

Tibor Szemző
A Guest of Life
Alexander Csoma de Körös

Script by László Sári
English translation by Tim Wilkinson

Scene 1. Reclusively cloistered sage

Music 1

byang chub rdzong gi dben gnas hdi
The world's a stronghold for the reclusively cloistered sage

Title 1

On 23 November 1819 Alexander Csoma de Körös speaker of 13 living and dead languages, set out on foot from Transylvania to track down the origin of the Hungarians

The voice of Milarepa, Tibetan
(Tibetan Gurma singing)

The world's a stronghold for the reclusively cloistered sage:
Behind me is an ice-flow curtain, tumbling silk hangings,
Before me a wondrous grove, a dream wood, luxuriant.
Below, broad pasture expanses, billowing seas of grass.

Title 2

He arrived eight years later at the Buddhist monastery in Kanam village at the foot of the Himalayas

Wanderer

The world's a stronghold for the reclusively cloistered sage:
Behind me is an ice-flow curtain, tumbling silk hangings,
Before me a wondrous grove, a dream wood, luxuriant.
Below, broad pasture expanses, billowing seas of grass.

Scene 2. Credits

A Guest of Life

Alexander Csoma de Körös

Music 2

nkhor ba mthan med mu mthan med par khyams

Leaving you no choice but to roam in an infinite and boundless Maelstrom

Storyteller

In the district of Háromszék it is believed, to the present time, that if Alexander Csoma had returned from Tibet, he would have become king of the entire land of the Szeklers. They waited a long time. Some still await him now.

Title 3

Storyteller
Mari Törőcsik

Title 4

Producer
György Durst

Recitation from The Book of the Dead, Tibetan

Of births to be deferred to or repudiated there are countless, innumerably many, the onsets of their brightnesses too manifold be enumerated. Stubborn ignorance veils them, leaving you no choice but to roam in an infinite and boundless Maelstrom. That is why it is important that you now reach a place of safety!

Death is the embodiment of the law – so we say.

Death is the light's radiance – so we say.

Death is *the* reality – so we say.

Death is *the* reality – so we say.

Title 5

Co-producer
Attila Bognár

Title 6

Cinematography
István "Taikyo" Szaladják

Title 7

Editor
Teri Losonci

Camel (packing)

Title 8

Paintings
Gábor Roskó

Title 9

Animations
Károly Kása Papp
Bálint Kolozsváry

Title 10

script
László Sári

Leaning shopkeeper

Title 11

a Tibor Szemző film

Scene 3. The hardiest dancer
1st legend, animation

Storyteller

When the merchants' caravan reached the town, a great clatter of music could be heard at all sides from the streets. Hard to tell where it actually came from. As they pushed on further, Alexander Csoma saw men and women standing in a ring, hand linked in hand. In the centre of the circle was a violin player, striking up a regular song of Turko-Croat character. Others were accompanying this on zither, brass rattles, tambourines, drums, much as if it were a devil's dance down in hell. Not that it was that, for it was a bridal feast! Men and women alike wearing wide pantaloons and snug, scaly-silver kaftans. The merchant signalled for his caravan to halt; they had arrived.

"My eldest son is marrying for the fourth time. What do you say to that, scholar? I told you, did I not, that I'm not a poor man! I have four wives myself," he said loudly, turning to Alexander Csoma. "Come on in, then!"

So Alexander Csoma entered the courtyard with the merchants, joined the ring, and they danced together that way until dawn the next day. But even after that, the wedding feast carried on for a further ten days. And the merchant would not allow his guests to leave. He had them dance morning, noon and night, until the entire wedding party had fainted dead away from the circle, and every Gypsy was snoring in his sleep. The wealthy merchant sought to show how merry Turks are as a people, and him the merriest and wealthiest of them all. Yet the hardiest dancer amongst all present was not the swaggering merchant but Alexander Csoma himself. He was the last one left standing on his feet after ten days; he alone endured the leaping around, the ceaseless musical pounding of the dirt. Never was a wedding feast as big as that seen since, anywhere in the Balkans, it is said.

"Anyone who can endure a merchant's wedding for ten days can go straight to the land of the Himalayas!

Thus Alexander Csoma himself went, the moment he had stopped dancing. Down into the depths, up to the sky, across entire continents, he reached there without stopping once, Turks and Greeks and Bulgars declare even to this day. Anyone can learn that when passing through those parts.

Scene 4. I stand dumbfounded, Himalaya

Title 12

“Its treasures and beauty
may be no more than wishful thinking...”

Music 3

Ton de myrmekon ton chrysorychon dermatata idein phesin houtos pardaleais homoia
...But their skins are like those of leopards

Milarepa, Tibetan

A cool breeze wafts, a whiff of flowers drifts on the air's wings,
And the waterside willows sway in a decorous dance.
The tender grass of endless pastures that unfold to view
Is grazed, with heads bowing, by a legion of docile beasts.
The shepherds keeping watch on the flocks quietly make merry;
A flute's far-carrying tones supersede the strains of song.
The world attaches to itself all of servant-mankind,
Who work over the soil entirely with their labour.

Wanderer

A cool breeze wafts, a whiff of flowers drifts on the air's wings,
And the waterside willows sway in a decorous dance.

Indian Schoolteacher, Hindi

Yet the Himalayas have a dourer, more inimical aspect as well. Unlike the Indian
paradise of the southern slopes, to the north stretch endless, bare plateaus,
where cruel windstorms wreak devastation. Only he who has business there
should direct his path that way.

Wanderer

Only he who has business there should direct his path that way

Strabo, Ancient Greek

Gold-mining ants live in the mountains. These ants are no smaller than foxes, but
their skins are like those of leopards.

Wanderer

Gold-mining ants live in the mountains. These ants are no smaller
than foxes, but their skins are like those of leopards.

Strabo cont.

They dwell in large holes in the bowels of the mountains, and the gold-dust that
they mine they heap up at the mouths of the holes, like moles.

Wanderer

They dwell in large holes in the bowels of the mountains, and the
gold-dust that they mine they heap up at the mouths of the holes,
like moles.

Wanderer

Very few of our own kind have ever seen this landscape. Its treasures

and beauty may be no more than wishful thinking.

The Professor, Sanskrit

Even the millennia of the gods would not allow me to hymn to you the glories of the Himalayas. I stand dumbfounded, and a festive mood of ages long gone, a shudder, seizes me. For the Himalayas are not just a shrine, a church, but god himself. The Himalayas are the greatest wonder of the divine and human world.

Music 4

At diabolus numquam in his plagis firmiter insistere potuit
But the devil was never truly able to gain a footing in this region

Henry Savage Landor, Hungarian

To the north of the lakes stood the magnificent sacred Kelas mountain, overtopping by some two thousand feet all the other snowy peaks of the Gangri chain. Kelas, the sacred peak, is of fascinating interest owing to its peculiar shape.

Wanderer

To the north of the lakes stood the magnificent sacred Kelas mountain.

Landor, cont.

When clouds were round it, toning down and modifying its shape, Kelas appeared at its best from the painter's point of view. Under these conditions, I have thought it very beautiful, especially at sunrise, with one side tinted red and yellow, and its rocky mass standing majestic against a background of shiny gold. With my telescope I could plainly distinguish, especially on the east side, the defile along which the worshippers make the circuit at the base of the mountain... From this spot we could see more distinctly... the band round the base of the mountain, which, according to legend, was formed by the rope of the devil trying to tear down this throne of the gods.

Wanderer

We could see more distinctly the band round the base of the mountain, which, according to legend, was formed by the rope of the devil trying to tear down this throne of the gods.

Classmate from Nagyenyed, Latin

But the devil was never truly able to gain a footing in this region; the worshippers did not allow him to break the peace, the miracle.

Wanderer

But the devil was never truly able to gain a footing in this region.

Scene 5. By the shore of the Saracens
2nd legend, animation

Storyteller

In Szekler-land they recount even to the present time how the world would stand agape when Alexander Csoma was spotted somewhere. Once, for instance, still en route to Tibet, a big ship almost foundered by the shore of the Saracens. So big a sailing ship that the entire land of the Saracens would have comfortably fitted on it. Alexander Csoma just happened to be paying a visit to the ship's captain when a frightful shout sounded from the rigging aloft:

"Ahoy! Here comes the Black Hurricane!"

In the twinkling of an eye, a dark shadow spread across the waters of the sea. On the heels of that, a sky-high wave swelled up, picking the gigantic ship up on its back, only to plunge it back down from on high like a broken-winged sparrow. It then soared upwards afresh on the back of the monstrous waves. And so it went on and on, with the turbaned Saracens just tumbling about in the belly of the ship, their world turned topsy-turvy.

"Scholar, sire, true believer that you are, in Alexandria you have a reputation as a learned sorcerer," the captain in his dripping-wet pantaloons turned with great respect to Alexander Csoma. "The Black Hurricane has already destroyed all we possess back home; our livestock, our houses, our country; the better half of our people is lost, now the other half too awaits its death. Save what is left, I beg you, summon up your schooling!" he bowed humbly in his silk pantaloons to Alexander Csoma, at which the latter stood silent in the ship's prow. He looked up at the black clouds in the sky and at that moment spotted amidst them the black dragon from hell. As the story is still told to this day, he quietly hailed it, then launched into a long discourse. No one knows what language he spoke in, or what he may have said, but the dragon gradually calmed down. In the end, it became as meek as a lamb, then stole away in such a manner that, from that day on, he was never even seen again.

That is how the Saracens were left on the face of the Earth, for otherwise they would no longer exist

Scene 6. World Mountain, Kanam village

Title 13

“Even the millennia of the gods
would not allow me to hymn to you
the glories of the Himalayas.”

Music 5

Devavarshasahasreshu 'pi na shaknuyam himalayasya stutim prakirtitum

Even the millennia of the gods would not allow me to hymn to you the glories of the Himalayas

The Professor, Sanskrit

Even the millennia of the gods would not allow me to hymn to you the glories of the Himalayas. The Himalayas are the greatest wonder of the divine and human world. For the Himalayas are not just a shrine, a church, but god himself.

Wanderer

I stand dumbfounded, and a festive mood of ages long gone, a shudder, seizes me. Himalayas are not just a shrine, a church, but god himself.

Hungarian Schoolmistress and Kanori Guide

The “uncomfortable angularity” of Mount Kailasa is closely linked to the dourer, more majestic aspect of the Himalayas. Its marked inimicality, and the wild winds and storms that rampage in this region, all evoke the mountain’s most celebrated tenant, the god Shiva.

Wanderer

The wild winds and storms all evoke the god Shiva.

Later

Shiva and his divine consorts have their abode on the tallest peak of sacred Mount Kailasa. Above them are the heavens, at the foot of the mountain is the middle world of humankind, below that are the various levels of hell.

Schoolmistress and Guide cont.

This is where most of the Hindu and Buddhist divinities live, along with Shiva and his family. Above them are the heavens, at the foot of the mountain is the middle world of humankind, below it are the various levels of hell. Kailasa is the centre and axis of these three worlds. The World Mountain.

Wanderer

Kailasa is the centre and axis of these three worlds. The World Mountain.

The Professor, Sanskrit

Even the millennia of the gods would not allow me to hymn to you the glories of the Himalayas. The Himalayas are the greatest wonder of the divine and human world.

First Lama

Music greets the rising sun at dawn each day from the roof of the monastery in Kanam village. Tibetan Buddhism has existed here in unchanged form for practically a thousand years. For a thousand years the day has begun with musician monks climbing up onto the flat roof with their instruments. To start with they blow their long horns nice and softly, then as the sun's disc rises over the peaks in the east they sound them ever more loudly. By the end their sound completely fills the vast spaces of the Kanam valley.

Scene 7. In a splendid garden of the king of Araby
3rd legend, animation

Storyteller

Once, when he happened to be traversing the great sandy desert, Alexander Csoma suddenly found himself in a splendid garden of the king of Araby. Though he had seen many marvels and glories by then, even he had not witnessed the likes of this. Amid the cool shade of ferns, winding their way amongst bubbling fountains, the courtiers conducted him to the palace. In its rooms were crimson curtains before windows of ice-clear crystal, pillars of veined marble everywhere, colourful gem stones heaped in huge basins of gold at every turn. The king was away at war in a nearby place, but they were expecting him back by the evening. Meanwhile, Alexander Csoma was pampered in a scented bath and clothed in white gossamer Arabian garb. He then idled away the time with the servants.

It was his habit, wherever he might go, whomsoever he might meet, to acquire that person's language without further ado. Despite taking a bagful of tongues with him when he set off on his journey from the land of the Széklers, they were never enough. Likewise at the palace of the king of Araby, so intently did he listen to the domestic servants that by nightfall he had mastered that king's tongue as well. At which moment the king himself indeed returned from the war. When he learnt that Alexander Csoma was visiting, he let out such a shout of joy that all the men of rank and all the king's servants flocked together, for in those days a king of Araby was rarely accorded such an honour. He gave orders for a great feast to be prepared. They ate and drank and became fast friends, but even after that Alexander Csoma held his friend in conversation for three nights and three days. He told him about his native village of Kœrös, about Nagyenyed and Göttingen, where he had been schooled. And also about how he was seeking his homeland, and the ancient relics of his countrymen, in Asia. The king was greatly amazed listening to this, marvelling at Alexander Csoma's intrepidity.

Then, with the king being obliged to return to the war, as he was now sorely missed, and Csoma to carry on his journey toward Tibet, they embraced one another with deep emotion. So that the wanderer might never forget this land, the king bestowed on him the gift of a large gilded book. So big was the book that it took four servants to carry it in Alexander Csoma's steps all the way to the very centre of the distant Himalayan land, then straight up from there to the very summit. In this large gilded book were written down all the languages in the entire world, so that Csoma could learn whichever of them he wished, and derive pleasure in doing as long as he lived.

Scene 8. Lest he be assailed by longing...
Kanam, monastery, ceremony

Title 14

The monk coolly contemplates the earthly life.

Music 6

Frigide et longe
Coolly and from afar

Classmate from Nagyenyed, Latin

The Tibetan monk tucked away in his monastery, amongst the rocky bastions of the Himalayas, coolly contemplates the events of earthly life.

Milarepa, Tibetan

That is what I see, scanning peacefully around this land.

Classmate cont.

Coolly, peacefully, so as not to be caught up by the rapture of 'existence', that is to say, the ardour of the will to live, Coolly and from afar lest his composure be perturbed. Lest he be assailed by longing in this earthly life, which, for all the beauties and joys it offers aplenty, is replete with suffering.

First Lama, Tibetan

The Tibetan monk tucked away in his monastery, amongst the rocky bastions of the Himalayas, asks if what ever-victorious death eternally threatens is true beauty or true joy. Transience casts its shadow on everything that constitutes happiness for the ordinary man. He asks if transient beauty, transient joy, transient happiness is not rather suffering.

Scene 9. How Alexander Csoma saved the caliph
4th Legend, film

To this day, the story is told in Baghdad of how Alexander Csoma saved the caliph. On one occasion when the two of them left the palace to take a ride, they were so immersed in conversation they failed to notice that they had ventured beyond the city gate.

animation

Despite proceeding far beyond it, in sandy desert, they could not bear to break off philosophising. All at once, though, they saw a great dust-cloud arising in the far distance and swirling ever closer. Then suddenly, before their very eyes, an entire army of Persian cavalry emerged from the dust. They were galloping, swift as an arrow, straight for Baghdad, but the moment they spotted the two lonely horsemen, the host reined in and came to a halt.

“Who might you be?” the shah of Persian himself came forward from amongst the ten thousand horsemen on his curly-maned, emerald-eared steed.

“I am one who this morning mounted his horse in his town and, musing on the ways of the world, got to this point in the desert. That’s who I am; so is my companion, and so are you too, whatever you may do,” responded Alexander Csoma, cool and collected. “A man cannot be more than that, even if one of us may be the Caliph of Baghdad and another the Shah of Persia.

“If one of you is indeed the Caliph of Baghdad, then at a nod from me he will be dead and his city mine. Still, the encounter might have happened the other way round, and then my life would hinge on him, with Persia being lost along with me. Is that really all there is to it?,” the Shah of Persia pondered in the desert on what Alexander Csoma had said. Then slowly, grudgingly he wheeled his steed round, gave a sharp dig of the spurs and galloped back with his army behind his own walls. Never again did he take to the saddle at the head of his troops.

“It is just the wind that your vainglorious fist clasps, leading your army. All else is nothing but a warped fragment, your fate as well,” the shah later read in the library of his palace.

animation

“It is just the wind that your vainglorious fist clasps, leading your army. All else is nothing but a warped fragment, your fate as well,” said Alexander Csoma to the Caliph of Baghdad on returning to his palace. There they left off philosophising for that day.

The wise caliph then related the tale of what had happened to the two of them to his men of letters, who recorded it. Those who read about and understand the essence of the desert encounter cite his words to this day. And the name of Alexander Csoma is not

forgotten but remembered with gratitude in Baghdad.

Scene 10. Where is your dwelling-place, then?

Fatepur Sikhri

Title 15

Where is your dwelling-place, then?

Music 7

Des Menschen Leben scheint ein herrlich Los
The life of man seems such a splendid fate

German Man

The life of man seems such a splendid fate;
The day how fair, and night as well how great!
And we, in this sheer Paradise so favoured,
The sun's magnificence we've hardly savoured
When our own striving muddles and confounds us
Now with ourselves and now with all around us;

Wanderer

The life of man seems such a splendid fate;
The day how fair, and night as well how great!
And we, in this sheer Paradise so favoured,
The sun's magnificence we've hardly savoured

The Wanderer and the Moon, Arabic

Where is your dwelling-place, then? Where is the dwelling-place of the fairies or the moths? Where is man's dwelling-place?" the Wanderer asked the Moon. "Where is it? Whither does it lie?"

"The fairies make the mountains, cliffs and trees their home; the moths' home is the blade of grass, the leaf, the flower. Man, however, makes the entire subcelestial world his home. So his dwelling-place may be anywhere," the Moon replied. "Except that point is as though it were nowhere at all," he added.

The Wanderer came to a halt in his horror. He then set off again, but lifted his feet more slowly than before. "His dwelling-place may be anywhere, yet still he finds no home. His dwelling-place may be anywhere yet still he finds no home," he kept reiterating the future's strange promise. "Where should I go, then, in light of that?"

Wanderer

Where is your dwelling-place, then? Where is the dwelling-place of the fairies or the moths? Where is man's dwelling-place?

His dwelling-place may be anywhere, yet still he finds no home.
Where should I go, then, in light of that?

Scene 11. Who knows himself?

Title 16

Who knows himself?

German Lady

Who knows himself? Who knows what he can do?
Has bold man never tackled anything intrepid?
The morrow is first to say if what you do
Was injurious or of benefit.

Music 08

Wer kennt sich selbst?
Who knows himself?

Second Lama, Tibetan

The milk is not seen in butter;
The Teaching is a mute secret.
Not-knowing derives from knowing;
Entrust your seeing to your heart.

Wanderer

The milk is not seen in butter;
The Teaching is a mute secret.
Not-knowing derives from knowing;
Entrust your seeing to your heart.

The Fairy of Wondrous Awakening, Persian

“I am the Fairy of Wondrous Awakening,” a voice sounded beside the Wanderer. “Not far from here is my home in the Shadow Empire of the Great Void, beyond the Sea of Weeping Sorrow, amongst the Mountains of Liberated Spring, in the Caves of Eternal Fragrances. I am commander of the dreams that travel on the wings of the eastern breezes, the judge of sleepers whose souls ascend to Heaven in their dreams to assuage the pain of earthly burdens on their return.”

Wanderer

I am the Fairy of Wondrous Awakening. Commander of the dreams, judge of sleepers whose souls ascend to Heaven in their dreams to assuage the pain of earthly burdens on their return.

The Fairy cont.

“Oh, would that I could always dream and dwell in your land!”

Wanderer

Oh, would that I could always dream and dwell in your land!

The Fairy cont.

“This region will be your home when you have finally shed your earthly body. Until then you can be but a guest here, when on sinking into dreams you forget your body down below. You understand that, don’t you?”

Wanderer

It is not yet time for you to move here to me. This region will be your home when you have finally shed your earthly body. Until then you can be but a guest here, when on sinking into dreams you forget your body

down below. You understand that, don't you?

Scene 12. The Wheel of Life

Music 9

ekbār bhābo āmi nā thākle rātrir rūp kemon hato?

For just imagine what the night would be without me!

Francis Bain, Bengali

As I lay there, I glanced up and saw the Moon's sickle in the purple-blue air. It quivered on the brow of the mountain peak, its softly radiant aureole making the heaven's funereal blackness beautiful, as if by magic. Whilst I beheld it with wonder, the Moon stooped down to me from the brow of the Heavens and whispered in my ear:

Wanderer

As I lay there,
I glanced up
and saw the Moon's sickle
in the purple-blue air.

Whilst I beheld it with wonder,
the Moon stooped down to me from the brow of the Heavens
and whispered in my ear:

The Moon, Bengali

"See, I am the star of the night, Heaven's diadem, the heavenly body of darkness, the embodiment of enchanting beauty that surpasses all imagining.

And you, who bathes in my brilliance, swims in my silvery torrent, softer and gentler than the most precious glance, have you no wish to pay homage to me? For I, too, am a divinity. Propagator of medicinal herbs, balm for the soul, cool, pallid, miraculous midnight madonna.

Do you not wish to bow your head before me, as the men of all ages have done since time immemorial, and as the peoples of the East do still to this day - they who placed me as an ornament on the curly brow of the god of gods, who call me the exquisite and sole adornment of this great dark world? For just imagine what the night would be without me! Darkness frozen to iciness, blind fear.

Mysterious swan, camphor-filled chalice, silver vessel, crystal globe, shedder of cool ambrosia - the ancients referred to me by many names, and when they bestowed a name upon me, it was always a woman's name.

Wanderer

Have you no wish to pay homage to me?

The Moon cont.

For I am a symbol of that power which is mother, spouse and daughter in one, which only attracts and does not repulse. Of that power which leads submissively reverential creation in its totality in a mystic round dance. The power of attraction and attachment that mankind cannot explain and yet surrenders itself to. For in it is concealed all beauty, in it concealed all feeling.

Scene 13. The mountain's prettiest fairy
5th Legend, *mooving moon*

Storyteller

In the dead of night, Alexander Csoma once mused at length on the mutability of the moon. On the new moon's brilliant sickle, on the waning moon's slim gondola, on the full moon's power to derange, on the frozen muteness of moonless nights.

Animation

Music 10

Hiába marasztalta, itt sem maradhatott

But she too pressed in vain to detain him; he was unable to stay

He was perched on one of the rocky bastions of the Caucasus, as guest of his friend, the god of the mountain. To the side, all around, the fragrance of flowering pomegranate and persimmon trees, below him endless meadowland.

"Down below, in the valley, the silver sea-swell of grasses. Do you see how the wind fashions its waves?" the mountain's prettiest fairy spoke unexpectedly next to Alexander Csoma. Alexander Csoma saw the mountain sward bathed in moonlight and heard the tinkling bell of the fairy's voice, yet he dared not behold her. She was prettier than the moon and all the stars of the Caucasian sky together.

"How many years have you been looking at the spring firmament's tiny moon and its ten thousand billion stars, little fairy?" Alexander Csoma asked quietly, gazing far ahead, not taking his eyes off the silver ocean of grasses.

"I have been looking at the springtime firmament's tiny moon and its ten thousand billion stars for an eternity," the fairy replied. "For as many years as this mountain has been standing here and the moon passing overhead and looking down on me. And we shall go on looking at one another for an eternity to come, to the end of time. Despite which I grow a little bit older every day all the same," she added to show her compassion towards the mortal wanderer. "And what about you, learned wanderer? For how long have you been looking at the sky's moon and constellations?" she went on to ask.

"I could count up the years, but I don't do that. I would become terrified at their rapid passing. That is why I too live my life the way you live. I shall be for as long as I have to be, as long as heaven wills. Yet as this finite earthly existence elapses, I become much, much older every day," Alexander Csoma replied somberly to the fairy, with utter conviction.

"Stay here with me on this rock, then the passing of your life will cease. From then on you shall live for eternity with the gods and fairies of the mountain," the fairy quietly entreated the learned wanderer. But she too pressed in vain to detain him; he was unable to stay. He soon quit the

Caucasus and the lovely, tinkling-voiced little fairy.

Film, hard steps

Tibet awaited him, he was driven there by longing. Though unbending discipline was his constant companion, he trod thereafter with heavy steps none the less. Throughout his entire, lengthy earthly path.

Scene 14. My soul's provenance is heaven

Title 17

My soul's provenance is heaven,
untouched by earthly existence.
Its suffering a passing cloud,
The overcast sky a spectre.

Third Lama, Tibetan

My soul's provenance is heaven,
untouched by earthly existence.
Its suffering a passing cloud,
The overcast sky a spectre.

Music 11

Na moteallegh be àlam-e àsemani, na moteallegh be àlam-e donyavi
Fit for neither the celestial nor the earthly world

Persian Storyteller

The Wanderer came to a halt by a lake shore. Dewdrops glistened on the petals of half-open lotuses. The work of fairy fingers, scattering their dawn pearls on the white petals so that the flowers did not so much as quiver on the surface of the water. Nor the blades of tender grass on the shore so much as bob. The Wanderer gazed at the lotus calyces, gazed at the blades of grass. He gazed at the dewdrops, those simultaneously earthly and celestial marvels.

Wanderer

The Wanderer came to a halt by a lake shore.
He gazed at the lotus calyces, gazed at the blades of grass.
He gazed at the dewdrops.

Yomo, Tibetan

All the business of this world is
a likeness mirrored on water.
See and know that this fleeting outline
Can never be reality.

Wanderer

All the business of this world is
a likeness mirrored on water.
See and know that this fleeting outline
Can never be reality.

The Yearning Wanderer, Persian

"You are a stranger! Fit for neither the celestial nor the earthly world."
"I am a wanderer," he said and then fell silent.

Wanderer

"You are a stranger! Fit for neither the celestial nor the earthly world."
"I am a wanderer," he said and then fell silent.

German lady

Soon the painful surfeit of furore
Powerfully impels him there, soon there, outdoors,
And at the sight of heaven's spirits' lustre and glory
Pleasure in dreams emerges once more.

Wanderer

Soon the painful surfeit of furore
Powerfully impels him there, soon there, outdoors,
And at the sight of heaven's spirits' lustre and glory
Pleasure in dreams emerges once more.

Yomo and First Lama, Tibetan

The organs of sense recognise
the tricks that are played on the mind.
The false and the true, the inward
and outward, can be told apart.

Scene 15. The maharajahs rejoiced exceedingly
6th Legend, animation

Storyteller

When Alexander Csoma, one fine day, arrived on Indian soil, the maharajahs rejoiced exceedingly. The fame of the learned man's miracle-working had so long preceded him, they could hardly wait. Day and night, they spruced up their palaces, and titivated their daughters. When Alexander Csoma had finally paid visits on all of them, without taking a wife from any, a great wailing and lamenting arose amongst the princesses. They all believed that the reason he had hitherto had no wish for any girl, whether Romanian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Greek, Saracen, Arab, Persian, or Tartar, was because he yearned with all his heart for an Indian girl alone. But to no avail were they clever and beautiful and diligent; to no avail their skills in gardening, poetry and music, Alexander Csoma had no use for any of them but just continued on his way.

Yet it was they who truly knew that there is a land where the rooms behind the windows of crystal palaces eternally breathe an intoxicatingly heady scent and torrid springs of rapture bubble day and night, and in whose arbours the flowers never wilt away. But they related all these many delights to Alexander Csoma to absolutely no avail.

And anyway, what would the poor man have done with so many princesses? Were he to have taken them home with him, the many oriental princesses would have overrun every corner of Szekler-land!

Scene 16. Down south, beneath the baking sky

Music 12

dwags mo rnam-thar legs pa mi rtag hchi ba med na
Men would live for time without end, happy too, amongst generous maids

Title 18

Sin is sumptuous and enthralling,
A glittering, coloured bubble.
When it is punctured by Knowledge,
the brilliance quickly fades away.

Lama, Tibetan

Sin is sumptuous and enthralling,
A glittering, coloured bubble.
When it is punctured by Knowledge,
the brilliance quickly fades away.

Title 19

Down south, beneath the baking sky,
men would live for time without end,
happy too, amongst generous maids,
if that were permitted by Death.

Lama, Tibetan

Down south, beneath the baking sky,
men would live for time without end,
happy too, amongst generous maids,
if that were permitted by Death.

Title 20

Out of desire emanates sin;
out of sin, erroneous notions.
Yet all that the souls are seeking,
poor things, is a pathway to love.

Lama, Tibetan

Out of desire emanates sin;
out of sin, erroneous notions.
Yet all that the souls are seeking,
poor things, is a pathway to love.

Scene 17. His dreams that day were fine and daring

Music 13

Mahāśay hamārā deś tumhāre jñān se chamak rahā hai.

Sir, your learned fame illuminates our celestial land with great light!

Title 21

His dreams that day were fine and daring,
for who knows what reason.

The Indian Master of Ceremony, Hindi

Here's the princess!

Wanderer

Here's the princess!

The Indian Lady-in-waiting, Hindi

Here's the princess!

The King in the Dream, Hindi

“Sir, your learned fame illuminates our celestial land with great light! Your wisdom has no equal amongst even the most brilliant of gemstones. My daughter does not yet have a consort, and I have already listened to many sages. On hearing of your fame, I determined that I intend the princess for you. Does my will accord with your own wish too?”

Wanderer

Sir, your learned fame illuminates our celestial land with great light!
On hearing of your fame, I determined that I intend the princess for you.
Does my will accord with your own wish too?

Hindi Storyteller

The princess and the wanderer bowed to one another then drained the gourd vessels to the last drop, thereby sealing their wedding vows. Servants then led them by the pale light of candles to the matrimonial suite. The bed was made of red coral, ornamented with the seven precious stones. Brilliant tiny gemstones hung down from the curtains, beneath them awaited coves of soft bolsters and coverlets.

Wanderer

The princess and the wanderer bowed to one another.
Servants then led them by the pale light of candles to
the matrimonial suite.

Bengali Storyteller

Whilst the Wanderer mused in the blinding moonlight on earthly life and heavenly

dreams, he lowered his head to his knees.

Wanderer

His dreams that day were fine and daring, for who knows what reason.
Perhaps he was afraid — whether that the dream would continue or
come to an end.

Bengali Storyteller cont.

His dreams that day were fine and daring, for who knows what reason. He had
grown weary in earthly haste and heavenly adventure alike. He might easily have
fallen asleep had he not feared stepping within [...] But the wanderer was afraid -
whether that the dream would continue or come to an end. Even he did not know
which he preferred.

Wanderer

Speak, my vagrant heavenly companion! Can what
man seeks down here, in the dust, from there be spotted?

Meditating Wanderer, Bengali

Speak my vagrant heavenly companion! Can what
man seeks down here, in the dust, from there be spotted?
He spins distractedly amidst magic shadows,
Roams blind, anguished, in forests of innuendoes.

The Moon, Bengali

Eternally the same, on a search for his self,
Yet on his maps never spying the way ahead.
His mind hunts, and battle upon battle wages.
A book's page where reason, never heart, engages.

Wanderer

Eternally the same, on a search for his self,
Yet on his maps never spying the way ahead.

Scene 18. Csoma had given his word

7th Legend, film

Storyteller

One day, then, Alexander Csoma stood at last alone on the roof of the Himalayas. He looked about, turned round and round; the entire world could be seen from there. The reason he had gone up there was in order to glimpse the relics of the Magyars. But on his way he was suddenly reminded of the British king.

Once, a long time ago now, the British king had requested that if he were to reach the peak of the Himalayas, he should set aside a little time to read the Tibetans' library.

animation

He had found no one the whole world over who would be capable of doing that. This the king had explained to Alexander Csoma back then, and Csoma had given his word he would find the time.

film

And so, he went into one of the monks' monasteries and asked them to open up the library. When they had opened it up, Alexander Csoma entered, and at a single sitting read through ten thousand Tibetan books. He then got to his feet and pondered hard.

Music 14

Omnes de India nuntii perpendendi sunt sedulo

We must thoroughly weigh up the reports about India

Storyteller cont.

The Tibetan books asserted that for him seeing was nothing more than what the world displayed to him. This, however, was all illusion and falsity, because all was constantly in flux. By the time a person might get to know it, everything would be completely different.

Csoma then mused at length as to why this should be of interest to the British king. He was also a little perturbed as to whether he fully comprehended the thinking of the Tibetans. So he sat back down to the books and compiled a substantial Tibetan-English dictionary for the king. Let him peruse the books himself until he has grasped just how evanescent reality is.

Scene 19. Everything is in flames...

Title 22

Everything is in flames.

The eye is in flames, and visual images are in flames, the ear is in flames, and sounds are in flames, the nose is in flames, and odours are in flames, the tongue is in flames, and tastes are in flames, the body is in flames, and tangible objects too, the mind is in flames, and thoughts are in flames.

Music 15

Die Sieben Worte, Introduzione, String Quartet

Sziddhartha Gautama Buddha, Pali

And the Blessed One, after having dwelt at Uruvela as long as he thought fit, went for to Gayasisa, accompanied by a great number of monks, by one thousand monks, who all had been hermit before. There near Gaya, at Gayasisa, the Blessed One dwelt together with those thousand monks. There the Blessed One does addressed the monks:

"Everything is in flames, monks. The eye is in flames, and visual images are in flames,... The ear is in flames, and sounds are in flames,... the nose is in flames, and odours are in flames. . . the tongue is in flames, and tastes are in flames,... the body is in flames, and tangible objects too,... the mind is in flames, and thoughts are in flames. What has set them alight? The fire of passion, the fire of hatred, the fire of stupidity,... sorrow, suffering, and torment have set them alight, I say to you."

Sanskrit speaker

Spoke the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, when he proclaimed his teachings

Title 23

Spoke the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama,
when he proclaimed his teachings

Scene 20. He closed his books for ever
8th Legend, film

Storyteller

Alexander Csoma pondered many a long year amongst the Tibetan books in the high Himalayas. The tumult of the constantly drifting world of existence down below did not reach him. "*There on the water of the lake is a puny image of the great heaven glittering up above. Down below the real is a false tracery, evanescing into diffuse vacuousness.*" He read the Teaching in the books, drinking in every word. He then noted down for the British king that, according to the Tibetan writings, one sole authority exists in the world: Time, which is present in all things and constantly passing by. Invisible and governing all. Adjuster of the orbits of stars and raiser of blades of grass. Creator and destroyer. With dominion over Sun and Moon. That was the sole reality, and all which exists outside it is there merely for it to display itself in.

He noted down for the British king that, according to the Tibetan writings, it was sheer stupidity to ponder on other things, to weave plans, make any endeavour. So heed well, let time pass gently by. Don't reveal yourself too strongly, don't try to set any direction on its passing. Cupidity will prove your undoing. That is what Alexander Csoma exhorted the British king once upon a time.

He, for his part, then closed his books for ever. From that day on, he scrutinised the face of the Himalayas ever more frequently and at ever greater length from the window of his monastery.

Scene 21. Anyone who scratches around amongst the names of things is crazy!
“Dance” of the Lamas

title 24

I have my home under the Green Cliff

Music 16

Qing geng feng xia yi gu song
I have my home under the Green Cliff

Meditating Hungarian Lady

Anyone who scratches around amongst the names of things is crazy! As if anything could hang on the name of something that exists mutely. Naming is never perfect; words are always too little, faulty. Yet words in their tens of thousands rise about us on all sides; they give the brain direction. But as to what words seek to say, we don't always comprehend too well, or have already forgotten.

As to what reality clothed in words might be like, gradually even those who write scholarly books do not know.

Wanderer

Anyone who scratches around amongst the names of things is crazy! As if anything could hang on the name of something that exists mutely.

Meditating Lady

As to what reality clothed in words might be like, gradually even those who write scholarly books do not know.

Wanderer

Yet words in their tens of thousands rise about us on all sides; they give the brain direction. But as to what words seek to say, we don't always comprehend too well, or have already forgotten.

Chinese man

Whence do I come? Where do I go?
It is not you who set that track.
I have my home under the Green Cliff.
A thousand troughs and a hundred peaks
Are dividing us.
Try your luck! Show up, why don't you!
I shall welcome you
with just a roar of laughter.

Wanderer

Whence do I come? Where do I go?
It is not you who set that track.
I have my home under the Green Cliff.
A thousand troughs and a hundred peaks
Are dividing us.
Try your luck! Show up, why don't you!
I shall welcome you
with just a roar of laughter.

Scene 22. In the depths of the subterranean world
9th Legend, animation

Music 17

In The Depths of The Subterranean World

Storyteller

When Alexander Csoma did nothing else in the Himalayas than just contemplate the sky, the mountains, the stones, the trees, watching what the blades of grass, the flowers, the beetles and the birds did, he again meditated at length. Then, one day, he decided that he would descend below. Up above, he had learnt from the Tibetan books what the world beyond the material conceals; he now set off to see what the material world might be like from the inner side. He bade farewell to the learned monks of the Tibetan monastery. They bowed deeply to one another, and he set off down the valley on the river bank. They were taken aback by how swiftly he moved away. At first he was as big as a raven, then as a fly, and finally no bigger than a poppy seed.

When he again reached the Middle Kingdom on his journey, he made a halt one last time. He looked about him to see what people were doing. Does a man *hard at work* comprehend his fate, his business? Or is it just the man who *contemplates* up above who comprehends where he is heading, what awaits him? He wished to know before he left them too. He watched and watched the multitude for a good long time, interrogating the wiser amongst them. Then one day he moved on from there as well.

“What interests me is whether I was before I came into the world, and whether I shall be after death. Where was I? Where shall I be? Does the subterranean world know about me now? And if I descend, shall I know about you? Until life is invited from death, and death from life, until you have been the guest of Heaven and the subterranean depths, you are merely the weary guest of mud and darkness,” he declared to his companions here, and then no one ever saw him again. They gazed at length after him, secretly hoping that in the depths of the subterranean world he would come across not only his own antecedents, but also the relics of his ancestors.

Scene 23. Farewell from all earth-dwellers

Title 25

Death is the embodiment of the law - so we say.
Death is the light's radiance - so we say.
Death is *the* reality - so we say.

Music 18

Nothing at all is, only you are insofar as you are at all

The Wanderer Saying Farewell, Hungarian

Nothing at all is,; only you are, insofar as you are at all. It would therefore be best if, from now on, you were to look after everything yourselves. To see through the secret of reality, discern the causes and the law. To be delivered from the passions of being, the passions of ignorance. To vanquish birth, vanquish death. That is now up to you. Go! Go onwards!

Wanderer

Nothing at all is; only you are, insofar as you are at all. It would therefore be best if, from now on, you were to look after everything yourselves. To see through the secret of reality, discern the causes and the law. To be delivered from the passions of being, the passions of ignorance. To vanquish birth, vanquish death. That is now up to you. Go! Go onwards!

recitation from The Book of the Dead, Tibetan

Of births to be deferred to or repudiated there are countless, innumerably many, the onsets of their brightnesses too manifold be enumerated. Stubborn ignorance veils them, leaving you no choice but to roam in an infinite and boundless Maelstrom. That is why it is important that you now reach a place of safety!

Death is the embodiment of the law – so we say.
Death is the light's radiance – so we say.
Death is *the* reality– so we say.
Death is *the* reality– so we say.

Scene 24. Some still await him now
10th Legend, animation

storyteller

In the district of Háromszék it is believed, to the present time, that if Alexander Csoma had returned from Tibet, he would have become king of the entire land of the Szeklers. They waited a long time. Some still await him now.

Without a doubt, by the time he had traversed the three worlds, he had become the wisest man who ever lived. Here kings hung on his every word, from here and beyond dragons, will-o'-the-wisps, gods and fairies marveled at his learning. He knew everything about the heavenly and earthly world, and was acquainted with the darkest crannies of hell.

They waited a long time. Some still await him now.

Music 19

Muhammad Rafi: Kya ajab saz hai yah shahnai - "shahnai"
How marvellous instrument is this shahnai!

Cast

END