as the result of syncretism of Aryan and non-Aryan cultures.

An essential part of their worship is the animal sacrifices, which supposedly include human sacrifices in the pre-historic age and rituals with blood (Kosambi 87). The idea of blood as the source of regeneration and the bearer of soul was an essential part of the savage cults (Fraser 207b) Hence, on the one hand, sacrifices and rituals with blood to regenerate life were developed in various ancient communities, while bloodshed has been tabooed as a sin because of its sacred association with the human soul. In *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (Temple of Earth Publishing: 1922), Sir James George Fraser records:

The taboo is probably based on the common belief that the soul or spirit of the animal is in the blood.... But as usual the taboo is only the special enforcement of a general precept; in other words, its observance is particularly enjoined in circumstances which seem urgently to call for its application, but apart from such circumstances the prohibition is

also observed, though less strictly, as a common rule of life. Thus, some of the Esthonians will not taste blood because they believe that it contains the animal's soul, which would enter the body of the person who tasted the blood. Some Indian tribes of North America, "through a strong principle of religion, abstain in the strictest manner from eating the blood of any animal, as it contains the life and spirit of the beast." (207b)

1.4. Vampiric Creatures in Hindu and Buddhist Myths

The rituals with blood and sacrifices, an inheritance of the primitive cults have later been synchronized with the Aryan customs, and became associated with demons and therefore, forbidden. However, Brahminism retains its ancient connotations by associating it with regeneration and source of vitality (one would remember in this context, the myth of *Raktavija*, the demon who was capable of regenerating and multiplying himself with the drop of blood, in *Markandeya Purana* (c. 3rd century AD). The Vajrayana Cult of Buddhism also manifests its preoccupation with blood as the source of vitality and regeneration. Regarding the syncretism of Buddhism and the ancient cults, Kosambi has recorded a curious case. Considering the existence of Buddhist monasteries in the tribal regions of Maharashtra, he states:

The Buddhist monks, not mere almsmen but expert food-gatherers...who penetrated the wilderness to preach ahimsa and peaceful social behaviour would initially follow the same tracks, in order to reach the greatest number of savages. Their religion insisted upon the cessation of blood-sacrifices, and the cult-spots were the most likely places for their preaching. (Kosambi 89)

Such observations on the correspondence of the two cultures lead to two important critical assumption. Firstly, it evidences the role of trade routes in the transportation of culture and religion. Secondly, it testifies the reciprocal influences of Buddhism and ancient indigenous cults on each other, later manifested in the Vajrayana tradition. The rituals of blood, which have been associated with demonology in the Brahminical tradition, found a sacred position earlier in Shaiva as *Aghori* and later in Buddhist and Shakta Tantras such as *Vajrayana* and *Mahadamara* because of their subversive tradition. Chintaharan Chakravarti traces the origin of Tantra in the tribal cults prevalent even in the pre-Vedic period. As Chintaharan Chakravarti comments in *Tantras: Studies on Their Religion and Literature* (Punthi Pustak: 1972)

Though they [mythological stories] are rather conflicting in details, they agree in suggesting the origin of the Tantras with degenerated or low-class people from whom they seem to have been borrowed by the higher-class people who may have systematised them and found for them a philosophy of their own. Different Tantric rites and deities are known to have been popular in olden times with lower class people among whom they are supposed to have their roots. (45)

Chintaharan Chakravarti further cites examples from *Kadambari* to prove his point:

Bana in his *Kadambari*...refers to rites similar to those of the tantras as having been prevalent among the lower section of the people (*Sabaras*), e.g., offering human flesh as a religious offering and worshipping god with blood and meat of animals.... Elsewhere... he refers to the temple of goddess *Candika* and the rites performed there. The chief priest of this temple is stated to have been an old Dravidian. As a matter of fact, the Sakti or Mother cult which presupposes a matriarchal society is supposed to have originated with the Dravidian people among whom mother-kin is still found to be prevalent. (45-46)

It is significant to note that such customs of worship with human and animal blood and flesh along with the orgiastic sexuality have later been associated with *Kapalikas*. They seem to perform the rites to achieve magical power to control the elements. As Dr. Apurba Chandra Barthakuria notes in *The Kapalikas* (Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar: 1984)

We learn from the account given in the *Kalika Purana* that the *Kapalikas* offer oblations in the fire with the flesh, fat and brain of human beings, worship their celebrated deities with wine poured from the skull of a Brahmana and perform human sacrifices. They also wear a dirty tiger's skin and carry a human skull. It is mentioned in the same account that the *Kapalikas* drink wine in a sacrifice and they also drink blood. (5)

However, the *Kapalikas* have not been well received in the *Puranas* and often being associated with demons for their fleshly rituals and often debarred in sacred occasions (Bathakuria 45). Demonology²⁵ appears to be a potential threat that destabilizes the sacred institutions of

²⁵‘Demonology is the science or doctrine concerned with the study of demons. It can comprise such features as a classification of their hierarchy, of their powers and limitations, attributes, multiple names and derivations. It has also come to mean a branch of magic that deals with malevolent spirits’.
<https://www.library.sydney.edu.au/collections/rare-books/online-exhibitions/witchcraft/demonology/demonology.html>. Accessed 5 December 2022.

marriage and family by thwarting the idea of monogamy in its celebration of orgiastic pleasure of sexuality.

In *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton University Press: 1990) Northrop Frye says:

The demonic erotic relation becomes a fierce destructive passion that works against loyalty or frustrates the one who possesses it. It is generally symbolized by a harlot, witch, siren, or other tantalizing female, a physical object of desire, which is sought as a possession and therefore can never be possessed. The demonic parody of marriage, or the union of two souls in one flesh, may take the form of hermaphroditism, incest (the most common form), or homosexuality. The social relation is that of the mob, which is essentially human society looking for a pharmakos, and the mob is often identified with some sinister animal image such as the hydra, Virgil's Fama, or its development in Spenser's Blatant Beast. (149)

Such ancient rituals concerning fertility, vitality, pleasure, regeneration seem to have been manifested in various cultures across time and space. Their varied representations across cultures range from demons, witches, lamia, empusae, Indian *Baitals* to European vampires. What binds them together, as I observe, is their association with blood, which could be traced back to the pre-historic cults of the so called 'savage races'.

1.5. Vampiric Traits in European Folklore

The Romanian legacy of Dracula has been endorsed by the detailed discourse on Count Dracula by the scientist as well as exorcist Dr. Van Helsing in Stoker's novel:

Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turk, over the great river on the very frontier of Turkey land. If it be so, then was he no common man, for in that time, and for centuries after, he was spoken of as the cleverest and the most cunning, as well as the bravest of the sons of the 'land beyond the forest.'.... The Draculas were, says Arminius, a great and noble race, though now and again were scions who were held by their coevals to have had dealings with the Evil One. They learned his secrets in the Scholomance, amongst the mountains over Lake Hermanstadt, where the devil claims the tenth scholar as his due. In the records are such words as 'stregoica' witch, 'ordog' and 'pokol' Satan and hell, and in one manuscript this very Dracula is spoken of as 'wampyr,' which we all understand too well. (Stoker 287-288)

The account of the lineage of the Count appears to manifest the power, cunningness and the nobility of the Draculas. Instead of the concern over the imminent threat posed by the vampire to the rational elites of nineteenth century England, one would hardly miss the tone of admiration and fascination for the enemy. The reference to Scholomance, a nineteenth century Hogwarts is being adopted from the traditional folklore of Romania.

In an article entitled “Transylvanian superstition” published in 1885, Emily Gerard records:

As I am on the subject of thunderstorms, I may as well here mention the Scholomance, or a school supposed to exist somewhere in the heart of the mountains, and where all the secrets of nature, the language of animals, and all imaginable magic spells and charms are taught by the devil in person. Only ten scholars are admitted at a time, and when the course of learning has expired and nine of them are released to return to their homes, the tenth scholar is detained by the devil as payment, and mounted upon a zmeu (dragon) he becomes henceforward the devil's aide-de-camp, and assists him in 'making the weather,' that is, in preparing thunderbolts. A small lake, immeasurably deep, lying high up among the mountains south of Hermanstadt [sic], is supposed to be the cauldron where is brewed the thunder, and in fair weather the dragon sleeps beneath the waters. (136)

The account of the school of wizardry emphasized the point of manipulating and exerting control on the elemental Nature (ironically a rationalist preoccupation as well) which is one of the privileges of Count Dracula. The topography of the place seems to be significant. The Dragon in the Lake reminds us of the legend of the Loch Ness monster (Emily was Scottish in origin) and it is not surprising that the name Draculea is derived from the Latin *Draco* meaning the son of the dragon or that of the Devil (Dan 1). Thus, the significant phenomenon is the artistic synchronization of the indigenous East European myths and folklore. Stoker seems to have reoriented the notorious legend of Vlad III to fit his vampiric tale in order to create an Eastern enchantment to fascinate the European readers. The choice of the figure of Vlad Draculea as the inspiration to create the character of the Count may be attributed to his notoriety, cruelty and propensity to exert power.

Although the narrative of Vlad the Impaler appears to be the immediate inspiration to compose his vampire narrative, Stoker does not merely seem to recreate the single narrative in a Victorian context. I think that his novel appears to be the crossroad where several traditions meet; several myths merge and overlap to create one of the most enigmatic myths in European literature.

In his discourse on the origin and nature of the vampire Count Dracula in Bram Stoker's epoch-making novel *Dracula*, Dr. Van Helsing, the enlightened doctor-scientist as well as exorcist traces the existence of vampiric creatures in every civilization since the Classical age in Europe. Although, the myth of the vampire finds different dimensions and manifestations in different cultures, they share the characteristic feature of the subversion of the norms of heteronormativity on the one hand, and the state of transition between life and death on the other. The ancient predecessors of 'the vampire' comprise the Grecian legends of *Empusae* and *Lamia*, the bloodsucking seductresses, Indian *Baital*, the animated corpse or *Pishacha* and the vampires of Slavic folklore.

1.6. Vampiric Creatures in Buddhist Mythology²⁶

Hindu and Buddhist mythologies have rich traditions of demonology as well. The supernatural creatures such as *Rakshasa*, *Pishacha*, *Danava*, *Dakini*, *Yogini*, and *Pretini* have been presented in theological as well as fictional discourses with their characteristic details. Such demonic creatures have often been designated as the consorts of the Lord Shiva and often they have been conceived as the companions of the Goddess *Kali*. There are schools of Tantra that valorize and promote the power of the demons to control the natural and human world. Tantra, unlike the Brahminical texts, conceives the male as passive and the female as active in sexual union. I think that the problematization of heteronormative codes of sexuality in Tantra perhaps stems from the *Vajrayana* Buddhist tradition, which places goddesses as prominent entities rather than mere companions of their male counterparts. The demons also problematize heteronormativity by transgressing the established norms of sexuality anticipating the western vampiric creatures in the nineteenth century.

I find that a study of the myth of the vampire in the west renders its striking similarities with the Gods and Goddesses of Buddhism of the *Vajrayana* tradition. Further I find that the concepts of Hell and the Lord of Death in Buddhist mythology appear to render structural resemblance with the western concept of the vampire and his abode conceived in fictional narratives. Among them, mention must be made of *Aksobhya*, one of the *Dhyani Buddhas* in

²⁶ Part of the assumptions of this section has been published in Subham Amin. "Our Vampires, Their Vampires: A Study of the Origin of Vampire Legend in Buddhist Mythology". *Journal of the Department of Pali*, University of Calcutta, Volume XIX, 2016, pp. 91-95.

the *Vajrayana* tradition. As Benoytosh Bhattacharyya comments in *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism* (Motilal Banarasidas Publishers: 2009):

Amongst the gods emanating from *Aksobhya*, *Heruka*, *Hayagriva* and *Yamari* are the chief. The blue colour of *Aksobhya* is associated with terrible deities and gruesome rites in the Tantra. The deities emanating from *Aksobhya* usually take a blue colour and they exhibit an awe-inspiring appearance with distorted face, bare fangs, three eyes, protruding tongue, garland of severed heads and skulls, tiger's skin and ornaments of snakes. (131)

The god represents energy and vitality along with a preoccupation with blood. One of his manifestations, *Heruka* manifests the same vitality in his dynamism:

*Neelang naracharmabritang kapalamala [...]/Jwalad-urdha-pingalakeshang
raktabartulakshang/ Antiya sangrathita mundamala bilambitam/ Narasthi rachita
bharanang [...]/ Dangstrakaralabadanang [...]/ bamakarena purnakapalang.*²⁷

(Bhattacharya, *Sadhanamala* 469)

The *Heruka* is here described as in an apparel made of human skin and human skulls. He dazzles with pale hair and reddened eyes rolls around. He wears a necklace of human skulls and his ornaments are made of human bones. He looks fearful in feasted teeth and in his left hand; he holds a human skull cup full of human blood. Such associations are recurrent in his descriptions as in the expressions “*Raktaparipurna sardranamastakamalakrita shrakdama dangshtrakaralang*”²⁸ (Bhattacharya, *Sadhanamala* 469). Similarly, Benoytosh Bhattacharyya elaborates about one of the sexual postures of the *Heruka* thus:

When two-armed *Heruka* dances in the *Ardhaparyanka* attitude on a corpse, and carries the *Vajra* and the skull cup full of human blood in the two hands. The *Khatvanga*, surmounted by human skulls with flowing banner, hangs from the left shoulder like a sacred thread.... While his Sakti *Vajravara* shows the *Vajra* and the *Kapala* full of blood. (*An Introduction to Esoteric Buddhism* 131)

²⁷ “He (the god *Heruka*) is blue in complexion, clad in an apparel made of human skin. His pale hair is disheveled and his eyes are red. He looks furious in his clenching teeth and he holds a human skull cup filled with human blood in his left hand.” (My translation)

²⁸ “Clenching teeth and the head and the hair smeared with blood” (My working translation).

The preoccupation with blood and the corpses is also seen in *Vajravarahi*, the consort of *Heruka*. She has been described as wearing a garland of human skulls: “*Vajravarahing raktang trinetrang muktakeshang/ Shatardha sardra narashiramala pralambitang.*”²⁹ (Bhattacharya, *Sadhanamala* 439)

Moreover, her posture on a spirit suggests the reversal of sexual role: “*Vajravarahing raktabarnang pretasanasthang/ Alirhapadang nagnang urdhakeshang/ Kapalamukutang*”³⁰ (Bhattacharya, *Sadhanamala* 367)

Yamari, another important manifestation of the *Aksobhya Buddha*, could also refer to the same context. The Tibetans conceive an interesting anecdote about the origin of this God. According to that anecdote, a Yogi was killed and beheaded by robbers. Then, as Benoytosh Bhattacharyya says:

Immediately when he was killed his body assumed the ferocious form of *Yama*, and, taking up the bull’s head, he set it upon his headless shoulders. He then killed the two robbers, and drank their blood from the cup made out of their skulls. In his fiery and insatiable thirst for victims, he threatened to de-populate the whole of Tibet. The Tibetans appealed to their tutelary deity *Manjusri*, whereupon the latter assumed the fierce form of *Yamantaka*, and defeated *Yama* in a sanguinary battle. (*An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism* 131-132)

From this I would like to infer that anecdote of the origin of *Yamantaka* could possibly be conceived as a predecessor of Dracula in the pattern of death, regeneration, insatiable lust for blood and defeat in the hands of the divine.

The description of hell in *The Jatakas* (c. 2nd century BC), referred by J. H. Haldar in *Early Buddhist Mythology* (Manohar Book Service: 1977) evokes a filthy nether world similar to the dwelling abode of the vampires:

The commentary on the *Matakabhata Jataka* refers to the sixteen *ussada-nirayas*.... There is in the hell a lake filled with stinking filth and ordure. Its inhabitants have to eat ordure and filth. Malicious persons who harm their friends and hurt others are subject to such suffering.... Another stinking lake full of blood and pus is also there. Those who

²⁹ “The three-eyed goddess *Vajravarahi* is red in complexion. Her hair is dishevelled and smeared with blood. She wears a garland of human skulls.” (My translation).

³⁰ “The goddess *Vajravarahi* is red in complexion. She is accompanied with spirits. She wears a skull cap, sitting in a reversed sexual posture.” (My translation).

slay their fathers, mothers and others to whom they should pay reverence are cast into it and have to drink a draught of blood. (Haldar 60-63)

In *The Jatakas* (c. 2nd century BC), there is a description of the hell *Sataporisa* that is also endowed with similar attributes:

Those who slay their mothers are sent to this hell and are cut with ploughshares by demons. When they become thirsty, the demons give them blood resembling molten copper which flows from their wounds. Here they suffer from loss of sight. Enormous worms pierce the sinners' skin and devour their flesh and blood. (Haldar 63-64)

Such a description of harrowing hell with a lake full of blood to quench the thirst of the sinners in Buddhist mythology is the motif of the vampire legend: blood. Dracula feeds on the blood of his victims to retain eternal life, thereby to remain in the state of eternal damnation. As Van Helsing gathers from the ancient scriptures:

The vampire live on, and cannot die by mere passing of the time; he can flourish when that he can fatten on the blood of the living. Even more, we have seen amongst us that he can even grow younger; that his vital faculties grow strenuous, and seem as though they refresh themselves when his special pabulum is plenty.... But he cannot flourish without his diet; he eat not as others. (Stoker 286)

It is significant to note that such hells in *The Jatakas* are reserved for those who commit blasphemy or sacrilege. Dracula's act of renunciation of God and his bloodsucking motive that resembles fellatio, approximate sacrilege by virtue of his defiance of heteronormative codes of sexuality endorsed in theological doctrines. Ironically, Dracula, as the elixir of eternal life, appropriates the blood, which the sinners are compelled to consume as part of their torment in hell in Buddhist mythology. This appropriation is a subversive form of counter discourse against the order of Catholicism.

Suttanipata, in its description of the infernal tortures, refers to the victims who are struck with iron rods; they are led to the iron stake with sharp edges (Haldar 63). Thus, I think that it may not be coincidental that Dracula is supposed to be killed with an iron stake pierced through his heart. As Van Helsing recounts:

The branch of wild rose on his coffin keep him that he move not from it; a sacred bullet fired into the coffin kill him so that he be true dead; and as for the stake through him, we know already of its peace; or the cut-off head that giveth rest. We have seen it with our eyes. (Stoker 287)

It is ironical that the vampire, who demonstrates subversion of heteronormativity in its sexual practices, has been punished with a stake, a phallic symbol in order to penetrate his body. In his penetrative study of the exorcism of the vampiric corpse of Lucy, Christopher Craft observes:

This enthusiastic correction of Lucy's monstrosity provides the Crew of Light with a double reassurance: it effectively exorcises the threat of a mobile and hungering feminine sexuality, and it counters the homoeroticism latent in the vampiric threat by reinscribing (upon Lucy's chest) the line dividing the male who penetrates and the woman who receives. By disciplining Lucy and restoring each gender to its 'proper' function, Van Helsing's pacification programme compensates for the threat of gender indefiniteness implicit in the vampiric kiss. (Bloom 56)

Therefore, the stake, the most effective and potent phallic weapon of patriarchy has been employed to discipline the sinners who have committed sacrilege in the hell of *Jatakas*, has also emerged in vampire narratives to punish the transgressive male and female vampires. As Christopher Craft comments:

The vigour and enormity of this penetration (Arthur driving the 'round wooden stake', which is 'some two and a half or three inches thick and about three feet long', resembles 'the figure of Thor') do not bespeak merely Stoker's personal or idiosyncratic anxiety but suggest as well a whole culture's uncertainty about the fluidity of gender roles. (Bloom 56)

The demi-gods and goddesses in Tibetan and *Vajrayana* pantheon, precisely those of wrath manifest their preoccupation with blood drinking, the central metaphor in vampiric fiction. In the *Tibetan Book of the Dead: or The After—Death Experience on the Bardo Plane, according to Lama Kazi Dawa—Samdup's English Rendering* (OUP: 2000), one would find such deities, as in the description of the Judgement Day after death, the furies of the Lord of Death are being presented as demonic figures, preoccupied with blood:

Then [one of the Executive Furies of] the Lord of Death will place round thy neck a rope and drag thee along; he will cut off thy head, extract thy heart, pull out thy intestines, lick up thy brain, drink thy blood, eat thy flesh and gnaw thy bones; but thou wilt be incapable of dying. Although thy body be hacked to pieces, it will revive again. The repeated hacking will cause intense pain and torture. (166)

The series of macabre images of the disintegration of the body with a beastly vigour and monstrous violence gets replicated in the description of vampiric Lucy in *Dracula*:

Never did I see such baffled malice on a face.... The beautiful colour became livid, the eyes seemed to throw out sparks of hell-fire, the brows were wrinkled as though the folds of the flesh were the coils of Medusa's snakes, and the lovely, blood-stained mouth grew to an open square, as in the passion masks of the Greeks and Japanese. If ever a face meant death—if looks could kill—we saw it at that moment. (Stoker 254)

In his introduction to the *Tibetan Book of the Dead: or The After—Death Experience on the Bardo Plane, according to Lama Kazi Dawa—Samdup's English Rendering* C.G. Jung considers the image of the torment after death as equivalent to schizophrenia. As he says:

The psychological equivalent of this dismemberment is psychic dissociation. In its deleterious form it would be schizophrenia (split mind). This most common of all mental illnesses consists essentially in a marked *abaissement du niveau mental* which abolishes the normal checks imposed by the conscious mind and thus gives unlimited scope to the play of the unconscious 'dominants'. (xlvi)

1.7. The *Pishacha* as a Predecessor of the Vampire

The genesis of the vampire legend not only lies in Buddhist *Tantra*, but in *Shakta* tantric cult as well. The concept of the *Pishacha*, the animated corpse who is invoked by the worshippers of necromancy to harm their enemies, seems to anticipate the vampire cult in Europe in many ways. The legend of *Pishacha* finds a literary rendering in *Vetala Panchvingshati* (c.11th century AD) a collection of mythic tales by the Sanskrit poet Bhavabhuti in the eighth century. The tales are told by Baital, an animated corpse to King Vikramaditya who is being assigned the task by a Yogi to bring the corpse to him for tantric rituals. Sir Richard Burton translates the text in 1870 and no wonder, that he entitled it as *Vikram and the Vampire or Tales of Hindu*

Devilry (1893). In the Preface to *Vikram and the Vampire or Tales of Hindu Devilry* (1893) translated by Sir Richard Burton, Isabel Burton states:

The Baital-Pachisi, or Twenty — five (tales of a) Baital [5] — a Vampire or evil spirit which animates dead bodies — is an old and thoroughly Hindu repertory. It is the rude beginning of that fictitious history which ripened to the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, and which, fostered by the genius of Boccaccio, produced the romance of the chivalrous days, and its last development, the novel— that prose-epic of modern Europe (xi)

The tale anticipates Stoker's novel primarily in its depiction of the ambience that precedes the appearance of a vampire. As King Vikram approaches the cremation ground to meet Yogi Shantashil, the necromantic practitioner, nature manifests apocalyptic images and phenomena.³¹

I find that a similar calamitous ambience is observed during Jonathan Harker's journey to the Dracula Castle. As he was proceeding to it, he heard weird howls of predatory creatures.

In *Dracula* (1897), as I see, Stoker employs a combination of visual and auditory images to create an eerie sensation.³²

³¹ 'There was an outer circle of hideous bestial forms; tigers were roaring, and elephants were trumpeting; wolves, whose foul hairy coats blazed with sparks of bluish phosphoric light, were devouring the remnants of human bodies; foxes, jackals, and hyenas were disputing over their prey; whilst bears were chewing the livers of children. The space within was peopled by a multitude of fiends.... Malignant witches with shrivelled skins, horrid eyes and distorted forms, crawled and crouched over the earth; whilst spectres and goblins now stood motionless, and tall as lofty palm trees; then, as if in fits, leaped, danced, and tumbled before their evocator. The air was filled with shrill and strident cries, with the fitful moaning of the storm-wind, with the hooting of the owl, with the jackal's long wild cry, and with the hoarse gurgling of then swollen river, from whose banks the earth-slip thundered in its fall'.

Sir Richard Francis Burton, translator. *Vikram and the Vampire or Tales of Hindu Devilry*. London, Tylston & Edwards, 1893, pp. 31-32. E-book.

www.forgottenbooks.com/en/download/VikramandtheVampire_10016261.pdf. Accessed 4 December 2022.

³² 'Then a dog began to howl somewhere in a farmhouse far down the road, a long, agonized wailing, as if from fear. The sound was taken up by another dog, and then another and another, till, borne on the wind which now sighed softly through the Pass, a wild howling began.... Then, far off in the distance, from the mountains on each side of us began a louder and a sharper howling, that of wolves, which affected both the horses and myself in the same way.... But just then the moon, sailing through the black clouds, appeared behind the jagged crest of a beetling, pine-clad rock, and by its light I saw around us a ring of wolves, with white teeth and lolling red tongues, with long, sinewy limbs and shaggy hair. They were a hundred times more terrible in the grim silence which held them than even when they howled. For myself, I felt a sort of paralysis of fear.' Bram Stoker. *Dracula* (1897). Penguin, 1994, pp. 21-23.

In spite of the topographical dissimilarities, the existence of wrathful nature, predatory and supernatural creatures and the uncanny ambience is common in both the texts that function as premonitions to an impending catastrophe or the appearance of Evil. Among the signs that suggest the approach of the Devil, is essentially a storm. In his discussion of the power of Dracula, Van Helsing points to the capability of the Count to control nature:

(H)e can, within his range, direct the elements, the storm, the fog, the thunder, he can command all the meaner things, the rat, and the owl, and the bat, the moth, and the fox, and the wolf, he can grow and become small, and he can at times vanish and come unknown. (Stoker 283)

Such ability and aspiration to control the elements of nature dates back to the pre-historic customs posed as magic among ancient tribes and significantly, blood was an essential part of such rituals.

In his seminal work *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, Sir James Fraser mentions:

Once more, the savage thinks he can make the wind to blow or to be still. When the day is hot and a Yakut has a long way to go, he takes a stone which he has chanced to find in an animal or fish, winds a horse-hair several times round it, and ties it to a stick. He then waves the stick about, uttering a spell. Soon a cool breeze begins to blow. In order to procure a cool wind for nine days the stone should first be dipped in the blood of a bird or beast and then presented to the sun, while the sorcerer makes three turns contrary to the course of the luminary. (79b)

It is important to note that in most of the aboriginal customs that aspire to control the elements of nature as well as desire eternal life by regenerating the dead, blood acts as the recurrent motif of regeneration as it does for the vampire legend. The magicians, who could apprehend the phenomena of nature, later approximated the seat of the kings in communities. Similarly, Count Dracula aspires to be the king of humankind by defeating the rational world of science, technology and constitutional monarchy following the line of those ancient magicians. Does it represent the archetypal conflict between Nature and Culture?

Apart from their associations with calamity, disorder, apocalypse, Dracula's resemblance with *Baital* is quite apparent in the description of the latter in Burton's *Vikram and the Vampire or Tales of Hindu Devilry* (1893):

Its eyes, which were wide open, were of a greenish-brown, and never twinkled; its hair also was brown, and brown was its face — three several shades which, notwithstanding, approached one another in an unpleasant way, as in an over-dried coconut. Its body was thin and ribbed like a skeleton or a bamboo framework, and as it held on to a bough, like a flying fox, by the toe-tips, its drawn muscles stood out as if they were ropes of coir. Blood it appeared to have none, or there would have been a decided determination of that curious juice to the head... its skin it felt icy cold and clammy as might a snake. The only sign of life was the whisking of a ragged little tail much resembling a goat's. Judging from these signs the brave king at once determined the creature to be a *Baital* — a Vampire. (35-36)

The features of the *Baital*, such as, pale complexion, thin body and puckered flesh, anaemic face and cold body temperature, are essential determinants of his resemblance to the European vampire legend. Such resemblance could be discerned from Jonathan's description of the Count on their first meeting:

The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward, and holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince, an effect which was not lessened by the fact that it seemed cold as ice, more like the hand of a dead than a living man.... His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth. These protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years.... Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were long and fine, and cut to a sharp point. As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me, I could not repress a shudder. It may have been that his breath was rank, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which, do what I would, I could not conceal. (Stoker 26-29)

In both these figures, I find, one comes across cold lifeless corpses reanimated by blood. it is worthy to remember that Yogi Shantashil was also involved in rituals with blood (Burton, *Vikram and the Vampire or Tales of Hindu Devilry* 32). As in case of the motif of blood to control the elements of nature, the *Baital*, the *Pishacha* or the Indian vampire is not an Aryan invention. Rather, its origin goes back to the pre-historic, which precedes habitation because

the deities have no temple or any permanent structure to house them. Kosambi has recorded the existence of pre-historic myths and gods and goddesses on the trade routes in Maharashtra to formulate a theory of syncretism and transportation of myths by traders and travellers. Referring to the ancient open-air shrine of the *Vetala* at Chinchvad, he observes:

The primitive origin and nature of the extant cults is shown by the injunction (as also in the case of *Vetala*) that the stone must be open to the sky. Roofing it over brings grave misfortune upon the misguided worshipper, but the goddess's consent is generally obtained when the villagers become sufficiently wealthy. Therefore, the cults go back to a period before houses were in fashion, and when the "village" was on the move. (Kosambi 87)

It would not be far-fetched to refer to the *Mhasoba* cult in Northern Maharashtra where a black stone is worshipped under the open sky. He is regarded as the deity of the so-called low-caste people within the Brahminical system who sacrifice animals to him and consume cakes made of roasted blood of that sacrificed animal. Hence, the vampiric preoccupation with blood could allude to these cults, which seem savage to us today.

1.8. Conclusion

The emergence of the myth of vampire with his transgressive and non-normative sexual practices (fellatio, homosexuality, lesbianism, necrophilia, paedophilia, incest) in the popular imagination therefore, as I want to show, appears as a viable threat that could disrupt the bourgeois production system by indulging in the sexual pleasure principles instead of engaging in the serious business of reproduction. Hence, the bourgeois anxiety about potential disruption of the production system got manifested in the social hysteria about vampires.

The intertextual study of the vampire narratives of Asia and Europe leads to two critical assumptions or observations. The first one of them is the theory of migration following the trade routes. If the chronology of the Indian texts with vampiric legends are taken into consideration, then the period of the development of the cult would appear to parallel the development of the *Tantric* tradition in some branches of the Indian theological milieu. The *Vetala Panchvingshati*, a fictional discourse on vampirism and *Tantra*, is assumed to have been composed in the eighth century while *Sadhanamala*, the sacred text of the *Vajrayana* cult of Buddhism is believed to have been composed from the third to the tenth century, although most

of the deities conceived, achieved aesthetic shape not before tenth century (Bhattacharyya, *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism* 19)

The Buddhist scholar Atisha Dipankara took many texts of Buddhist *Tantra*, along with many other Buddhist doctrinal works to Tibet in the twelfth century immediately before the Islamic invasion in India. Since the twelfth century, a rich tradition of *Tantric* Buddhism flourished in Tibet as well as in China. These traditions include blood rituals for eternal life, magic to control elements of nature and above all, subversion of heterosexual codes and acknowledgement of alternative sexuality. No wonder that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* contains all the traits evident in the Indian texts. What could be the reason? Did the medieval Arabic and European merchants and travellers carry the myth to the Slavic region? The chronological study of the vampiric myths across the line does not deny this possibility as I have shown in this chapter. The second hunch or tendency I find would be to use the Jungian line: manifestation of the primary archetypes in different nations in different forms even without any evidence of migration. Although that debate is yet to be resolved, there is hardly any disagreement about the enigmatic charm of vampire cult across cultures.