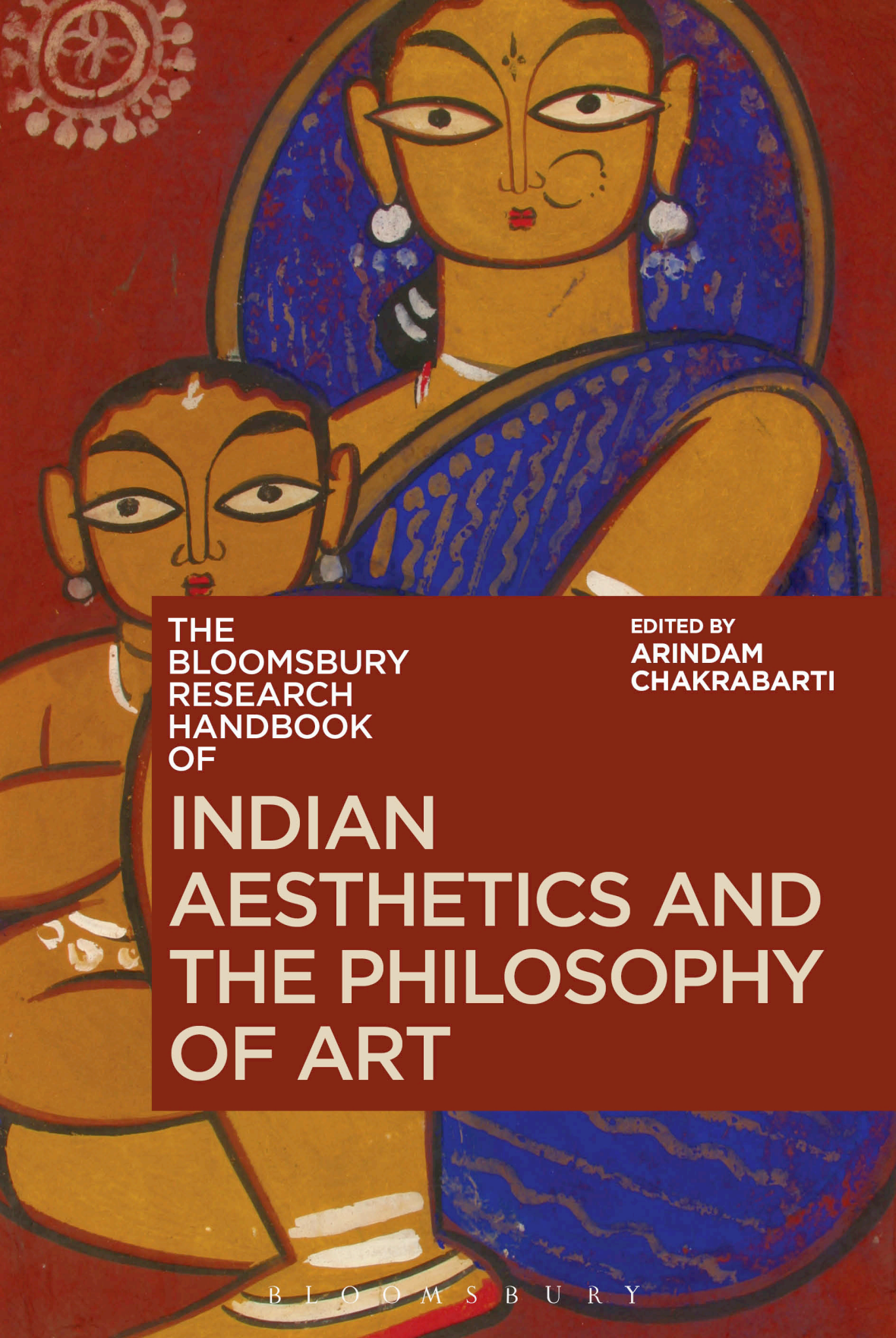


THE BLOOMSBURY RESEARCH HANDBOOK OF

INDIAN AESTHETICS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART

EDITED BY
ARINDAM CHAKRABARTI

BLOOMSBURY

THE BLOOMSBURY
RESEARCH HANDBOOK OF

INDIAN AESTHETICS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART

BLOOMSBURY RESEARCH HANDBOOKS IN ASIAN PHILOSOPHY

Series Editors:

Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, Lancaster University.
Sor-hoon Tan, National University of Singapore.

Editorial Advisory Board:

Roger Ames, University of Hawai'i; Doug Berger, Southern Illinois University; Carine Defoort, KU Leuven; Owen Flanagan, Duke University; Jessica Frazier, University of Kent; Chenyang Li, Nanyang Technological University; Ronnie Littlejohn, Belmont University; Evan Thompson, University of British Columbia.

Series description:

Bringing together established academics and rising stars, *Bloomsbury Research Handbooks in Asian Philosophy* survey philosophical topics across all the main schools of Asian thought. Each volume focuses on the history and development of a core subject in a single tradition, asking how the field has changed, highlighting current disputes, anticipating new directions of study, illustrating the Western philosophical significance of a subject and demonstrating why a topic is important for understanding Asian thought.

From knowledge, being, gender and ethics, to methodology, language and art, these research handbooks provide up-to-date and authoritative overviews of Asian philosophy in the twenty-first century.

Forthcoming titles:

The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Chinese Philosophy Methodologies,
edited by Sor-hoon Tan

The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Chinese Philosophy and Gender,
edited by Ann A. Pang-White

The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Indian Epistemology and Metaphysics,
edited by Joerg Tuske

The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Indian Ethics,
edited by Shyam Ranganathan

The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Indian Philosophy and Gender,
edited by Veena Howard

THE BLOOMSBURY RESEARCH HANDBOOK OF

INDIAN AESTHETICS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART

Edited by Arindam Chakrabarti

Bloomsbury Academic
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

BLOOMSBURY
LONDON • OXFORD • NEW YORK • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

Bloomsbury Academic
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

50 Bedford Square
London
WC1B 3DP
UK

1385 Broadway
New York
NY 10018
USA

www.bloomsbury.com

BLOOMSBURY and the Diana logo are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published 2016

© Arindam Chakrabarti and Contributors, 2016

Arindam Chakrabarti has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the Editor of this work.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

No responsibility for loss caused to any individual or organization acting on or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Bloomsbury or the editor.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-4725-2835-3
ePDF: 978-1-4725-2430-0
ePub: 978-1-4725-2597-0

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
The Bloomsbury research handbook of Indian aesthetics and the philosophy of art / edited by Arindam Chakrabarti.
pages cm. –
(Bloomsbury Research Handbooks in Asian Philosophy)
ISBN 978-1-4725-2835-3 (hardback) – ISBN 978-1-4725-2597-0 (epub)
1. Aesthetics, Indic. 2. Art, Indic–Philosophy.
I. Chakrabarti, Arindam, editor.
BH221.I4B59 2016
111'.850954–dc23
2015028329

Series: Bloomsbury Research Handbooks in Asian Philosophy

Typeset by Newgen Knowledge Works (P) Ltd., Chennai, India
Printed and bound in Great Britain

CONTENTS

List of Figures vii

Introduction: Contemporary Indian Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art 1

1 "Resonance" and Its Reverberations: Two Cultures in Indian Epistemology of Aesthetic Meaning 25
Lawrence McCrea

2 *Rasa* Aesthetics Goes Global: Relevance and Legitimacy 43
Priyadarshi Patnaik

3 Who Is Afraid of Mimesis? Contesting the Common Sense of Indian Aesthetics through the Theory of "Mimesis" or Anukaraṇa Vâda 71
Parul Dave-Mukherji

4 Thoughts on *Svara* and *Rasa*: Music as Thinking/Thinking as Music 93
Mukund Lath

5 The Aesthetics of the Resplendent Sapphire: Erotic Devotion in Rūpa Gosvāmin's *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* 107
Nrisinha Prasad Bhaduri

6 The Impersonal Subjectivity of Aesthetic Emotion 127
Bijoy H. Boruah

7 Refining the Repulsive: Toward an Indian Aesthetics of the Ugly and the Disgusting 149
Arindam Chakrabarti

8 The Perfume from the Past: Modern Reflections on Ancient Art Bankimchandra, Rabindranath, and Abanindranath Tagore 167
Sudipta Kaviraj

9 Aesthetics of Theft 195
Sibaji Bandyopadhyay

10 A Complex Web: Approaches to Time in Rajput and Mughal Painting 215
B. N. Goswamy

11 Deep Seeing: On the Poetics of Kūṭiyāṭṭam 221
David Shulman

12 Realizing the Body in Movement: Gestures of Freedom in the Dance Aesthetics of Rabindranath Tagore and Kumar Shahani 249
Rimli Bhattacharya

13 The Aesthetical Paradox of the Hermit's Hut 269
Kazi Khaleed Ashraf

14 Aesthetic of Touch and the Skin: An Essay in Contemporary Indian Political Phenomenology 297
Gopal Guru

15 Demands and Dilemmas of Durga Puja "Art": Notes on a Contemporary Festival Aesthetic 317
Tapati Guha-Thakurta

16 The Sky of Cinema 353
Moinak Biswas

17 Toward a Gandhian Aesthetics: The Poetics of Surrender and the Art of Brahmacharya 373
Tridip Suhrud

18 Aesthetic Judgment of Disgrace 391
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

INDEX 411

FIGURES

13.1 The Buddha Figure Inside a Shrine Structure, Gandhāra. Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri, Columbia. 271

13.2 The Buddha in a Trefoil Arch, Gandhāra, Second to Third Centuries BCE, Ingholt, *Gandhāran Art in Pakistan*. 272

13.3 The Two *Gandhakuṭī*s at Jetavana, from Bhārhut, c. Third to First Centuries BCE, Drawing Based on an Image in Fergusson and Burgess, *Cave Temples of India*. 272

13.4 A Brahmanic Hermit in front of His Hut in a Forest Setting, Mathurā, J. Ph. Vogel, *La Sculpture de Mathurâ*. 274

13.5 The Buddha Visiting a Brahmanic Ascetic Seated in a Woven Hut, Gandhāra, Ingholt, *Gandhāran Art in Pakistan*. 275

13.6 A Yogi in Front of His Hut with Various Utensils, Mughal Miniature Painting, Chester Beatty Library. 277

13.7 The Mughal Emperor Akbar Visiting the Ascetic Baba Bilas, Mughal Miniature Painting, Chester Beatty Library. 278

13.8 Interior of Lomas Rishi Cave, Barabar Hills, Gaya, c. Third-Century BCE, Photo by Tim Makins. 286

13.9 Exterior of Lomas Rishi, Photo by Tim Makins. 287

13.10 The Buddha Under a "Distended Lintel" in a Domed Pavilion, Gandhāra, Drawing by Raphael Tran. 289

13.11 The Buddha Under a "Distended Lintel" with Bodhisattvas in Pavilions, Gandhāra, from Burgess, *Buddhist Art*. 290

15.1 Example of an Innovative "Art" Durga—Bhabatosh Sutar's Goddess with Butterfly Wings, Made for the Sikdarbagan Sarbojanin Puja, 2012, now on display at a Warehouse Gallery in the Dhakuria Lakes. 318

15.2 A Buddhist Pagoda Tableau, serving as the Architectural Setting for the Goddess—BE Block (East) Puja, Salt Lake, 2009. 319

15.3 Replica of the Sanchi Stupa, created by designer, Dipak Ghosh, who specializes in the production of exact copies of Indian Historical Monuments—Jodhpur Park Puja, 2011. 320

15.4 Recreation of a South African Village by designer, Amar Sarkar, whose Forte Lay in the Production of Folk and Primitive Art Tableaux—Bosepukur Shitala Mandir Puja, Kasba, 2005. 321

15.5 Puja Courtyard installation by artist, Bhabatosh Sutar, using the ten arms of the Goddess and the decapitated Buffalo Head—Rajdanga Naba Uday Sangha Puja, Kasba, 2010. 321

15.6	Dense Cluster of Puja Award Banners outside the 25 Pally Puja, Khidirpur, 2012.	322
15.7	Puja banner advertising the artist, Sanatan Dinda, his Durga image of 2006, and the Nalin Sarkar Street Puja, 2007.	325
15.8	Sanatan Dinda's Durga, conceived in clay in the form of a Tibetan Buddhist Bronze Sculpture—Nalin Sarkar Street Puja, 2006.	327
15.9	Architectural Pavilion and decorated corridor, designed by Sanatan Dinda—Nalin Sarkar Street Puja, 2006.	328
15.10	Sanatan Dinda's Durga made for the Nalin Sarkar Street Puja, 2010.	329
15.11	Sanatan Dinda's signed Fiberglass Durga Sculpture at the 95 Pally Puja, Jodhpur Park, 2012.	331
15.12	Bhabatosh Sutar's installation with a vast radial Sun standing above a mound of foliated Earth—25 Pally Puja, Khidirpur, 2007.	335
15.13	Bhabatosh Sutar's installation with enlarged forms of handloom weaving shuttles and looms—Rajdanga Naba Uday Sangha Puja, Kasba, 2009.	336
15.14	Bhabatosh Sutar, Durga in the form of a giant flame—Naktala Udayan Sangha Puja, 2009.	337
15.15	Sushanta Pal, Pavilion made with woven mats and colored strings, and Tapestries of Miniature Paintings on Durga—Naktala Udayan Sangha Puja, 2006.	340
15.16	Sushanta Pal, Installation Featuring a Flurry of Three-Pronged Spears, Titled *Yogini*—Bosepukur Shitala Mandir Puja, Kasba, 2009.	341
15.17	Sushanta Pal, installation with aluminum foil, tin, and metallic objects, titled *Mahamaya*—Khidirpur Pally Sharadiya Puja, 2010.	341
15.18	Sushanta Pal's transformation of an entire neighborhood into a painted installation—Badamtala Ashar Sangha Puja, Kalighat, 2010.	342
15.19	Gouranga Kuinla, Pavilion designed like Jagannath's Chariot-Car, flanked by costumed clay-pot puppets—Dumdum Park Bharat Chakra Puja, 2010.	345
15.20	Rupchand Kundu, Durga and her family, modeled after Ramkinkar Baij's Santhal Family and Mill Call sculptures, in a Santhal Village Tableau—Dumdum Park Bharat Chakra Puja, 2006.	347
15.21	Subodh Ray's folk-art Durga to match a Pavilion designed by him, using the tribal artists of Chattisgarh—Behala Agradoot Club Puja, 2006.	348
16.1	*Meghe dhaka tara*: Before the Last Cry.	364
16.2	*Subarnarekha*: The First Utterance of Love.	365
16.3	*Ajantrik*: Bimal and the Woman.	366
16.4	*Ajantrik*: The Abandoned Woman.	367
16.5	*Ajantrik*: The Railway Station.	368
16.6	*Ajantrik*: The Gazing Horizon.	370

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Indian Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art

Now (he) glorifies the arts . . . the arts are refinement of the self (*ātma-samskṛti)*. With these the worshipper recreates his self that is made of rhythms/metres

Aitareya Brahmana, 6;27, ca. 1000 BCE

Sometimes dharma (moral virtue), sometimes play, sometimes politics and wealth, sometimes tranquility, sometimes laughter, sometimes battle, sometimes lust, sometimes killing . . . theater *sings-after the essence* (*bhāvānukīrtanam*) of all things in all the three worlds . . . Such theater shall produce repose and relief for those who are laden by misery, exhausted with labor, distraught with grief, or stricken with ascetic austerities. There is no such branch of knowledge, no craft, no science, no fine art, no yoga, no ritual action which is not seen in this theater.

Nāṭyaśāstra, 1.108–116, ca. first-century CE

The ability to experience the tension between the inner and the outer worlds is what we call talent.

Benodebehari Mukherjee, 1979/2006

Not so much "beautiful" or "lovely," as "amazing" and "awesome." This latter pair of currently popular interjections seems to express aesthetic experience, as theorized by classical and contemporary Indian philosophies of art more accurately than the former pair. One is thus tempted to overstate the case for a perennial contemporariness of Indian aesthetics. True, from early centuries of the common era, one comes across a list of eight or nine major art-emotions or dominant aesthetic affects. These are: love, pathos, laughter, rage, fear, valor/ heroism, wonder, disgust, and, added later on, tranquility or serenity. Wonder seems to be just one among them. And individual philosophers of art—such as Bhojadeva or Abhinavagupta—have tried to reduce or subjugate all of them to the first (erotic love) or the last (tranquil peace), rarely calling "*adbhuta* (the awesome)" the mother or quintessence of all aesthetic modes. Yet the

crucial common feature of classical or modern, Sanskrit or vernacular Indian poetry or theater has been "*camatkāra*"—an intersubjectively relishable sense of amazement. Great poetry, music, painting, or sculpture is neither born of nor does it evoke ordinary pleasure or fun. A dance may delight us. We may enjoy a song. But what is more marvelous and remarkable is the aesthetic phenomenon described in both East and West, as the awe-inspiring talent of the artist/poet, which turns our saddest experiences to our sweetest ones, our horrors into the awesome sublime. The object or event depicted or narrated or enacted may be extremely ordinary, as in the love-request (from *GitaGovinda*) "If you please speak even a little bit, the moonbeams of a flash of your teeth removes the terrible darkness of this cavern" (*vadasi yadi kim cid api/ danta-ruci kaumudi/ harati dara-timiram ati ghoram*). What fills us with awe, when the original Sanskrit song is sung in the proper *Raaga*, is not the speaking or the glimpse of someone's clean teeth or the dark cave that is lit up, but how the familiar sounds and meanings manage to suddenly suggest to our imagination the surplus meaning of the entire story of an unbearable silence of sulk that must have preceded these imploring words, and the dreary sadness that has enveloped the heart (cavern) of the lover who is coaxing the lady to flash the light of her pardoning words.

To take a more contemporary early twentieth-century example, the Tagore song, supposed to be sung in a fast tempo, which starts with the lyrics "In which tune, in which restless rhythm, is my lute sounding today?" ascends to a high-pitched crescendo with the following words of amazement at the vibrancy of the verdant grass:

> It's the hope of touching no one knows whose feet/
> That makes each blade of grass with words replete.
> (kār pada-paraśana āśā/ trine trine arpilo bhāṣā//)

The tactile eagerness of the whisper-effect created by the original's "p" and "s" sounds, evoking the startling metaphor of blades of grass garrulous with the thrill of prospective foot-steps is created by the series of queries "Which?" "Whose?," thickening the sense of wonder at the humdrum seasonal changes of the earth. The ripples of that awesome magic of sounds and images keep reaching many resonating hearts. Poetry, music, or art begins when the utterer, singer, imitator/ re-presenter, or artist is self-startled by the work or utterance prompted by unselfish pathos or empathic stirring of the heart. The first poet, according to Sanskrit literary lore, was stricken by pity and outrage when a hunter killed with a lethal arrow a desire-inebriated red-crested bird, which was happily flying about with its partner until its love-flutter was rudely interrupted. As the sage Vālmikī, the would-be author of Rāmāyaṇa—itself an epic saga of interrupted love of a divine couple—cursed the hunter, words rolled off his lips in four evenly measured quarters. Noticing the singable cadence of his own words he blurted out in amazement: "*What is this* I have uttered just now?" "*kim idam*?." The wonder expressed in this primordial interrogative at once records a relishing reflexivity, an appropriation as well as surrender of agency, a humbling of conceptual-cognitive arrogance. The content of this aesthetic startle seems to have been this: lo and behold!, this verse is authored by me, but I have no idea how it became a verse. The reader/listener can first feel the pain of the slain bird, then the empathy of the sensitive sage, share his righteous anger at this cruel act, without needing to

know if the bird, the hunter, the sage ever really existed. The sheer transcendence of ego made possible by this quick succession of fact-independent feelings, when reflected upon, spawns a nameless meta-feeling one can call "*rasa*." After "*śoka*," the Sanskrit word for grief, the legend goes on, such rhythmic speech came to be known as "*śloka*." Whenever speech is poignant with a pain through which one finds the self in others—in all living beings, real and imaginary—a poem is born.

In the Katha Upanishad, the adjective "wonderous/ amazing" was used for the speaker of the ineffable Self beyond the ego. Rare and awesome is such a speaker and knower "āścaryo vaktā" "āścaryo jñātā" because he manages to tell us of that which thwarts all words. This is not merely a surprise of short-lived novelty and fascination with unprecedented elocutionary skill. It is an unfading, ever-renewable sense of wonder at one does not know what. Since the time of Rāmāyaṇa, till the current milieu of postcolonial Indian literatures, films, Hindusthani and Karnatik classical as well as Bollywood movie music and dozens of provincial dance and theater forms, of painting styles where Picasso, Mughal Miniatures, and Ajanta fresco-s may fuse seamlessly, very many fundamental concepts of art-appreciation and aesthetic evaluation have changed. Yet, Indian aesthetics is as vibrant with contesting constructions and deconstructions now in the twenty-first century as it was in the first couple of centuries of the Common Era when the text of the Nāṭyaśāstra probably came to be canonized. There are many alternative ways of organizing Indian philosophies of art and aesthetic experience. Without exoticizing Indian art or culture, we have implicitly chosen reflexive wonderment—*adbhuta rasa*—as the common affective thread simply because the mind-boggling variety of regional and pan-Indian, elite classical and popular folk theories, and practices of art inspires more wonderment than merriment or rapture or any tragic sense. Sacred or profane, spiritual or material, earthy or ethereal, contemplative or clownish, visceral or conceptual, exuberantly touchy-feely or mathematically abstract, raw or cooked, the unclassifiably profuse expressions of Indian creativity makes the philosopher throw up her hands in despair. Faced with the variations of contemporary Indian aesthetic sensibilities one feels like saying "*kim idam*"*?* The richness of the experience makes the most complex theory look impoverished. In front of this bewildering variety, just as in front of the flabbergasting overpopulation of sculpted images on a South Indian Gopuram, or the geometrical complexity of some of the Islamic architecture in Sultanate or Mughal India, one's pride of conceptual categorization is pleasantly shattered. One learns to laugh at all the current mistaken generalizations such as "All Indian art is spiritual," "All Indian sculpture is voluptuous," or "No Indian dance is mimetic," or "All Indian cinema is garishly song-and-danceful," or "Indian poetry is mostly erotic or mostly heroic!," or "Indian paintings are mostly and typically symbolic," "Indian portraiture is never realistic."

This collection of essays tries to imitate the heterogeneity of Indian aesthetic experience, in its unusually diverse range of topics. The family of conceptions underlying these specially commissioned essays in the present first-of-its-kind collection is organized under two main headings. First, contemporary scholarly, historical, creative and comparative extensions, criticisms, and transreations of "*rasa*" *theory*. Second, a philosophy—epistemology, phenomenology, ontology, ethics, sociology, and politics—of artistic *practices* across a wide range of genres.

One important common feature of all our eighteen essays is this: each of them affords a glimpse of the original philosophical research of a leading thinker in the field of Indian aesthetics right now in early twenty-first century. Yet, this is by no means a history of Indian aesthetics. Nor is it meant to be a survey of Indian philosophies of art. None of the specially commissioned essays in this collection has been written as encyclopedia entries "reporting on" a sector of contemporary Indian aesthetic theory. Since there is no archeological or archival claim of "recovering" a dead past or "covering" a living present field, the companion has no conceit of comprehensive coverage. These essays add new waves to the ocean of Indian reflections on art, aesthetic experience, and practice. To change the metaphor slightly, each of them immerses in, as well as becomes a living tributary to the complex network of rivers that is contemporary Indian aesthetic thinking.

Although the first, *theory*, part begins with a philosophical reconstruction of a medieval debate in poetics at the intersection of theory of meaning and theory of "*rasa*"—the latter much-celebrated concept traced nearly two millennia back to Bharata, who composed the definitive thirty-six-chapter treatise on the theory and practice of dance and drama, this volume does *not* consist of scholarly translations of or critical commentaries on Sanskrit texts on literary aesthetics, poetics, or philosophy of visual arts. It reflects the *state of the art* in *creative*, *analytic*, and *comparative* philosophy being done right now by those teachers and researchers of Indian aesthetics whose work defines the field. To be sure, not all of them have contributed to this volume, and alas not all the subfields of Indian art-practices have been philosophized on.

In our opening epigraph from a very ancient Vedic text, the Sanskrit word "śilpa" has been translated as "art." But, another word "*kalā*" also competes for our attention here. In the last decades of twentieth century, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, a national council for the arts and history of Indian aesthetics, undertook the project of producing a multi-volume encyclopedia around 250 pivotal concepts relating to art, where the term "*kalā*" was used for art. In the last two volumes of this series, some of the key terms that have been written about give us a rough idea of the contemporary Indian culture's aesthetic self-understanding. They are Rekhā (line), Ākāra (form), Ākṛti (structure), Rūpa-Pratirūpa (appearance/image and representation or mirrored image), Pratimā (idol), Pratikṛti (likeness/portrait), Prasāda (grace, elegance, clarity), Ābhāsa (impression, mental image, suggestion), Anukaraṇa (imitation), Chāya (shadow), Liṅga (sign), Rīti (style), and so on.

Chapter III of Vatsyayana's Kama-Sutra lists sixty-four "kalā"s, which includes singing, playing musical instruments, dancing, etiquette, culinary arts, art of weaponry and war, gymnastics, knowing how to compose and scan verses, Arithmetic, clay-image making, knowing how to guess human character from conduct and gestures, cosmetics, bed-making, wine-preparation, making artificial flowers, and of course the art of painting and wall-decoration. The concept of "kalā" thus may extend far beyond the European notion of "art." But that should not lead us to jump to the conclusion that the sixty-four arts are mostly "crafts" and the "pure" concept of art is not to be found in traditional Indian culture. Like the notion of "justice" or "rationality," the notion of "art" has also got to be trans-culturally available.

What makes it maddeningly difficult to articulate is the family-resemblance sort of continuity that exists between such widely divergent forms of art as the art of lip-painting and the art of war, keeping painting, sculpture, music, and poetry in the central core. To recapitulate, Indian art, classical and contemporary, spreads over a vast and variegated canvas including sculpture, architecture, painting, theater, dance, instrumental and vocal music, poetry and literature, cinema, religious rituals, crafts, public festivals and carnivals, cosmetics, perfumery, fabric-design, gold-jewelry (which should not be sniffed at as "mere craft"), arts of primary pedagogy—for, teaching children of the socially marginalized how to read can be quintessentially an aesthetic agenda, sports and entertainment—urban and folk, traditional and avant-garde. Correspondingly, the essays in this volume are designed to encompass a wide range of philosophical topics. Many of them arise out of straddling genres. For example, the following chapters of this volume discuss the nature of art-emotions, rhythms, and tones of thinking, arguments for and against resemblance-theories of art, political and ethical implications of art-work, a modern ascetic's experiments with the "art of self-control and surrender," political hazards of aesthetic education in a deeply class-furrowed society, literary norms of intertextual stealing or borrowing, axiology of the visual, auditory, and the tactile, the tension between freedom and influence in movie-making, and problems of perfuming the present with the past, as well as the tension between indigenous eternals versus foreign trends in aesthetic imagination. The areas where these philosophical formulations have been tested on include northern, eastern, and southern Indian performance theories and practices, and contemporary explorations of the paradoxes of ancient ascetic/monastic architecture. Some of the essays, while being based on close authentic acquaintance with classical or folk traditions of theory and practice of literary, visual or performance arts, initiate a dialogue with Western aesthetic theories or practices. So, the chapters of this book would also constitute a dynamic map of *comparative cross-cultural aesthetics* as it is happening now.

Before we give a topical overview of the chapters of this companion to contemporary Indian aesthetics, for philosophers entirely new to the field of Indian aesthetics, here is a very basic introduction to the original *rasa*-theory. Acquaintance with the basics of ancient *rasa*-aesthetics should help the nonspecialist reader get the frequent allusions especially in the first part of the volume.

Affective states received as much philosophical attention as cognitive or intellectual states in the very early history of Indian thought. All that moves in front of our consciousness was taken as alive with breath (*prāṇa*) and capable of subjective feelings (*cinmaya*). To be is to feel or be felt. Hence "*bhāva*," the word for emotion in Sanskrit, literally means "a manner of making it be" (from "*bhū*," to be, in its causative form "*bhāvayati*"). One of the earliest pre-Buddhist schools of metaphysics (*Sāmkhya*) explained all objective transformations in terms of three basic emotive or feelable strands (*guṇa* meaning binding strings, as in "*dhanur-guṇa*" bow-string, not qualities): delight (*sattva*), dynamicity (*rajas*), and delusion (*tamas*), blended in different proportions. Delight, symbolized by the color white, is responsible for clarity (what Thomas Aquinas calls "claritas" in his own aesthetic theory), luminous understanding and joy. It is light in both the senses, not heavy and

not dark. Dynamicity, symbolized by red, leads to swift energetic action whipped up by pain and restless desire for more. Delusion or torpor, black in color and named after *tamas*, which means darkness, makes us lethargic, ignorant, and dejected. This feeling-driven ontology of nature, running parallel with the medical idea of the three humors, was not accepted by many later philosophers. But the word for emotions retained its old meaning: "basic modes of bringing into being." Abhinavagupta revives the *Sāṃkhya* metaphysics of the triple strands of pain, pleasure, and torpor in his initial explanation of what it is like to undergo the basic emotions, in connection with his immediate predecessor Bhaṭṭanāyaka's views about how we enjoy *rasa*-s to the extent that they are expressed through modifications of that common nature where the first strand of delight dominates and how the pain of restless appetite of dynamicity heightens the thrill of finding restful fulfillment in the self-tasting of an art-emotion. To simplify the triple affect theory into just a pleasure-pain-dynamic, Abhinava has an elaborate and subtle reduction of each of the eight durable emotions into some permutation of pleasure and pain with distinct mutual predominance patterns. He brings back the function of delight, dynamicity, and laxity in his mature theory of the fluid equilibrium of the three emotion-transmuting operations: "quickening (*druti*) due to predominance of *rajas*, spreading (*vistāra*), due to an interplay of *tamas* and *sattva*, and luminous opening up (*vikāśa*), due to *sattva*."[1] When *rasa* is brought into being, some awareness—other than experience, memory, and demonstrative proof—attains its nature of quickening, spreading, and luminous opening up, through a variety of intertwining of *rajas* and *tamas* with the sentience of delightful *sattva*. This unique sort of awareness is essentially a kind of repose of the heart, and is a simulation of the taste of supreme Brahman[2] (*Dhvanyāloka, Uddyota II, Locana under verse 4*).

Now, it was clear to every thinker that *the ordinary emotions of love, mirth, hatred, anger, jealousy, odium, and fear are not aesthetic feelings* in any sense. Something else happens when poets or painters hold a mirror in front of our emotional nature. Not just any duplication or mimesis but a reflection on a heart-mirror misty with many memories seems to render the ordinary extraordinary (while *bhāva*-s remain *laukika*, *rasa*-s are *alaukika*). On the extraordinariness (*alaukika-tva*) of "*rasa*," which can only be "suggested" by the function of *vyañjanā* or *dhvani*, Abhinavagupta enters into the most elaborate polemics in his commentary *Locana* on *Dhvanyāloka*, *Uddyota I*, *Verse 4*. Ānandavardhana's phrase "*pratīyamānah punar anyad eva*" (though appearing, yet again, quite another) is one occasion for such a polemic. But already, in his predecessor Śrī Śaṅkuka, there was a keen alertness to the fact that the fear and suspense, with a touch of humor, that we feel when we watch an enactment of, let us say, the story of Kīcaka—the uncouth letch who waits for Draupadī to arrive for a tryst at night and meets instead a murderous Bhīma who comes in a woman's disguise—does not come with any belief that "here is Kīcaka on the stage," or that "this actor is imitating one Kīcaka," or any inference that the actor must be besotted, disgusted, enraged, and scared successively, or even a doubt of "is he Kīcaka or is he not?."

The aesthetic relish we have when we read a thrilling story, listen to a sad melody, see a fine play depicting the horrible injustice done to a powerless good person, or

see half-finished marble lovers kissing in a Rodin sculpture, or Rembrandt's macabre painting of the *Blinding of Samson*, is no ordinary wonder, sorrow, outrage, erotic excitement, or horror. Indeed, if one uses French or Sanskrit erotic poetry to get sexually aroused then one is not making an aesthetic use of it. The patriotism—*utsāha* (the basic emotion behind "*vīra*")—evoked by the music of a grand national anthem is no "*vīra rasa*" because it is not an aesthetic sentiment.

Bharata's ancient Sanskrit text "The Science of Drama" analyzed art-experience with the analogy of the gustatory experience of savoring a well-cooked delicacy where many flavors and spices have blended to give it a unique taste. Even the English word "taste" (in art) retains this original culinary-gustatory association.

Bharata, the first Indian theorist of performing arts, set out the basics of the *rasa*-theory in this cryptic aphorism, over the interpretation of which Indian aestheticians have debated for nearly two thousand years: "From the combination of excitant determinants (*vibhāva*), expressive consequents (*anubhāva*) and transient feelings (*vyabhicāri*), the relishable juice (*rasa*) is realized (*rasa-nisîpattihî*)."[3]

In a drama or readable poem this can happen when the character or plot goes through excitants such as a beautiful woman coming into the house of her lover on a rainy night to confess during an amorous embrace that she is too weak to sever her other "vainer ties" and so that this might be her last visit, and the love-crazy man strangling her with her own long golden hair. These determinants then combine with consequents, such as the man kissing the dead woman's drooping face and sitting still all night locked in an embrace, and with passing occurrent moods such as the following fleeting thoughts:

> No pain felt she /
> I am quite sure she felt no pain.
> As a shut bud that holds a bee . . .
> So glad it has its utmost will,
> That all it scorned at once is fled/ And I, its love, am gained instead.[4]
>
> (Robert Browning, "Porphyria's Lover")

Out of the functions of these (verbally depicted or theatrically exhibited) situational causal inputs and expressive outputs supported by enacted or verbalized, depicted or suggested transient feelings, the savor of erotic love laced with tragic anger and the horror of a killing arises like an emergent mixed flavor out of the various ingredients of a well-spiced work of cuisine. It is this heart-melting taste of a multi-flavored transformed unworldly emotion that is the object of aesthetic relish.

This account is then generalized for other art-media such as music and painting as well with appropriate differences of modes of representation. Although the transitory emotions are classified into thirty-five distinct states such as pride, anxiety, languor, curiosity, oblivion, aggression, terror, bashfulness, lethargy, doubt, expostulation, and so on, the major durable sentiments that are realized through this functional operation of the inputs (determinants) and outputs (consequents) and the transient accessories in between, are said to be eight or nine in number. They are: Love, Laughing Mirth, Sorrow, Wrath, Valor, Fear, Astonishment, Disgust and, most crucially, according to Abhinavagupta, the special spiritual sentiment of Tranquil Dispassion.

One important feature noticed by most commentators is that Bharata's formula does not mention the durable emotions—*sthāyibhāva-s*—at all. This omission is taken as deliberate so that one does not conflate aesthetic relish with an ordinary stable sentiment. Also, it is customary for a definition of a poetic meter to be formulated in that very meter, or the defining lyrics of the octave-scale of a Rāga to be sung in that very Rāga (*lakshanî-geet*). Thus the fact that the durable emotion can emit a savor only when it is denotatively absent could have been self-allusively illustrated by this formula that mentions the causes, the effects, and the accompanying fleeting feelings but leaves the chief "what-it-is-like to-be"-s unsaid.

Śańkuka contrasts this unpoetic explicit description: "*The king's sorrow aroused his ministers' fear that his heart may burst with un-shed tears*" with this poetic description: "*As I imagine the fine rain of tears from her eyes falling on the portrait of mine that she is painting they feel like pearls of sweat breaking out on my body at the touch of her hand*" where love shines as the dominant emotion precisely because the word "love" is never mentioned.

But even when suggested by absence, a durable sentiment is not yet the fully relishable savor called *rasa*. Only when this sentiment is delinked from any egoistic worldly pragmatic concern and depersonalized, then a certain heart, resonating in sympathy with other similar hearts, loses itself completely in the wondrous subjective self-savoring of the sentiment. *Notice that it is not the stable sentiment that re-emerges* out of the alchemical cuisine of determinants, consequents, and transient states, which is called *rasa*, but only the intuitive experience of it. One or more of these stable sentiments are transmuted into one or more of the nine *rasa*-experiences, the special aesthetic genres of the Erotic, the Comic, the Pathetic, the Furious, the Heroic, the Terrible, the Wondrous, the Hideous, and the Serene.

The original use of that term *rasa* ranges over a variety of interconnected meanings: a fluid that quickly tends to spill, a taste such as sour, sweet or salty, the soul or essence of something, a desire, a power, a chemical agent used in changing one metal to another, the life-giving sap in plants and even poison. Almost all these distinct meanings are exploited at different junctures of the complex aesthetic phenomenology centering the concept of *rasa*. In the creation, appreciation, and interpretation of a particular work of art or even in a single poem, more than one of these savors could intermingle with a dominant one.

A classic example from Kālidāsa's most famous play *The Signet-Ring of Śakuntalā* that is most often discussed as an illustration of the *rasa* of fear (which itself could be of many kinds, this one having little to do with the Western genre of horror):

> Charming in its graceful turn of the neck,
> Again and again fixing its vision on the chasing chariot behind,
> Its hind half entering into its front as it springs forward dreading the flying arrow,
> Strewing the earth with half-chewed grass falling from its tired mouth,
> Look at it leap ahead travelling mostly in the air and rarely on the ground.[5]

The aesthetic juice of this picture-poem is the terrible (*bhayānaka*), garnished obviously with tender pity. This is obviously not the fear and pity of a Greek tragedy.

Out of the determinant chase by a hunter on a chariot and the consequent vibrantly depicted running for life, the transient anxious looking back, the unchewed grass being thrown around, the expressive success of this poem lies in the obliqueness or unexplicitness of the fear-essence that is evoked. The deer is in motion. But the contemplating relishers' heart rests and bathes in this leaping racing fear that visits us from the pen of a poet more than a thousand years ago.

It would be silly to complain that this theory is archaic and only applicable to Sanskrit poetry of a particular genre. Even in other cultures and in other mediums of art, very often, if not always, you can explain the special "wonder" we experience in terms of the intermixture of indirectly evoked universal stable emotions. The painting by Caravaggio where David is shown with the bleeding bearded head of Goliath surely invokes the heroic *rasa* with a heavy dose of the terror. But once you realize that the severed head is that of the artist himself, a new blending of sorrow and disgust gives rise to the ninth flavor of serene stillness over and above the heroism. Such is the wonder that appropriate mixture of moods and suggestive indirectness of expression can work!

However, some emotions are downright distressing, felt as adverse or opposed to life. An acute agony or a horror or disgust is not something one would like more of. What is not wished to be terminated is not felt pain. How, then, could sad songs and tragedy become sources of such aesthetic delight that we repeatedly want to listen to them? Wonder, love, and valor may be worth perpetuating but the direct enjoyment of the pleasures of love or glory is hardly artistic. Simply by intensification or watering down, moreover, an emotion does not become an aesthetic feeling. In that case any endocrinally hyperstimulated person or any dulled unexcited stolid fellow would be experiencing aesthetic joys. To perceive, with detachment, that somebody else is enjoying herself or suffering is also not by itself an aesthetic pleasure. By what alchemy then is a durable latent emotion—a *sthāyibhāva* durable emotion—transformed into a relishable savor arising out of the contact between a work of art and a sensitive heart? And whose emotions are these anyway: the fictional character's, the poet's/playwright's, the actor's, or the spectator's/reader's?

Abhinavagupta goes through a consideration of at least three theories before arriving at his own, extremely subtle answer to these questions.

First theory: Intensification through super-imposition (ascribed to Lollaṭa)

From the performer's or author's point of view, the emotion arises originally and primarily in the original character, be it historical or fictional. It is re-produced by the force of imitation and re-enactment. The determinants and consequents in the actor, encouraging the imagination of intermediate transient feelings, together enhance and intensify one or more stable emotions. So it is the boosted version of the character's stable emotion (*upacitaḥ sthāyī*) that the relisher enjoys, thanks to the effects of theatrical pretence and empathy. The art-emotion is generated and then erroneously superimposed on the actor by the audience.

This theory is rejected for many reasons. Textually, it leaves unexplained why Bharata does not even mention the permanent emotions in his aphorism on *rasa-niṣpattihî*. Also, the actor surely cannot afford to be swayed by intense emotion, which would make it very hard for him to keep track of his complex dance-steps

and keep time with the complex beat of the percussion and music, and so on. Enhancement or intensification of the emotional state, surely, does not appear to be either necessary or sufficient for it to become poetic or theatrical. If it were sufficient, then whenever someone's mild annoyance turned into real rage, or when an audience mis-attributed such intensification to anyone, that would generate aesthetic enjoyment of that anger as an art-emotion—quite a ludicrously absurd consequence of Lollaṭa's theory.

Second theory: Inference from imitation "the logic of the painted horse" (ascribed to Śrī Śaṅkuka)

Against the first illusionist-intensification theory, it is pointed out that the appropriate cognitive attitude of the art-relisher is not that of holding the true belief that "this dancer (acting out the story of the happy Prince) is indeed happy," or the false belief that she is the happy Prince, or a doubt as to if he is really the Prince or not. The spectator is not supposed even to have first an illusion and then an exposure or correction of error *such as* "He is not really a happy Prince though he appears to be one." The ideal viewer of Oedipus Rex should not even judge that: "This actor resembles a contrite Oedipus." The actor-character identification is not a knowledge, error, doubt, or assertion of similarity. It is a unique sort of judgment. Elizabeth Taylor is "being" that Cleopatra who was very proud of her beauty. This "being" is mimetic. She is taken by the audience, through inferential signs, to be simulating Cleopatra's pride of beauty.

It is the actor's pretence-represented emotion inferred from the cause or effect or concomitant feelings/happenings. The indirectness of the inference is what makes it artistically enjoyable. The mimetic emotion arises in the spectator or relisher who draws the inference from causes and effects, and so on. Abhinavagupta's refutation of this mimetic (or inferential) account of *rasa*-production is extremely complex and elaborate. By itself, it should be the topic of a different chapter. One simple point that emerges out of it is that not only is it impossible to imitate someone or pretend to be someone whom one has never encountered (because she is fictional or he lived thousands of years back), but that usually an imitation of love gives rise to laughter (*ratyanukaranaṃh hāsahḥ*). Although the straight pretense-theory is rejected, some kind of mirroring of a set of pleasure-pain-pattern must be at the heart of what Abhinava claims is not an "*anukarana*" (imitation) but an "*anuvyavasāya*" (a meta-judging or reflective judgment—if we can risk an allusion to Kant's Third Critique here, though of course in a very different affective milieu).

Third theory: DE-PERSONALIZATION (ascribed to Bhaṭṭanāyaka)

As I have said, the second or imitation-inference theory of production and relishing of art is rejected on the basis of a number of sharp objections. For example: what is the actor supposed to imitate—Arjuna's mental states or his bodily states? He has experienced neither, that he could recall and re-enact them. His bodily signs of emotional upheaval, such as trembling and sweating, are supposed to imitate the mental state of fear and pity; but trembling or sweating does not "resemble" an inner state! Therefore *rasa* is not experienced, generated, or manifested in either the actor or the audience. Through the mysterious mechanism of universalization, a cognitive state distinct from experience or memory or appearance, *rasa* quickens, spreads, and overflows like a liquid.

Having stated all these complicated theories and their refutations, Abhinavagupta prefaces his own ingenious theory with this methodological interlude:

"If it is already well known to handed-down tradition then what is new in it?

If it is an exposition of one's own individual ideas then what is the point of mastery over all the traditional texts?

Given the tension between these two valuable contrary reasons demanding self-evident originality and tradition-sanctified acceptability, people can decry all possible theories!

That is why I have not wholly rejected any of the other views but simply discussed the predecessors' views that form a staircase of critical thinking. Having climbed up those stairs my intellect can now arrive at the truth of the matter without feeling too tired."[6]

According to Abhinavagupta, seven factors are responsible for the unworldly selfless enjoyment of feeling-essences that result in aesthetic marveling:

1. Intermixture or blending (no good poetry or drama or art can be born of one single *rasa*).
2. Suggestedness or denotative absence: pity or fear or love is not an art-emotion when it is named or directly described in so many words. It only delights when shown through literal omission.
3. Depersonalization and detachment from particular spatio-temporal circumstances.
4. Resting of the heart—through the repeated play of getting emptied and then replenished. This state is called marveling thrill (*camatkāra*), indwelling, savoring, tasting, enjoyment, consummation, melting away, or repose (*viśrānti*).
5. Ever-fresh creativity of combinations of determinants, consequents, and transients, due to creative genius and free receptive fecundity.
6. Self-savoring of sheer sentience: *vimarśa*'s self-mirroring. A deep involvement and thick unification of the connoisseur's self with the juicy essence itself.
7. The job of the determinant stimulators and the expressive effects is simply to remove the obstacles of pragmatic, egotistic, intellectual concerns. When this "*āvaranîa-bhańga*" happens, then there is a certain temporary loss of one's individual spatio-temporal separateness from the imagined characters of fiction as well as from fellow-relishers of the play or poem or painting. There are some obstacles that block the emergence of the uniquely aesthetic "after-taste" (*anuvyayvasāya*)—the fictional emotions, so to say. Abhinavagupta lists seven of them:

(The plot's) unfitness for conception, because of impossibility.
Fixing of specific historical time and place.
Taking a feeling as necessarily arising in oneself, and thus losing oneself in the pleasure or pain (total lack of distancing).

Failure of empathy and other cognitive-imaginative means of awareness.
Lack of clarity.
Lack of salience.
Getting affected by doubt (could it ever have happened?).

As a result of removing these obstacles (such as being fixated on the particular spatio-temporal setting of an experience, or worrying about which actual individual it is that is suffering or loving or fainting), the most surprising phenomenon that happens according to Abhinavagupta is demonstrated by the following. Take the fear of the deer running for its life, in the Kālidāsa poem from *Śākuntalam*, mentioned above. As *Bhayānaka Rasa*, by skilful acting out of the determinants and consequents, is immediately felt in the heart of the viewer as transmuted fear, it is quite distinct from the feelings "He is afraid," "I am afraid," "My friend is afraid," or "My enemy is afraid." It is a distilled essence of fear which, without embracing any particular place or time—as it were—"spins in front of one's eyes" and in it, the Self of the viewer is neither utterly hidden away, nor is it specially highlighted, and this is true of even any Other ("*sāksîād iva hrîdaye nidhiiyamānam, caksîusîor iva vi-parivartamānam (deśa-kālādyanālińgitam bhayam). bhayānako rasahî, . . . tathāvidhe bhaye ātmā na atyantena tiraskrîto, na viśesîata ullikhitahî, evamḥ paro'pi*" [*Abhinavabhāratī*, Ch. VI]).[7]

Now, let us turn to the chapters of this volume.

Our collection opens with Lawrence McCrae's discussion of the friends and foes of the technical concept of "Resonance" (*dhvani*) as the soul of poetry. Ānandavardhana, the ninth-century Kashmiri literary theorist revolutionized poetics by arguing that poetic language is distinguished by its transmission of meanings through "suggestion"—a penumbral or tertiary communicative function exceeding primary denotative and secondary metaphorical meanings. McCrae shows how Ānandavardhana's argument for the distinctness of poetic suggestion from other modes of meaning remained mainly negative. His opponents complained that he does not himself articulate a clear positive account of the process and determinants of suggestive expression. Demonstrating a more hard-headed demystifying attitude, these more analytical opponents claimed that "suggestion" properly analyzed, was in fact reducible to oblique or figurative meaning as traditionally understood or that it could simply be shown to be an inferential process where the literal meaning works as a premise for surmising the aesthetically enjoyable meaning of a verse or a dramatic sequence.

This tension between the drive for analytic precision and conceptual economy on the one hand and the flair to emotionalize literary signification as something mysteriously extraordinary—an ineffable tertiary semiotic halo, as it were, that resists all rational modes of analysis persisted even after the initial criticism died down and Ānandavardhana's "suggestive reverberation"–theory gained more or less universal acceptance. McCrea's essay shows us how philosophically fecund this tension between the analytical and mystical theories of poetic meaning has been for the field of classical Indian theories of aesthetic meaning. This opening chapter is a fitting segue into the contemporary Indian scene in philosophies of art because it reminds us of Abhinavagupta's own balanced defense of his respectful

borrowing from and criticism of predecessors. Before proposing his "original" theory, Abhinavagupta pauses to tell us, that the opinions of the greats have not been refuted or disparaged (*satām matāni atra na dūşitāni*); but one needs to climb over them using them as successive critical stairs. Any "new" theory of art, otherwise would be imperiled by the following mighty destructive dilemma. Either, if it is totally derivative of established tradition, there is nothing new in it, or, if it is claimed to be entirely an innovation out of the thinker's own consciousness, has the thinker mastered all the traditional knowledge-systems and their texts to be able to claim such novelty? Yet, through a balanced mixture of erudition and originality, reverence for the past and individual creativity, one's philosophical thinking can climb higher and higher flights of "art-theoretic stairs" without ever feeling jaded (Nāţya Śāstra: AB, Chapter 6, pp).

Early twentieth-century Indian philosophers of art have had to climb two flights of steep stairs before coming to their own. They had to immerse themselves in both European and Sanskrit Aesthetics. Ignoring the centuries of being ignored by their Western counterparts, these Indian aesthetes first did some important spade-work in comparative aesthetics. The two-volume work by Kanti Chandra Pandey, the pioneer-translator of Abhinavagupta, remains a useful sourcebook not only for summaries of basic *alamkāraśāstra texts* in English, but also as a sample of an assessment of European aesthetic theories from a Sanskrit scholar's perspective. Although it would often mix comparative aesthetics with Indian art-history, Ananda K. Kumaraswami's work also contains brilliant cross-cultural metaphysical insights about Eastern versus Western norms of beauty and artistry. Pravas Jivan Chaudhury's 1965 paper (in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*) "Catharsis in the light of Indian Aesthetics" and Subodh Chandra Sengupta's essay on Hamlet in the light of Sanskrit Poetics and S. K. Saxena's book on Hindusthani Music and Kathak Dance in the light of the aesthetics of Susan K. Langer set high scholarly standards for comparative aesthetics, that, of course, have been made practically invisible in contemporary Western philosophy of art and aesthetics. Like Western Metaphysics, Ethics and Epistemology, contemporary Euro-American Aesthetics not only maintains what Gayatri Spivak, has called "sanctioned ignorance" of the rich traditions and debates in Indian aesthetics, it continues to omit the required qualifier "Western" when churning out Companions and Sourcebooks of "Aesthetics" pretending or stipulating that the history of aesthetics has got to be synonymous with the history of Western aesthetics. Patnaik's chapter on the relevance of classical Indian *Rasa*-aesthetics for a global comparative aesthetics makes yet another strong case for a decent burial of such insular and blinkered approaches to philosophy of aesthetic meanings and feelings.

Comparative aesthetics, Priyadarshi Patnaik argues, is about resemblances in spite of differences. In addition, he argues for cautious optimism about discovering or constructing *provisional universals* that make comparisons between different art-worlds and alien aesthetic discourses possible. Beginning with some samples of insightful and illuminating applications of *rasa*-theory in the modern Western context, Patnaik's essay attempts to formulate criteria of legitimacy of such theory-application across cultures. When a rich and conceptually nimble aesthetic theory

is made to straddle cultures and times, one has to have a mix of doubt and dare at the same time, using the touchstones of (1) cultural, (2) contextual, (3) thematic, and (4) structural fit/compatibility. Rich with charming and startling examples, the exercise not only refreshes Western thinking about poetic, performative, and aesthetic signification, but reciprocally, enriches and sophisticates Indian theories of aesthetic interpretation and criticism as well.

Since the attack on "resemblance" by Nelson Goodman, analytic philosophers of pictorial or depictive art have been suspicious of the idea of "copying," "imitating," and mimesis in general. But Parul Dave-Mukherjee, an editor translator of the seventh-century Sanskrit classic *Citra-Sūtra* (aphorisms on painting/drawing) revives the Sanskrit version of the concept of similarity and imitation in her essay in this volume. The term "Anukṛti" (anu=after+kriti=work), Mukherjee complains, is much misunderstood in the current discourse of Indian aesthetics, which unfortunately is still dominated by colonial Orientalist aspirations. Since typical Indian "portraits" do not resemble the particular originals, nor do all the symbolic gestures of Indian dance imitate real-life expressions of emotions, it is fashionable to say that "*anukṛti*"—that is imitation—is *un*important for Indian art. But according to Mukherjee, in painting or play, theater or dance, sculpture or music similitude (*sādṛśya*), or mirroring *(pratibimbanam*) is crucial to Indian art-practices, even if it is not exactly the same as Greek mimesis. Her critique of Coomaraswamy's transcendentalist essentialist theory of the 'spirit of Indian Art' should pave the way to a post-colonial art theory that retrieves robust anukarana-centered (perhaps Śankuka-inspired) principles of art as mirror of nature, or at least mirror of the heart.

From poetry and painting, our anthology then moves to a highly imaginative new theory of music as nonreferential thinking and thinking as improvisational singing. Mukund Lath takes a musical tone/note to be a naturally abstract symbol. A constellation of such notes form a symbolic system, but it is a language without a semantic denotative relation. Such a rhythmic breath-borne sequence of tones is meaningful in itself—like gestures in a pure dance (nrtta). The nonreferential abstract nature of music was recognized early in Indian thought. Bharata, who defined theater as imitation, (anukarana), deliberately negated this principle in speaking of nrtta. And, so, naturally, for him, the aesthetic goal of nrtta was, unlike that of theater, not *rasa*, but a different kind of "formal beauty," one might say. The symbol system of "svara"-s(tones/notes), though more felt than conceptually and semantically interpreted naturally invites us to think about it. Thus Lath invites us to consider how music and thinking can in a deep sense be a mirror to each other, such that thinking itself could have a nonsemantic aspect like the intrinsically meaningful "elaboration" (*badrhat*) of a rāga in a khayal.

If Lath draws our attention to the song in our thought, the next chapter by Nrisinha Bhaduri explains the thought behind our finding a plaintive "song of separation" beautiful. It applies a highly controversial Gaudiya Vaishnava doctrine of egoless but socially "prohibited" erotic love to the mellifluous "Song of the Gopis" from the famous Xth canto of the Bhagavata Purana. In Rupa Goswami's philosophy of art, Love (*śṛṅgāra*) of different kinds is the source of all other art-emotions. The devotion of a self-effacing Gopi (cowherd-girl playmate of Krishna),

which is consummated in seeking the union of Krishna and Radha, while pining for Krishna herself, is the central literary, poetic, musical, spiritual emotion, aiding it are four other primary forms of love: love as servitude, love as friendship, and love as filial affection. Applying the sixteenth-century Rupa Goswami's complex theory of love-in-separation, and extra-marital love as social suicide, this chapter brings out the beauty of this theory by applying it to the lyrical ballad sung by the Gopis when Krishna disappears in the middle of the Full Moon Night of the Great Rāsa dance, and the forlorn gopis weep and roam from grove to grove in search of their beloved. The two negatives of, first heightening the emotions through socially recalcitrant erotic liaisons, and then celebrating nonegotistical love, seem to cancel out into an unfathomably deep affirmation of the beauty of pure love "where there is no smell of carnal desire." Although the text and the theory is old, the treatment and the critical perspective of this chapter makes it as contemporary as any of the other chapters. Three philosophical questions are raised: Can we defend the primacy of love as the source of all other aesthetic sentiments? Is the depiction of divine love or love of a God in human form generalizable for human love? What is the relevance of this sixteenth-century philosophy of aesthetic emotions in the present post-Freudian cosmopolitan day and age?

Rasa-aesthetic enjoyment has been called (by the early twentieth-century Kantian-Vedantist philosopher Krishnachandra Bhattacharya) "the feeling per excellence," which does not need any particular feeler or owner. Bijoy Barua's analytically painstaking explorations follow up on this sort of modern reconstruction of the phenomenology of *rasa*. Borua arrives at a notion of centerless *rasa*-aesthetic consciousness which, he claims, can provide a solution to the perennial puzzle of what makes art capable of transforming the ugly and the abhorrent into an object of relishable experience.

It is this puzzle of how art can make representation of the repulsive and the ugly relishable, that Arindam Chakrabarti turns to, in the following chapter. Our positive art-experience seems to be a cognitive-affective creative response to the beautiful. The disgusting or the ugly is simply opposed to the beautiful. These two assumptions seem pretty natural to make. Yet great paintings, good plays, fine films, lovely stories, exquisite poems depicting the disgusting and the ugly (e.g., Manik Bandyopadhyay's classic short story *Prehistoric* about a leprosy-stricken beggar woman) are quite often objects of positive art-experience. How can we solve this paradox? By denying the first or the second assumption? Is the beautiful irrelevant to art-experience, or is the disgusting not opposed to the beautiful? Taking examples from renaissance and modern European literature and painting, as well as classical and twentieth-century Indian art and literature, this chapter tries to solve the problem of the exquisite representation of the hideous by making use of Abhinavagupta(eleventh-century Kashmiri philosopher)'s insig[omit: hts about "Biibhatsa" as a "rasa" (art-transformed emotion). In the light of contemporary examples the chapter tries to adapt Abhinavagupta's theory and come up with a many-faceted richer theory of how the repulsive is miraculously rendered relishable by the magic touch] of the artist's "light of imaginative intuitive creativity (*pratibhā*)." Re-adjusting rasa theory to the wide variety of examples Chakrabarti considers from European and Indian

poetry, and painting, sculpture, and short-stories, naturally leads him far beyond Abhinavagupta's ideas. The sources of man's desire to play with this universal emotion of revulsion creatively, appropriately, and even for the purposes of spiritual self-transformation prove to be well-worth excavating.

The attractiveness of the repulsive as a subject of artistic representation can sometimes be erroneously diagnosed as due to its shock-value, novelty, and unusualness. But the quick-fading newness of a gimmick must be distinguished from the permanent newness of a rediscovered past. Sudipta Kaviraj's essay takes us to the dizzying depths of this paradoxical phenomenon of drawing creative novelty and originality from a community's own half-forgotten past. Analyzing the formation of a new language of the aesthetic in nineteenth-century (British-colonized) Bengal, especially in the writings (and paintings) of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath, and Abanindranath Tagore, the chapter seeks to explore the mode of this renewing presence of the Sanskrit past in modern Indian aesthetics. Examining Bankimchandra's new readings of old texts such as *Gītagovinda*, the Bhagavata, and Uttararamacarita and comparative readings of Kalidasa and Shakespeare and Rabindranath Tagore's essays on Sakuntala and the neglected heroines of Sanskrit poetry, and some of Abanindranath's historical paintings the chapter focuses on the transaction between two forms of representation the narrative-diegetic and the visual-specular. In the process, the chapter spontaneously offers us an aesthetic of history, a theory of the *rasa* of the re-envisioned past, as it were.

The perfume of the past is complemented in good art by the fragrance of the future.

If the artist records and archives bits of the past, she also has the opposite urge to play with fresh forms never before imagined. Sibaji Bandyopadhyay's chapter introduces two complementary concepts: *will to play* and *will to record*. The former attests to man's insatiable urge to construe newer forms and meanings, the latter refers to man's equally powerful inclination to cling on to things that are passing by, to preserve what has already been achieved. The conjecture is: the wills work in unison. In every situation, the *will to play* cancels out at least a part of the *will to record* and vice versa; there is no "artistic" happening that is not always internally fractured. It is with this set of theoretical assumptions that the essay invites us to figure out some kind of *aesthetics of theft*. Taking his cue from Karl Marx's digression (in the *Grundrisse*) into art-enjoyment, right in the middle of his analysis of the *theft* of others' labor-power, Bandyopadhyay constructs an Indian aesthetics of theft. We call it "Indian" not because Marx "stole" it from Kautilya, the author of the classic politics text *Arthashastra*, but because Bandyopadhyay finds in [omit: both] Kautilya [omit: and Rajashekhara] the basic idea that: "Merchants, artisans, craftsmen, nomadic mendicants, actors, jugglers and similar persons are all thieves [*chora*], in effect, if not in name" (*Arthashastra*, Book 4, Section 1, Verse 65). What, however, intrigues Bandyopadhyay is that the same idea is echoed in a text ostensibly composed to celebrate the art of writing. Rajashekhara (first quarter of tenth-century AD) in his treatise on aesthetics *Kāvyamīmāmsā* had boldly declared: "There is no poet who is not a thief, no merchant who does not cheat." The *inclusion* of the *kušīlava*, that is, the "performer in a play" in general, into the ambit of "thieves'" by the astute authority on political economy as well as by a champion of poets

make it almost mandatory to consider whether or not the art of "stealing" itself is foundational to the work of art.

Bandyopadhyay's essay travels out in search of various thieves: in deference to Plato's decree the "poets-in-perpetual-exile" as well as the "buffoons" who excite the comic temper of men (Plato, *The Republic*, "Book X"); those who in their bid to expose the vulnerability of power—and power is necessarily predicated upon "stealing" others' labor-power—delight in belittling the mighty.

Time past, propelling poets and painters toward time future, enters into the very content of pictorial representation. A Mughal or Rajput miniature often looks like a still picture of a succession of events. How the flow of time enters into this stillness is the subject of Goswamy's short but penetrating chapter on the visual aesthetic of medieval Indian miniature painting. Judging from the vast amount of material that has surfaced since Ananda Coomaraswamy's times—the manner in which Mughal and Rajput painting wove in and out of each other, the ongoing dialogue between them, brings out one distinction to which, surprisingly, Coomaraswamy paid little or no attention: the distinct ways in which Mughal and Rajput painters came to terms with the elusive, complex element of time in their work. Regardless of whether they were Hindu or Muslim, the Mughal painters' view of time was linear, rigid, "logical." The Rajput painters, on the contrary, followed a different course. They saw time as it had always been seen in the long Hindu-Buddhist tradition: cyclic, malleable, subjective, and not subject to the laws of "this world." As they treated it in their work, time could turn back upon itself, could move diagonally, take a leap, exist at different levels. One of the most visible features in their treatment of time, although not by any means the only one, is the manner in which Rajput painters routinely brought in, without the slightest sense of warping or oddity, the same figure, or set of figures, more than one time within the same frame—in the mode of continuous narration. In the whole range of Mughal painting one does not come across this phenomenon, barring a couple of glaring exceptions. Clearly different mindsets, and different understandings, were at work. Goswamy's contribution invites us to contemplate these two phenomenologies of "chronography," of writing time with a very fine brush.

Not as tense but as duration, time flows in an unhurried pace during a twenty-nine nights-long performance (in 2012) of live Sanskrit drama—in the Kudiyattam tradition of Kerala, which claims even in twenty-first century, to preserve elements of the most ancient forms of Indian theater, attested in the Natya-sastra. Kudiyattam performers and scholars of the art also continue to use the terminology of Kashmiri poetics and aesthetics, that we have alluded to earlier in this introduction, to interpret what happens on stage. But in fact, almost nothing links the aesthetic system of Bhaṭṭanāyaka and Abhinavagupta with the complex, heavily localized, world of Kudiyattam. Even basic and familiar philosophical terms such as "*dhvani*" (suggestion), *camatkāra* (marvel at relishing), or *ākāmksā* have been entirely reconceived and laden with new meanings in this tradition.

David Shulman gives us a subtle, ruminative, semi-autobiographical phenomenology of what it is like to be a spectator of the nearly month-long ritual dance and drama narration of a well-known story, for example, of Hanuman the monkey-messenger

presenting a signet-ring sent by the abducted Sita to the divine hero Rama who is pining for her. The aesthetic meaning of deliberate scrambling of the time sequence and messing with audience memory of these performances, ranging from twelve hours to over one hundred and fifty hours for a single performance is painstakingly unpacked by Shulman. Using the Sanskrit paradigm example of the absurd "Skyborn Lotus," used by an indigenous anti-Kudiyattam aesthete, Shulman (whose work on the history of South Asian Imagination is called "*More than Real*") captures the total release from realism with which these amazingly slow but action-packed performances are suffused with meaning, thought, and emotion, minute by minute. The visual ataraxia that happens to the spectator is best described in Shulman's own italicized words: "*What you have missed through inattention will come back to claim you, without rancor. Inattention is one useful kind of attention. But there are also those moments when an unearthly lucidity takes over and then I see, open-eyed. I stop decoding the* abhinaya*, stop thinking, and stare.*"

From traditional Sanskrit dance we come to a many-sided philosophical appreciation of modern Bengali/Indian dance-drama that Rabindranath Tagore introduced. Rimli Bhattacharya's essay focuses on new realizations of the dancing body in relation to traditional aesthetics reconfigured in aspirations for freedom in specific historical conjunctions. It brings together two figures, of Tagore and Shahani, who are not contemporaries, and whose métier and matter are quite disparate, seeking to explore "the contemporary" in their respective art practices. Emphasizing sharp breaks and unexpected continuities of aesthetic, social, and political concerns, this chapter delineates abstract arcs of material practices in time and space, both within and outside of the Indian subcontinent. Bhattacharya's argument turns on the multiple meanings of the verb "to realize": to understand, to materialize, to become aware, to find fruition or to discover one's inner resources. In French, the director is called the "realisatẽur," one who realizes all the diverse elements and materials into sound and image on film. The experiments with the non-laboring body in Rabindranath Tagore's Shantiniketan ashram school (and later, university) is traced through the early decades of the twentieth century as a colonized people seek to find strategies and forms of self-determination. Cutting across more than five decades, when we come to Shahani's films from the 1970s to the 1990s we encounter the film "*Chār Adhyay* (*Four Chapters*)" (1997), made to commemorate fifty years of India's independence. An explicit link, with Tagore's dance-choreography would be that Tagore's last novella of the same name on which this film is based, was completed in Kandy (Sri Lanka) in 1934, in the midst of a frenetic dance tour of the island led by the 73-year-old poet. Working thus, at quite distinct historical conjunctions, poet, writer, painter, dramaturge, and educationist, Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) and film-maker and writer, Kumar Shahani (b. 1940), have striven to eschew any essentialist understanding of "Indian aesthetics" or indeed of any singular "Indian aesthetic of dance."

This chapter affords us glimpses of the multiple and interpenetrative streams or flows in their aesthetics of dance and filmic representation of the dancing human body.

From the dynamic geometry and political economy of the enrapturing urban body and its cinematic representation, our volume shifts to the dwelling of the dwellingless (anagarika) hermits and ascetics who played a focal role, down the ages, not only in developing various strands of philosophical thinking in India, but also setting unique architectural standards of their austere undomestic homes. Buddha and Mahavira took the vow of homelessness and taught nonattachment and nonviolence, not to dwell *in* owned structures or dwell *on* aggressive or acquisitive obsessions. Yet the dwelling places of such monks started off architectural styles of cutting out caves from monoliths or building thatched cottages of modest measures. After all these are people who have left their homes. Why should *their homes* be the subject of a philosophy of architecture?

How, notwithstanding its ideal of plainness and sparseness, the hermit's or ascetic hut is implicated in the development of iconic and even monumental architecture, from intricate Hindu temples to elaborate Buddhist structure is brought out philosophically but with structural historical details in this very contemporary critique of the art of the South Asian "hermitage."

If the hermit's hut is voluntarily self-exiled into the wilderness, outside the city and the village, the live skin of those "dalit" outcastes who transform the dead skin of animals into leather-art-work has been forcibly marginalized by the upper caste Hindus for millennia. The next essay by Gopal Guru seeks to argue that the work of aesthetic transformation of leather correspondingly leads to a complex but systematic devaluation of the cutaneous presence of those leather-workers in caste-inscribed Indian Society. Thus, in the Indian ritual register, association with leather as raw or treated dead skin renders live skin employable but untouchable. At the level of production, association with dead skin particularly in the production process makes the live skin that handles it defiling and perhaps disgusting. At the level of consumption, the same dead skin reincarnated as a fashionable leather jacket, a fine cricket-ball or a gold-embossed leather-bound volume adds iconic class-prestige to a person. The essay goes on, in its second part, to discover an opposite process of meaning-making through another use of dead-skin: in making drums that potentially serve as percussions of protest. It would seek to re-signify the dead skin into a subversive substance. Thus a *dalit* aesthetic of touch is "pregnant" with different subversive meanings once the skin is transformed into, for example, a dalit drum (*dafale* in Marathi) that may be deployed as a symbol of freedom and anguish at the same time. It is a symbol of freedom in as much as it transgresses the social and cultural boundaries within which a dalit is trapped. A dalit shedding his dead skin in 1956 (conversion to Buddhism) expresses this subversive act of transgression. As a poisonous weapon, the drum creates two different feelings among the dalit and his tormentor. It empowers the dalit. But the sound of the drum-beating also flattens and thereby beats the ego of an upper-caste tormentor. It is in this sense that the dalit dialectical aesthetics of skin is indistinguishable from its clashing politics.

Another kind of huge drums, called "dhak" in Bengali, is central to the carnivalesque auditory aesthetic of Durga Puja, the major annual festivity in West Bengal. The essay has as its backdrop the transformed artistic profile of the Durga Pujas of contemporary Kolkata and the new identity of the festival as one of the

city's biggest, most spectacular public art events. It places itself against a long-standing discourse that has celebrated the extraordinary artistry of the clay images of the goddess (*pratimas*) and the elaborate architectural pavilions (*pandals*) in which she comes to be housed, even as it has decried the increasing de-sacralization and commercialization of the religious festival. Tapati Guha-Thakurta's study sets out to complicate this discourse by arguing a case for the overlapping configurations of the traditional and the contemporary, the devotional and the commercial, the artistic and the corporate in today's Durga Pujas. It does so by focusing its lens closely on the time frame of the present and the urban space of a single city, whose image has grown to be synonymous with this grand autumnal festival of the goddess. It looks in particular at the coming of age at the turn of the twenty-first century of new categories of Durga Puja "art" and "artist," alongside a new thriving vocation of Puja designing. The main intentions of Guha-Thakurta is to interrogate the notion of the "aesthetic" and the terms on which it may be inserted within the residual religious occasion and the consumerist extravaganza of today's festival. In the process she raises several questions that pertain to the epistemic shifts wrought by the newly emerging dispensation. She asks, for example: To what extent does the envelope of the "aesthetic" enable the ephemeral ritual icon to become a "work of art"? How effectively can it mediate the commercial publicities, promotions, and competitions that have invaded the current economy of the Pujas? How does "art" provide a special form of branding of the contemporary festival? What kind of special dispensation of "artist" and "designer" has the festival nurtured, and what are the inbuilt constraints of the field that keeps de-stabilizing these? And how does one contend with the ever-slipping lines of distinction between the "artist" and the "artisan" in this sphere of practice?

Moinak Biswas draws attention to a deep political as well as aesthetic crisis of contemporary Indian cinema. He locates the crisis at the intersection of a number of processes such as: the re-organization of film production and exhibition in the wake of liberalization of the economy; the new faith in direct mindless "representation" that the new cinema and its audience demand; the in-your-face social problem-solving ambitions of the new cinema and its consensual horizon. The new "individualistic-sociality" and consensus are diagnosed as the root of the political crisis, while the new faith in direct representation of the social is seen as the aesthetic obverse of the same. Since classical Indian aesthetics of theater has always emphasized "de-individualization" of emotions as the source of the unselfish relishing (*rasa*) that a dramatic performance offers us, Biswas draws upon the work of Abanindranath Tagore, Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya and others to present *rasa* theory as a theory built on the premise of audience's contribution to artistic processes, and as a theory of artistic emotion as impersonal. The idea of the impersonal "Heart Universal," also glimpsed through the notion of the "*ākāśa*," a space of creative and infinite recombinations where the usual boundary of inside/outside is eliminated, is used to understand how a filmmaker such as Ritwik Ghatak, deeply attentive to Indian traditions of art and philosophy, conceived of the responsibility of narrative communication aesthetically. An analysis of his work—which includes the filmic representation of a poor lonely man's love-affair with his moribund automobile—is

presented to show the possibility of moving beyond the person-centric sentimental cinema of bourgeois sociality.

Although Attenborough's film *Gandhi* may be responsible for the late twentieth century's popular Western interest in M. K. Gandhi's life, which was his message, our transition from film-aesthetics to Gandhi's approach to sexual abstinence as an art should strike the reader as the most abrupt change of topic. Mahatma Gandhi is widely perceived to be indifferent if not opposed to aesthetic experience. An icon of uncompromising moralism, Gandhi led a sparse life, in the austere surroundings of his ashrams and is assumed to be opposed to aestheticism and the arts that flourish in leisure. Openly critical of Western civilization and its seduction of the senses, Gandhi can be imagined to be out-Plato-ing Plato in denigrating the shadow-world that movies immerse us in. His insistence upon bodily labor, his noneffusive, economical prose and his desire for a desireless life of Brahamacharya (literally but unhappily translatable as "celibacy") promote this perception. Tridip Suhrud's essay seeks to explore Gandhi's outwardly dry but inwardly highly emotional aesthetic life enriched by his relationship to medieval devotional poetry, in particular with the Hindi poet Tulsidas. Brahamacharya, thus, emerges for Gandhi as a subtler aesthetic and not just as a rigorist ethics. Prayer was the essence of Ashramic life. Gandhi claimed that without prayer Ashramic life was not possible as the Ashram was a "community of men of religion." Of course, the religion here is nondenominational and at heart nondualistic. The twice-daily ashram prayers, which included—singing hymns from the Ashram Bhajanavali—a collection carefully put together by Gandhi himself, recitation of the Gita, endowed a simple beauty upon the whole working day at the Ashram. Mirroring this simple ego-surrendering elegance in his writing style, Suhrud argues in his chapter that for Gandhi the aesthetic experience is the experience of striving to know the truth about oneself. This aspect of prayer, both congregational and individual (as recitation of Ramanama or Namasmaran) is as central to his self-practice as the one of devotion and submission. Only those who know themselves are capable of submission. This idea of knowing oneself is central to the practice of Brahmacharya understood not only in the limited sense of chastity and sexual abstinence but in its root sense as "charya" (conduct) that leads one to Truth (=Brahman). Brahmacharya, understood and practiced in this way leads not to denial of sense but of harmony of senses, which for Gandhi opens our senses to the aesthetic identification of the self, the other, and the universe. The essay traces back this notion of aesthetics to his reading of the Bhagavad Gita and his particular fondness for the verses that describe the state of Sthitaprajnjna.

Ethical and aesthetic concerns coalesce in an utterly opposite way in the last chapter, where the art of educating the poorest children of a marginalized community in reading literature emerges as a method of working against social inequality. Gayatri Spivak whose recent-most work on Aesthetic Education after Globalization disrupts many stereotypes of South Asian and comparative aesthetics, considers reading and teaching of fiction as tasks of preparation for the possibility of unconditional ethics. By locating, in the work of Rabindranath Tagore and J. M. Coetzee, versions of the "I" figuring as object, the chapter recommends reweaving literary texts as warnings for postcolonial political ambitions. Intertextually with Levinas, King Lear, and Kabir, Gayatri Spivak tries to present a phenomenology of a reading of Coetzee's *Disgrace*,

and considers her experience of trying (perhaps by failing) to make two village girls from a marginalized community "read" a brief history of Nelson Mandela's struggle against apartheid in South Africa contained in their textbook. In this concluding essay we witness the process of a stillinthemaking "politically critical" aesthetics emerging out of an idea found in Tagore's poem: "Insult" where a new kind of equality becomes the goal of our ethico-political action. This he calls equalityindisgrace. In the process of proposing this new aesthetics of reading and reading together to achieve equality-in-disgrace, a new philosophy of the art of teaching might emerge.

We began this introduction by noting the contemporariness of the Indian aesthetics of wonder. While the dizzying diversity of the points of view from which classical, medieval, modern, and postmodern South Asian aesthetics of poetry, literature, history, painting, theater, dance, film, architecture, music, visual, and tactile experience are being theorized right now should have sustained this theme of "amazement," the end of the volume and of this introduction may open up the possibility of another common thread for a future pluralistic Indian philosophy of art. This is the thread of an impossible urge toward equality—of what has been called "samam brahma" (Bhagavadgita). Equality (samatva) has been one of the defining features of Yoga, in the Bhagavadgita. "Yoga," with dozens of alternative meanings, not only stands for the technique of rearranging the desires of the body and mind in a balanced and harmonious manner. An ideal Yogin has been defined as one who sees the pains and pleasures of others, of all living beings, as equal, in analogy of his own (*atmaupamyena, samam BG VI.*). Intolerence of inequality, even of social suffering, might therefore be the clue to a new ethically responsible aesthetic that radically nontraditional Indian critics of postcolonial reason could initiate. At least such an Indian aesthetic is long overdue for centuries now. Just as Gandhi identified poverty as the worst form of violence, a radical South Asian philosophy of art should now investigate the ugliness of extreme inequality. In India, as elsewhere, the cultural search for literary and artistic beauty and genius has always sanctioned, if not encouraged, different forms of hierarchies of the fine versus the quotidian, the laukika versus the alaukika, the high-brow versus the low-brow. But Indian aesthetics has always had a strong counter-current of abhorring inequality.[8] Refinement of our taste, like Yoga in the Bhagavadgita, may consist in this utopian striving, not toward unity but toward equality (*samatva*).

NOTES

1. "*rasahî anubhavasmṛhtyād-vilakṣhanîena rajas-tamo'nuvedha-vaicitrya-balāt druti-vistāra-vikāśa-lakṣhanîena parabrahmāsvāda-savidhena bhogena param bhujyate iti*": NS, Ch. 6, Vol. 1, p. 276.
2. *Dhvanyāloka, Uddyota II, Locana under verse 4*—the same point made in a different way in *Abhinavabhāratī* and *Locana*.
3. Bharata, Natya-sastra, Ch. 6, between verses 31 and 32, Vol. 1, p. 231.
4. Robert Browning, "Porphyria's Lover," in *Poems of Robert Browning*, ed. Donald Smalley (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1957), pp. 73–74.

5. Kālidāsa, *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* (The Signe-Ring of Śakuntalā), I. 7:*grīvābhaṅgābhirāmamF02100EE muhuranupatati syandane dattadṛhîśhîtîḥihhîpaścārdhena pravisḥṭhahḥ śarapatanabhayādbhūyasā pūrvakāyamśa sḥpairardhāvalīdḥhaihḥ śramavitatamukhabhramḥśibhihîî kīrnîavartmāpaśyodagraplut atvādviyati bahutaramḥ stokamūrvyā prayāti.*
6. Abhinavagupta inserts these four verses in the middle of his commentary on the *rasa-sūtra*, the text of which is highly controversial and mostly corrupt in all editions. See Ravishankar Nagar (ed.), NS, Vol. 1, p. 277.
7. *Abhinavabhāratī,* Ch. VI, NS, Vol. 1, p. 278.
8. A little-discussed book *Aesthetic Enjoyment: Its Background in Philosophy and Medicine* by R. K. Sen (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1966) defends this conception of harmony/equality-based philosophy of art.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agashe, K. S. (ed.) *Aitareya Bhramana*. Poona: Anandashram Sanskrit Series, 1930–31.

Ānandavardhana. *Dhvanyāloka or Theory of Suggestion in Poetry,* ed. and trans. K. Krishnamoorthy. Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1955.

Bandyopadhyay, Manik. "Prehistoric," in *Selected Stories,* ed. Malini Bhattacharya. Calcutta: Thema, 1988.

Bharata, Muni. *Nāṭyaśāstra, with Abhinavabhāratī of Abhinavagupta,* ed. M. Ramakrishna Kavi. Madras: Ananda Press, 1934.

Bhattacharya, K. C. "The Concept of Rasa," in *Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. I. Calcutta: Progressive, 1956.

Bhavabhūti. *Uttararāmacarita*, ed. M. R. Kale. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 2010.

Browning, R., "Porphyria's Lover," in *Poems of Robert Browning*, ed. Donald Smalley. Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1957.

Chaudhury, P. J., "Catharsis in the Light of Indian Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* 24 (1) (1965): 151–63.

Coetzee, J. M., *Disgrace*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1999.

Goodman, N., *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols.* Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill, 1968.

Goswami, R., *Naṭaka Chandrika* (with Hindi Translation), trans. Babulal Shukla Shastri. Varanasi: The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1964.

Jayadeva, *Jayadevapraṇītam Śrīgītagovindam*. Varanasi: Sampūrṇānanda Saṃskṛta Viśvavidyālaya, 2005.

Kālidāsa, *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, ed. M. R. Kale. Bombay: Gopal Narayan, 1898.

Kauṭilya, *Arthaśāstra,* trans. L. N. Rangarajan. New Delhi, Penguin Books India, 1992.

Krishna, S. S., *Srīmad Bhāgavatam: Canto 10 with Various Commentaries*. Ahmedabad: Krishna Shankar Shastri, 1965.

Marx, K., *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.

Mukherjee, B., *Chitrakar: The Artist*, Benodebehari Mukherjee, trans. K. G. Subramanyan. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1979/2006.

Mukherji, P. D. (ed. and trans.), *Visṇudharmottarapurāṇīyamṃ Citrasūtram*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Motilal Banarsidass, 2001.
Olivelle, P. (trans. and ed.), *Kaṭha Upaniṣhad* in *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation*. New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
Pandey, K. C., *Comparative Aesthetics*. Vols. I and II. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 2nd ed., 1972.
Plato, *Republic,* trans. C. D. C Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992.
Rājaśekhara, La Kāvvyamīmāṃsā de Rājaśekhara. French trans. Nadine Stchoupak and Louis Renou, 1846.
Saxena S. K., *Hindustani Sangeet and a Philosopher of Art Music: Rhythm and Kathak dance Visa-a-Vis Aesthetics of Susanne K. Langer*. New Delhi: DK Printworld, 2001.
Sengupta, S. C., "*Hamlet* in the Light of Indian Poetics." *Aspects of Shakespearian Tragedy*. Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1972, 143–72.
Shulman, D., *More than Real: A History of Imagination in South India*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.
Spivak, G., *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
Tagore, R., *Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore*. New York: Macmillan, 1952.
Tagore, R., *The Essential Tagore,* ed. F. Alam and R. Chakravarty. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.
Tagore, R., *Some Songs and Poems from Rabindranath Tagore*. London: East-West, 1984.
Valmīki, *Śrīmadvalmīkirāmāyaṇa*, ed. D. P. Sharma. Allahabad: National Press, 1927.
Vyāsa, *Mahābhārata with Bhavadipa commentary of Nīlakantha*, ed. Ramchandra Shastri Kinjawadekar. Pune: Chitrashala Press, 1936.

Images

Caravaggio, *David and Goliath*. Oil on canvas. Madrid: Museo del Prado, 1599.
Rembrandt, *Blinding of Samson*. Oil on canvas. Frankfurt: Städelsches Kunstinstitut, 1636.

Film

Attenborough, Richard, *Gandhi* (Film). London and Mumbai: Goldcrest Films and National Film Development Corporation of India, 1982.
Shahani, K., *Chār Adhyay* (*Four Chapters*) (Film). Mumbai: National Film Development Corporation of India, 1997.

CHAPTER ONE

"Resonance" and Its Reverberations: Two Cultures in Indian Epistemology of Aesthetic Meaning

LAWRENCE MCCREA

The "Resonance" (*dhvani*) theory of the ninth-century Kashmiri literary theorist Ānandavardhana transformed the landscape of Indian literary theory. Ānandavardhana held that poetic language is distinguished by its transmission of meanings through "suggestion" *(vyañjanā*), a semantic process that he took to be distinct from the already well-known and widely accepted processes of denotative and figurative signification. This claim of Ānandavardhana's brought him into direct confrontation with all of the then-dominant traditions of linguistic philosophy in South Asia, which recognized only these two modes of signification. Aesthetic and literary theory were, at this time, relative newcomers in the realm of Sanskrit systematic thought (*śāstra*). Some reflection on the special features of literary language can be found in the dramaturgical treatise *Nāṭyaśāstra* (c. 500 CE?), but it is not until the seventh century that works devoted specifically to the analysis of literary language first appear, with the "Ornament of Poetry" (*Kāvyālaṃkāra*) of Bhāmaha and, shortly afterward, the "Mirror of Poetry" (*Kāvyādarśa*) of Daṇḍin. While these early works of poetic theory and the others that follow them occasionally draw on the terminology and concepts of established language theory, they make few innovations in these areas, and do not generally enter into direct confrontation with nonpoetic language theories.[1] Ānandavardhana engages far more extensively and critically with the established traditions of extraliterary language analysis than any of his predecessors,[2] and the fundamental challenge the theory of *dhvani* poses to these traditional bodies of theory becomes one of the primary foci of controversy in the field for the next three centuries, especially in the Kashmir region, which dominated Indian poetic theory during this period and came in time to set

the model for poetic theory throughout the subcontinent. While Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka* reshaped Indian thought in important ways that go far beyond the simple assertion of suggestion as an independent mode of signification,[3] it is this one claim in particular that provoked a strong negative response, and served as the principal point of attack for Ānandavardhana's most important critics. This criticism came primarily not from practitioners of nonliterary language theory and philosophy themselves, but from rival literary theorists.[4] In the wake of Ānandavardhana's work there came to be a basic divide within the field of Sanskrit poetics between those who sought to explain all the expressive processes that operate in literary texts through the already well-known and understood semantic processes recognized by nonliterary language theorists and those who felt that the most vitally important and distinctive modes of poetic signification lay beyond the scope of any such analysis. It is the nature and extent of this divide that I wish primarily to investigate here. In particular I wish to suggest that the split between Ānandavardhana and his rivals did not end when the controversy over the existence of *dhvani* was firmly laid to rest in the eleventh century. Rather, I think it can be shown that the tension between those who wished to assimilate poetic language theory to general language theory, and those who resisted this assimilation by insisting on the special and in some sense inexplicable nature of poetic expression, persisted well into the early modern period, and remained a source of conflict.

I. THE VARIETIES OF SUGGESTED MEANING

To begin with, let us briefly survey the types of suggested meaning recognized by Ānandavardhana. Ānandavardhana offers several overlapping typologies of suggestion.[5] The most basic divides suggestion into three varieties, based on the type of unstated content conveyed: matters of fact [*vastu*], figures of speech [*alaṃkāra*], and emotional content [*rasa*]. Ānandavardhana exemplifies suggestion of a matter of fact with the following verse:

> Wander confidently, Monk. The dog [that frightened you] has been killed today by a lion that dwells in the vine-bowers on the banks of the Godāvarī.[6]

Here we are to understand that the verse is spoken by a woman who wishes to secretly meet her lover by the riverbank, and seeks to prevent the wandering mendicant from interrupting them there. The monk, already frightened by a dog, will all the more fear to wander near the river if he believes a lion lives there. The actual intent of the speaker is just the opposite of her overt intention, as she explicitly instructs him to wander while in fact intending to prevent him from doing so. Somehow, then, the explicit command to "wander," in this specific context, leads us to understand the fact that the speaker wishes to prevent the monk from wandering near the river.

Ānandavardhana calls this kind of literary transmission of unstated meaning *dhvani*—literally "tone" or "resonance." This term was originally employed by Sanskrit grammarians and grammatical philosophers to refer to the speech sounds of ordinary language, which, when heard, produce in hearers' minds an awareness

of the (purportedly eternal) phonemes they make manifest. The process by which they do so is unexplained, and is treated as a primary and irreducible property of the sounds. Ānandavardhana's basic contention is that the words of this poem and the explicit meanings they convey in the same way somehow produce in us an awareness of a meaning not actually stated; it is this that serves as the basis for the metaphor embodied in his choice of terminology. In the verse quoted above, we are told that the woman orders the monk to "Wander confidently." The unstated contrary intention on the part of the speaker is, according to Ānandavardhana, to be understood by a process of signification specific to literary language, which he describes as "suggestion" or "manifestation" (*vyañjanā*): a process that is, he will argue, not explicable by any of the methods so far devised by language theorists to account for nonliteral signification.

The content conveyed by suggestion, furthermore, is not limited to factual matters of this kind. More specifically poetic or intraliterary elements may be suggested as well, as for example in the following verse:

> "Having already obtained Śrī, why would he produce again in me the pain of churning?"
> "I cannot imagine for him, his mind free of lassitude, his former sleep."
> "Why should he build a bridge again, being attended by the lords of all the islands?"
> The ocean appears to tremble when you approach, as if entertaining such doubts.[7]

Churning the ocean to obtain Śrī (the goddess who personifies royal prosperity), sleeping while floating on the ocean during the periodic dissolutions of the world, and the construction of a bridge across the ocean to the island kingdom of Laṅkā (during his incarnation as Rāma) are all well-known feats of the god Viṣṇu. Yet here the ocean is said to imagine the addressee of the verse, the king here being eulogized, as "again" performing these legendary feats. The verse is therefore understood to imply that the king being addressed is none other than Viṣṇu himself. Hence Ānandavardhana takes the verse to suggest a metaphorical identification between the king and the god. "Metaphorical identification" (*rūpaka*) is one of the standard poetic figures described by Ānandavardhana's more formalist predecessors, and he goes on to show that many if not most of such recognized poetic figures can likewise be suggested rather than explicitly stated in certain cases.

The third type of suggested meaning described by Ānandavardhana, the most surprising, and probably the most important both for Ānandavardhana's own vision of literature and for the long-term development of Sanskrit literary aesthetics, is a kind of emotional content or "meaning." This sort of emotional content had already long been discussed in the Sanskrit literary and dramaturgical tradition under the name of *rasa* (literally, "flavor"), a kind of unified or heightened emotional mood thought to be conveyed by a dramatic performance or the recitation of a poem. The precise nature of this emotional flavor was not clearly outlined in the first text to discuss it, Bharata's (mid-first millennium) dramaturgical compendium, the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. It had already been the focus of much discussion prior to Ānandavardhana's time, and was

to prove a major topic of controversy for tenth- and eleventh-century aestheticians. But Ānandavardhana was the first to treat *rasa* unambiguously as a type of *meaning*, and therefore the first to see the process by which it was conveyed or evoked through language as necessarily a semantic one. For Ānandavardhana *rasa*, unlike factual content or poetic figures, can *only* be conveyed by suggestion. For this reason, and also because he promotes the communication of a unitary *rasa* as the prototypical aesthetic goal of the best poetry, this forms an especially important test case for Ānandavardhana's theory.

As an example of the suggestion of *rasa* Ānandavardhana offers the following example:

> Śiva, his composure somewhat disturbed, like the ocean when the moon begins to rise, cast his eyes on the face of Umā [Parvatī], whose lower lip was [red and round] like a bimba-fruit.[8]

Here Śiva's growing love for Pārvatī and the erotic *rasa* that depends upon it are not explicitly mentioned. According to the recognized principles of dramaturgy, each *rasa* is conveyed by a particular set of aesthetic factors (determinants, consequents, and associated emotional states). In the above example, the presence of Parvatī and the beauty of her lip are determinants, Śiva's gazing at her face is a consequent, and his loss of composure an associated emotional state, all of which in combination, serve to convey the erotic flavor that is taken to be the emotional meaning of the verse.

Ānandavardhana contends that it is *only* through the presentation of such factors that emotional mood can be conveyed. Simply to *say* that Śiva fell in love with Pārvatī will not create the "flavor" of love for the listener. Hence it is only through suggestion, rather than direct declaration, that *rasa* can be conveyed.

While this theorization and categorization of the literary workings of unstated meanings was devised to account specifically for the Sanskrit and Prakrit verses that had formed the object of analysis for Indian poetics from its very origins, unstated meanings and tacit emotional content obviously play a major if not a central role in literature more generally, and one can certainly see parallel processes at work in modern literary works as well. To take only one rather simple and therefore particularly clear example, consider the famous six-word short story purportedly composed, on a bet, by Ernest Hemingway: "For sale: Baby shoes, never worn."[9] Here we can see very clearly that the understanding of the story requires the reader to somehow become aware of both unstated factual content—that the shoes were purchased for a baby who has died—and unstated or implicit emotional content—the grief and desolation we realize must have been felt by the parents of the dead child. Both levels of unstated content are plainly analogous to those already dealt with by Ānandavardhana in the examples given above. The question, for a modern interpreter as for Ānandavardhana and his contemporaries, is how we are to account for our ability to understand this implied factual and emotional content. Is there some specifiable deductive or abductive process that allows us to move from the explicit meaning of the story to its additional layers of meaning, or do the words themselves in this combination have a special capacity, perhaps not fully

specifiable, to convey extra meanings or connotations beyond their ordinary ones? If Ānandavardhana's claims for the independence of *dhvani* from ordinary modes of language interpretation is to stand, it is important that something more be at work here than everyday hermeneutic or deductive processes; whatever leads us to understand the hidden meanings intended by such expressions must be something altogether different.

In comparing Ānandavardhana's account of suggestion with preexisting accounts of denotation, figurative signification, and inference, a marked difference of method is notable. Ānandavardhana's defense of the need to accept suggestion as a distinct mode of signification is based almost entirely on negative arguments. He tries to show that suggestion cannot be accounted for by any of the specific interpretive and deductive processes recognized by earlier language theorists and philosophers, but does not himself offer any comparatively specific account of the processes by which suggested meanings are accessed by readers or hearers of suggestive poetry. His negatively defined case for the existence of suggestion rests on a dual claim: (1) that the meanings he designates as "suggested" are clearly understood by some means or other and (2) that they cannot be understood through any of the already recognized modes of signification. Therefore, he concludes, there must be some other, previously unrecognized, mode of signification, which he stipulatively designates as "suggestion" or "reverberation" (*dhvani*).

In making this kind of argument Ānandavardhana turns to good advantage the detailed theoretical accounts of denotation, figurative signification and inference offered by earlier theorists. Grammarians, practitioners of Vedic hermeneutics (Mīmāṃsā), and logicians had long attempted to specify as precisely as possible the conditions that prompt language hearers or readers to resort to nonliteral interpretations of terms and phrases, and the factors that guide them in determining the intended nonliteral meaning in any given case. The very specificity of these accounts offers Ānandavardhana a roadmap as to how to exclude *dhvani* from the processes they define. If he can point to cases of *dhvani* that fail for any reason to meet the specified criteria for figurative expression or inference, he can make a case that the unstated meanings must be conveyed through some other process—even if he does not or cannot himself give a precise account of how that process works.

For example, by Ānandavardhana's time it had come to be generally recognized that figurative or secondary signification depended on three factors: (1) some obstruction or incongruity that makes it impossible to interpret an expression literally, (2) a connection between the literal and intended figurative sense, and (3) some purpose or motive for the speaker's resort to figurative expression (or for the intended figurative meaning).[10] Ānandavardhana's attack on those who would treat *dhvani* as a type of figurative signification builds on this detailed preexisting analysis. Ānandavardhana contends that *dhvani* cannot be reduced to figurative signification because often it does not involve any obstruction or incongruity that needs to be resolved by reinterpretation. In some cases of *dhvani* the literal meaning is rejected and replaced by the suggested one—when the village woman tells the monk to "wander confidently," we understand that her intent is precisely to prevent him from doing so—but in other cases, including especially the all-important case of

suggested *rasa*, no such displacement of meaning is to be seen. In the verse "Śiva, his composure somewhat disturbed . . . ," the literal meanings conveyed—that Śiva looks at Pārvatī, that her face resembles a bimba-fruit, and so on—are not in themselves impossible or incomprehensible, and hence our understanding of the unstated fact that Śiva is falling in love with Pārvatī does not displace or overturn the literal sense of the verse, and condition (1) is not met.

He also contends that there is a difficulty entailed by condition (3), the requirement that the resort to figurative usage have some intelligible purpose. If the purpose element in any given case of figurative expression were itself to be conveyed by a further operation of figurative expression, this would result in an infinite regress: the second instance of figurative signification would require a third to convey its purpose, that would require another, and so on. Hence even the most stalwart advocate of figurative expression as traditionally defined must accept that there is *some* process of conveying unstated meanings apart from figurative expression. And this (otherwise unanalyzed and unexplained) process is, Ānandavardhana contends, nothing but suggestion. As long as it can be established suggestion must really exist as something distinct from its putative rival—here, figurative signification—this is sufficient for Ānanadavardhana's polemical purpose, and no precise specification of the defining conditions or operations of *dhvani* itself is required.

Similarly in the case of inference Ānandavardhana and later defenders of the *dhvani* theory assert the impossibility of *dhvani* meeting the defining criteria for inferential reasoning as they are understood by the traditional theorists of inference themselves. The exact nature and scope of inferential reasoning had been a matter of furious debate for half a millennium or so by Ānandavardhana's time, and he makes no effort to take a clear stand on any of the relevant debates. One thing agreed by all theorists is that inferring one thing from another requires prior knowledge of a necessary or invariable link between the two, and this is all he needs to make his point. He argues that, while it is possible to infer from the fact that a person is speaking that he wishes to convey *some* meaning—this is an invariable relationship that can be established through repeated experience—it is not generally possible to infer the particular meanings intended (whether literal or suggested); when we hear a sentence or verse we have not heard before, it is not possible to see this understanding as resulting from inference (presumably because we have no preknowledge of an invariable connection between the expression employed and the meaning intended, though Ānandavardhana does not say so explicitly).[11] So, again, we must acknowledge that certain unstated meanings are conveyed, and cannot be conveyed by inference. Again *dhvani* must be *something else*.

In both cases, Ānandavardhana is occupied wholly with differentiating *dhvani* from other more or less well-defined semantic processes, not to showing what it is or how it works in any positive sense. At one point we are told in a general way that the capacity of words to suggest meanings other than their literal ones is dependent on "context" (*prakaraṇa*)—this itself is made as part of a negative argument against identifying the process of suggestion with that of denotation[12]—but we are given no specific indication of precisely what contextual factors are sufficient to convey such a meaning, and how precisely they operate to produce in us the requisite awareness.[13]

To show what *dhvani* is not is enough. Ānandavardhana's attitude toward the extrapoetic bodies of theory he addresses here is basically a defensive one. He wishes to deflect any potential incursions on the turf he has marked out for his own literary semantics, but seemingly has no desire to compete with these extraliterary domains of theory on their own terms. And this tendency, as we will see, sets the pattern for later defenders of the *dhvani* theory.

II. THE ORDINARINESS OF POETIC LANGUAGE

Ānandavardhana's insistence on the independence of suggestion from other semantic functions naturally enough provoked a response from defenders of more orthodox modes of language analysis. This response came, however, not from authors working directly within the fields of grammar, Mīmāṃsā, and logic, but from rival literary theorists who accepted the adequacy of standard semantic and deductive theories to account for the workings of all language, literary language included. It is not, then, an attack coming from outside the domain of poetics, but an attempt by literary theorists to use existing theory to account for the semantics of poetic language, rather than postulating any specifically poetic mode of expression.

The two most important and historically influential critics of the theory of suggestion are both dedicated to showing that the phenomena Ānandavardhana describes under the rubric of *dhvani* can be fully explained as instances of well-known semantic and cognitive processes. The first is Mukulabhaṭṭa (c. 900 CE), who argues that all supposed types of *dhvani* can be explained as types of figurative signification (*lakṣaṇā*). The second is Mahimabhaṭṭa, who explains *dhvani* as a type of inference. While there are important differences in content, style, and method between Mukulabhaṭṭa's and Mahimabhaṭṭa's critiques, they are at one in their refusal to countenance any special "poetic" mode of signification. For them poetic language is simply *language*, and the processes by which it conveys its meanings are in essence no different from those operative in ordinary speech.

In his *Fundamentals of the Denotative Function* (*Abhidhāvṛttamātṛkā*) Mukulabhaṭṭa presents a fully elaborated theory of both literal and figurative modes of expression, drawing explicitly on the works of both Sanskrit grammarians and practitioners of scriptural hermeneutics or *Mīmāṃsā*, who had produced the most influential accounts of these expressive processes to date. In doing so, he develops a theory of figurative signification more elaborate and more coherent than any that had gone before. The earlier theorists on which he draws generally treated figurative signification in occasional and ad hoc comments, rather than making it a primary topic of analysis; Mukulabhaṭṭa is perhaps the first to produce a fully systematic account. It should come as no surprise, then, that his analysis of figurative expression is adopted virtually without alteration by most later poetic theorists, even those who reject his attack on the *dhvani* theory. Mammaṭa, whose *Light of Poetry* (*Kāvyaprakāśa*) becomes the most important model for post-eleventh-century poeticians, copies Mukulabhaṭṭa's typology of figurative signification nearly verbatim, and most later authors follow him in this respect.

Mukulabhaṭṭa allows for six subtypes of figurative signification, two metonymic and four metaphoric. The two metonymic he terms "indication", where a literal referent points directly to a second, figurative one, and "inclusion," where the literal referent incorporates, rather than simply being replaced by, a figurative one (on which more below). He divides metaphoric signification into two broad types: that based on a relation of similarity between the literal and figurative referents (e.g., "Her face is the moon") and that based on some other relation such as cause and effect (e.g., saying "Ghee is life" to mean "Ghee causes or extends life"). Each of these is further divided into cases of "superimposition" (*āropa*), where a figuratively expressive term is used coreferentially with a literal designator of the same referent (as in "Her face is the moon") and cases of "determination" (*adhyavasāya*) where a term is employed figuratively without such coreference (as when one simply refers to a face as "the moon").

The latter subdivision, as we will see, proves to have important effects in the later development of figurative theory.

The most important move in Mukulabhaṭṭa's attempt to explain all supposed "suggestion" as figurative expression is to show that its operation is not limited to cases in which the literal meaning is simply overturned or rejected. Ānandavardhana, as we have seen, argued that figurative signification cannot fully subsume the process of suggestion because figurative meanings arise only when the literal meaning of an expression is obstructed in some way, and therefore figurative meanings invariably replace, rather than supplement, the literal meaning of an expression. Mukulabhaṭṭa, by contrast, seeks to demonstrate, through his "inclusion" type, that figurative expression can occur even when the literal meaning is retained. Consider the expression "Have the spears enter" (*kuntān praveśaya*).[14] Here what is meant is that spear-carrying men (metonymically referred to as "spears") should enter. Here the literal meaning is not displaced—the spears in fact do enter—but is *supplemented*—the spears enter, along with the men. There is still an incongruity on the surface level of meaning (satisfying condition (1) given above), since the spears cannot enter by themselves. The resort to figurative interpretation resolves the incongruity, but not in such a way as to entail the abandonment of the literal sense.

For Mukulabhaṭṭa, all examples of *dhvani* where the literal sense is intended, including the all-important category of *rasa-dhvani*, are to be explained in similar terms. As an example he quotes the following verse:

> The arrows of the love-god cannot be deflected; the spring season spreads out in every direction; the moon's rays produce madness in my heart; the cuckoos are enchanting; this youthful stage of life is borne with difficulty, due to the weight of these swelling breasts. O friend! How can I now endure these five unbearable fires?[15]

Here the *rasa* to be figuratively indicated is that of love in separation. There is nothing absolutely impossible in the explicit meaning of the verse (apart from the metaphorical identification of the stimulating factors of love as "fires"), but the unbearability of these factors is itself inexplicable unless we posit an underlying cause, namely the emotional state of the speaker. Hence here too we have a supplementing

of the explicit meaning by a figuratively indicated one, but one that resolves what would otherwise be an incongruity in the surface level meaning of the verse, and hence meets the criteria for figurative signification.[16] Similarly all cases of supposed *dhvani* can be shown to rest on the resolution of some incongruity in the surface meaning; it is precisely this that drives one to seek for a nonliteral sense.

The eleventh-century theorist Mahimabhaṭṭa was the most determined and focused, and also the last, major critic of Ānandavardhana's *dhvani* theory. His sole surviving work, *An Analysis of Suggestion* (*Vyaktiviveka*) is in fact a book-length attack on the entire concept of suggestion that underlies Ānandavardhana's literary semantics. Mahimabhaṭṭa, using principally the tools of Dharmakīrtian Buddhist epistemology, sets out to prove and systematically demonstrate that the meaning effects that Ānandavardhana discusses under the heading of suggestion can all be explained, and can only be explained, as forms of inference. The entire third chapter of his work is devoted to examining each of Ānandavardhana's supposed examples of *dhvani*, spelling out the inferential process involved in each case. Criticisms of the attempt to reduce *dhvani* to inference have generally turned on the difficulty of establishing an invariable connection (*vyāpti*) between the putatively suggestive expression and the meaning it conveys. Mahimabhaṭṭa turns this argument around on the *dhvani*-proponent, arguing that, if the supposedly suggestive verses really do convey the meanings they are said to clearly and without ambiguity, there must in fact be an invariable relation between them. He quotes with approval Ānandavardhana's own claim that the suggested meaning of an expression is governed by contextual factors,[17] but tries to turn this against him by showing that it in fact supports his own inferentialist theory. Whatever set of lexical, contextual, and other factors one takes to determine the suggested meaning in any given case, this entire set of factors must in fact be invariably connected, and known to be invariably connected, to the meaning conveyed; and reasoning from a known element to an unknown one based on a known connection is nothing but inference.[18]

As part of his argument for the centrality of inference, Mahimabhaṭṭa makes a strong case that this inference must always be from literal meaning to implied or suggested meaning, and never from the word itself directly to a suggested or implied sense. Individual words and morphemes can convey only their own literal meanings; any further "meanings" are derived inferentially from the combination of the literal meanings so expressed. For this reason he rules out Ānandavardhana's entire category of word- (rather than meaning-) based *dhvani*. This is a type of suggestion that employs pun-like techniques, but in which one half of the double meaning is said to be "suggested" rather than expressed literally.[19] Mahimabhaṭṭa argues at great length that coherent punning is possible only if the punned terms are anchored by a pair of nonpunned expressions (one linking to and provoking each level of meaning); this completely excludes Ānandavardhana's suggested paromomasia, which is meant to operate only in the absence of a such a verbal "hook."[20] While no later authors follow Mahimabhaṭṭa in rejecting this category of *dhvani*, his analysis of the need for the nonpunned verbal hook in the figure "pun" does find important followers, as we will see.

Mammaṭa's late eleventh-century *Kāvyaprakāśa* represents the earliest response to Mahimabhaṭṭa's attack, but also effectively ends the controversy over *dhvani*. Mammaṭa's attitude toward the potential encroachment of nonliterary language philosophy in the realm of *dhvani*, like that of Ānandavardhana, is basically defensive. He briefly reiterates Ānandavardhana's basic arguments against reducing *dhvani* to figurative signification, and, responding to Mahimabhaṭṭa's attacks, argues at some length against the possibility of explaining *dhvani* as inference, based primarily on the impossibility of establishing awareness of an invariable relation between the suggestive expression and the meaning it suggests.[21] Again, the point is simply to establish that *dhvani* is something different from what other theorists have spoken about, not to make clear exactly what it *is*. For Mammaṭa writing at the end of the great *dhvani* controversy, as for Ānandavardhana at its inception, the main strategy for dealing with the large and intimidating body of Sanskrit extrapoetic language theory is evasion.

III. THE AFTERLIFE OF THE CONTROVERSY

After Mammaṭa's time, the controversy over the existence of suggestion effectively dies out, at least in the realm of literary and aesthetic theory. No further attacks are launched, and virtually all literary theorists acknowledge, at least in passing, both the reality of Ānandavardhana's "resonance" and its central importance in poetic language. Yet the tension over the role of extraliterary language theory in literary analysis persists even after the question of the existence of *dhvani* has been definitively settled. Several of the major post-Mammaṭa literary theorists, while accepting the reality of *dhvani* and according it an important role in the analysis of poetry, still sought to integrate literary semantics more closely with the main streams of nonliterary language theory, and in doing so continued and expanded many of the lines of argument first set forth by the great critics of *dhvani*. I will here comment briefly on just two of these authors, the twelfth-century figurative theorist Ruyyaka and Vidyādhara, the fourteenth-century author of the encyclopedic treatise *Ekāvalī*. Both are avowed adherents of the *dhvani* theory, yet the work of both is in important respects indebted to that of Mukulabhaṭṭa and Mahimabhaṭṭa, and both can be seen as trying in important ways to further rather than impede the integration of literary analysis with broader streams of linguistic theory.

This turn away from the defensive exclusionism of Ānandavardhana can be seen first of all in a simple shift of focus. In the post-Mammaṭa critical tradition attention is, to a considerable extent, redirected toward the very elements that had occupied the early poeticians: figures of speech, dictional qualities, and poetic flaws to be avoided. So, even while adherence to the *dhvani* theory is retained, *dhvani* itself becomes increasingly marginalized in the actual analysis of these thinkers. This trend is already fully evident in the work of Ruyyaka, whose magnum opus, his *Essence of Figuration* (*Alaṃkārasarvasva*) is the first work of poetic theory produced in Kashmir in more than three centuries to turn altogether away from the *dhvani* controversy and focus purely on the analysis of the poetic figures (as Ānandavardhana's predecessors had

mainly done). He begins his work with a brief prologue in which he declares himself a believer in *dhvani*, and then proceeds to ignore it for virtually the entire remaining work. And the analysis of the figures he produces (innovative in many ways) is most visibly indebted not to Ānandavardhana but to his two great rivals. I will mention only two instances of this. One of the more noteworthy features of Ruyyaka's work is a radical reconceptualization of the domain of identity-based figures, built precisely around the divide between "superimposition" and "determination" first elaborated in Mukulabhaṭṭa's work.[22] Ruyyaka has a very special relationship to Mahimabhaṭṭa in particular, as he wrote a very detailed and (despite occasional digressions in support of the *dhvani* position) largely sympathetic commentary on the *Vyaktiviveka*, and his work is clearly shaped in many important respects by this connection. Ruyyaka's treatment of the all-important figure of paronomasia or pun (*śleṣa*), for example, is most conspicuously indebted not to Ānandavardhana or to any of the earlier figurative theorists, but to Mahimabhaṭṭa. He differs with Mahimabhaṭṭa in that he does accept Ānandavardhana's category of word-based *dhvani*, but his specific analysis of the expressed figure *śleṣa* is founded entirely on Mahimabhaṭṭa's analysis as given in the *Vyaktiviveka*. He too believes that an expression can convey a literal meaning along with a punned, noncontextual one if there is some nonpunned term to serve as an anchor (otherwise, he says, it would be a case of *dhvani*, not the figure *śleṣa*).[23]

Apart from these direct links to the anti-*dhvani* theorists, Ruyyaka's work is also marked by more thoroughgoing application of the tools devised by grammarians, logicians, and Mimāṃsakas to the analysis of poetic phenomena. For example, building on the small adaptation of logical theory incorporated by the earlier poeticians through the figures of "poetic reason" (*kāvya-hetu*) and "poetic example" (*kāvya-dṛṣṭānta*), he expands the catalog of the figures to include a further set of mostly new figures based on Mīmāṃsā-derived principles of sentence interpretation.[24]

Both these features—the redeployment of ideas and arguments drawn form anti-*dhvani* theorists, and further efforts to incorporate extraliterary language theory into poetics—can be seen clearly as well in the *Ekāvalī* of Vidyādhara (fourteenth century, Orissa). Vidyādhara's system of the figures is modeled on that developed by Ruyyaka in his *Alaṃkārasarvasva*, a work that post-dates the *Kavyaprakāśa* and challenges its treatment of the figures in many key respects. Vidyādhara not only follows Ruyyaka closely in his definitions of the figures, often rephrasing Ruyyaka's own explanations nearly word for word, he also fully adopts Ruyyaka's systematic ordering of the figures, and his grouping of them into categories, including his groups of logic- and Mīmāṃsā-based figures.[25] Vidyādhara was certainly not alone in preferring Ruyyaka's treatment of the figures overall to that of Mammaṭa. Many, if not most, of the later Ālaṃkārikas were to a greater or lesser extent influenced by Ruyyaka's treatment and organization of the figures. Still, this wholesale adoption of Ruyyaka's model and system of organization stands out.

More striking still is Vidyādhara's treatment of poetic flaws or *doṣas*. Here his model is not Ruyyaka or Mammaṭa, but Mahimabhaṭṭa, whose attempt to reduce literary suggestion to inference was vociferously resisted by Mammaṭa (and, for that matter, by Vidyādhara himself in his own discussion of *dhvani*). Mahimabhaṭṭa's

Vyaktiviveka, while devoted principally to attacking Ānandavardhana's *dhvani* theory, includes a lengthy treatment of the *doṣas*,[26] and Vidyādhara bases his own treatment of this topic entirely on Mahimabhaṭṭa's, adopting, with only one minor variation, Mahimabhaṭṭa's typology of flaws, and explaining and illustrating them in a closely parallel fashion. Here, as with Ruyyaka, Vidyādhara is not alone in drawing on Mahimabhaṭṭa's work. Mammaṭa himself and, following him, many of the later Ālaṃkārikas, incorporate elements of Mahimabhaṭṭa's *doṣa* theory into their own. But no one else takes him as his exclusive model in the way that Vidyādhara does.

These incorporations of Mahimabhaṭṭa's *doṣa* theory and Ruyyaka's figurative theory, systematic and total as they are, seem to be more than haphazard or ad hoc adoptions of convenient elements of existing theory. They would appear to constitute significant lines of affiliation that Vidyādhara draws between himself and these earlier theorists: lines of affiliation that lie notably outside the tradition emerging from Mammaṭa's work.

And what is most interesting, viewing the *Ekāvali* in the larger context of the development of Alaṃkāraśāstra over the course of the second millennium, is that the lines of affiliation Vidyādhara draws here can be seen to carry on into the work of those later theorists who show the greatest interest in the *Ekāvali,* in particular the famous fifteenth-century poetic commentator Mallinātha, whose sole work on poetic theory is a commentary on the *Ekāvalī*, and the brilliant and iconoclastic Tamil polymath Appayyadīkṣita, whose own treatment of figurative signification in his *Critique of Verbal Function (Vṛttivārttika*) is closely modeled on Vidyādhara's. While Mallinātha's citational practices in his poetic commentaries are complex and hard to explain in any detailed manner, it is plain that both Ruyyaka's treatment of the figures and Vidyādhara's reworking thereof played a major role in his own understanding of the figures. Mallinātha's engagement with Mahimabhaṭṭa is very close, and indeed exerts a major influence on most of his poetic commentaries. Mallinātha responds in detail to Mahimabhaṭṭa's numerous identifications of flaws in verses of the classical poetic canon, often defending the authors against Mahimabhaṭṭa's accusations, but in some cases adopting variant readings of particular verses to avoid these flaws, or actually emending the texts, sometimes by adopting Mahimabhaṭṭa's own editorial suggestions, to repair them.[27]

Lingering traces of Mahimabhaṭṭa's influence, likely inflected through the influence of both Ruyyaka and Vidyādhara, surface in some very interesting ways in the works of Appayyadīkṣita—one aspect of which has already been very insightfully explored by Yigal Bronner and Gary Tubb in a recent article.[28] There they examine an argument over one specific verse between the two great antagonists of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poetics: the aforementioned Appayyadīkṣita and his nemesis, the north Indian poet and critic Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja (the "king of paṇḍits"). Appayyadīkṣita, while daringly innovative in this as in all dimensions of his writing, draws very heavily on Ruyyaka's *Alaṃkārasarvasva* in his own treatment of the figures, so much so that his great rival Jagannātha describes Ruyyaka's work as Appayya's own "root text" (*mūlagrantha*).[29] Appayya himself does not, so far as I know, treat Mahimabhaṭṭa's views sympathetically in any of his works or directly affiliate himself with him in any way, but here again Jagannātha's (hostile but

insightful) analysis of Appayya's views draws a connection that Appayya himself does not openly acknowledge. Jagannātha, picking apart Appayya's analysis of a particularly famous *dhvani* verse (very capably discussed and analyzed by Bronner and Tubb), actually accuses Appayya, while explicitly defending the *dhvani* theory, of covertly adopting Mahimabhaṭṭa's own inferentialist position: by attempting to specify with precision the conditions that force one to derive the suggested meaning of the verse, he has in effect turned this set of conditions into an inferential reason or *liṅga*, the knowledge of which enables one to arrive at the putatively suggested meaning by a purely deductive process—exactly the position of Mahimabhaṭṭa.[30] In effect, Appayyadīkṣita has fallen into the trap set long ago by Mahimabhaṭṭa—if one attempts to specify with any precision the factors that make it possible to know that a certain suggested meaning is meant to be conveyed by a particular expression, one in effect establishes that this set of factors is in fact invariably linked with the "suggested" content, and therefore opens the door to an inferentialist reading. In attempting to clearly analyze the determinants of suggestion, so as to forestall any threat of ambiguity, one essentially reduces "suggestion" to an everyday deductive or inductive process—exactly what Ānandavardhana sought to avoid. In order to remain both individuated and plausible, *dhvani* must remain in some sense imprecise or unanalyzed.

Here it does indeed seem that the legacy of Mahimabhaṭṭa's anti-*dhvani* argument lives on into the sixteenth century. In light of the connections linking Appayya back to Vidyādhara (and Mallinātha), to Ruyyaka, and, ultimately, to Mahimabhaṭṭa, I think we can productively see the tendencies that led Jagannātha to label Appaya as a crypto-inferentialist not simply as a manifestation of his own iconoclasm, but as emerging from what we might almost want to call a tradition. Appayya appears at the end of a more or less continuous chain of scholars who all sought, in one way or another, to bring elements of extrapoetic language theory to bear on the analysis of poetry. This intrusion of the nonpoetic into the domain of poetry was plainly a serious concern driving Jagannātha's response to Appayya. To quote Professors Bronner and Tubb: "The emphasis on logic that Appayya shares with Mahimabhaṭṭa appears to threaten the hard-won independent status of poetics as a discipline."[31] But I think it should be clear from the foregoing remarks on the *Alaṃkārasarvasva* and the *Ekāvali* that this "emphasis on logic", and on extrapoetic modes of classification and analysis more generally, is not limited to Appayya and Mahimabhaṭṭa, but is characteristic of a series of major works and authors falling between Mahimabhaṭṭa's time in the eleventh century and Appayya's in the sixteenth. What I am suggesting here is the existence, not of a canon, certainly, or even a text-tradition in any well-defined sense—there are obviously significant elements of conflict between the authors belonging to it, particularly in the case of Mahimabhaṭṭa—but of what might perhaps best be described as a kind of subculture within the broader domain of poetics; one characterized above all by its commitment to take seriously the claims of logic, hermeneutics, and general linguistics on the analysis of poetic language, and by its opposition to those, such as Mammaṭa and Jagannātha, who strive to keep for poetics a space of its own free from the incursions of such theory.

NOTES

1. The one important but decidedly anomalous exception being Bhāmaha's extended critique of the Buddhist epistemologist Dignāga's *apoha* theory in chapter five of his "Ornament of Poetry."
2. Although Yigal Bronner ("Udbhaṭa and the Dawn of Kashmiri Poetics," forthcoming) has recently argued convincingly that the work of the Kashmiri court poet Udbhaṭa, active about fifty years before Ānandavardhana, already marks an important milestone in the rereading of poetic theory through the categories of established extrapoetic language theory. Without seeking to undermine this important insight, I would argue that Ānandavardhana's engagement with non-literary language philosophers is both more systematic and more pointedly controversial, as it specifically argues for the inability of their theories to account for what he takes to be the most important features of literary language.
3. As I have argued elsewhere; see Lawrence McCrea, *The Teleology of Poetics in Medieval Kashmir,* Harvard Oriental Series 71 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).
4. The only significant response to Ānandavardhana's *dhvani* theory outside the realm of literary theory is a brief and contemptuous dismissal from Ānandavardhana's near contemporary and fellow Kashmiri, the early tenth-century logician Jayantabhaṭṭa, who regards the difficulties of semantic theory as beyond the capacities of mere poets to understand, and explains that all such meaning effects as Ānandavardhana sees as *dhvani* can be accounted for as types of inference—see McCrea, *Teleology of Poetics*, pp. 216–17.
5. On which, see McCrea, *Teleology of Poetics*, pp. 168ff.
6. *bhama dhammia vīsattho so suṇao ajja mārio deṇa | golānaikacchakuḍaṅgavāsinā dariasīheṇa ||* (Hāla, *Sattasaī* 2.75); *Dhvanyāloka* on 1.4 (Paṭṭābhirāma Śāstrī, p. 52)
7. *prāptaśrīr eṣa kasmāt punar api mayi taṃ manthakhedaṃ vidadhyān nidrām apy asya pūrvām analasamanaso naiva sambhāvayāmi |setuṃ badhnāti bhūyaḥ kimiti ca sakaladvīpanāthānuyātas tvayy āyāte vitarkān iti dadhata ivābhāti kampaḥ payodheḥ || Dhvanyāloka* 2.27 (Paṭṭābhirāma Śāstrī, p. 261).
8. *haras tu kiṃcitparivṛttadhairyaś candrodayārambha ivāmburāśiḥ / umāmukhe bimbaphalādharoṣṭhe vyāpārayām āsa vilocanāni //* (Kālidāsa, *Kumārasaṃbhava* 3.67).
9. David Haglund, "Did Hemingway Really Write His Famous Six-word Story?," *Slate*, January 31, 2013.
10. Take one of the stock examples of figurative expression: "a village on the Ganges" (*gaṅgāyāṃ ghoṣaḥ*). Here the literal meaning is blocked, since it is impossible for a village to literally float *on* the river Ganges itself. We instead understand the expression to refer to a village on *the bank* of the Ganges, the bank being related to the literal referent of the word Ganges by physical proximity.
11. In this basic claim he agrees with the Nyāya tradition of logic, which holds that the specific meanings we understand from sentences cannot be known inferentially (and hence hold "language" or "testimony" to be a means of knowledge separate from inference).

12. See Pattābhirāma Śāstrī (ed.), *The Dhvanyāloka,* with the *Locana* of Abhinavagupta and the *Bālapriyā* of Rāmaśāraka, ed. (Varanasi: Kashi Sanskrit Series 135, 1940), pp. 436–37.
13. In light of this almost wholly negative strategy of argument, the analogy Ānandavardhana draws between his own *dhvani* and the phonetic *dhvani* as described by grammarian-philosophers such as Bhartṛhari is in a sense (and, really, *only* in this sense) apt. The process by which ephemeral phonetic events "manifest" the eternal speech-sounds in the minds of hearers (and likewise the process by which spoken words and sentences manifest the meanings we derive from them) remains for Bhartṛhari essentially mysterious, not to say mystical. Bhartṛhari attempts to show that our awareness of speech sounds and meanings cannot be accounted for by any direct recognition or any combination of recognized elements, and hence must be produced by an irreducible and inexplicable intuitive "burst" (*sphoṭa*) of awareness.
14. For more on the example, see McCrea, *Teleology of Poetics*, pp. 273–74.
15. *durvārā madaneśavo diśi diśi vyājṛmbhate mādhavo*
hṛdy unmādakarāḥ śaśāṅkarucayaś cetoharāḥ kokilāḥ |
uttuṅgastanabhāradurdharam idaṃ pratyaṅgam anyad vayaḥ
ṣoḍhavyāḥ sakhi sāṃprataṃ katham amī pañcāgnayo duḥsahāḥ ||
Mukulabhaṭṭa, Abhidhāvṛttamātṛkā, p. 14.
16. Mukulabhaṭṭa does not directly address Ānandavardhana's second argument, about the need for a separate semantic function to convey the purpose of any given instance of figurative signification. Mukulabhaṭṭa certainly does accept purpose as a component in most (though not all) figurative signification. Indeed he provides what comes to be the standard account of this feature for Mammaṭa and later authors. But he simply ignores Ānandavardhana's infinite regress argument; he evidently regards the decipherment of the speaker's purpose as part of a unitary operation of figurative interpretation, requiring no further stages.
17. See above; also McCrea, *Teleology of Poetics*, pp. 408–10.
18. See Revaprasada Dvivedi (ed.), *The Vyaktiviveka of Rājānaka Śrī Mahimabhaṭṭa*, edited with a Sanskrit commentary of Rājānaka Ruyyaka (Varanasi: Kashi Sanskrit Series 121, 1964), pp. 146–49 (quoting *Dhvanyāloka*, pp. 436–37); also *Vyaktiviveka*, pp. 176, 504, and 510–11.
19. For more on this see McCrea, *Teleology of Poetics*, pp. 141–45.
20. For a more detailed discussion of Mahimabhaṭṭa's argument on this, see Lawrence McCrea, "Mahimabhaṭṭa's Theory of Poetic Flaws," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124.1 (2004), pp. 88–93.
21. See Mammaṭa, *Kāvyaprakāśa*, ed. S. Venkatanathacharya, Oriental Research Institute Series, nos. 120 and 122 (Mysore: University of Mysore, 1974–77), pp. 474–81.
22. "Metaphor" and related figures for him are based on identity expressed through superimposition, while figures such as "hyperbole" and "imagination" take the form of "determination"—see Ruyyaka, *Alaṃkārasarvasva*, ed. Pandit Durgaprasad and Kashinath Pandurang Parab, Kāvyamālā 35 (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press, 1982 [reprint]), pp. 34ff and 55ff.

23. *Alaṃkārasarvasva*, pp. 95–96. Puns in which both meanings are equally relevant (or equally irrelevant) to the context pose a different problem. Here there is no way to mark one level of meaning out as literal and the other as suggested, so Ruyyaka accepts both as being expressed literally.
24. Ruyyaka, *Alaṃkārasarvasva*, pp. 148–64.
25. Following Ruyyaka, he labels these groups *tarka-nyāya-mūla* and *vākya-nyāya-mūla*, respectively; Vidyādhara, *Ekāvalī*, with the Commentary Taralā of Mallinātha, ed. P. Sriramachandrudu (Hyderabad: Osmania University, 1981), pp. 316–32.
26. For more on which, see McCrea, "Mahimabhaṭṭa's Theory of Poetic Flaws," pp. 77–94.
27. For more on this see Lawrence McCrea, "Poetry in Chains: Commentary and Control in the Sanskrit Commentarial Tradition," in *Language, Myth, and Poetry in Ancient India and Iran* (Israel: Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2010), pp. 239–56.
28. Yigal Bronner and Gary Tubb, "Blaming the Messenger: A Controversy in Late Sanskrit Poetics and Its Implications," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 71.1 (2008), pp. 75–91.
29. Ibid., p. 85.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ānandavardhana, *Dhvanyāloka*, in Paṭṭābhirāma Śāstrī, ed., *The Dhvanyāloka,* with the *Locana* of Abhinavagupta and the *Bālapriyā* of RāmaŚāraka, ed. Kashi Sanskrit Series 135. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Series Office, 1940.

Bronner, Yigal, "Udbhaṭa and the Dawn of Kashmiri Poetics," in *Around Abhinavagupta: Aspects of the Intellectual History of Kashmir from the 9th to the 11th Centuries* (forthcoming).

Bronner, Yigal and Gary Tubb, "Blaming the Messenger: A Controversy in Late Sanskrit Poetics and Its Implications," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 71 (2008), pp. 75–91.

Dvivedi, Revaprasada, ed., *The Vyaktiviveka of Rājānaka Śrī Mahimabhaṭṭa*, edited with a Sanskrit Commentary of Rājānaka Ruyyaka. Kashi Sanskrit Series 121. Varanasi: Chaukhmbha Vidyabhavana, 1964.

Mammaṭa, *Kāvyaprakāśa*, ed. S. Venkatanathacharya. Oriental Research Institute Series, nos. 120 and 122, Mysore: University of Mysore, 1974–77.

McCrea, Lawrence, "Mahimabhaṭṭa's Theory of Poetic Flaws," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 124.1 (2004), pp. 77–94.

McCrea, Lawrence, *The Teleology of Poetics in Medieval Kashmir*. Harvard Oriental Series 71. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.

McCrea. Lawrence, "Poetry in Chains: Commentary and Control in the Sanskrit Commentarial Tradition," in *Language, Myth, and Poetry in Ancient India and Iran*. Jerusalem: Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2010, pp. 239–56.

Mukulabhaṭṭa, *Abhidhāvṛttamātṛkā*, in *Abhidhāvṛttamātṛkā of Mukulabhaṭṭa and Śabdavyāpāravicāra of Rājānaka Mammaṭācārya*, ed. M. R. Telang. Bombay: Tukaram Javaji, 1916.

Pattābhirāma Śāstrī, ed., *The Dhvanyāloka,* with the *Locana* of Abhinavagupta and the *Bālapriyā* of Rāmaśāraka, ed. Kashi Sanskrit Series 135. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Series Office, 1940.

Ruyyaka, *Alaṃkārasarvasva*, ed., Pandit Durgaprasad and Kashinath Pandurang Parab, Kāvyamālā 35. Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press, 1982 [reprint].

Vidyādhara, *Ekāvalī, with the Commentary Taralā of Mallinātha*, ed. P. Sriramachandrudu. Hyderabad: Osmania University, 1981.

CHAPTER TWO

Rasa Aesthetics Goes Global: Relevance and Legitimacy

PRIYADARSHI PATNAIK

Quantum Physics makes me so happy!

It is like looking at the universe naked. Ohh . . .

Sheldon's words in the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*, Season 5, Episode 20.

This living hand, now warm and capable
Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
And in the icy silence of the tomb,
So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
That thou would wish thine own heart dry of blood
So in my veins red life might stream again,
And thou be conscience-calm'd–see here it is—

I hold it towards you.[1]

John Keats, "This Hand, Now Warm and Capable."

I. INTRODUCTION

Let us begin this chapter with the two quotes above which raise more questions than they answer. What is it that makes Keats's poem successful? Why does it make us marvel and yet leave us in a state where it is difficult to pinpoint what we feel? What is it in this string of words that makes us experience emotions that have nothing to do with our lives? Similarly, when Sheldon looks at his whiteboard of equations in *The Big Bang Theory* and blurts out the words above, we see rare emotions in a person who is generally unmoved by emotions of everyday life or art. What motivates such reaction? Whatever else we may say, we cannot deny that these questions are as pertinent today as they must have been when Bharata's *NāṭyaŚāstra* attempted to answer such questions through the aesthetic concept of *rasa*.

Rasa theory begins with the assumption that emotions can be of two kinds: those that relate to our everyday life affecting our existence directly and others that have nothing to do with our personal lives and yet profoundly affect us. The two are deeply linked to one another. For instance, meeting one's beloved makes one react with emotions. Reading Keats's poem also generates emotions. But are they the same kind? What is it in a work of art—which has nothing to do with our lives—that *touches* our hearts? How does it work? Bharata suggests that it works in similar ways to the cause and effect and sequential flow of our daily lives.[2] He, in fact, develops a series of specialized terminologies in order to indicate how this happens.

According to Bharata, *rasa* comes from the combination of *vibhāvas* (antecedents, sources or causes), *anubhāvas* (effects or consequents that emerge in response to the antecedents or causes) and *vyabhicāribhāvas* (accompanying fleeting states that intensify the mood).[3] Gradually, their unfolding, which leads to a series of emotional responses in the perceiver, stirs certain feelings, and finally a specific emotion (say that of joy, ecstasy or disgust) intensifies to a state where we—for a few seconds or minutes—forget ourselves, submerge in the world of the art object and experience an emotion that has nothing to do with our lives. This experience makes us forget our identities, our specific time and locale, our histories, and floods us with a nameless experience—Bharata calls this experience *rasa*.

But how does it apply to Keats's poem? We must remember that Bharata spoke essentially in the context of a play where there was a story with its internal set of cause and effect relationships—there was a world that we could enter. In that world, things could happen. But Keats's poem is only a few lines and there is no story. Or is there? Let us look closely. We read the lines, we close our eyes. As the lines unfold in our mind's world, we see a fragment of a story, and then a world slowly emerges. The hand is not just a hand; it is linked to a body, to a throbbing heart. This is the speaker. We may imagine him in many ways. But he is there speaking the lines. He is the cause (*vibhāva*), the initiator of the words that as they unfold must have an effect (*anubhāva*) on the person he is speaking to, and in fact on the ambience of the whole poem. We do not know who she[4] is. But we have enough evidence in the text to make us aware, even though hypothetically, of what her responses would be. Within the poetic world, another world is created where things are icy and cold—death touching all (disgust—*bibhatsa*). Along with this is generated fear for the loved one (*bhaya*), empathetic sadness (*karuṇa*) and the reflection (even mental enactment) that this would result in the beloved responding immediately (*anubhāva*) to restore harmony:

> That thou would wish thine own heart dry of blood
> So in my veins red life might stream again.

The emotion of love (*śṛṅgāra*) is intensified by this imagined/enacted sacrifice. But then, all is restored to normal after love's imagined sacrifice when the reverie is dispelled and the hand is thrust forward flowing with the throbbing blood of life:

> And thou be conscience-calm'd–see here it is—
> I hold it towards you.

The sense of love (*śṛṅgāra*) is intensified and this happens only because of the touch and go of fear, anxiety, sadness and disgust, which *cook* with the flavor of love (*śṛṅgāra*) as the poem unfolds. Then the spell is broken and we come back to our lives. Moreover, this is not directly communicated to us, since emotions can only be evoked through suggestion (*dhvani*).

We are told, this spell is created through the process of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*[5]—a state where we lose ourselves in another world with its own logic, space, and time. We are also told that this is made possible because of our innate tendencies and memory of earlier perceptions (*vāsanās* and *saṃskāras*) that get activated in special ways during imaginative experiences. This paves the way for assuming that emotions and approaching aesthetic experience through emotions hold the potential of transcending human-made barriers and approximating the *universal*. True, each of us may create our own different worlds, may experience even different emotions from the same work of art—but there is no denying that these emotions are distinct from real-world emotions and that they operate in *similar ways* in us through the logic of antecedence–consequence and cause–effect. Finally, at the moment of deep experience we are timeless.

But not all works of art allow for story-telling or story-creation so important to the process of an emotional response. Here, I would like to point out that this story-creation has nothing to do with sequential arts. A painting can create a narrative fragment in our minds while unfolding of texts such as Auden's poem "O Tell Me the Truth about Love"[6] may fail to do so:

Some say love's a little boy,
And some say it's a bird,
Some say it makes the world go around,
Some say that's absurd,
And when I asked the man next-door,
Who looked as if he knew,
His wife got very cross indeed,
And said it wouldn't do . . .
Does it look like a pair of pyjamas,
Or the ham in a temperance hotel? . . .
Does it howl like a hungry Alsatian,
Or boom like a military band? . . .
When it comes, will it come without warning
Just as I'm picking my nose?
Will it knock on my door in the morning,
Or tread in the bus on my toes?
Will it come like a change in the weather?
Will its greeting be courteous or rough?
Will it alter my life altogether?
O tell me the truth about love.

Why does it not work?—It is about love or *śṛṅgāra*! The rhetorical pattern manages to evoke a series of images no doubt. But they form and they dissolve. The

disjunction among them is too great for a world to be shaped. We cannot identify a clear-cut set of *vibhāvas* or *anubhāvas*. We are not permitted to *submerge* in a story world. *Rasa* response to it is not possible unless the perceiver creatively links the various fragments together to create and enact a story. True, we marvel at the images, but it does not lead to *rasa*. But it also does not, for that reason, become a bad poem. It is simply not compatible with *rasa* analysis.

What then, say, about a painting like *Guernica*? As I pointed out above, it is about the ability to create a relation of cause and effect in the perceiver's mind. Let us abandon the story world within the work of art. Let us create a link between the art object and the perceiver. Is it not possible to suggest that if the art object is the cause (*vibhāva*), the response to it in the audience is the effect (*anubhāva*)? What if such an effect has emotional contents? In a separate world within the perceiver's mind, memories and instincts from real life cook with the images from the painting that trigger them; a tragedy that has nothing to do with her personal life is experienced and an emotional response is formed.

Thus, *Guernica*, on first viewing it, hits us with its horror (*bibhatsa*). True, there is no narrative per se. But we have the *vibhāvas* (causes) of horror in mangled and distorted forms that communicate sadness, disgust, grief, and outrage. And they produce in us a direct response of pity (*karuṇa*). For although it is not explicitly stated in the *NāṭyaŚāstra*, it is logical to assume that the cause and effect relation in a play is perceived by the perceiver for whom this totality acts as the cause (*vibhāva*) to which her response is the *anubhāva* (consequence).[7] However since this response is not one that belongs to the real world, we categorize it as a distinctive *aesthetic emotion* when it leads to our forgetting ourselves. One might argue: Well, in Auden's poem, we also have a series of fragments, temporal this time? But can they be gathered in memory like the fragments in *Guernica?*—Why does it not work? It does not work because the evocations that they create are too varied. The *vibhāvas* and the *vyabhicāribhāvas* do not add up to generate a series of evocations that are compatible with one another. The emotions do not sustain. There is *rasabhanga* or incompatibility of emotions and sentiments that are transmitted to us. Yet, as mentioned earlier, this does not take away anything from these works of art; nor does it make *rasa* theory any worse for that.

Thus, we are now aware that not all works can be judged by *rasa* theory. But on the other hand, traditionally, what has been evaluated by *rasa* can be extended. Critics such as Daya Krishna point to the incompatibility of nonfigurative and nonperformative art with *rasa*.[8] But I am convinced that almost all objects of art generate some sort of emotive response. In some cases the cognitive may initiate the emotive and sometimes the vice versa, but they are all there. Sheldon's emotional response to Quantum Physics makes us aware of the fact that there can be emotional responses to objects that generally are not considered apt objects for such response. There is probably something deeper working here—a sense of wonder. This, broadly, is a sort of emotion (related to surprise and in Indian tradition to *adbhuta*) and is considered a significant aspect of the aesthetic response by Abhinava—*camatkāra* (a mix of surprise, wonder and aesthetic delight). The fact that we can respond to the remarkable skill, profundity, ability, or perspective in any work points to the fact that emotional response is something

that is hardwired into human beings, and probably intense cognitive experiences have an emotional dimension.[9] Critics may point out that the theory was conceived for dramatic performance[10] or was later found most conducive to poetry.[11] They may also argue against the rigid formulation of eight or nine aesthetic emotions.[12] But it is because of this element of the emotive in response to a work of art—be it music, painting, or virtual art—that *rasa* theory holds the potential of applicability in the modern context. This suggests that the element of the universal is something to which *rasa* theory can make a claim, however tentative it might seem. But this application needs to be cautiously done by first defining what exactly we mean by universality, articulating some of the most distinguishing features of the *rasa* theory, and creating a set of guidelines for its apt and meaningful application.

II. THE QUEST FOR A PROVISIONAL UNIVERSALITY

When cultures start exploring one another, they agree, in some tacit way, that there is something common to them. Without such an assumption, intercultural explorations cannot take place. What they encounter in the process are differences as well. These differences are negotiated in different ways—appropriation, dismissal, rejection, reconceptualization as well as acceptance.[13] But even that which is considered common is often misconstrued, especially by the one who decides what is common and what is different.[14] In the history of the exploration of *rasa* theory—as a case study—all the above points play a very significant role. Language poses difficulties because we have the same words and terms but attribute different personal, group, and cultural meanings to them. For instance, the term *aesthetics* is itself a Western (used provisionally to include different European influences) construct. It is not necessary that we have exactly corresponding terms for it in other unrelated cultures. What others consider as aesthetic works (say the Vedas or the Upanishads) need not be considered in the same way by us. However, much of these confusions have already been thrashed out, anger vented, and it is perhaps time again to look at what we *share* with a much greater degree of empathy.

This brings us to the concept of *provisional universality* which is based on empathy and the deep-rooted belief that as human beings, across cultures, time, and contexts, we still have the ability and inclination to share. True, Indian aesthetics is a debated field, with scope for various kinds of possible interpretations—a part of our dialectical tradition—but we should not reach a point where the very terms *Indian* and *aesthetics* disintegrate beyond recovery. True, critics do point to the fact that national identities are frequently imagined and we often construct idealized states and attribute national status to certain theories (Indian aesthetics) at the neglect of others.[15] But all these are determined by the forces of history, the context, the lenses that we wear, and we cannot, inevitably, escape our subjectivity or historical conditions within which we write. However, there is sufficient justification to believe that, in spite of justified criticism to the contrary,[16] some theories such as *rasa* theory have had a lasting impact on various traditions, across centuries, including Sanskrit and other regional languages, and even spread as far as Java.[17]

In this chapter, we move within the awareness that all generalizations are tentative and, all claims of universality provisional. But within it, it is possible to examine why *rasa* theory is an important aesthetic theory and has validity in the contemporary context. Intercultural[18] aesthetics assumes that the aesthetic theories of different cultures can be compared. Before that it assumes that there is something called *aesthetic* in each culture. It also believes that a theory in one culture can be applied to a work of art in another culture, provided appropriate conditions for each exists. In order to do so, certain characteristics of literature and art in different traditions must have patterns of commonality—which allows for a movement toward universality or sharing.

Thus, while the universal is an ideal, probably never achievable, two kinds of movements toward universality are assumed for a successful aesthetic theory: One, across time in spite of changes in worldviews within the same culture so that it can be applied to works that follow; two, across space, in other cultures. Some aesthetic concepts catch attention again and again, at different historical moments, are appreciated both within their own cultures and across a wide range of cultures that can apply (or appropriate) the concepts to their own literatures. *Rasa* theory happens to be one of them. Since Bharata it persists, survives, and even makes its mark with the *ālaṇkārikas*,[19] gets revitalized with Anandavardana and Abhinavagupta and never loses its force again until colonial rule and amnesia in the seventeenth-century AD. After its rediscovery and contemporary revival (briefly discussed in Section IV) it still sustains its relevance and importance as can be found from theoretical, applied, and comparative works (which we illustrate in both Sections III and IV below) in contemporary times—thus its claim to provisional universality.

But what do we mean by the term *provisional universal* that makes cross-cultural comparison possible? It is the belief that human beings across cultures have many things in common, in spite of differences. It need not be exactly the same, but the patterns of similarities point to a common root. Thus, it tries to rise above differences, and holds the possibility of meaningful cross-cultural aesthetics. Patrick Colm Hogan[20] in his essay, "Literary Universals," points out (citing Carl Plantinga) that currently there is a trend to "link literary phenomena to particular historical conditions and ideology." In such a context the notion of universality is suspect, a "hegemonic European critical tool" (according to Ashcroft et al.).[21] But Hogan feels it has been wrongly attacked by critics who feel that the concept is in complicity with the projects of colonialism and imperialism—a hegemonic tool.[22]

I agree with Hogan for "no racist ever justified the enslavement of Africans or colonial rule in India on the basis of a claim that whites and nonwhites share universal human properties."[23] It should not be confused with the "desire to consider the dominant position as universal," which Appiah calls "pseudouniversalism."[24] Provisional universality is akin to Lalita Pandit's empathetic universal—"based on the assumption that all people share ethical and experiential subjectivity", and the universal emerges out of this awareness of sharing.[25] This is something that would become significant in understanding *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* in *rasa* theory, since it proposes that under ideal conditions all human beings have the potential for similar experiences. On the other hand the *desire to universalize* is an attempt at forced

transformation, where difference is not tolerated. But this difference is significant, since it allows for *intuitive insight* into possible elements of sharing that have not been discovered before. For instance, *rasa* theory does take a different approach to why negative aesthetic emotions are relished.[26] This *difference* allows for insights to common problems shared by different aesthetic traditions.

Hogan also makes another important distinction between "absolute" universal and "statistical" universal as used in linguistics.[27] While the absolute universal is found in "all cases" (equal to one), statistical universal is found with a significantly high frequency (though not equal to one). Across cultures, along history, these tend to repeat themselves. Symbolism, allusion, imagery, assonance, alliteration, verbal parallelism, plot circularity, classification of literary texts into poetry, prose, and drama—Hogan points out—are examples that are found across cultures that do not have a common ancestry. Hogan does not talk of emotions since he is not focusing on aesthetics but on literature. However, emotions pervade aesthetic works[28] of almost all cultures and thus qualify as provisional universals[29] here. Since *rasa* theory is about aesthetic emotions, I propose that in this rather provisional sense of the term, it has potential for universal appeal, and hence, is considered relevant at each moment in history that emotions in aesthetics are considered significant.

In the sections to follow, we shall attempt to look at some of these qualities—many of which can be either related to universals or some universal potential in us—that make *rasa* theory a fairly successful aesthetic theory for application across cultures.

III. WHAT MAKES *RASA* THEORY RELEVANT TO CONTEMPORARY AESTHETICS?

A successful theory has certain qualities that are conducive to both comparison as well as application. Some of these qualities are generic to any good theory—open-endedness, philosophical richness or continuity of tradition—while others are specific to the theory. We can point to *rasa* theory's take on the aesthetics of emotions, negative emotions, suggestion, universalization, or the amalgam of the ethical and the aesthetic as unique to it.[30] Here, we only discuss eight of them.

III.1. Open-Ended

One can trace the openness of *rasa* theory to two distinctive points—tradition and the complexity of the concept. In Indian literary tradition Rajasekhara mentions nine types of criticism—*sūtra* (aphorism in prose), *kārikā* (aphorism in verse), *vyākhyā* (elucidation), *vṛtti* (elucidation and illustration), *bhāṣya* (comprehensive summary of a viewpoint and its commentary), *ṭīkā* (assessment), *mīmāṃsā* (analysis), *samikṣā* (review), and *śāstrā* (theory of literature related to other theories of knowledge).[31] They are closely related to one another in various ways. But the most important for our discussion are the concepts of *sūtra* and *kārikā* on the one hand, and *bhāṣya* and *ṭīkā* on the other. The very notion of a *sūtra* (for instance) presupposes interpretation. It is, thus, open-ended—as if the quintessential wisdom in the *sūtras* needs to be

viewed through different lenses at different historical periods. Thus, we have, based on *Brahmaśutra*, a number of *bhāṣyas* that provide distinctive traditions of philosophical viewpoints at different historical points—that of Samkara, Ramanuja, Nimbarka, and so on. The *rasa sūtra* of Bharata is also interpreted again and again in tradition, allowing for both continuity (of tradition) and differences—Lollaṭa, Sankuka, Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Abhinavagupta, and Jagannātha. So the tradition allows for differences without having to take recourse to a break. Even the aesthetics that emerged from a strong reaction such as the *Bhakti* movement finally diffused within the tradition, by transforming *bhakti* into the *bhakti rasa*.[32]

This brings us to the second point—the concept itself. Not everything within a tradition endures in the same way or with equal degree of vigorous reinterpretation. If one looks at Indian aesthetic tradition, the *NāṭyaŚāstra* endures over time and some of its seminal concepts—especially that of *rasa*—get reinterpreted again and again.[33] Moreover, it needs brilliant minds to recognize the *universality* of a concept and make others realize that it pervades the entire realm of aesthetics. With Ānandavardhana and Abhinava this happens. *Rasa* grapples with the fundamentals of aesthetic experience—what it is, what are the components that constitute its basis and how it come into existence? Bharata's aphorism leaves enough scope for interpretation, through a wide variety of viewpoints, using insights from diverse traditions such as Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, Sāṃkhya, Vyākaraṇa, Vedānta,[34] and Kashmir Shaivism.

III.2. The Aesthetics of Emotions

But what are its central concerns that make it so relevant and appealing over the centuries?—It deals with emotions. One might argue that if emotions are so important, why do they not become relevant in other cultures? I would respond by saying that emotions are important, but the take on emotions determine one's attitude to it. In many traditions, emotions are suspect. Either they are to be forbidden or inhibited (Plato) or they are to be purged and got rid of (Aristotle).[35] Although generalization as in Bahm can be sweeping, nonetheless it draws attention to the distinctively different ways that the three traditions, India, China, and the West, look at the world. For the Hindus, "The ultimate in the way of the aesthetic consists in . . . bliss." Western reason is inimical to such an approach.[36] But, in the Indian context, the dichotomy between reason and emotions doesn't threaten aesthetics (it does philosophy).[37] Besides, with Abhinava, emotions—especially aesthetic emotions—attain the status of the *alaukika* (extraordinary) and are akin to spiritual ecstasy.

Most important, the questions, why does one *desire* to create aesthetic objects, why does one relish it, are also answered. As Arindam Chakrabarti points out, the notion of play, of playfulness is directly linked to enjoyment.[38] The desire for *play* in a world full of pleasure-pain mixture,[39] and the desire for repose (*viśrānti*) thereafter, lead to both aesthetic creation and relish. Thus, *rasa* theory answers the question about the very genesis of aesthetics.[40] The concept of enjoyment is not only examined in *rasa* theory, its very philosophy is explored, and its transformation into *alukika* detailed.[41] A key component, surprised delight with wonder (*camatkāra*), is

highlighted in the process, which leads to a state of repose and is finally linked to near-spiritual experience (*ānanda*). This enjoyment pervades at many levels. What motivates aesthetic production is enjoyment. What enjoins its performance (in plays at least) is again pleasure. And its consummation is transcendental rapture.

On the other hand, in the West, emotions have always been suspect. This attitude gets reflected in aesthetics as well—subjective and objective. "Disinterestedness" and "reasoned evaluation' become antithetical to emotions. Timm briefly traces Western problematization of emotions, referring to Lutz:

> . . . an attempt to understand "emotion" in Hinduism can ill afford to ignore the fact that in the West the word "emotion," as well as emotion words (like anger, fear, joy, and so on) carry implicit meanings and buried presuppositions which can complicate cross-cultural understanding.[42]

He also points to the innate suspicion of emotion (which can be traced back to Plato) that troubles the West—as opposed to rationality, as obstacle and as weakness, as expressed only by children and women.[43] Yet not showing any emotions is associated with "coldness" and "estrangement." while it is natural, it (or its excess) is to be discouraged.[44] These confusions remain unresolved even today in the Western tradition.[45]

Thus, emotions are significant in the context of aesthetic theories in many distinctive ways. One, most aesthetic objects evoke emotions in us—wonder, awe, admiration, and so on. A purely intellectual response to aesthetic objects is problematic. Two, aesthetic response—which cannot exist without some sense of admiration and wonder for another object—is sympathetic. It bridges the gap between the self and the other, and not through mere cognition. Three, unlike ordinary emotions where we tend to avoid unpleasant emotions and welcome pleasant ones, aesthetic works encompass themes that elicit all kinds of emotions, and yet we welcome and enjoy them. This establishes the significance of emotions in aesthetics.

III.3. Suggestion

The richness of the theory as well as its openness are again endorsed when it is pointed out by Ānandavardhana that suggestion is a very important aspect of art—but suggestion in itself, without communicating emotions, and without the ability to generate delight, is of no use—hence *rasadhvani*. Ānandavardhana's rigorous linguistic theory of suggestiveness or *dhvani* was integrated by Abhinavagupata with *rasa* theory. This was possible because of the appropriate fit between the two theories. Put very simply, emotions cannot be communicated directly from person to person or from a text to a person. Abhinva proposes that the mechanism for this is *suggestion*. Thus, after Abhinava, *rasa* theory became all about suggestion of emotions. This emphasis on suggestions had many advantages. It made the theory capable of transcending the boundaries of performance. Moreover, it can now be demonstrably applied to spatial arts as well—which can suggest and evoke emotions. Suggestion also makes it transcend cultural boundaries because all art, everywhere, is capable of suggesting, especially since all agree that emotions can only be suggested.[46]

It is made clear by both Ānanda and Abhinava that suggestion is that central mechanism without which aesthetic *communication* would be impossible. Perception can be shared (we may see the *same thing*). But how exactly can emotions be shared? What is it that makes it possible to feel emotions? Are they transmitted, replicated, or suggested?[47] A central concern of philosophers of aesthetics who lead up to Ananda and Abhinva is: how is *rasa* generated?—And it is only with *rasadhvani* that we have a satisfactory answer.

Here it is important to point out that suggestion was not something that was added to *rasa* theory. Rather it was, as if, already there and only *discovered*. The *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, and *sancharibhavas* lead to *rasa*; but what about the *sthāyībhāva* (central emotional quality) that is often explicit in a work of art? It is through the concept of suggestion that the *transformation* to *rasa* (as experienced by the perceiver) is indicated. Bharata's silence about *sthāyi* in the generation of *rasa*[48] provides ample scope for interpretation in favor of an underlying mechanism of suggestion—obviously the *sthāyi* is not the same as *rasa*, otherwise the term *rasa* would not be used. All these allow for the potential of a transformative experience that is not *sthāyi*. Since the *sthāyi* is not directly manifest in the audience (the audience does not act but is in repose) what is must be *rasa*.

III.4. Difficulties Resolved: Negative Emotions

Rasa theory succeeds because it is able to resolve a fundamentally difficult question about negative emotions—if aesthetics is about pleasure, how is it that we are able to relish negatively oriented works that present the ugly, the sad, the horrible, and the terrifying? Again, Arindam Chakrabarti's insightful essay on negative emotions in this volume answers a number of these questions, rather inadequately answered in the West.[49] So I shall concentrate only on a few other points.

In spite of Abhinava's comprehensive argument in favor of a transformative experience that is pleasurable, there have been criticisms to the contrary.[50] As Kulkarni points out, Ramacandra and Gunacandra, two disciples of Hemacandra, criticize Abhinava's concept of the extraordinary or transformative nature of aesthetic emotion by examining negative emotions. They feel that aesthetic experience is not really a transformation of ordinary (*laukika*) emotions. They, in fact, make a distinction between two layers—experience and appreciation. An unpleasant emotion beautifully presented does not become less pleasant, but one admires the skill.[51] The four negative emotions are equated to pungent and hot tastes that add to the sweetness of food.[52] The point has its validity. If one uses a decision-making perspective, one might say that one is torn between repulsion and attraction. However, one goes for the aesthetic experience when attraction (admiration for the skill) wins over the negative emotions generated by the work. But, this raises other questions that are rather awkward and difficult to answer—leading to a position where one might say that aesthetic experience is *bifurcated* (at least). It involves an emotional response and a judgmental response. One responds to emotions with emotions. One responds to the skills (in an intellectual activity) with emotions—admiration and wonder. This would, then, lead us inevitably in the direction of the elicitation of wonder *irrespective of* whether the work is sad, ugly, or terrifying. It

would also lead us to question an undeniable aspect of aesthetic experience—our *forgetting ourselves*.[53] If we argue in favor of "ownerless emotions"[54] where we lose our sense of individuality, time, and space during intense emotional experience, this bifurcated response[55] doesn't make sense. On the other hand, it doesn't also make sense to tell that all aesthetics works that communicate sadness, anger, or fear lead to a sense of wonder out of admiration for skills only.[56]

There are other open-ended problems about the very nature of aesthetic experience—*laukika* (ordinary) or *alaukika* (transformative) discussed with remarkable insight using the concept of 'ownerless emotions' by Chakrabarti;[57] issues related to transformative emotions and their relation to spiritual experience (and implicitly to religion), which have been answered very cogently through *rasa* theory by Wulff.[58] Such potentials make the theory contemporary again.

III.5. Philosophical Richness

Rasa theory, as discussed earlier, because of its almost aphoristic origin and potential for interpretation, is philosophically rich. Insights from spiritual traditions, logic as well as philosophy of language, have been used in different ways. This chapter does not permit elaboration. However, it can be pointed out that in trying to understand *rasa* experience, different philosophical insights are used—Lollaṭa, Sankuka, and Bhaṭṭanāyaka—through lenses of Mīmāṃsā, Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, and so on. At a more organic level, certain philosophical concepts such as *dhvani* and *sphota*—especially from the philosophy of language—as well as concepts of certain Saiva tenets are integrated with the theory[59] thus making it much more insightful and enriching. On the other hand, certain theories are "potentially" located within the concept itself. They get manifested (as if *prakāśita*) through the interpretation of competent critics. Two such concepts are that of *dhvani* and of the *near spiritual* dimension of *rasa* experience. Even here, a distinction can be made. While *dhvani* or suggestion is *visible* in the mechanism of *rasa* as indicated by Bharata, the *rasa* experience, as elaborated by Abhinava, follows *logically* for the dissection of the mechanism of the experience. Moreover, the tradition is always open to interpretation, and modern critics are free to reopen the *rasa* sūtra debate and attempt to reexamine the philosophical inclinations of its various commentators[60]—for instance, Arjunwadekar.[61]

III.6. Universalization

In the first section we discussed the notion of universals in the generic context. In *rasa* theory, especially in the hands of Abhinava, universalization of aesthetic experience becomes significant. The two can, thus, be related. If all humans are capable of emotions,[62] of enjoyment, of appreciation, if all cultures have some notion of *play*, which leads to delight, we have a *provisional universal* based on emotions. Aesthetic objects/texts, which may have different elicitors (*vibhāvas*) in different contexts can, through suggestion, evoke similar aesthetic emotions. Thus, both cultural and contextual factors can be accounted for. In that sense, I might venture to say that our modern practice of cross-cultural aesthetics and this chapter itself, in some sense incorporates the fundamental ideologies propounded

in *rasa* theory. For, both what is innate (*vāsanā*) (such as emotions and tendencies) as well as what is experienced-learnt (*saṃskāra*) are taken into account here. Context is also taken into account since we are given a list of what can disrupt *rasa* realization.[63] *Sādhāraṇīkarṇa* (transpersonalization) is about a kind of release from individuality.[64] But for this the *saṃskāras* and *vāsanās* need to be resorted to, both in the artist as well as in the perceiver—for these trigger sympathetic response and generalize the particular. *Vāsanās*—innate tendencies, some of which we carry even from our previous birth—seem to hold the key to true universals.[65] But *saṃskāras* bring in the notion of memory, of holding an experience just below the consciousness, to be brought up again when needed. These, along with the fact that sympathetic response, at a heightened level becomes "ownerless," lead to *rasa*. As the notion of *sādhāraṇībhāva*[66] tells us, and we actually do experience it during intense aesthetic experience, aesthetic enjoyment becomes ownerless—involving dissolving of self-consciousness, freedom from individual subjectivity and marveling at "this impersonal subjectivity."[67] It is without space, time, and a sense of "I"—and to this all of us agree. At the moment of deep aesthetic enjoyment we are not ourselves, nor located in any specific time or space. For if there isn't something common or shared then *rasa* experience would be radically different for different perceivers. Here is our commonality—for heightened aesthetic experience, irrespective of what elicits it, is universal.

III.7. Continuity

A tradition implies continuity. *Rasa* theory has a tradition, a long tradition of almost two thousand years. It is true, as Devy points out in *After Amnesia*, that in the last 300 years, there has been a certain discontinuity,[68] which is why we are where we are with Indian aesthetics, but I wish to point out that a tradition must also have the potential for continuity. *Rasa* theory has this, which is why it has again been picked up for exploration in the last fifty years. With due caution, and without sweepingly pointing to another tradition, I suggest that the way a tradition is rejuvenated in different cultures is different. Ours is different from other cultures. Here, a tradition is constantly refreshed, re-contextualized for a new generation, for a new ambience. This is best illustrated by the example of *sūtra-bhāṣya* as discussed earlier: for the *timeless sūtra* is *revived* again and again by the *bhāṣyas*. For *rasa* theory, context-specific *bhāṣyas* are necessary today which reinterpret it according to new contexts and problems.

III.8. Western Concerns and the Aesthetics of Other Cultures

The discussion above inevitability leads to the question of comparisons and relevance. It also leads us in the direction of applied criticism that we will look at in the next section. Here I have argued in favor of *shared* experiences or at least the potential for sharing. While it is true that the present field of Indian aesthetics, in a certain sense, is a "western creation"—since we use English terms as well as the English language, it would be wrong to say that it is entirely created by the West. True, parallels existed and initially only those parallels were explored—as if trying to justify the meaningfulness of Indian aesthetics insofar as it corresponded to Western

paradigms and had similar concerns and logic. But that was inevitably a part of its historical context. Since then we have moved through various other phases. With changing times, both European and Indian critics have started looking at differences as well that allowed for new insights into common problems hounding aesthetic experiences across cultures. It also allows for looking at specific issues that may not have been discussed by both traditional and modern critics in one tradition, but are found very relevant by a critic in another tradition for another specific kind of problem. That *rasa* theory has relevance in modern times in a variety of contexts is amply illustrated by books such as *Literary India*,[69] *Intercultural Aesthetics*,[70] and the present volume where *rasa* figures among other Indian and non-Indian theories. In the Indian context two recent volumes on *Aesthetic Theories and Forms in Indian Tradition*[71] and *Science, Literature, and Aesthetics*,[72] in the series, History of Science, Philosophy, and Culture in Indian Civilization, are indicative of renewed interest in Indian aesthetics as well as *rasa* theory.

However this inevitably leads to the question, however problematic—what is a good way of doing comparative applied aesthetics using *rasa* theory?[73] This we shall take up in the next section.

IV. APPLYING *RASA* THEORY

A significant amount of material on *rasa* has been generated both in terms of theoretical comparisons as well as applications to varied works of art over the last three decades or more. Interestingly, while Indian aesthetics and especially *rasa* theory—within the confines of Sanskrit studies in India—has again and again been compared to different traditions, poetic and philosophical, and applied to traditional Sanskrit literature,[74] its application has been extended to a wide variety of disparate areas as well.

In the context of Sanskrit studies in India, there is a marked absence of application to as well as discussion of Indian aesthetics in relation to (a) regional aesthetics and texts and (b) non-Indian concepts or works of literature and art.[75] On the other hand, in the last part of twentieth century and in the first decade of the twenty-first century, quite a number of works both in Indian universities (from departments other than Sanskrit)[76] and universities abroad[77] have compared different traditions and have applied *rasa* theory to diverse works of art, many of them contemporary. Moreover, the theory has become so popular as to be applied in diverse contexts such as communication theory,[78] film script writing,[79] and leadership theory.[80] It even figures in popular sites that provide educational essays and learning tools to students.[81]

But such tendencies can lead to an indiscriminate use of a theory. This brings in the notion of *legitimacy* of application. Many would object to such an exercise—one is trapped within one's historicity, dogmas, and nothing can be said with certainty; one must speak from within one's context and within it, attempt to suggest what works, what doesn't, what is meaningful, and what may not be. In making such an effort I am being guided by my historicity as well as by the various works (and

works in response to these works) that pervade the field. My categories and my touchstones, thus, are based on assessing earlier theoretical and practical criticism by others and my own experience in applying *rasa* theory. Thus, in principle, with time, these touchstones are open to both modifications as well as extensions.

By the 1970s, Indian aesthetics had already been established, in spite of earlier skepticism,[82] as an important set of literary theories that had relevance in the contemporary context.[83] This was done in three different ways. One, Indian aesthetics was presented lucidly to a Western audience, for instance, "A Bird's-Eye View of Indian Aesthetics," by K. C. Pandey.[84] Secondly, Indian aesthetics was compared to Western aesthetics, as this lent it credibility—for instance, Pravas Jivan Chaudhury's "Catharsis in the Light of Indian Aesthetics."[85] Thirdly, and most significantly, many important texts or at least fragments were translated meticulously. After its revival, *rasa* theory (and Indian aesthetics in general) has been explored in diverse ways. One can find certain patterns of explorations based on specific lenses used. They are not necessarily used in isolation, but the following criteria are generally used meaningfully: (1) Cultural compatibility, (2) contextual compatibility, (3) thematic compatibility, (4) structural compatibility, and (5) insights through differences. These touchstones emerge from our discussions in the first two sections. The notions of "culture" and "compatibility" are the concerns of both comparative aesthetics, and the quest for universals. On the other hand, "contexts," are based on resemblance to certain Western paradigms (partly because of which Indian aesthetics resurrected). "Themes" are based on suggestion, *rasa* theory's take on emotions, and universalization, while "structures" are based on the structure of emotions, and their logicality. Finally, "insights through differences," is based on non-Indian concerns where one finds that differences provide valuable new insights into problems that have contemporary relevance.

IV.1. Cultural Compatibility

The term "cultural compatibility" is being used here in the broadest sense. It can be located for two reasons—(a) certain universal qualities that are to be found in the aesthetics of different traditions irrespective of or without any cultural contact, (b) compatibility which can be traced back to common ancestry or to one tradition being influenced by another tradition. An example of the first is a PhD work on Wole Soyenka and contemporary Indian drama by Chinmai More where an attempt at comparison between Indian cosmology and metaphysics with Yoruban worldview is made. Points of resemblances are established cogently on the basis of aesthetic principles, myth, ritual, and folklore. *Rasa* theory is applied to Soyenka's plays and his aesthetic principles applied to modern playwrights such as Girish Karnad.[86] Such studies reiterate the strength of our belief in the possibility of commonality and shared universal heritage.

On the other hand it is possible to make valid comparisons on the basis of common heritage. In fact such studies are very insightful in exploring how the same (or similar concepts) get modified and follow similar and yet separate trajectories in different traditions. For instance, Susan Pratt Walton, in her paper on the relation between the aesthetic and the spiritual in Javanese music, locates the link for this integration on the basis of the concept of *rasa*. While she traces it back to Indian aesthetics, she also

identifies the various new connotations that the term *rasa* has in Javanese tradition. For instance, she points out how the Javanese mystical tradition integrates Tantric Shaivism, Mahayana Buddhism, and mystical Islam (Sufism), and then traces this amalgam forward to the contemporary context: "The person who truly understands ultimate reality—*rasa sejati*—can express that understanding through gestures in dance, sounds in music, or words in poetry."[87] This is all the more insightful, since, one might argue, in the Indian context this level of integration of religion and aesthetics did not exist, was problematic even after Abhinavagupta's exposition and is never a part of contemporary aesthetic traditions. Two recent PhD dissertations[88] explore the way that contemporary theater and dance traditions of Kerala have been strongly influenced by both Indian and Western aesthetic traditions (including *rasa* theory). Such explorations hold the possibility of revitalizing contemporary art practices, and giving them the confidence, a sense of anchorage, which they often need (though they may apparently reject). This trend is not really new. Even as early as 1964, G. B. Mohan excitedly points to strong resemblances between Indian and Japanese poetic theories based on notions of "fragrance" and *rasa*.[89]

IV.2. Contextual Compatibility

Contextual compatibility brings in both the notion of "aptness" of time (or history) and of *difference*. This brings in historicity. At different points of time in the history of a particular tradition, works of art emerge. It is possible that the work being examined has components that, irrespective of when they are being assessed, but in their earlier context (within which they emerged), have points that are compatible with the theory assessing them. A good example of this is Jaishree Odin's critique of Poe's theory as well as literary works in the light of *dhvani*.[90] Referring to Krishna Rayan's critique of Poe's focus on suggestiveness, she attempts to relate Poe's notions of "suggestiveness," "horror," and "nothingness," to *rasa* theory. Tracing Poe's use of suggestiveness in relation to fancy and imagination, she emphasizes that Poe was probably the first European critic to recognize the significance of suggestion. The essay then relates the notion of horror to *bhayanaka* and emptiness to *śānta rasa*. She, thus, argues for a positive interpretation of Poe's concept of "nothingness." This understanding is then applied to some of his *Tales*. Another interesting example is Elizabeth Otten Delmonico's exploration of *rasa* in Arun Kolatkar's long poem—*Jejuri*.[91] Here, culture and context move a full circle. Arun Kolatkar's poem, at first glance, seems to be very much in the tradition of Western literary writing. Except for the theme—a visit to the holy temple town of Jeguri—everything else is divested of religiosity. And yet, Delmonico competently identifies the way that the poem is emotionally fragmented and apparently problematic, and then, through *rasa* theory, competently answers the questions of *aesthetic responses* raised—what makes it a successful poem.

IV.3. Thematic Compatibility

Thematic compatibility is about common points between the works of art being analyzed and the theory used to dissect it. But often thematic compatibility can operate by examining both surface resemblances as well as deep resemblances. For

instance, it is always possible to explore the romantics in the light of *rasa* theory. However, if one proposes that the Indian theory of *rasa* is very similar to the "emotive" explorations of the romantics and goes on to apply it, this can become mechanical unless emotions in different cultural contexts are aptly located. Mechanistic applications often fall victim to merely looking at thematic compatibility and ignoring the rest. Most good applied criticisms (as well as theoretical comparisons) first establish thematic patterns of similarities, but then move on to focus on cultural and contextual elements as well. Gerow's insightful essay on Katharsis and *rasa* is an instance where he makes a case for "the translatability of the Indian *rasa* aesthetic by comparing it "to the problematic Aristotelian notion of catharsis and . . . by finding in its categories a way of classifying a variety of recent films."[92] Raj Kumar Mishra's application of *śānta rasa* to Nissim Ezekiel's *Hymns in Darkness*, ironically (since Indian English poets are almost never judged by Indian aesthetics), is another example anchored on thematic compatibility.[93]

IV.4. Structural Compatibility

Structure here is being used in the sense of underlying logic of analysis. Often there are occasions where the logic of both the way that a work unfolds (temporal) or is manifest (spatial) lacks compatibility with the theory analyzing it. A simplistic application of *rasa* theory to spatial art forms can suffer from this. Formalistic works of art examined through the lens of emotions can also lead to this. As Sam Trivedi points out, "Not all literature and art is emotive or expressive of (or portrays) emotions and other mental states, and some is in fact purely formalist; nor is expression of mental states the sole aim of literature and art."[94] Similarly, judging a work with a different sensibility rather simplistically—which even I attempted[95]—such as the literature of the absurd using *rasa* theory can lead to such an impasse. The notion of the absurd resides in a state of incomprehension. In a certain sense, it is anti-aesthetic. Yet its effect is aesthetics. This contradiction needs to be integrated into the way that one approaches the issue of dark comedy or the absurd. A straightforward analysis of the structure of the work, of its *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, its simplified categorization into *bibhatsa*, *karuṇa*, or *raudra* may not actually help.[96] One may need to bring in theories about *rasabhaṅga*, and negotiate the aesthetics that emerges in spite of that through a critique that modifies both the theory as well as the perception of the work of art. Tapasvi Nandi's analysis of the theater of the absurd through the notion of *dhvani* is a case to the point.[97] While the complex of cause and effect may be broken down in the theater, another kind of associative logic comes into play through the images and symbols, which point to the breakdown of language, logic, of cause and effect, and thus generate the representative emotive effect through suggestions.

IV.5. Insights through Differences

Differences can be insightful, especially when they are based on the assumption of commonality and sharing of aesthetic constructs and experiences. Differences relate to contextual compatibility in an interesting way. For instance, "ownerless emotions," an undisputable aspect of aesthetic experience, become relevant in the contemporary context. However, in the European tradition, the answers are

not very satisfactory. On the other hand Indian insights, as competently presented by Chakrabarti (discussed above) with poetic illustrations, suggest how in Indian tradition the problem is approached differently. The same is again illustrated in Chakrabarti's exploration of negative emotions, which in Western aesthetics, is answered differently (and perhaps, less satisfactorily).[98]

Cultural differences can also lead to insights when there are thematic similarities. Susan Sontag's essay[99] on the aesthetics of silence problematizes silence while in Abhinava silence (*śānta*) resolves the noises of the world. The ox-herding pictures[100] present a pictorial silence through the culminating image of emptiness. These can lead to interesting new insights about how different aesthetic sensibilities operate, and also to identify underlying ideologies that determine how specific themes are treated, or emerge as for works of art. An example that best illustrates this is Kathleen Marie Higgins's paper on "aesthetic breakthroughs" where she focuses on the moment and process of *transformation* (my term) and finds a meaningful solution in *rasa* theory: "The Western aesthetic tradition, for all it says about aesthetic experience, says little about the breakthrough that precipitates it."[101]

While it is not absolutely necessary that all the five features be present in cross-cultural criticism, their presence, in varying degrees, is necessary for a meaningful application. Based on how the above touchstones are used, I would classify most applied criticism into the following categories (1) mechanical and imitative, (2) reactionary, and (3) organic.

IV.5.1. Mechanistic and Imitative Approach Use of *rasa* to Aristotelian tragedy, to plot analysis, or the way that emotions were evoked, was contextually relevant in the last century. If on the other hand, one applies it to isolated examples in today's context, it appears mechanical, repetitive, and not very meaningful. This imitative trend is to be found in some recent applied criticism. Kausik Adhikari's application of *rasa* theory to Tennessee William's plays,[102] or Naveen K. Mehta's comparison of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* and *Hamlet*[103] could have improved if they had gone beyond just looking at the mere unfolding of the plays and attributed *rasas*. Fernando's dissertation is also rather mechanical in its comparison of Indian and Western literary theories and the straight-jacketed application of *rasa* to his work. Sangeeta Mohanty's work, on the other hand, creates cultural relevance by locating the popularity of Shakespeare's plays in the Indian context, how they have been repeatedly translated, and then approaching Hamlet variously through *rasa* and *dhvani* and comparison to *The Gita*.[104] Thus, a logic for comparison is developed, the indecision of the heroes in two cultural contexts (Hamlet's and Arjuna's) are located culturally and contextually during analysis.

IV.5.2. Reactionary Approach On the other hand reactionary criticism is context specific. At a certain critical juncture in the history of the modern re-discovery of Indian aesthetics there were a number of reactions. Early reactions to Harold E. McCarthy's strong criticism[105] of eastern aesthetics in "Aesthetics East and West" resulted in works by Pandey, Choudhury, Thampi, De, Kane,[106] and others who had to justify the relevance of *rasa* theory within Western paradigms and get them

accepted for publication (or at least get the books reviewed) in journals such as *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*.[107] There were critics, both Indian and Western—Gnoli, Mason Patwardhan, Gerew[108]—who continued translating difficult and rare passages of Indian aesthetics into English, bringing to light its richness. When post-colonialism became a strong force, a different set of reactions set in and can be seen reflected till today. Many, like me, tried to apply *rasa* theory to world literature, while many others tried to negotiate Indian literature within tradition.[109] But indiscriminate assertions sometimes lead to a mechanistic and indiscriminate approach. Sometimes, this can also lead to misconstruction of contexts and rejection of meaningful similarities. The good, along with the bad can get thrown out. Often, this, in unskilled or less skilled hands—where the intent without the expertise or competence is the driving force—may lead to mechanical criticism; not to meaningful comparisons but to dogmatic rejections of all comparisons as meaningless. This will result in the decline in such comparative criticism. Unfortunately, a lot of post-colonial criticism—however valid within its context—may prove detrimental to the growth of comparative aesthetics.

IV.5.3. Organic Finally, organic criticism is what is required at this juncture of comparative aesthetics in relation to *rasa* theory. The context is ripe for giving up an aggressive or reactionary attitude and to examine appropriate climates in which the theory can be explored. This can be contextual—Chakrabarti's essays[110] are illustrations that uses both theory and applications, and shift between Indian and Western examples of aesthetic texts. Walton's paper on Javanese music, More's work on Achube and contemporary Indian playwrights, and even Mohan's comments of Japanese and Indian aesthetics, all hold the possibility of future meaningful exploration of comparative aesthetics. Gerow's work on Katharsis and exploration of the structure of films through Indian aesthetics is still another illustration.[111]

While this set of guidelines and touchstones are not definitive, they are indicative. It is perhaps the opportune time to give up aggression, ignore differences unless they provide insights into common problems, and explore shared traditions and shared experiences.

NOTES

1. John Keats, "This Living Hand, Now Warm and Capable." <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/180719> (accessed September 2, 2013).
2. Bharata differentiates ordinary causes (*karanas*) from causes within a play (vibhāvas). Later Abhinava uses the term *alaukika* (extraordinary) to differentiate *rasa* emotions from everyday emotions.
3. See J. L. Masson and M. V. Patwardhan, *Aesthetic Rapture*, the *Rasādhyāya* of the *NāṭyaŚāstra* (Vol. 1) (Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, 1970).
4. Since it is written by Keats, we assume it is addressed to a woman.

5. Not by Bharata but later in the tradition. The same is true of *vāsanā* and *saṃskāra*.
6. W. H. Auden, "O Tell Me the Truth about Love." <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/o-tell-me-the-truth-about-love/> (accessed September 3, 2013).
7. Moreover, for somebody who is familiar with the historical context of the painting, the context acts as the *vibhāva* and the painting is understood as the *anubhāva*. Most paintings in the Indian tradition are actually stories/narratives since they freeze moments from stories already told—*The Rāmāyaṇa*, *The Mahābhārata*, *The Jātakas*, and so on.
8. Daya Krishna, "*Rasa*: The Bane of Indian Aesthetics," *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, 21.3 (2004), pp. 119–35.
9. See Kevin N. Ochsner and Elizabeth Phelps, "Emerging Perspectives on Emotion–Cognition Interactions," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 11.8 (2007), pp. 117–18.
10. Daya Krishna, "*Rasa*."
11. V. K. Chari, "Poetic Emotions and Poetic Semantics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 34.3 (1976), pp. 287–99.
12. Ibid.
13. Differences even challenge the very concept of a commonality within Indian culture. "Indian" is now a contested term. P. P. Raveendran, in "Genealogies of Indian Literature," *Economic and Political Weekly* (June 24, 2006), points to the controversy regarding the terms, "Indian," and "literature," both of which can mean a lot of different things to different people and are regulated by those who decide what to call what (pp. 2558–59); G. N. Devy, in *After Amnesia, G N Devy Reader* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2009), also assumes "traditions" rather than a single tradition. However S. L. Bhyrappa in "Abiding Values in Indian Literature," *Indian Literature*, 43.2 (1999), pp. 180–85, as well as Krishna Rayan in "Towards a Rewritten Indian Poetic, *Indian Literature*, 37.2 (1994), pp. 9–17, draw attention to religious commonality and sharing across languages. Thus, according to Rayan, even a reactionary movement such as *Bhakti* (which incidentally was trans-regional again) evolves a new aesthetics that finally reacts within the aesthetic tradition—*bhakti* is integrated as *bhakti rasa*.
14. H. Gener Blocker, "Non-Western Aesthetics as Colonial Invention," *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 35.4 (2001), pp. 3–13.
15. Raveendran, "Geneologies," p. 2559.
16. Ibid.
17. Susan Pratt Walton, "Aesthetic and Spiritual Correlations in Javanese Gamelan Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65.1 (2007), pp. 31–33.
18. The term is borrowed from Patrick Colm Hogan and Lalita Pandit (eds.), *Literary India: Comparative Studies in Aesthetics, Colonialism and Culture* (Albany: State University of New York, 1995). It is used interchangeably with "cross-cultural" and "comparative aesthetics."
19. See Lala Ramayadupala Simha's "Bhāmaha's Conception of *Rasa*," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 42.1–4 (1961), pp. 175–80.
20. Patrick Colm Hogan, "Literary Universals," *Poetics Today*, 18.2 (1997), pp. 223–49.

21. Ibid., p. 224.
22. As Makrand Paranjape, in "Indian (English) Criticism: Some Notes," *Indian Literature*, 37 (1994), p. 160, points out, "what passes off as 'international' or 'universal' is in fact merely Euro-American."
23. Ibid., p. 224.
24. Ibid., p. 225.
25. Ibid.
26. See Arindam Chakrabarti, "Play, Pleasure, Pain: Ownerless Emotions in *Rasa* Aesthetics," in *Aesthetic Theories and Forms in Indian Tradition,* History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization Vol. VI, Part 1, ed. Kapila Vatsyayan and D. P. Chattopadhyay (New Delhi: Munshiram Manohar Publishers, 2008), pp. 189–202.
27. Hogan, "Literary Universals," p. 228.
28. Aesthetics itself is often considered a Western construct. But I would like to point out that in many cultures including India we have forms that are appreciated by similar standards. This is not to be confused with colonial anthologies' misrepresentation of the Vedas or the Upanishads as examples of Indian literature.
29. Since they are not found in "all cases."
30. Since the last one is about the relation between aesthetics and ethics, we do not discuss it here.
31. Devy, *After Amnesia*, p. 8.
32. Rayan, "Towards a Rewritten Indian Poetics," p. 11. This often does not happen in the Eurocentric context.
33. This is not to undermine the significance of other concepts such as *alamkara, vakrokti* or *auchitya*. But our focus here is on *rasa* theory.
34. K. S. Wadkar, "Rasa Theory and the Darsanas," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 65.1–4 (1984), pp. 81–100.
35. Although Gerow looks at the two possible meanings of *catharsis*—purgation and resolution, nonetheless, what is hinted at is correcting an imbalance. Edwin Gerow, "Rasa and Katharsis: A Comparative Study, Aided by Several Films," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 122.2 (2002), p. 268.
36. Archie J. Bahm, "Comparative Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 24.1 (1965), pp. 109–19, p. 114.
37. The philosophers and aestheticians were at loggerheads and had unkind words for one another until Ananda and Abhinava integrated philosophy and aesthetics. Even so, aesthetics never really found a place in *darśana*.
38. Arindam Chakrabarti, "Play, Pleasure, Pain," pp. 189–90.
39. Ibid., p. 189.
40. Ibid.
41. This transformation seems to be neglected in Western aesthetics. See Kathleen Marie Higgins, "An Alchemy of Emotions: *Rasa* and Aesthetic Breakthroughs," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65.1 (2007), pp. 43–54.

42. Jeffrey R. Timm, "The Celebration of Emotion: Vallabha's Ontology of Affective Experience," *Philosophy East and West*, 41.1, Emotion East and West (January 1991), pp. 59–75, p. 61.
43. Ibid., p. 62. By these standards, *rasa* aesthetic can be labeled "effeminate aesthetics."
44. Ibid., pp. 61–63.
45. It is only recently that emotion as an important aspect of cognitive processes is being acknowledged.
46. See Chari, "Poetic Emotions," for comparison to Wittgenstein.
47. Abhinava's commentary deals with this problem and this is where he brings in the concepts of Sankuka, Lollaṭa, and Bhaṭṭanāyaka. For a simple and lucid presentation see Arindam Chakrabarti's "Play, Pleasure, Pain," and for a detailed analysis see K. C. Pandey's *Comparative Aesthetics: Vol. 1: Indian Aesthetics* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1950) (Reprint 2008). For translation of this section, see Raniero Gnoli's *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 3rd edition, 1985).
48. See, for Abhinava's explanation for the omission, Pandey, *Indian Aesthetics,* p. 183; Chakrabarti, "Play, Pleasure, Pain," p. 197.
49. See Chapter 7, "Refining the Repulsive: Towards an Indian Aesthetics of the Ugly and the Disgusting" in this volume.
50. V. M. Kulkarni, "The Alaukika Nature of Rasa," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 75.1/4 (1994), pp. 281–90.
51. Ibid., p. 283.
52. Ibid., p. 283. This still does not answer the question, "why," but only addresses the issue of what happens.
53. But we must concede that not all aesthetic experiences are transformative leading to forgetting ourselves.
54. Chakrabarti, "Play, Pleasure, Pain."
55. As Chari points out, *rasa* theory argues that the *rasa* experience is one resolved unified tone, p. 291.
56. Interestingly, as A. V. Subramanian, in *The Aesthetics of Wonder* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1988), p. 3, points out, Acharya Narayana, in his lost text, talks of surprise as the core of the aesthetic experience. However, it is not clear if it can be considered the essence of any and every work of art.
57. Chakrabarti, "Play, Pleasure, Pain."
58. Wulff, "Religion in a New Mode," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* 54.4 (Winter 1986), pp. 673–88.
59. Which in the hands of Abhinava absorb other traditions including Sāṃkhya and Vyākaraṇa.
60. See Arjunwadekar, P. R. Vora, and Bhanuprasad Pandya in V. M. Kulkarni (ed.), *Some Aspects of the Rasa Theory* (New Delhi: Bhogilal Leherchand Instititute of Indology, 1986).
61. K. S. Arjunwadekar, "*Rasa* theory and the *Darsanas*," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 65.¼ (1984), pp. 81–100.

62. Modern psychology, especially the work of Paul Ekman, is based on the theory that emotions—happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, surprise, and scorn—are universal.
63. See Pandey, *Indian Aesthetics*, pp. 178–80.
64. The image, to the ideal perceiver, is perceived independent of any relation with his ordinary life. Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience*, p. XXII.
65. They can almost be equated with "instincts," which are common to the human species.
66. Pandey, *Indian Aesthetics*, p. 169.
67. Chakrabarti, "Play, Pleasure, Pain," p. 198.
68. See Devy, *After Amnesia*, Introduction, pp. 1–5.
69. Hogan and Pandit, *Literary India: Comparative Studies in Aesthetics*.
70. A. V. Braembussche, H. Kimmerl, and Micole Note (eds.), *Intercultural Aesthetics: A World Perspective* (London: Springer, 2009).
71. Vatsyayan and Chattopadhyay, *Aesthetic Theories and Forms in Indian Tradition*.
72. Amiya Dev (ed.), *Science, Literature and Aesthetics, History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, Vol. XV, Part 3 (New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilization, 2009).
73. Here I focus only on applied aesthetics, but many of the points made also apply to other types of comparative criticism.
74. For detailed information see "Directory of Doctoral Dissertations on Sanskrit of Indian Universities." <http://www.sanskrit.nic.in/Thesis_Modified/directory/R/index.htm> (accessed August 7, 2013).
75. Ibid.
76. See *Sodhganga: A Reservoir of Indian Theses*. <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in> (accessed August 7, 2013).
77. Sangeeta Mohanty, "The Indian Response to Hamlet: Shakespeare's Reception in India and a Study of Hamlet in Sanskrit Poetics" (PhD Dissertation, Basel University, 2010; Fernando, Gregory, "*Rasa* Theory applied to Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and *A Farewell to Arms*," PhD Dissertation, St Clements' University, 2010.
78. N. M. Adhikary, "The Sadharanikaran Model and Aristotle's Model of Communication: A Comparative Study," *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 1 and 3 (2008). <http://nepjol.info/index.php/BOHDI> (accessed August 8, 2013).
79. Ashwini Malik, "Screenwriting Formulas: Templates, Structure & The *Rasa* Approach," December 18, 2012, Lightsfilmschool.com. <http://www.lightsfilmschool.com/blog/screenwriting-template-formula-rasa/2410/> (accessed August 8, 2013).
80. James R. Ferguson, "The Rasa of Leadership in Contemporary Asia: The Nexus of Politics, Culture and Social Performance," *The Culture Mandala: Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies*, 5.1 (2002).
81. *Studymode*, "The 'Theory of *Rasa*' Applied to Romeo and Juliet," (October 2012). <http://www.studymode.com/essays/The-Theory-Of-Rasa-Applied-To-1177107.html> (accessed August 6, 2013).

82. Harold E. McCarthy strongly criticized Indian aesthetics, in "Aesthetics East and West," *Philosophy East and West*, 3.1 (1953), pp. 47–68.
83. See Parul Dave-Mukherji, "The State of the Study of Indian Aesthetics: Then and Now," *International Association for Aesthetics*, for a different historical perspective and approach to doing Indian aesthetics. <http://www.iaaesthetics.org/news/62-the-state-of-the-study-of-indian-aesthetics-then-and-now> (accessed August 10, 2013).
84. K. C. Pandey, "A Bird's-Eye View of Indian Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 24.1 (1965), pp. 59–73.
85. Pravas Jivan Chaudhury, "Catharsis in the Light of Indian Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 24.1 (1956), pp. 151–63.
86. Chinmai More, "Myth, Ritual, Folklore: Wole Soyenka and Contemporary Indian Drama—a Comparison" (PhD Dissertation, S N D T Women's University, 2013). <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/7588> (accessed August 10, 2013).
87. Walton, "Aesthetic and Spiritual Correlations," pp. 31–33.
88. V. Ramadevi, "Sri Rama Varma Vijaya Mahakavyam of M Kungan Varier: A Critical Study" (PhD Dissertation, Mahatma Gandhi University, 1998). <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/244> (accessed August 10, 2013); H. Sadasivan Pillai, "The Uses and Functions of Rituals in Modern Malayalam Theatre Their Relevance to the Ritual Concepts in the Theatres of Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski" (PhD Dissertation, Mahatma Gandhi University, 2010). <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/606> (accessed August 10, 2013).
89. G. B. Mohan, "Letters Pro and Con," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 22.3 (1964), p. 337.
90. Jayshree Odin, "Suggestiveness: Poe's Writings from the Perspective of Indian '*Rasa*' Theory," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 23.4 (1986), pp. 297–309.
91. Elizabeth Otten Delmonico, "*Rasa*" in Arunk Kolatkar's "Jejuri: An Application of Classical Indian Aesthetics," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 83.3–4 (2000), pp. 519–42.
92. Gerow, "*Rasa* and Katharsis," pp. 264–77.
93. Raj Kumar Mishra, "Evaluation of Nissim Exekiel's Hymns in Darkness through *Rasa* Theory," *The Criterion: An International Journal of English*, 2.1 (2011) <http://www.the=criterion.com> (accessed May 1, 2013).
94. Sam Trivedi, "Evaluating Indian Aesthetics," Aesthetics Online (2013). <http://www.aesthetics-online.org/articles/ articles/index.php?articles_id=70> (accessed August 11, 2013).
95. P. Patnaik, *Rasa in Aesthetics* (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 1997), pp. 175–204.
96. An error that I have sometimes committed in my book written almost two decades back: Patnaik, *Rasa in Aesthetics*.
97. Tapasvi Nandi, "Rasa-Theory : A Catholic Application," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 82.1/4 (2001), pp. 113–12.
98. See Chakrabarti, "Play, Pleasure, Pain," and "The Aesthetics of Disgust."

99. Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence," *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969).
100. Ten Bulls. Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Bulls> (accessed August 15, 2013).
101. Higgins, "An Alchemy of Emotions," pp. 43–54.
102. Kousik Adhikari, (Year not specified), "Application of *Rasa* Theory to Tennesse William's Plays 'Glass Menagerie', with a Comparative Approach to Western Literary Theories," *Bornolipi: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2.2. <www.reflectionedu.com/barnolipi.php> (accessed in early 2013).
103. Naveen K. Mehta, "Treatment of Karun *Rasa* in Abijanansakuntalam and Hamlet," *Lapis Lazuli—An International Literary Journal*, 2.1 (2012). <http://pintersociety.com/> (accessed in early 2013).
104. Mohanty, "The Indian Response to *Hamlet*."
105. Harold E. McCarthy, "Aesthetics East and West."
106. Pandey, "A Bird's-Eye View of Indian Aesthetics"; Pravas Jivan Chaudhury, "Catharsis in the Light of Indian Aesthetics"; Mohan G. B. Thampi, "'*Rasa*' as Aesthetic Experience," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 24.1 (1965); S. K. De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 2 Vols. (Calcutta: Firma K. L. M., 1960); P. V. Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1971).
107. The phases do have overlaps, but the trends are indicative.
108. Reniero Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1968); J. Moussaieff Masson and M. V. Patwardhan, "The *Dhvanyāloka* and the *Dhvanyālokalocana*: A Translation of the Fourth *Uddyota*, Pt. I," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 97.3 (1977), pp. 285–304; Edwin Gerow, "Abhinavagupta's Aesthetics as a Speculative Paradigm," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 114.2 (1994), pp. 186–208.
109. Devi, *After Amnesia*; Paranjape, "Indian (English) Criticism."
110. Chakrabarti, "Play, Pleasure, Pain," and "The Aesthetics of Disgust."
111. Gerow, "*Rasa* and Katharsis."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adhikari, Kousik, "Application of *Rasa* Theory to Tennesse William's Plays 'Glass Menagerie', with a Comparative Approach to Western Literary Theories," *Bornolipi: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2.2. <www.reflectionedu.com/barnolipi.php> (accessed in early 2013).

Adhikary, N. M. "The Sadharanikaran Model and Aristotle's Model of Communication: A Comparative Study," *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 1 and 3 (2008). <http://nepjol.info/index.php/BOHDI> (accessed August 8, 2013).

Arjunwadekar, K. S. "*Rasa* Theory and the *Darsanas*," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 65.1–4 (1984), pp. 81–100.

Arjunwadekar, K. S., P. R. Vora, and Bhanuprasad Pandya in V. M. Kulkarni (ed.), *Some Aspects of the Rasa Theory*. New Delhi: Bhogilal Leherchand Instititute of Indology, 1986.

Auden, W. H., "O Tell Me the Truth about Love." <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/o-tell-me-the-truth-about-love/> (accessed September 3, 2013).

Bahm, Archie J. "Comparative Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 24.1 (1965), pp. 109–19, 114.

Bhyrappa, S. L. "Abiding Values in Indian Literature," *Indian Literature*, 43.2 (1999), pp. 180–85.

Blocker, Gener H., "Non-Western Aesthetics as Colonial Invention," *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 35.4 (2001), pp. 3–13.

Braembussche, A. V., H. Kimmerl, and Micole Note, (eds.), *Intercultural Aesthetics: A World Perspective.* London: Springer, 2009.

Chakrabarti, Arindam, "Play, Pleasure, Pain: Ownerless Emotions in *Rasa* Aesthetics," in *Aesthetic Theories and Forms in Indian Tradition,* History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization Vol. VI, Part 1, ed. Kapila Vatsyayan and D. P. Chattopadhyay. New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilization, 2008, pp. 189–202.

Chari, V. K., "Poetic Emotions and Poetic Semantics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 34.3 (1976), pp. 287–99.

Chaudhury, Pravas Jivan, "Catharsis in the Light of Indian Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 24.1 (1956), pp. 151–63.

Dave-Mukherji, Parul, "The State of the Study of Indian Aesthetics: Then and Now," *International Association for Aesthetics*, for a different historical perspective and approach to doing Indian aesthetics. <http://www.iaaesthetics.org/news/62-the-state-of-the-study-of-indian-aesthetics-then-and-now> (accessed August 10, 2013).

De, S. K., *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 2 vols. Calcutta: Firma K. L. M., 1960.

Delmonico, Elizabeth Otten, "*Rasa*" in Arunk Kolatkar's "Jejuri: An Application of Classical Indian Aesthetics," *Soundings: an Interdisciplinary Journal*, 83.3–4 (2000), pp. 519–42.

Dev, Amiya (ed.), *Science, Literature and Aesthetics, History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, Vol. XV, Part 3. New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilization, 2009.

Devy, G. N. *After Amnesia, G N Devy Reader.* New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2009.

Ferguson, James R. "The Rasa of Leadership in Contemporary Asia: The Nexus of Politics, Culture and Social Performance," *The Culture Mandala: Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies*, 5.1 (2002).

Fernando, Gregory, "*Rasa* Theory applied to Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and *A Farewell to Arms,*" PhD Dissertation, St Clements' University, 2010.

Gerow, Edwin, "Abhinavagupta's Aesthetics as a Speculative Paradigm," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 114.2 (1994), pp. 186–208.

Gerow, Edwin, "Rasa and Katharsis: A Comparative Study, Aided by Several Films," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 122.2 (2002), p. 268.

Gnoli, Raniero, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta.* Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 3rd edition, 1985.

Higgins, Kathleen Marie, "An Alchemy of Emotions: *Rasa* and Aesthetic Breakthroughs," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65.1 (2007), pp. 43–54.

Hogan, Patrick Colm, "Literary Universals," *Poetics Today*, 18.2 (1997), pp. 223–49.

Hogan, Patrick Colm and Lalita Pandit (eds.), *Literary India: Comparative Studies in Aesthetics, Colonialism and Culture.* Albany: State University of New York, 1995.
Kane, P. V., *History of Sanskrit Poetics.* New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1971.
Keats, John, "This Living Hand, Now Warm and Capable." <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/180719> (accessed September 2, 2013).
Krishna, Daya, "*Rasa*: The Bane of Indian Aesthetics," *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, 21.3 (2004), pp. 119–35.
Kulkarni, V. M., "The Alaukika Nature of Rasa," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 75.1–4 (1994), pp. 281–90.
Makrand, Paranjape, "Indian (English) Criticism: Some Notes," *Indian Literature*, 37 (1994), p. 160.
Malik, Ashwini, "Screenwriting Formulas: Templates, Structure & The *Rasa* Approach," December 18, 2012, Lightsfilmschool.com. <http://www.lightsfilmschool.com/blog/screenwriting-template-formula-rasa/2410/> (accessed August 8, 2013).
Masson, J. L. and M. V. Patwardhan, *Aesthetic Rapture*, the *Rasādhyāya* of the *NāṭyaŚāstra,* Vol. 1. Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, 1970.
Masson, J. M. and M. V. Patwardhan, "The *Dhvanyāloka* and the *Dhvanyālokalocana*: A Translation of the Fourth *Uddyota*, Pt. I," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 97.3 (1977), pp. 285–304.
McCarthy, Harold E., "Aesthetics East and West," *Philosophy East and West*, 3.1 (1953), pp. 47–68.
Mehta, Naveen K., "Treatment of Karun *Rasa* in Abijanansakuntalam and Hamlet," *Lapis Lazuli—an International Literary Journal*, 2.1 (2012). <http://pintersociety.com/> (accessed in early 2013).
Mishra, Raj Kumar, "Evaluation of Nissim Exekiel's Hymns in Darkness through *Rasa* Theory," *The Criterion: An International Journal of English*, 2.1 (2011) <http://www.the=criterion.com> (accessed May 1, 2013).
Mohan, G. B., "Letters Pro and Con," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 22.3 (1964), p. 337.
Mohanty, Sangeeta, "The Indian Response to Hamlet: Shakespeare's Reception in India and a Study of Hamlet in Sanskrit Poetics." PhD Dissertation, Basel University, 2010.
More, Chinmai, "Myth, Ritual, Folklore: Wole Soyenka and Contemporary Indian Drama—a Comparison." PhD Dissertation, S N D T Women's University, 2013. <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/7588> (accessed August 10, 2013).
Nandi, Tapasvi, "Rasa-Theory : A Catholic Application," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 82.1–4 (2001), pp. 113–12.
Ochsner, Kevin N. and Elizabeth Phelps, "Emerging Perspectives on Emotion–Cognition Interactions," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 11.8 (2007), pp. 117–18.
Odin, Jayshree, "Suggestiveness: Poe's Writings from the Perspective of Indian '*Rasa*' Theory," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 23.4 (1986), pp. 297–309.
Pandey, K. C., *Comparative Aesthetics: Vol. 1: Indian Aesthetics.* Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1950 (Reprint 2008).
Pandey, K. C., "A Bird's-Eye View of Indian Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 24.1 (1965), pp. 59–73.
Patnaik, P., *Rasa in Aesthetics.* New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 1997, pp. 175–204.

Pillai, H. Sadasivan, "The Uses and Functions of Rituals in Modern Malayalam Theatre Their Relevance to the Ritual Concepts in the Theatres of Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski." PhD Dissertation, Mahatma Gandhi University, 2010. <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/606> (accessed August 10, 2013).

Ramadevi, V., "Sri Rama Varma Vijaya Mahakavyam of M Kungan Varier: A Critical Study." PhD Dissertation, Mahatma Gandhi University, 1998. <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/244> (accessed August 10, 2013);

Raveendran, P. P., "Genealogies of Indian Literature," *Economic and Political Weekly,* June 24, 2006, pp. 2558–59.

Rayan, Krishna, "Towards a Rewritten Indian Poetic, *Indian Literature*, 37.2 (1994).

Simha, Lala Ramayadupala, "Bhāmaha's Conception of *Rasa*," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 42.1–4. (1961), pp. 175–80.

Sontag, Susan, "The Aesthetics of Silence," *Styles of Radical Will*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969.

Studymode, "The 'Theory of *Rasa*' Applied to Romeo and Juliet," (October 2012). <http://www.studymode.com/essays/The-Theory-Of-Rasa-Applied-To-1177107.html> (accessed August 6, 2013).

Subramanian, A. V., *The Aesthetics of Wonder.* New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1988.

Ten Bulls, Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Bulls> (accessed August 15, 2013).

Thampi, Mohan G. B., "'*Rasa*' as Aesthetic Experience," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 24.1 (1965).

Timm, Jeffrey R., "The Celebration of Emotion: Vallabha's Ontology of Affective Experience," *Philosophy East and West*, 41.1, Emotion East and West (January 1991), pp. 59–75, p. 61.

Trivedi, Sam, "Evaluating Indian Aesthetics," Aesthetics Online (2013). <http://www.aesthetics-online.org/articles/ articles/index.php?articles_id=70> (accessed August 11, 2013).

Wadkar, K. S., "Rasa Theory and the Darsanas," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 65. 1.4 (1984), pp. 81–100.

Walton, Susan Pratt, "Aesthetic and Spiritual Correlations in Javanese Gamelan Music," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65.1 (2007), pp. 31–33.

Wulff, D. M., "Religion in a New Mode," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* 54.4 (Winter 1986), pp. 673–88.

CHAPTER THREE

Who Is Afraid of Mimesis? Contesting the Common Sense of Indian Aesthetics through the Theory of "Mimesis" or Anukaraṇa Vâda

PARUL DAVE-MUKHERJI

Art History as a discipline arrived in India by the late eighteenth century under the aegis of colonialism. This historical fact has far-reaching philosophical implications for the way the discipline has taken shape in India even in the postcolonial era. The cultural nationalists who appropriated Art History turned that which had started as a colonial enterprise—to discover the forgotten past of the colonized and inculcate a sense of history into its subjects—into the recovery of native civilizational pride. In both the instances of colonial representation of India's past and the nationalist celebration of a golden age, cultural differences were assiduously maintained. If "naturalism" emerged as a colonial weapon of drawing lines of difference between self and the other as this term—like other comparable terms such as morality, nationalism, and democracy—were considered central to the Western self-identity, the pioneering art historians such as A. K. Coomaraswamy posited transcendentalism as a counter term to construct not only an Indian but Asian identity in art and culture. While this oppositional mode of thinking had some merit in animating a rhetorical defense of Indian art and resonated with nationalist fervor current in the first quarter of the twentieth century, it has created a conceptual grid that strongly controls the hermeneutic drive and the interpretation of premodern texts on art and aesthetics.[1]

This conceptual grid has so starkly polarized a materialist West that manifested as "naturalism" in art against a spiritual India that willfully rejected naturalism in

its higher pursuit of philosophical idealism that it has lost its explanatory potential and instead, has become a liability in a postcolonial retake on Indian aesthetics. It inadvertently confirmed West's ethnocentricism rather than posed a challenge to it by accepting mimesis as a Western domain. No longer under the same historical pressure in the postcolonial times and yet the legacy of the pioneering art historians thrives uncontested and continues to create obstacles in our understanding of the complexity of visual representation theorized in the ancient *śilpaśāstras* or art treatises and other related textual sources. *Anukṛti,* a term cognate to mimesis, constituted one of the central concerns of aesthetics and poetics from the time of the *NāṭyaŚāstra*, the ur text on dramaturgy by Bharata of ca. 200 CE, until the eleventh century CE when Abhinavagupta formulated a resounding critique of this theory in his commentary on the same text. This term—along with what I take to be mimetic terminology such as *sādṛśya*, *viddha*, and *satya*—find prominent presence in the *śilpaśāstras* even if they concern practice of art more than its theorization. Revisiting Indian aesthetics via *anukaraṇa vāda* or theory of mimesis not only casts a new light on the basic concepts of Indian aesthetics but opens up a new terrain of comparative aesthetics between Indian and Western aesthetics that departs from the customary binary oppositions (A. K. Coomaraswamy, K. C. Pandey) and embraces a nonessential relationality: mimesis is no more an exclusive feature of Western art than is transcendentalism an essential hallmark of premodern Indian art.

* * *

This chapter consists of four sections, the first three relate with problems of engaging with *anukaraṇa vāda* today through historiography, the problematic of translation, its contemporary relevance and the last attempts to recover the debates and discourse surrounding this theory in the Abhinavabharati through the lens of comparative aesthetics.

I. ANUKṚTI AND THE PROBLEM OF TRANSLATION

Etymologically, *anukṛti* is constituted by *anu* + *kṛti*, which literally means "acting-after" or "following the action of" and in that sense, imitation or a performance of mimicry seems close enough.[2] However, what complicates a simple translation is the fact that the English term "imitation," with its Greek ancestor "mimesis," carries a long history of shifting usage from the time of Plato till today which does not, naturally, correspond to the etymology and history of the usage of the Sanskrit word in the Indian context.

Anukṛti and *Anukaraṇa Vāda* are the key terms in this essay, which defy a translation into English. Neither "mimesis" nor "a theory of mimesis" is an adequate translation. What are the types of traditional sources that offer information about this term and the discourse surrounding it? It involves mapping the terrain of the usage of the term and its cognate concepts such as *satya* (truthful), *sādṛśya* (similitude), *pratibimba* (reflection), *pratikṛti* (portrait), and so on. The problem of translation of

the term *anukṛti* into English for which there is no singular term that captures the meaning is not just a linguistic problem but a philosophical one.

The current encyclopedic and semiotic projects of elucidating key terms of art by Kalātattvakosa have initiated an important move while raising, at the same time, the validity of offering their meaning through a synoptic context. Each of these terms is contextual that they lose meaning if abstracted from the specific instance of usage. It is for this reason that Vincent Lefevre's (pp. 59–64) analysis of these terms is by far the most productive as it stems from his interrogation of the genre of portraiture in the South Asian context.

Difficulty in translation may be seen as a productive terrain to explore an equally complicated history of the usage of *anukṛti* in premodern art theory in India. The very fact that there exists no one-to-one correspondence between *anukṛti* and mimesis takes us into the heart of a theoretical problem of cultural difference and simultaneously compels us to take up a comparative approach that can register cultural overlaps and differences.

> Drawing upon anthropological distinctions between emic and etic terms, such relativist positions advocate the use of each tradition's core concepts (Elkins: "indigenous terms") whose incommensurability and untranslatability are assumed. The arguments proffered appear to be premised on a radical relativism that ends up freezing alterity as fixed and ahistorical.[3]

Much that Juneja alerts us to the dangers of essentialization that we may lapse into by proposing cultural differences and yet the difficulty of translatability does have a heuristic value of allowing theoretical complexity to surface. Is it possible to translate a term such as anukrti or anukarana into English that creates a new term such as mimikrti or anukrisis? Can the neologism itself reflect the conceptual intersection?

Anukṛti usually appears in conjunction with a family of terms such as *sâdṛśya*, which calls for a closer exploration. The Kalātattvakosa section on Sâdrsya-Sârupya is a promising attempt at grasping the wide range of meaning from the most technical to the most philosophical but when it considers its aesthetic implication, it cannot resist the pull toward the Coomaraswamian construct and the textual sources are read through this filter.[4]

None of these terms open up to a historical study as attempted by the Kalātattvakosa project as they are embedded in different contexts that range from the everyday sense of the term to its technical and philosophical meanings. If we set aside the Coomaraswamian lens and grasp even its literal sense, there may be a better chance of capturing its meaning whereby both the differences and overlaps with Platonic or Aristotelian theories may be addressed rather than taking cultural divergence as a starting point of analysis.

II. ANUKṚTI IN INDIAN ART HISTORIOGRAPHY

The fact that *anukṛti* has not received due recognition within art historical discourse takes us to the colonial conditions under which art history as a discipline emerged.

Anukṛti got caught up in the nationalist defense of Indian art against the colonial view that Indian art was barbaric and lacked fine arts. To defend Indian art, the *śilpaśāstras* that were discovered around early twentieth century, proved instrumental in the argument that fine arts in India existed both in theory and practice. When Indian art history was witnessing a "textual" turn starting from 1920s, the pioneering art historians had made claims of transcendentalism as a way to place Indian art on a higher plane than that of the "naturalistic," "degenerate" Western art. It was around the alleged absence of "naturalism" that the discourse of transcendentalism was made and hence any reference to *anukṛti* with its mimetic connotation was either avoided or conceptually recast as spiritual or mental.[5] A. K. Coomaraswamy and Stella Kramrisch, the two pioneering art historians, have done a great service to art history by laying down its foundations, but as far as the *anukṛti* debate is concerned, they have overlooked it, falling under the spell of colonial art theory that accepted mimesis as a Western domain. Rather than contesting such an imperialist appropriation of mimesis, Coomaraswamy strengthened the colonial view by creating a binary between the materialist west that adopted mimesis in art as opposed the spiritual east that not only shunned naturalism but declared the perceptual world as redundant to the project of pure transcendentalism. Such a construct gave rise to many related presuppositions such as the irrelevance of the perceptible world to art practice and the most widely prevalent commonplace: portraiture never existed as a category in Indian art.

Today, from a postcolonial perspective, it is possible to assert that the defense that placed Indian art in an advantageous position came at a price. To counter the weapon of "naturalism" in art that had been used to condemn Indian art, the cultural nationalists forged a more effective tool in form of transcendentalism: Western artists may have mastered "naturalism" in their art; their art was assumed to be impoverished in its spiritual quotient, an exclusive hallmark of Indian art. In this contestation, any reference to *anukṛti* would have destabilized the terms of defense leading to an anti-*anukṛti* bias. The very foundation of Indian art history was created on suppression of *anukṛti.*

In the study of Indian aesthetics, comparativism runs through it almost like an invisible thread that stems from its colonial lineage. In what has been understood as comparative aesthetics, it has entailed comparing classical Indian aesthetic theories of *Rasa* and *Dhvani* with Greek aesthetics (Singal, 1977; Sukla, 1977). Today, to consider Greek civilization as fountainhead of the Western culture is itself open to contestation as in the cultural geography of the ancient world, Greece was more connected with the Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and South Asian world than with Europe.

To demonstrate how as recently as 1993 the legacy from A. K. Coomaraswamy continues to shape the understanding of Indian aesthetics, let me turn to V. K. Chari's *Sanskrit Criticism*. In all other respects, this book undertakes most stimulating and thought-provoking comparativism between Western and Indian literary and aesthetic theories. It is only when it concerns imitation or mimesis in art that the author resorts to familiar terrain invoking Coomaraswamy's work of 1934!

> In the West, "imitation" and "mimetic illusion" have long served as useful criteria for defining literature. In Sanskrit criticism, too, the notions of imitation and fictionality were entertained by many theorists before Abhinavagupta. Bharata

> spoke of drama as mimetic reproduction (anukarana). But this term was largely used in the context of theatre; it was nowhere offered as a definition of poetry as a verbal composition . . . In any case, . . . Abhinavagupta rejects both the theory of drama as imitation and its implications of fictionality and representational illusion. Mimetic terms, such as "likeness making" (*sadrsya-karana*), "similitude" (*sādṛśya*), and "correspondent form" (*pratirupam, pratima, pratikrti*), are employed in Sanskrit treatise on art in the context of portrait painting and sculpture. *The sacred images were, thought of, however, not as "likenesses" of any visible models but as symbolic representations of certain concepts, designed in accordance with canonical prescriptions.* (my emphasis, V. K. Chari, 33, footnote no. 13)

This section ends in footnote 13. See Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, chaps. 1 and 5, 1934.

I will like to draw attention to the timing of the publication of *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, which followed Coomaraswamy's (mis)translation of the terms of classification of painting from the adhyaya 41 of the Citrasutra of the Visnudharmottara Purana in 1932. As a critical editor of the CS, I found Coomaraswamy's singling out of this chapter most intriguing as not only was this chapter most corrupt but it dealt with classification of Indian art into *Satya* (naturalistic), *Nagara* (urban, town bred), *Deśika* (local or provincial), and *Miśra* (mixed). If the first term was allowed to keep its meaning, the conceptual edifice that Coomaraswamy was to evolve would have collapsed and this led him to offer a transcendental revamping of the first category *Satya* as Pure and Sacred for which he faced a strong criticism from the Sanskritist, V. K. Raghavan.[6]

The most recent intervention in comparative aesthetics between ancient India and Greece is by Bharat Gupt in his *Dramatic Concepts: Greek and Indian*. His attempt to compare *anukaraṇa* with mimesis proceeds remarkably only to conclude that *anukṛti* was essentially different from its Greek counterpart in its creation of "a new work, independent and self sufficient" (p. 100).

When Coomaraswamy recoiled from textual references to *anukṛti* and *sadṛśya* for their potential to undermine differentiation he wanted to set up between Indian and Western art, it can be explained as a defensive reaction to the colonial comparison, which for Coomaraswamy worked only to flaunt the superiority of Western/Greek "naturalism" over Indian incompetency in capturing the real (John Ruskin—Greek Bull and the Indian bull). However, I am not eliminating cultural differentiation and arguing for equivalence of *anukṛti* with mimesis but underlining the need to rethink cultural difference in contemporary terms rather than the ones that were laid down during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The success of Coomaraswamy's defense of Indian art has today become a liability as his position translates into the cultural common sense of Indian art. Let me give examples of how this framework that has been "naturalized" controls the reading of ancient texts.

Pioneering a significant move to analyze gender in premodern Indian art, Vidya Dehejia brought to light interesting literary references about women portraitists from literary works from the period starting from the eighth to the eleventh century, which have been overlooked in Indian art historiography (p. 12). Culling out a fascinating story about a woman painter or *śilpinī* from Kaṭha Sarit Sagara who

impressed the prince by her ability to capture the verisimilitude of the princess, Mandaravati, Dehejia doubted the veracity of the claim by accepting the widely held notion about Indian art added to her text as a footnote: "The fact that Indian portraits do not aim at a verisimilitude is irrelevant to the context" (p. 21).

The narrative logic of the story coheres around the dexterity of the woman painter in capturing likeness. In fact, when her portrait of Mandaravati was doubted by the prince as too beautiful to belong to a real face, the woman painter met the challenge by creating another portrait of the doubting prince himself to quell his incredulity and to demonstrate her ability to produce lifelikeness.

But in Dehejia's selective reading of the story, it was enough to establish the existence of women artists in the past while disregarding the question of visual representation and her competence in handling the cultural codes of portraiture.

In Sanskrit literature, there is no dearth of the theme of portraiture and the latter recurs as a literary device in many plays.[7] Another recent example of the dismissal of "naturalism" is by Julian Ana Lia Monitor and it has been analyzed by Phyllis Granoff as Monitor's succumbing to the interpretive frameworks inherited from the past:

> Despite the ample evidence in literature that portraits were representation of individual, not types, it is clear those modern scholars are uncomfortable in accepting this evidence as proof for the existence of realistic portraiture in pre-Moghal India. Two factors seem to be involved: First is the widespread interpretation of Indian art by Kramrisch and Coomaraswamy as dealing with "inner essences" and "spiritual essences" rather than external realities. The second is the lack of extant sufficient examples of portraiture, painted or sculpted that could support the remarks in Sanskrit literature.[8]

Monitor explored Bhasa's play on Pratimanataka, the tragic story line of which hinged upon the protagonist, Bharata's ability to recognize of the portrait of his father, King Dasaratha. In ancient India, lifelike portraits could only be made of dead kings and placed in a royal portrait gallery. Bharata who was not aware of the death of his father, entered a Royal Portrait gallery where sculptural busts of dead kings were displayed. Recognition of his father's face in the portrait is the tragic moment for Bharata; Monitor, who closely read this play, continued to rely on Coomaraswamy's construct to conclude that attention to physical characteristic was alien to premodern portraiture in India.[9]

As a result, Monitor misses "Bharata's visual engagement with the statue and moment of recognition and reads the text to say that Bharata had to be told the statue was of his father. In fact I think that the actual text tells us in a dramatic fashion that the image was a likeness and that Bharata recognized his father but could not accept fully the implication of what he was saying."[10]

Portrait-making was certainly not alien to the literary imagination where references could be cited to show how portraits not only resembled the person but also acted as substitutes for real people and underwent even marriage ceremonies (*Svapnavāsavadatta* mentions that when Udayana and Vāsavadatta eloped, their parents got their portraits married!). Some Sanskrit dramas, such as Rājaśekhara's

Viddhaśālabhañjikā, treat exact representation in portraits as a point of departure for philosophical discussions about the very nature of art and reality.

Vincent Lefevre is the first to problematize the issue of portraiture in conceptual terms and unlike most of his predecessors, takes the textual references to portraiture seriously and does not rule out the practice of portraiture in ancient India. However, he resolves the riddle of textual affirmation of high realism and lack of sufficient evidence in the extant examples by delinking portraiture from resemblance and foregrounds the social and political function of portraits. This position is so far the boldest conceptual move but it creates a sense of perceptual alterity that has the potential of reviving the colonial bias about the disjunction between the Indic action and Indic thought. And his claim that portraiture functioned more as a literary device that had less to do with resemblance than evocation rests upon his blurring of the distinction between literary and artistic representation. This leads to his undermining of the classification of *viddha* and *aviddha* portraits as the difference between portraits and images is meaningless as either could act as a substitute for real people.

Moving against the grain of a skeptical reading of the textual evidence of portraiture or 'naturalism' in Indian art, I wish to accept the "truth claims" made by these texts not as evidence of practice of high realism in art but as a heuristic device to explore representation and propose that the question of resemblance or similarity is a fraught issue that raises complex philosophical and metaphysical concerns. Rather than dismissing these references, can we take the onus on ourselves for not having access to the ways of world-making and cultural grids through which resemblance operated? Nelson Goodman has exposed the fallacy of taking resemblance at face value and demonstrated the slipperiness of its terrain, resemblance being such a capacious term such that any two most disparate entities can be claimed to be similar unless the terms of equivalence are ascertained.

In my analysis of what I term as the mimetic terminology of the *śilpaśāstras* or treatises on art, I discerned a strong embedding of these terms in practice and its performative acts. Likeness was not just a question of reproducing the image correctly in any medium but it entailed a performative dimension and became a matter of practice and familiarity with cultural codes of resemblance. Take, as for instance, the misreading of "*vayugati*" in the Citrasutra that defined skillfulness of a *citravit* or a skilled painter. (I am grateful to Alexis Sanderson for pointing out such a usage of this term.)

Most translators have taken *vayugati* in a representational sense. It was taken to refer to the skill required for a painter to capture clothes, banners, and flames caught in the wind (*vayugatya*) where as a performative reading will yield a different sense: a proficient painter is the one who can paint clothes, banners, and flames *with the speed of the wind* (*vayugatya*). In a sense, skillfulness in art is not gauged only by similitude but the speed of execution what brings in the question of temporality and mimesis. What is so important about our detour to a text and commentary on dramaturgy such as the Abhinavabharati is that *anukṛti* has a better explanatory potential in the context of performance where mimesis and mimicry intersect. Attention to the *anukaraṇa vāda* can, in fact, supply the discursive frame to understand representation from a new lens.

III. LOCATING ANUKARAṆA-VÂDA IN A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT OF COMPARATIVE AESTHETICS

Situated in the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, what is my urgency to invoke a discourse on *anukṛti* that arose between the tenth and eleventh centuries in India? Contemporary theory of representation has long questioned the binary opposition between the copy and the original or the analog and the digital in post industrial and technologized present and it is no longer possible to maintain a distinction between the natural and the man-made in the post-human world. "Naturalism" or the category of resemblance, once a hallmark of Western control over representation in colonial times, has itself come under a rigorous philosophical interrogation from Walter Benjamin, Richard Wollheim, Nelson Goodman, Michael Taussig, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, among others.[11]

While in the Western context, a rich problematic had been worked out along a broad spectrum of the iconic to the symbolic modes of representation,[12] an equally nuanced debate that had set up different positions around representation in the Indian context remains to be explored. A closer attention to this text in terms of its repressed theory of "mimesis" only would contest the overarching framework of transcendentalism built by Coomaraswamy and regurgitated in current times[13] but also counter the contemporary Western theorization of mimesis as a domain that had no meaning outside the West.

> Few cultures outside the West have regarded realism as an important goal . . . Many traditional cultures, moreover, do not make the sharp distinction between art and reality that Western theory has inherited from Plato. Art in these cultures is closely intertwined with ritual and with daily life, much as it seems to have been in archaic Greek culture before Plato's intervention. Without the presumed difference of art from reality that underwrites Plato's critique of mimesis, the idea of realism, of reproducing life in a different medium, has little meaning.[14]

Potolsky's ethnologizing of "traditional cultures" that lack the critical distance to speculate on the difference between image and reality—being too immersed in rituals and daily life—is hardly applicable to the discursive framework of Abhinavabharati. At a time when neither technology nor media in the modern sense shaped thinking, how did these early aestheticians and philosophers arrive at the problematization of representation and the status of the real in painting and drama? The debate unfolds at a high level of intellectual sophistication among many positions that can easily be divided between the supporters and critics of "mimesis." While it has been speculated that around the fifth-century BCE, in ancient Greece, Plato made a foundational distinction between image and reality, which was to leave a lasting impact of the long intellectual tradition that unfolded in the West (Belting quoting Vernant), I will posit that a similar awareness of the distinction between image and reality existed in India but its history and genealogy in Indian philosophy and specially epistemology need to be explored and its relevance for the art practice and art theory examined. Many

comparative attempts have been made between the Greek art theory and the ancient Indian one but the preconceived notions about *anukṛti* have blocked the way for a sustained comparison.

I also locate my current query within what I understand as an interpretive crisis in Art History in the times of globalization which, on one hand, has spawned new disciplinary terrains such as global art history/World Art Studies and on the other, raised questions about the absence of "native" art theories. While at the height of modernist Art History, it was possible for Western art historians to encompass the world under the rubric of world art, the conceptual methodology largely remained Western—formalism, stylistic analysis, iconography, patronage studies. From a postcolonial and poststructuralist perspective, these methodologies kept the focus on Western Art History, which more easily yielded to the methods used and gave a coherence to the discipline at the cost of marginalizing the non-Western Art Histories. In response to the critiques of Western hegemony, the standard position taken by the art historians from the West is retaliatory: For too long, we have been shaping the conceptual tools of Art History, which have been as much used by "you" as by "us." Perhaps, the only alternative to break out of this conceptual deadlock is to turn to the "native" theories of art for forging new tools of analysis that can energize the field. It is here that I locate comparative aesthetics to be a rich terrain on which new forms of dialogue about representation and all its allied problems of referentiality and truth claims can be carried out. In this chapter, I accept the challenge thrown at me by my interlocutors from the West but not on their own terms. My initial response to this challenge was to question this imperative as an essentialist imposition from the West, predicated as it was, on an ascription of ethnicity to knowledge systems as Indian, European, Western, and so on. Can formalism be seen as a Western method if we place its emergence in the context of nineteenth century imperialism, which created conditions for the flow of, say, African masks into Europe, which at first inspired as much fascination as horror? Formalism offered itself as a tool of analysis to domesticate the alien artifact as any object when viewed in terms of its shape, size, and color, is made amenable to a formal understanding and its foreign content is domesticated, once placed within the familiar schema of formalism.

The native theory of art and aesthetics cannot simply be mined from a purely native framework, as in order for these theories to speak to us, a dialogic encounter may be staged between them and contemporary theoretical frameworks. Here, I reject the imperative to embrace a purist approach in which it is forbidden to mix up theories. Accepting that theories spring out of cultural specificities and are products of their times embedded within a politics of representation, what makes dialogue across time possible are some minimal universal problematic that any theory of representation must involve. Let me give an example of this. A theory of imitation/*mimesis*/*anukṛti* requires at least two components: the object and agent of imitation. To say that in the Indian context, the perceptible world was of no consequence to cultural practice on grounds of some inherent autonomy of mental images (Coomaraswamy/Bharat Gupt) or ritualistic immersion in non-Western art (Potolsky) or lack of distinction between image and reality (Lefevre) is an exercise in epistemic violence.

Even as Abhinavagupta rejects the theory of mimesis, he nevertheless subscribes to this basic epistemological basis in mimesis: "how can there be any imitation if

the object of mimesis is beyond one's perceptual domain?"[15] While admitting the basic empiricism that mimesis entails, Abhinavagupta puts forward two categories—(a) mimesis in visual arts is acceptable where one has access to a model whereby the resemblance is checked and (b) mimicry in drama that can mime actions but not emotions. The acceptance of mimesis and its terms goes against the grain of a common assumption about premodern art practice in India that did not rely on models. What Abhinavagupta proposes is not an evidence of mimetic art practice but that the fundamental notion of mimesis was not beyond the cultural imagination of these theoreticians.

Epistemic violence is not an act that a contemporary interpreter does to a premodern text. This violence may itself be embedded within the text as conditions of its coming into existence. Just as it is possible to critique "Western" formalism by invoking the imperialist conditions of its emergence, the "native theory" that I propose to study by Abhinavagupta is no less caught up in its own politics of representation of gender and caste. In both the cases, the racial, gender, and caste bias does not take away the value of the philosophical debate even if they offer us a deeper context within which to understand them. Lastly, following Benjamin, the present has the potential of animating the past—"for every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (thesis on the Philosophy of History). No comparative method can be constructed if cultural discourses are taken as immiscible.[16] (The fact that formal method is applicable to non-Western art histories implies translatability of basic visual concepts.)

This chapter will attempt to posit comparative aesthetics as a method not to compare Indian concept of mimesis with Greek mimesis as has been the standard practice but make the "native" discourse around *anukṛiti* comprehensible by detours to poststructuralist theories of representation. Is it possible to engage with these debates on a philosophical level and create a cultural context for a meaningful comparative aesthetics such that affinities and differences may be perceived across cultural differences between Abhinavagupta's rejection of *anukaraṇa-vāda* and Deleuze's critique of representation or between Aristotle's mimesis and Bharata's *anukṛti*? It is the new contemporary retake on mimesis that guided me to turn to premodern texts on aesthetics in India that blurred the boundary between mimesis and mimicry.

Comparative aesthetics is not a methodological choice but an inescapable condition of the postcolonial reality. If we take up the specific comparative study of mimesis in the context of the West and India, an insurmountable asymmetry remains in terms of the state of research. While the Western historiography on mimesis constitutes a sophisticated discourse where it captures the central preoccupation of art and literary theory, its very existence in the Indian context is under denial as part of the colonial legacy. Then, is comparativism a viable enterprise across glaring asymmetries in the state of research in mimesis in India and the West? I would argue that the problematization of mimesis in the West and its implicit ethnocentricism offers me a point of entry into the maze of different conceptual positions taken up by the early Indian theorists and practice comparativism.

IV. REVISITING THE ABHINAVABHARATI TO EXPLORE ANUKṚTI OR "MIMESIS"

For pictures of goblins and unicorns
are quite easily graded as more or less
realistic or naturalistic or fantastic,
though this cannot depend upon degree
of resemblance to goblins and unicorns.

Nelson Goodman on Seven Strictures
against Similarity.

Consciousness of an imitation
presupposes, furthermore, perception
both of the term of imitation and of the
thing which imitates.

Abhinavagupta in Abhinavabharati
(Gnoli, 40/ Dwivedi 43).

If *anukṛti* is widely discussed and contested in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, it finds a prominent presence in the *śilpaśāstras* such as the *Citrasūtra, Mānasollāsa, Śilparatna*. What was missing in the latter is a theory of *Anukṛti* or Anukaranavada but was implicitly assumed to be central to drama and visual arts such that there was no need to formulate a discourse around it apart from endorsing it as a central function of a painting or a drama. It was only when it got challenged and for the first time its efficacy was questioned that the debate becomes available to us. It was *Abhinavabhāratī*, Abhinavagupta's commentary on the *Nāṭyaśāstra* that bears witness to this important debate around *anukṛti* and it is ironical that this debate is preserved in the text that undermined the importance of *anukṛti* in its conclusion. The debate around *anukṛti* is conducted more on an epistemological and philosophical plane and refers directly to drama than art practice; the latter offers itself as the space of an exemplar as paintings of a horse and a cow are held up in the philosophical discussion around the status of the real and the function of resemblance in art and drama. What is noteworthy is the complex intersection of mimesis with mimicry even if the text makes no terminological differentiation between them and stretches *anukṛti* itself to stand for both.

IV.1. Anukṛti and Anukaraṇa Vāda in the Abhinavabhāratī

It was my close reading of an art treatise, the Citrasutra of the Visnudharmottara Purana, regarded as most fundamental to early Indian art, and its mimetic terminology such as *anukaraṇa*, *sādṛśya karanam*, and *satya* that created awareness of the importance of "mimesis" in early Indian art. As a critical editor of this text, it was not sufficient to pay attention to the new primary material available to me but also to its historiography. What was most striking about the latter was the wide gap between the literal and the interpreted meaning of this terminology that sustained the conventional understanding of this art treatise as espousing transcendentalism. Its central role in art historiography is attested by the fact that leading authority on Indian art have been compelled to either translate it or offer an annotated commentary starting from Stella Kramrisch, A. K. Coomaraswamy, and C. Sivaramamurti. This text concerning the practice of painting primarily, was informed by a strong mimetic attitude and considered *sādṛśya karanam* or "resemblance making" as a primary

task of a trained painter. Apart from this stricture, there was hardly any discursive elaboration on the theory. In the section on what constitutes the ability of an expert in painting (*Citravid*), the text enumerated the following: ability to make a distinction between a dead and a sleeping man; the one who can represent the body parts usually hidden by jewelry—ears, wrists, and neck; one who can draw banners, flames, and clothes with the speed of the wind (*vayu gati*).

While these prerequisites of an expert in painting were embedded in practice, the *Śilpaśâstras* did not engage with any philosophical discourse about the status or the epistemology of the real or the reception of mimesis by the viewer. There is only one reference to the reception of art when the *Citrasŭtra* states how a painting should appeal to a wide range of viewers who turn to a painting with different expectations; the ornaments catch women's attention; colors attract ordinary people; the lines strike the experts and the critics discern the shading. On the other hand, Abhinavagupta's demolition of the theory of *anukṛti* is largely carried out by foregrounding spectators' reception of performance.

It offered a unique conjunctural space that brought together aesthetics, philosophy, dramaturgy, visual arts along with logic, epistemology, and semiotics. The text has preserved a vibrant debate surrounding how aesthetic rapture (*rasa*) is produced in drama in which communication of emotions by the actor and their reception by the audience play a key role. *Anukṛti*, that defies an easy translation, stands between mimesis and mimicry. (Mimikrti or Anukresis). A divided opinion existed concerning the relevance of *anukṛti*. There prevailed a group of aestheticians that embraced *anukṛti* (Bhaţţa Lollaţa, Śrī Śańkuka) as the constitutive element of performance and visual arts, whereas another group (Bhaţţa Tauta, Bhaţţa Nāyaka, Abhinavagupta himself) vehemently refuted its importance. Despite the fact that in the debate it is the latter group that emerges as the more dominant, the arguments by the defeated side are compelling and seem to have held sway before the discourse rejecting mimesis grew stronger.

Given the fact that the entire discussion around *anukṛti* occurs within the commentary on *Nāţyaśāstra*, the context of drama is central. This does not preclude the theorists from drawing examples and parallels from visual arts that are particularly illuminating on what *anukṛti* implied in visual arts. This section of Abhinavabharati is well known and scholars have paid it a special attention and yet it has not been analyzed through the lens of "mimesis." The following is the key verse in *NāṭyaŚāstra* in which Bharata defines how *rasa* comes into being. It is around verse 33 of the sixth *adhyāya* of the NSū, that serves as a node for the debate sketched out by the commentator, Abhinavagupta.

Aesthetic rapture, *rasa*, is created when the primary mental states *sthāyi bhāva*, the consequents, *anubhāva* and the transitory mental states, *vyabhicāri bhava* come together.[17]

IV.1.1. From the Theory of Intensification (Upaciti Vāda) to the Theory of Mimesis (Anukaraṇa Vāda) What is remarkable about this section of the *Abhinavabharati* is that Abhinavagupta acquaints us with earlier theorists who embraced *anukṛti* as a basic explanatory model for a dramatic performance. It begins with a tenuous

use of "mimesis" in Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa's *upacitivāda* that explains *rasa* as the result of the intensification of the ordinary movement of the mind by the combined effect of the play, the production, and the actors. It was the character Rama who was the main site of *rasa* production as the original, whereas the actor who imitated Rama, was only the metaphorical site, as a copy. When one of the eight basic mental states or *sthāyībhāva* gets intensified in the actor, who plays the role of the character Rāma, the audience accepts the actor as Rāma. In other words, *rasa* is nothing other than intensified *sthāyībhāva* achieved through mimesis or *anukṛti*. This view is revised by his successor, Śrī Śaṇkuka who displaces *upaciti vāda* with *anukaraṇa vāda* by foregrounding the role of mimesis. He accomplishes this by two moves: (a) drawing a distinction between a literary text that accomplishes *anukṛti* by verbal means—*vācika* as opposed to a dramatic performance where the *naṭa* or actor combines the verbal with the performative—that is, *vācika* with *abhinaya* or acting.[18] (b) For Śaṇkuka, any defense of mimesis entailed a defense of illusion without which aesthetic experience cannot exist. He turns to the Buddhist philosopher, Dharmakīrti and quotes from his text *Pramāṇavārttika* to defend illusion in drama.

> When two people who are walking in the dark are drawn towards light given out by a jewel or a lamp, the perception of light may be similar. The light may have different causal efficiency or *arthakriyākāritva*, as it may either lead to a lamp or a jewel, but both are examples of mistaken cognition. (In case of the latter, to take light which is an attribute for a substance is mis-cognition, according to this school of Buddhism.) But at the level of perception, a shining jewel and flickering light of a lamp appear non-distinguishable and impel the two people in the same way.[19]

While Śaṇkuka subscribes to Dharmakīrti's example to defend illusion in drama, he was also a Naiyāyika or a "Realist" philosopher, which meant that he believed in the reality of universals and the importance of inference or *anumāna* in visual illusionism. Emotions defy direct perception but can only be inferred as emotional states when manifested through visual signs and symptoms. The time when Śaṇkuka was formulating his theory of *anukaraṇa vâda*, a climate of philosophical eclecticism prevailed when it was possible to draw from diverse schools of thought from Buddhist idealism taught by Dharmakirti to the theory of inference from the Nyâya philosophy. He wanted to locate his theory within inferential semiotics to lend it some objective basis.

IV.1.2. Mimesis through Inferential Semiotics: Śaṇkuka What marks Śaṇkuka's theory of mimesis as different from its counterpart in the Platonic or Aristotelian theory is its intertwining with inference (*anumâna*) as a special feature of dramatic performance. His theory of mimesis is placed in the interstices of mimesis alluding to a painting of a horse (*citra-turaga-nyâya*) and mimicry (actor's miming with the body and the face). Just as fire in the mountains, which is beyond the scope of visual perception, is signified by smoke, so are the emotions expressed through visible signs of facial contortions and body gestures. If there is a universal concomitance between

fire and smoke, so is there between emotions on one hand, and physiognomy and gesticulation, on the other. The latter is made possible by the actor's training and skill in *abhinaya* or acting through which the actor slides from the artificial (*kṛtrima*) plane to the real *pāramārthika* plane of emotions only experienced by the character Rāma. What creates a correspondence or *anusandhāna* between the simulated and the real is the actor's virtuosity in acting.

IV.1.3. Painting of a Horse (Citra-turaga-nyâya) and the Logic of Representation To elucidate the role of illusion in drama, Śaṇkuka brings in the analogy of the painted horse, *citraturaganyāya*. Just as when we stand before a painting of a horse, we tend to take the given configuration in paint as standing for a horse, in the same way we accept the actor for the character. Śaṇkuka makes a distinction between illusion that any creative act is predicated upon and delusion that springs from an untrained response of a spectator who tends to ask wrong questions before a painting or a drama.

i. Is this a real horse or a real Rāma?—A question of *samyagjñana* or right cognition.
ii. Is this a false horse or a false Rāma?—A question of *mithyā jñana* or wrong cognition.
iii. Is this a real or a false horse / a real or a false Rāma?—A question of *sādṛśaya jñana* or doubtful cognition.
iv. Does this painted horse resemble a real horse? Does this actor resemble Rāma?—A question of *sādrśya jñana* or cognition of resemblance.

Only an uncultured viewer takes resort to the four modes of questions as the first question arises from a naiveté that an artist aspires to bring in a real horse in a painting! In the same way, the aim of the actor is not to bring on to the stage the real Rāma who is a mythological/historical personage; hence the question of right cognition has no place in visual arts and drama. So while he dissociates dramatic representation from any truth claims that lend aesthetic experience its nondiscursive dimension, he simultaneously grounds it within the known logical category of inference.

The second question is also predicated upon a false notion of authenticity when the question of the real is itself suspended. Doubt that may have a legitimate place in a discussion in epistemology or ontology that deals with the distinction between truth and falsity makes no sense in a world of representation in drama or painting. The rejection of similitude or *sādṛsya* as nonvalid cognition is odd, given the example of a painted horse but it was perhaps to drive home the point that aesthetic experience is in no way cognitive. It produces no knowledge. A painted horse need not resemble a real horse in a one-to-one correspondence and yet it can be interpreted as a horse through marks that make a painting. The skill of the artist is involved in creating the *anusandhāna* or correspondence between the marks and the horse, which creates a sign system that runs parallel to the inferential semiotics. It is via the inferential semiotics that physiognomy and body gestures convey emotions, just as in the case

of our knowledge of fire is inferred by our sighting of smoke. Frown-knit eyebrows and sidelong glances can convey emotions such as anger or desire—they are like the smoke signs for the "inner fire of emotions." At this point, resemblance emerges as a key issue that mimesis implicates.

IV.1.4. Critique of Anukaraṇa Vâda by Bhatta Tauta and Abhinavagupta Abhinavagupta follows his teacher, Bhaṭṭa Tauta, who systematically objected to the *anukaraṇa vāda* and demolished it stage by stage by raising questions as follows:

> If *rasa* is said to be the imitation of *sthāyībhāva*, is it so from the point of view of a) the spectator, b) the actor, c) critics or d) Bharata himself?[20]

It is striking how the spectator enjoys primacy in Abhinavagupta's list. The first proposition is rejected on grounds of whether spectators are aware of the fact that the actor is imitating the character Rama. Here, Bhaṭṭa Tauta establishes a demarcation between mimesis and mimicry. While the latter is admissible as in the case of the actor pretending to drink wine while drinking water allowing for some modicum of false cognition (*mithyâ jnâna*), what is not feasible is the imitation of Rāma's emotions through action because emotions are not amenable to visual perception. Actions and emotions belong to two distinct domains of knowledge, which don't intersect and are grasped by different sense organs. How can a frown or a sidelong look express emotion as the body belongs to the realm of the physical (*jadatva*) and the emotions belong to the mental realm (*cittavṛtti*) (Sankuka's example of a painted horse does not hold as this is the case of mimesis where the object of imitation, i.e., the horse is amenable to perception and so one can check what the painted image is an imitation of.)

Bhaṭṭa Tauta poses the same question from the actor's perspective: How is it possible that the actor is able to imitate Rāma? *For there to be any imitation, access to the original is vital. There can be no copy without the original.*[21] This line with its stress on empiricism would upturn the commonly held view that mimesis in the Indian context concerned only some metaphysical plane. At this stage, the comparison between drama and painting no longer works nor would the example of the painted horse (*citra-turaga*) support the theory of mimesis in drama. In case of a painting of a horse, there is referentiality to support imitation as the copy can be tested against an original.

But in drama that entails enacting of emotions, can there be any place for referentiality? How can the actor claim to have seen the emotions experienced by Rāma? If you limit *anukṛti* to bodily gestures through inferential semiotics, or if you take imitation to mean any action based on a previous action (going to the etymology of the word *anu+kṛti*), then it will lead to another logical absurdity of *atiprasakta* or a category that is too capacious to be useful, as any action that imitates a previous action will belong to this class, which will have no limit as the real life is full of repeated actions!

IV.1.5. Journey from the Artificial to the Real or from the Artificial to the Artificial: Fallacy of Inferential Semiotics Bhaṭṭa Tauta rejects the theory of imitation from the point of view of the critics. The critics will not allow creative license to inference or

anumâna, which for them was strictly a logical category of knowledge. He challenges Śańkuka's use of inference as an explanatory model for *anukṛti*:

> If you say, we have no direct access to emotions but they are to be inferred from the visible signs of facial expression and gestures; and if it is admitted that in case of the actor, emotions like love (*rati*) acted are artificial (*kṛtima*), but in the case of Rāma, the character, they are real (*paramârthika*), it would imply that the corresponding signs and symptoms that the actor acts out will also have to be regarded as unreal. This raises a logical problem when inference is applied to the realm of drama. In the standard example of inference about inferring fire from smoke, one perceives "real" smoke (*hetu*) to arrive at the inference of "real" fire.
>
> From the perception of real smoke----------› real fire
>
> However, if you claim that in drama, the cognition of logical reason (*hetu*) is itself false as the emotion by the actor is feigned and hence artificial (*kṛtima*), so all the facial expressions and body gestures will count as false signs or *liṇga*, then logically, if the signs themselves are false, they can only lead us "false" inference as in "false" fire !
>
> At this point, the *anukaraṇa vādins* mock at their critics and sketch out an absurd inferential logic:
>
> Real smoke: real fire ≠ false smoke as in mist: false fire as in red flowers !
>
> But:
>
> Real smoke: real fire = false smoke as in mist: real fire
> (via mithya jnana or false cognition)

The critics relentlessly pursue the logic of inference to undermine the *Anukaraṇa-vādins*:

> While real smoke can lead to the inference of real fire but an artificial smoke or that which simulates smoke, as for example, mist, cannot lead us to fire but a copy of fire, as in red hibiscus flowers! When the *liṇga* or sign itself is artificial, then how can it lead to a real inference in form of fire! What the spectator will arrive at will be a false inference or *ābhāsānumāna* in form of red flowers!
> *Yatrāpi liṅgajñanam mithyā, tatrāpi na tadābhāsānumānam (a) yuktam* [22]
> Where the cognition of the sign is false, it need not lead us to a false inference!

In fact, here the *anukaraṇa vādins* are mocking at their critics as arriving at a bizarre conclusion of inferring red flowers on seeing mist. Given their earlier defense of *mithya jnana* or false cognition, the *anukaraṇa vādins* subscribe to the following equation.

> Smoke: fire = mist: fire

It seems that *anukaraṇa vadins* were attacked by the opponents by logical grounds that were resisted by Śańkuka who had passionately argued for aesthetic conditions of viewing as opposed to logicians' conceptual framework.

IV.1.6. Critiquing the Anukaraṇa Vâda: Resemblance without Imitation To counter the objection of the wrong use of inference to explain *anukṛti*, the *anukaraṇa vâdins* kept underlining the distinction between the real and the represented. They drew a distinction between an actor who is not really angry but who puts on an appearance of being angry. In other words, the actor resembles an angry man in a manner in which he contorts his eyebrows in a frown, and so on.

To which, the critics retort thus—"So you invoke the relation of resemblance between the actor and an angry man?" Here, the critics draw upon *upamāna* as one of the four *pramāṇas* or sources of knowledge followed by the Nyâya philosophers. The standard example used by Naiyāyikas to illustrate analogical knowledge was the resemblance between a cow and a *gāyal* or a cow-like animal. After attacking inference, the critics take the *anukaraṇa vādins* to task by refuting yet another *pramāṇa—upamāna* or analogy. When we come face to face with a strange animal, *gāyala* in a forest, and we recognize it as resembling a familiar animal, cow, it leads to analogical knowledge, *upamāna* (when we use "cow-like" as an analogy to explain the meaning of *gāyal*). *Upamāna* is here held up by the critics as instantiating resemblance without imitation. When we understand a *gāyal* as looking like a cow, we don't attribute that resemblance to imitation saying that a *gāyal* imitates a cow! *Upamāna* stands for resemblance without imitation and hence serves no purpose to defend *anukaraṇa vāda*.

IV.1.7. Rejecting Generality as Object of Mimesis Attacking from yet another angle, the critics bring up the question that there may be several actors who play the role of Rāma – so while what is to be imitated (*anukārya*) remains the same, the agents of imitation or *anukartṛ* keep changing when different actors are involved. Does this imply that what the actors imitate is a generality or *rāmatva* or Rāmaness and not some empirical entity? For the Naiyāyikas, this was not a problem since generality was a real category and was assumed to be as real and exist in the world as the individual particulars that instantiated them.

But for the critics, the way different cows instantiated cowness could not be extended to Rāmaness and the way different actors brought this generality to spectators' perception by their individual performance.

IV.1.8. Actor Is Not an Empty Vessel: Questioning the Distinction between the Model of Mimesis and Actor's Mimicry The most potent objection against the *anukarana vadins* was through the relationship between the actor and Rāma, the model of imitation. When the spectators observe the actor, the latter is not seen as an empty vessel (*pātra*) but a sentient being who, in the act of imitating Rāma, stirs his own emotions. What is taken as Y (actor) "acting" as X (Rāma) by the *Anukaraṇa-vādins* is displaced by Y "being" Y. Imitation implies an alterity or a difference between the self and the other when you act like someone else. But when the actor identifies with the character, his own emotions get aroused and he cannot then be imitating his own emotions! (Kuntaka—you can't climb your own shoulders.) The denial of the distinction between the object of imitation (*anukārya)* and the agent of imitation (*anukartṛ*), removes the very lynchpin that had held together the position of the *Anukaraṇa-vadins*.

svātmāpi madhye naṭasya anupraviṣṭa iti galito anukāryānukartri bhāvah.[23]

[If in this imitation], actor's self takes part, [then] the distinction between the object of imitation—*anukārya* and the subject of imitation—*anukartṛ* collapses.

One of the fundamental presuppositions of the *anukaraṇa vâdins* was that a minimum distance had to be posited between the actor and the character for mimesis to work. One can only mime others but how can anyone mime oneself? Once the critics declare actor's performance based on *identification* rather than *imitation*, they seem to pull the carpet from under the feet of the *anukaraṇa vâdins* and their project of representation. The basic logic of representation is predicated upon the distinction between the one who represents and what is represented. This critique of *anukaraṇa vâdins* ultimately translated into a critique of representation itself.

IV.1.9. Difference between Mimesis and Mimicry Dealing a final blow to the *anukaraṇa vâdins* and their invocation of painting as a support for mimesis, Abhinavagupta takes up the case of a painted image of a cow. What a painter does is compose (*samyuj*) an image of a cow by cleverly placing pigments in a configuration (*samnivesa*) to resemble a cow but what he cannot do is "manifest" (*abhivyaj*) a real (*paramârthika*) cow like the one revealed by a lamp. This very question of the "real," that is, that Sankuka wanted to declare as irrelevant in an aesthetic representation is adamantly raised by the critics. In fact, the very function of invoking the example of a painting of a horse or the *citra-turaga-nyâya* by Śankuka was precisely to pose a different epistemology for aesthetic pleasure where ontology has no place.

Abhinavagupta attacked the *anukaraṇa vâda* through a scholastic questioning where it was at its weakest. The main contradiction in Śankuka's position lay in his simultaneous claim of asserting that aesthetic experience is both discursive and nondiscursive. When defined as an imitation, it cannot escape being discursive and yet, he claims that it must transcend discursive cognition and the realms of right-, wrong-, doubtful-, and similarity-based categories of knowledge (Gnoli, p. 39).

Be that as it may, until the time of Abhinavagupta, the *anukaraṇa vādins* enjoyed preeminence in art theory and may have had similar relevance in visual arts from many examples were drawn—of the painted animals as in the maxim of the painted horse (*citra-turaga-nyâya*) and a painted cow (*sanyujyamâna gauh*).

From this debate around *anukṛti*, it is clear that a clear distinction was not only made between image and reality in the visual arts (painted horse/cow and real horse/cow) but also in drama (real and fake emotions). What was at stake was not just the legitimacy of mimesis but a theory of representation that, according to Abhinavagupta, could no longer be sustained on the relationship of difference between what is to be imitated and who the imitating agent is. Rather than difference, a relationship of affect and contamination was put forward in which the agent of imitation is as affected by the emotion as the original "owner" of this emotion.[24] The most challenging task that needs to be undertaken is to understand the performative dynamics of *anukṛti* in Indian visual arts and in drama where epistemological status

of an image need not coincide with its truth claim. This might help us in better grasping the *Citrasūtra*'s famous but misunderstood statement:[25]

Yathā nṛttte tathā citre, trailokyānukṛtih smṛtāh[26]

As in dance, so in painting, the imitation of the three worlds is prescribed.

A. K. Coomaraswamy deployed this statement to undermine the importance of *anukṛti* in Indian arts. He claimed that if the three worlds included the fictitious, then *anukṛti* was meaningless in the arts. It is Goodman who alerts us to the complexity in dealing with resemblance in his "Seven Strictures against Similarity." Resemblance or similarity is such a capacious relationship that most disparate objects can be brought into relationship of similarity without any guarantee to a truth claim. If we foreground the linguistic component of any representation, the fictitious status mattered little as long as even the most impossible entity, to cite Indian philosophers' favorite example, a rabbit's horn, can be plausibly rendered in representation. Abhinavagupta, even in his refutation of *anukaraṇa vâda* had made it clear that for any imitation to be legitimate, not only was it imperative to know the object that is being imitated but also the terms of imitation.

It is allegiance to a truth claim that Śankuka wanted to dispense with by foregrounding the fictitious and stressing a willing suspension of disbelief in aesthetic reception. For him, mimetic action is a perpetual illusion, a constant displacement, through the production of doubles. Mimetic practice is that which establishes, through performative enactment, relationships between that which represents and that which is represented. However, it is his turn to inferential semiotics that brought ontology from the back door and the critics dismantled the edifice of *anukaraṇa vâda* by broadening the crack that the nexus between *anumiti* (inference) and *anukṛti* (mimesis) created.

If we open our minds to *anukṛti* as an evolved concept, endorsed since the time of Bharata until Abhinavagupta's time, that underwent various shifts via *upacitivāda* and *anukṛtivāda*, we can engage more seriously with literary references to representation, and achieve corroboration between various kinds of discourses such as aesthetic, philosophical, and literary. Shifting the frame of reference from transcendentalism to *anukṛti* may foreground the performative dimension of art making and art reception in premodern Indian art and let the art works strike us with a new resonance.

NOTES

1. See Ramaranjan Mukherji's Foreword to Mohit K. Ray's *A Comparative Study of the Indian Poetics and the Western Poetics* (New Delhi: Sarup, 2008): "The reason as to why Indian poetics stand far above Western Poetics is that while Indian mind is guided mainly by the Philosophy of Spirituality, the Western mind is guided mainly by the Philosophy of Materialism," xv.
2. *Anukṛti* defies a straightforward translation. When forced to translate *anukṛti*, I prefer "performative mimesis."

3. Monica Juneja, "Reflections on Art History's Shifting Global Geographies" (Talk given at the University of Zurich on May 6, 2013, Heidelberg University).
4. *Kalātattvakosa*, ed. R. C. Sharma (New Delhi: Seema, 2002), Vol. 5, Chapter 5, pp. 41–65.
5. Cf. Parul Dave-Mukherji, *The Citrasūtra of the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 2001), p. 3.
6. See the introduction to *The Citrasutra of the Visnudharmottata Purana* for a critical art historiography and the modern reception of this text.
7. Virginia Saunders, "Portrait Paintings as a Dramatic Device in Sanskrit Plays," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 39 (1919), pp. 299–302, as cited in Phyllis Granoff, "Portraits, Likenesses and Looking Glasses: Some Literary and Philosophical Reflections on Representation and Art in Medieval India," in *Representation in Religion: Studies in honor of Moshe Barasch*, ed. Jan Assmann and Albert I Baumergarten (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 65, fn. 5).
8. Granoff "Portraits, Likenesses and Looking Glasses," p. 66, fn. 6.
9. Julian Anna Lia Monitor, *Portraits in Sechs Fürstenstaaten Rajasthans vom 17. bis zum 20 Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Fanz Stein Verlag, 1985); cited in Granoff, "Portraits, Likenesses and Looking Glasses."
10. Granoff, "Portraits, Likenesses and Looking Glasses," 67.
11. Richard Wollheim and Nelson Goodman, *The Languages of Art*, 1967; Walter Benjamin, "On the Mimetic Faculty," *Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986); Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Gilles Deleuze, "Plato and the Simulacrum," 27 (October Winter) (1983), pp. 45–56; Goran Sorbom, *Mimesis and Art* (Bonniers: Scandanavian University Books, 1966); E. H. Gombrich, *Art and illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, Bollingen Series (New York, London: 1960). Jacques Derrida, *Of Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Matthew Potolsky, *Mimesis* (New York; London: Routledge, 2006).
12. Potolsky, *Mimesis*.
13. See, for example, Harsh Dehejia's *The Advaita of Art* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996), which regurgitates Coomaraswamian commonplaces.
14. Potolsky, *Mimesis*, 95.
15. Raniero Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta* (Rome: Instituto Italiano Per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente, 1956), p. 9.
16. Elkins "Why Art History Is Global," in *Globalization and Contemporary Art*, ed. Harris (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 381.
17. *vibhāvānubhāvavyabhicārisamyogād rasaniṣpattih* (NSū 6.33) page 34, 1996. Abhinavabharati edited by Parasanatha Dvivedi, Ganganathajha Granthamala, vol. 14, Varanasi: Vijaya Press, 1996.
18. This would counter Lefevre's argument that both visual and verbal representation had an equally evocative function. Through physical means, the actor brings the emotion to the level of perception [*pratītiyogya*] (Vincent

Lefevre, *Portraiture in Early India: Between Transience and Eternity* [Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011], 72).

19. Page 41. Dvivedi edition.
20. Page 43. Dvivedi edition.
21. sadṛśyakaraṇam hi tâvad anukaraṇam anupalabdhaprakṛtinâ na śakyam kartum. Gnoli, *Aesthetic Experience*, p. 9.
22. Gnoli, *Aesthetic Experience*, pp. 7–8; Dwivedi, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta,* p. 45]
23. Dwivedi, p. 48; Gnoli, *Aesthetic Experience*, p. 9.
24. This is an inflection of the sense in which Chakravarti has used ownership of emotions in Indian aesthetics. (See "Ownerless Emotions in Rasa-Aesthetics," by Arindam Chakravarti in *Asian Aesthetics*, ed. Ken-ichi-Sasaki [Japan: Kyoto University Press, 2010]).
25. A very important discussion on the performative aspect of knowledge is given by S. N. Balgangadhara, *The Heathen in His Blindness: Asia, the West and the Dynamics of Religion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. 418.
26. Dave-Mukherji, *Citrasūtra,* Adhyaya 35 and verse 5, pp. 2–3.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Balgangadhara, S. N., *The Heathen in His Blindness: Asia, the West and the Dynamics of Religion.* Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994.

Belting, Hans, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*. Trans. Thomas Dunlap. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Chakravarti, Arindam, "Ownerless Emotions in Rasa-Aesthetics," in *Asian Aesthetics*, ed. Ken-ichi-Sasaki. Japan: Kyoto University Press, 2010.

Chari, V. K. *Sanskrit Criticism*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992.

Coomaraswamy, A. K., *The Transformation of Nature in Art*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1934.

Dave-Mukherji, Parul, *The Citrasūtra of the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 2001.

Dehejia, Vidya, *Representing the Body: Gender Issues in Indian Art*. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1999.

Elkins, James, "Why Art History Is Global," in *Globalization and Contemporary Art*, ed. Jonathan Harris. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 375–86.

Gnoli, Raniero, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*. Rome: Instituto Italiano Per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente, 1956.

Goodman, Nelson. "Seven Strictures against Similarity," in *Works: Nelson Goodman among the Social Sciences*, eds. Mary Douglas and David Hull, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992.

Granoff, Phyllis, "Portraits, Likenesses and Looking Glasses: Some Literary and Philosophical Reflections on Representation and Art in Medieval India," in

Representation in Religion: Studies in honor of Moshe Barasch, ed. Jan Assmann and Albert I Baumergarten. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

Gupt, Bharat, *Dramatic Concepts: Greek and Indian*. New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 1994.

Lefevre, Vincent, *Portraiture in Early India: Between Transience and Eternity*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011.

Monitor, Julian Anna Lia, "Portraits in Sechs Fürstenstaaten Rajasthans," vom 17. bis zum 20 Jahrhundert Wiesbaden: Fanz Stein Verlag 1985; cited in Granoff (2001).

Pandey, K. C, *Comparative Aesthetics: Indian Aesthetics, Vol. I.* Varanasi: Chowkhambha Sanskrit Series, 1950.

Potolsky, Matthew, *Mimesis*. New York; London: Routledge, 2006.

Saunders, Virginia. "Portrait Paintings as a Dramatic Device in Sanskrit Plays," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 39 (1919), pp. 299–302, as cited in Granoff (2001: p. 65, fn. 5).

Singal, R. L., *Aristotle and Bharata: A Comparative Study of Their Theories of Drama*. Chandigarh: Singhal, 1977.

Sukla, Anand Charan, *The Concept of Imitation in Greek and Indian Aesthetics*. Calcutta: Roopa, 1977.

CHAPTER FOUR

Thoughts on *Svara* and *Rasa*: Music as Thinking/ Thinking as Music

MUKUND LATH

It might seem odd, if not perversely counterintuitive, even to think of relating—let alone equating music to thought, for this assumes a close kinship that seems to be entirely absent. Music, indeed, helps us to move away from thought. The realms of music and thought pursue ends that take our consciousness in entirely different directions. Music may be said to be a kind of *bhoga*, engulfing us in an immersion akin to self-forgetfulness; and this is plainly quite opposed to the quiet, deliberate, transparent, self-transcending, and reflexive self-awareness that belongs to thought. Music, for this reason, can be readily and meaningfully associated with food and festivity, marriage, love-making, even death; it can go with states of feeling, even, in its sublimity, with a reflective or meditative *mood*, but not with discursive thought that seeks a self-reflexive withdrawal from other activities, especially those leading to self-forgetfulness. Music, because of its relation with the feeling consciousness, can also be associated with the other arts: an association that can take place at a deeper and more integral level than its relation with the kind of celebratory activities named above. Such a deeper, more integral relation is evident in theater. But any meaningfully significant association of music with reflective thought seems, quite apparently, to be unthinkable.

What, then, does it mean to equate music to thought as I am trying to do here?

A little reflection, however, will show that a kinship is not difficult to find. We can discover one if we consider music as an autonomous, exclusive activity, an activity meaningful on its own. We can then perceive that music like thought is a similarly profound and reflexive activity. Even a little searching attention reveals that music is similar to thought in its abstraction; it seeks a similar withdrawal, and shares a similar reflexive consciousness that can be seen as parallel to thought. This is most evident in contemplating a rāga: in singing it, playing it, or even in listening to it.

But, paradoxically, it is here that we also realize how different it is from thought. We find ourselves in a world of feeling that has withdrawn into itself and has certainly no place for discursive thought. And yet at the same time it now becomes manifest that the two, music and thought, partake of a reflexive spirit and processes of inner,

abstract movement that are deeply analogous, thus disclosing an unexpected yet extraordinary kinship. A reflection on this kinship can help us to understand both music and thought with a new insight. To use a metaphor, we can now see the one as a kind of mirror for the other, where the one reflects the other, and a sensitive realization of this can, I think, afford us a keener look into the two and perceive their deep-seated kinship.

Clearly, both music and thought are realms embodied in symbols, or rather, systems of symbols. These may be seen as different "languages" that are rich and powerful mediums for the reflexive consciousness. The word, "language," is indeed often used to denote both of them; but it is needless to remark here that this is a lākṣaṇika or figurative use of the word, since these two "languages" that embody thought and music are of very different kinds as systematic worlds of symbols. This can be readily seen in the fact that they are not translatable into each other. In fact the nontranslatability of music is even more basic: something said in a linguistic sentence can, in principle, be said in a different set of words, even in the same language. This is not possible in music. The very category of "translation" appears meaningless here. But translatability, on the contrary, can be seen as a basic criterion of meaningfulness in what we know as language—word-based language—as Kautsa penetratingly remarked in speaking of the Vedas. Yāska (seventh-century BCE) quotes him as observing that the Veda cannot be considered as meaningful since the syllabic order that constitutes a Vedic mantra is considered inalterable. But if this is so, Kautsa argued, a Vedic mantra cannot be taken as an utterance in a language, since whatever is said in a language can always be said with a different syllabic order, that is, with different words, and this is true in principle, for if an alternative formulation is not possible, we are not in the realm of language; the Veda therefore, lacks meaning.

But the "language" of music, unlike word-based language in which the Vedic mantras are articulated, is both meaningful and untranslatable. If the mantras, for example, were tablā- bols, embodied in language-like syllables, but not aimed at articulating words, we could meaningfully say that a change in the syllabic order will change the *meaning* of the bol. Now the *meaning* of tablā-bols, unless we restrict the use of the concept of meaning to word-based languages, is certainly of a very different kind, and, obviously, quite distinct from that of a word-using language.

The difference in the very nature of meaning being intimated here may be conceptually understood in terms of the notions of abhidhā and vyañjanā. They point at two different realms of meaning, and we can see the difference between the two realms in considering ordinary word-using language with some depth, for it has both abhidhā and vyañjanā. Abhidhā is denotative, indicative meaning, and vyañjanā may be characterized as "evocative." There are languages that have no abhidhā, only vyañjanā. The system of tablā-bols—or music as such—is one such language. Although ordinary language has both abhidhā and vyañjanā, we usually think of it in terms of abhidhā, a denotative process without which our vyavahāra or ordinary living is unthinkable—and so is thinking, since concepts, like things, are also denoted through words. It is abhidhā that has the kind of translatability that Kautsa had in mind. But vyañjanā with its evocative, nondenotative and nontranslatable meaning is as rooted in language as abhidhā. It is vyañjanā that makes not only

tablā-bols but poetry possible. And it is because of vyañjanā that poetry is considered untranslatable. The poetic meaning of an utterance is clearly lost with a change in its syllabic order: that is, if a poem is translated into other words, even in the same language. For what we then have is a meaning sans the vyañjanā: the "evocative" sense that makes poetry *mean* what it does.

Ānandavardhana has argued that the significance of vyañjanā lies in a meaning that is addressed not to our intellect but to our emotive, *felt* consciousness. Vyañjanā, he felt and argued, is as inherent and natural a function—or power—of language as abhidhā, and like abhidhā it too works in many ways. Typically, language in vyañjanā can move out of the rationale or denotative logic of abhidhā and deliberately distort it for its own purposes. An obvious way to look for vyañjanā in ordinary language is the path taken by the old *ālaṅkārikas*. It is easy as they pointed out to discover that vyañjanā is an inherent part not only of poetry, but of ordinary, normal everyday—vyāvahārika—usage where we find that we deliberately distort evident logical sense in order to convey a meaning that such a sense does not, indeed cannot, envision. It is because of the fact that vyañjanā is immanent in language that poetry is possible. Take the famous example of the Sanskrit phrase, *gaṅgāyāṃ ghoṣaḥ*, which may be translated for our purpose as, "the village is right *in* the Gangā." This may sound a little awkward in English and so may not quite work, but take the sentence, "she is lost in the TV." These are obviously very ordinary usages, language is unthinkable without them. One can indeed think of innumerable examples, even coin them; in fact, one keeps coining them continuously (because once usage becomes conventional, it loses its bite: its evocative vyañjanā). Clearly, such usage is an integral part of language. The sense, the significant point, behind such usages is to lead meaning into the arena of the felt consciousness. We can see that the intention behind speaking of a village as being "in" the river Gaṅgā is to evoke a felt sense in the listener: a feeling of purity and coolness regarding the village, a feeling that cannot be denoted—cannot be reduced to abhidhā . Similarly, in saying "she is lost in the TV," a sense of utter attentiveness is *evoked*, rather than denoted. Such usages purposely—and with their own rationale, meaningfully—distort ordinary logic. And we are aware of this: we *know* that such "distortion" is aimed at a "felt" understanding and is imbued with a "meaning" of its own that is both untranslatable and calls for a distortion of ordinary sense—that is of abhidhā. We also know that mere distortion is not enough: the distortion has to be "meaningful" its own way, calling for an understanding and logic of its own kind. True, what is said through vyañjanā may be, usually, "rendered" or "translated" into abhidhā: one could say, "being on the Gaṅgā, the village is very cool and pure"; or "she is totally occupied in watching the TV," and the like. But to reduce vyañjanā to abhidhā will also mean a loss of the *felt* sense, the *evoked* meaning, which is not only untranslatable but is the intention—and the reason—behind such usages. It is this aspect of language that makes it inherently poetical. Poetry, we grant, is not really translatable. This is because vyañjanā is not translatable in principle, not even into another vyañjanā . This is not to negate poetic translations, but the word "translation" is here used loosely: since, such a "translation" if it is also a successful poem is, in fact, a new poem with a new vyañjanā, even if it is judged as sharing the "intent" of the original.

What we have said above should not be taken to mean that distorting abhidhā is necessary for vyañjanā : there are great poems where the language is straightforward abhidhā. But even in a poem that is seemingly forthright abhidhā, it is the vyañjanā that is the heart of the poem, and it remains untranslatable: changing the words of the poem will make it anonpoem or new poem. What we wish to point out through the discussion here is that abhidhā and vyañjanā lead to different realms of meaning. Vyañjanā is the medium for a realm of meaning that, being connected with our felt consciousness, has a basis and justification—a pramāṇa, one could say—of its own.

That the category of translation is not really meaningful in vyañjanā is more manifestly evident when we note that there are "languages" that have only vyañjanā and no abhidhā. Music is one such rich and powerful language. It would not make sense to say of a svara- yojanā (a musical phrase or a coherent group of musical phrases) that it can be *translated* into another svara-yojanā, much less into word-based language. Here we can really say to Kautsa that a change of svara-order will change the meaning, for there will, clearly, be a change of vyañjanā . The new svara-order if "meaningful" will make a new musical sense. Music as a "language" thus cannot be equated with word-based language, though, like such language, it too is formulated through a rich system of symbols. Also, like language, it is multiple by nature, and gives voice to very different traditions and cultures, embodying deep-rooted civilizational distinctions, as can be seen in the profound, overwhelming difference between the polyphonous European and monodic Indian music.

Music can also be seen to have a natural proclivity for reflexivity: for svara, the foundational unit of music, is a naturally abstract symbol. Consider in this context the very nature of svara. Words—despite the different meaning-worlds they create in the different realms of knowledge, feeling, and action—are characterized by a vācya-vācakā-bhAva, a separable word-meaning relation, a relation that makes translation possible, because the same vācya can have different vācakas. But svaras simply do not have a vācya. A svara is meaningful—that is, it has a vyañjanā—by itself. It may be called a self-sustained, *svayampratiṣṭha* symbol. It does not have a sound-meaning duality like language: svara as sound does not look for a meaning outside itself.[1] But its svayampratiṣṭha nature also implies that svara is inherently abstract in character. It thus can be used as a basis for a powerful language of pure vyañjanā : its abstract character also enabling it to be a medium for its own distinct kind of reflexivity. There are many such languages—painting, theater and dance among others. But the language of svara may perhaps be said to form the richest and most self-contained—or *svayampratiṣṭha* of them, and thus an apt medium for pure, "self-contained," reflexivity. As a language it allows us, paradoxically it might seem, to inhabit the world of feeling and yet remain a witness to it. Through svara we can reflect on a world of pure feeling while remaining in the feeling consciousness, withdrawn from the context of the ordinary world of human living or vyavahāra. Svara, in other words, permits us to self-reflexively explore the felt world as a world of meaning, to investigate its independent vastness and its immense possibilities with an introspective, imaginative and creative eye. It richly reveals to us that like the thinking consciousness, the felt-consciousness is also a reflexive consciousness.

But this being so, it can also meaningfully form a mirror for the self-understanding of thought, and the other way around.

For the purpose of our discussion, another significant aspect of the svapratiṣṭa nature of svara is worthy of reflection here. The fact that svara lacks a vācya-vācaka-bhāva has another profound implication: the lack of a vācya-vācaka-bhāva also implies the lack of a subject–object relation—a viṣaya-viṣayi-bhāva. What we have in its place is a subject–subject relation that vyañjanā can be seen to be rooted in: a vyañjita—evoked—meaning works within the subject-consciousness, it is conveyed to the subject, for the subject. The svayampratiṣṭha nature of svara where there is only vyañjanā and no abhidhā makes this fact even more apparent. The vyañjita meaning evoked by a word-based language is never felt to be pure undiluted vyañjanā because of its association with abhidhā, and the vācya-vācaka-bhāva inherent in abhidhā. A viṣaya-viṣayi-bhāva is never entirely felt to be absent in ordinary language. It is retained as background for vyañjanā, if not as sustaining support. One could even assert that word-based languages are basically founded on abhidhā, and vyañjanā is parasitic on it.

Thought too is intrinsically founded in a viṣaya-viṣayi-bhāva. Even as a discursive-reflexive activity embedded in the subject, it cannot but conceive of the subject except as an object. Using words as its medium, thought can be seen to be essentially, and quite self-consciously, a wilfully abhidhā-based activity. In fact, the more abstract the thought, the more self- reflexively it withdraws into a pure vyañjanā-less abhidhā; one can indeed see it as moving wilfully toward an avoidance of vyañjanā to seek greater discursive self-transparency. The svayampratiṣṭha abstraction of svara, on the other hand, being entirely untouched by a vācya-vācaka-bhāva is also removed from a viṣaya-viṣayi-bhāva. What the language of svara makes possible thus is a reflective consciousness where the felt subject becomes capable of contemplating itself while remaining in the subjective mode. It is enabled to become its own witness: to contemplate itself without becoming an object. A language-sustained, hence meaning-sustained, subject–subject relation is true of all vyañjanā, but is more clearly manifest in svara. Needless to add that in such a reflexive state of self-contemplation, the subject is not an individual but a universal subject, as it is in thought. Pure vyañjanā, sans a subject–object-oriented vācya-vācaka-bhāva, makes this possible.

The matter, I think, can become clearer, if we reflect on the concept of sādharaṇākaraṇa as understood by Abhinavagupta in the context of *rasa*. In the experience of *rasa*, Abhinava says, emotions or feelings become universalized (i.e., become sādhāraṇīkṛta), a process that takes place through vyañjanā. A sādhāraṇīkṛta or universalized emotion is an emotion that is freed from its ordinary everyday state where it has an obsessive and overwhelming hold on us as individuals. In the *rasa* experience this hold is loosened and the emotion is transmuted into an individual-transcending universal. In ordinary life we remain in the clutches of our emotions: we are driven and carried by them; they master us, control us, keep us occupied in such a way that there is no space in our awareness where they can shine on their own and reveal their true transcendent nature. Sādharaṇākaraṇa makes this possible. A sādhāraṇīkṛta emotion is emotion freed from the confining

tie that narrows it to an individual. Freeing our feeling-consciousness from the overwhelming, binding nature of our everyday limited individual emotional self, it enables us to relish our emotional-being in its true universal, hence transcendent, nature. This is *Rasa*. It not only enables us to relish our emotions, but also gives us a foretaste, a living insight, into the ānanda, which is inherent in the very nature of our self and consciousness. It is not difficult to see here that a sādhāraṇīkṛta emotion being a universal is also a reflexively felt emotion: we experience it in a state of felt self-consciousness where we are a witness to it as we feel it—or one might say—we "know" it as we feel it. But this "knowing"—if such a word is to be meaningful here—is not a "knowing" where the feeling becomes an object of knowledge, for then there will be no *rasa*. We "know" it from within our subjective self, in what I have termed a subject–subject relation.

Abhinava has spoken of *rasa*, and the sādharaṇākaraṇa that leads to it, in thinking about theater which, through Bharata, has been at the center of Indian thinking concerning *rasa*. A theatrical presentation can be readily seen, as Abhinava did, as an imaginative transformation and *re*-presentation—or rather re-creation of the human condition—the lived life and world of human experience—on the stage. The theatrical stage creates a space for us where we can become a detached witness to our own living, experiencing human self—and thus reflect on it—while yet remaining in a felt, experiencing consciousness. This is possible because of the unique and peculiarly "real-unreal" nature of theater and the *extra*ordinary world that it creates—a world that we know to be imaginative and yet a world with which we deeply identify. The nature of this unique world cannot be comprehended, as Abhinava asserts, by the ordinary ontic categories of our understanding: categories such as real, unreal, illusive, doubtful, possible, impossible, or the like. None of these apply to the world of theater which, though a re-presentation of the human world, is yet a distinctive creation that projects a world of its own, independent of the world we live in. It is a deliberate creation that by intention and design accosts our felt experiencing self. Being a world with which we identify, it has the quality of being lived and experienced, and yet being an imaginary world of our own creation, it allows us to be an onlooker and enables our felt consciousness to withdraw from itself, and yet "feelingly know" itself with a reflexive self-awareness. We can readily realize the reflexive nature of this felt awareness when we perceive that in this state even an overpowering, consuming emotion such as fear is transmuted into something that can now be relished. This is because, as Abhinava argues, the fear that I experience in watching a drama is not *my* fear. Indeed, it is nobody's fear: it does not "belong" to anyone at all; the category of "belonging to someone" is taken away from it. Clearly, it does not "belong" to the actor who is presenting it on the stage (if it did there would be no such presentation), nor does it belong to the playwright or the producer of the play or any of the many onlookers of the presentation. What we have, in Abhinavagupta's words, is a sādhāraṇīkṛta—or universalized—emotion free of its individual limitations. Indeed, the imaginatively created world of theater can be seen as a "language," of its own kind, a language that uses the happenings and doings of our lived-felt world and weaves them into a system of symbols to create a language of vyañjanā that gives rise to *rasa*, an individual-transcending state of the

feeling-consciousness, a reflexive state, where our emotional self acquires an eye to see itself, and where emotion, thus transformed, is elevated into a state of relish.

However, the word sādharaṇākaraṇa here raises questions. Clearly, universalization or sādharaṇākaraṇa is not limited to the process of *rasa*, and so to vyañjanā . Even abhidhā cannot work without it. Let us take the word "fear" as ordinarily used (as abhidhā). Fear is plainly a universal concept, like all words it is sādhāraṇīkṛta—as Abhinava himself would have admitted: there is no fear in thought or conceived "fear." But, then the moot question is—a question Abhinava does not raise: How is the sādharaṇākaraṇa of vyañjanā that gives rise to *rasa*, different from that of abhidhā ? The question is obvious though it was not raised by either Abhinava or the thinkers following him. It has been recently raised by Yashdev Shalya, a perceptive modern thinker and philosopher. The question, I think, is important; it can lead us to a more fruitful grasp of the sādharaṇākaraṇa that Abhinava had in mind in the context of *rasa* and the vyañjanā that gives rise to it. It will also steer us toward a fuller understanding of the process of vyañjanā in music that cannot be understood in the light of theater, since music, unlike theater, is svapratiṣṭha and nonrepresentational.

Shalya has another objection to Abhinava, an objection that concerns theater as a representational—loka-pratiṣṭha—art. Shalya questions Abhinava's idea of a "non-belonging" emotion. To say, Shalya points out, that fear in a dramatic (or narrative) context does not belong to anyone (and thus is rendered sādhāraṇīkṛta) is not true, for fear in such a context has to be someone's fear: it has to belong to some character or characters in the play to be perceived as fear at all.

Shalya's objections are, I think, pertinent for us in trying to understand the distinctive character of music and the nature of vyañjanā in it. To the argument that the emotion in a play must belong to someone, one might answer—Abhinava himself, one can imagine, might have so answered—that an emotion, such as fear, occurring in a theatrical or narrative context, cannot be said to really *occur*, for the simple reason that what happens in the theater is not judged as real: there is no adhyavasāya here of "something truly happening." Interestingly, Abhinava does speak of an adhyavasāya here, a special, distinctive adhyavasāya that we have in watching a play. The events that take place are, in their own way, judged as "occurring"; otherwise they will have no effect on us. But they are judged as occurring in the peculiar context of theater, which we know to be imaginary, where our felt self willingly identifies itself with characters and events and "has" their experiences, while, at the same time, remaining aware that nothing is *really* taking place. It is this peculiar character of a dramatic happening and our felt perception of it that transmutes our normal—or laukika—emotive experience into a new and transcendent state, a state of abstraction that might be cognized as the self-reflexivity of our felt consciousness.

The term, sādharaṇākaraṇa, we can then presume, was understood by Abhinava—and other ālaṅkārikas following him—in a special sense in the special context of *rasa*, a context that assumes the process of vyañjanā as distinct from abhidhā. Abhinava, and others following him, seem to assume this distinction without overtly speaking of it. Abhinava was, needless to add, deeply aware of the difference between abhidhā and vyañjanā . The use of the word "fear" as *denoting* an emotion, as he himself

points out (the word he uses is "śṛṅgāra" or "love") has no vyañjanā: it does not, in the least, *evoke* fear, but only names it, whereas the language of dramatic narrative with its vyañjanā can transform "fear" into the bhayānaka (fear-oriented) *rasa*, which is a totally different experience.

It is usually forgotten in discussions on *rasa* that the state resulting through sādharaṇākaraṇa, evoked through vyañjanā has to be understood as a meaning-perceiving state, though unlike abhidhā the perceived meaning is a felt meaning, without becoming an abhidhā-based concept and hence an object. The older theorists unduly emphasize the relish aspect of the sādhāraṇīkṛta emotion, saying that what sādharaṇākaraṇa does is to remove an obstacle: it takes our emotive life out of its normal obsessive confines and enables us to feel and relish the Ānanda that is its truth. But we cannot really understand the notion of sādharaṇākaraṇa, whether it arises through abhidhā or through vyañjanā, unless we grasp the sādhāraṇīkṛta as something having a meaning. That vyañjanā is a process of meaning is indeed evident, as we have remarked, from the fact that it is embodied in a language-like system of symbols. A sādhāraṇīkṛta universal, whether evoked through vyañjanā or denoted through abhidhā, is grasped as meaning or else it cannot be said to be grasped at all. The relish aspect of *rasa* has been vastly overdone by the *rasa*-theorists. Fear, even as a universalized emotion is not really relished. There is no relish in the fear evoked by great narratives of the human condition. What is evoked often amounts to a kind of terror, much worse than ordinary fear. The *Mahābhārata*, many would agree, evokes nirveda (world-weariness). This has been associated with the quietude of śānta *rasa*, but nirveda can also be clearly seen as lying on the same path as terror.

But if we make the language of a dramatic narrative fundamental to vyañjanā, as the older theorists seem to do, we cannot talk of it meaningfully in music. *Svara* is not only devoid of any kind of vācya-vācaka-bhāva, it is, in fact, totally nonrepresentational, unlike, for example, lines and colors in painting, which *can* represent the world. There can be no theater without a representation of the world we live in, but the abstract world of music, on the contrary, is completely free not only of the world of sense-perceived objects, but even the category of the "object" is missing from it. In the case of word-based language, it might be argued that language does not really *re*-present a world outside of it, but it actually *presents* such a world to us—a world that is nāma-rūpa, where rūpa cannot be detached from nāma—and so our world is in a radical sense a language-*created* world, and thus essentially "abstract": for it has no existence outside of thought. But thought, we have seen, is embedded in a subject-object relation—the world for it is an object, even if it does not exist outside of it; but svara, we have also seen, lacks such a relation. The abstract nature of thought, however understood, takes place in a language that assumes a subject–object relation. But not *svara*.

What is moot for us here is the point that the abstract nature of thought and its reflexive character that assumes this abstract nature is generally granted and reflected upon. In fact, it is further assumed that only thought can be self-reflexive, and as a corollary to this it is taken for granted that reflexivity needs a words-based language with its subject–object relation to be possible at all: indeed, such a relation of duality, it might be added, is necessary for the self-detachment that reflexivity calls for. For

this reason we do not normally pay attention to the profoundly reflexive—or what may be called the "thinking"—aspect of music. What we have attempted above at some length is just to do this: to help us discursively comprehend music as a language in which abstraction is inbuilt, an abstraction that is founded on a self-detachment within the felt subject itself.

But arguments apart, it is not really difficult to realize the reflexive character of music more immediately. One has only to look at ālāpa. Ālāpa is the imaginative process with which a rāga is built up in direct performance, where we can *see* the rāga taking shape through an imaginative process that is plainly akin to thinking. Thinking aims at building up a conceptual structure into a *thought*, by combining, rejecting, relating concepts in order to understand and articulate a larger abstract idea or notion, such as that, for example, of "truth" or "justice," or the "world" or the "self," or "thought" itself. A rāga is similarly an abstract musical idea or notion that has to be articulated through the thought-like process of ālāpa, which imaginatively builds up a rāga, as one does a concept, by reflectively, appropriately and meaningfully combining, separating, rejecting svara-clusters, movements, phrasings, tempi, and the like with reflective discrimination. Thinking of ālāpa in this context comes readily to someone like me who belongs to the musical milieu of rāga-making, but we can easily move from here and see that the imaginative process of ālāpa is central to music-making as such. In non-rāga milieus what we usually accost are finished products of the musical imagination, or what may be termed "dhuns." We take them as given. As musicians we learn to reproduce them, and as listeners we respond to them as set compositions. We might assess them, analyze them, describe them, theorize about them, contemplatively reflect on them, or in other words, *think* about them in various ways. But the self-aware and self-discriminating reflexive process that is immanent in them does not come across to us directly as in ālāpa. But though it remains hidden, it is always there. This, as we know, is similar with thought. Consider here the difference between thinking and thought. A thought, like a finished dhun, is given to us as a finished product, and we usually take it such, without realizing that it is embedded in a living, dynamic ongoing *process*. Yet this is not difficult to realize, since questioning is essential even to a passive understanding of a given thought, and questioning stimulates a deeper jijñāsā and impels us to *think*. It is the same with music: our attention is normally occupied by a finished composition: a dhun. But in ālāpa the *process* that creates a work becomes vibrantly manifest and comes to the center of our awareness, revealing itself to be at the core of the activity and life of music—so much so that the rāga as a finished product, the end-result of a particular ālāpa—however satisfying and definitive and final-seeming it might be, yet remains basically an open formulation, the possibility of other, different, formulations remain inherent in the nature of the process that results in a unique, singular, articulation: a rāga remains an ongoing thing quite transparently, never becoming a dhun. We usually miss the ālāpa in thought, which is mostly presented to us as dhun: in text-books, books on the history of thought or in class-room lectures. But it is not difficult to grasp the living movement of thinking as an imaginatively dynamic process that underlies a finished product of thinking—a thought-dhun—for, as we have said, even a finished thought potentially invites us to

think, for it is rooted in a process that can take ever newer imaginative directions. Such a plurality of imaginative possibilities, which is naturally engendered by the rule and reign of *process* is openly evident in rāga-ālāpa, even at the surface. Indeed, the aim of the enterprise of ālāpa is to make the process dominant; and this also means that a rāga has no definitive, singular finality. It cannot be a final and *finished* product. It is the process that creates it, and we realize at every step that it can do so in multiple ways. Indeed, the process being at the center of the matter, the finished products too are revealed as fluent, malleable things: a rāga even as a normative musical idea cannot in its nature be a "given" with any finality. A rāga, in fact, is ever pregnant not only with new possibilities but also with new rāgas, which, in principle, remain multiple. And the process is not just a matter of the old constantly giving birth to the new as a kind of natural process, but entirely new articulations, new ways of imagining the form and spirit of the very notion of rāga also emerge. Let me take two examples: one from Carnatic music and the other from Hindustani. One often thinks of certain basic musical structures and relations between svaras, such as scales, as given in the very nature—or, one might say, the "deep" grammar—of music. But for the creativity of the process there is no such limitation; it seeks new meanings, ever seeking to expand its horizons. In the development of the rāga tradition, the number of svaras, the "absolute," non-violable, "given" relations between them, the number and nature of the scales, and other structural imperatives, were taken as fixed. But the open and imaginative process of ālāpa being essential to the making of a rāga, this could not remain so. The number of svaras and the resultant scales kept on increasing; given, inviolable harmonies were ignored and creatively violated (like the rule of contradiction in thought, resulting in concepts such as, "sadasadvilakṣaṇa," or even, as we have seen, "nāṭya") and new musically unwarranted, "illogical," pitch-intervals became svaras and new svara combinations were found musically meaningful. Venkatmakhin (sixteenth century), a musician and musical theorists from the South, imparted to this perceived possibility a new leap. He thought of new possible scales, some on norms quite alien to the hallowed, established patterns. These became the basis of new rāgas. Ahobala (seventeenth century) from the North was even more radical. Influenced by the practice and thinking of the great musicians of his days, he propounded the revolutionary view that it is not svaras that make rāgas, but rāgas that make svaras: any pitch- interval that is meaningful in a rāga and helps to give form to its spirit, its bhāva, and enriches it creatively is a svara; hence there is no pitch-interval that is not potentially a svara. This is indeed true of modern rāga practice, where the scale is not only a continuum, but a continuum that is wrought in multiple ways to individualize the svara-structure and the movement between svaras of different rāgas.

The two theorists, one might think, take entirely different paths: the one is bent on multiplying rāgas, the other on individualizing a rāga. But the two processes are complementary: they are two aspects of the openness and the immense innate potentialities of the arena of ālāpa. Let us reflect a little more on Ahobala, applying his principle to the field of thought. An idea, we could say, following him, is not formulated through pregiven words, but rather, on the contrary, the idea "chooses" the words that would articulate it, and it might coin new words to do so to

appropriately express its "spirit." Ahobala's position that svaras are not pregiven entities is, in fact, more obviously true of words or concepts: there is no pregiven finished and complete totality or predefined and demarcated arena of words in language. Language is an immanently ongoing process, incessantly instituted in ālāpa. In articulating an idea—or a rāga—ālāpa can be seen to be not only a self-consciously reflexive process, but a process that reaches out beyond itself. We discover ourselves as constantly looking for the right svara, or the right word. The significant—and seemingly paradoxical—thing here is that the criterion for what is fitting is also the rāga or idea itself; but a rāga—or an idea—is not like a prelaid-out blue-print to which we can readily refer. In fact, the rāga or the idea, do not "exist" in the normal sense at all, not even in a metaphysical world that we could perceive with a yogic eye. The "being" of a rāga, or an idea, however one might understand it, is accessible only to the reflexive consciousness, which reaches out to it: it both envisions it and seeks to express it, acting at the same time as the judge of the "right," the appropriate—a judge, who, regrettably, can also easily falter, go wrong, and be deluded. But such *is* the creative process: which is inexorably a pratyaṅgmukha—endlessly inward-turning—reflexive process. Nāgārjuna, on just such a ground, would have dismissed the process as niḥsvabhāva—"empty," having no being at all. A pramāṇa (a ground for truth or validity), as he has argued, is inevitably a part of the reflexive process where it becomes a prameya (the object being examined through a pramāṇa), and this process can keep turning on itself and reflecting on itself without end—ad infinitum—reaching nowhere; and hence the idea of pramāṇa is niḥsvabhāva—empty, and therefore absurd and meaningless. But this is how creativity works: it can be seen to be deeply embedded in the incessantly inward-moving self-contemplating consciousness. The inward-turning—pratyaṅgmukha—and endless process of reflexivity is a deeply imaginative process. It is not merely unendingly self-repetitive, as the anavasthā that Nāgārjuna accords to it seems to imply, but it is in fact a meaning-searching process that can enrich itself at each new inward turn; being meaning-seeking it is also a pramāṇa-seeking process that is constantly reaching beyond itself for not only its enrichment but its validation. It can be seen as a process of an increasing and expanding spiral of awareness: of "seeing." It reaches out, stretches out, keeps transcending itself seeking meaning and its right expression and embodiment. This is what underlies ālāpa, and ālāpa is not limited to svara or even to word, it is rooted in the meaning-consciousness itself.

The notions of paśyatī and parā vāk may help to elucidate what I am trying to say here. The idea of paśyatī vāk (and the word "vāk" here, can be plainly taken to indicate both music and word-based language: both being sound-based) suggests a level of meaning-consciousness that lies beyond the ordinary levels of language usage, beyond, in other words, of vaikharī (uttered, expressed language) and madhyamā (the unuttered flow of language that keeps endlessly moving in our consciousness). We are in the field of paśyatī when we are *seeking* to articulate an unexpressed thought—or a rāga. We look for the right word or svara, which is not there but which we reach through our meaning-seeking reflexive consciousness. But what is the criterion of discrimination? The criterion is the unexpressed, disembodied idea itself, for there can be no other. And this search therefore leads us beyond paśyatī

into parā: for the sought idea—or rāga—is not a singularly existing "metaphysical" entity, it lies in an ineffable field of an ever creative possibility. This is the parā, the source, the seed or the nucleus of meaningfulness. We have no grasp of it, except, in whatever measure, through our inward-turning reflexive consciousness, which forever and insistently tries to reach out to it.

If we have followed the discussion above with some sympathy, it should not be difficult to see a kinship in the ālāpa of svara and thought. But the two, one might still assert, seek very different ends. Svara is essentially a seeker of anekānta—of plurality—whereas thought seeks the singular, the ekāntic truth. It may not reach it, may never reach it, but that is its immanent goal. *Rasa*, that svara seeks, unlike satya that cannot but be "one," is, on the other hand, inherently "many." Even if we grant an ālāpa-like imagination and fluidity to thinking, this cannot negate the fact that what the ālāpa seeks *here* is finality: the truth as it is; and this cannot but be ekānta. It makes no sense to think of truth as anekānta. However, let us suppose that the truth has been finally reached in some all-seeing thought which, then, naturally, claims finality. Such claims are indeed many: plural in themselves. But will any finality, however authoritative, persuasive, and compelling, stop further thinking and the questioning, which is immanent to thought? Will we not ask: Is this really the truth? Attempts have been made, and certainly will be made again and again to stop such questioning. But such attempts clearly lie outside the ālāpa that is the heart of thinking—they use means other than thinking to impose nonthinking.

But even if we grant this, a still deeper and more crucial case can be made here for ekānta in thought. It can be argued—and indeed easily perceived—that thought—or rather, "thinking"—by its very nature seeks finality; it might be seen, in truth, to seek an all-covering omniscient finality, since thought pervades all our seeing and seeking: our is and our ought. To aim at finality is inherent in it, and at its broadest it seeks an all-pervasive finality. It may not arrive at it—and perhaps it is by nature not capable of arriving at it—as some thinkers will insist—yet the entire discourse on truth, even in negating truth, can be seen to assume the finality of the singular, nondual—advaya—truth. With svara however the matter is just the opposite, because of the inherently anekānta nature of *rasa*. Yet consider this: a seeking of finality is not really absent from whatever we do and create. We seek in our enterprises to construct a whole: an internally harmonized, consistent, coherent "singular" totality. The immanent ambition of thought is to do this with the broadest possible vision. Svara does not have the pervasiveness of thought—thought can reflect on svara, but svara cannot do this with thought—but even svara seeks such finality: a meaningful projection of a rāga aims at projecting the "complete" rāga as a *singular* whole. But *rasa* being multiple by nature, such finality remains forever, and knowingly, nonfinal. This is not so with thought. But we might yet ask: is the finality of thought not really similar? And further: is truth really something singular? If we make mathematics a mirror for thought, as has often been done in the west, singularity—indeed a "final" deductive singularity, becomes the ideal for thought. A similar thing happens if the finality of the "one" spiritual experience is considered as singular, as in India. The ideal of sense-perception as the final pramāṇa for satya, also leads to an analogous notion of the singularity of truth. But mathematics, as has been

shone, is also an imaginative enterprise pregnant with plurality, however deductive it might seem. And the nonfinality of sense-perception has been questioned right from the beginning of thought: the very enterprise of thought begins with the percept that what we see is appearance and not reality. Thus it is not unthinkable for thought to see itself in the mirror of svara, and thereby realize its plurality, a plurality akin to that of svara. True, the category of "truth" is inapplicable to svara, whereas thought is unthinkable without it. Yet what do we seek through svara? Do we not seek a profound authenticity, an ever-rising depth, breadth, and height of imaginative insight and vision? But is this not what thinking is also about! Thinking, in fact, does this in a more self-aware manner. It is ever self-conscious of its reflexivity. Music, if it looks at itself in the mirror of thought, can perhaps aim at being more self-consciously thought-like.

NOTE

1. Music for the ancients, as with us today, was mainly a vocal enterprise. But the nonrepresentational or abstract nature of music was recognized even during Vedic times, especially within the circles of Sāma-singers. Indeed, Sāma is the only example of a revelation that is purely in svaras, with its own composer ṛṣis, independent of the sung words of the Ṛk. In the literature of the Sāma circles, especially *the Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* (tenth–ninth-century BCE), the purely musical aspect of Sāma is clearly revealed in the notions of the anṛk (Ṛik-less) and aśarīrī (content-less) Sāma and the stories connected with these. The text speaks also of the worship of Sāma as an icon consisting purely of svaras.Later a sacred form of sophisticated high-art music called the Gāndharva and considered to be born of Sāma, became a center of practice and discourse with its own śāstras, dealing with matters theoretical, descriptive, and aesthetic. Gāndharva, a basically a sung form like Sāma, was more clearly nonrepresentational and abstract. Its complex and intricate music was sung to meaningless syllables interspersed with some words that did not disturb its abstract intent. It was, as one can readily perceive, as autonomous and abstract as Dhrupad and Khyāl, using syllables and words with a similar abstract spirit. Gāndharva was indeed much more self-consciously abstract than Sāma, as is clear from the discourse upon it. It was already a greatly esteemed form of art-music with its own established tradition, when Bharata wrote his Nāṭyaśāstra (second-century BCE). We discover that Bharata, whose theater, nāṭya, was, in his own words, a basically representational or imitation-based art, uses this established form as a source for constructing a new word-oriented sung music to be used as an integral part of his theater, much as a composer for a Hindi film today might construct a word-dominated tune out of a rāga. But Bharata goes into the principle of the matter, making the theoretical comment that for nāṭya the music of the Gāndharva form consisting of svara, tāla and pada (tones, rhythmic structures and words; with svara as the basic component, and thus the primary and dominating element of the three named in the sequence) has to be understood and redefined in a manner that overturns the sequence, making pada the first and chief element of the three. This upside-down definition of Gāndharva,

with pada—or word—dominating svara and tāla, changes the resultant music both in form and spirit making it, in principle, more appropriate for the representational purpose of nāṭya. Abhinava uses the very succinctly significant term, svapratiṣṭha (self-contained, self-sustained) for characterizing the abstract music of Gāndharva (and also for a similarly nonrepresentational, abstract form of ancient dance, or nṛtta, the tāṇḍava), recognizing that the "language" or the symbolic systems of these forms have no vācya-vācaka-bhāva, or any representational intention. Abhinava's pregnant term "svapratiṣṭha" was also meant to contrast these forms with nāṭya (or kāvya or literature), with their clear intent of anukaraṇa—or imitation—which cannot be conceived of without a meaningful reference to an outside world.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Aesthetics of the Resplendent Sapphire: Erotic Devotion in Rūpa Gosvāmin's *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi*

NRISINHA PRASAD BHADURI

I. THE AMOROUS AND THE AESTHETIC

Love and poetry are not only both equally mysterious, the connection between them is also mysterious. Not all poetry is about love. And not all love results in poetry. Yet it is hard to shake off the feeling that there is something amorous about poetry and something poetic about love. Although Plato was notorious for his suspicion of poets, his dialogue (*The Symposium*) on the mind-bending nature of love has been studied in the West as a source for his aesthetics. Although *śṛṅgāra*, or the erotic, is only one of the nine major aesthetic *rasa*s (aesthetic juices/ flavors/modes) in classical Indian aesthetics, in Rūpa Gosvāmin's philosophy of art, *śṛṅgāra* of different kinds is the source of all other art-emotions. While the *bhakti*, devotion, and love of a self-effacing gopī (cowherd-girl playmate of Kṛṣṇa), which is consummated in the selfless desire for the union of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, forms the central literary, poetic, musical, and spiritual emotion, there are three other primary forms of love that aid it: (1) love as servitude, (2) love as friendship, and (3) love as filial affection. In this chapter, I apply Rūpa Gosvāmin's complex theory of love, especially love-in-separation (*vipralambhaśṛṅgāra*), to the exquisite poetry and music of the "Song of the Gopī" (*Gopīgītā*), from the tenth canto of *Śrīmadbhāgavatapurāṇa*, where Kṛṣṇa disappears in the middle of the full moon night of the great love sport, and the forlorn gopīs weep and roam from grove to grove in search of their beloved.

II. INTRODUCING COSMIC SPORT: THE ENCHANTER'S ENCHANTER, CUPID'S CUPID

Śrīdharasvāmin is the most respected commentator of all the *Bhāgavata*-commentators and unlike, Sanātana, Jīva Gosvāmin, and Viśvanātha Cakravartin, he is concise, precise, and unemotional. Introducing the play of the divine in the prose comment on the Rāsa Pentad of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Śrīdhara says:

brahmādijayasaṃruḍhadarpakandarpadarpahā/
jayati śrīpatir gopīrāsamaṇḍalamaṇḍanaḥ//

Victory to the Lord of Śrī (Lakṣmī)—the Lord who is embellished by the gopīs in *Rāsa* play. Victory to him, who washed away the pride of Kandarpa, the love god who is efficient in distracting the hearts of high gods such as Brahmā or Śiva.

The verse begins with a "denial"—the denial of the soteriological ego of the supreme God and the denial of the conventional conjugality of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. Thus the mythical perfect, ideal, normal love form is denied by the unconventional, even liminal, love of the gopīs.

The *Rāsa* dance with the gopīs is also the mythical ground of "lived reality," where the dignity and glorification of love simply narrows the scope of the normative love ordained by the scriptures. Thus in the *Rāsa* dance, an enchanting lover god stands against his ever-powerful savior counterpart and condescends to become a human hero. And he is never just an intellectual construction—as a god of Yājñavalkya, Janaka, or Śvetaketu—but of the downtrodden common people, of the devoted believers. The god of this philosophy is not an embodiment of yearning, however sublime—such as grew from the religious searching of the Hellenistic man or the Upaniṣadic seer—not the god of the learned, not even the god of the mystic—but the god of whom Pascal said in his famous creed: "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not of the philosophers and scholars." This god, now encircled by the band of rustic gopīs, rebuts the god of sexuality (Kāma) who becomes completely mesmerized by Kṛṣṇa's amorous charms. And finally, the gopīs, who had left their husbands and households to incur the odium of unchastity, serve as symbols of supreme, because free and challenged, love. With this glorification (*maṇḍana*) wrought by the gopīs, Kṛṣṇa is tactically referred to by the commentator as having defeated the love god, the god of sexuality, who shyly left the place of *Rāsa* play, not with the grief of a defeated hero, but enchanted and mesmerized.

The love-god Kāmadeva is emphasized to be extremely powerful. The dialogue between Indra and Madana, where Madana shows his muscle and arrogance at having smashed the patience of Brahmā, Śiva, and so on, points to the power of Eros in general. Here in the *Rāsa* episode, we see that the arrogant and proud Madana is nevertheless mesmerized and overwhelmed by Kṛṣṇa's charms. The commentator impartially shows that the god of love had more advantages and facilities in the *Rāsa* feat than what he found in his encounter with Śiva, where he was of course burned alive.

In Śiva's contest with Kāmadeva, he wore the guise of a yogin. In this episode, the Lord of Eros sought the help of the vernal season that dawned on the Himālaya

mountain. But in the Kṛṣṇa episode, in Vrindavana, it was the clear, natural, and autumnal moonlit night, where even the eastern direction in bridal form was blushing red in shyness, touched by the loving hand of the moon, her paramour lately come to appease her after a day of absence.

In Śiva's case, it was daytime, almost moonrise—a time very unfit for an erotic adventure, but Madana had to compromise, since at night he would have been unable to procure the beautiful superwoman Pārvatī, very much needed for the task at hand. In Kṛṣṇa's case it was a moonlit night naturally supportive of any erotic adventure. In Śiva's case, there was only a single female body for his arousal, but here in the *Rāsa* dance, a host of cowherd maids ran out gladly and willingly to meet their beloved. So Madana had all the advantages and yet it was Kṛṣṇa, the dark youth with yellow attire, donning a peacock feather garland, who seduced the wanton ladies. But with all the conditions of eroticism fulfilled, the lord of Eros could simply not drag away his flower bow and retired unhurt. He failed to put to shame the one who is the source of unconditional love, and thereby left the *Rāsa* ground himself being put to shame. This is the introductory comment of the veteran commentator Śrīdharasvāmin who probably derived his source from an adjective in the Pañcadhyāyi verse—*sākṣānmanmathamanmathaḥ*—the enchanter's enchanter.

III. SPLITTING THE DIVINE "I": INTO ME AND YOU

Someone with a basic familiarity with the norms of ecstatic love will not face any trouble in assimilating the serene impact of the *Gopīgītā* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* to the sentimental tenets of Rūpa's *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi*. On the other hand, it is far more difficult to attune the elevated transparent (*ujjvalonnata*) love sentiment of the divine to mundane love. Especially because it is hard to elevate what is most debased in our conventional moral outlook to a higher plane of pure unblemished love sentiment, and propose its transparency and sublimity by mere association with godhead. Yet it is the figure of illicit love that serves the divine purpose most exquisitely, precisely because it is a free encounter unmotivated by social and familial protocols, and even more because it is unsanctioned, and in fact forbidden, requiring a grand leap of desire.

There is also a problem in trying to supply a philosophical coherence to this narrative. It would have been less debatable, if the aesthetic height of the *Gopīgītā* could be compared to the Platonic love dealt with in the Symposium. It would have been idealistically superb if this love could touch the pitch of a sort of nonsexual Platonic love, full of romance and yearnings without any tinge of sexuality. But this pitch in the Indian aesthetic is altogether different. Again, Plato's search for beauty and goodness would be too complex a theory to compare to the sweet aesthetic emotion, *madhurarasa*, which portrays the divine as a reflection of the human. Here the dark lord, who is omnipotent, omniscient, and has all fulfillments within himself, is incarnated as a human being to enjoy human sentiments. It is not like the search for one's alter ego—"in search for his own token" or a search for the part that would

make us whole, as Aristophanes has explained. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa had already noted this search for the other in prophetic words: *ardho vā eṣa ātmano yajjāyā . . . yāvat pūrṇo na bhavati* (5.2.1.10). But this is only a natural urge for sexual union pertaining to all human beings and beasts. This cannot pertain to the love of the gopīs for Kṛṣṇa, nor of Kṛṣṇa for the gopīs. Nor are we ready to accept the views of such scholars as the dilettante in Vedānta philosophy who propounded that perpetual love between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā "is a symbol and interpretable as mystic-and-erotic relations between the devout human soul and God." In this the Vaiṣṇava aestheticians can only agree with him to the extent that Kṛṣṇa's fooling around with the maidens is too human and "divested of his heroic character." But their deduction of the whole Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa affair as "the mystery of the union of the soul and God," more precisely of Rādhā as the "soul" yearning for God and "Kṛṣṇa as God "extending his kindness and grace," would simply be shocking to the Gauḍīya philosophers, and is quite outside the entire aesthetic and religious tradition. It is also too simple a comment that the post-Caitanya poets modeled "the constant celebration of god's love for Rādhā" as love "for the prototype of the human soul" and the love of the gopīs other than Rādhā is only the search of "the less advanced souls" for the ultimate.

Explicitly enough, these great scholars in comparative religion and mythology might have been influenced by Plato's general remark on love "as in search of his own token," and what if we think that the love of the gopīs "as less advanced souls" is just Plato's "lesser loves" as Gregory Vlasto paraphrased our affections for concrete human beings? It should be noted, however, that a criticism of Plato does not serve any purpose for the discussion of the love sentiment contained in the *Gopīgītā* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* or the one propounded by Rūpa Gosvāmin in the *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* (*UN*). This is because the search for "god" in the Symposium has nothing to do with the extreme aesthetic "*camatkāra*" (spark of enjoyment) of the *Gopīgītā*, which can only be enjoyed by one who can very well control the "human personal" within himself, and by one who has a total respect for the divine. The *Gopīgītā* concludes with the warning that a human being should never act in the way of the divine, and only the supreme lord could and did suppress the sense of sexuality within himself; enjoying the love sentiment like a little boy who finds his reflection in a mirror, narcissistically overwhelmed by his own play—*siṣeva ātmanyavaruddhasauratah / yathārbhakaḥ svapratibimbavibhramaḥ*.

Plato is philosophically right in only one context of Vaiṣṇava aesthetics where we could reason that the supreme lord, half-sick of his power complex, became eager for the human taste of love and wished to forget his soteriological self through his own special power *yogamāyā*. Mention must be made of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* passage that refers to this search for his own double. The *Upaniṣad* says—the supreme being was not enjoying at all. He felt lonely because one cannot enjoy by oneself. He desired a second (1.4.3–4). This loneliness, the desire to enjoy (*rantum* in the Rāsa Pentad and *reme*, *ramate* in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*) and longing (*sa dvitīyam aicchat*) caused the *Puruṣa*, the supreme being, to work himself into a state of gestation, and for this, the Vaiṣṇava philosophers say, the Lord made an image in Rādhā and the gopīs and thus he experienced the love lying within himself.

The Vaiṣṇava scholars will invariably refer to the theory of difference in nondifference in this connection and extract the metaphysical implication of the theory of the *śakti* (power) and the *śaktimat* (powerful). The former is Rādhā and the gopīs, and the latter Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, the vernacular philosopher poet compares this difference in nondifference with the deer-musk and its perfume, and again with fire and heat. As there is no essential difference between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, they, too, are essentially one but only different for the sake of play (*līlā*) [*Caitanyacaritāmṛta*, 1.4.84–85]. Rūpa Gosvāmin, the author of *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi,* who would be our mainstay in the discussion of *ujjvalarasa*, rhetorically points out this *śakti-śaktimat* combination in his play the *Vidagdhamādhava*. He solves the binary of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā by yet another comparison: The moon can never be shorn of its very own moonbeam:

na hi candreṇa candrikāyā mokṣaḥ kadāpi sambhavati

IV. DIFFERENCE IN NONDIFFERENCE

The rhetoric of difference in nondifference—in moon and moonbeam, the deer musk and its smell, the fire and its heat—all these might have developed from the older *Pancarātra* texts *Ahirbudhnya* and *Jayākhyā Saṃhitā* that categorically laid down the difference in nondifference of the *śakti* and *śaktimat*. The former calls the *śakti* the "inseparable entity" (*apṛthakcāriṇī sattā*) of the all-powerful lord and the latter calls it identical with the highest *paramātman* [*abhinna parmātmanaḥ*].

Before going into the *ujjvalarasa* synthesis of the *Gopīgītā*, it is necessary to establish the philosophical status of Kṛṣṇa and the Rādhā—the two bases (*ālambana*) of the sentiment. While the prior antecedent of the *śakti-śaktimat* theory of Pancarātra texts serve as a basis for the post-Caitanya Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa amalgam, it also finds a strong philosophical ground in the Kashmir Śaivaite concept of *Pratyabhijñā*. Abhinavagupta, a great luminary of Kashmir Śaivism and the last scion of the *Dhvani* school, quotes a verse in his *Vimarśinī* on Utpaladeva's *Īśvarapratyabhijnā* and echoes the *śakti-śaktimat* theory as a sort of reflected duality of the unity of Śiva. He says—the Lord thus separates his own elements and enjoys himself in a dream, as it were. Abhinava's own verse in his *Tantrāloka* calls it *svasaṃvinmātramukura* (the mirror of his own eternal conscious) where the Lord finds himself enjoying his own reflection. The *Kāmakalāvilāsa* of Puṇyananda eulogizes that eternal *śakti* in the very second verse and says that *śakti* is the mirror of Śiva's eternal identity as "I"—*Śivarūpavimarśanirmalādarśaḥ*. Here we should attend to the metaphysical implications of a verse from another of Rūpa's own dramas the *Lalitamādhava*, a verse uttered by Kṛṣṇa himself when leisurely looking at his own reflection. Looking at his charm in a crystal clear reflection in water, Kṛṣṇa remarks—*aparikalitapūrvaḥ kaścamatkārakārī*—Oh this is me reflected I see. What a wonderful beauty it is, I have never seen it before. The sight of this beauty makes me eager and lustful to enjoy myself like Rādhikā—*sarabhasam upabhoktuṃ kāmaye rādhikeva*.

The reflection concept is not thus unique to the Kashmiri *pratyabhijñā* school, but it does not belong to the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* school either. Rather, it is an earlier metaphysical phenomenon that serves as a conceptual tool by which the nondual self works itself into a state of duality. Moreover, the motive behind such working out of the duality is the human-like desire and eagerness to enjoy love. The dualistic propensity traced in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* antecedent (*sa vai naiva reme*, etc.) minus the creation myth, has been adapted to the primal excitant force *hlādinī*, integral to the Lord himself. The duality has been worked out by way of a transmission of the *hladinī* force into the physical reflection of gopīs—and thus the reflection mode, while circular, is not narrowly so.

While the concept of the gopīs is a physical transmission of the essential *hlādinī* force of the Lord himself, Rādhā has been metaphysically called the essence of the Lord's bliss personified—the *hlādinīsāra* in *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi*. Rādhā's supremacy has been deduced by Jīva Gosvāmin from the gopī-concept in general. He first says that the gopīs are the Lord's essence incarnate and that Rādhā is the essence of the elements of eternal bliss. That this transmission of the Lord's bliss in a separate person such as Rādhā was meant to provide an opportunity for the Lord to experience himself is evident in the reflection concept—the Lord expresses his extreme desire to experience his own beauty and for that he finds Rādhā as the only means.

Rūpa Gosvāmin explicitly shows this dualistic urge as a mode of reflection in yet another verse of his drama *Lalitamādhava* (LM) where the Lord finds himself aroused like Rādhā. A dramatic feast was arranged by Puranmāsi (personification of *Yogamāyā*) and Uddhava to provide some pleasure to Kṛṣṇa, sick from Rādhā's separation. As a spectator of the drama, Kṛṣṇa finds himself on the stage—his character exquisitely enacted by a divine artist. Kṛṣṇa, charmed by his own beauty, says: the actor, playing my part in the role of a cowherd boy, has simply struck me with amazement and the mind seeks to assume the form of Rādhā so that I might fully experience my own beauty—*yasya prekṣya svarūpatāṃ vrajavadhūsārūpyam anviṣyati*.

It is this desire and eagerness that made the nondual Kṛṣṇa work himself into the state of duality—thus metaphysically Rādhā has been produced from Kṛṣṇa himself. Confusion may still arise in the list of the devotees in Rūpa's *Laghubhāgavatāmṛta*, where Rādhā has been named as the best of the devotees. Rūpa here examined the comparative merits of Prahlāda, the Pāṇḍavas, the Yādavas, and the Vrajagopīs, especially Rādhā. Rūpa concludes at last that Kṛṣṇa should be worshipped in the accompaniment of Rādhā, because she is Kṛṣṇa's dearest. But even if Rādhā is Kṛṣṇa's most dear, she is also the greatest of the devotees. This brings in the question of servitude—servitude to Kṛṣṇa, which is the unique feature of *bhakti* sentiment that is also an underlying current in every primary sentiment, even in the elevated erotic sentiment of *madhurarasa* personified in Rādhā. Puranmāsi, who is the divine counterpart of Kṛṣṇa's *māyāśakti* that keeps Kṛṣṇa forgetful about his supreme divinity, exclaims in Rūpa's *Vidagdhamādhava* that no phenomenal being is entitled to keep Rādhā in possession, since she is like a star shining in the sky—

viṣṇupadavīthisañcāriṇī. The word "*viṣṇupada*" means "sky" but by way of pun Yogamāyā suggests—*viṣṇus tava eva padasañcāriṇī rādheti*. This creates the effect of servitude even in the resplendent aesthetic emotion *ujjvalarasa*, and thus it is intriguing to see that in Rūpa's *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* (*BRS*), every primary and secondary sentiment has *bhakti* as the common middle term. This suggests that the sense of servitude permeates every sentiment in Vaiṣnava aesthetics.

V. FROM COSMIC PEACE TO SURGING EMOTION

samudre śāntakallole snātum icchanti barbarāḥ
Only barbarians want to swim in an ocean whose waves are totally calmed.

With this conceptual establishment of Rādhā and the gopīs, we can now proceed to the extraction of the "resplendent" *ujjvala* sentiment in the *Gopīgītā*. But before that we have one more point of confusion to settle. Experts in Indian aesthetics had racked their brains gravely on this issue and the first argument comes as a prophetic injunction from Bharata, the author of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. He accepted only eight sentiments as conventional and these eight *rasa*s remained unchanged well into early medieval times.

Very many of the connoisseurs of Indian literature and aesthetics feel that there are a number of obstacles in the way of a ninth sentiment, *śāntarasa*, being constructed as a bona fide aesthetic sentiment. First because the abiding sentiment (*sthāyibhāva*) of *śāntarasa* is disenchantment (*nirveda*), what amounts to renunciation or abandon. And the absorption in abandon can never enchant the heart of literary connoisseurs because detached people do not generally support the emotional dispositions expressed in a piece of art. Thus Śāradātanaya says in his *Bhāvaprakāśana*: The *śānta* sentiment, even very natural to a *śānta*-initiated poet, does not tickle the wonder (*rasacamatkāra*) in the heart of sensitive connoisseurs, who easily and readily respond to the usual taste of other sentiments.

But many of the experts in Indian aesthetics say that *śānta* has all the scope and capability of being a complete aesthetic emotion or sentiment. Abhinavagupta, who is the last and ultimate champion of the theory of suggestion, had established the emotional basis of *śānta* with the arguments of a real debater. He shows that the sense of renunciation evolving as an effect of the knowledge of self (*tattvajñāna*) turns out to be the abiding emotion of *śāntarasa*. The operational faculties of mind suspended and controlled by self-realization turn out to be the derivative emotions (*vyabhicāribhāva*). Again the yogic practices such as *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, and so on become instrumental (*anubhāva*) to the culmination of the *śāntarasa*. We are, however, not very keen to discuss the organic arrangement of *śāntarasa*, since we have no hesitation in accepting Abhinava's strong arguments for the fusion of *śāntarasa*. Ānandavardhana himself said that there is certainly a joy in the taste of *śāntarasa* because the satisfaction and fulfillment arising from the waning of desire for material happiness certainly contributes to the "being" of *śāntarasa*.

It is notable at the same time that the enjoyment of bliss derived from the *śāntarasa* is just not as common as in that of other emotions. Naturally the creative poet of the *śāntarasa* and the connoisseurs thereof are very special and exclusive compared to those of other common sentiments. Although both Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta champion the cause of *śānta* as a full-fledged *rasa*, it is intriguing to note that they did not include the sentiment of *bhakti* especially within the scope of *rasa*. Abhinava just mentioned *bhakti* (devotion) and *śraddhā* (regard) as two faculties of *śāntarasa* along with others such as remembering god (*smrti*), being intent on god (*mati*), and enthusiastic effort for the Lord's service (*utsāha*). Since all these might be deemed as secondary properties for the making of the *bhaktirasa*, we might think that even in the ninth or tenth century no definitive significance was attached to *bhakti* as an aesthetic sentiment.

Still it seems relevant to discuss the sentiment of *bhakti* in the frame of the *Gopīgītā*, since it holds such a place for the *Gauḍīya*s that *bhakti* has turned out to be the culmination of all the eight traditional sentiments. *Śānta*, the last of the traditional sentiments, was added to the list later by reluctant theorists almost with a cursory nod—*śānto'pi navamo rasaḥ*. But however reluctant, this inclusion provides the first step toward fashioning the devotional sentiment. Moreover since the giants such as Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta accepted the emotive aspect of *bhakti* as an inherent attitude in *śāntarasa*, Rūpa Gosvāmin began the list of devotional emotions with *śānta* as the first principle.

The great literary theorists, Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta, being themselves the ultimate arbitrators in the world of suggestion, adhered to the latest tradition of nine *rasa*s, but expressed their mind by providing an example of exquisite *bhakti*. H. H. Ingalls rightly said that Ānandavardhana shows his ideas about bhakti and that it even represents his view of life's work. Ānandavardhana writes:

I am weary from much poetic painting of the world,
For although I used the new and wondrous sight of poets
Which busies itself in giving taste of feeling
And used the insight of philosophers
Which shows us objects as they really are,
I never found, O God recumbent on the Ocean,
a joy like that which comes from love of Thee.

Ingalls really understood the pulse of the philosopher whose "*bhakti*"—(*tadbhaktitulyaṃ sukham*) has been translated as "love" by Ingalls. Abhinavagupta commenting upon this verse says the joy and happiness drawn upon by the poets and philosophers are but the reflection of a simple drop of that vast enjoyment of the love of god. Traditional ideas of "*bhakti*"—be it devotion, servitude, or love—form the frame of reference for the aesthetic emotion that attains superlative charm in the *Gopīgītā* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

VI. EROS AND THE RESPLENDENT-SAPPHIRE

We will not enter into the debate about whether *bhakti* can be successfully fused into a *rasa* or not. But it is a fact that the moment the conservatives shakily and helplessly had to accept the "serene-as-a-savor" (*śāntarasa*) and it found, in literary theory, a room of its own, the other important emotions very justifiably began to claim their places in the books on poetics written by later thinkers. Thus Rudraṭa includes "*preyas*" (liking) as a "*rasa*," the abiding emotion of which is affection (*sneha*). Rudraṭa, however, considered equivalent his *preyas* with the *sākhyarasa* (the sentiment of friendship). Thus it is matter of aesthetic probability that long before the *sakhya rasa* came to be connotatively considered as a primary sentiment in Rūpa's *Bhakti-rasāmṛtasindhu(BSS)*, it had its antecedent in the "*preyas*" of Rudraṭa. Similarly the *vātsalya* (the sentiment of affection), which came to be considered a major sentiment among the five major thinkers of Vaiṣṇava *rasa*-synthesis, was very favorably regarded in Viśvanātha's *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, which confers upon it the affirmation of Bharata as regards its solemn capability of being a *rasa*: *atha munīndrasammato vatsalaḥ*. To add to this, it may be remembered again that "*preyas*" in Rudraṭa's nomenclature was the sentiment of devotion in Daṇḍin's view. Daṇḍin calls it "*prīti*" and enumerates the emotion with the example of Vidura. He says that a change in the ingredients of this sentiment may extend this "*prīti*" to a higher plane of *sṛṅgāra*: *prāk prītir darśitā seyaṃ ratiḥ sṛṅgāratāṃ gatā*.

We believe that all these argumentative dilemmas of integration and disintegration of new and newer emotive principles culminated in Rūpa Gosvāmin, who crafted a revolutionary change in the pattern of *rasa* theory. Rūpa starts with a version of *śāntarasa* where the *bhakti* sentiment is intermixed, and borrows the traditional term "*prītabhaktirasa*" to express the sentiment of servitude (*dāsya*), and "*preyobhaktirasa*," which in turn expesses the sentiment of friendship (*sākhyarasa*) Rūpa's *vatsalabhaktirasa* represents the affection of the parents and superiors, and then the ultimate *madurarati* serves to express the love of the gopīs for Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa for them. Rūpa deals very briefly with the *madhurarati* in his *BRS*, leaving its greater elaboration for the *UN*. *Śṛṅgāra*, the sentiment par excellence in traditional Indian aesthetics has been replaced by *madhurarasa* in the *UN*, although it is intriguing enough that the title of the book is not *madhura*, but rather *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi*—the blazing sapphire:

the most secret of major raptures,
discussed but briefly before,
monarch of sacred raptures,this
we sing of madhura in depth.

Jīva Gosvāmin the illustrious commentator writes here—*Ujjvala* is the other name of *madhura*, the monarch of all the devotional raptures—*sa evojjvalaparyāyo bhaktirasānāṃ rājā madhurākhyo rasaḥ*.

The explanation of why Rūpa preferred the word "*ujjvala*" to "*madhura*" in the title of his book is neither directly given by Rūpa nor by the great accomplished commentators such as Jīva Gosvāmin or Viśvanātha Cakravartin. It is beyond doubt, however, that Rūpa selected the word "*ujjvala*" to fit in with the word "*nīlamaṇi*" in which, the standard of comparison, the *upamāna* simply swallowed up the object, the *upameya*. Kṛṣṇa—as happens in the figure of exaggeration, *atiśayokti alaṃkāra* or in certain forms of metaphor, *rūpaka*, where the *upamāna* and *upameya* change roles. To explain the concluding verse of the *UN*, "ayam ujjvalanīlamaṇiḥ," the commentator says, "ujjvala" is the sentiment of the *śṛṅgāra* itself and this blazing brightness is at one with the sapphire—*ujjvalaḥ śṛṅgārarasa eva nīlamaṇiḥ*. Everyone knows that this blazing sapphire is Kṛṣṇa himself because he is thousands of times adorably called the *nīlamaṇi*—the blue sapphire in later Vaiṣṇava *padāvali* literature. So the word *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* applies to both in double entendre—to the work itself and also to Kṛṣṇa who is *śṛṅgāra incarnate—śṛṅgāraḥ sakhi mūrtimān iva madhau mugdho hariḥ krīḍati*.

But apart from the explanatory comments of the commentators, we have every reason to say that Rūpa always tried to both differentiate himself from and also adhere to tradition. We believe he appropriated the word *ujjavala* from Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra. Bharata says—*śṛṅgāra* that issues from the abiding or the permanent sentiment of love is always blazing bright in nature (*ujjvalaveśātmakaḥ*). Whatever is pure, holy, and attractive to the eye in the world is inferred to be (or compared to) *śṛṅgāra*, which has among its chief elements an attractive and brilliant appearance and attire.

In his *Vidagdhamādhava*, Rūpa uses the same word to eulogize Caitanya who he thinks had come down to earth to propagate the *bhakti* sentiment in the form of *ujjvala* to the common people at large—*anrpitacarīṃ cirāt karuṇayāvatīrṇaḥ kalau/ samarpayitum unnatojjvalarasāṃ svabhaktiśriyam*. This verse again quoted in the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* reflects the same spirit and indicates that the word "*ujjvala*" has been received by the "little tradition" as a synonym of *śṛṅgāra*, more specifically the divine *śṛṅgāra* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. It should, however, be recognized that this *ujjvala* also applies to three other principal sentiments such as *dāsya* (servitude), *sakhya* (friendship), and *vātsalya* (affection) as an adjective indicating the purest state of the emotions of servitude, friendship, and affection. But in *śṛṅgāra*, selflessness has reached such a height that the sexuality of the gopīs is directed toward the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa and not at all toward their own satisfaction.

VII. THE RED FLAME OF PASSION TURNS BLUE

It should be remembered that the love of the gopīs has been identified with a form of carnal desire (*kamarūpa*) in *BSS*, but this desire, the ceaseless yearnings of the gopīs to be physically united with Kṛṣṇa, is, however, only meant for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa himself, their beloved. *yadasyāṃ kṛṣṇa-saukhyārtham eva kevalamudyamaḥ* (*BRS*, 1.2.283). The verse from Rūpa's *BSS* invited the comment of Jīva Gosvāmin

in his commentary on the *UN*, where he says: there are two types of physical union (*sambhoga*)—one, the gratification of one's own sensuality through the beloved and the other—the gratification of the beloved through one's own sensual organs. The former, in view of the personal pleasure involved, is called "*kāma*" (carnal desire) and the latter, in view of the gratification of the beloved, is called "*rati*" that is the other name of divine love.

It is not that the word "*kāma*" has not been used for the love of the gopīs—their expressions of desire might not be their own mere carnality—but since they bear the extreme nature of eroticism, the brand of the traditional word "*kāma*" has not been accepted in all its variegated references to physical union. We can peripherally note a comment of Zygmunt Bauman who took the cue from Octavio Paz's *Double Flame* and said:

> Paz explores the complex interaction between sex, eroticism and love—three close relatives yet so unlike each other that each needs a separate language to account for primordial fire of sex, lit by the nature long before first stirrings of humanity, rises to the red flame of eroticism, above which quivers and shivers the delicate blue flame of love. There would be no flame without fire; yet there is much more to the red and blue flames, than there is to the fire from which they arise.

Sex, eroticism, and love are linked yet separate. They can hardly exist without each other, and yet their life is spent in an ongoing war of independence. The boundaries between these terms are hotly contested—alternatively, but often simultaneously, the sites of defensive battles and invasions. Sometimes the logic of war demands that the cross-border dependencies are denied or suppressed; sometimes the invading armies cross the boundary in force with the intention of overpowering and colonizing the territory. Torn between such contradictory impulses, the three areas are notorious for the ambiguity of their frontiers, and the three discourses that serve (or perhaps produce) them are known to be confused and inhospitable.

In fact, Bauman takes eroticism as "cultural processing" of sex, but we think the love of the gopīs is the aesthetic processing of both sex and eroticism. The personal eagerness for physical union with Kṛṣṇa, or the words that flow from their mouths as specimens of carnal desire may give rise to the question of the gopī's sexuality, but according to Rūpa, since this so-called carnal desire of the gopīs has an intrinsically self-effacing nature, the brand "kāma" is only used as a sort of showing off to Kṛṣṇa, their sole beloved, that they are driven by such a passion that needs gratification and satisfaction, although vitally it never approaches the primordial pivot of their own physical desire. We have seen in the *Gopīgītā* itself—and how could we explain here the self-immolating nature of gopīs' love—that the gopīs are asking Kṛṣṇa to place his hands on their breasts warm with excitement—and this is almost like the epigrammatic exclamation of Taylor and Saarinen used by Bauman—"desire does not desire satisfaction. To the contrary desire desires desire." And this is human. Their love is called *samarthā rati*. In *samartha* the love strives only to make Kṛṣṇa happy, by that way the lover and the beloved become one—*ratyā tādātmyam āpannam* (*UN*, Kāvyamālā, p. 412). We do not know if there is a streak of *śāntarasa* here

or if it is like Octavio Paz's—love goes through the desired body and seeks the soul in the body and the body in the soul. Viśvanātha Cakravartin, the passionate philosopher of Vaiṣṇavism, would inevitably comment on this score and thus says in his *Ānandacandrikā*: the eagerness and desire on the part of the gopīs are all meant for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. Naturally, as heroines their desire for union is not unjustified. Although sometimes the craving for their own pleasure is seen on the surface, yet a delicate sentimental process is always an underlying current. Generally the gopīs never express their selfless love in a selfless manner. They never show that they are sacrificing everything for their selfless love. On the contrary, they express their interest in various sensual pleasures that they may have through their union with Kṛṣṇa. Viśvanātha gives an example—he says: "Suppose, one has laid sumptuous dishes for a hungry friend who actually relishes in those dishes; the friend, noting the plenty of courses gets shy and then the host says—this table is for me and not for you. In such a treatment the depth of love appears to be greater than sheer verbal expression of love. We must remember that the sensual pleasure which the common people indulge in for their own satisfaction is but a secondary factor in the love of the gopīs. They make love only when Kṛṣṇa wishes to make love to them.

In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* when Kṛṣṇa responded to the call of the gopīs after their heart-rending song, he submits to the gopīs saying—I am in debt to you forever and would never be able to repay your debt, because you have always tried to seek my union without any of your own interest and for that you faced all the stigmas of wanton women, but still came out of the shackles of your family and social prestige—

na pāraye'haṃ niravadya- samyujām
sva-sādhu-kṛtyam vibudhāyusāpi vaḥ
yā mā bhajan durjara-geha-sṛṅkhalāḥ
samvṛścya tadvaḥ pratiyātu sādhunā

Sanātana Gosvamin, the elder brother of Rūpa, with whom he shared a life of complete renunciation, took the opportunity to explain this so-called sexuality and commented on the verses of the *Rāsa Pentad*, saying that the love of the gopīs may give some apparent signs of sexuality, but in reality it is bereft of any stain—*pratyuta svaviṣayakatādṛśakamasya mahān eva guṇo'bhipretaḥ, niravadyasamyogahetutvāt*. Again to explain the expressed use of the word *kāmadeva* in the *Bhāgavata* (10.90.48) verse *vrajapuravanitānām vardhayan kāmadevam*, Sanātana says—the sensual pleasures that run counter to the good sense of wordly people, paradoxically help the gopīs to renounce the world. The gopīs' love that brings Kṛṣṇa under their control is the effect of release from the world. This love, however, appears to be newer and newer at every moment. Sanātana gives several alternative explanations of the word *kāmadeva* to justify this sensuality (*kāma*); since sensuality reaches sublimity (*deva*) that is, the word *kāmadeva* should not be taken in its familiar connotation. According to him, *kāma* is called *deva*, because the desire for the lord being the effect of deep love, the feeling is tantamount to the best of desires. However, if the word is derived from the root *div* "to play" instead of "to shine," the divine sports also presuppose the involvement of deep love. Again with the

sense of play, the lord whets the gopīs' sensuality with the manifestations of his own charm and beauty. He indulged in such sensual pleasures with the gopīs for his own pleasure, which ignores the four aims of life *caturvarga*, and thus it is tantamount to renunciation. It is also the effect of deep love, which is tantamount to devotion.

VIII. SAVAGE AESTHETICS

The inherent property of *śānta rasa* is to concentrate on Kṛṣṇa by all means. The *gopī*s have this property because they left everything—their parents, in-laws, their husbands, and their social prestige. They totally concentrated upon Kṛṣṇa like *śāntarasika yogin*-s. We have already explained the aesthetic taste of servitude (*dāsya*). The *sakhya* generally denotes a friendship of two persons of similar status having no-extra regard for one another, paying no heed to differences in status, power, or anything. We have seen the friends of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja. They used to play at riding on Kṛṣṇa's shoulders and he had to run up to particular marks with the girls on his shoulders. In the penultimate chapter of the *Gopīgītā*, Kṛṣṇa himself proposed to the fortunate gopī, presumably Rādhā, to ride on his shoulder and she faced no dilemma in regard to this gesture of intimacy and accepted the proposal readily. Moreover, we have heard the gopīs to address Kṛṣṇa as *sakhā* in the *Rāsa Pentad* itself. The *gopī*s address Kṛṣṇa as their friend and adopt the tool of *śānta* and *dāsya rasa* to express their erotic love. They say—drench us please with the nectar of your lips. If you do not, we will consign our bodies to the fire of separation from you, *O friend*, and thus like yogins attain to the abode of your servitude.

no ced vayaṃ virahajāgnyupayukta-dehā /
dhyānena yāma padayoḥ padavīṃ sakhe te // (10.29.35)

Again the theme of friendship returns in the *Gopīgītā* with a note of *śānta* rupture. You are not actually the son of the gopī Yaśodā, *O friend*, but rather the indwelling witness in the hearts of all embodied souls (10.31.4). Lastly with the scenes of servitude and friendship intermixed, the gopīs *surrender* to *śṛṅgāra*—O you who destroy the sufferings of Vraja's people, O hero of all women, your smile shatters the false pride of your devotees. Please, dear friend, accept us as your servants and show us your beautiful face:

bhaja sakhe bhavatkinkarīḥ sma no
jalaruhānanaṃ cāru darśaya / (10.3.6)

It is not that the sense of friendship only melts the hearts of the *gopī*s. Kṛṣṇa himself addresses the *gopī*s as friends (*sakhyaḥ*) in plural—*mitho bhajanti ye sakhyaḥ* (10.32.17) *and nāhantu sakhyo bhajato'pi jantūn* (10.32.20).

It may seem confusing that three or four different aesthetic savours are getting unduly mixed here. How could the erotic and friendly get so conflated with the filial and the tranquil? The aptness of the intermixture according to Gaudiya Vaishnava aesthetics can be appreciated if we remember the gradual order of sophistification in aesthetic taste that is as follows: as the qualities intensify, so the taste also gets finer in

each and every step. Thus excellences found in the tranquil, the servile, the friendly and the filial all culminate in love—the ujjvala, the effulgent or the erotic *madhurā rasa.*

To explain the extreme charm of the *Gopīgītā* as the vindication of *ujjvalarasa*, we need to speak of other seminal points that have made the songs the best example of Rūpa's vision of *rasa*. From the *rasa* point of view, the sweetly sexual *madhurā rati* cannot be set on a par with the common enjoyment of *śṛngāra*. The *ujjavala* begins its first discourse with its hero Kṛṣṇa who is the source of all the aesthetic sentiments—*akhilarasāmṛtamūrti*—and thus he includes in himself all the qualities of the four types of hero. And it is this one and the same hero who is a husband to Rukminī, Satyabhāmā, and so on in Dvaraka, while in Vrindavana he is the paramour of thousands of *gopī*s.

IX. DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES

A canonical later text on dramaturgy, the *Daśarūpaka* is very explicit that adultery has no role in a *śṛṅgāra* narrative. In the principal sentiment of *śṛṅgāra* there would be no scope of a woman, wedded to another person, to fall in love with the hero. Here the definition of "*anyastrī*"—"a woman who is another's" is either a maiden or a married woman. This is an accepted definition in traditional *alaṃkāra*, cf Rudraṭa, Bhojarāja, Hemacandra, Bhānudatta, Vāgbhaṭṭa—all are unanimous in supporting this kind of domestic morality in aesthetics. Rūpa, in the *Harivallabhāprakaraṇa* of the *UN*, lent his general acceptance to it and he probably kept the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* warning in his mind, which forbids all such extramarital ventures for common humans. It says that the status of the divine and powerful personalities (who can control their senses) is not harmed by any apparently audacious transgression of morality, for they are like fire, which devours everything fed into it and remains unpolluted. But someone who is devoid of that extraordinary element should never imitate the behavior of such personalities, even mentally. If out of foolishness an ordinary person does imitate such behavior, he will simply destroy himself, just as a person who is not Rudra would destroy himself if he tried to drink an ocean of poison—

naitat samācared jātu manasāpi hyanīśvaraḥ /
vinaśyatyācaran mauḍhyād yathārudro'vdhijaṃ viṣam // (10.33.30)

Unlike others in the traditional school, Rūpa began his first discourse by showing the differentiation among heroes. In discussing *ujjvalarasa*, he begins with the question of the hero-paramour. Rūpa here flouts the contention of traditional aesthetics and affirms that whatever taboo is attached to adultery applies only to the common, mundane human hero, not to Kṛṣṇa who is incarnated to enjoy the extract of his very own bliss.

Since, the dramaturgical rules were binding on Sanskrit authors, they could not flout them readily. But it should be kept in mind that a living society does not go by the rules of dramaturgy. Again such violation occurred in the traditional dramas of

Bhāsa's *Daridracārudatta* or Śūdraka's *Mṛcchakaṭika*, or in the vast body of poetry related to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Indeed the instances of love with married women are not absent in other literatures, especially the *kāvya* poetry of "courtly love," such as the *Amaruśataka*, or earlier, in Hāla's Prakrit *Sattasaï*.

This courtly love may include an experience of clandestine meetings of lovers, sensuous romance, and romance in separation, but it has a particular tilt toward artificial romance. The inaccessibility involved in loving a married woman, only lends a sense of frustration that could never be compared to Kṛṣṇa's love for the *gopī*s or the *gopī*s love for Kṛṣṇa. In the whole of the *Rāsa Pentad* we find ourselves in a world of cattle-herders, far from Brahmanical orthodoxy, far from town life—we are in a forest of abandon. A glance at the *Rāsa* story in the *Harivaṃśa* shows that the *gopī*s, who came for amorous play in a hurry, were all smeared with the dust of dry cow dung and mud. This gesture of meeting the lover in whatever condition—with makeup on only one eye, with the waist band dangling at their leg, and the jingling anklet around their neck—abruptly leaving their homes, families and domestic duties—shows only the uncompromising nature of the *gopī*s' love.

X. THE PLAY OF POLYAMORY

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja takes note of the general polyamorous tendency of male-sexuality and points out that the male erotic pleasure is whetted by having a number of female-objects—*bahu kāntā vinā nahe raser ullās*—and the great number of gopīs who are but the manifold metaphysical reconstruction (*kāyavyūha*) of the one, Rādhā, stand to satisfy the general aesthetic need of eroticism in Kṛṣṇa's adultery.

Transgressing the whole society in matters of extramarital romance and adultery raises vital questions for a woman: of infidelity, stigma, verdigris, and lack of chastity, and for a man: lechery, lewdness, and adultery. Both of these arenas of stain and calumny build the common ground of taboo that is rendered somehow delightful and mystical by the concept of *parakīya preman*.

Any approach to this realm of sexual transgression necessarily apprehends a moral fear. Rūpa in his *UN*, defines this transgression for both the paramour and the wedded wife. Rūpa says that the wise define *upapati* as a man who transgresses the moral religious principles by becoming the lover of a woman already married to someone else. The commentrator Viśvanātha claims that the paramour transgresses the moral bond with this particular determination in his mind that he has to win the heart of a married woman. It should be noted here that Rūpa's philosopher nephew Jīva took this concept of a paramour's love *aupapatya* and *parakīyatva* as virtual reality. In view of the emotional intensity invested in *parakīya*, Jīva had to accept it conceptually, but when it belongs to Kṛṣṇa with all its immorality, he speculates a virtual form of *aupapatya* wrought by the divine power of *yogamāyā*, a goddess who is instrumental in making this high god believe that he is a paramour, making love to someone else's wife in order to realize the extreme social transgression in passionate love—parama-svakīyā api parakīyāyamānā vrajadevyaḥ.

Viśvanātha, however, disregarded this idea of virtuality and believed in Kṛṣṇa's *aupapatya* with all its transgressiveness. He thus explained the idea with an object–subject (*viṣaya-āśraya*) equation. One who is the sole refuge and resort of love is called *āśraya*—in this case she is Rādhā who owns that faculty of love called *madana*—the faculty that even Kṛṣṇa lacks even in his divine fullness—she becomes the only resort of Kṛṣṇa's love (*āśraya*):

sarva-bhāvodgamollāsī mādano'yaṃ parāt paraḥ /
rājate hlādinī-sāro rādhāyāmeva yaḥ sadā //

More precisely the *āśraya* is one who can enjoy the taste of this love in all its essence. But Kṛṣṇa is only the object of this love because he is also worshipped through it. The *āśraya* type of love is thus applied to him. Viśvanātha Cakravartī probably takes his cue from the Caitanya Caritāmṛta when he uses the *viṣaya-āśraya* equation to proclaim the reality of *parakīya* devotion. The *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* has Kṛṣṇa say:

> Radhika is the highest abode of this love and I am only its object. I taste the bliss to which the object of love is entitled. But the pleasure of Rādhā, the abode of that love, is ten million times greater:

sei premār śrī-rādhikā parama "āśraya"/
sei premār āmi ha-i kevala "viṣaya"//
viṣaya-jātīya sukh āmār āsvād/
āmā haite koṭi-guṇ āśrayer āhlād//

While the transgression of moral principles for the fulfillment of love marks the primary and necessary condition of *aupapatya*, the love of a paramour, the same transgression done by the *gopī*s, who are wedded to others, is marked by an unconditional surrender of their selves for the love of Kṛṣṇa.

XI. THE POETIC THEOLOGY OF ILLICIT LOVE

The illicit love of a paramour or married woman involves an obsessive focus on the union of the lovers, not to speak of the height of passion, wonder, and novelty, which the books of traditional aesthetics feel shy to accept or describe. The *UN* overcomes this delicacy because its hero has his foot in supreme divinity and became incarnate to enjoy a love beyond human morality. In this, Rūpa Gosvāmin is very aware that this "beyond the bound of morality" begets the extreme pleasure, because it is both human and superhuman. He also knows that the tradition might not accept this illicitness on the surface, yet it cannot but support the essential ingredients of passionate love that ultimately support the illicit ecstasy.

The *UN* thus draws the conclusion that in social transgression lies the extreme enjoyment of love—*atraiva paramotkarṣaḥ sṛṅgārasya pratiṣṭhitaḥ*. It is also traditionally accepted because the root of this transgression finds its essential basis in Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra. Rūpa quotes from Bharata to prove that he did not deviate from the traditional and moral view of the social system. The illicitness drew upon the same traditional source for its vindication. He quotes a verse ascribed to Bharata

to the effect that amorous love, in which moral customs and religious principles always forbid the lovers to unite, in which the lovers secretly strive for the forbidden union and find little scope of touching, seeing, or talking to one another, is the highest peak of love's enjoyment:

bahu vāryate khalu yatra prachannakāmukattvañca /
ya ca mitho durlabhatā sa manmathasya paramā ratiḥ //

In fact, these very features of restraint, decorum, social limitations, and fear of overstepping conventions also face a normal lover who steals to approach a young girl living with her parents, or else a young girl stealthily rushing to be united with her boyfriend. This is why it is not surprising that Rūpa also includes an unmarried young girl as an instance of *paroḍhā*, because she is under constant surveillance of her parents. Rūpa keenly appreciates this extreme intensity of love beset with obstacles.

Naturally the divine love that is called the blue sapphire—*ujjvalanīlamaṇi*—presupposes the incorporation of eroticism and sex, the enjoyment of which denies the scope of ready availability and thus finds its real intensity in hindrance and difficulty. The traditional scholars said that the real enjoyment of *kāma* is only available in love with the wife of someone else—*tat khalu surataṃ kṛcchraprāpyaṃ yad anyanārīṣu*.

The beginning of the *Rāsa Pentad* introduces the rushing *gopī*s being detained by their husbands, fathers, brothers, and relatives— *tā vāryamāṇā patibhiḥ pitṛbhir bhrātṛbandhubhiḥ*, but to the *gopī*s this was the ultimate signal—the call of the flute—and they all hurried to the forest to meet their beloved. The shackles of matrimonial bondage—the husband, the in-laws or those of fathers, mothers, and brothers suddenly loosened.

Keeping in mind the odium imputed to the love of a paramour for another man's wife, Rūpa again tried to collect authority from the traditional texts, but again harped on almost the same clue, the same emotional height that comes from the feminine "no-not now" and "never again" or from the extreme unavailability of the desired woman. Rūpa quotes a traditional verse from Rudrabhaṭṭa's *Śṛṅgāratilaka*:

vāmatā durlabhatvaṃ ca strīṇāṃ yā ca nivāraṇā /
tadeva pañcabāṇasya manye paramam āyudham //

XII. THE BLINDING LIGHT OF THE RESPLENDENT BLUE

The *Rāsa Pentad*, especially the *Gopīgītā*, might give the impression that the gopīs exist only for the lovemaking of Kṛṣṇa. They never seem to resist any undesired love-ventures of the dark Lord, nor say "no" to any of his behavior, rather they seem always available to satisfy all the craziness of Krishna's love. They almost seem like lambs to the slaughter whenever they come before him. We may argue here that

the Rāsa dance is the last coveted and long-awaited union of the gopīs with Kṛṣṇa and this can never happen without the aesthetic niceties that culminate in the Rāsa dance. The unavailability and feminine refusals (*durlabhatva* and *vāmatā*) that are such a basic excitant factor in most stories of erotic love, have been taken by Rūpa as a key sign of the extreme enjoyment of love (even in traditional aesthetics) and according to him, this feature holds the key to the extramarital love of the gopīs. The extreme unavailability of the gopīs, their refusals, and the obstacles they have overcome, have also been extreme, and this extremity has been pointed out by the helpless gopīs who say—we have come to a point of no return—*yāmaḥ kathaṃ vrajam atho karavāma kiṃ vā* . Time and again the gopīs reiterated what stakes they had to overcome to ignore the socially induced conditions—the household with its parents, husbands, and in-laws—*pati-sutānvaya-bhrātr-bandhavān/ativilaṅghya te 'ntyacyutagatah Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* 10.29.34; 10.31.16.

This extreme transgression definitely has a long history of obstacles that the *Rāsa Pentad* could not depict in full detail; the *UN* elaborates on them with the traditional nuances available in the vast Vaiṣṇava literature. Rūpa quotes a verse written by a poet named Hara in the *UN* where the Dark Lord waits the whole night to catch a glimpse of Rādhā, but is unsuccessful because of the suspicious intervention of the old woman (this is likely Baḍāyi, her granny babysitter from Baḍu Caṇḍīdās's *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, and other vernacular folk tellings of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa story). The verse says:

> When Kṛṣṇa reached Rādhā's courtyard to meet her and his tinkling ornaments sounded like the cuckoo's call, he suddenly heard the door open, and also heard the continual jingling sounds of conch-shell bracelets. When he heard the arrogant Jarati (the old woman) call out "who is there? Who is there?"—he became pained at heart. Krishna spent the entire night hiding in a tree near Rādhā's house.

It is worth noting that the field of extramarital love is perennially sullied with sinister awe and lust. Again it is also always a prohibited arena. Even the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana cautions the kings and ministers not to indulge in extramarital affairs, because the sun rises everyday and the people can catch them. Thus the *Kāmasūtra* allows the extramarital affair only in case of unavoidable and excessive sexual urges, but it should always be carried out secretively.

In the *Rāsa Pentad*, the love that turned the cowherd maids to approach their paramour was a selfless, self-effacing love at odds with modern-day ideas of a woman's "psychic self with will and agencies." Thus the lord of Eros who was once burnt down by Śiva, was himself overwhelmed by the charms of unattached sexuality and fled the site of the *Rāsa* dance. The love here came out of divine longing where the divine one splits into two and finds himself playfully projected in a mirror. The duality of Godhead, the difference and nondifference, is compared to the inseparable entity of the Moon and the moonbeam, the fire, and the heat. In the love illustrated in the *Rāsa Pentad*, the moon realizes how soothing and pleasing are its inherent beams; the fire realizes what heat it can muster to burn the particles of sexuality, to mature into the blue flame of elevation. This love however, betrays its full affiliation to a sort of billowing ecstatic rapture, never to be appeased by the

peace of a yogin, but only to be perceived by one who devotionally surrenders to the Lord. The devotee has to trek a long path of detachment, defeating personal desires, even the desire of salvation; finally reaching the point of sublime ecstasy, where the deep attachment to the lord alone abides. This devotion urges a devotee to long for the servitude of Rādhā, the personification of surrender in love—and this ultimately leads to enjoyment of *madhurā rati*.

The *madhurā rati* of the *Rāsa Pentad* apparently bears all the marks of illicitness on the social plane, and thus it comes more as an embarrassment than an aid to the understanding and appreciation of love. The *UN* suppresses this anticipated odium and begins to seek justifications by rephrasing the commonplaces of the tradition, favorably interpreting the elevated love in terms of self-effacing surrender that sublimates extramarital sexuality by means of unconditional love. Again the love of the self-effacing cowherd maids of Vrindavana cannot be compared to ordinary illicit love, because of its spiritualized abandon, nor can modern-day paramours—in their secret trysts or group romps—be set on a par with Krishna whose holy descent has been wrought by a motive of enjoying absolute, pure love. The agents of this love are paradoxically immune to any true sexuality. The source-text and the mainstream tradition even go to the extent of warning that no one with a touch of concupiscence in their heart is fit to relish the supra-mundane aesthetic savor of a poetic, dramatic, or musical depiction of this love. So the paradox thickens.

CHAPTER SIX

The Impersonal Subjectivity of Aesthetic Emotion

BIJOY H. BORUAH

I. SUBJECTIVITY AND ONTOLOGICAL CONSTRAINT

It is true of my subjectivity that I, a subject of experience, a center of consciousness emotionally receptive or sensitive to the impact of the world as it *actually* is, am also emotionally receptive or sensitive to the world as it *might have been* or as it could *possibly* be. Arguably, these are two *modalities* of my overall subjectivity that deserve understanding and analysis in terms of significant distinctions.

Because of this bi-modality, human subjectivity, in the dimension of emotional sensitivity and responsiveness, is unique among all species sharing the same dimension of subjectivity. Members of many animal species are prone to emotional responsiveness of fear and anger, joy and sadness, and so on, much as we humans are. But nonhuman animals are emotionally sensitive and responsive to the way the world *actually* is. Their sensitivity or responsive subjectivity is constrained by their consciousness of what is observationally presented or familiar to them. Actuality, or the way the world is at any time, is an ontological constraint, so to speak, by which their subjective life is inexorably conditioned.

What is special about bi-modal human emotional subjectivity compared to one-dimensional subjectivity of other animals? Obviously, the specialty has to do with the human capacity for modal thinking. The modality of possibility and the imagination that opens up that modality endows distinctiveness to human consciousness and subjectivity. If perception presents the world in the modality of actuality, the world held up in perceptual consciousness is not ontologically free-floating. The undercurrent of imagination creates an inexplicit and shadowy background of possibilities against which the explicit perceptual world is foregrounded.

Imagination is activated when perception is held in abeyance for the mind's exploration of possible worlds in the field of consciousness. Imaginative exploration is a departure from actuality into the realm of possibility. It is

therefore a form of ontological freedom from the perceptually encapsulated field of consciousness. This freedom makes available a new form of experience and mode of affective response.

While the relation between imagination and possibility is a clear indication of ontological freedom, the availability of new modes of affective response in this freedom of consciousness evinces an interesting relation between affective subjectivity and ontology. It shows that consciousness deprived of imaginative excursus into possible worlds is also denied the possibility of a subjective life other than what is available through perceptual experience of the actual world. It is therefore arguable that the relation between ontology and affective subjectivity can provide a fresh perspective for an understanding of the nature of aesthetic experience and emotional response to fiction.

II. THREE WAYS OF BEING FICTIONAL

Entertaining a possibility, howsoever simple and easily conceivable, is already an exercise of ontological freedom from actuality. Such a mental entertainment may be minimally free from the constraint of perceptual encapsulation. Nonetheless, even a minimal ontological freedom from actuality implies distancing of consciousness from the bounds of perceptual belief. There is a shift of level in consciousness that this distancing effects; it is the shift from the perceptual level—or the level of perceptual belief—to that of imagination. Imagination is essentially contrasted with belief,[1] and the persistence of belief (in what actually is the case) ties, or ontologically constrains consciousness to what is *apparent* to it.

Imagination is instrumental in freeing consciousness from attachment to the apparent world and substituting for it some possible world as its intentional object. Our engagement with fiction is the finest illustration of how imagination changes the intentionality of consciousness by substituting possible worlds for the actual one.[2] Indeed, the practice of fiction is the most illustrious demonstration of consciousness' freedom from the ontology of the apparent or the actual.

The *practice* of fiction can occur at various "levels" of human consciousness, of which there are three cases that are important to a proper understanding of this practice. One primary case is that of children forming fictions in the immature state of their consciousness. In their playfulness and unbridled spontaneity, children are often lost in games of make-believe, or in mythical worlds enacted for them by storytellers that they listen to with rapt attention. Psychologically speaking, their imaginary excursion into fictional worlds is an integral part of their life as children. So their practice of fiction is constitutive to the structure of their playfully spontaneous and uninhibited psyche.

The second important case of the practice of fiction is consciousness in madness. Human insanity is often manifested in the way the deranged mind indulges in imagining things that are not there. Sometimes a madman even imagines himself being someone else, and the intensity of madness is manifested in his *believing* what he actually make-believes. Figments of the imagination are (mis)taken to be facts of

the world. The fictional world of madness "breaks into" the real world in such a way that the integrity (or normality) of the life of the affected person breaks down.

The third case of the practice of fiction is the one represented by the rest of us humans, that is, normal adult persons imagining worlds in wistful fantasy, in counterfactual, thought-experimental considerations, or in the creative process of producing a work of art. The normal adult consciousness is also prone to indulge in fictions of delusion ranging from innocuous daydreaming to self-deceptive fabrication of self-images. Still other examples include fictions of dreaming and hallucination.

Fictionality enters normal adult consciousness through two different modes of psychological disposition, namely, mental activity and passivity. The operation of counterfactual imagination in thought experiment or in the creative process of art is clearly a sign of the mind's consciously active and controlled engagement. The fictional world is deliberately conceived and manipulated by the imagination of the controlling agency of the fiction-maker. But that is not the case when consciousness is under the spell of dream or hallucination, or even in self-deceptive delusion of grandeur. In these cases, the person is more in a state of mental passivity, as the person's mind is driven into the fictional world by repressed desire or some form of disturbance. Passivity conduces to fictions of fantasy and self-delusion.

Passive fictional excursion of the normal adult mind bears dispositional affinity to indulgence in the fictional on the part of children as well as the deranged mind. Mental passivity characterizes all the three forms of fictional alteration of the intentionality of consciousness. The three cases of fictionality can be represented in a continuum of passivity from the mild (i.e., the normal adult case) to the extreme (i.e., the abnormal state of mind).

It would be wrong to conclude that, since the mind is passively led into the fictional world, this form of imaginary transition into possible worlds is not a manifestation of ontological freedom. Of course it is true that the mind in passivity is not quite free because of lack of enough self-control. But ontological freedom is not a matter of mental self-control. Rather, it is in terms of the availability of the capacity to imagine possible worlds, to visualize worlds beyond perceptual encapsulation, that ontological freedom is defined. It is irrelevant whether that capacity is exercised in conscious deliberation or under the influence of factors defying self-control.

III. FICTION AND DETACHMENT

The passive way of being fictional is not a reason for depriving this mode of fictional engagement of ontological freedom. But it is a reason for denying *psychological* freedom to such cases of fictional engagement. Indeed, we are *led* into the fictional world of a dream or madness allegedly by unconscious forces. Since we are under the *spell* of the fictional in such cases, our agentive role is held in at least partial suspension. While the person in insanity is clearly a patient, the person in dreaming is no less a patient, though not a victim of abnormality. What is common in either case is that consciousness is under the sway of the fictional or the imaginary, even though the imagination that begets the fiction also arises from the same consciousness.

Fictional engagement of this passive and compulsive variety is therefore a kind of psychological *attachment* to the fiction one indulges in. Even though imagination causes the ontological shift from the actual to the fictionally possible, consciousness obliterates that ontological gap between the actual and the possible. The fictionally indulgent self becomes unaware of the fictionality it indulges in and mistakes the fictionally possible world for the actual. Despite being driven by imagination into an excursus into the fictional realm, the self fails to maintain *a sense of distance* from the fictional as it happens in a normal practice of fiction.

Why does the self fail to maintain a sense of distance from the fictional in this case? Mere mental passivity is no explanation of why this is the case. The crucial point is that the self in passive fictional indulgence makes imaginative departure from the actual *without* believing that its fictional life is imaginary and hence discontinuous with the actual. The ontological divide between the actual and the fictional collapses in this case. Hence there is no possibility for the self to *detach* itself from actuality and enter into the fictional world with that sense of detachment.

In contrast to the self in fictional indulgence of the passive variety, the self in the normal case of active or conscious imaginary transition to the fictional world maintains a transparent sense of *disengaging* itself from the actual. The awareness of discontinuity between the actual and the fictional is an enabling condition for the possibility of *experiencing* the fictional life in a significantly distinguishable way from the experience of actual life. The disengaged self is freed by that disengagement from the experiential burden of actual life, so that it can now exploit its detached consciousness in order to yield a fresh perspective of subjectivity to render the fictional world *alive*.

Talking about "the practice of fiction" in the present context refers more appropriately to *deliberate* imaginative engagement of the disengaged self with fictional worlds.[3] There is a close connection between "deliberateness" of the imaginative engagement and the 'disengaged stance' of the self making an imaginative entry into the fictional world. Disengaging oneself from actuality is a precondition for deliberately effecting one's imaginative transition to the fictional world. Given the existential primacy of the actual, the self is already rooted in, and naturally bound to, actuality. Therefore, imagination is at once operative in disengaging the self from actuality *and* in effecting its entry into the fictional world.

The imaginative practice of fiction is thus an expression of the human self's ability to realize that the existential primacy of the actual over the possible is *contingent*. Since the possible is fictionally available to consciousness through imaginative suspension of the actual, it becomes transparent to the existentially engaged self what it is like *not* to be the way it actually is. Although the feeling of "existential primacy of the actual" naturally prevails upon the engaged self, imaginative access to fictionally possible modes of existence purges that feeling of primacy of the illusion of necessity or inexorability.

The possibility of the 'double effect' of fiction—namely disengagement from actuality on the one hand and engagement with a fictionally possible world on the other—is a demonstration of the flexibility of the self for perspectival shift of consciousness. In disengaging itself from the perspective of actuality, the self attains

a form of freedom to turn itself into a field of detached consciousness. It is precisely in virtue of this freedom of detached consciousness that the self is able to engage with the fictional life of unactualized possibility. What is significant about this perspectival shift of consciousness is the possibility of a *new form of subjectivity* in the fictionally engaged field of consciousness.

IV. EMOTIONS ACROSS THE ONTOLOGICAL DIVIDE

While the self can engage in the fictional by virtue of imaginative detachment from the actual, that engagement can also be experientially salient in a manner appropriate to the appreciation of the fictional. It is in the context of aesthetic appreciation of the fictional, where the object of appreciation is a work of fiction, that the experientially salient response of the self seems to embody a new and complex form of subjectivity. This experience of fiction is *emotionally* salient in that it is an appreciation of the fictional predominantly in the form of emotional response to the world of the work of fiction. But the emotional salience in the experience of fiction (call it ERF), though very much comparable to the salience of emotional response to real-life counterparts of fiction (call it ERR), is also significantly distinguishable from ERR in respect of their respective subjectivity.

Given the existential primacy of the actual (i.e., the real-life world), the phenomenology of ERR is of course the subjective background that provides the template for our appreciation of the subjectivity of ERF. Indeed, ERR sets the template not just for affirming the phenomenological similarity of ERF with it. The template is adverted to even when ERF is arguably held to be discontinuous with ERR. Any argument for claiming difference in the subjectivity of ERF from that of ERR is dependent on a basic understanding of the template.

Emotions are felt states of mind and the feeling is thought-dependent, that is, dependent on thought about the intentional object of the emotion or what the emotion is about. If, for example, I am envious of you as the author of a best-selling novel, that is because I think of this authorship as highly desirable and feel unhappy at not being such an author myself. Again, you are angry with me because you think, rather believe, that I did something unjust to you (e.g., I made you miss an opportunity to apply for a fellowship by spreading wrong information in a malicious way). The affective experience of envy or anger is thus founded upon the subject's appropriate thought or belief about the object that the emotion is directed at.

Emotions are thus a complex of affective subjectivity and cognitive appraisal.[4] The affective response to the object—the arousal of the feeling toward the object—is accountable in terms of the cognitive-evaluative assessment of the object. Any change in the cognitive appraisal, either because of a realization that it was a mistaken appraisal or because of rejection of the standard on which the appraisal depended, would lead to the cessation of the feeling or at least modification of it. The affective phenomenology of an emotion is not an independent component of emotional subjectivity. It rather is a dependent component inasmuch as the cognitive appraisal of the object constitutes the ground for its occurrence.[5]

The cognitive-evaluative complex can be analyzed into two distinct but intertwined attitudinal relations of the subject to the object of emotion. One is the attitude of existential belief about the object, that is, that the subject encounters a real object or a real-world situation. The other is the evaluative attitude toward the real object or situation, that is, that the object or situation is believed by the subject to be of a certain nature, for example, dangerous, unjust, despicable, desirable for oneself, deep loss to oneself, and so on. It is, of course, the evaluative belief about the object or situation that embodies the cognitive appraisal that underlies an emotion. But the existential belief is an essential, though obvious, cognitive background of the appraisal and a necessary condition for the occurrence of the emotion. This "background necessity" of the existential belief may be characterized as the *reality constraint* on the emotional subject.

What is significant about the "reality constraint" on the emotional subject is that the affective efficacy of the evaluative construal of the intentional object is parasitic on the subject's existential commitment to what the emotion is about. Furthermore, the subject evaluating the intentional object is *continuous* with the subject existentially committed to the object of emotion. That is to say, there is no distancing of the self construing the object in a certain evaluative way from the self cognitively aware of the existence of the object. Rather, the self's evaluative belief about the object is inextricably entangled with the self's existential attachment to the object. To disentangle the former from the latter would amount to ceasing to feel the emotion upon realizing that the putative object was an illusion.

Why should the evaluative-cum-existential entanglement in the cognitive constitution of an emotion be an issue here? Isn't this entanglement conceptually necessary for the possibility of the occurrence of an emotion? Wouldn't it be incoherent, hence irrational, to talk about the possibility of my having an emotional response to something that I construe as harmful to me, even though I do not believe that something to be real at all?[6] After all, fearing an object that I evaluate as harmful to me would be unintelligible if I disbelieved in the existence or reality of that object. Hence it seems that the self evaluating the object as harmful must be continuous with the self existentially committed to the object construed as harmful. Thus, the two beliefs have their locus in the same self and their entangled coexistence accounts for the subject's fearful response to the object.

As far as ERR is concerned, the necessity of the entanglement of the evaluative belief with the existential belief is undeniable. In fact the entanglement embodies the necessary and sufficient condition for the possibility of emotions in real life. But the entanglement is *not* necessary for the possibility of emotional response *as such*. What *is* necessary, though not sufficient, is the persistence of the evaluative belief, the attitude of appraising the intentional object in terms of some evaluative criteria. But this implies that the concept of emotion extends beyond the ranges of emotions that we feel only when we are existentially committed to what the emotions are about. It is possible for us emotionally to respond to objects on either side of the ontological boundary that divides the real and the fictional.[7]

If ERF is conceptualized in terms of the extended meaning of the concept of emotion, and the requirement of the evaluative belief is reckoned as necessary for

emotion in the extended sense, then what is the sufficient condition of ERF? How is it that the persistence of the negative existential belief—that is, the disbelief in the existence of Anna Karenina or Mr Pickwick for instance—doesn't disable the subject of aesthetic appreciation from feeling sad at Anna's plight or being amused by Pickwick's idiosyncrasy? There must be some enabling condition, apart from the subject's evaluative construal of Anna or Pickwick, which accounts for emotionally responding to the fictional character. And the same condition would also provide a crucial explanation of why the persistence of the negative existential belief doesn't have the disabling effect on the subject's emotionally responsive disposition.

If the intentional object of an emotion happens to be a character in a work of fiction and the subject is aware of its fictionality, then the fictional object must have a "grip" on the subject analogous to the cognitive grip a person or object of a real-life emotion has on the subject. The cognitive grip in the real-life case is the function of the existential belief, that is, commitment to the existence of the object. Now, one cannot coherently be said to have a *cognitive* apprehension of a fictional object in aesthetic appreciation. But the nature of aesthetic response is such that the imaginative awareness of the fictional object can arguably be characterized as *quasi-cognitive*. The aesthetic response is partly a function of the aesthetic attitude, which ensures that the imaginative awareness of the fictional object has the attitudinal "quality" inherent in the awareness of an actual object. A mere fictional character is thereby transfigured into a living person who is evaluatively construed as seriously unfortunate (Anna Karenina) or hilariously idiosyncratic (Mr Pickwick).

Although I cannot be said to have a cognitive apprehension of Anna Karenina or Mr Pickwick because of their actual nonexistence, nor can my apprehension be said to be patently *non*cognitive. For there is at least a cognitive *force* in the mode of apprehension in so far as I appreciate the character, with full sincerity and genuineness, in the light of an appropriate evaluative construal. It is *as if* I know the character to have suffered under unfortunate circumstance, or to be idiosyncratic to the point of evoking much amusement. Indeed, the sincerity and genuineness of my evaluative appreciation of the plight or nature of the character if reflective of this quasi-cognitive awareness of the character. And it is to be noted that this "as if" mode of awareness is not that of pretence or simulation that carries no cognitive force or "spirit" of cognition.

V. THE IMPERSONAL SUBJECTIVITY OF AESTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Aesthetic experience of fiction in works of art has a complex structure that I have tried to analyze in terms of a theory of emotional response to fiction. Taking the cognitive theory of emotional response to real-life objects as the template for an extended understanding of the concept of emotion, I have tried to sketch a quasi-cognitive theory of aesthetic emotion or emotional response to fiction. Imaginative awareness of the fictional object in the aesthetic frame of mind is not pretended awareness of something, but rather has the phenomenological quality of genuinely

cognizing it in its vivifying presence. The presence of this quality in aesthetically appreciative awareness of a fictional character has been conceptualized as the presence of a cognitive force in aesthetic engagement with fiction.

What is the peculiarity of the aesthetic frame of mind that lends quasi-cognitive efficacy to our imaginative involvement with, and affective response to fiction? This question is bound up, I think, with the much discussed point of *aesthetic disinterestedness* considered to be a condition for the possibility of aesthetic experience.

The usual connotation of aesthetic disinterestedness is that aesthetic experience is marked by a suspension of personal interest in viewing the aesthetic object, so that the object can be enjoyably appreciated *for its own sake*. The disinterested mode of attention toward the aesthetic object is said to be sympathetic and contemplative. Sympathetic attention involves surrendering to the world of the work or aesthetic object. And contemplative attention on the object implies being fastened to the object with acute awareness of the details of the object.

It is Schopenhauer's idea of aesthetic contemplation that, according to me, provides an insightful suggestion toward answering the question of the quasi-cognitive efficacy of the aesthetic attitude in emotionally responding to the aesthetic object.[8] In the contemplative aesthetic attitude, the object is attended to without viewing it in a relational way, which is that of viewing things in relation to personal interest or the will. Rather, attention is paid to the things themselves, the representations. Since the will is held in complete suspension and the representation in view fills the mental space in a mood of contemplative absorption, the subject ceases to sense the difference between itself and the world conceived as representation.

Schopenhauer's account of aesthetic contemplation can be interpreted here for my purpose without having to enter into the metaphysical underpinnings of his idea of will and representation. For the idea of representation can very well be construed as referring to the aesthetic object, or what is represented in a work of art. What is central and relevant to my purpose is the point about *suspension of the will*, inasmuch the will is taken to be the source of the relational attitude, that is, the will as the source of personal interest in viewing the world. Equally central is the other related point about the cessation of the sense of difference between the self contemplating the representation and the representation itself.

Suspension of, or withdrawal from, the world-bound will implies that the self disengages itself from its engaged stance, the stance of personal interest in and concern with actual life. Aesthetic disinterestedness presupposes this "ontic" disengagement of the self from the practical and personal stance rooted in actuality. Of course the disengagement is at the same time a perspectival change in consciousness, whereby the self engages itself afresh with the representational world of fictional possibility. But is it the *same old self* of nonaesthetic life that becomes the subject of fictional engagement by adopting the aesthetic perspective?

It seems to me that there is a discontinuity of subjectivity in this transition that must be recognized as both subtle and profound in significance. The methodologically cultivated disinterestedness, as it were, gives birth to a secondary self with a potentiality for experience unavailable to the primary, actuality-bound self. The

secondary self is, one might say, the aesthetic self, the subject of aesthetic experience. It is also the self imaginatively driven by a fresh interest in, and involvement with, the aesthetic object, culminating in aesthetic pleasure.

But why take the extra ontological burden of positing a "secondary self" instead of talking about the primary (nonaesthetic) self realizing its aesthetic potentiality by cultivating the attitude of aesthetic disinterest? Isn't the self's act of disengagement, or distancing itself from the nonaesthetic stance of "practical interest," a step in "delinking" consciousness from one point of view, which is anchored in actuality, to adopt a quite new point of view, whereby it engages itself afresh with the world of fictional possibility?

I think it would be an under-explanation of the possibility of aesthetic experience to try to conceptualize the transition of subjectivity, through disengagement or psychical distancing, from the practical (nonaesthetic) stance to that of a fresh engagement with the aesthetic (or fictional) object, without invoking the notion of the secondary self. What would be missing from that explanation is a proper understanding of the difference in the nature of the *relation between the subject and the object* in the two contexts, that is, the practical or nonaesthetic and the aesthetic.

The subject–object relational interface marks the fundamental way of our being in the world. In ordinary everydayness of life, where the dynamism of existence is largely conditioned by practical interest in the world of objects, our involvement in the world hardly leaves any room for psychical distance between us and the object. Objects present themselves to our consciousness in their aspectual configuration, and our perceptual awareness of objects is barely free from our practical interest in the aspects *as* which they are perceived. To the extent we are subjects of aspectival perception of the surrounding world, we barely distinguish ourselves from the environment. Thus, the boundary between us and the objects in our immediate surrounding is much too inexplicit to be a reason for any clear sense of distance between our subjectivity and the objective environment.

It would be right to say, therefore, that our ordinary consciousness of the world, our immediate lived reality, is experientially characterized by subject–object *unity* rather than duality. Since the perception of objects in the surrounding is largely determined by our interest in the aspects *as* which the objects appear to us, there is no proper grounding of a disinterested stance in our consciousness of objects. There is an unconscious "incorporation" of the surrounding objects into the self in us.

It is this subject–object unity in nonaesthetic everyday experience that also accounts for the *personally* involved, self-centric engagement with the surrounding world. The experience is characterized by personal subjectivity inasmuch as the subject of the experience is a centered self, that is, the self as the center-point from which the world is viewed. In this view the object viewed is subordinated to the interest of the subject viewing it.

The cultivation of disinterestedness involves stepping back from the engaged stance and thereby consciously creating a cognitive interface between the subject and the object. Disengagement implies a breach in the subject–object unity or intimacy of the interested or engaged stance. Of course this need not be disengagement of

aesthetic disinterestedness; even a purely intellectual and reflective disengagement would rupture the pre-reflective sense of subject–object unity of egocentric involvement. But in the disengaged stance of aesthetic disinterestedness, the object of aesthetic appreciation is distanced from the subject so that the subject can give itself over to the object without any regard for its own interests and purposes. And the appreciative experience is such that the subject entirely disregards the fact that it has a subjective egocentric relation to the object.

Disengagement from the nonaesthetic in an attitude of aesthetic disinterest becomes an occasion for taking up an interest in the aesthetic object entirely from the perspective of the object. But the ability to take interest in the fictionally possible object entirely on its own terms, without any sense of egocentric subjective relation to it, implies that one steps outside of oneself. It is as though one de-centers oneself entirely from the world and opens up to the object *qua* a de-centered self of center-less consciousness. One no longer experiences the object as a part of the lived world of practical concern. On the contrary, one experiences oneself as part of the fictionally possible world of the object.

Surely this transformation of oneself from the perspective of a centered self into the subjectivity of a center-less consciousness is no less than a radical crossing of ontic boundary. It is therefore appropriate to characterize this transformation as the begetting of a secondary self, a new subjectivity apposite to the possibility of aesthetic experience. What is special about this transformation is the de-centered subjectivity of the secondary self, the ability to experience the fictionally possible world in the mode of center-less consciousness. Indeed, to experience anything in such a mode of consciousness is to imply a distinctive form of subjectivity, which is subjectivity *without* the first-person perspective.

VI. AESTHETIC EMOTIONAL SUBJECTIVITY WITHOUT FIRST-PERSONAL SALIENCE

The transition from the personal subjectivity of the primary self immersed in everyday actuality to the subjectivity of aesthetic experience is, so to speak, a quantum jump in the field of consciousness. In affording psychic distance from actuality and thereby inhabiting the world of fictional possibility, the secondary self of aesthetic engagement draws its subjective dynamism from *impersonal* consciousness. Since the fictional object of aesthetic appreciation is meant to be an interest in an object *for its own sake*, only an impersonal gesture of consciousness can possibly have the adequacy of attaining that interest.

It is not as an individual self with a particular first-personal salience of consciousness that my interest is fixated on the aesthetic object. For the individuality of a self is dissolved if consciousness becomes center-less, and without centered consciousness there is no locus or source of the first-person perspective. It is not in my first-personal subjectivity that my experience of the aesthetic object occurs. Rather, it is only as an unindividuated, de-centered self, an impersonal *someone*, that I can be the subject of an aesthetic experience. Indeed, I become an impersonal subject of consciousness, a

subject free to be fully receptive to the object, when I enter into the fictional world of the aesthetic object as a "will-less" self (in Schopenhauer's sense).

The secondary self, as a subject of aesthetic experience, is thus a source of subjectivity free from first-personal salience. This freedom from the first-personal salience that is inherent in the self-consciousness of pragmatic interest is a condition for emotionally responding to the fictionally possible object, notwithstanding the awareness of its fictionality. In fact, it is this freedom that undercuts the initial *otherness* of the object—the art-object of fictional possibility—to the disengaged self of aesthetic disinterest. A new relation of subject–object unity is formed in the aesthetic moment between the secondary self—the subject of aesthetic experience—and the art-object. Obviously, the otherness is overcome in this subject–object unity precisely because the object is no longer attended to from the first-personal stance. The unity is attained only because the impersonal subjectivity of the secondary self establishes a "selfless" and "universal" experiential link with the object.

It is necessary now to dwell on the *selflessness* and *universality* of aesthetic experience, especially the experience of emotionally appreciating the aesthetic object. More specifically, the unique nature of the subject–object relation of an aesthetic emotional experience needs to be analyzed in a deeper way. This deep analysis is concerned mainly with the secondary self I have posited as a key explanatory concept.

The concept of an aesthetic emotion is unique as an affective experience, and some light can be shed on its uniqueness by laying bare the structure of its complex phenomenology. In this regard, I believe that one of the finest and illuminating accounts of the structural complexity of aesthetic experience is that of Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya (1875–1949). I discuss Bhattacharyya's analysis here in view of its explanatory relevance to my posited notion of a secondary self.

Talking about aesthetic emotion in terms of feeling, Bhattacharyya says that "the artistic sentiment is not merely a feeling among feelings but the feeling par excellence, standing as it does on a new grade or [mental] level altogether as compared with other feelings."[9] What makes an aesthetic emotion the "feeling *par excellence*" is determined by the highest level of freedom. The gradation of "freedom" is said to be determined by the feeling's place in the higher mental plane. Bhattacharyya explains how aesthetic emotions are marked by this freedom in terms of a subtle analysis of sympathy.

Sympathy is a second-order feeling for a first-order, primary or direct feeling that another person experiences toward some object. In a direct feeling the subject "does not feel his detachment from the object: he is attracted into or weighed down by the object" (350). This means that the subject of primary or direct feeling is *not* free from the object of his feeling. The subject–object interface is much too obscured by the subject's affective involvement with the object to leave any room for detachment. By contrast, since a sympathetic feeling is directed at a primary feeling of an object experienced by a person, the sympathizer is at one remove from the object of which the other person has a feeling. This is because the vehicle of sympathetic feeling is imagination: I imagine him feeling something about the object and feel myself *with* him having the primary feeling. I have an indirect imaginative access to the object of

his feeling; hence I am not subjectively lost to the object in the way he is lost under the compelling force of the direct feeling.

Bhattacharyya argues that the subject of a sympathetic feeling is freer than the subject of a primary object-feeling because the former *imagines* seeing the feeling-evoking property of the object that the latter actually sees. For example, if he fears a tiger he encounters in the forest, he sees the terrifying look of the tiger precisely because the tiger is presented to him as having the property of terror. If I sympathize with his fear, I imagine him fearing the terrifying look of the tiger he encounters, and the terrifying property of the tiger is presented to me, not as "a given fact, as adjectival to it . . . [but] as detached from the fact—as *floating on it* or as *shining beyond it*" (351, emphases added). It is as though the expression of the property of being terrifying floats "in the air" as something without a substantive locus. It is this detachment of the expression of the emotion-evoking property from its factual substratum that is argued to be the reason for the freedom of a sympathetic feeling.

However, in sympathy "the detachment is felt from objective fact but not from subjective fact" (352). Although I am not affected by the terrifying object of which he is afraid, I am still affected by the "subjective fact" of his feeling fear of the terrifying tiger. Hence sympathy is not yet the feeling *par excellence* that is supposed to be free on both objective and subjective dimensions. Bhattacharyya therefore goes on to consider the possibility of "sympathy with sympathy" in contrast with simple sympathy. What happens in such a higher-order sympathy with simple sympathy, what happens is that "my sympathy with a [second] person's sympathy for a third person's feeling [of an object] is unaffected by the feeling" (ibid.). This is because higher-order sympathy involves a corresponding higher-order imagination of the imagined feeling of the second person who sympathizes with the third person's feeling of the object.

Consequently, what the higher-order sympathizer imagines is an imagined feeling, a feeling imagined by the second person as experienced by the third person in relation to an object. And the imagined feeling, which is the direct object of higher-order sympathy, is already detached from the object of the primary, object-feeling. Hence the higher-order sympathizer is unaffected by the object-feeling of the third person, which is at two remove from this sympathizer. Higher-order sympathy is thus free both from the object and from the subjective state of the primary feeling of the object. It is therefore a 'free' feeling still higher, at the level of freedom, than the feeling of simple sympathy.

VII. DRAMATIC IMAGINATION AND CONTEMPLATIVE FEELING

What does the emphatic reference to freedom signify in Bhattacharyya's attempt to explain the nature of aesthetic experience in terms of sympathy with sympathy? Of course Bhattacharyya wants to show, through the demonstration of the feature of freedom, how aesthetic feeling is the feeling *par excellence*. But in my own terms the alleged freedom is to be understood as freedom from the

first-person perspective. This freedom refers to the impersonal subjectivity of aesthetic experience, in which the object is experienced without first-personal salience. Indeed, Bhattacharyya himself alludes to impersonality in explicating artistic sentiment and aesthetic enjoyment.

The allusion to the dissolution of personality in aesthetic experience is made by Bhattacharyya in the context of explicating aesthetic enjoyment in terms of *contemplative feeling*. Using a scheme of three grades of feeling—primary, sympathetic, and contemplative—Bhattacharyya identifies the feeling of higher-order sympathy (sympathy with sympathy) with contemplative feeling. If I sympathize with you sympathizing with her feeling something, then I experientially imagine your imagined feeling that you experience in sympathizing with her feeling something. While you are at one remove from the feeling of the object she actually experiences, I am twice removed from that factually based feeling and hence detached from the object of the feeling both objectively and subjectively. My imagined feeling is therefore experienced as a contemplative state. Being twice removed from the factual basis of the feeling, the feeling that I experience in imagining you feeling with her is, as it were, "floating in the air." Thus, my experience can only be regarded as a case of contemplative feeling.

If the feeling in question is twice removed from the factual object, it means all personal connection with that feeling is cut off, and the subjectivity of my experience is impersonal. "My personality is, as it were, dissolved . . . I freely become impersonal" (353). In this field of impersonal consciousness, the feeling can only occur at the free mental level of contemplation.

Bhattacharyya invokes the notion of contemplation as a mode of mental engagement with the aesthetic object. It is aesthetic contemplation that he characterizes as free and impersonal. Aesthetic contemplation has of course to have recourse to imagination inasmuch as the aesthetic object is imagined. But what is crucial is Bhattacharyya's suggestion that the subject of aesthetic experience or aesthetic enjoyment is a contemplative subject with a uniquely 'imaginary' status. He makes this subtle point in reference to contemplating a character in a drama.

While a character in a drama has to be imagined to be an actual person, it is not that I directly imagine the character to be an actual person. Rather, "I imagine *some one* imagining the character as an actual person and I sympathize with this imaginary 'some one' as the second person" (353, emphasis added). But who is this mysterious "someone"—an imaginary second person—who has been deputed, on my behalf, to be the subject imagining the character to be an actual person? Bhattacharyya answers: "The imaginary second person is not one particular person but *some one* or *any one* person. He has the value of a concept of a person in general: only here we have in the concept an efflux of feeling and not of the intellect. This person is felt—not thought—by me who am aesthetically contemplating. The felt-person-in-general may be semi-mythologically called the Heart Universal" (354).

Assuming that the character in a drama or a novel is fictional, I am required to imagine the character as actually living the life depicted in the fictional narrative. But for that I first imagine *myself* being a "universal" person, a subject of de-centered consciousness freed from the first-person perspective. In this transmutation of

personality from a particular "first-person" into an impersonal consciousness, I attain the adequacy of being a proper subject of aesthetic contemplation and aesthetic enjoyment. Only then do I appreciate, and emotionally respond to, the eventful life of the dramatic character. Bhattacharyya makes the point in clear terms: "Artistic enjoyment is not a feeling of the enjoyer on his own account; it involves a dropping of self-consciousness, while the feeling that is enjoyed . . . is freed from its reference to an individual subject" (ibid.).

The realization of the subjectivity of impersonal consciousness—the universal "someone" without first-personal individuality—is said to be a matter of affective experience rather than of intellectual contemplation. When I engage in aesthetic contemplation, I free my consciousness from its anchorage in the first-personal constitution of my individual personality. It is in this state of freedom that I "whole-heartedly" identify myself with the impersonal subjectivity of the so-called person-in-general—the "Heart Universal" that Bhattacharyya alludes to in the remark quoted above.

What I have called the "secondary self" in my explanation of aesthetic experience is the same impersonal subject of aesthetic contemplation that is referred to by Bhattacharyya as the "imaginary second person" who is a person-in-general. Bhattacharyya's ingenious description of the difference between the first person and the second person in his three-person scheme of explanation is a proper articulation of the significant discontinuity that I emphasized earlier between the primary (nonaesthetic) self and the secondary self of aesthetic experience.

Emotionally responding to a character in a drama or novel is, thus, an experience owed to the (imaginatively) contemplating self of impersonal subjectivity. Much as the contemplating subject is free from first-personal subjectivity, so also the emotion experienced in appreciating the plight of the fictional character is "free from the entanglement of fact" in being a feeling *in* imagination. Being free from "factual entanglement" and entertained in contemplative imagination, the (fictional) emotional experience is sui generis as an affective experience lacking in first-personal salience.

There is a striking similarity between Bhattacharyya's Indian aesthetic theory of art-emotion and its Western counterpart in T. S. Eliot. Talking about the "expression of *significant* emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet," Eliot writes: "The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done."[10] Here Eliot is alluding to the same notion of impersonal subjectivity, but of the poet rather than of the reader or the appreciator of a work of poetic or dramatic fiction. However, what applies to the poet or creator of the work in expressing a "significant" emotion in a work of fiction also applies, at least in the general spirit of entering into the possible world of artistic fiction, to the responsive appreciator of the work. Indeed, impersonality is a common mark of the subjectivity both of the creative artist and of the responsive appreciator of works of fiction. While Eliot is trying to articulate the impersonality of the creative artist in depicting "significant" art-emotions, Bhattacharyya's attempt is to bring to limelight the same feature of subjectivity from the appreciative perspective of aesthetic enjoyment.

Eliot's "poetics of impersonality" or the impersonal theory of poetry invokes another important notion that dovetails with Bhattacharyya's notion of the "Heart Universal" used in the explication of aesthetic-experiential impersonality. What is crucial to poetic impersonality is that "the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a *medium* and not a *personality*, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways" (ibid., p. 42, emphases added). Construing poetic subjectivity as an impersonal medium contrasted with individual personality is tantamount to the universalization of subjectivity. The universal poetic self is then capable of artistic depiction of human emotions in a form that can find their appreciation in impersonal affective response to the work.

Now, the significant form in which a poetic or artistic emotion finds its creative expression through the impersonal medium of poetic subjectivity is amenable to apprehension and appreciation by the impersonal "Heart Universal" of an aesthetic contemplator. In other words, the appreciative response to the depicted emotion is an affective experience that occurs in a mode of consciousness, which is more a universal "medium" of subjectivity than a particular locus of the first-person perspective.[11]

VIII. SUBJECTIVITY WITHOUT OWNERSHIP

If aesthetic emotions are experienced in the universal mode of consciousness-as-medium rather than in the individual mode of consciousness-as-personality—if such a "depersonalization" of subjectivity is a condition of adequacy for aesthetic experience—then it can arguably be held that perhaps these emotions lack individual ownership. Surely a "Heart Universal" is not a personal subject, and yet it represents a subjective medium for the occurrence of affective experience in response to art. Aesthetic experiences or art-emotions therefore must themselves be *nonindividuated* feelings lacking in first-personal salience. The impersonal subjective medium is, as it were, a center-less emotional space for these feelings to occur. These are "free" emotions in that there is no egocentric tie by which they are tied to individual subjects.

It would be right to say that "free" aesthetic emotions are so-called because of their "distilled" and "transmuted" essence. What makes these emotions sui generis is precisely their place in personality-transcendent consciousness of aesthetic experience. Distilled of egocentric first-personal salience and entertained in contemplative imagination, aesthetic emotions are a transmutation of ordinary emotions into what might be called *essence-illuminating* emotions. Whether it is the depiction of sorrow, love, jealousy, hatred, guilt, fear, repentance, or agony, the contemplative appreciation of affective response to such an artistic depiction is an emotional experience that illuminates *what it is like* to be in any such emotional state. That illumination of course comes from sympathizing with the depicted human condition. But the affective subjectivity of this sympathy is impersonal because of the subject's stance of impersonal distance with regard to the character or situation.

Emotional essence-illumination must be a central feature and objective of the artistic enterprise and aesthetic endeavor. A work of fiction does not depict a particular emotion so that the reader or audience can re-experience it or merely identify with it. Art is not an imitation of life, because the mimetic intention of art is the transfiguration of life that yields the possibility of illuminating appreciation of the human condition. When, for example, Shakespeare's *Othello* depicts jealousy and Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* depicts human suffering born of deep alienation, the fictional narrative makes available to us the possibility of experiencing these emotional states in their essences, that is, what jealousy or suffering from self-alienation essentially is. Certainly such an aesthetic experience is expected to be emotionally illuminating precisely because the poignancy of the feeling is often a startling revelation of the human condition, whether it is affected by jealousy or suffering.

If I experience, from impersonal distance, the what-it-is-like essence of fear or love or sorrow or anger, then of course I am not a personal subject of this impersonal essence-illuminating emotional experience. This experience occurs *in* me without being an experience *of* me; I am just a "medium" in Elliot's sense, although the "current" of sympathetic imagination flows through this medium of consciousness. Isn't it therefore a case of "ownerless emotion"—an emotion that belongs to no individual subject—even though the subjective space of the individual provides the locus of the emotion? Wouldn't it be right to say, therefore, that both Eliot and Bhattacharyya are professing a theory of aesthetic emotion that implicates them in endorsing the idea of ownerless emotion? Is this a case of emotional subjectivity without a particular subject of the emotional experience?

In a recent article dealing with the classical Indian theory of aesthetic relish (*Rasa*), Arindam Chakrabarti[12] finds it pertinent to raise the following question: "When the audience in a play or film, the reader of a narrative poem, or the viewer of a representational painting relishes a certain work of art, whose emotion is it that they relish or taste" (p. 190)? With a disclaimer that is acknowledgedly wedded to Abhinavagupta's aesthetic theory,[13] Chakrabarti answers that "the specially transmuted, suggested, distilled or distanced emotion that is relished in aesthetic experience *does not have any particular owner*" (ibid., emphasis original).[14]

Denial of ownership to aesthetic emotion is a provocative theoretical gesture, because the idea of aesthetic relish or taste clearly refers to a personal subject who has the relishing experience. But the truth is quite otherwise. Aesthetic relish can be of negative emotions such as grief and disgust as much as it can be of positive emotions such as love and exhilaration. It is unintelligible how any normal subject can find such emotions enjoyable from the personal stance. It seems theoretically compelling to say therefore that there must be a transformation of subjectivity from the personal stance to that of the impersonal. So the possibility of aesthetic enjoyment, especially the enjoyment of tragedy, must be predicated on impersonal subjectivity. What enables us to savor the depiction of the tragic (as well as the ugly or disgusting) is our attunement to center-less subjectivity.

Besides, what makes an aesthetic emotion a relishing experience is its essence-illuminating content. The phenomenology of aesthetic experience is largely shaped

by the essence-illuminating character of an aesthetic emotion. What I enjoy in appreciating, for instance. Although the no-ownership theory seems compelling in view of the impersonal character of art-emotional subjectivity, it still remains a moot question whether subjectivity without individuality is tantamount to ownerless subjectivity. The notion of a 'centre-less non-singular subjectivity' is arguably forced upon us, according to Chakrabarti, once we understand the phenomenology of art-appreciation. But, is center-less subjectivity ontologically incompatible with selfhood altogether? Of course the self is usually represented as that ontological "point" at which consciousness is centered, which is the locus of the first-person perspective. In this sense, center-less subjectivity implies the constrasting idea of subjectivity without a subject-self. But the radically alternative idea of a *de*-centered self is not just consistent with the idea of center-less subjectivity; it is in fact a legitimate candidate to qualify as a *reflexive* owner of center-less, nonindividual or nonsingular subjectivity. What is to be argued out is the claim that the notion *de-centered self* is not an oxymoron.

IX. CENTER-LESS SUBJECTIVITY AND DE-CENTERED SELF

Center-less subjectivity is not a prima facie condition of consciousness. It is a form of subjectivity *attained* by the self by virtue of objective detachment. As an individual self, I am capable of stepping back from my individual, first-personal viewpoint that defines and constitutes my personal subjectivity. The centered viewpoint, from which I initiate this objective process of self-detachment, is presented as just one of the innumerable individual subjective viewpoints that coexist in a world of common humanity. This means that the earlier, precritical perspective of the centered self comes under critical review as soon as I adopt the center-less view toward it. It also means that I am as much a subject of the center-less view as of the precritical view of centered subjectivity.

Thomas Nagel[15] identifies the subject of the center-less view with what he calls the "objective self" and writes: "Each of us, then, in addition to being an ordinary person, is a particular objective self, the subject of a perspectiveless conception of reality" (pp. 63–64). This assertion does not imply that there is an extraordinary person of nonperspectival consciousness somehow attached to every ordinary person. It just means that there is more to me and my subjectivity than the personal self of my ordinary perspectival engagement in the world. Impersonal subjectivity is an extension of me inasmuch as this extension occurs within the field of consciousness I inhabit as a person.

Attaining impersonal subjectivity is a dramatic experience, says Nagel. "What happens when I consider the world objectively is that an aspect of my [Thomas Nagel] identity comes into prominence which was previously concealed and which produces a sense of detachment from the world. It then comes to seem amazing that I am in fact attached to it at any particular point" (p. 65). The amazement is produced by the objective discovery that my personal subjectivity, and the sense of

personal identity consequent upon that subjectivity, is not an ineluctable condition of my being.

Nagel's objective self is construed as the subject of a center-less view of the world understood as the *view from nowhere* altogether. "The pursuit of objectivity requires the cultivation of a rather austere universal objective self. While we can't free it entirely of infection with a particular human view and a particular historical stage, it represents a direction of possible development toward a universal conception and away from a parochial one" (p. 63). In other words, objectivity does not stop at stepping back from the individual-centric, intrasubjective point of view and realizing the species-specific, intersubjective human point of view as such. Rather, the center-less view is far more abstract and requires the objective self to step back from the entire human perspective, including any possible perspective of sentient existence. What would possibly be left to the objective self once the process of detachment is taken to the maximally possible extent is a kind of indeterminate universal consciousness purged of all forms of parochial or perspectival subjectivity.

Admittedly, objectivity as the "view from nowhere" is the so-called God's eye standpoint (*sub specie aeternitatis*) and only an ideal which sets the direction of the pursuit of objectivity. As far as the objectivity of impersonal subjectivity is concerned, it is the narrower, species-specific, intersubjective viewpoint of our common humanity, of *being a human person* as such. It is a kind of metaphysical ascent of the self from the personal to the impersonal. But it is not a transition from the subjective self to an objective no-self, because the self persists so long as subjectivity—including impersonal subjectivity—persists. After all, impersonal subjectivity is a mode of being in the world; that is, there is something it is like, experientially speaking, to be in the impersonal mode of consciousness. Thus, talk about the phenomenology of art-appreciation in terms of impersonal subjectivity forces us to recognize the objective self as a nonindividual subject of aesthetic experience.

It may be contended that the so-called objective self is purely a subject of the abstract conception of a center-less world and, thus, not a subject of *experience*. A center-less world is not an object of experience; it rather is an object of intellectual thought. Hence, the argument continues, this 'abstract' self cannot be a subject of aesthetic experience. Shouldn't this argument make it more appropriate, therefore, to make the claim that the impersonal subjectivity of aesthetic emotion is a case of ownerless emotion?

The objective self is of course the subject of a highly abstract thought. But the abstract thought of a center-less world is not merely intellectually entertained; the occurrence of the thought is also an *experience* of impersonal subjectivity. That is to say, this thought occurs in the experiential mode of realizing *what it is like* to relate to the world as a de-centered self. In other words, the objective self has a subjective life in the mode of impersonal subjectivity. It is an impersonal *subject* of experience.

Indeed, subjectivity as such is reflexive. The reflexivity of personal subjectivity is the egocentric self-awareness identified as the first-person perspective. That is, the individual subject is reflexively aware of its first-personal subjectivity. Impersonal subjectivity, on the other hand, is equally reflexive, but the reflexive awareness is

not *individual* self-awareness. This self-awareness or reflexivity is not anchored to a nonfungible individual center of consciousness, which is the locus of the first-person perspective. Rather, it is reflexive awareness of adopting the objective stance of impersonal detachment from the individual locus of subjectivity. Underpinning the objective stance is the de-centered self that is aware of its center-less subjectivity.

Talk about reflexive awareness of center-less subjectivity certainly sounds recondite unless center-less self-awareness is posited as an ideal for the pursuit of objectivity. But objective detachment, including aesthetic disinterestedness and impersonal art-appreciative engagement with the fictional, would make very poor sense unless we invoke the seemingly arcane notion of center-less subjectivity. Eliot's poetics of impersonality, as we have seen, provides the theoretical basis of art-emotions. But that theory can be read as making a hesitant allusion to center-less subjectivity in the guise of complete surrender of personality to the work. Bhattacharyya's semi-mythological "Heart Universal" is a more direct illustration of how the aesthetic contemplator turns into a subject of center-less awareness of emotions depicted in art. Chakrabarti brings the Western insight of Eliot to bear on the classical *Rasa*-aesthetic theory in its modernized version crafted by Bhattacharyya. He advocates the centrality of the idea of center-less subjectivity in the understanding of aesthetic emotion and, accordingly, claims art-emotional experience to be illustrative of subjectivity without a subject.

In this chapter I have traversed a path not very different from the one treaded by these three thinkers: Bhattacharyya, Eliot, and Chakrabarti. But I have tried to argue, *pace* Chakrabarti, that just because aesthetic emotions are phenomenologically marked by impersonal subjectivity, they do not float free of any subject of experience. If aesthetic impersonal subjectivity primarily consists in experiencing the what-it-is-like essence of emotions depicted in art works, there must be an impersonal subject to be reflexively self-aware of the essence-illuminating experience. There is a de-centered self that underpins the impersonal subjectivity of aesthetic experience, and aesthetic emotions are predicated of this subject of center-less awareness.

NOTES

1. The contrast between belief and imagination is drawn out by Roger Scruton (1974) in terms of the linguistic notion of assertion. In *Art and Imagination* Scruton writes: "Clearly there are modes of thought that involve not the assertion of '*p*', but the more elusive ability simply to hold the proposition that *p* before one's mind, to entertain *p* as a possibility, or as a supposition. Indeed, much of our more complex thought processes—imagination, for one—are of this kind, and we know exactly what it is to say '*p*' unasserted" (p. 88). Inasmuch as belief that *p* entails assertion of *p*, believing involves commitment to truth, given the logical connection between assertion and truth. Imagination, being a species of unasserted thought, is indifferent to truth. Another way of describing this contrast would be distinguishing belief from make-believe.
2. While this relation between fiction and possible world is characterized in terms of the intentionality of imagination, it can be compared with the semantic characterization

of this relation provided by David Lewis in "Truth in Fiction," (Lewis 1983, pp. 261–80). A much more elaborate account of the semantic characterization within the framework of literary theory is Thomas Pavel's *Fictional Worlds* (Pavel 1986), especially Chapter 3, "Salient Worlds," pp. 43–72.

3. It is also apt to refer this phrase to the institutionalized cultural practice of fiction making as a creative enterprise in the world of art and aesthetics. The writer of a work of fiction is of course a disengaged mind imagining a possible world and populating it with fictional characters. And the fictional world is rendered alive by the author's skillful constructive manipulation of language. But in this chapter I am not so much concerned with the authorial sense of practicing fiction. My concern here is more with the disengaged self 's appreciative and emotional engagement with fictional worlds of works of fiction.
4. The "cognitive appraisal" theory of emotion is more in vogue in the literature of psychology, and the theorists of this psychological persuasion may be said to be the closest interdisciplinary counterpart of the philosophical cognitivists about the nature of emotion.
5. The cognitive theory of emotion has its provenance in Aristotle's *De Anima* and *Rhetoric*. Two important sources of the Aristotelian theory of emotion are Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (1996) and Fortenbaugh (2002). Contemporary works in the cognitivist tradition are far too many to be cited here. A few important ones are: Anthony Kenny (1963), Robert Solomon (1976), William Lyons (1980), Jerome Neu (2000), Martha Nussbaum (2001). My own adaptation of this theoretical understanding of emotion in the context of theorizing on the nature of ERF is to be found in Bijoy H. Boruah (1988).
6. The problem of incoherence and irrationality of one's emotional response to what one believes to be fictional objects is famously raised to philosophical prominence by Colin Redford in his "How Can We Be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?" (Radford, 1975). Various responses to Radford's provocative view have been presented and discussed in recent philosophy for the last fifty years. My own somewhat early contribution in this discussion is *Fiction and Emotion: A Study in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Mind*, referred to in footnote 5. Subsequent discussions, mostly in journal articles, by various philosophers are too many to be mentioned here. The discussion is conceptualized as the "paradox of fiction" and some important books dealing with this paradox are: E. M. Dadlez (1997), Mette Hjort and Sue Laver (1997), and R. J. Yanal (1999).
7. The extension of the concept *emotion* beyond the ontological boundary of the real into the fictional is analogous to the concept *wish*. We not only wish to be what is really possible to be, for example, the president of the United States of America or the next Miss Universe. We also wish, although seldom, to be what is fictionally possible, for example, a mermaid or a superman. Both these concepts are different, in this (ontological) regard, from the concept *perception*, which has no extension beyond the ontological boundary of actuality. One cannot coherently talk about perceiving what one knows to be fictional, in the way one *can* talk about wishing to be something, or feeling sad about somebody, one knows is fictional.

8. The source of Schopenhauer's views on aesthetic contemplation is Book III of his magnum opus *The World as Will and Representation: Volume I* (Schopenhauer 1996).
9. Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya, "The Concept of Rasa," in (Bhattacharyya 1983, p. 349). All subsequent page references of quotations from Bhattacharyya in the text are to this book.
10. T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in (Eliot, 1975, p. 44). It is important to add here what further remarks are made by Eliot in articulating the poetics of impersonality. He writes: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality" (ibid., p. 43). This escape from personality is not, of course, an escape from subjectivity altogether. Rather, subjectivity is purged of personality and turned into an impersonal medium for entirely new modes of possible experience.
11. Bhattacharyya's own assertion relevant to this comparison with Eliot's reference to poetic subjectivity in terms of the "medium" contrasted with personality is the following: "Every feeling that is depicted in art is contemplated as reflected in or sympathised with by this Heart Universal and the person who contemplates the feeling [i.e., the aesthetic contemplator] merges his personal or private heart in this ubiquity" (p. 354).
12. "Play, Pleasure, Pain: Ownerless Emotions in Rasa-Aesthetics," in (Chakraborti, 2009). All parenthetical page references of Chakrabarti's remarks in the text are to this article.
13. Abhinavagupta's (950–1020 CE) most important work on the philosophy of art is *Abhinavabhāratā*—a long and complex commentary on *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata Muni. An authoritative version of that work is R. Gnoli (1968).
14. In professing the no-ownership theory of aesthetic emotion, Chakrabarti draws upon both Eliot and Bhattacharyya in regard to their ideas on art-appreciation. Apparently, their ideas—Eliot's poetics of impersonality and Bhattacharyya's "Heart Universal"—lend support to the no-ownership interpretation. It can arguably be claimed, as Chakrabarti does, that "the notion of a centre-less non-singular subjectivity seems to be forced upon us if we attend to the phenomenology of art-appreciation" (ibid.). However, this interpretation cannot escape the challenge that, after all, the appreciative, essence-illuminating emotional experience might still be said to belong to the ego-less self of the appreciator. I try to pursue this observation here.
15. Nagel (1986), Chapter IV, "The Objective Self," pp. 54–66. Subsequent paginations of quoted passages from Nagel all refer to this work.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bhattacharyya, Krishnachandra, *Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. I, ed. Gopinath Bhattacharyya. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983.

Boruah, Bijoy H., *Fiction and Emotion: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press and Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

Chakraborti, Arindam, "Play, Pleasure, Pain: Ownerless Emotions in Rasa-Aesthetics," in Dev (2009), Chapter 14, 2009, pp. 189–202.

Dadlez, E. M., *What's Hecuba to Him? Fictional Events and Actual Emotion*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.
Dev, Amiya, *Project of History of Indian Science, Philosophy and Culture, Volume XV, Part 3*, (PHISPC). New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilizations, 2009.
Eliot, T. S., *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt, 1975.
Fortenbaugh, W. W., *Aristotle on Emotion* (second edn). London: Duckworth, 2002.
Gnoli, R., *The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta*. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1968.
Hjort, Mette and Laver, Sue (eds.), *Emotion and the Arts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
Kenny, Anthony, *Action, Emotion and Will*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963.
Lewis, David, *Philosophical Papers*,Volume I. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.
Lyons, William, *Emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
Neu, Jerome, *A Tear Is an Intellectual Thing: The Meaning of Emotions*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
Nussbaum, Martha, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
Pavel, Thomas, *Fictional Worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.
Radford, Colin, "How can We be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume*, No. 49 (1975), pp. 67–80.
Rorty, Amelie Oksenbeg (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
Schopenhauer, Arthur, *The World as Will and Representation*: *Volume I*, trans. Eric. F. J. Payne. New York: Dover Publications, 1969.
Scruton, Roger, *Art and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind*. London: Methuen, 1974.
Solomon, Robert, *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976.
Yanal, R. J., *Paradoxes of Emotion and Fiction*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Refining the Repulsive: Toward an Indian Aesthetics of the Ugly and the Disgusting

ARINDAM CHAKRABARTI

I. AESTHETIC THINKING WITHOUT CLEAN BORDERS

The *concept of the ugly* is as disturbing for an aesthetic theory as encountering actual brute *ugliness* is for us in life. One doesn't know how to think or feel in the presence of the hideous. If the beautiful comes with a claim to our attention and admiration, the ugly comes with a challenge to either cover or avert our eyes or be repulsed by our own repulsion. For a sensitive thinker-feeler, a challenge is always more interesting than an invitation. Hence the abhorrence tends to turn into a secret attraction. The ugly demands as much serious attention from aesthetics as the wrong and the bad receives from ethics. Aesthetic experience is clearly not bivalent like classical logic. Besides the beautiful and the ugly, the scale of aesthetic evaluation includes rather than excludes an entire middle range. The indifferent, the plain, the quotidian, the boring, the kitschy, and other middles blur the line of demarcation between the lovely and the hideous. Whatever is not attractive is not necessarily repulsive, for there is the huge intermediate zone of the humdrum. What does not delight us need not disgust us. The negation in words such as "unlovely," "unsightly," and "unattractive" means something stronger than mere lack or absence. In Sanskrit also, *a-sundara* means worse than not beautiful; it means *kutista*—positively hideous, deserving disparagement (*kutsā*). But should aesthetics pay attention to all that lies in the middle and left of the range of the pleasing right side of this scale, from the plainly "blah" to the nauseatingly cadaverous? Usually aesthetics in general and Indian aesthetics in particular are thought to be concerned with the beautiful. Indian phenomenology of art is supposed to deal with what it is like to relish that special cognitive-emotional state stimulated by good poetry, good music, good dance, good drama, good painting or good sculpture, and so on. But, this chapter tries

to show how Indian aesthetics makes room for a relishable representation of the ugly and a special aesthetic savoring of disgust. As an essay, it has many beginnings and no end. It is not endless, and hopefully it does not illustrate its own topic, but its conclusion too is a failed attempt at another beginning. How something can be disgustingly ugly and yet an object of aesthetic experience therefore, remains an open question till the end. In an essay on the ugly such theory-repelling inconclusiveness may be quite apt. A philosophy of ugliness should at least not be conceptually elegant. If we can appreciate the artistic excellence of a representation of an uncouth old man with gaps in his teeth, we should be able to admire the unkempt structure of a theory of ugliness. "Beauty has only one form," Victor Hugo commented, "ugliness has thousands." Because, while there might well be a single unified way of collecting varieties of the beautiful under one, perhaps disjunctive, universal definition, there are admittedly endless ways of failing to be beautiful and of being positively ugly, recalcitrant to any unified definition. The "aesthetic of the repulsive" therefore would have to capture that untidy array of unexpected shocking counterexamples to any alleged criteria of what good art can represent. A recent illustrated book on the ugly is subtitled, "The Aesthetics of Everything" (Bayley, 2013), apparently giving up the attempt at any subdivision of the class of ugly things, or even any attempt to distinguishing it from the beautiful, for the unlovely abhors taxonomy or demarcation. Metaphysically, the clichéd equation of beauty and truth tempts us to equate the ugly with the false (not to be confused with the unreal). Of course, a certain nondualistic Vedantic line of reasoning that considers only pure subjective consciousness to be real, would commit all that is "objective" to the ontological garbage of Maya or falsity. The world that drowns us in suffering is unlovely, at least to reflective discriminating people; even pleasure is pain in disguise, and all worldly beauties have an ugly underbelly; hence it cannot be determinately described to fit either in the class of good or bad, reality or unreality, caused things or uncaused, substantial or insubstantial. Hence it is *anirvacaniya*, neither real nor unreal, which is what makes it "false" in the technical Advaita Vedānta sense! And calling ugliness false, of course, has interesting consequences for an ethics of transcending the pretty/ugly dichotomy, such that even all the beautiful things in the world could be listed under the ugly/false because ignorance-constituted objects of experience.

Thus, even the most comprehensive catalog of all ugly phenomena gravitates toward being chaotic, cacophonous, and crazy. Including smelly shoes and spilled sealing wax, side by side with rancid body odor of a once beautiful woman and a florid maudlin romantic poem or an opulent Las Vegas hotel, the class of ugly entities is logically slovenly, disheveled and hellishly higgledy-piggledy. It better not be a neat taxonomy.

In order to justify my method of applying a Sanskrit/Indian theory of aesthetics of disgust to account for Western examples of the ugly and the disgusting in art and poetry, let me begin with one academic anecdote.

About fourteen years ago, when I first presented the Indian aesthetic of disgust and the ugly to an European audience (in Certosa di Pontignano belonging to University of Sienna, Italy), a senior professor of aesthetics and history of art, seeing my slides, for example, of the Gandhara style sculpture of the skeleton-like emaciated Buddha, commented that this kind of aestheticization of the hideous or repulsive body must be peculiar to Indian art or Indian ascetic sensibility because in Europe art is all about beauty and attractiveness.

Ironically, my final example of a "beautiful" story about St Catharine's dedication to caring for the sick (see this chapter, below), had vivid images of her drinking her own vomit and (Christ's) blood, and Santa Catarina happened to be Sienna's presiding saint!

I felt a special kick in responding to those initial cultural relativist objections with my wealth of European examples where the Indian philosophical aesthetics of disgust could be applied in very illuminating ways.

Baudelaire refines the repulsive in his own unmistakable style, in a tone that matches the fascination that Kshemendra the Sanskrit cynical poet has with the story of an old prostitute who puts on heavy make-up to hide her ageing body (in the eleventh-century Sanskrit verse-novella *Samayamātrkā*). Both seem to have the same communicative design: to expose the hypocrisy of "genteel" readers. Here is Baudelaire:

> Like a penniless rake who with kisses and bites
> Tortures the breast of an old prostitute,
> We steal as we pass by a clandestine pleasure
> That we squeeze very hard like a dried up orange.
> Serried, swarming, like a million maggots,
> A legion of Demons carouses in our brains,
> And when we breathe, Death, that unseen river,
> Descends into our lungs with muffled wails.

When we ask "How would a rasa-theorist explain the beauty of Goya's painting *Saturn Eating His Own Child*, a prior question is likely to arise. "Is it legitimate," asks a closeted Orientalist of sorts, "to take an ancient or mediaeval Indian theory of art-experience and try to explain a modern European painting in its terms? Isn't the cultural baggage of the former totally incommensurable to the complex semiotic milieu of the latter?" Without entering the larger issue of cultural relativism within the hermeneutics of art, I want to point out that the reverse has been done only too often. Thanks to well-theorized but irresistible epistemological colonization, Oriental literary or artistic practices have been and still are "interpreted" through Occidental theories, partly because it is regarded as a truism that any "theory" would have to be European. Even cultural contrasts are noted with a European vantage point. It seems more apt to call the architecture of Dilwara Temple, in Mount Abu, similar to but not quite Baroque, than to judge Hamlet as not a *dhīrodātta nayaka*. The histories of anthropology and sociology in the West are histories of explaining Oriental raw data with the help of Western pure theories—didn't Husserl remark that the Oriental mind is too crude and preoccupied with the practical to fashion pure theories? Right now, even the postcolonial South Asian experts apply Freud, Marx, Foucault, Walter Benjamin, Max Weber, Gramsci, Julia Kreisteva, and Agamben, to understand Indian art, religion, politics, poetry, purity-pollution taboos, and so on. I think it is time we tried the cross-cultural enterprise the other way. An earlier generation of "admirers" of the East believed or at least would have us believe that there simply are no dry, complicated theories of aesthetics in India: there are only those juicy uncensored poems, voluptuous erotic sculptures on the temple-walls and cave-frescos of full-bodied damsels in

Ajanta, and a bunch of blissed out Tantrics and Yogis who tell us to transcend all theoretical disputes and pass straight from Kamasutra postures and Tantric rituals to Nirvana or Samadhi, skipping all "why" questions! We now know better. If we have to test and rejuvenate by creative criticism and adaptation those numerous intricate theories of making, communicating, enjoying, suffering, interpreting, and assessing art that are already available in Sanskrit theoretical literature, then we must try it out on the literally outlandish examples and see if they work. The cultural difference between Elizabethan England and ancient Greece did not stop anyone from trying out Aristotle's theory of catharsis or mimesis on King Lear. Of course, the theories need to be changed and enriched to fit examples undreamt of by the original philosophers of art living in radically different times and places. But that is no reason to freeze the ancient theories with their own local and contemporary examples or to be skeptical about the point of assessing Yeates's work by the interpretive tools of Ānandavardhana. Especially at a time when philosophers have loosened up considerably about finding the "correct meaning" of a work of art and are not always looking for what the poet or artist herself meant, the possibility that a ramified *rasa*-theory may unravel the mystery of how a creepy face of an obese man made of skinned dead chicken be the subject of a masterly painting by Arcimboldo.[1] Now back to disgust.

II. THE BEAUTIFUL REPUGNANT?

Let me start by sharing one of the most powerful short stories of Sadaat Hasan Manto, written originally in Urdu, about the violent aftermath of the partition of India. Manto wrote many heart-rending stories about the insane communal violence that raged over both India and Pakistan immediately after 1947 when the revenge-cycles between Hindus and Muslims claimed thousands of innocent lives. This is one of them:

II.1. Jelly

> At six in the morning, the man who used to sell ice from a push-cart next to the service-station was stabbed to death. His body lay on the road, while water kept falling on it in steady driblets from the melting ice. At quarter past seven, the police took him away. The ice and the blood stayed on the road. A mother and child rode past the spot in a *tonga*. The child noticed the coagulated blood on the road, tugged at his mother's sleeve and said, "Look mummy, jelly."

I am repulsed even to imagine clots of human blood mixed with melted ice looking like edible jelly to a child. It suggests cannibalism. The clear hint that the blood is from an innocent victim of mass ethnic violence adds moral nausea to my gut-disgust. I take no masochistic delight in painful revulsion or abomination. Yet, I *like* the story as a work of art. I would even say that it is a *beautiful* story. Why?

The puzzle of the hideous in art can be stated somewhat naively but neatly in the form of a seemingly inconsistent trio:

(A) Positive aesthetic experience is a special cognitive-affective-creative response to the beautiful.
(B) The disgusting or the ugly is simply opposed to the beautiful.
(C) Yet, good paintings, plays, or poems about the disgusting or the ugly are quite normally objects of positive aesthetic experience, in the West as well as the East, in ancient as well as modern times.

The puzzle does not look threatening at all because it seems that we can question each of the three propositions constituting it. Aesthetic reaction need not require that the object be beautiful or pleasing in any ordinary sense.

This mildly funny and vaguely tongue-in-cheek recent comedy show makes the point that the ugly is the new beautiful. Umberto Eco has come up with a history of the different varieties of the ugly as a subject for European paintings. The analyses and the illustrations in that book show clearly that there is nothing very new or twenty-first century about this phenomenon, which could be described either as the aestheticization of the hideous or, as Lewis Carroll's wise caterpillar put it, artistic or philosophical uglification of the beautiful. What I would like to explore in this chapter is whether the ugly and the repulsive has not always had an important place in Indian Aesthetic theory, without dislodging the beautiful from its central place in the practice and theory of art.

A bird slain by a cruel hunter in the middle of their love-play is not a delightful or pretty sight. Yet that is classically known as the situation prompting the aesthetic experience expressed in the primordial "first poem" in Sanskrit composed spontaneously by Valmiki the author of Rāmāyaṇa. So, proposition (A) can easily be contested. One can understand how tragic fear and pity, a hunted bird or—to change Shakespeare's plot a little—even a deformed dwarfish Desdemona killed in the midst of her love or similar sad images, can become beautified through poetic inspiration. Once this is conceded, the sharp opposition between the ugly and the beautiful also tends to disappear. Although poems or paintings dealing with shriveled senile bodies, repulsive situations, or hideous objects are rarer than those about charmingly young bodies, balmy beautiful blossoms or sublime sunsets, a gifted artist can take it as a challenge to metamorphose what is ordinarily rejected by us as abject, filthy, or uncouth into something aesthetically approvable and even attractive. Thus proposition (B) seems shaky too.

Both these propositions, I am told, have been rejected by Rosenkranz who taught us that aesthetic experience has very little to do with the beautiful and that the opposition between the ugly and the beautiful is utterly spurious.

Finally, the third proposition does not quite claim that the direct object of aesthetic experience could be disgusting or ugly. It does not say that even *ugly paintings* could be beautiful; nor does it claim that encountering human feces or corpses just like that without any spiritual or artistic preparation or purpose could become an aesthetic experience. What it says is that there can be a beautiful painting of an ugly object, that we can have a positive aesthetic experience out of a poem or painting *about* a hideous object. It is not the snub-nosed bulgy-eyed Socrates or Diego Rivera, or a man turned to a cockroach or the smashed head of a harpooned whale that is enjoyed

as good art, but only the sculpture or story depicting or describing those repulsive objects. It is perfectly un-mysterious how the head can be ugly but the representation can be beautiful. When Vasari wrote that he loved the drawing by Leonardo called Scaramuccia, he was not implying that he would love to see—let alone have—such a deformed face.

The disgusting cannot be beautiful, but can the disgusting be represented in a beautiful or in a sublime way? Sublime is a category that Kant associates with displeasure, fear, and wonder.

III. THE CAPTIVATINGLY CRINGE-WORTHY

Yet, after the paradox is logically dissolved, there remains, nonetheless, a philosophically ponderable matter. Aesthetic relish is after all an experience worthy of being repeated and shared. How can such a desirable re-liveable experience take, even through the distancing devices of literary or artistic make-believe or mimesis, what is so utterly revolting as the open oozing sores of a leper's body or the rotting carcass of a prostitute on the street as its object. How can we love so much to imagine or see the depiction of what we loathe so much! For, even the art-mediated experience requires imagining what it is like to be in the presence of such nauseating things. Pornographic enjoyment of disgusting sights—in which I would include present-day television pornography of poverty and violence in the third world—can be brushed aside as kinky or perverted. But there is nothing perverted about Baudelaire's poem *A Carrion* :

> Her legs flexed in the air like a courtesan,
> Burning and sweating venomously,
> Calmly exposed its belly, ironic and wan,
> Clamourous with foul ecstasy . . .
> . . . And that almighty stink which corpses wear
> Choked you with sleepy power!
> The flies swarmed on the putrid vulva, then
> A black tumbling rout would seethe
> Of maggots, thick like a torrent in a glen,
> Over those rags that lived and seemed to breathe.

The poem ends with a reminder to the beloved angelic woman accompanying the poet as he sees this decomposing dead body, that even her heavenly beauty must speak to this dire putrid flesh, to the worm that shall kiss even her proud estate:

> When through her bones the flowers and sucking grass/
> Weave their rank cerement.

Judging this poem by Sanskrit aesthetics, one would have to notice that there is an interplay of two relishable savors in this work of art: the hideous (*bibahtsa*) and the tranqil (*śānta*). The stable sentiment behind the hideous is disgust (*jugupsa*) and the stable sentiment behind the tranquil is meditative world-weariness or stoic

dispassion (*vairagya*). Baudelaire almost echoes what the seventh-century Buddhist philosopher Santideva wrote in his "Perfection of Meditation":

> You had passion for this pouch of filth when it was covered over,
> So why dislike it now that it is uncovered?
> / . . . Seeing this pile of meat being devoured by vultures—
> Do you think what is food for worms should be worshipped with jewellery?

(*Bodhicaryavatara* viii/47–51)

My second example comes from the twentieth-century Bengali novelist Manik Bandyopadhyaya. His celebrated short story *Primeval* is about a criminal suffering from gangrene who takes to begging and falls in love with a young lame beggar-woman who has leprosy. The heroine of the story is introduced in these words:

> A beggar woman begged at the mouth of the bazaar. She was still young with a supple body, but had a thick slimy, jelly-like sore on one leg from the knee down to the sole of her foot, which helped her to earn more than Bhikhu ever did and was the reason she was particularly careful to keep it unhealed.

After the old male partner of this beggar woman is murdered in a gruesome way by the lover-beggar Bikhu, like Raskolnikov, robs all his saved up money and runs away with Panchi the leper girl. The story ends with these unforgettable lines:

"Panchi put her arms round his neck and hung on his back. Bhikhu leaned forward under her weight but walked fast enough. A sickle moon climbed the far sky from behind the village trees. A quiet stillness reigned upon God's earth. It is the selfsame moon, perhaps, that still visits the earth. But the stream of darkness which Bhikhu and Panchi inherited from their mother's womb, nursed deep inside themselves, and which would now live hidden under the fleshy folds of their offspring is indeed primordial. This darkness has ever defied the light of the earth in the past and will ever defy it in the future." This last passage, I would call "sublime" in Kant's sense.

The aesthetic savor exuded by this story seems to be the *hideous*—the beggar woman always laughs showing big gaps between her black teeth—touched with a tranquil pathos. But it uses the stable emotions of disgust, erotic love, and sorrow with a transient gleam of the terrible during the murder scene to create a profoundly sobering sense of the inescapability of primordial evil. And what is most puzzling is that we do not need to revel in revulsion in order to "enjoy' this sort of literary art.

Before I attempt several solutions to the residual paradox: how the abhorrent become aesthetically arresting—let me give a quick gist of the phenomenology of art-experience in Classical Indian aesthetics.

IV. THE *RASA* FORMULA

It all begins with the cryptic recipe given by Bharata the first-century father of Indian dance and drama theory, a recipe for cooking emotions and spicing them delicately to produce aesthetically relishable cuisine. The cryptic formula is:

From the conjunction of determinant/ excitant causes, consequent/expressive effects and transient feelings, the relishable juice called "rasa" is realized.

In a drama or readable poem this can happen when the character or plot goes through excitants such as the death of a child, shows consequent features such as the mother weeping, crazily playing with the dead child's toys, and a series of passing states such as fainting, delusion, anxiety, feeling of emptiness, and so on. and the savor of tragic sorrow emerges out of these factors among the spectators. This account is then generalized for other art-media such as music and painting as well, with appropriate differences of modes of representation. Although the transitory emotions are classified into thirty-five distinct states such as pride, anxiety, languor, curiosity, oblivion, aggression, terror, bashfulness, lethargy, and so on, the major stable sentiments that are realized through this functional operation of the inputs (determinants) and outputs (consequents) and the transient accessories in between, are said to be eight or nine in number.

They are: Love, Laughing Mirth, Sorrow, Wrath, Valor, Fear, Astonishment, Disgust, and according to Abhinavagupta—most crucially—the special spiritual sentiment of tranquil Dispassion. But even a simple stable emotion (sthāyi bhāva) is not yet the fully relishable savor called "rasa." Only when this sentiment is delinked from any egoistic worldly pragmatic concern and depersonalized, then a certain heart, resonating in sympathy with other similar hearts, loses itself completely in the wondrous subjective tasting of the sentiment. Notice that it is not the stable sentiment that re-emerges out of the alchemical cuisine of determinants, consequents, and transient states, which is called "rasa," but only the inward yet unselfish intuitive experience of it. One or more of these stable sentiments are transmuted into one or more of the nine *rasa*-s, the special aesthetic genres of the Erotic, the Comic, the Pathetic, the Furious, the Heroic, the Terrible, the Wondrous, the Hideous, and the Peaceful. The original use of that term "rasa" ranges over a variety of interconnected meanings: a fluid that tends to spill, a taste such as sour, sweet, or salty, the soul or quintessence of something, a desire, a power, a chemical agent used in changing one metal into another, the life-giving sap in plants, and even poison! Almost all these distinct meanings are exploited at different junctures of the complex Aesthetic Phenomenology centering the concept of *rasa*. In the creation, appreciation, and interpretation of a particular work of art or even in a single poem, more than one of these savors could intermingle with a dominant one. And Bharata asserts that "in practice, there never is poetry born of a single rasa" (*Natya-Sastra* VII, 126). That is why disgust blends with horror in the macabre, on the one hand, and blends with laughter in the grotesque, on the other.

V. AESTHETIC DEPICTION OF DEFECATION, DECAPITATION, AND DEATH

The determinant/excitants of disgust are listed by the first-century text *NāṭyaŚāstra* 6/34 as follows:

"Perceiving or hearing about things hated from the bottom of one's heart, naturally unlovely such as foul smell or subjectively intolerable, filthy or soured

by satiety." The consequent expressions would be shrinking of all the limbs, covering of one's nose, grimaces of the face, tending to vomit, spitting, fidgeting and fanning of one's body etc. The transient states would include temporary amnesia, anxiety, swooning, and deadly sickness, or even death. Out of the functions of acting out or representing of such causes, effects and transient states, there arises a special mimetic awareness of that recognizable emotions latent in every human heart: disgust. Some aesthetes say that even when refined through drama, poetry or painting this stable sentiment called disgust is never relished as a "rasa." The reason we admire or are attracted to such a disgust-evoking theatre or poem, one could have a first guess, is that we admire the skill of the artist, the vividness of the imagination that the work can evoke in us. But Abhinavagupta takes a different and more daring stance. The rasa of the hideous, he would say, is not just a distilled or intensified or depersonalized form of the emergent stable emotion that is disgust. It is a supra-mundane (alaukika) self-savouring by the connoisseur's consciousness of the sheer creative freedom to feel every crevice and corner of life, to transmute the putrid into a "pure" reminder the body's mortality and corruptibility. Take this mediaeval Sanskrit poem (attributed to one Indrakavi):

Then, it was fragrant sandalwood-paste,
Sprinkled generously to perfume this very body –
Young and handsome.
Amorous glances of love-lazy crafty girls
Rested upon it like buzzing restless bees.
Now, as people look at that body guarded by
A thick net of vultures circling above
Worms creeping all over it,
They cover their noses.

What we admire in the original verse (in perfect seventeen-lettered meter) is not merely the artful juxtaposition of the contrasting images of glances of the girls and of the vultures, the fragrance and the stink, and the clever use of suggestion through consequents such as "covering of the noses," but the serene sense of ephemeralness of bodily attraction.

Even 900 years before Abhinavagupta, Bharata distinguished between two types of hideous: *due to anxiety* (*ksobha-ja*), associated with saliva, excreta, worms, slime, dirt; and *due to agitation (udvega-ja*), associated with blood, entrails, corpses, and so on. A good example of the first would be the poem by Yeats called "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop" that ends as follows:

A woman can be proud and stiff
When on love intent
But love has pitched his mansion in
The place of excrement;
For nothing can be sole or whole
That has not been rent.

The idea of beautiful people defecating traumatized Jonathan Swift. His disgust is recorded in this part of his charming poem "Strephon and Chloe" (Poetical Works, p. 525):

> O Strephon, e'er that fatal Day
> When Chloe stole your heart away,
> Had you but through a Cranny spy'd
> On House of Ease your future Bride,
> In all the Postures of her Face,
> Which Nature gives in such a Case;
> Distortions, Groanings, Strainings, Heavings;
> 'Twere better you had lickt her Leavings,
> Than from experience find too late
> Your Goddess grown a filthy Mate.

You can trust the author of "A Modest Proposal" to suggest, "better you had lickt her leavings."

A good example of the agitative violent variety of the hideous would be the following poem (translated from Sanskrit), which involves us, in what Julia Kriesteva calls "a vortex of summons and repulsion"[2] or as Kṣemendra, the champion of "aptness" (aucitya) in literary aesthetics, comments "shows the intertwining of eros and and disgust" (the poem is by Kṣemendra himself):

> Swiftly snatching the heart of the young man
> Who lay motionless as if drunk,
> Clinging close to his neck, she revealed her desire
> Passionately scratching his face with her fingernails
> Biting, and biting again his lower lip
> Making love-marks on his chest with her teeth
> Thus indeed did the she-jackal display
> Her intense passion for the carrion.

But Abhinava adds a third kind, which he calls "pure": that disgust that turns all outward consumptions insipid for each of us "heroes of the world-theater." Shakespeare's Hamlet or that play's ideal reader seems to be almost savoring this "pure" disgust when he tells the King, with dry irony, that Pollonius, whom Hamlet has killed, is at supper:

> Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are eating at him. . . . Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service—two dishes, but to one table. That's the end.

To contemplate upon Time or Death as the great eater of all eaters, or even the cyclic nature of consumption—that we are our food's food—are ancient Upanishadic themes repeatedly echoed in Sanskrit and modern Indian literature. Out of this "pure" odium at embodiment arises that ultimate spiritual relish: the rapture of tranquility that Abhinavagupta is famous for having founded his aesthetic phenomenology upon. Even the hideous self-portrait of Caravaggio as a dripping head impersonating Goliath or the picture of Saturn eating his own child that Goya is reported to have hung

in his own dining room can thus lead us to aesthetic rapture simply by shattering our consumer's ego. What comes out of it is that our clinging slackens, our thirst abates. And the Mahābhārata says that the bliss of lessening thirst (trsna-ksaya) is incomparably superior to all other terrestrial pleasures. In this sense the hideous can lead to the rapturous, explaining why the frozen in samadhi, the Hindu God Śiva who presides over the arts of music, percussion, and dance has made his abode in the cremation ground. A contemplative imaginative practice of what it is like to be dead is not after all a necrophiliac's fantasy. It is the first awakening mystical experience that turned Ramana Maharshi into an enlightened being!

VI. TWO TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE LOATHSOME: LUDICROUS AND LOVED

I do not claim that Abhinavagupta has said the last word about the place of the repulsive in art. Far from it. One of the most original but ill-understood twentieth-century philosophers of India, K. C. Bhattacharya wrote some time in the 1930s a paper called "The Concept of Rasa"[3] the second part of which is devoted to the topic of the ugly. "The aesthetic attitude survives the feeling of ugliness in two ways," he wrote. It either turns the feeling of incongruity to the ludicrous or it overcomes and deepens the feeling of ugliness into an enjoyment by the patient faith of heroic love. The first mode of blowing away the hideous with the power of laughter is brilliantly illustrated by the following Sanskrit poem:

> As she kissed him deeply, he was choked with emotions. In a violent convulsion he coughed out that loose tooth that had travelled from her mouth to his.

Kṣemendra, unfortunately, calls the above skit a literary failure because it "inappropriately" mixes savors, but we can surely enjoy Aristophanes's *Clouds* when it not only describes gnats humming through their narrow anal orifices, a lizard "crapping" on Socrates as he was busy star-gazing but shows his students learning astronomy with their anus turned heaven-ward and passing wind.

The second mode of patient faith winning over ugliness can be illustrated by the end of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Secretly loving her all his life Florentino Ariza unites with Fermina Daza on a sailing ship only when both of them are very old. She is getting sea-sick. His bodily sexuality is literally "dead." Their pungent body-odors match mutually "like the smell of human fermentation." Yet they promise to love each other forever and the novel ends with what Abhinavagupta would call a restful unobstructed enchantment with eros—an "intrepid love" that defeats the ugly hand of time.

VII. SIX VARIETIES OF AESTHETIC DISGUST

Following K. C. Bhattacharya's footsteps I want to enrich the Indian aesthetics of the hideous by further distinguishing six different modes of absorbing disgust and ugliness within a positive art-experience.

First, *disgust as emotional justice*:

Not the ugly itself, but the artist's or author's or the character's disgust at it is enjoyed simply for the sake of its appropriateness as an emotional reaction. The loathing that a loathsome character deserves would be danced out in gestures of rejection and nausea in Indian Bharatanatyam or Odissi, but it is best expressed when left unsaid. Take the Borges story *The Cruel Redeemer Lazarus Morell*. This ruthless swindler cheated Negro slaves as well as slave-owners for a living. He would promise to free a slave in the American South in exchange of money and make more money in the underhand reselling of the Negro until the poor slave would be killed. Borges's own hatred for this character expressed throughout the story in unrelenting irony climaxes at the end when he reports, in an autobiographical voice, Lazarus's last crime, the brutal murder of a man in order to steal his horse:

> I told him I had no time to hear him pray. He turned around and dropped on his knees and I shot him through the back of the head. I ripped open his belly and took out his entrails and sunk him in the creek. I then searched in his pockets and found four-hundred dollars and thirty-seven cents . . . His boots were brand-new and fitted me genteelly.

The power of wordlessly suggested abomination here makes not the disgusting act any less hideous. The heart-universal's interpersonally resonating disgust at it scintillates as the quintessence of what Sanskrit calls "bibhatsa," for that word is used for morally revolting acts as well. It feels just right to feel so repulsed by so repulsive a man. It is fine as art because emotional justice has been done.

Second, *the hideous as the counter-point for a shocking contrast that fascinates us:*

This mode is most prominent in *The Hunch-back of Notre-Dame* where Quasimodo's deformity heightens Esmerelda's beauty. In a group-portrait Goya paints an ugly Queen holding the hand of a beautiful child princess and the painting's appeal is enhanced by the contrast. Besides, the representation of the physical ugliness of a person heightens the unexpected beauty of his soul, especially juxtaposed with the converse: a morally disgusting character of a physically attractive person. Under this mode of contrast, therefore, I want to subsume those narratives that enchant us by the magnetism of the extremes coming together in a single figure. I saw on the Italian television a movie-version of the *Phantom of the Opera* where humans living in the gutter engage in gory and repulsive play with rodents and vermin and mutilated human body-parts. Christine, the beautiful heroine is drawn irresistibly toward a gruesome man who bites off people's tongues and ears and lives with creepy creatures and yet loves her and loves music to death. Disgust is used here as an extreme counterpoint to the sublime beauty of the woman and her music. The representation of the dark obscure nature of the "phantom's" tragic love for the singer requires all his hideousness for its aesthetic success.

Third, something that we have already talked about: *reduction to the ridiculous, grotesque, ironic*:

This can be done in the most studiedly ribald language as in Aristophanes or Rabelais or in a more subtle way where a heavy dose of mocking humor is tinged

with just a shade of pain as in well-told stories about sadly funny gross acts of the inmates of mad-houses.

Fourth, *the hideous can emerge as a prop for artistic relish when it is shown to be overcome by heroic, committed, or religious love:*

This love could be erotic or agapic. Famous example of this is in the popular story of the Beauty and the Beast. A deeper metaphysical treatment of this theme of overcoming of outer ugliness through the inner eye of love is in Tagore's *King of the Dark Chamber* where the queen never can see the face of the king because he might be too unbearably ugly. In the climax the queen, once frustrated by her misplaced love for an externally handsome lesser king, finds her own unseen but worshipped King "incomparably beautiful" insofar as her own love is mirrored in the King's appearance.[4]

As far as Christian or Buddhist compassion are concerned, they have been expressed through literary narrations of life-stories of nuns who did hideous things in order to test or prove their compassion for the physically or mentally sick. St Catherine of Siena (c. 1370) was nursing a sick sister-nun suffering from a cancerous breast-tumor. The patient began to resent St Catherine's eagerness to attend to her noxious wounds. Ungratefully and angrily, the patient started slandering her as a pervert who exploits her sickness for earning religious merit. One day St Catherine could not take it anymore. While dressing her open sore, she threw up on the patient's body. She had to somehow overcome the corrupting temptation to come away leaving the sick and feeling proud of her hitherto-shown humility and tolerance. So she took her own vomit mixed with the cancer-patient's pus and blood in a cup and drank it off. That night, Christ appeared in a vision/dream to her and blessed her by allowing her to drink blood from the side of his own crucified body. This story is told with pious devotion by Raymundus Venies in his *Life of Santa Caterina* (part II, chapter 11). I am sure it awe-inspiringly shows, for some audience, the greatness of humility and compassion only through the use of the most disgusting details. In the Buddhist collection of Pali poems by ancient nuns called "Therigatha," we have the classic story of Shubha the beautiful maiden who found the man who tried to seduce her in a mango-grove to be mentally sick because he was inebriated with the beauty of this young nun's eyes. Out of kindness for this sick man who did not realize the worthlessness of bodily beauty she simply cut out her own eye-balls and offered it to the seducer thereby scaring him away in repentance and horror. Such therapy of one's own or another's desire is a common subject of much traditional religious literature.

Fifth, the most widely practiced transformation of disgust to dispassion that Abhinavagupta called "pure": *the serene sense of vanity and fragility of earthly pleasures*:

This is done in many ways. Sometimes by bringing out the lurking specter of overfeeding and satiety that haunts all human consumption. Sometimes it is done by showing behind every human revelry the ugly entrails of mortality. Examples and discussion of this abound in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and the Sanskrit epic *Mahābhārata*. At the end of the great war, which forms the center of that epic, the righteous hero Yudhisthira laments looking at the battlefield where rotting

dead bodies are piled up: "The earth has lost her youth, everything stinks of death, everything is shriveled, old and ugly. Is this what we fought a war for?"

Abhinavagupta has connected this notion of "pure" hideousness with the notion of purity (*śauca*) in Patanjali's *Yogasutra* where it is linked with a certain disgust at one's own gross body. This disgust transforms itself into a tranquil dispassion that embraces death without any sadness and goes beyond pleasure and pain. Spirituality does not have to abjure the bodily world, but it often—in very unlike cultures—has some deep connections with transcending or reversing the binaries of good and bad, pleasure and pain, pretty and ugly.

The most delicate and in a deeper sense Romantic is the sixth mode: *the viscerally vibrant absorption of the hideous for the sake of the sheer thrill of sensing every fold of embodied existence.*

Every chiasm and tiny wisp of apparently insignificant human bodily experience provides us with an "inscape," a tinglingly detailed yet nonconceptual picture of the world through our flesh, as it were. The inner feeling of feeling no matter what, or in some cases the feeling of lack of all feelings, affords the expelled repulsive a unique place in aesthetic experience. Jibanananda Das who also used disgust in the third and the fifth way above, gives an eerie example of the last kind of use in his poem "A Certain Sense," which ends this way:

. . . and yet/ This love, this dust, this slime.
Within the head there works
Not a dream, not a love, only a certain sense.
—this sole savour . . .
Has it pledged word
To see the face of man ?
To see the face of woman ?
To see the face of children ?
. . . The hearts in which grow hunchbacks, and goitre.
Forming living flesh
In mould of stale cucumbers, rotten gourds—
To see every such thing ?

Here there is no special loathing of the decomposing flesh or fruit, not even a spiritual "use" of the dust and slime of life. It is neither the filth, nor the feeling of disgust at the filth, but the sheer inner touch of being alive all over that is enjoyed both by the poet and his heart-sharing ready audience. The hideous shimmers with pure rapture of heeding one's senses.

"The One with a Blue Neck" (Nīlakaṇṭha) is a name of Śiva—whose dancing image has been the globally recognized icon for Indian Dance and the Arts since Ananda Coomaraswamy made it the title of one his books. The mythological allusion is to the story of the churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons that resulted in both the elixir of immortality and the poison of death coming out of the deep waters. To save the gods—the senses—it was Śiva who drank poison that the other gods could not stand. He drank it but did not swallow it. He stored it in his neck. So it remains darkening his neck. The creative

artist sees his own embodied consciousness partly blackened or blued with the poison of sensory intake of the ugly in the mirror of his own or another's work as he recognizes himself in the poison-ingesting serpent-sporting cosmic artist Śiva.[5] Unfortunately, this proto-spiritual phenomenology of art-experience of the ugly as a sibling of the experience of rediscovering the Atman-Brahman identity creates more problems than it solves. In my drive to aestheticize the ugly, have I not eliminated, not only the subject–object distinction but the distinction between the ugly and the beautiful altogether? How can any theory or recipe for reflection on experience merit the name "aesthetics" if it abolishes that distinction?

VIII. INCONCLUSION

I had promised at the outset that this philosophical investigation of disgust and the ugly will be incomplete. Let me end therefore by beginning a new project under this general rubric of an unfinishable theory of the unlovely. The project is to find a place for an aesthetic of madness in literature and the dramatic arts. One crucial feature of "Śiva" whose dwelling is in the unclean cremation-ground and whose cosmetics and accessories are ashes of burnt corpses and skulls of dead people, deserves our attention before we leave this brief excursus into the aesthetics of disgust. It is his in divine madness.

Most of us feel a very strange kind of eerie repulsion with a touch of embarrassment in the presence of a madman (unless it is a violent mad person, in which case one is fearful and compassionate). Some of the most memorable pieces of world literature and drama climax with the depiction of insanity (has any European written a poem or play about the dying Neitzsche's final attack of madness that made him hug a beaten-up horse and weep?). The last scene of Shakespeare's King Lear perhaps can serve as the aesthetic paradigm. But a mixture of madness and ugliness results in a disgust-evoking dialogue in this scene from the seventh-century Sanskrit play *Drunkards' Frenzies Farce* (*Matta-vilāsa-prahasana*):

> Madman: "There, there! There's that wicked dog! You're running off with that skull which contains my roast meat! You son-of-a-slave, where do you think you are going? Look at him now dropping the skull and coming to bite me! . . . I'll smash your teeth with this stone . . . I climbed on the back of the village pig, jumped high up into the sky and negotiated the ocean to go and grab that demon Ravana along with that whale-swallowing son of Indra (here he garbles up all his mythological allusions). Hey you little shrub are you calling that a lie? Look, this toad with a hand as massive as a pestle is my witness! . . . I shall eat that piece of meat left half-chewed by that dog!"
>
> Pashupata: "O! That madman comes again! Look at him: Wearing used, discarded rags in shreds and patches, disheveled, sporting dreadlocks, full of dust and ashes, a pile of cast-off garlands round him draped, attended by a flock of crows, keen to scavenge dregs of left-over food, he is like a village heap of garbage moving about in the human shape!" (pp. 90–91, MVP)

Unexpected in high-class Sanskrit literature, these macabre and grotesque dialogues and the visual images they invoke challenge our philosophy of art. We need to explain why it is wrong and perverse to "enjoy" actual madness and ghoulishness in others and yet why one should be able to "enjoy" a master actor giving an amazingly "good" performance playing this pitifully horrid part.

NOTES

1. See paintings titled *The Cook*, *The Jurist*, or *the Gardener* by Guiseppe Arcimboldo (c. 1570)
2. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press 1982), p. 1.
3. See K. C. Bhattacharya's *Studies in Philosophy* (volume I and II), ed. Gopinath Bhattacharya (Originally Progressive Publishers Calcutta 1958, Reprinted by Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi 1978).
4. A Bob Dylan song uses this trope of the amorous hideous rather straightforwardly:

   You know I love her
   Yeah I love her
   I am in love with the ugliest Girl in the World.
   If I ever lose her I will go insane
   I go half-crazy when she calls my name . . .
   The woman that I love she has two flat feet
   Her knees knock together walking on the street
   She cracks her knuckles and she snores in bed
   She ain't much to look at but like I said
   You know I love her! Yeah I love her!
   I'm in love with the ugliest Girl in the World.

   I am grateful to Connor Roddy, my research student, for procuring me this example. Neither K. C. Bhattacharya nor Abhinavagupta would have perhaps liked this Bob Dylan song. But when someone enjoys these lyrics (and Dylan songs are often admired only for the lyrics) K. C. Bhattacharya's idea that the enjoyed quintessence of ugliness can be manifested through "patient faith of courageous love" seems to explain it pretty well.
5. I am grateful to my colleague Lee Siegel and my research assistant Connor Roddy for helpful discussion and references.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

'*rasahî anubhavasmrḥtyād-vilakṣḥanîena rajas-tamo'nuvedha-vaicitrya-balāt druti-vistāra-vikāśa-lakṣḥanîena parabrahmāsvāda-savidhena bhogena param bhujyate iti*': Bharata, NāṭyaŚāstra, Ch. 6, Vol. 1, p. 276.

Dhvanyāloka, Uddyota II, Locana under verse 4—the same point made in a different way in *Abhinavabhāratī* and *Locana*.

Bharata, NāṭyaŚāstra, Ch. 6, between verses 31 and 32, Vol. 1, p. 231.

Browning, Robert, "Porphyria's Lover," in *Poems of Robert Browning*, ed. Donald Smalley. Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1957, pp. 73–74.

Kālidāsa, *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* (The Signe-Ring of Śakuntalā), I. 7:

grīvābhaṅgābhirāmaṃ muhuranupatati syandane dattadṛṣṭirṭîhiḥ
paścārdhena praviṣṭhaḥ śarapatanabhayādbhūyasā pūrvakāyam
śaṣpairardhāvalīḍhaiḥ śramavitatamukhabhramṣibhiḥî kīrnîavartmā
paśyodagraplutatvādviyati bahutaraṃ stokamūrvyā prayāti

Abhinavagupta inserts these four verses in the middle of his commentary on the *rasa-sūtra*, the text of which is highly controversial and mostly corrupt in all editions. See Ravishankar Nagar (ed.), NS, *ed. cit*., Vol. 1, p. 277.

Abhinavabhāratī, Ch. VI, ibid. p. 278.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Perfume from the Past: Modern Reflections on Ancient Art

Bankimchandra, Rabindranath, and Abanindranath Tagore

SUDIPTA KAVIRAJ

In a comic poem contrasting their times and ours [*Sekal*], Rabindranath Tagore decided, though living in separation [*viraha*] from the heroines of antiquity was hard, he would not die of longing. They all live in the present under other names. Apart from the survival of those women under new names, Kālidāsa, had not glimpsed the graces of the new women of Bengal—who wear socks and shoes, walk with an untoward straightness, speak in a foreign accent, but still carry the same enchanting glance (*kataksa*). Perfumes of that past occasionally waft into our times: but Kālidāsa had no glimpse of our own.[1] After a true reckoning, Tagore concluded, we should be content to live in the times in which fate has thrown us. Actually, this was a comic presentation of an immensely serious problem for Tagore's generation. Past perfumes wafted powerfully into the air of nineteenth-century Kolkata. The past was an immense and troubling presence in its imagination; and his generation reflected deeply on how exactly the present was related to the past: was it a relation of continuity, of rupture, of selective absorption? A new aesthetic that was produced in an astonishingly short time—from Vidyasagar's aesthetically inert imitative adaptations of Sanskrit drama to the unmistakably modern sensibility in Rabindranath and Abanindranath—contained a surprisingly robust substratum of philosophic interrogation of the past.

I.

The "past" is a concept that the present uses to determine/interrogate its relation to history. No past is entirely static; because no past can exist without interference from constantly changing demands the present always makes on this concept. Although

it is contrary to our intuition, the past constantly changes, because it cannot stop being the past of a new present. Of course, the events that constitute the past do not change in themselves, but the relational network that defines its nature changes constantly forcing the past to change.

In this chapter we use the term "the aesthetic" in two senses. In the first, "the aesthetic" means simply the explicit or inexplicit theory through which a society intellectually appropriates objects of aesthetic pleasure. In its second meaning "the aesthetic" refers to the level of the practical—the implements, resources, techniques by means of which aesthetic objects are produced. It goes without saying that despite the analytical difference, these two aspects of the aesthetic are deeply entangled. In a society like Bengal in the nineteenth century, both aspects of aesthetics were profoundly transformed. In this immense churning of possibilities, significant figures offered their own individual solutions to the "problem of the past." This chapter will analyze the ideas of three major aesthetic thinkers—Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore, and his artist nephew, Abanindranath.

I.1. Before Historical Aesthetics

Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar (1820–91), a major figure in the transformation of Bengali colonial culture, evinced a clear sense of the contemporary crisis of aesthetics. Bengali literary culture had developed in the shadow of Sanskrit literature till the eighteenth century. Poets such as Bharatchandra Raygunakar in the late eighteenth century wrote in a vibrant language that worked inside a complex aesthetic economy encompassing Sanskrit and the vernaculars. In late medieval Bengali culture, by the time of the rise of a new religious sensibility around Gaudiya Vaisnavism, an intelligible relation had been established between the normative but distant models of Sanskrit and intense, immediate enjoyment of vernacular literature. It is impossible to analyze here the complex relations of normativity and difference that existed between Sanskrit *kāvya* and Bengali vernacular poetry.[2] The shadow of Sanskrit remained at sufficient distance not to stifle the emergence of a related but distinctly demotic register of popular aesthetics. Two genres in vernacular gained significant popularity: the first was narrative poetry generally known as *mangalkavyas* relating the adventures of worshippers of demotic deities; and the second was a new form of *kāvya* similar in formal properties to modern lyric poetry—*vaisnava padavali*—with poetic embroidery around a nonnarrative theme of emotional states—such as *viraha*,[3] *milana*,[4] or celebration of the beauty of nature. Vidyasagar wrote two kinds of literary works to introduce modern Bengalis to high literary standards—drawing on canonical Sanskrit and English texts—mainly Shakespeare. Interestingly, Vidyasagar's aesthetic world was in this respect truly cosmopolitan and bi-cultural. Both Sanskrit and Shakespeare were to acquaint his countrymen with what truly great literature meant, and form their literary taste. Curiously, what is entirely lacking in his literary works is a dominant sense of *historical* time, of *temporal breaks* in aesthetics, an idea that great literary beauty still had to be timely. Kālidāsa could be appreciated in modern times, but not imitated: for some reason, writing poetry like Kālidāsa was historically impracticable. All great poetry, for Vidyasagar, was contemporary

in exactly the way in which they were contemporary for Sanskrit poetic aesthetes for centuries.[5] Kālidasa and Jayadeva both composed unequalled Sanskrit poetry, in different times: yet they formed parts of an unbroken and undifferentiated literary tradition for which temporal difference did not matter.[6] On the other side, European literature, Shakespeare in particular, put Bengalis in touch with a new tradition, but in his eyes equally timeless. To grow, modern Bengali literature had to emulate great poetry from all directions of space and time. Possibly, Vidyasagar's particular opinions on poetics were determined by his own literary practice. Conventionally, he is credited with a significant but ironic role in the making of modern Bengali prose. Vidyasagar wrote poetic texts without composing them. His works simply communicated to his readers a primitive outline of the great stories, though he was careful to warn that readers should not think they got true aesthetic taste of the real Sanskrit Śakuntalā. His "translations" of either Śakuntalā or the Comedy of Errors were not translations in either the modern or the real poetic sense.[7]

Retrospectively, it is not easy to characterize what Vidyasagar was trying to accomplish through these renderings of classics narratives—in a kind of *balabodhini*[8] style. The narratives are bereft of commentarial or interpretive layers, of real poetic enjoyment: they simply told the modern educated youth, increasingly alienated from the Sanskrit world, what great treasures existed in that tradition; but what is remarkable is the absence of a structural, temporalizing distance. Modern readers would be able to appreciate the poetics of these tales as *sahrdayas* if they acquired the linguistic skills. There is no sense in Vidyasagar's writings that what is making the Sanskrit world fade was not just language, but a much larger thing vaguely called history. An illustration of this depoeticization of the literary image would explain this problem. A famous episode in the *Śakuntalā* is the description of king Dusyanta's first vision of the *asrama* girl, marked by four famous lines—the first says that the beauty of the forest creeper has put the beauty of the creepers in the royal garden to shame: *durikrtah khalu udyanalatah vanalatabhih*—which Vidyasagar renders in dull prose (Vidyasagar Racanabali, p. 69). In the play, this is followed by a celebrated description of Śakuntalā in her bark dress:

Sarasijam-anubiddham saibalenapi ramyam
Malinam api himangsor laksma laksmim tanoti
Iyam adhikamanojna valkalenapi tanvi
Kimapi hi madhuranam mandanam na krtinam[9]

Even though surrounded by weeds, the blooming lotus looks beautiful, as the full moon remains splendid despite its stains, this girl's beauty is heightened by her bark cloth; what does not add to the beauty of a naturally beautiful thing?. The inaccessibility of this poetry, for Vidyasagar, is caused by an accidental decline of Sanskrit literacy. Unformed by the relentless onesidedness of the Hindu college curriculum, Vidyasagar reveals a strange cognitive naïvete—at least on the question of aesthetics. He has no sense that literary appreciation was changing so rapidly that the entire corpus of classical Sanskrit was in danger of becoming strange, distant, unintelligible—a worse fate than being regarded infantile and vulgar. Summaries of great Sanskrit works offered in his essay, "*Sanskrta-sahitya visayak prastab*,"[10] are unframed by a sense of epochal anxiety.

When we read Bankim, we are immediately aware of the presence of a very different sense of the pastness of the Sanskrit world. The Sanskrit world's inaccessibility is not accidental and reversible; he displays a deep historical sense that that is a lost world. A comparison between Vidyasagar and Bankim immediately illustrates the difference between two fundamental visions of temporal distance: the first is merely incremental or *chronological*, the second is what Koselleck calls *temporalizing* distance, a *structural* difference between events belonging to periods of time with a different character. The first is a mere incremental distance, the second is structural. The temporal distance between poets such as Mukundaram and Bharatchandra is of the first kind: the chronological distance is long, but nothing has *structurally* changed between the two times—most significantly, in the basic notion of the literary. Composition of a *mangalkavya* remains eminently possible, and Bharatchandra could add his own *Annadamangal* to the long list of medieval *mangalkavyas* without aesthetic embarrassment. The time distance between Bharatchandra and Rabindranath is of the second kind—in the time that lapsed, the definition of the poetic itself has been transformed.

II. BANKIMCHANDRA

A sharp sense of historical rupture marks Bankimchandra's reflections on the discourse on literary taste. In his intellectual life, Bankim has a deep unceasing engagement with both the aesthetic and philosophic traditions of the Sanskrit world. Another part of Bankim's reflections was centered on the parallel question of the historicity of ethics: was the concept of dharma becoming obsolete?[11] No other Bengali writer feels the sense of historical rupture with such force—probably because Bankim was an intensely eager and later an equally intensely disillusioned reader of the European Enlightenment. Few people understood and owned the Enlightenment's intellectual values with such clarity and intensity as Bankim, and few subjected it eventually to such a sharp critique. Consequently, in no other thinker do we encounter such a strong awareness of temporal boundaries—a sense that what we call time is not simply a sequence of temporal points; rather *time in history* is a succession of envelope-like containers, like a series of vessels within which events and experiences are bounded and imprisoned: it is impossible for them to splash from one receptacle to another. Time can be an infinite series of chronological points; *historical* time is emphatically different: it is a sequence of *structures*, or what Koselleck calls time*s*—with the full force of the plural—or *temporalities*. Like Marx's feudalism, capitalism, or Weber's premodern and modern, these structures do not intermix, flow into each other, blend and leach: these are radically different from each other, and in all that they hold inside. These are *structures* that bound, shape, and form the experiences of human beings living inside them. Poetry that flourished inside one such structure/temporality cannot even breathe, not to speak of flourish inside another. Bankim is regarded as the first writer of successful historical novels in Bengal literature. In one sense, this judgment is false. True, history, in one sense of the term, held an unending somber fascination for Bankim—as a process through which fates of

societies, particularly their *political* destiny were sealed, that cusp of time where the future of his own society was reshaped by large historical events. Histories even in his early immature period were all exceptionlessly "political." In later life, he never wrote a true historical novel; one in which the aesthetic effort is to evoke and make artistically accessible to a modern reader an experience of a past irretrievably lost.[12] Instead, the time of his novels is always fraught—filled with the future; always pointing to political possibilities involved in the creation of modern colonial Bengal (Kaviraj, 1995, Ch. 4).

II.1. Uttararamacarita

But this way of thinking about the past pitches Bankim straight into a fundamental difficulty as a writer. If taste is relative to time in this radical sense, by implication, it leaves him bereft of any exemplary models of aesthetics. Nothing can alleviate the radical unavailability of a canon new literature can draw from. Accordingly, received traditions of Bengali or Sanskrit literature offered very little in the making of Bankim's narrative art. But it would be wrong to say that Bankim gave up that tradition without an examination. He does not engage with the Mahābhārata story—except through his great fascination for the epic figure of Krishna. Diegetically, Krishna's relation to that epic story is itself quite strange. In some ways, he is secondary to the diegetic unfolding of the epic; yet in some senses, he is more than central, and the ancient critical tradition recognized this large paradox.[13] Also, the central enquiry in Bankim's *Krishnacharitra* is not aesthetic, but ethical. In his narratologic explorations, Bankim wrote two short essays on the character of Draupadi: he finds in her character an exemplar of the kind of assertive action-inducing women he was to create in his own fiction. All Sanskrit feminine characters, Bankim claims, are imitations or elaborations of the paradigmatic feminine ideal in Sita; Draupadi is the sole incandescent exception. His first *prastab* (literally, proposal) deals with Draupadi's *darpa*—assertiveness—in the face of cruel turns of her mixed fate; the second gets distracted into dispute with Western criticism. This is a recurrent feature of Bankim's critical analysis—which Tagore, in one of his essays calls Bankim's *kalahapriyata*—his constant querulousness with Western readings of Sanskrit works. Characteristically, Bankim gets easily distracted by the ethical problems of monogamy and polyandry (BR II, 197 ff.). Despite the brevity of his critical engagements, his decided preference for the high-toned Krishna in the Mahābhārata over the more familiar incarnation in the Bhagavata or Gaudiya Vaisnava theology, makes him a pioneer in the modern evaluative shift concerning the two epics—the emergence of the Mahābhārata as a site of complex ethical-aesthetic enquiry.[14]

One of Bankim's detailed exercises in literary criticism of an ancient text is the essay on Bhavabhuti's play, *Uttraramacarita*, a narrative derived from the Rāmāyaṇa. To Bankim the Rama characters in the original *Rāmāyaṇa* and in Bhavabhuti are entirely dissimilar: Valmiki's Rama is a truly epic-heroic figure; the Rama of the *Uttararamacarita* is much softer. "The Rama of Ramayana is an epic hero, his nature is filled with solemnity and patience. When Bhavabhuti wrote his poetry, Indians no longer possessed the same character; they had turned soft-natured through love of

luxury and leisure. Bhavabhuti's Ramacandra is similar. His character is devoid of heroic qualities. There is a marked lack of gravity and patience. At times one feels contempt for his frailty. A good example of this trait is his girlish sobbing on hearing the accusations against Sita. He fainted promptly. Then wept for long in front of Durmukha. Makes long speeches. These contain some deeply moving expressions, it is true, but such prolixity interferes with the feeling of the *rasa* of *karuṇa* (pity)" (BR, II, 163–64).[15] Bankim recognizes that the aesthetic purpose of narrative poetry and drama are quite distinct. The first purports to offer an enjoyable account of the events in the narrative chain. "From the dramatist we demand *a true picture of the hero's heart*" (168 my italics). The *Uttraracarita* is deficient in narrative elaboration and conflict (170). At times, Bankim's irreverence toward classical texts is quite astonishing. Some parts of Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa, he asserts, are so inferior that it is hard to read them (182). Bhavabhuti's excellence lies in the depiction of states of mind (*rasodbhāvan*). As an aside, Bankim remarks with characteristic irreverence: "we want to explain what is *rasodbhāvan*; but I have placed a hurdle in my path by using the term *rasa*. Nowadays we must abandon the terms used by ancient aestheticians of our country; the moment we use them it creates problems" (184). "In the poetic evocation of mental states, Bhavabhuti is comparable to the world's finest poets" (185).

In this poetic examination of Bhavabhuti's work two features of modern aesthetics have intervened decisively. It is true that the discussion begins with a comparison between two Sanskrit classics—the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Uttararamacarita*—presenting two diegetic renderings of the same story in starkly divergent literary forms. But stealthily, the process of judgment has smuggled in criteria from European aesthetics, with explicit or inexplicit references to Shakespeare. Eventually, Bhavabhuti is regarded as a great poet—not of Sanskrit literature, but of an unconventionally expanded literary universe—of the poetry of the world. In Bankim's thinking, the intrusion of a new set of aesthetic criteria clearly makes it impossible to assess great texts of Sanskrit literature in the traditional way, in isolation, deploying solely the criteria from Sanskrit aesthetic theory. Texts of the past are subjected to a judgment of the modern. Yet, interestingly, even after the new, widened criteria are applied, Sanskrit literature does not shrivel and collapse in ignominy. Some parts of the ancient Sanskrit tradition do remarkably well, and are re-grounded as literary classics. This is similar to Vidyasagar's juxtaposition of Sanskrit classics and Shakespeare; but to produce an argument of a very different kind.

II.2. Later Sanskrit Poetry: Gitikavya—Jayadeva and Vidyapati

Bankim inaugurated another significant tendency in modern criticism—a speculative sociology of literature. In an essay on Vidyapati and Jayadeva—the two ironic originators of Bengali *kāvya*[16]—he offers a vast stage-theory of literary sociology to account for the predominant aesthetic character of early Bengali *kāvya*. Bengali literature might lack in other respects, but not in production of excellent poetry (p. 189). After a stage of initial conflict between Aryan and pre-Aryan societies—reflected in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, once the Aryans established their dominion, followed

a time of internecine war among the conquerors—the subject of the second epic. However, *dharma* became so utterly inviolable after the coming of peace and establishment political order, that everything, even literary creativity, came to be governed by the spirit of dharmic thinking. "The *puranas* are the consequence of this obsession with *dharma* (*dharmamoha*—a striking phrase). Just as the torrent of *dharma* flowed on one side, a torrent of indulgence (*vilāsitā*) surged on the other. The results of that are shown in Kālidāsa's poetry and drama"[17] (190). When these Indians settled down in a particularly fertile eastern end of the subcontinent, this gave rise to a specific form of poetry Bankim describes with characteristic acerbity:

> Everybody will recognize that we are painting a collective portrait of the Bengali character. In celebration of the character of these people—devoid of ambition, lazy, inactive, domesticated—a new poetry arose. That poetry is also devoid of ambition, lazy, sensualist, immured in domestic pleasures alone. Its poetic style is excessively delicate, extremely mellifluous, the ultimate celebration of erotic love (p. 191)

Two predominant kinds of poets are found in the Bengali poetic tradition—the first group celebrate the splendor of human love, placing it in the midst of the beauty of nature, the second only what goes on inside the human heart. In poets such as Jayadeva there is not only a dominance of external nature in both its senses—natural beauty of the forests and the seasons, but also external, that is, physical sensations of eroticism; in Vidyapati its kingdom is interior nature (*antahprakṛtir rājya*) (p. 191). "Jayadeva's songs are filled with the erotic play of Radha and Krishna, Vidyapati's songs with their love. Jayadeva represents enjoyment of pleasure (*bhog*), Vidyapati desire and remembrance. Jayadeva is pleasure, Vidyapati sorrow/suffering. Jayadeva is spring, Vidyapati the rains[18] . . . Jayadeva's songs are like chanteuses' music with instrumental accompaniment, Vidyapati's are like the sighs of evening breeze" (p. 191). In a sudden turn to a comparison with modern poets, Bankim stresses their difference from the ancients—"the poets of today are learned—scientistic (*vaijnānik*), historically-informed and knowledgeable about spiritualism"—which imparts a different character to their poetry. A perfect poet would be able to depict the inner world along with exterior nature—which is hard to accomplish artistically. Failing to find that perfect balance produces aesthetic inadequacy—*dośa*.[19] Excessive sensualism is found in Jayadeva, excessive spiritualist alienation in Wordsworth (p. 192). What is remarkable in this unusual, irreverent, yet strangely comfortable analysis is the refusal of a perspective of aesthetic and historicized relativism. It displays an expanded aesthetic cosmopolitanism, breaking the boundaries of the Sanskrit and Western cosmopolises and making them one. Bankim could have easily taken the line that the art of Sanskrit poetry was wrapped inextricably in a past historical world the path to which is irreversibly barred; and Bengali poetry has been placed by history, without recourse, in a world of colonial modernity. Aesthetic judgments across this divide of temporal structures are implausible. Let judgment on Sanskrit poetry be made on the basis of Sanskrit aesthetics, he could have said, and of emerging modern Bengali poetry by modern criteria drawn primarily from the Western aesthetics of *saundarya*. True to character, Bankim refuses that relatively

easy compartmentalization, and chooses his location as a critic in a new, fraught unprecedented cosmopolitan aesthetics in which Jayadeva and Wordsworth can be unhesitatingly compared.

II.3. The Politics of Comparative Literature: Śakuntalā, Miranda, and Desdemona

Some of Bankim's unconventional and startling essays boldly announced this universal cosmopolitan aesthetic—often by comparing the two great poets from the Indian and European traditions. His famous essay "Śakuntalā, Miranda and Desdemona" illustrating this new literary cultivation, with a comfortable inhabitance of the two worlds of aesthetics, was to start a long tradition of comparative reflection. An explicit comparativism is continued in Tagore, as we shall see, but this easy familiarity with the aesthetic of European modernism becomes unremarkably common in Bengali poetic production as much as literary criticism. The boundary between the two aesthetic universes is not abolished, but writers acquire a strange ability to cross it at will.

Even though direct comparisons became rare, these essays shattered the *frame* of aesthetic criticism forever, forcing Bankim's successors to confront its complex philosophical challenge. This is a radicalization of the literary aesthetics we found in Vidyasagar—who drew simultaneously from Sanskrit and Shakespeare; but Bankim is not content to place them side by side. He proposes a comparison. Both Śakuntalā and Miranda are raised by hermits—outside human society, both are untutored in the guiles of earthly love. However, Miranda is completely free of the artfulness we find in Śakuntalā (*Śakuntalāy jesab bāhānā āche*).[20] Bankim does not fear declaring that if the depiction of naturalness and artless simplicity is the object of the dramatist, Miranda's character realizes that ideal better: "the natural purity of femininity—which is the purity inside bashfulness (*lajjār madhye lajjā*), there is no shortage of that quality in Miranda. Therefore, in Miranda's simplicity there is more surprise and sweetness than in Śakuntalā's" (p. 205). In Śakuntalā we find a girl's tender bashfulness, but not the gravity and affection of a mature woman. Such differences cannot be explained by mere cultural difference, because "the human heart is at all times and in all places intrinsically the human heart" (p. 207). Śakuntalā acquires that high tone of maturity when she responds to the king's refusal in the royal assembly.

Two attributes define Śakuntalā's character—innocence and chastity. Its second side comes alive through a comparison with Desdemona—both married great warriors; and they were both entirely faithful to their beloved. "If faithfulness is a loyalty that remains unmoved by violence, oppression, rejection, or mistrust, then Desdemona is nobler than Śakuntalā" (BR, II, p. 208). Bankim readily admits that at another level Śakuntalā and Desdemona are not really comparable. "What is regarded as a drama in India, in Europe that exactly is not called a drama. Drama in both cultures are *dṛśyakāvya*, but from a drama European critics demand something more" (p. 209). By those criteria, *Tempest* and *Abhijnānaśakuntalam* are poetic compositions, but *Othello* is a real drama. "We cannot grasp the extent, the movement, the force

of Śakuntalā's sorrow. These are all very apparent in Desdemona. Śakuntalā is a painting by a painter; Desdemona is a sculpture—almost alive. Desdesmona's heart is spread open in front of us, Śakuntalā's heart is expressed only in signs. Therefore, since the depiction of Desdemona is more vivid than Śakuntalā, Śakuntalā dims in comparison to Desdemona. Otherwise, internally, they are identical. Śakuntalā is half-Miranda and half-Desdemona. After marriage Śakuntalā is like Desdemona, before marriage like Miranda" (p. 208). This is an unprecedented kind of literary criticism. What Bankim says of the "newness" of the modern Bengali poets is all true of his criticism as well—it is enriched by a knowledge of science, history, about the vast literature of the West, and above all, a new demand for a link between literature and the idea of interiority.

Bankim's new aesthetics is marked by several unprecedented intellectual moves. First, as we saw earlier, he brought a new, sharper historicism into the reading of religious and aesthetic texts. Vedic *dharma* and the doctrine of the Gita are sharply separated both in time and their philosophical spirit;[21] just as he separates the distinctive aesthetics found in the epics, in Kālidāsa's and in the Vaisnava poetry of Jayadeva and Vidyapati. He dispenses with the radical ahistoricity of classical Sanskrit *kāvya*, which treated Mahābhārata, Kālidāsa, and Jayadeva as constituents of the same *timeless* canon.[22] These new criteria make possible judgments often incredibly irreverent in comparison with traditional readings, which valued different qualities in individual poets without subjecting them to critical ranking, and which avoided sharp devaluation of parts of the tradition. Some parts of the epics are judged so inferiorly composed as to be nearly unreadable. A major new dimension is the demand for poetic restraint and taste—an avoidance of the *ashlīla* (obscene/vulgar) even though amusing, a new conception of vulgarity that immediately condemned parts of Sanskrit poetry as beneath cultivated taste.[23] But more fundamentally, in the comparisons between Kālidāsa and Shakespeare, this critical aesthetics invokes a new expansive definition of realism, similar to the representational realism of European painting.[24] This realism is expansive in the sense that it encompasses a demand for realistic depiction, as in the picture of Desdemona's suffering, of interior experiences of the human soul. Shakespeare can bare the human soul; Kālidāsa can only reveal it by means of indirect signs. Clearly, a new conception of interiority of the self is stealing into not merely literary creation but also criticism. This is only appropriate, as the poetic universe is a whole—governed by universal, unrelativist principles of artistic judgment.

II.4. Does the Aesthetic of the Past Infuse the Present?

Although Bankim's critical writings on the past art are not numerous, they have the advantage of being pithy, and marked by an unmistakably new sensibility. For the first time the notion of the past is mediated with such rigor by the new European conception of history as a temporalizing system of time-structures.[25] Over time Bankim's thought showed notable change—from an early period deeply influenced by positivist and utilitarian philosophy to a more complex critical relation with European thought in his later period when he tends to reuse Indic concepts. An example of this ironic recovery is his elaboration of a modern doctrine of *bhakti*. Drawing the idea from Vaisnava religious

thought,[26] Bankim empties it of its conventional meaning—to place inside this hollowed out term a forceful ethic of modern patriotism. For an artist, a sense of the past has two different expressions: the first is in his explicit discursive reflections on past art, on their relevance and usability; but there is a more subtle and fundamental second expression–through the decisions implicit in the actual making of his own artistic production.[27] A modernist historical consciousness—which views time as a sequence of structures/temporalities—makes it hard for Bankim to declare naively, like Vidyasagar, that Sanskrit literature was his *own* tradition: indeed the vernacular terms for tradition take on increasingly fraught, internally differentiated meanings—between *āgama* (a past that has produced, sanctions, and continues in the present) and *atīta* (a past that has ceased to be actionable in the present, and therefore exists as distinct and inert). Despite his deep interest in the novelistic possibilities of history, Bankim never composed a narrative that has as its principal purpose a thick artistic description of a past form of life.[28] The past in all his novels is a past that is woken out of its sleep, infused by the troubled yearnings of the present, a past in which his readers were trained to seek shadows of a present in disguise. Following Koselleck, it is possible to claim that his past is temporalized—though strictly speaking he uses very few of technical temporalizing concepts. His thought is marked by a profound, ineradicable sense of a rupture, the essence of *time as history*, between earlier stages and an unnamed but intensely felt *neue zeit*—existence of a time as a medium, which makes possible a time that is itself new, that had not existed before. In Bankim, this sense of rupture does not produce the exhilaration found in the European Enlightenment: it is an intrinsically darkened Enlightenment, for it is always under the unhappy shadow of loss of sovereignty. In social life, this sense of rupture is overwhelming; little is left usable by the cruel destruction of modernity—except for two domains where elements of the past can be redesigned and deployed to create a sense of difference from European civilization—in the field of religious-ethical thought, and in selective enjoyment of literary art.

III. RABINDRANATH

Rabindranath Tagore was separated from Bankim not merely by a few decades of fast-moving literary innovation, but also by a serious difference in literary temperament. It is not surprising that his sense of the past, while owing a great deal to Bankim, was significantly different.

Like Bankim, Tagore's relation with the past has to be captured by three types of readings: of his discursive essays on the past or its literary culture, of his poetry which make somewhat indirect, ironic, displaced interpretations of the past's presence, and finally, again in some subtle practices inside his language itself—in the most primary movements of the words of his verbal art.

III.1. Reading of the Epics

Speculative sociology on a grand scale became a popular form of thinking in the nineteenth century, as Indian intellectuals suffered from an anxiety induced by the European charge that their culture lacked historical consciousness. Many Bengali

thinkers join this debate by claiming, rightly, that engagement and refined thinking about the past can take many forms—not merely the accurate record-keeping of past events.[29] Like Bankim, Rabindranath too ruminated about an encrypted historical sociology embedded inside the epics. "Indian Aryans were initially forest-dwellers, and gradually became village-dwellers and city-dwellers" (*RR, XIII*, 1970, p. 5, Bharatvarshiya Vivaha). At times, Tagore construes the Rāmāyaṇa as a metaphoric narrative describing a conflict between an agricultural civilization and its predecessor, reading *sītāharana* literally as a stealing of the furrow[30] (ibid, p. 6). In a preface to a work on the Rāmāyaṇa,[31] Tagore first divided *kāvyas* between two types—those that express the sensibilities of a single poet, and the ideas of a great community (*eklā kabir kathā*/ *bṛhat sampradāyer kathā*). The second category are works in which "a whole country, an entire epoch expresses its heart, its range of experience," turning them into permanent treasure of mankind. Great works such as "Paradise Lost," though high-toned, are not comparable to the voice of an entire time. "However much they may possess a depth of *rasa*, these are not a treasure of a country, but a library's valued collection" (662/4). The abiding temptation to link epics to history is not entirely overcome: it will not do, Tagore says, to treat Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata as epics; they are also history. Not the history of events, because those focus on some specific time; Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata are "eternal histories" of India[32] (662/4). As these constitute a different kind of history, the appropriate response to them is not the usual one of literary criticism—to consider if the characters of Rama and Lakshmana are high or low, artistically imposing or pale. The figure of Rama does not portray a divine character, to Tagore, but a human figure. If it had depicted a god, its dignity would have been less than its depiction of a human ideal.[33] "Through this poem we get to know—not the nature of the poet, its creator, but the nature of India" (662/5). Rāmāyaṇa, in Tagore's reading, is not a heroic *vīrarasa* poem as epic poetry normally is, but a stylized picture of the family—of the fundamental geometry of commitments in domesticity—relations with parents, wife, brother, server. Like his fictional character Gora, Tagore declares: "with silent respect, we have to judge how for a thousand years India viewed this story" (662/4). Mahābhārata is seen in the same way: "to the rhythm of its simple *anushtubh* meter, the heart of India beat for thousands of years" (662/6). The reader will be able to understand India through Rāmāyaṇa, and Rāmāyaṇa through India: because for Indians the figures of Rama, Sita, Hanuman were so true that even their own family were not true to the same extent (662/7).[34] Accordingly, the rules of critical appreciation of the epics must also change: true criticism is a form of worship; "the critic is a priest offering oblations, he merely expresses his own or humanity's wonder mixed with adoration" (662/6), I have suggested elsewhere that Tagore's imagination was not drawn to the bloodsoaked battlefields of the Mahābhārata as signs of the tragic poetry of human suffering; he preferred Buddhist tales of a subtler destruction of the human spirit.[35] But Tagore does not ignore the moral dilemmas of the Mahābhārata: it is the hard obscurity of *dharma* that connect like a string of tears Mahābhārata stories chosen for the *Kathā O Kahini*. *Kāhinī* selects some of the hardest moral questions the perversely complex narrative intelligence of the epic could devise—the conversations just before the battle between Karna

and his unknown mother, Kunti, the conversation between Dhṛtarāṣtra, the nominal chief of the Kuru clan and queen Gandhari, incensed by Draupadi's disgrace, her subjection by Gandhari's own sons to a violation worse than rape. This is followed by a conversation between the king Somaka who performed a *putreṣṭi* sacrifice (the darkly ironic title of *putra-isti* that can mean both desire for a son, and sacrifice of a son, the narrative event produces a perverse combination of both), but remains, in an unjust paradox, untainted by the intention for the performance, which is displaced on to his officiant priest.[36] The Mahābhārata is a dark narrative[37]and from its persistently and brilliantly perverse expanse, Tagore chooses the most profound aporias. Even the *pretas* in hell recoil from the story of the sacrifice:

Thāmo thāmo, dhik dhik
Purṇa morā bahu pāpe. Kintu he ṛtvik,
Śudhu ekā tor tare ekti narak
Kena sṛje nāi bidhi?
Stop, stop, shame, shame on you, priest,
We are filled with sins, but
Why did the creator not create a hell specially for you alone?

III.2. Śakuntalā

Although surprising, unprecedented and idiosyncratic, Bankim's comparison between Śakuntalā and Shakespearean heroines prompted many successors to extend his reflections—as the new world of Bengali literature gradually silted with new works, responding to the irresistible attraction of the two great traditions. Despite his admiration for Kālidāsa, Bankim shows a preference for Shakespeare's dramatic quality, treating the Sanskrit poetry as either vulgar [Jayadeva] or listless [Śakuntalā]. Tagore's concern is about a growing opinion among educated Bengalis that Kālidāsa was a poet of unrestrained sensuousness, to be avoided by readers of purer modern taste.[38] Tagore's essays offer a more "relativistic" criticism of Kālidāsa's works, especially *Kumārasambhava* and Ś*akuntal*ā. In both narratives the stormy love of youth, when an erotic impulse overwhelms all restraint is shown as incomplete: and both Śakuntalā and Pārvatī are triumphant when their power stemmed not from their incomparable beauty, but from renunciation. Both Śiva and Duṣyanta are conquered by a woman of renunciation, rather than of transcendent beauty—a walking creeper in full bloom (*paryāptapuṣpastavakāvanamr*ā *sancāriṇī pallavin*ī *lateva*). In another essay, Tagore directly contradicted Bankim's fearless assessment that Śakuntalā was comparable in her two states—as a young woman and renunciant—to Miranda and Desdemona, and a less vivid instance of the two forms of the feminine. Tagore invokes Goethe's famous remark regarding Śakuntalā, which he calls "not an exaggeration coming out of enjoyment, but a wise aesthetic judgment (*ānander atyuki nahe, rasagner vicār*)," moving into a more relativist aesthetics. "In the Tempest, the name mirrors its narrative content: conflict between man and nature, and between man and man—and the basis of that conflict is the desire for power/control. It is conflict from end to end (*ihār āgā-goḍā-i bikṣobh*)"

(662/23). It is a story of the tempest of human desires: like ferocious beasts, these impulses have to be tamed and restrained by control, coercion and repression (662/23). By contrast, "Śakuntalā can be regarded as Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained rolled into one" (662/27). Among Shakespeare's dramas there is not a single instance of the deep calm and restraint in *Śakuntalā*. European poets imitate real human life, Kālidāsa's imagination transcends it, and does not admit of its exclusive claim to artistic truth. "In the *Tempest* we get power, in Śakuntalā, tranquility; in the *Tempest*, victory by means of violence, in Ś*akuntal*ā contentment through the power of goodness; in the *Tempest*, an interruption halfway through the story, in Ś*akuntal*ā ending in fullness" (662/27). There could hardly be a more forceful riposte to Bankim's reading of what the two literary worlds offered. In his literary criticism, Tagore often recognizes the vast differences in temporalized narrative taste. In the epics, there is no curiosity about the narrative end: "they move forward constantly thinking, constantly questioning, constantly surveying their surroundings, without the least urgency to reach the end" (662/30). Regarding the expansiveness of K*ādambar*ī, he argues, if the modern aesthete desires to draw pleasure from premodern tales such as Banbhatta's story, he will not be able to grasp it staying inside the boundaries of his own time; he will have to enter into another. If someone wants to savor *Kadambari*, he will have to forget that he is getting late for the office (662/33). *Kadambari* is a gallery of images. Ordinary tales are told by stitching together a succession of events; Banabhatta has told his by placing in sequence a succession of verbal paintings (662/38).

III.3. Two Poems on Meghadūta

Probably the most evocative reflection on the poetry of the past is to be found not in Tagore's prose criticism, but in a cluster of poems that set up what I shall call an *ironic* relation to temporality. References to Kalidasa permeate Tagore's poetry—in two forms. The first is an entirely unannounced, unprepared, unrequired irruption of either images or locutions offering a gratuitous pleasure. In Bankim's writing too there are arresting references of this kind. To take just two examples, after she gets the news of Mubarak's death, Aurangzeb's daughter Zebunnisa is suddenly and gratuitously described as—*vasudhāinganadhūsarastanī vilalāpa bikirṇamūrdhajā*—taking an image from the celebrated *rativilāpa* sequence in the *Kumārasambhava*.[39] In *Kapalkundala*, when the pilgrims are returning from the sea and first see the distant shore, Nabakumar exclaims:

> *dūrāt ayaścakranibha—sya tanvī tamālatālīvanarājinīlā*
> *ābhāti belā lavanāmburaśerdhārānibaddheva kalankarekhā* (Kalidasa, Raghuvamśam)

The presence of Kalidasa in Tagore is often even subtler, at a level that is deeper, less accessible than the quotational found in Bankim. The past's presence is captured forcefully in three poems of very different taste. An early work from *Manasi* describes the composition of the *Meghaduta* as a poem for all lovers separated from their beloved. Every year the new rains poured sustaining, renewing water on its words,

making them blossom again, so that people in the sorrow of separation could find a language for their own longing. It is a language that turns separation itself into a strange paradise:

labhiyāchi viraher svargalok, jethā
*ciraniśi japiteche virahinī priy*ā
*Ananta-saundarya mājhe ek*ākī *j*āgiy*ā*

But the momentary connection with the past is easily lost (*ābār hārāye jāy*); and the poet's mind is forced to think about a question that cannot be answered. Why this curse? Why this eternal distance from what we most desire? (*ke diyeche hena śāp, kena vyavadhān?*). Two other poems, of very dissimilar tone, shape a kind of answer. A lighthearted verse "Sekāl" [then] fantasizes about what would have happened if he had been born in Kalidasa's time. Life would have unfolded in the slow rhythm of the *mandākrāntā.*[40] Union would spread over six seasons in unhurried fulfillment, with a poem capturing its raptures in six cantos.[41] The past has gone—carrying all its denizens with it, including Kalidasa's elegant women. Ultimately, Tagore concluded, there were major consolations in the world at hand: the flowers bloom in the trees in the same way; the south breeze on a spring evening is still equally sweet, despite the absence of the gorgeous women. (*anek dike-i jāy re pāoā anketā santvanā/ jadio re nāiko kothāo se sab varānganā*). Women who grace the world today would have doubtless appeared beautiful to the great poet's appreciative eyes. It is true they wear stockings and shoes, walk erect, and speak in an alien style, but they show the same archness in the eyes as in his times. We should not mourn the absent women of the past, under different aliases they still exist. On final reckoning, we have done better than the great poet. Tastes and fragrances from his time waft to our world; but of our times he had not the faintest glimpse. The colored past of Kalidasa has no rejoinder to the unanswerable advantage of the present.("Sekal," *Sancayita*, Visvabharati, Kolkata, 1972, p. 409.)

Tagore's finest reflection on the *Meghadūta* and larger questions around temporality came in a later poem, "Yaksha" (1938, ibid., p. 801–2),[42] which should be read along with a short charming essay, "Meghdūt."[43] It is hard to capture the flavor and force of Tagore's thinking without direct quotes.

The yaksa's *viraha* travels unceasingly on the path to alakā, carried by the joy in the wings of the flying crane to an inaccessible paradise (*ciradūr svargapure*). Great beauty mingles with the deepest pain at every step of this journey (*nibiḍ byāthār sāthe pade pade paramsundar pathe pathe mele nirantar*). An immense longing stays awake in the heart of Time, the traveler. To transcend its separation from wholeness (*purṇatār sathe bhed*) it travels to gateways of the future, through new lives and deaths. This world is a poem to that longing, composing an endless commentary in *mandākrāntā* meter—with a faint omen of joy on a vast canvas of sorrow [prose translation of the verse].[44]

The prose essay on *Meghadūta* spells this out more clearly: "We have been banished from that time not merely during the season of the rains, but for all time." As if time has slowly become graceless after that point.[45] As if we should have had a contact with them; "we have a deep affinity of humanity, but a cruel distance of

time" (662/8). The poetry that past has left behind "only reminds us of that time, but does not bring it close; excites our desire, but does not fulfill it" (662/9).

A sudden turn occurs in the stream of thought: "there exists an unfathomable *viraha* (separation-longing) not merely between the past and the present, but *inside every human being*." This is a transition to a more radical philosophical argument—when *viraha* is taken from the relation between lovers, and placed radically *inside* every man, then, we do not have to be separated from each other to feel forlorn, the separation is placed within ourselves. What does this mean? Is this simply obscure colored froth of poetry, or a serious philosophic idea? I believe that this bears some affinity with a powerful form of argument in philosophy. A modern example of this line of thinking can be found, for instance, in the notes of the Young Marx. Marx's early critique of the capitalist society was radically ahistorical,[46] based on a philosophic contrast between a "nature" seen as an unalienated species life of man. Effects of a capitalist economy on human beings force them to deviate from this unalienated "natural" condition; it degrades humans by making that unalienated "nature" inaccessible, lost irretrievably in capitalist property relations. Capitalism is not described through its historical emergence from a prior feudal structure—using a logic of economic temporalization. It is rejected as a "fall" from an atemporalized condition of unalienated nature. The thinking in this poem's last segment is similar. To say that man loses his way to himself is not a meaningless statement, it is an expression of this deeply felt desire for wholeness, the dream of an unalienated life. In this poem, the images from Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*—of the yearning *yakṣa*, of his alienated *priy*ā, of an unreachable *alak*ā, of a journey without end—are all reinterpreted; they are not parts of a longing for the past, but for perfection. From a wistful picture of the past, *Meghadūta* becomes an allegory of the present, a sublimation of its finiteness.[47]

Central to Tagore's reflections on Kalidasa is a metaphor that is not easy to decode. Exile does not imply a destruction of the place from where one has come, an utter, unrelieved extinction of that form of life—it is an exile but a strange and subtle exile—it is not an exile in space, but an exile in time.

Readings of these texts of literary criticism might help us in figuring out the meaning of the strange but critical metaphor—exile from the past. It is a strange and subtle exile—not an exile in space, but an exile in time. The strangeness at the heart of this metaphor comes from the transposition of exile, which sets up a relation between two points in space to two points in time. Exile does not imply a destruction of the place one has come from, an utter, irrecoverable extinction of that form of life. An exile in time does. It suggests that that form of life is irrecoverable. There is no way of return to its living forms. Art alone can produce a stratagem that can pass that barrier through imagination—through an occasional fleeting capture of its images. Historical distance has a double effect, making those forms irrecoverable and infinitely enchanting.

IV. ABANINDRANATH TAGORE: HOW TO SEE THE NONEXISTENT

Seeing what no longer exists—that is the crux of the imaginative challenge that literary and visual art face in common, but because of the different medium they

deploy, the response takes different forms. There is the obvious fundamental difference: the way these two arts represent the past are divergent. Literature uses words, art paint and lines. Words are abstract, visuality is concrete. Consider the relation between three things: the real presence of a limb with blood dripping form it, a visual image, and a word representation that speaks in words of the bloodied limb. There is a clear difference between the conveying of that "image" in words and in visual form: let us call that a difference between abstract(word) and concrete(visual image). In visualizing the past, as opposed to conceiving it in words, the challenge becomes harder in some ways. In premodern aesthetic texts, some of these hardships of imagination, the work of *kalpanā*, are treated in some detail, with characteristic acuity. Literary descriptions often face the question of physiognomic indeterminacy. Rama is always "described" (how can you describe something that does not exist? or someone no one has ever seen?) as handsome. Actual or corporeal handsomeness is always a combination of determinate features; many different individuals can be handsome, but each is handsome in his own way. Rama, even though we assume he was an individual who existed in the past, was not seen by anyone who could literally "describe" him.[48] What happens then—when a poet evokes his appearance as handsome? One answer to this problem is that in this case—in a drama—the words make a simple symbolic evocation. The director finds a handsome actor to represent Rama, to *stand in* for him—which means both reminding us that he is not really like Rama, and that he is; because Rama must have been handsome in his own way, not the actor's. This is one handsome figure making a gesture of likeness toward another. Spectators consequently adopt a dual attitude toward the handsomeness of the Rama character[49] or dramatic impersonator: they realize that there is a strange overlay of likeness on unlikeness. In the conventional distinction between *dṛśya* and *śrūta kāvya*—seen and heard—there was a deep realization of the extended implications of this fundamental difference—of the systematic transformations that took place when representation in words were transferred into visual and aural scenes. The same difference between the verbal and the visual is at issue in the imaginative recapture of the past.

Pastness raises the vital question of experiential continuity and discontinuity. Historicist temporalizing thinking immediately splits the meaning of the past into two irreconcilable notions—*āgama* and *atīta*—which we can characterize as continuous and discontinuous or, if we stress a different point, an actable and unactable past (see above). The first indicates a past that is active because actionable in the present; at times, even more strongly, a past that provides the source and criteria of judgment for practices continuing in the present—for instance, of singing, dancing or calligraphy. The second meaning, by contrast, simply signals the fact that a practice that was possible in some previous time has become unactionable now, either because the source of that knowledge has dried up, or that its practice creates such social disapproval that it is hard to practice it in the present; or that its conditions of intelligibility have frayed so utterly that it would be indecipherable, even if someone was able to enact it.

In Rabindranath the sense of the temporalization and experiential inaccessibility of the past is accentuated and sinks deeply into the fabric of the thinking itself.

Whether it is in the lighthearted nostalgia of the poem "Sekal," or the anguish of "viraha" from past times in the dense prose essay, "Meghdūt," Tagore's thinking centers on the fact that contents of Kalidasa's time are experientially barred from the inhabitants of the present. That is what calls for strategies of partial and tenuous access, captured in the strangely apt metaphor of a perfume wafting across a boundary—not of space, but of time.

Here the distinction between the mental and the sensory becomes critical. Evocations of the past in words appeal to the mental, leaving the creation of an actual image to the reader's imagination; but in case of the dramaturgical, or the visual, the presentation of the past has a sensory form. When Rabindranath writes *kurubaker parta cuḍā kālo keśer mājhe*, the reader grasps abstractly the "picture" of a red sprig against the black hair, but the redness is abstract waiting for a reader's imagination to assign a determinate shade of color. In a painting of the same image, the painter has to apply a concrete, entirely particular shade of red, not leaving it to the spectator's imagination.

The central problem then is that the past is a time that once contained a world from which large parts of real attributes have been irretrievably obliterated. Fragments of real objects that become available to us from the past always have this incomplete character—in sculptures heads and arms are missing, in Ajanta murals large sections are effaced. Literary evocation follows this logic of partial absence faithfully by the answering fragmentariness of captured images. These qualities of the past pose deeper problems for paintings. First, to be truthful, it must convey a sense of a world that is only partly existent: a world that exists sensorily only incompletely, in fragments. Second, it must deal with the difference in medium—it must find a way of capturing the indefiniteness of attributes that literary texts can convey simply because of the abstractness of word-mediated images. Even in the word pictures of poetry there might be tiny, forgettable particles of sense that indicate an unliving stillness of the beautiful figures—*līlākamal raita hāte nā jāni kon kāje*[50] [who knows what the play—lotus was meant to *do*]. At one level, of course the question is redundant: the lila kamala is for play, not to do anything. But I suspect that such phrases suggest something deeper and more far-reaching about the figures' pastness: these figures are merely beautiful spirits—insubstantial, elusive; they melt into unreality if we want to touch them—powerfully captured in the short sighing phrase—*ābār hārāye jāy* (Thakur, 1972, p. 103).[51] Their only existence can be as pictures; they cannot do anything, because doing is a property of the present. The technique of representing the past is very similar, despite their mediums, in Abanindranath.

To understand Abanindranath's representational problem, and also his peculiar solution, we should turn to an important contrast. Modern Indian painting was inaugurated by the profusion of work by Raja Ravi Verma. Ravi Verma too was troubled by the radical absence from which his art was to begin. On one side, there was an absence of a temporally proximate artistic tradition of academic painting—despite the abundance of varying forms of image-making crafts. Colonial culture, in a strange but common paradox, thus made European painting the exemplar that was easily at hand for aspiring painters. Like many other modern artists, Ravi

Verma worked with a capacious, some would say indiscriminate, conception of the past in which the mythological and the historical were not clearly separated. Also his sense of the Indian past scoured Indic mythology for his themes—Sakuntala, Nala-Damayanti, Draupadi, scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa. He followed European classical painting in portraying the scenery and the surrounding architecture in vivid realistic detail. Ravi Verma's presentation of the figures such as Sakuntala, or the scene of triumph of Indrajit, bring these characters to life and 'reality'—critics might say, to an excess. He sees the task of painting as a realistic visualization of an imaginary scene, which leave in fact very little to the imagination of the viewer. Ravi Varma was criticized for less significant features of his scenes: for instance, the architecture resembled palaces of classical European provenance, rather than something recognizably Indian. Those criticisms are less significant than a more fundamental question—to which Abanindranath seems to have fashioned, after much reflection, a radically different answer. In the *Triumph of Indrajit*, for example, the scene is depicted with utter corporeal and material clarity, as though the painter is depicting some event of the present—available for such complete corporeal capture—conveyed precisely by the wealth, minuteness, and certitude of detail. Even the angle of the shade on every single step is painted with what can skeptically be called, a paradoxically false truthfulness. True, that kind of extreme detail is insignificant to the scene; but these are called for by the logic of representation working in the painting. For that picture to be "true,"[52] the painter and his viewers must know the exact time of the day, and the exact angle of the slanting ray of the sun. There is a similar, entirely symmetrical veridicality of the bodies and costumes. Such veridical capture of the past, or of a mythical event—a past-surrogate—is misleading. These pictures in that sense convey a notion of truth that is false; it lays a claim to a sensory capture of the past that is simply beyond the limits of the possible. Here the limit we are talking about are the temporalizing limits historical time placed on chronology—but now deflected on to the plane of pictorial language. If it had been a continuous past—an event of a kind that is still socially prevalent—we could capture such detail imaginatively—with accuracy and fluency. In a discontinuous past, major parts of the lived world would become underdetermined—in the sense that determinations would disappear—with no way of knowing how things were. To paint with a pretence that we know every single detail of that world and can render it veridically is a false idea. It misuses the capacity of realist painting to create a verisimilitude—but of something nonexistent. It seems that Abanindranath's thinking played around with this problem for a considerable time, and at different stages of his artistic evolution, worked different resolutions.

IV.1. Early Works: Kṛṣnalīlā

Abanindranath's earliest works were concerned with the past as mythology—partly like Ravi Varma. Unlike Ravi Varma's canvases that ranged widely across Indian mythical narratives, Abanindranath's painterly imagination was directed at themes of local color, starting with the long Bengali fascination with Krishna's līlā in Vṛndāvana. The Krishnalila paintings immediately established a radically

different aesthetic of color, line, and atmosphere. The draftsmanship of the figures become very different from Ravi Verma's, and local Bengali critics, influenced by a mixture of religious devotion and conventions of European painting, faulted his figures as weak and effeminate.[53] These critics were clearly shocked by the presentation of a radically different optics—a regime/logic of visualization—trying to paint a world that hangs in the balance between being illusory and being lost. Abanindranath's Krishnalila paintings met a challenge to the visual imagination by introducing several significant features. They tried to imagine a visual logic that was entirely different from European ways of seeing, to imagine a past quite different from the present; because what was lost was not merely the world of the past times, but even a capacity to imaginatively conceive of it. The ambient influence of Western painting was crucial in this context: it was not only merely dominant, but also the persistently familiar. A new way of seeing had to work against its dominance. A correct logic of visualization that could capture the past, it seemed to Abanindranath, would have to powerfully signal its un-veridicality and its visual-linguistic difference. The Krishna paintings captured the spirit of Vaisnava religiosity. The paintings were faithful to the comprehensive lyricism of the Vaisnava imaginary, drawing attention to profusion of beauty in nature, renewed unremittingly in the cycle of seasons, of the *kunjas* of the lovers' trysts, of the river and the forests, the blooming trees and the nights of full moon for the mundane but cosmic *līlā* of Radha and Krishna. The optic *language* of these paintings is engaging in a harder task—to aesthetically disengage the "past" mythopoeic world from the object language of the present, the world that is given to us. The language of painting itself—before it finishes objects—seeks to convey a sense that everything in that world is different from this world; that it is a world of intrinsic beauty, unmarred by the presence of anything that is not beautiful. The proper description of this world, as much as the figure standing at its center, is *akhilam madhuram*.[54] Therefore the truth of the world as we experience it in our historic present—its mundane imperfection—must not be allowed to enter that enchanted universe. The untainted lyricism of Vṛndāvana must not be sullied by the prose of a mundane world. The invention of this different language of visuality strains to create a grammar to portray an un-mundane world that is both beauteous and elusive. The realistic musculature of the figures of the Ravi Verma—which by its painting methods suggests it is the same world, but in a different time—is replaced by a body consisting of flowing lines, solid colors, musical gestures. The wonderful image of the conquered woman in "The triumph of Indrajit" and the waiting women in Abanindranath's early works such as *Viraha* are different not merely because the first is distraught and the second wistful; but because the first is real, the second is radically lyrical. They are inhabitants of two different worlds.

IV.2. Mughal Themes

Surprisingly, a second phase, when the artistry of Mughal miniatures mesmerized Abanindranath,[55] retains a strange connection with the mythopoeic universe of Vrindavan. It does not matter that the themes are differently nonexistent—

the first is nonexistent in being mythical, and the second in being historical. The similarity of the figures is truly striking: the Jahanara image seems to have evolved from the waiting woman in red (waiting in Krishnalila paintings), even to have borrowed the flaming color of her dress—slightly subdued to go with the mood of her anguish (with Shahjahan looking at the Taj). The world within these Mughal pictures go through a strange transformation: the figures change, and at the same time, do not. We can be forgiven for believing that she is the same enchantress migrated somehow into a different historical world—despite the similarity of their wistful gaze, they are caused by different types of anguish. Abanindranath's past world is notably diverse—quite separate from the solidly Hindu character of Ravi Verma's antinquity. It enfolds a vivid Islamic presence—often treated with deep seriousness, occasionally in sardonic imitation.[56] The Krishnalila paintings are framed in pages that imitate Mughal miniatures—with Bengali verse under the pictures explaining the narrative episodes in an ironic imitation of Islamic calligraphy. These lines are infused with a visual perfume of the past. In the Shahjahan paintings, the surroundings evoke Islamic aristocratic architecture, but with a minimalism that focuses the viewer's attention on the human drama. The Taj is barely visible in the distance. Minimalism is intensified in the striking painting of Aurangzeb with Dara's head in the utter bareness of the surroundings. The project of viewing of the past in this visual language of minimalism is supplemented in the subsequent phases of his painterly work by a dominant use of colors evoking moods. Increasingly, what a painting wants to say is conveyed by the uses of color. In paintings of Omar Khayyam, once more about a beautiful but visually decayed/incomplete past world, that style appeared perfectly applied. If we ask what the painting is about, the objects to be painted are few, what is painted is the color of the past. As in the Omar Khayyam paintings, or the remarkable painting of the Abhisārikā, the figures exist in an almost objectless world of color. Color becomes an increasingly significant part of what the paintings seek to convey: "it really seems as though the color is itself capable of thought, independently of the object it clothes" (Baudelaire, 1972, p. 137).

IV.3. Saying through Color

Abanindranath's vision-language had already evolved and settled—with its forceful use of aesthetic blur/fading and the dominance of color—into a style. It was no longer a matter of depiction of scenes from this mixed mythical-historical past; it extended, in the painting of "The bird" for example—into paintings of nature, extending into landscapes of the Bengali countryside and riverscapes, which seek to capture their stillness by paint. Even after Abanindranath, this style that moved away from a tradition of European-style realism, into something that sought to *see* images that were strangely ideal, brought out of the world of nature and human beings by exaggeration and fading –tinkering with the shapes of the real—enjoyed a long afterlife. In paintings such as Nandalal Bose's "Evening" in which the minimalism—images

of just one branch full of luxuriant foliage and two huge trunks—brought out something about treeness or the being of the forest that would evade capture by ordinary realistic painting. I think this applied to the field of visual form the idea behind Tagore's saying that the truth is what the poet creates, what happens is not all true (Thakur, 1972).

Sei satya jā rachibe tumi/
ghate jā tā sab satya nahe

The forest lived truly in what the artist painted; the mundane forest was not all true.

At the center of Abanindranath's reflection and practice of modern art lay a core of serious philosophical reflection on the nature of history—the ontological character of the past. There is a peculiar mode in which the past exists—it is fundamentally different from the mode of the present. It exists in parts, irretrievably decayed, irrevocably deprived of its presentness. It is deprived of its ability to act, its ability to do things. That was why it was aesthetically wrong to portray the past in a way similar to the present—an infringement/violation of its deadness, its stillness, its pictoriality. The past could exist only in the form of images that were not whole, fragmented, frozen out of real life—something that was dead and beautiful at the same time. Art could breathe form into those *images*, but not real life. This is the major difference between this kind of fascination with the past and real revivalism. That is why the perfect capture of this ontology was through fragments—as in Abanindranath's pictures in which we can see but only through a blurring mist of time; because we cannot see everything, what we can discern takes on an exaggerated beauty. This representational process is exactly parallel to the capture of the past—in a frieze of enchanting fragments—in Rabindranath's poems on Kaildasa. It is because of its ethereality/its elusiveness that it can come to us as a fleeting perfume, an aesthetic vision that can enrich, enhance our relation to what we have. It seems that the *virahini* in the Vṛndāvana picture is transformed into Jahanara and is transformed again in the bent body of the mountain woman. But it is clearly reborn, fleetingly, impermanently, in the body of the black girl. This utterly ordinary girl is as astonishingly beautiful as Kalidasa's poetic figures: she has the same arrangement of flaming blossoms as ornaments against the color of her dark hair; the same white sprig hanging from her ear, the ripple of the same white garland on her black body. In her we see an utter "transformation of the commonplace." She reassures us, just like Tagore's poem, "they" are all still present under other names: *tānra sabāi anya nāme āchen martyaloke*. We should not mourn for the past: it always exists in its elusive impermanence just at the border of our artistic world. We can visit that world only when we can ride on art's embodied dreams. Dreams need a language that is different from the one adequate to describe the prose of the real. All languages are inadequate to convey what it gives us, but some languages hint at this combination of elusive enchantment—the language of irony, the blur of color, the broken chain of images. The black girl belongs not only to our present, but also to a visual site that is half past and half paradise.

V.

The last example of an aesthetic "presence of the past" is from the surprising realm of comic literature—from the world of Sukumar Ray's nonsense poems for children. This was an enchanted world of mixture, inversion, misunderstanding—all captured in the capacious meaning of the title—*Ābol Tābol*.[57] It contains a poem about a strange, improbable animal, hunko-mukho hyanglā, who, incongruously, has a human maternal uncle engaged in the not uplifting trade of an opium inspector (āphinger thānādār) . One day, reports the poem, he was mysteriously gloomy, though he was seen dancing with delight a short while before. The poem wonders about what caused his sudden sadness: and characteristically the surmise about possible reasons runs in chaotic diverse directions: did he overestimate his skill in dancing and sprain his ankle? Did his uncle unexpectedly pass away? When asked, hunko-mukho hyanglā, provides a suitably cerebral answer, satisfying to the naturally intellectual Bengali mind. Those, he states, are not the reason: he is pondering a deep, insoluble question:

Hunko-mukho henke kay, āre dur tā to noy, dekhcho nā ki rakam cintā?
Māchi-mārā phandi e, jata bhābi man diye, bhebe bhebe kete jāy din-tā.
Base jadi dāine lekhe mor āine ei lyāje māchi māri trasta
Bāme jadi base tāo, nahi āmi pichpāo, ei lyāje āche tār astra.
Jadi dekhi kono pāji base thik mājhāmājhi ki je kari bhebe nāhi pāi re
Bhebe dekho e ki dāy, kon lyāje māri tāy; duti boi lyāj mor nāi re.

A prosaic translation of his predicament would be:

Hunko-mukho said aloud, no that is not the problem, don't you see how hard this question is?
It is a stratagem for killing flies: I pass the day in intent thought.
If a fly settles on the right, my rules dictate that I swat him instantly with this tail.
If it settles on the left, I have an answer too: I have the weapon in the other tail.
[However], if a particularly cunning one perches on the exact middle, I would not know what to do.
Think how hard this is: how do I swat him, I have no more than two tails.

For decades, hunko-mukho's tragic dilemma has troubled and delighted Bengali children. But Sukumar Ray's comedy is rarely single-stranded—it usually carries subtle and complex connections to surprising sources of additional enjoyment. Sometimes, these are connections that only adults can discern which prolongs the enjoyment of this comic enchantment beyond the time of childhood. In this particular case, the reader will discover to his amazement, that the poem's *chanda*—the metric form—comes from a startlingly unexpected source. The meter comes from one of the most canonical works of Sanskrit poetry, Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda,* an amazing inextricable mixture of the erotic and the spiritual. Discerning readers would discover that the meter of Jayadeva's famous lines of erotic verse:

Patati patatre vicalita patre śankita bhavad-upayānam
Racayati śayanam sacakita-nayanam paśyati taba panthānam

can run seamlessly into Ray's Bengali lines
hunko-mukho hyānglā bāḍi tār bānglā mukhe tār hāsi nei dekhecha
nei tār māne ki keu tāhā jāne ki, keu kabhu tār kache thekecha?

Transferring metric forms from Sanskrit to vernaculars is known to be exceedingly hard; aural properties of Sanskrit and Bengali were quite different. So it is a deeply unsettling discovery that Sukumar not merely successfully composed in a Sanskrit meter, but hid it inside a rollicking nonsense verse. It is a triumph of the pleasure of out-of-place-ness. Within that small work on wonders of laughter, he offers a theory of laughter rising—not out of envy, or malice, or contempt, but out of a creative imagination which simply sets things into wrong places—a laughter created by incongruity:

Māsi go māsi pācche hāsi nim gāchete hacche śim
Hātir māthāy byānger chātā, kāger bāsay bager dim

Auntie, it tickles my laughter; shim beans are growing on nim trees
The elephant goes into the shade of the mushroom[in Bengali, literally, a frog's umbrella], and the stork's eggs are stowed in the crow's nest.

Evidently, this is one of the major sources of laughter, as more somber texts had also asserted, but without the pleasure of such enchanting lightness of saying. Appropriately this genre of laughter is a part of a book of laughter for children, because, as the book says in a tribute to the innocence of children, it is the priceless gift of a laughter that does not need a reason:

Hāste hāste āsche dādā, āschi āmi āsche bhāi
Keu jāne nā hāschi keno, pācche hāsi hāschi tāi
My elder and younger brothers come laughing, as I am laughing myself
No one knows why we are laugh; we do because we just feel like laughing.

There can hardly be a more unanswerable reply to the question why people laugh. The poem on Hunko-mukho can of course be enjoyed simply through the aural rhythm of the meter; but there is no doubt that its enjoyment is enhanced if we perceive the hidden play of the past: it is clearly part of the poet's intention to hide this lost treasure. Without its grasp, the reception of the poem remains incompleteness. Sanskrit poetry found a hiding place inside some of the most improbable literary locations.

Nineteenth-century Bengal is an astonishingly creative world of aesthetics: but it is a world which conceals in strange, complex, subtle ways a fugitive, inapparent presence of the past. In some ways, the past might misleadingly appear as irretrievably lost, because the past's mode of being present cannot be the same as the present's. Its mode of presence is allusive, forgettable, implicatory. The study of Bengali literature is instructive precisely for this reason. This shows that under the apparently independent realm of modern aesthetics, there is a subterranean universe of an artistic past from which perfumes of pleasure come into our world. It reminds us that the present art cannot be as beautiful as it is entirely on its own, without the subtle enhancement from past aesthetics . In nineteenth century Bengali art the aesthetic past is not as much forgotten as gone into concealment. The past is present

in images both hidden and revealed—in Kalidasa motifs in Tagore's poetry; in the imagery of feminine beauty inside the vibrant colors of the blooms decorating the hair of mysterious dark girls, the rhymes of erotic Sanskrit poetry literally hiding inside the cadences of laughter in children's poetry. Who can say in this world that the past is entirely past?

VI.

Bengali culture in the nineteenth century was engaged in the reconstitution of fundamental discourses. This transformation affects fundamental ways of thinking about history and about art. The literature of art criticism is significant for two reasons. It shows the creation of new standards of artistic judgment. But precisely through the arguments they use in separating the values of premodern literature from the modern, they constantly reflect on the ontology of the past. A striking feature of the new historical sensibility is a more radical sense of the past. The past is not marked only by chronological distance, but structural inaccessibility. Yet, this radical distance produces a paradoxical form of enchantment. As this past ceases to threaten the present, it becomes possible to set up an aesthetic relation with its images. The perfume from that time intermittently wafts into the present. It is its uncertainty, its incomplete that is the essence of its allure. This new aesthetic offers a past always marked by mystery, standing in a magical twilight between elusiveness and illusion.

NOTES

1. *āmār kāler kaṇāmātra pān ni mahākavi*, Rabindranath Thakur, Sekal, *Sancayita* (Kolkata: Visvabharati, 1972).
2. For a discussion of the transactive relation between Sanskrit and Bengali, see Sudipta Kaviraj "Two Histories of Bangle Literature," in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of Caifornia Press, 2003).
3. Separation and longing.
4. Union.
5. For detailed analyses of the traditions of Sanskrit *kāvya* and its internal criteria, see Sheldon Pollock, *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* (Berkeley: University of Caifornia Press, 2003) and Sheldon Pollock, *Language of the Gods in the World of Men* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
6. This aesthetic principle that refused to mark texts strongly by their temporal difference—in other words, refused to treat temporal difference as historical difference—is linked to much larger issues about premodern Indic intellectual culture. It is misleading to see this as a failure on their part to understand the historicity of the human world. This way of thinking represents a fundamentally different approach to the effects of time. It does not fail to think historically; rather, it thinks in a mode that is deliberately different from the historical.

7. There is a long tradition of "anuvāda" in which classic Sanskrit works would be rendered into a vernacular language. But these did not follow the modern ideal of a verbal (word-to-word) transfer; these were free re-compositions—often with a quite different *rasa* arrangement. The Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* and Tulsidas's *Ramcaritmanas* are quite different aesthetic works.
8. Fit for children's understanding.
9. *Abhijnānaśakuntalam*.
10. Saṁskṛta bhāsā o saṁskṛta sāhitya viṣayak prastāb (Observations on Sanskrit Language and Literature), VR, II, pp. 5–46.
11. *Dharmatattva*, in *BR*, II.
12. This is Georg Lukacs's conception of the aesthetic of a historical novel. Georg Lukacs, *The Historical Novel* (London: Merlin Press, 1962).
13. The *Dhvanyāloka* by Ānandavardhana not merely makes the point, but with a brevity that shows that it takes this judgment for granted. It required a bare statement, not an exposition. Daniel H. Ingalls (ed.), *Dhvanyāloka*, Harvard Oriental Series (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 690–91.
14. This primarily reflected in his detailed analysis of the story—both narratological and ethical—in the *Krishnacaritra*, BR, II.
15. "While reading that we thought young Bengali women do indeed weep like this when they send their husband or son on employment away from home" (BR, II, p. 168).
16. Vidyāpati was the great poet of Maithili, and historical research tends to support the case that Jayadeva was a native of Orissa rather than Bengal. Ironically, however, both were conventionally treated as originators of the Bengali poetic tradition—probably on the basis of two reasons. Both were great figures of Vaisnava poetry, which circulated in a vast region of eastern India as a common poetic heritage. Secondly, linguistically both composed in languages that are entirely transparent to Bengali speakers and readers.
17. See Rabindranath Tagore's pointed rebuttal of this "popular" impression of Kālidāsa in his essay on Śakuntalā discussed below.
18. There is something very powerful and suggestive in the use of the latent verb ("is") in these sentences—which is hard to capture in translation.
19. Bankim uses a conventional term of Sanskrit poetics.
20. *Vāhana* is a particularly notable term.
21. *Dharmatattva*, *BR*, II.
22. Using the term ahistoricity here is rather tricky. The literary ideal is not ahistorical in the sense of failing to grasp the need for historical indexing of texts, but timeless—that is, it deliberately deflates the significance of such marking by chronology.
23. There are no references to classic works such as the *Amaruśatakam* or the *Śṛngāraśatakam* by Bhartṛhari in Bankim's criticism.
24. On which Bankim commented much more rarely—we must remember the elementary fact that this is before the age of mechanical reproduction.

25. I take this from Koselleck's well-known discussion about modernity and the planes of historicity, Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), Chapter 2.
26. The *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* defines uttamā bhakti as: *Anyābhilāṣitā-śūṇyam jnānakarmādyanāvṛtamānukulyena kṛṣṇanuśīlanam bhaktiruttamā*
27. This can be illustrated clearly in the case of Abanindranath Tagore who writes occasionally about this historical sense in his lectures on art; but, it is shown in his paintings.
28. According to Lukacs's famous work on *The Historical Novel*, that was their primary aesthetic purpose. Lukacs, *The Historical Novel*.
29. Rabindranath seems to have felt the sting of this accusation more than Bankim.
30. From the linguistic fact that sītā means the furrow made by the plough, and was found in a furrow by her father King Janaka.
31. Dinesh Chandra Sen's *Rāmāyanī Kathā.*
32. *Bharatvarṣer cirakāler itihās.*
33. Again, the theoretical similarity with Bankim's approach to the reading of Krishna's character is striking.
34. Tagore often gave expression to this sense of a heightened truth accessible only to art: *sei satya jā racibe tumi, ghate jā tā sab satya nahe* [truth will be what you will create, what happens is not always true]. "Bhāṣā o chanda" Tagore (1972).
35. Sudipta Kaviraj, "Tagore's Rhetoric of Suffering" (Unpublished paper for panel on "Buddhism outside Buddhism," AAS conference, Boston, 2006).
36. Although this clearly goes against the idea that *adhikārī* of an act is its *phala-svāmin*.
37. Sudipta Kaviraj, "The Second Mahabharata," in *South Asian Texts in History*, ed. Yigal Bronner, Whitney Cox, and Lawrence McCrea (Ann Arbor: AAS, 2011), 117.
38. This seems an indirect reference to Bankim's essays.
39. Interestingly, Tagore too was fascinated by the story, and provided a splendid re-reading of its meaning in two poems, "Madanbhasmer Purve" and "Madanbhasmer Par." In the second poem, there is a line of stunning reinterpretation of the episode in which Śiva's anger burns Madana down to ashes: *pancaśare dagdha kare korecho e ki sannyasī viśwamoy diyecho tāre chaḍāye /byākulatara bedanā tār bātāse uthe niśvāsi/ aśru tār ākāśe paḍe gaḍāye* [what have you done, sannyasi, by burning down Love you have filled the world with it/him. It's a more restless pain that now breathes in the wind, the sky drips with its tears].
40. The name of the meter in which the *Meghadūta* is composed, which literally means slow-moving.
41. A reference to the *Ṛtusaṃhāra*.
42. For a beautifully rendered, but minimal, translation, see Rabindranath Tagore, *Selected Poems*, trans. William Radice (London: Penguin, 1985), 116–17.
43. "Meghdūt," Prācin Sāhitya, *Rabindra Racanābali*, XIII, 662/7–9. Ananya Vajpeyi has recently commented on Tagore's essay. In passing she comments on my paper on these two texts, "The theory in the poem," JSL. See Ananya Vajpeyi, *Righteous Republic*

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). Her reading of Tagore seems to me right, but overextended. It is certainly true that Tagore thought of the difficult relation between the present and the past through the deeply colored category of *viraha* (separation-longing). But it is not right to say that that category is central to Tagore's thought as a whole. *Viraha* is evoked beautifully an subtly in Tagore's reflections of time and memory; but it plays a small part in his general philosophical thought. But there is a second significant issue about Vajpeyi's reading of Tagore. Vajpeyi tends to speak of Tagore's relation to the past in an entirely undifferentiated way: as if he wanted to go back to the real *social* past. In fact, Tagore's deep nostalgia is not for the *social* past at all, but a deeply aestheticized picture of the past. The pictures in Meghaduta that ceaselessly beckoned him from across time were almost entirely bereft of serious social properties. Tagore felt real scorn for some aspects of the Indian past; and an undifferentiated treatment of "the past" can produce a seriously misleading picture of his thought.

44. For a verse translation, Tagore, *Selected Poems*, 116–17.
45. Tagore uses a very interesting phrase—samay yena itar haiyā āsiyāche.
46. I accept this judgment from Althusser's reading of the 1844 manuscripts. Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin, 1969).
47. In Kālidāsa's text there are elements, which encourage this reading in terms of an unalienated state. In the *Uttaramegha* these lines describe the alakā:

    ānandottham nayanasalilam yatra nānyair nimittaih
    Nānyas tāpah kusumaśarajādiṣta saṃyogasādhyāt
    Nāpyanyasmād praṇaya kalahād viprayogopattih
    Vitteśanam na ca khalu vayo yauvanād anyad asti

    This passage quite clearly applies the typical logic of inversion in constructing an unalienated condition—spatialized into alakā—by taking ordinary features of the human condition, such as separation, sorrow, and loss of youth, and inverting them.
48. It is clear that this is not a case of what is ordinarily called description. In fact, the philosophical speculation in some of these texts is precisely about what kind of action it is.
49. Note how the word character in English splits into two separate meanings.
50. The work of the līlākamala is indefinite in Sanskrit kāvya: in another memorable picture Pārvatī intently counted the petals to overcome embarrassment.
51. Meghdūt, Mānasi, *Sancayit*ā, Visvabhāratī, Kolkata, 1972, 103.
52. There is a fascinating literature on the nature of what makes aesthetic objects—such as literature and art—true, in Bengali writing: but that discussion cannot be analyzed here. Two remarkable, and typically insightful attempts by Rabindranath can be found in his poem "Bhāṣā O Chanda" and his review of Bankimchandra's *Kṛṣṇacaritra*.
53. Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
54. From the classical Vaiṣṇava poem *Madhurāṣṭakam*.
55. Mitter, *Art and Nationalism.*
56. The quite obvious presence of Islamic elements can be found in all his periods: in the calligraphy of the Krishnalila—which is in fact a startling innovation, in the

Shahjahan and Mughal series, in the illustrations of Omar Khāyyām and the Arabian Nights. It seems to inaugurate a tradition that combines these themes with this highly specific style that continues in later artists such as A. R. Chughtai.

57. There are several excellent translations of this wonderful work of fantasy, all admirable in their own ways: *Nonsense Rhymes* by Sukumar Ray, trans. Satyajit Ray (Calcutta: Writer's Workshop, 1970); Sukanta Chaudhuri, *Select Nonsense of Sukumar Ray* (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1987); and the most recent, Sukumar Ray, *Wordygurdyboom,* trans. Sampurna Chattarji (New Delhi: Puffin, 2008).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Althusser, Louis, *For Marx*. London: Allen Lane, Penguin, 1969.

Baudelaire, Charles, *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, trans. P. E. Charvet. London: Penguin, 1972.

Chattopadhyay, Bankimcandra, *Bankim Racanābalī* (BR). Kolkata: Sahitya Samsad, 1984.

Ingalls, Daniel H. et. al., ed., *Dhvanyāloka*. Harvard Oriental Series. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,1990.

Kalidasa, *Mahākavikālidāsaviracitam Kumārasaṃbhavam*. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Vidyabhavan, 1963.

Kaviraj, Sudipta, "Two Histories of Bangla Literature," in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Kaviraj, Sudipta, "Tagore's Rhetoric of Suffering." Unpublished paper for panel on "Buddhism outside Buddhism," AAS conference, Boston, 2006.

Kaviraj, Sudipta, "The Second Mahabharata," in *South Asian Texts in History*, ed. Yigal Bronner, Whitney Cox, and Lawrence McCrea. Ann Arbor: AAS, 2011.

Koselleck, Reinhart, *Futures Past*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985, Chapter 2.

Kumar, R. Siva, *Paintings of Abanindranath Tagore*. Kolkata: Pratikshan, 2008.

Lukacs, Georg, *The Historical Novel*. London: Merlin Press, 1962.

Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Pollock, Sheldon, *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Pollock, Sheldon, *Language of the Gods in the World of Men*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Raghuvaṃśam. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Orientalia, 1987.

Tagore, Rabindranath, *Selected Poems*, trans. William Radice. London: Penguin, 1985.

Thakur, Rabindranath, *Rabindra Racanābalī*. Kolkata: Pascimbanga Sarkar, 1970.

Thakur, Rabindranath, *Sancayitā*. Kolkata: Visvabharati, 1972.

Vidyasagar, Isvarcandra, *Vidyāsāgar Racanābalī,* ed. Debkumar Basu. Kolkata: Mondal Book House, 1966.

CHAPTER NINE

Aesthetics of Theft

SIBAJI BANDYOPADHYAY

I. TOWARD A THEORY OF THE *WILL*

I.1. To Be Present

Will to record may well be one of the more driving, more persistent passions that set apart man from other life-forms; a *will* that may very well tint man's being-hood with an indelible seal of distinction. *Will to record* is closely kneaded with man's propensity to *play*; which is the same as saying, it is firmly welded to the blend of a twofold inclination. One of the two play-inclinations has for its goal the framing of clear-cut rules for the smooth running of some or the other structure; the other looks forward to unearthing the disorderly and the messy inscribed at the very heart of the instituted structure. But this is not all.

Will to record also alludes to another powerful and equally primitive predilection. That has to do with the compulsion to *display*—the uncontainable penchant to hold at bay things which, in the remorseless process of passing out, are inexorably turning into quiet nothings. The determination to refer back in the guise of standing witness, the grammatical grit to re-order the fading past in the tense of perennial present, the prying curiosity to re-view events already-viewed, is an impulse as pressing and stubborn as those of instincts. This near-absurd impulsion to instill a feel of *durability* to the *ephemeral*, to permeate a sense of *fixity* to the *fragile*, of necessity branches out in two directions. One courses along the vector set upon *circumscribing* the inherently flimsy with the aid of apparatus of marking, that is, upon the assigning of names, epithets, taxonomic nomenclature, classificatory characteristics, and so on, which make the integrally fuzzy *repeatedly recognizable* with some degree of certitude. The other follows the vector highlighting the self-implicating *artificiality* involved in fabricating *nonrepeatable unique* specimens while capturing the fleeting in frieze.

Simultaneously allied to the somber game of *truth-claiming* and to the comic prank of *fiction-building*, *will to record* is focalized on a special kind of monumentalizing the momentary—it composes stolid displays out of vagaries of play without however losing attention to fine distinctions; it invites libidinal investments that besides giving longer leases to staying power allow the participants to gaze at the self-same acts with discrimination.

Embroiling the singularly dependable testimony with dicey interreferentiality, confounding the ritualistically reiterative with cunning displacements, admixing sterilized museum-pieces with daily residues of dust, consecrating as well as compromising archival integrity by the looseness of the haphazard, and other such combination of opposing tricks, *will to record* keeps re-formatting the matrixes of stasis-in-motion and motion-in-stasis.

The unreasonable propulsion to halt time so as to partake in variegated experiences each on its own term that the *will to record* fosters bears affinities with certain aspects of the pact signed in blood between Faust, the Scholar, and Mephistopheles, the Spokesperson of Perdition. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) in Part I Scene IV of his two-part tragic play *Faust* (Part I, last revised: 1828–29; Part II, completed: 1831) depicts the tired, old pundit praying to the intrepid seducer in these words:

> Faust—When, to the Moment then, I say:
> "Ah, stay a while! You are so lovely!"
> Then you can grasp me . . .
> The clocks may halt, the hands be still,
> And time be past and done, for me!

Mephistopheles, of course, readily grants the boon: "Do, as you wish, nibble at everything, / Catch at fragments while you're flying." And then, down the line, speaking still in Faust's study, the Angel of Denial counsels the philosopher in the following words:

> Mephistopheles—Time is short, and art is long.
> I think you need instruction.
> Join forces with a poet: use poetry,
> Let *him* roam in imagination . . .

The instructive bit that one almost effortlessly derives from the Mephisto-manifesto is: employing the *will to record* to render to the transient the look of the stationary may not be quite feasible without the support of poetic liberty or license. This also suggests that there must be certain underlying aesthetic principles that make the bonding between the artistic enterprise and the act of recording, between the opposing feelings of being grasped and being grasping, virtually natural.

I.2. To Desire, to Need

Will however is not a formulaic construction, easy to pick or pack. For, "will" is a complex amalgam of *need* and *desire*. The term "will," compounded by the charge of the constant change, systematically eludes strict formal definition. In matters dealing with "will" one has to perforce take recourse to make-shift arrangements, to frameworks amenable to dismantling without much ceremony or fuss.

The reason why the notion of "will" is wavering in nature is because the borderline separating "need" and "desire" is never perfectly sealed. Not even the most vigilant battalion of Boarder Security Force patrolling the "dividing line" can ever succeed in maintaining the sanctity of the partition between "need" and "desire" to the

full—illicit exchanges between the two domains in the form of insidious leaks as well as in the form of inflowing deemed lawful due to exigencies of time make the task of overseeing very trying. Thus, what is considered superfluous today may assume tomorrow the importance of being an indispensable factor whose omission would routinely precipitate a crisis in the running of need-economy. Conversely, an element thought to be absolutely essential to the sphere of basic requirements today may become obsolete tomorrow only to emerge as a rarity arousing an ineffable yearning, a vague wish in somebody's innermost self. In short: in stark opposition to the expectations of those who, forgetting earlier pleasures or utilities, turn stodgy and judgmental, there is no map of "will" with permanently settled frontiers—any or all of them can be drawn and re-drawn, re-figured incessantly.

Just as "nature" and "culture" constitute an *unstable* binary, so do "need" and "desire"—though forever joined, forever together, they get variably distributed in diverse places and times. Their proportions alter as either new components get inducted or the existing ones switch allegiance from one to the other province. The act of crossing over, an act quite comparable to translating a work into a different register of syntax and idiom, modifies not just the form but the content of "will." Tracking "will" therefore requires context-sensitivity, calls for attention to political pressures, even to details usually regarded trivia.

Fortunately for us the "need-desire" dyad has received many a systematic philosophical treatment from ancient times.

One delectable instance of the treatment is provided by Plato (428/427 or 424/423–348/347 BCE) in his dialogue *Symposium*. The literal meaning of the text's title is "drinks party"—and, as it was routine those days (even if pipe-girls were present in the assembly to add to the merriment), Greek symposia were primarily stag parties. *Symposium* is one book of philosophy that is neither pedantic nor so abstruse as to befuddle lay-readers uninitiated in jargons or contrite technicalities. It was composed nearly half a century after the Peloponnesian War, sometime between 365 and 378 BCE, when, routed by Sparta, the sun of Athenian empire had already set, and, beginning with a boom, Athenian Democracy had ended in pathetic whining. Consisting of tributes offered to *Eros*—the god who, as one of the participants in the stag-party opined, although "venerable and important" was routinely slighted and side-lined by poets—*Symposium* is usually counted as venerable and important as Plato's dialogue on the Ideal State, *The Republic*.

Of the six each of whom delivered an *encomium* on *Eros*, a speech full of glowing praise of "passionate love," two were, Aristophanes (446—386 BCE), the master-builder of the genre known as Old Comedy and Socrates (470/469—399 BCE), the incorrigible interloper-cum-instigator who personified the faith that living an unexamined life was as inconsequential as not having been conceived at all.

Plato—the Greek thinker whose influence across centuries has been so formidable that it has yielded the popular saying, Western philosophy was nothing but a series of footnotes to Plato's treatises—constructed an elaborate frame of reference to furnish the Socratic view of *Eros* in the *Symposium*. Socrates confided to his fellow-speakers that all he could say on "love" was what he had picked up from an itinerant mystic named Diotima. There is no way of knowing for sure whether Diotima was

a historical character or purely a figment of Plato's far-too-fertile imagination. This much however is certain that the charismatic Diotima—nonfictional or otherwise in origin—afforded Plato the admirable excuse to adopt the device of "reported speech" and that too in the mode of "re-call." The major portion of Socrates's speech consisted of supposedly faithful reportage of the "question-and-answer session" during which, breaking the set patriarchal pattern, a man enquired of a woman on the philosophical content of "Love." And, Plato presented the session in the shape of dialogue-within-dialogue in the *Symposium*. In the course of the rather intricate exchange—so intricate that it managed to muscle in a couple of fallacious arguments, slip in a pair of major conceptualizations through a side door without any of the other members of the drinks party noticing them as such—Diotima imparted to Socrates a set of lessons which went much beyond the immediate issue at hand. Taking *Eros* as *one* instance of *desire*, Diotima construed a series of abstractions which bespoke of certain general features of the human *psyche*. Some of those psychic characteristics:

(a) Desire is *necessarily* linked to the sense of deficiency—one *longs* for only that which he *lacks*; one *wants* only that of which he is *wanting*.
(b) The *object* of desire is "permanent possession" of things (either previously lacking but now assimilated or yet to-be-had).
(c) *Need* is "a constant of companion" of Love (and by extension of every case of *desire*).

Interpolating from this Socratic premise it is tenable to posit that *need* is linked to the drive to retain properties that already *belong* to the person who nonetheless *longs* for more.

(d) Assuming that stronger the sense of lack of something greater the hankering for its possession, the sovereign-most desire of mortal human beings must be the desire to achieve *immortality*.
(e) Even with the full knowledge of his finitude man remains compulsively obsessed with Infinity. And this, in the ultimate instant, infuses *desire* with strains of incurable irrationality and unflagging dissatisfaction.
(f) Nevertheless, being a rational animal, man, (without ever giving up on his never-to-be-fulfilled aspiration for absolute self-perpetuation or *permanence*), strikes a compromise.

Centered on relative immortality, the compromise has two facets. One revolves around physical procreation and the other around mental procreation. Capitalizing on the sole resource for bodily procreation, that is, on the ability of reproduction, man partly gratifies his unrequited desire for immortality by generating approximate images of his own. Those who concern themselves with just not sex but also with virtue, wisdom, self-discipline, justice, and so on, try to prolong their *ideas* via offspring of mental procreation, that is, via (worthy) students.

It appears from the Diotima-Socrates dialogue that the two way-outs mortal men devise in order to (roughly) simulate godly immortality almost naturally conjoin the institution of "family" and the practice of "pedagogy." In other words, despite the broad generality of the philosophical abstractions, their applicability in concrete terms gets particularized according to social milieus.

It was customary in classical Greece to regard the female role in childbirth as secondary—it was thought then that woman was just a receptacle for the growth of the embryo and all the properties of the child inherited came solely from the father. Hence, to minimize the anxiety of parenthood on the part of the seed-bearer, iron-clad strictures around the female body had to be stipulated. Subordination of women in the name of familial value was like a precondition for the partial accomplishment of masculine fantasy of immortality through physical procreation. On the other hand, since the running of *polis* was exclusively man's business and concepts such as virtue, wisdom, justice could only be communicated to son-like-pupils through mental procreation, the vindication of boys and their loving teachers in the sphere of Greek academia was almost a fait-accompli.

One of the many startling aspects of Socrates's *encomium* on *Eros* is that it renders to Love's profile as well as to his location the touch of structural instability. Lying between gods and men, immortality and mortality, Love is a spirit. Occupying some middle ground, engaged in conveying men's prayers to gods and gods' instructions to men, Love, by definition, is homeless, in fact, a "vagrant." And since, Love is just one sort of *desire*, we may safely induce that Diotima's theorem, "to desire is to experience some or the other lack," is tagged with the lemma: no matter how thorough the surveillance, no topos of desire can be wholly delimited—being slippery, *desire*'s contours keep changing and by the same movement so do the contours of *need*.

There is one Indian philosophical term that seems to have a direct bearing on the desire-need nexus. Combining two senses in one, the term is *yoga-kṣema*. It stands for: *yogo'prāptasya prāpaṇam; kṣemas tad rakṣaṇam*, that is, "*yoga* = acquisition of the new; *kṣema* = preservation of the old" (Radhakrishnan, 2008, pp. 247, 118). In *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* III.10.2 we hear: "For him who knows this, as preservation in speech (*kṣema iti vāci*), as acquisition and preservation in the inbreath and the outbreath (*yoga-kṣema iti prāṇāpānayoḥ*)." Kṛṣṇā, at one point in the *Bhagavadagītā*, advises his favorite pupil Arjuna: "be free from the dualities . . . not caring for acquisition and preservation (*niryogakṣema*)" (II.45). Then again, elsewhere in the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇā assures his devoted or *bhakta* disciple: "Those who worship Me . . . I bring attainment of what they have not and security in what they have (*yogakṣemam vahāmy aham*)" (IX.22). Kauṭilīya—Plato's counterpart in the Indian tradition of state-craft—set a three-tier formula concerning a ruler's duties in matters relating to internal administration in his treatise on Political Science, the *Arthaśāstra* (written sometime between 300 BCE and 150 CE). The three components were: *raksha* or "protection of the state from external aggression," *palana* or "maintenance of law and order within the state" and *yogakṣema*. Kauṭilīya says in I.7.1 that in order to endure himself to his people the *rājarṣi* or the king-worth-the-name should ensure *yogakṣema*. And, the compound here signifies, "[*yoga* =] the successful accomplishment of an objective" + "[*kṣema* =] its peaceful enjoyment" (Rangarajan, 1992, p. 90). Scholars ranging from Śankara (788–820) to Ananda Coomarswamy (1877–1947), thinkers extending from the Doyen of nondualism—who, in all probability, was the first to compose commentaries on the principal Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*—to the pioneering theorist of Indian Art, differ on the interpretation of the famous *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*

I.2.2 verse (Radhakrishnan, 1998, p. 608). Yet, on the surface of it, it looks as if the *Kaṭha* śloka does condemn activities concentrated on the attainment-retention duo: "The simple-minded, for the sake of worldly well-being (*yoga-kṣema*), prefers the pleasant." It therefore is not strange that being directed toward those who are capable of transcending all three of the "three-fold modes"—*tamas* or "dullness"/ "inertia," *rajas* or "passion," and *sattva* or "goodness" (*Gītā* XIV.5)—*Gītā* II.45 speaks of canceling out *yogakṣema* (*niḥ* + *yogakṣema* = *niryogakṣema*) and in doing so resonates positively with (at least the surficial meaning of) *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* I.2.2 and negatively with Kauṭilīya's worldly counsel to *rajas*-some rulers.

It may not be amiss to claim that just as *Symposium*'s proposition vis-à-vis the interplay of *need* and *desire* so also the notion of *yoga-kṣema* demands a dynamic interpretation. For, if the propelling of desire or *kāma* culminates in *yoga*, that is, in establishing connection with a new element and its inclusion in the arrogating agent's internal system, the need to factor in the new entry and undertake conservation or *kṣema* of the altered set of already-available elements must correspondingly suffer change in quality.

I.3. Two-Pronged Desire

It may be better to dispense altogether with the rather vain-glorious epithet *Homo Sapiens* or "Man the Wise" while discussing either *will to play* or *will to record*. Instead, terms such as *Homo Ludens* or "Man the Player"—a term coined by Johan Huizinga (1872–1945), one of the founders of modern culture theory and a renowned Sanskritist—and *Homo Faber* or "Man the Maker," may prove more suited to the purpose.

To clarify a point hinted at earlier, the *will to play* in man is so overwhelming and unaccountable, so terrifying in effect that it can at moments break asunder prelaid schemes. The violent interruption resulting in unforeseen inversions, the trivial and the precious may undergo abrupt reversal in status. *Homo Ludens* or "Man the Player" might, for all we know, take delight in suddenly changing the rules of game to make the serious and the sombre appear ludicrous and exalt the ordinary and the pedestrian, belittle the high to emplace the low on a pedestal. The anarchic threat implicit in *play*, the randomness, the thorough-going relativism inherent to it, should never be underestimated. It therefore would be profitable if we elaborated a little more on the concept of *play*.

Rabindranath Thakur [Tagore] (1861–1941)—the Bengali who was poet-music composer-playwright-novelist-short-story writer-painter-essayist-designer of alternative pedagogy-prodigiously promiscuous in the matter of epistolary intercourse and without whom the world would surely have been a poorer place—had hypothesized in the 1908 short piece titled "Iccha" ("desire") included in his collection of lectures *Santiniketan* (volume 3: 1909) that "desire" was of two types. One of them was focalized on *proyojon* or "need" and the other dealt with the *proyojonhin* or "the needless." The major theorizations of the essay were: while "need-based desire" was self-oriented "needless desire" was other-oriented; the force that motivated the former was the dire necessity of mounting safety-barricades

for the self; but the latter, being *desire for yet another desire*, was propelled by the prospect of encountering the unknown. In the final analysis then, the first type of desire (*proyojon-er iccha*) fortified *kṣema* and the second type (*proyojonhin iccha*) increasingly intensified the sense of the *lack* by opening up a potentially infinite series. Rabindranath developed further on these insights in the set of lectures he delivered at Calcutta University on three consecutive days in March 1923. The second lecture titled "Tattho o Satya" ("Information and Truth")—the other two were named "Sahitya" ("Literature") and "Sristi" ("Creation")—sought to broaden the notion of *play*. Rabindranath's argument ran along this line: *khelā*—usually translated as "play," but to avoid confusion we opt for "gambol"—was predicated on imitation of information associated with various primary existential needs and as such gave the freedom to demonstrate "needful desires" without the obligation of performing the works required of those needs; on the other hand, *līlā* or "play proper" transmuted, even transcended information to create make-beliefs; the products of *līlā* had higher truth-values than those crafted by *khelā* precisely because the former expressed "needless desire," the desire for desire, and the latter, despite the "freedom," was handicapped by its insidious connection with this or that utility-function. Rabindranath, in effect, spelled out a peculiar theoretical principle. Which was: the mode of *mimesis* (in the sense Aristotle [384–322 BCE] used it in the preamble to his *Poetics*) or that of *anukaraṇa* (as defined in Bharata's *Nātyaśāstra* I.111) linked to *khelā* was subjected to the dictates of the phenomenal world; but the mode of *mimesis* or *anukaraṇa* harnessed by *līlā* had the capacity of bringing *mimesis*/*anukaraṇa* itself to the edge—not being required to supply colorful yet clerical replicas of palpable activities, *līlā* could, and often did, outstrip the data gathered through contacts between the senses and the physical world. The picture thus was: in pace with alterations in the profiles of *need* and *desire* the boundaries of *proyojon-er iccha* / *needful desire* and *proyojonhin iccha* / *needless desire* as well as dimensions of *khelā* / *gambol* and *līlā* / *play proper* get modified; but, the imagination involved in the creative act of *līlā* almost invariably comes up with artifacts, which in the register of manufactured items churned out by *khelā* are like distortions or malformations or mutations defying straight-forward recognition—in one word, *deceptions*.

This derivation then seems quite apt. That is, when in the celebrated manual of statecraft *The Republic*'s (composed around 375 BCE) Part Ten ("Theory of Art"), Plato (or a clever writer having the virtuosity to imitate Plato's style almost flawlessly) canvassed the view that poets by the vice of laying out imperfect copies of the phenomenal world, which in turn were defective copies of immaculate and immutable ideal forms were "thrice removed from Reality," he was mainly concerned with *līlā* / *play proper* than *khelā* / *gambol*. This fits quite well with the proposal mooted in *Republic*'s Part Three that irrespective of the fact whether it was wrought by the Venerable Homer or any other popular poet, whichever poetic passage spreads disinformation about gods or heroes or paints the other-world as being dismal, weakens the moral fiber of children and hence should be ruthlessly deleted. In addition, Part Ten's general contention that poetry was fundamentally illusion too gels well with the conception of *līlā*. Socrates's—Plato's spokesman in *The*

Republic—dispassionate call for censoring morally objectionable poetry in the larger interest of building an ideal *polis* is clearly ridden with anxiety vis-à-vis *play proper*. The same goes for the "simile of the cave" with its tripartite division comprising the "sun," "divided line" and "cave," which Plato marshaled in *Republic*'s Part Seven to illustrate that only the philosopher standing on the right side of the divided line and bathed by the piercing rays of the Sun (as against, say, the poet, standing on the wrong side of the divided line and deluded by the shadowy images reflected on the cave-wall) was cut out to run a State committed to Truth, Justice, and Goodness. Effectively, Plato held that those dabbling in *play proper* were agents who infected the society with "false consciousness"—the (still going strong) formulaic expression that both condenses and simplifies the theory of ideology. But the remarkable thing about *Republic*'s Book Ten is, besides giving the philosophical reason for putting a ban on poets in his dream-state, Plato also revealed therein the politics of his own reasoning. Plato contended that "dealing with a low element in the mind" the poets loosened the "rein [which kept in check man's] comic instinct." And this "release" had for Plato dangerous overtones. He said: "[the artist] weakens and encourages and strengthens the lower elements in the mind to the detriment of reason, which is like giving power and political control to the worst elements in a state and ruining the better elements."

The subterranean bond between the "comic" and "desire for desire"—a bond that abides even when *play proper* comes up with so-called serious productions such as tragedy or elegy—is what makes *līlā* look perilous to powers that be. And, driven by the *fear*, the disciplinary authorities devise various strategies of *repression* ranging from downright prohibition to outright yet neutered exhibition, from utter silence to excessive volubility. Undoubtedly, introducing "needful desire" and "needless desire," positing theoretical distinctions between *khelā* and *līlā*, bring to the notions of *will* and *play* greater complexities. Armed with this qualifier let us now broach the question of *will to record*.

II. TOWARD A THEORY OF THE *TEXT*

II.1. Speech and Writing

Both *will to play* and *will to record* lead to various ways, meet diverse ends. Keeping registers, preparing documents, raising monuments, drawing up minutes of meetings, taking photos, inscribing letters on paper or painting colors on canvas—each such action is motivated by, in addition to the agent's yen to set up something, the craving to let others, including himself, tell of his experiences *after the event*. All else may be false, but the *text* that thus gets concretized is not a lie—the last thing that can be denied is the materiality of a thing operating simultaneously in two time-scales, the present and the future. To understand the meaning of *after-life* of a text—something that is also part of its *life*—one has to perforce reflect on the activity designated *recording*.

The verb crucial to *play* as well as to *record* is *to make*. It may not be just an etymological accident that the English word *poetry* comes from the Greek *poetica*

which is derived from the verb *poiein*, meaning, *to make*. It goes without saying, neither the oral nor the nonoral work can be conceptualized without the job of making. But, there is a significant distinction between "orature" and "literature." The peculiarity of *speech* is that each such execution gets exhausted just as it comes to close. Although speech enjoys the warmth of immediacy, the intimacy of face-to-face encounter, it is irreversible, nonretractable. Speech being *unidirectional*, the phonemes that a pronouncer issues forth cannot be withdrawn, revised, erased by the backward sweep of brush, *after* they are dispatched. To hold onto any implacably self-same yet ever-evaporative first utterance in the *ambience* of speech itself, there is no other alternative but to *re-collect* with as much as fidelity as can be harnessed what was collected initially and keep mouthing it. To memorize the made-up but forever lost speech-instance and *re-cite* it with due alacrity and solemnity thus becomes greatly important: the *second-order* making in the form of re-membering, the backbone of any *śruti* tradition, earns the prestige of being uncontaminated by falsehood. Being the elemental form of recording and also having the claim to Truth knotted to it, the repeatable performance of re-calling speech-in-speech functions as an unattainable ideal for every other mode of recording. The self-defeating sense of *lack* that they have in relation to speech-in-speech is the reason why some degree of *phonocentric* nostalgia—the hankering caused by the faith reposed on unmediated, sufficient-unto-itself speech as being the true source of meaning—always clouds them.

Pressed forward by *will to record*, and of course in conjunction with *will to play*, man, at some point, hit upon a novel technique, a new "make" which transformed the very texture of his being—and that momentous invention, also an intervention, was what is commonly known as *writing*. Writing—meaning, any kind of etching on any kind of surface external to the memory-bank—is that technique which allows the scripter to look over and reflect upon the very process of its becoming. More relaxed than speaking in terms of temporal sequencing, writing gives the scope to cross out or insert portions following reconsideration even while a piece is being laid out.

Literally empowering people to re-member things as they wished, it endowed altogether a new dimension to the art of recollection, redefined the dealings between "memory" and "amnesia." Acknowledging the strong recording-potential of writing, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) had remarked in his scintillating short essay "A Note Upon the "Mystic Writing-Pad" (1925)—an essay that left a deep imprint upon Jacques Derrida's (1930–2004) conjectures on "metaphysics of presence"—"[by writing] I can be in possession of a permanent memory-trace." Absolute permanence being a chimera, the word "permanent" in the preceding sentence ought to be read only relatively.

From the day the textual field began to be imaged and mapped via writing, the verb *poiein* deployed to serve second-order textual-make also started to yield manifold results. The technological breakthrough inaugurated by writing opened the path for devising additional mechanical contraptions that could record whatever was being played out with greater and greater accuracy. Without pursuing the history of development of reprographic machines it would be

impossible to appreciate how various aspects of recording have progressively been separated out and accredited with partial autonomy. Using the tape-recorder as a handy metaphor those aspects may be named, *rewind*, *fast-forward*, *pause*, and even *stop*. This implies: as means of manufacturing mechanical replicas become more and more technologically advanced they not only gain in the capacity to furnish almost impeccable facsimiles of things contrived by *will to play* but also gain in the power to work upon "originals" and spread "tampered" copies. So, along with machines increasingly functioning as indispensable *tools* in the matter of play, the act of recording too, simulating the act of play, gets involved in the latter. Hence, *duplicity* as a theme becomes even more unavoidable for anyone interested in speculating on art-practices.

II.2. The Field of Text

Before we embark on the aesthetics sensitive and sympathetic to artistic cheating, let us linger a little longer with the issues raised so far. In sum:

- The difference between a *trace* and a *sign*, between an etching curved in the memory-cave and a mark systematically generated, between the reception and the response of the human brain, is too huge for words. To make the matter even more tortuous, there may just be no trace that can be certified as purely original, not one that is not somehow contaminated by human mediation, not already smirched or soiled by other signs. Still it pays to keep the pair thematically distinct. The notional partitioning of "trace" and "sign" offers an opening—it helps in pondering over the distinct roles of the prefix "re" conjoined to "presentation" and "production."
- The urgency to re-produce traces in the language of signs is acute in man. The bid to memorize oneself and flesh it out has the same charge as the deepest desire in Socrates's formulation in Plato's *Symposium*. Paradoxically enough, the *need* to conserve traces, that is, to strengthen the *kṣema* aspect of the psyche, fuels the impractical *desire* to preserve oneself in to-to. Re-stating the accumulated traces as faithfully as possible—meaning, transcribing traces in terms of codes that allow verbalization—is equivalent to fixing one's "presence" and having it continually attested. Is it not a common belief that what comes out by minimizing as much as possible the gap between trace-source and sign-object is some sort of a *document*? The Sign Documentary puts across strong denotative claims. "Diegesis" or authoritative synopsis being the soul and style of documents, they warrant a second coming, promise that the signs enclosed in them disclose their originary traces without much of generation-loss. A hoary brittle parchment, for example, is a "document" only because it succeeds in persuading users to treat the inscriptions borne by it as "authentic." A document has the liberty to be self-endorsing—as though a magic-object, it rings out loud and clear, "It Was so." Even if later scrutiny reveals that the factual information

supplied by a specific document is suspect, the proclamation integral to the species remains sacrosanct. In other words: it is because we believe in documents that we can talk about forgeries. At worst, a document, a record deemed clean and tidy, is a "genuine fraud." Hence, the art, rather the science of "history writing" depends much upon judicious discernment—on the skill to spot the bonafide pieces amidst heaps of fakes, counterfeits, which hide their connotative intentions behind the artful veneer of denotation.

- But the main trouble remains: there never is any perfect repetition, all repetitions are at best substitutions, every recurrence a re-enactment, a newly staged play. Yet on this shaky foundation, a foundation ceaselessly attacked and weakened by *will to play*, man attempts to build reminders, ready-reckoners, or aide-memoires for himself. *Will to record* thus is diabolic, Janus-faced: on the one hand, it attests to man's ceaseless endeavors to loosen the stranglehold of the prefix "re" attached to the word *representation* so as to strengthen the "re"-part of *reproduction*; and then, at times covertly, at others, overtly, it cannot prevent itself from advertising that the "outcomes" wrought by it are inventions on their own right. The reprographic revolution brought on by digital technology provides excellent instances of covertly overt or overtly covert imputation of "play" in any "display"—for, contrary to say, a "traditional" photograph, a digital "replica" is liable to be more treacherous; speaking relatively, the probability is higher that evidential value of a "copy" procured with a digital still-camera is much less than that of the "copy" secured with the aid of analog photography; the latitude for "horseplay" in the sphere of reprography is much wider today than it was ever before.
- From the above a provisional definition of text can be offered.
- A text, one may posit, is a *conclave* where *will to play* and *will to record* crisscross, co-mingle, and part ways, a *site* where traces are worked upon, recast only to be deposited, stored as signs. Since every text is of certain making and each of them enunciates a claim vis-à-vis truth peculiar to itself, the simultaneous invocation of the two types of *will* helps to complicate the picture in relation to *truth-making*. Charting the trajectory of "textual-make" brings us to the arena of medium and machine, technical innovations, and technological leaps. Doing the same along the axis of "textual-claim" prompts us to consider the discursive regimes, protocols, procedural means linked to the manufacture of some specific truth.
- If "enclosure" is one aspect of *play* and "disclosure" that of *record*, then whether what has been enclosed within the wrappings of the text and disclosed for others' benefit, whether the bundle of marks accumulated privately for public dissemination, tallies with the *Real* or not, may emerge as a major issue. And a problem.

II.3. Originality and Aura

Indubitably, there is no transcendental measure that can convincingly weigh the "truth" of a representation with surety. Neither is there a single infallible yardstick for measuring the distance between a "record" and its "referent." Surcharged profusely by the sense of "lack," a text, both at the levels of "play" and "display," "representation" and "reproduction," "enclosure" and "disclosure," may just be a tissue of lies. It is not surprising therefore that philosopher-critics enamored with the idea of unblemished truth are deeply uneasy about artistic constructs. And, to express their disdain for the "poet"—that is, the *yogī*-composer as well as the craftsman of *kṣema*-artifacts—the adjudicators committed to the notions of absolute integrity and unchanging essence keep returning to the same charge. The charge is: what the poet, in both his two incarnations as player and recorder, primarily lacks is *originality*; parasitic as he is by nature, nothing that the poet brings forth possesses the *aura* of the original; just as the work of reproduction, so also the work of representation is always-already marred by external mediation; at best, the poet is a willy copy-cat—he has the guile and the audacity to pass off a distorted tattered second-hand material either as a thing of one's own making or as a dependable testimonial of a previous make. This indictment is more damaging than that can be raised against "copies" following the theoretical route traced by Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) in his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." He had contended therein: "even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art [lacks] the element of [the work's] presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be"; and, therefore, employing the term *aura* to "subsume the eliminated element," what all copies were in wanting was precisely that. However, in criticisms that leave no quarter for the profession of artist-craftsman, the work of art is positioned sans "aura" from the very start.

Book Ten of Plato's *The Republic* interpellates those who dabble in (reproducible) copies of (defective) copies of (incomparable, immutable) forms as *beggars*, as those who roam door to door, plead for doles from self-assured people for their pathetic subsidized livelihood. We read in the *Republic*: "[Writers of drama and poetry are] subtle thinkers who are beggars none the less." There is however a better metaphor than the "beggar" available to describe beggarly poets; and, that is, the *thief*.

III. TOWARD A THEORY OF THE *COPY*

III.1. Lampooning the Thief

Kauṭilīya put it point-blank in his treatise on Political Science, the *Arthaśāstra*: "Merchants, artisans, craftsmen, nomadic mendicants, entertainers and similar persons are all thieves [*cor*], in effect, if not in name; they shall be prevented from harassing the people" (4.1.65). The interesting thing is, in addition to being labeled "thief in effect," "entertainers" are also conferred with a "name" that speaks ill of them with no dash of ambiguity. The generic word for the "entertainer" is *kuśīlava*; and, *kuśīlava* happens to be a family-member of the word *kuśīl*, meaning, "of bad character."

Convinced of the intrinsic worthlessness of the *kuśilava*s, the redoubtable lawmaker Manu launches a systematic campaign against the lot. The *Manusamhitā* or "The Laws of Manu" forbids entertainers—within whose ambit fall the *nata* (actor/actress), *gāyana* (singer), *vādaka* (musician), *kathāvāka* (storyteller), *chāraṇa* (wandering minstrel), and similar persons—from giving evidences in law-cases, from attending feasts on the occasion of "rituals for ancestors" or from partaking offerings to gods (8.65, 3.149, 3.155). Manu's aversion for artists is so great that he counsels the king keen on good governance to expel, along with "gamblers, playboys, men who persist in heresy, bootleggers," the *kuśilava*s from his "town" (9.225). This may be a cause of astonishment, but, in relation to the Final Solution apropos the "poet" Plato and Manu speak in unison.

The pragmatic Kauṭilīya, on the other hand, proposes to put to fruitful use the absence of *character* that distinguishes the performer from the righteous and the honest. The *Arthaśāstra*'s author's argument boils down to saying: the *kuśilava* is adept in being what he is not; he is a *thief* in the sense of having the dexterity to step into some other's shoes and steal his show; therefore, there exits a natural bonding, a close familial resemblance between the *kuśilava* and undercover agent, between the *cor* and the *chār* (spy); and, that proximity can be utilized for the benefit of the state. In the murky affair of duping unsuspecting people, Kauṭilīya is most inclined to enlist secret agents in the role of the ascetic or the wandering mendicant (e.g., 13.2.11, 13.2.1). As it is *Arthaśāstra* 4.1.65 establishes a paradigmatic equivalence—that is, an order of relationship answering to the criterion *what goes with what*—between the nomadic mendicant and the entertainer. The equivalence is further bolstered by Kauṭilīya's (and Manu's as well) unrestrained hostility toward the Veda-denying (*nāstika*) wandering mendicants (*Bhikshu*).

But then, just as the labyrinth of connections spelled out on the basis of the principle *what goes with what* (or, *who goes with whom*) in *Arthaśāstra* 4.1.65 links the entertainer with the Veda-denouncing, world-renouncing beggar it also ties him up with the money-seeking worldly-wise merchant (*vaṇika*). The latter joining becomes even more intriguing when we find it surfacing even in texts dealing with aesthetics proper.

III.2. The Poetic Reply

Summing up his discussion on the question of transactions at the level of words in the business of crafting poetry, the poet-dramatist-critic Rājaśekhara (first quarter of tenth-century AD) said rather mischievously in the treatise on aesthetics *Kāvyamīmāmsā*: "There is no poet who is not a thief, no merchant who does not cheat, but the one who knows how to hide his theft flourishes." The merit of this axiom-like assertion lies in its ability to solve the vexed problem of plagiarism at one stroke. Pursuing the logic of the "foundational statement," it is easy to come up with this theorem: only he is guilty of *haraṇam* or "appropriation" of others' possession, culpable of the offence of parading something as his own that does not belong to him, who is mindless about the *art* involved in the act of borrowing without permission. The plagiarist is that artless person who cannot but help exposing the

fact that the excerpts he reproduces are "unspoilt" by *will to play*. Paradoxically, the plagiarist—in contradistinction to the person having the ingenuity to "hide his theft"—forfeits the claim of being a "poet" by being honest about his dishonesty. Moved solely by a weak kind of *will to record,* the plagiarist finishes up furnishing items that too are paradoxical in nature—(while the genuine poet concocts *copy*) the spurious poet supplies *fake copy*.

Adjudicating on the issue under what circumstances proprietorship of stolen goods remain illegitimate or become legitimate, Rājaśekhara introduced two tropes: *Śabdaharaṇam* or "Appropriation of Words" and *Arthaharaṇam* or "Appropriation of Meanings." At the outset the critic defined the term *haraṇam* or *appropriation* to mean, "The using of words and ideas from the work of another (and passing them off as one's own)" (11.1). Next, he subdivided the act under two headings; namely, (a) "that which should be avoided" and (b) "that which should be adopted" (11.1). The obvious implication of the division: *haraṇam* itself was of two kinds; one negative and blameworthy, and the other positive and laudatory. For the first Rājaśekhara retained the word *haraṇam* and for the second he brought in *swikaraṇa* or "adoption" / "acceptance." The above may be recast as: (coincides as it does with plagiarism) the "*haraṇam* mode of *haraṇam*" or "appropriation improper " should be avoided; (encourages as it does innovation) the "*swikaraṇa* mode of *haraṇam*" or "appropriation proper" should be cultivated.

Like all Indian aestheticians Rājaśekhara too was gripped by the charm of the minutiae, obsessed with the pleasure of outlining seemingly endless classifications. So, in the section on *Śabdaharaṇam* or "Appropriation of Words" he divided the subject-matter into five group-possibilities ranging from co-opting a *pada* or a single word to the *prabandha* or long continuous composition (11.1). Similarly, in the section on *Arthaharaṇam* or "Appropriation of Meanings" we come across a threefold distribution of which the first two are further distributed in two subgroups each. The threefold division consists in: *artha* or meaning (i) derived from the work of some other poet, (ii) of which the source is not certain, (iii) of which the source is the poet himself (12.3).

Next, the meaning derived from the work of some other poet is of two types, namely, (i) the one that carries almost the same sense but is expressed in a different manner (*pratibimbakalpa*), (ii) the one that appears to be different by the dint of extra polish or garnishing (*ālekhyaprakhya*) (12.3 to 5).

Further, the meaning of whose source is unclear is also of two types, namely, (i) the case in which different senses are expressed via similar word-construction (*tulyadehitulya*), (ii) the case in which virtually identical thought-substance is expressed in an entirely different style (*parapurapraveśasadṛśa*) (12.3, 6, 7).

Then again, *ālekhyaprakhya-tulyadehituly* and *parapurapraveśasadṛśa* can be broken up into eight subdivisions each. (And, presumably the same can be done to *pratibimbakalpa*, for) *Kāvyamīmāmsā* asserts that the total number of subdivisions is thirty-two (Chapter 13).

However, despite its elaborate taxonomy, Rājaśekhara's *Kāvyamīmāmsā* has a singular goal, which is to absolve the poet indulging in *haraṇam* from the charge of being a plagiarist-like copyist. This is strikingly evident when Rājaśekhara

discusses the employment of *śliṣṭa* or paranomastic words, that is, words that create special rhetoric effects by suggesting two or more meanings (11.1 to 5). He actually likens them to *kaviprasiddhi* or *trope*, the "poetic commons" to which every poet enjoys free and equal access. Surely, dipping into a stock that belongs to all cannot constitute a crime.

Borrowing two key-terms from the science of "Thematology," a science crucial to the study of Comparative Literature, Rājaśekhara's main thesis amounts to announcing: so long as a poet knowingly (and in parenthesis we add, or unknowingly) treats the work of other poets as no more than *rohstoff* ("raw material") and working upon them fashions his own unique *stoff* ("stuff"), he cannot be held guilty of "appropriation improper." The lifted portions then have the function of the *acknowledged quotation* as against the *nonacknowledged quotation* one comes across in any self-incriminating counterfeit-text composed by the cheat dabbling in "appropriation proper."

We thus arrive to this peculiar formulation: the plagiarist-subject is honest about his dishonesty; and since "dishonesty" is the same as "non-acknowledgment," the plagiarist turns out to be someone who is candid about his own nonacknowledgment. On the other hand, the poet-subject, even if he does not disclose his sources (or is not consciously aware of them), reveals—to use a technical term coined by J. L. Austin (1911–60) in his *How to do things with words* (1962)—that the *perlocutionary* act or "the act performed *by* saying something" bearing affinity with "quotation" is itself revealing. The subject in this case has no qualms about foregrounding "acknowledgment," no misgivings about exhibiting the stolen goods that have undergone *swikaraṇa* / "adoption" / "acceptance," precisely because *haraṇam* here indicates that in actuality all quotations are more processed than merely packaged. Thus, if the plagiarist, the false poet that is, is destined to mechanically reproduce quotations, is forever condemned to the doing of mindless *re-citation*, the true poet, by the dint of setting up interactive sessions between *will to record* and *will to play* during which both the aspects also remain sharply delineated, engages in the meaning-producing act of *citation*. With a little stretch of imagination one might say, to "cite" is to both acknowledge others' *possession* and to contest the idea of *ownership* (in this case, of textual material) in the spirit the nondualist philosopher Śankara had answered the question *kasyasvid dhanam* ("whose, after all, is wealth?") raised in *Īśa Upaniṣad* verse I. Rejecting the idea of prerogatives centered on any version of "possessive individualism," Śankara's reply was piercingly straightforward; which was, "Nobody's"!"[1] Moreover, "citation" shows that just as every text is about itself, it is also, by the same movement, about other texts. It is, as a matter of fact, a mode of "invocation" or discursive positioning oriented toward some other. This brings us back to Rabindranath's conceptualization of *proyojonhin ichha* or "needless desire"—the *desire for yet another desire* without harnessing which no *līlā* / "play proper" can be thought of in the first place.

The purloiner engrossed in *haraṇam* that ought to be avoided, that is, with "appropriation improper," gets overtaken by *will to record* in such a fruitless way that his dealings with *kṣema* become mechanically clerical—not confident about "immortalizing" himself, he ends up circulating dead material. On the other end,

the poet engaged in *haraṇam* that ought to be adopted, that is, with "appropriation proper," brings a new luster to the potential inherent to any technical reproduction; which is, to borrow an expression from Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," its destabilizing capacity of "putting the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself." Thus, to put it pithily: while the plagiarist *duplicates* things ad verbatim, the poet *multiplies* them in such a magical way that each specimen has the appearance of being *singular*. *Kāvyamīmāmsā* abounds in examples that demonstrate that the primary dissimilarity between "re-citation" and "citation" is unmistakable. Rājaśekhara further complicates the picture by classifying poets into four groups (11.18). The first is the self-sufficient one, the *utpādaka* or "creator." The rest are (fruitful) "thieves": the one given to emendation, the *parivartaka* or "changer"; the one expert in covering his acknowledgments in apparent nonacknowledgment, the *ācchādaka* or "concealer"; the one who draws from various sources, the *samvargaka* or "collector."

Nevertheless, in spite of the careful building of the profile of the honorable "thief," *Kāvyamīmāmsā* does at one point burst out in an unseemly boast compelling the reader to wonder whether it would not be more prudent to call the poet a "dacoit" or a "plunderer" (11.5) than a mere *cor*. And, interestingly enough, the passage in question is not presented in the voice of Rājaśekhara but in that of his wife Avantīsundarī, a scholar on her own right. We hear Avantīsundarī—almost in the vein of reckless pioneers devoted to the business of "primitive accumulation of (poetic) capital"—declaring with great aplomb: the person possessed with talents, celebrated because of her/his ability to treat contemporary matters and mint grapevine-like refined (sweet) words, need not be shamefaced, if s/he borrows words or meanings from authors who are neither known nor established, poets who work with obsolete plots or with unrefined knowledge or whose language is so undistinguished as to taste like (bitter) medicine. It really is ironical that this registering of the powerful poets' natural "right" to alienate the less fortunate from their "wealth" comes immediately after *Kāvyamīmāmsā* refers to the old saying, "While all other thefts committed by a person pass away with the lapse of time, literary theft endures even to sons and grandsons" (11.4).[2]

III.3. The Child

Deliberating on the complexity surrounding the psychology of "enjoyment," Karl Marx (1818–83), one of whose innumerable theoretical contributions dealt with the "primary" or "primitive" "accumulation of capital," had framed a riddle in *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (1857–58). The puzzle that he posed there was: "the difficulty lies not in understanding that the Greek arts and epic are bound up with certain forms of social development. The difficulty is that they still afford us artistic pleasure and that in a certain aspect they count as a norm and as an unattainable model." The riddle allows itself to be rephrased as: how does a "record" securely bound to the protocols of the age of its production manage to address contemporary concerns and provide impetus to *will to play*? Unhampered by the habit of "reductionism" that forces one to regard every text as being a mirror that

either passively reflects or unwittingly refracts or deceitfully distorts the economic reality of the time of its coming-into-being, Marx went on to give a further twist to his puzzle in the *Grundrisse*. He suggested: (even if one is aware of the dangers of infantile regression and nostalgic sentimentalism), nobody can avoid to *constitute* a "childhood" of his own in matters relating to the enjoyment of arts; the performance of *re-enactment* was like a categorical imperative in the sphere of aesthetics. Marx wrote: "A man cannot become a child again, or he becomes childish. But does he not find joy in the child's naiveté, and must he himself not stride to reproduce its truth at a higher stage? . . . Why should not the historic childhood, its most beautiful unfolding, as a stage never to return, exercise an eternal charm?" This sudden digression into the question of art-appreciation in a set of notebooks otherwise devoted to the analysis of sordid business of *theft* of others' labor-power in different modes of production, particularly in that of the bourgeois kind, gives to the *Grundrisse* a somewhat paradoxical status in the arena of "Aesthetics of Theft." The answer to the question why the figure of the "thief" features in authoritative texts on Political Science and Aesthetics may lie in the fact that the latter set is prone to parodying the metaphysical ridiculing of the poet—Rājaśekhara's expert on *haraṇam* is simultaneously aligned and antithetical to Kauṭilīya's "thief in effect" or Manu's *kuśilava* (or Plato's "beggar"). The positive, appreciative deployment of the robber metaphor in literary criticism may be counted as a strategy by which sweeping condemnation of artists is contested, a strategy that in the course of contesting also loosens the "rein that keeps in check man's comic instinct" and permits the consumer to play the buffoon, something that Plato frowned upon.

All said and done, the clue to the mystery of the persistency of the "thief" metaphor lies in the figure of the "child"—is it not equally true that besides the connoisseur the poet too has to invent a childhood in order to impute to his pilfering the charm of "innocent" play? *Bhakti* poetry—in particular, the poetic tradition that flourished in Northern Indian—affords us with a blue-print of sorts—indeed an allegedly literally *blue* print—for such innocence. A flute playing blue god faces the charge of stealing butter and cream. This is the stuff of canonically beautiful imagination for thousands of years. Who can ever be truly annoyed with the antics of *bālagopal*, the little Kṛṣṇa? Will it not be correct to say, the thieving *bālagopal*'s poetic protestation that he has not partaken of butter out of turn—*maiya mori main nahin makhan khayo* (Surdas: fifteenth century)—which at the same time is a confession, will produce in his mother, harassed though she is by her neighbors' incessant complaints about her son's dastardly deeds, the loving anger that can only be regarded as a manifestation of a special kind of *rasa*?

NOTES

1. For a detailed discussion on *property* and *possession* see: Arindam Chakrabarti, "'Whose after All Is Wealth': Remarks on the Logic of Ownership," *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences 2013–14*, ed. Rahul Govind. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, India (forthcoming).

2. Sudhindranath Dutt (1901–1960), one of the pioneers in the realm of post-Tagore Bengali poetry, dedicated his first volume of poems *Taṇwī* ("The Shapely Damsel": 1930) to Rabindranath Tagore. Dutt's "Note of Dedication" itself was humble enough. Therein he said, the book was being offered to Rabindranath not for "remitting the debts" but for "acknowledging the debts" he owed to the Master-craftsman.

   This strain of humility was even more pronounced in Dutt's Preface to the book. Addressing the readers he frankly confessed that he was guilty of turning Tagore's poetic goods, and that too shamelessly, into his own. These words of Sudhindranath Dutt may indeed be reckoned as a reflection on "aesthetics of theft":

> To be truthful, if searching through
> the book one gets any glimpse of
> excellence anywhere, it will be more
> or less safe to conclude that the
> portion contains a fraction of
> Rabindranath's some or the other
> composition *stolen* by me. However,
> I am not ashamed of the felony;
> because, the thief who feels
> impelled to follow the evil path only
> for the sake of his fascination for the
> Beautiful is, though certainly
> unethical, an impeccable
> *aesthete*. [emphasis added]

   Sudhindranath Dutt, *Taṇwī*, *Sudhindranath Dutt-er Kavyasamgraha* (Kolkata: Dey's Publishing, 1976), pp. 325 and 327.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aristotle, *Poetics*. Translated by S. H. Butcher. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 2000. Available at: www.2hn.psu.edu.

Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Edited by J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Bandyopadhyay, Dhirendranath. *Samskrita Sahityer Itihas*. Kolkata: Paschimbanga Rajya Pustak Parshad, 2005.

Bandyopadhyay, Sibaji. "The Laughing Performer," in *Sibaji Bandyopadhyay Reader: An Anthology of Essays*. Delhi: Worldview Publications, 2012.

Bandyopadhyay, Sibaji. "Introduction," In *Thematology*, ed. Sibaji Bandyopadhyay. Kolkata: Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, 2004.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Random House Bharat, 2007.

Dasgupta S. N. and De S. K. *A History of Sanskrit Literature: Classical Period*, Volume 1. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1975.

Freud, Sigmund. "A Note on the 'Mystic Writing-Pad,'" in *The Penguin Freud Library*, volume 11, ed. James Strachey and trans. James Strachey. London: Penguin, 1991.
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Faust* (Parts I & II). Translated by Kline. 2003 Available at: www. iowagrandmaster.org.
Huizinga, Johan. . *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture*. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1960 [1938].
Kauṭilīya. *Arthaśāstra* (Sanskrit original), in *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra* (Part I), Ed. R. P. Kangle. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2006.
Kautilya. The *Arthaśāstra*. Translated by L. N. Rangarajan. New Delhi: Penguin, 1992.
Manu. *Manusamhitā* (Sanskrit original). Edited by Panchanan Tarkaratna. Kolkata: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 2000.
Manu. *The Laws of Manu*. Translated by Wendy Doniger and Brian K. Smith. New Delhi: Penguin, 1991.
Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. Translated by Martin Nicolaus. London: Pelican, 1973.
Nātyaśāstra (Sanskrit original and Bengali translation). Translated by Sureshchandra Bandyopadhyay and Chanda Chakrabarti. Kolkata: Nabapatra Prakasan, 1997.
Plato. *The Republic*. Translated by Desmond Lee. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974.
Plato, *Symposium*. Translated by Robin Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
Radhakrishnan, S., trans. *The Bhagavadagītā.* New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2008.
Radhakrishnan, S. trans. *The Principal Upaniṣads*. New Delhi: HarperCollins India, 1998.
Rājaśekhara. *Kāvyamīmāmsā* (Sanskrit original and English translation). Translated by Sadhana Parashar. New Delhi: DK Printworld, 2013.
Śankara. "Bhāṣya: *Īśa Upaniṣad*, Verse I" (Sanskrit original and Bengali translation). Translated by Durgacharan Sānkhya-Vedāntatirtha. Kolkata: Deb Sahitya Kutir, 2002.
Thakur, Rabindranath. "Ichha," *Rabindra Rachanabali* (suabh-samskaran: volume 7). Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1995.
Thakur, Rabindranath. "Tattho O Satya," *Rabindra Rachanabali* (suabh-samskaran: volume 12). Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 1995.
Waterfield, Robin. "Introduction," *Symposium* by Plato. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

CHAPTER TEN

A Complex Web: Approaches to Time in Rajput and Mughal Painting

B. N. GOSWAMY

> Mughal art is secular, intent upon the present moment, and profoundly interested in individuality . . . It is dramatic rather than static, young, fond of experiment. Rajput painting is essentially an aristocratic folk art, appealing to all classes alike, static, lyrical, and inconceivable apart from the life it reflects.
>
> —Ananda Coomaraswamy

> For us trusting physicists, the separation between past, present, and future is a bare, yet stubborn illusion.
>
> —Albert Einstein

It is appropriate perhaps to begin with a painting.

Based on a *pada* from the *Sur Sagar*, work of Surdas, the blind poet of Mathura, it houses in the top register the text in five lines. The composition is in raga Nata, and begins thus: "*Laal, tumhari murali nekey bajaaoon/jaun taan tum gaavat ho piya, tey hi taan banaaon.*" The words are Radha's, and she addresses Krishna. Let us exchange roles, my love, she says. Whatever melody you are playing on your flute, let me now strike that. And then goes on to detail each reversal of role. Let me do your hair, and let me wear your peacock crown with me wearing your jewellery, and you wearing mine, she says; you turn into the proud and offended beloved, and let me sit, appeasingly, at your feet; you cover your face with a veil, as I did, and let me take the veil off you with love. And so on, it goes. The sport generally goes under the name: *viparita rati*, meaning love with the roles reversed. Surdas says it quite beautifully.

But equally engaging is the way in which the unnamed Mewar painter visualizes the scene/s. Beginning with the top left, Krishna and Radha are in their normal *rupa*, so to speak: Krishna playing upon his flute, and Radha listening, completely enraptured. But then, in vignette after fragrant vignette, the roles change: one sees Krishna, instantly recognizable on account of his dark complexion, turn into a woman, and Radha taking on the role of her lover. Krishna has his hair done by Radha; they exchange clothes and jewelry; they walk about in the forest, she leading

him; there is mock anger and appeasement; eagerly the lovers bend in an erotic embrace but the roles stay reversed. Finally, after the eye has traveled over the page and traced their cadenced movements, in the bottom register—Radha playing the flute and Krishna listening—they stand, unmoving in time as it were, very close to where Surdas is seated, singing: eyes closed, cymbals in hand.

The work is quintessentially Rajput: aristocratic and folk at the same time, "universal" in its appeal, "at once hieratic and popular," and "essentially mystic in its suggestion of the infinite significance," as Coomaraswamy characterized Rajput painting once, of an intimate moment. Here, the same figures appear repeatedly, eleven times in fact, within the same frame; they change positions and places; everything moves and yet remains static; the space in which all this happens remains essentially the same; the "actors" and the composer, divines and mortals, come together, within touching distance of one another. Through all this, although one may not have noticed it at first, is reflected in the work a view of time. Subtly, soft-footedly, that element has entered it.

The relationship between time and the visual arts is complex, but one has to try and come to terms with it. One speaks here not of different "categories" of time, if one can call them that: thus, of "psychological time" that a work of art demands; or the time taken to carefully regard a work of art: "ruminative time" in other words. One also knows that each work of art belongs to a given time and hints at it, being the product of a Zeitgeist. The issue is of coming to terms with time that is inherent in the texture of the work itself. In this sense, for all its seeming incomprehensibility, time becomes a specific, constitutive factor in the structure of a work of art. This constitutive factor does not appear uniformly in the arts of man, for the understanding, even the awareness, of time varies greatly, each culture having developed its own view of it across the centuries. In India, where it is generally difficult to disentangle the different strands that form the fabric of thought, one knows that—given the Rajput world—time is never far from the common man's thoughts even though aspects of it may tend to get confused. There are on the one hand extraordinarily subtle, abstruse speculations about the nature of time in Indian philosophical thought: about *maya*, cosmic cycles of time, *yuga*-s, and *kalpa*-s. Many names of Śiva—*Mahakala*, *Kalabhaksha*, *Kaladhipati, Kalari,* among them—are built around the word for Time: *Kala*. The term *kalachakra* subsumes within itself all kinds of time: cosmic, mythic, sacred, astrological, and calendar. When one probes an Indian given to thinking about time, each time his or her eyes would light up: it is as if a geologist were coming upon, on some distant outcropping, a piece of many-hued sedimentary rock, such as sandstone—colors glistening, layers embedded in each other, inseparable. At the popular level, however, the one dominant thought that stays in the mind is of time never coming to an end: of it all being cyclical. Its *gati*—gait in other words—is different.

Where some of these brushes with time—a great many perhaps—come from is the world of myths. Indirectly, tangentially sometimes, we find them in mythological stories that everyone knows or hears. The matter is of deep interest in this context, for it is at that level initially that ideas become embedded, since stories are tactile, have texture. One can take examples. In an episode in the *Vishnu Purana*, for instance, one reads of the great god, Vishnu, accompanied by the divine sage, Narada, stopping at one point in the course of his wanderings, and asking Narada to fetch some water

from a nearby village. While he waits at the edge of the forest, Narada goes to the village, knocks at a door, falls in love with the young woman who answers, marries her, founds a family, and lives happily with his wife and children for long years until a flood comes and inundates the village, sweeping everything before it. Narada too is washed away by the current and is thrown perchance at exactly the spot where he had parted company from Vishnu. As he lands, and opens his eyes, he is greeted by Vishnu who asks him, simply: "Son, have you brought me the water that I asked you to get?"

The pace at which time had moved for Vishnu, and for Narada, is drastically different.

In the *Balagopalastuti*, that widely known devotional text by Lilashuka, there is a famous verse in which Yashoda, Krishna's foster-mother, recites the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* to baby Krishna while putting him to bed. The narrative reaches the point where the demon Maricha, in the guise of a golden deer, lures Rama away from his forest hut in the hermitage, leaving Sita exposed to danger. As Yashoda speaks animatedly of the scheming Ravana's arrival on the scene to abduct Sita, suddenly baby Krishna, half-asleep by now, jerks into action and shouts out aloud: "Lakshmana! Where, oh where, is my bow?" It is as if the memory of an earlier incarnation of himself as Rama, the seventh, overtakes Krishna in his present life, as the eighth incarnation of Vishnu.

Suddenly, time has moved in a loop.

Another story in the *Brahmavaivarta Purana* speaks of the humbling of Indra's pride. As the king of gods sits majestically in his assembly, self-satisfied and aware of his own importance, into this assembly comes charging in from outside a phalanx of ants that takes everyone by complete surprise. Only one person in the assembly, a young sage, seeing this strange vision, laughs aloud. When asked by Indra what causes him this amusement, the sage says that he simply recognized each of these ants, it having been an Indra in a former birth.

Countless cycles of time are hinted at.

When Narada visits Krishna's kingdom at Dwarka, as narrated in the *Bhagavata Purana*, he enters the inner apartments. As he approaches the senior-most queen of Krishna, he finds her attending upon the Lord with a flywhisk in her hand as he sits, eating his food. Greeting the divine pair, Narada withdraws and moves into the next chamber to pay his respects to the wife of Krishna next in seniority only to find her playing a game of dice with Krishna. In another palace he sees one of Krishna's queens massaging the soles of Krishna's feet as he lies on a bed. Amazed, Narada moves further on, and finds, in each chamber, a queen in Krishna's company, serving him food, helping him with oblations, and so on. In chamber after chamber Krishna greets him as if he had seen the sage just then.

Simultaneous presences of the same person at different places are being spoken of.

In the *Bhagavata Purana*, again, Akrura, the great devotee of Krishna, is described as being entrusted with the responsibility of escorting Krishna and Balarama to Mathura. On the way, Akrura feels the need to refresh himself by taking a bath in the Yamuna along the banks of which they are moving. With the permission of

the two brothers, Akrura halts his chariot, enters the water, and dips his head only to see, below the surface of the water, Krishna and Balarama seated in the chariot exactly as he had left them on the riverbank. Greatly confused, he lifts his head out of the water, and sees them again on the bank, in the very same chariot. Disbelieving, he takes another dip: this time, under the water, he sees Krishna as Vishnu lying on the serpent-couch of Shesha, Krishna and Balarama having assumed now their true forms. Akrura suddenly sees, in the vision, the identity of Krishna and Vishnu, Balarama and Shesha. But when he lifts his head, he sees on the riverbank Krishna and Balarama again as youthful boys engaged in conversation.

With a sense of wonder, the elusiveness of time and appearances is put across.

Tales such as this, embodying—subtly, unobtrusively—the many aspects and hues of time, can be multiplied. What emerges from them in any case is time moving in a cyclic fashion, making bends and loops, turning back upon itself, rising spiral-like, splitting itself, assuming different tempi for different people. In short: mercurial, illusive, elusive.

One does not think of the painter being a philosopher in his own right, but as one who was part of the Indian tradition, and who not only imbibed it but also contributed to it in his own manner, one can imagine him growing up with this view of time. The nature of his work, especially when he was engaged with telling narratives, required that he take cognizance of it, and one sees him, over long periods of time, trying to come to terms with it. At the subtlest level his view of time affects the whole view that he takes of portraiture: but of that, and in some detail, another time. The most dramatic reflection of his understanding of the nature of time is seen when he adopts the method of continuous pictorial rendering. He simply presents, within the same frame, without any break or barrier, the same figure or set of figures more than once—as in the *Sur Sagar* painting—establishing a sequence of events but not necessarily separating different moments by breaking or boxing them up. This goes back to a very early tradition that one sees in sculptural representations too. There, for example, within the same frame or panel one might see, in a *Jataka* representation, Buddha in a former birth take on the appearance of a deer who is first trapped, then aimed at by a hunter, finally released from the trap with the aid of another friendly animal. The three renderings, different moments of time, sequentially established, are set next to each other, without being divided or separated, the sculptor clearly relying upon the viewer for decoding the narrative and working out his own sequence within these different renderings. Countless instances of this kind of treatment can be seen in early sculpture. In painting, the Rajput painter, for instance, does exactly the same thing. In the same folio, thus, we could see a painter entering the palace of the Raja at the top left, then see him enter the inner apartments at bottom right, and, in the center of the painting, see him again, at work, finishing a fresco on the palace wall. Or, in a forest setting, one might see a lion appear at top right, leap into the air in the middle of the painting, and then fall dead at the bottom left, hit by the bullet of a hunter sitting concealed in a tree in a corner. Paintings such as this are not philosophical statements made by the painter, nor are they naïve: they simply reflect the fact of his feeling completely at home while doing this, for after all time is elusive, can be manipulated. Coomaraswamy

took all this in his sweep when he said: "Where European art naturally depicts a moment of time, an arrested action or an effect of light, Oriental art represents a continuous condition."

There are other, and many, absorbing instances where the artist can be seen working out his own method for bringing in time according to the demands of the situation. One sees him sometimes bringing the narrator of a text or a tale into the painting itself on each leaf of a whole series. One sees this done prominently, and with such aplomb, in the *Laur Chanda* series of the sixteenth century, or in the already cited eighteenth-century *Sur Sagar* leaf, for example. The induction of the author, or the narrator, into each leaf can be seen as a flashback, or as the past and the present getting merged: a way of suggesting perhaps that not only is the composition—as visually rendered—free of the bounds of time: so is its author. In each leaf of the *Laur Chanda* series, the author, Mulla Daud, can be seen seated in a small rectangular box panel, rosary in hand, reading, his book resting on a *rehal*-stand in front of him. The rest of the page is filled with a rendering of the scene or the passage described in the composition written on the verso of the page in beautiful calligraphy. But the Mulla is always there, reading, whether in one corner or another. In like fashion, in the *Sur Sagar* series, the blind poet always appears, seated at bottom left or right corner of each leaf, singing while playing upon his pair of golden cymbals, the same song that is illustrated or envisioned on the page. As a variant, when a long tale is being told, the narrator and the listener are both brought in, in some corner, while the page is devoted to the scene being visually rendered, as in the early *Aranyaka Parvan* ms. in the Asiatic Society of Mumbai.

There are other absorbing renderings. Where the narration, according to the text, is very long, and there is an extended dialogue, the painter sometimes renders two very similar—almost identical—scenes, only the smallest variations being introduced: change in the position of objects around the persons conversing, or replacing day with night, and so on. Clearly the attempt is to suggest that much time has elapsed in the course of the conversation, from the preceding folio to the present one. In the extensive series of drawings of the *Rāmāyaṇa* by Ranjha, now in the Bharat Kala Bhavan at Varanasi for instance, where this device is used, even an informally "explanatory" note is inscribed on the margin of the drawing, by a pandit or a senior artist, saying: "*bhava vartalapa da*," meaning that what is being put across is the fact that much time has passed in this conversation.

In all this, a point of obvious interest, as far as the device or convention of continuous pictorial narration is concerned, needs to be picked up: something that Coomaraswamy—oddly—did not do while establishing the distinction between Rajput and Mughal painting. While this device is employed almost routinely in paintings that spring from the Hindu-Buddhist-Jaina tradition—for the most part in Rajput painting—it barely if ever appears in mainstream Mughal painting. One has to look truly hard for examples of Mughal painting in which the same figure appears more than once. There is that painting of a murder scene in the Jahangir album in Berlin, for example, where one sees it. An armed intruder sneaks into a house by breaking a brick wall, attacks a man sleeping in the courtyard under a canopy even as a woman looks on, twists his neck to kill, and then climbs up a tall tower from

the height of which he throws the severed head down on the ground outside where a horrified crowd of men looks at the grisly sight with wonder and consternation. There is no mistaking the fact that the severed head is that of the man who was asleep inside; nor does one miss the fact that the intruder is seen twice, even if one does not see his face clearly: once as he kills the sleeping man and then atop the tall tower from where he throws the severed head, his trophy perhaps, down to the ground. This, because he wears exactly the same clothes—brown tunic, red knee-length pajamas, large shield tied to the back—which would be a requirement of continuous narration. Another example, which one must state is an exception to the rule in this "manuscript," can be cited from a folio of the *Hamza Nama* where a man first appears outside a fortress and then, again, is seen scaling its wall. It is possible that if one keeps looking, one might find a few others, but the numbers would remain negligibly small. There can be little doubt that this stems from the view that the Mughal painters had of time. Adhering to the Judaeo-Christian tradition in this respect as he must have done, to a Muslim painter it would simply be "illogical" to render the same figure twice within the same painting. In this one does not forget the fact that not all Mughal painters were Muslims—a very large number of them were drawn from the Hindu fold—but everyone working in a Mughal atelier, one imagines, must have had to conform to the belief or the discipline of the Ustad, the master-painter who virtually ruled over the atelier. From the names that have come down, it can be gathered that the Ustads were all Muslims and it is to the Islamic view that they must naturally have leaned. It would not have been easy for a painting employing the method of continuous pictorial rendering "of the Rajput kind" to slip through the net. Interestingly, a direct reference to time passing appears in that famous Mughal painting—by the Hindu painter, Bichitr—in which Jahangir is seen sitting on a magnificent hourglass-shaped throne, conferring a favor upon a Sufi saint even as the mighty of the world—King James I of England, the Sultan of Turkey—stand at the foot of the throne in the hope of catching the exalted Emperor's eye. That hourglass, caressed in the painting by little putti who watch the sands of time run, is clearly of European inspiration and must have figured in some European painting, exciting the imagination of the Indian painter. But, interestingly, we do not see it ever again, afterward.

Clearly, there are different ways of seeing and doing. Mughal painting continued to remain "secular, intent upon the present moment, and profoundly interested in individuality," while Rajput painting continued "to appeal to all classes alike, static, lyrical, and inconceivable apart from the life it reflected." But in respect of coming to terms with time, it would seem as if the painters, or earlier, sculptors of India kept forging, over a period of some two thousand years, different strategies. In working these strategies out, they kept taking something from the tradition and, in turn, giving something back to it.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Deep Seeing: On the Poetics of Kūṭiyāṭṭam

DAVID SHULMAN

Abstract:
The last surviving form of live Sanskrit drama in performance—the Kūṭiyāṭṭam tradition of Kerala—claims, with some justice, to preserve elements of the most ancient forms of Indian theater, attested in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*. Kūṭiyāṭṭam performers and scholars of the art also continue to use the terminology of Kashmiri poetics and aesthetics to interpret what happens on stage. But in fact, almost nothing links the aesthetic system of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka and Abhinavagupta with the complex, heavily localized, and largely untheorized world of Kūṭiyāṭṭam. Even basic and familiar terms such as *dhvani* or *camatkāra* have been entirely reconceived and laden with new meanings in this tradition (*dhvani*, e.g., is said in the *Vyaṅgya-vyākhyā*, one of the few surviving medieval Sanskrit sources dealing with the Kūṭiyāṭṭam repertoire, to refer only to the contrapuntal use of eye movements to suggest meanings directly opposed to the surface level of the text being performed).

Although the handwritten handbooks of performance, *āṭṭaprakāram*, passed down in the performers' families, are helpful in understanding structural features of the art, and the artists' own interpretive statements are always of great interest, in the end we can only begin to formalize a theory of Kūṭyāṭṭam aesthetics inductively, after witnessing full-scale performances. These tend to be long, in an arithmetic sense—ranging from 12 hours to over 150 hours for a single performance—but amazingly action-packed and suffused with meaning, thought, and emotion, minute by minute. These performances require, indeed are directed toward, a wide-awake spectator capable of entering into the imaginative world on stage in a personal, active way. All Kūṭiyāṭṭam works also restructure the Sanskrit text they have chosen to perform, scrambling its natural, linear sequence in the interests of generating an entirely different cognitive basis for experiencing the play. There are also strong, though often nonexplicit, thematic elements operating in every major Kūṭiyāṭṭam text-in-performance. This chapter will offer an initial set of hypotheses about the nature of the aesthetic experience that emerges in this tradition, its overriding expressive themes and unusual structure—on the basis of the twenty-nine-night performance of one of the major texts, known as *Aṅgulīyâṅkam*, which I witnessed in the summer of 2012.

I. DEEP SEEING: NOTES ON KŪṬIYĀṬṬAM[1]

Kūṭiyāṭṭam, the last surviving form of Sanskrit theater in live performance, is often said by its Cākyār and Nambyār performers to embody the very ancient tradition of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* in continuous transmission. There are, in fact, senses in which this claim is true, although I am not going to discuss them in detail here. What is, however, clear to any spectator who has the privilege of seeing a full-scale Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance (they usually last for many nights) is that the aesthetic and poetic world made present and visible in performance is a unique configuration of elements, mainly South Indian or, indeed, specifically Malayali in nature. Classical components appear within a radically re-imagined structure; and while it is now common for performers and scholars of Kūṭiyāṭṭam alike to marshal the familiar vocabulary of the Kashmiri poeticians, above all Abhinavagupta, to "explain" what is happening on stage, ten minutes of live performance are enough to show how tenuous this linkage really is. Perhaps unfortunately, perhaps not, the Kūṭiyāṭṭam tradition itself was never really theorized from within; what we have to work with are interpretive fragments, mostly implicit, from the *āṭṭaprakāram* performance manuals that have come down through generations in the Cākyār families, some hints from other sources in the wider spheres of medieval Kerala culture (including the fascinating, though ostensibly hostile Sanskrit text known as *Naṭâṅkuśa*), the important commentary known today as *Vyaṅgya-vyākhyā*[2] that is focused on two major plays (*Subhadrā-dhanañjayam* and *Tapatī-saṃvaraṇam* of Kulaśekhara), and the often-illuminating, reflective oral comments that the performers themselves can sometimes be induced to make. And one thing more—our own responses, cognitive, emotional, and inductive, to what we are seeing. In short, this is a tradition on the threshold of being theorized.

Pioneering work has been done in this direction by scholars such as Heike Moser Oberlin, Virginie Johan, L. S. Rajagopalan, K. G. Paulose, Clifford Jones, and others. Since I will be citing the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* repeatedly in the following pages, I want to mention, at the outset, Virginie Johan's monumental study,[3] to which my own observations are hardly more than footnotes. Given the immense complexity of all full-scale Kūṭiyāṭṭam performances, it should be clear that the following remarks are but tentative, initial forays into this field. At most they may give some indication of the route that could be taken toward a deeper analysis.

Here are a few factual features. The unit of performance in Kūṭiyāṭṭam is almost always a single act, *aṅka*, from one of the classical Sanskrit texts that form the main repertoire. Almost all of the latter are Kerala plays, including the so-called Bhāsa plays that, in my view, and as Tieken has shown in a series of important essays, have nothing to do with the classical poet Bhāsa but are, in fact, medieval Keralan productions.[4] (The one major performance text from outside Kerala, once a central part of the repertoire but these days only rarely staged, is Harṣa-deva's *Nāgânanda*.) Titles of performances always refer to these individual acts, extracted from the play as a complete whole though not detached from its wider expressive themes: thus we have the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam*, "Act of the Ring," the sixth act of Śaktibhadra's *Āścarya-cūḍāmaṇi*; the *Mantrâṅkam*, "Plotting and Planning," Act 3 of the *Pratijñā-*

yaugandharāyaṇa; Bāli-vadham, the first act of the *Abhiṣeka-nāṭaka*, and so on. These *aṅkas* constitute, each in its own right, an artistic whole and need to be understood as such. But they are never performed in the "natural" linear order that the parent text offers. Kūṭiyattam has restructured the linear sequence, removing it completely from the *Nāṭya-śāstra*'s vision of *sandhyaṅgas* and *artha-prakṛtis*, which have been replaced by a tripartite systemic ordering: *puṟappāṭu, nirvahaṇam, kūṭiyāṭṭam*.

In brief, the *puṟappāṭu*, "setting forth," sets in place the ritual frame for performance; each time a new character comes on to the stage, there is a *puṟappāṭu* (often telescoped), in which the actor creates the imaginative world within which he, and the audience, will live for the duration of the performance. He does this by a series of patterned, abstract dance movements and gestures, an intricate choreography that creates and populates an entire cosmos, "from Brahmā down to the blades of grass and the ants." When this cosmos is in place, its various parts tied down so as not to slip away, the actor plucks invisible flowers from the invisible space he has constructed and offers them to the invisible deities who inhabit this space. At the end of the performance, usually after many nights, this imagined domain is taken apart by the actor in front of our eyes.

The *nirvahaṇam*, played by a single actor, takes the form of a sustained and probing retrospective. Usually it begins with a set of questions (*anukramam*) posed by the character: "How did I get to this point (in the story)? And what happened before that?" And so on. He moves backward through the plot to a point where he can stop and begin again, now moving forward toward the dramatic present, that is, the moment in the play in which he entered the stage for the first time. This long retrospective, usually lasting at least several nights, is composed of many elements, including verses from other acts of the same play, oral texts of an epic style and nature, set pieces embedded within the larger narrative (often in multiple layers of embeddedness), and, more generally, the thoughts, desires, memories, projections, and delusions that fill the character's mind. One gets to know this character through and through in the course of the *nirvahaṇam*—so much so that I would claim, contrary to the regnant Kashmiri theory of drama as entailing the momentary depersonalization (*sādhāraṇī-karaṇa*) of the spectator, that Kūṭiyāṭṭam is a theatrical genre based on extreme *personalization* of character and, as one consequence of this feature, on highly individual responses by the spectator as well. At no point in the long performances does the spectator lose his or her personal awareness of self, not even, I think, if (when) he or she falls asleep for a while.

Kūṭiyāṭṭam ("acting together") proper, in the limited and technical use of the term, comprises the climax and conclusion of the dramas. The term refers specifically to the presence of more than one actor on stage. Usually this last stage—often limited to one or two nights—reverses the retrospective direction of the *nirvahaṇam* and thus brings the text of the play into a forward-moving sequence. It is worth noting, however, that the verbal text constitutes, in itself, only a small part of a typical Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance (in the more general sense of the term). The play is built around bits of this text that serve as nodal points, or points of departure for elaborate episodes built up from other materials; the performance eventually reverts to the Sanskrit script in order to achieve closure.

One sees even from a compressed, synoptic statement such as the above that Kūṭiyāṭṭam deliberately moves away from anything remotely like linear progression along the lines of a given plot. It jumbles up temporal modes, reinvents dramatic sequence so as to allow the character to externalize the contents of his mind in the nonlinear state proper to any living innerness, and offers an entirely new meaning to words such as "plot" and "text." On precisely these grounds the *Naṭâṅkuśa*, written, it seems, by a Brahmin purist well grounded in the classical Sanskrit tradition (perhaps in the fifteenth century[5]), attacks the Kūṭiyāṭṭam style (although on another level he seems somehow, grudgingly, to be attracted to it):

> *evaṃ ca laṅkā-prāpteḥ prācīnā kathā nikhilâpi siddhā bhavet . . . tatra kaver abhimatam anusaraṇīyam. na tāvat kavibhiḥ nāṭakâdau nāyakānāṃ caritam utpatter eva prabhṛti vilaya-paryantam upanibaddhyate. na ca prârabdha-bhāgād ārabhya ā-samāpipayiṣita-bhāgād akhilam unmīlyate. . .tasmād yad vastu yato yathā vā nibaddhaṃ tat tatas tathaiva prayoktṛbhiḥ parigrāhyam . . . siddhasyâvartanaṃ tāvad na kathaṃ piṣṭa-peṣaṇam/ asatas tu samādāne vyoma-padmo 'pi gṛhyatām//.*[6]
>
> You can assume that the entirety of the earlier story, from before Hanuman's arrival in Lanka, is well known [to all spectators] . . . Thus the poet's concept [of the play's structure] should be followed. Poets don't tell us at the start of a play everything about the characters' lives from birth to death, nor is everything spelled out beginning with the much earlier pieces of the story and ending with the conclusion toward which the work is moving . . . So the actors should perform the work as the author composed it [and in that sequence] . . . There is no point in repeating what everyone knows, like grinding the already ground. Moreover, if you take up something unreal, you might as well depict the lotus growing in the sky.

It would be hard to find a more precise statement of what Kūṭiyāṭṭam is all about than "depicting the lotus growing in the sky." This proverbial example of the unreal is, as we saw, the culmination of the *puṟappāṭu*. Moreover, filling in the other, nonexplicit pieces of the character's consciousness—all that happened to him since his birth, or even before that event, and all the intersecting experiences, dreams, wishes, and communications that constitute the stuff of his memory and his fantasies, conscious or unconscious—is exactly the purpose of the *nirvahanam*. We should, thus, be grateful to the irascible author of the *Naṭâṅkuśa* for presenting us, in the absence of a systematic theoretical text from within the tradition, with the negative of such a text, from which we may well be able to reconstruct something of the poetic drive at the heart of this art form.

The introductory section of the *Vyaṅgya-vyākhyā* (as well as modern oral tradition) ascribes the revolution in dramatic structure, among other things, to the playwright-king Kulaśekhara, who is supposed to have taught the author of this commentary how the new style is meant to be enacted—including the technique known as *pakarnnāṭṭam*, "alternating roles," by which the single actor assumes the roles and voices of many (embedded) characters from within his primary role as a single character-cum-storyteller.[7] I think it unlikely that the massive transformation

at the very heart of the drama goes back to a single creative figure; rather, the tradition has found this way to express its awareness of the fact that at some point, perhaps beginning around the twelfth century, the Kerala tradition of Sanskrit theater experimented with radical innovation motivated by the aspiration to achieve new levels of expressive intensity suited to its cultural context. In what follows, I will look briefly at only four elements, both structural and aesthetic, of this particular Keralan kind of expressivity: suspended syntax and its temporal force; "deep seeing" as the primary mode of playing the text; the Advaitic metaphysic underlying poetic praxis; and the emotional textures generated by the play as it strives toward conclusion. I will not have the space to discuss in detail the peculiar textuality of this tradition or the nature of suggestion and insight that Kūṭiyāṭṭam offers those who give themselves to it; nor will I attempt to formulate a more complete model of the cognitive and other processes at work in the attuned spectator—they are far too complex to be summarized here.

The *Aṅgulīyâṅkam*[8] is one of the two longest, most ramified, and artistically compelling compositions in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.[9] In the Sanskrit text of Śaktibhadra, the act describes Hanuman's arrival in Laṅkā in search of Sītā; his discovery of her, in desperate straits, in the shadow of the *śiṃśapa* tree; and the rather asymmetrical, highly charged conversation that develops between them, culminating in the moment Hanuman hands over Rāma's ring and receives in exchange Sītā's *cūḍāmaṇi* ornament, which he will take to Rāma. This straightforward narrative structure has disappeared in the performance text, leaving behind only traces in the form of verses and bits of dialogue that turn up when needed. Virginie Johan has generated a crystal-like diagram of what happens in the full-scale performance (following an analytical method first developed by Heike Moser Oberlin); I refer the reader to her work.[10] My interest here lies in isolating features of general application to this art form, not in developing an interpretation of this one play as an aesthetic whole.

II. ĀKĀṄKṢĀ: CAESURA AND COMPLETION

Several times in the course of the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam*, Hanuman, who is, nominally, the sole character on the stage, begins a sentence and breaks it off after the first phrase. In each case the sentence will eventually be finished, normally after several nights of further performance when the play reverts, briefly, to its primary situation, that is, Hanuman's arrival in Laṅkā and discovery of Sītā. You are meant to hold the unfinished sentence in your mind, with the anticipation and tension natural to such a mode of speech, until—days later—it pops up again in the mouth of the character and achieves a conclusion. I will call this the *ākāṅkṣā* mode, after a category used by Sanskrit grammarians to refer to the syntactic suspense inherent in all sentences: speech tends to syntactic completion, and an opening phrase sets up an anticipation that will or will not be fulfilled by the speaker. *Ākāṅkṣā* also means something such as "yearning" or "hoping"—for completion.[11]

When you first encounter this *ākāṅkṣā* mode in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, you find it more than a little surprising. They say Kūṭiyāṭṭam is a slow genre. *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* takes

twenty-nine nights to perform in its full form (which is the only form that counts). To be honest, I don't find it slow, but I do feel the underlying rhythm that allows the gesture, or the singular sentence, or the movement of the eyes, or the phrasing of the drums, to reach their natural and necessary conclusion in whatever time it takes. Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance can be, if necessary, condensed into modular segments of the whole, but it cannot be rushed. The *ākāṅkṣā* mode suits this rhythm in more ways than one. Syntactic suspense makes sense in a world in which imaginative production, an interactive, mutual process entailing work both by the actors and the audience, demands and assumes its proper space and its natural pace. One possible domain for such imaginative production—in many cases the heart of the performance—is in the gaps generated by the break in speech, though overt verbal speech is only one of the levels in which the actor/character expresses his movement through the situations he has created.

On the penultimate night (Night 28) of the performance, Hanuman says in answer to Sītā's recurrent question, "And then?" (*tado tado*): *tataḥ kasmiṃś-cit mahati vanântare*, "then, in some great wilderness or other" . . . The wilderness is fleshed out over the rest of Night 28: the actor shows us the episodes of Kabandha and Śabari and then the moment when Sugrīva, the exiled monkey king, notices the arrival of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and wonders who they are. All this is information that Sītā lacks and that Hanuman knows, mostly because Lakṣmaṇa has, he says, told him about these things. Sītā wants and needs to know every detail. Hanuman is coming closer and closer to the present moment, that is, to the point in the story that both Hanuman and Sītā can recognize as their unfinished present where the story comes to a temporary stop, very much in the *ākāṅkṣā* mode, latent with anticipation. Now Hanuman can say: I have seen him with my own two eyes. He then depicts, or perhaps sculpts, kneads, fills up, makes visible, vivifies, the god who is nowhere to be seen.

Hanuman:

His feet, with their long toenails.
their soles marked by the signs of discus and conch,
his firm calves, thin waist, like a round
stone set with jewels, the goddess sign
on his breast, his arms long as serpents,
his eyes that are like lotus blossoms,
his face full as the full moon—
that's Rāma. I worship his feet. (6.7)[12]

Sītā: Now it's as if I can truly see my husband. And then?

In some sense, this moment provides a climax toward which the play has been moving for some four weeks. Like Sītā, we, too, see Rāma in the most durable and credible form possible for human perception—that is, as an image emergent deep in the eye and in the mind that has assumed the form and functions of the eye and that always intensifies this kind of seeing.

Let us step back and look at the two main earlier instances of the *ākāṅkṣā* technique. The first takes place on Night 1, at the very outset of this performance.

Hanuman has "set off" on his stage journey that will lead him to the moment just described. At the end of Hanuman's *puṟappāṭu*, the "setting forth," he says the first two words of Act VI in Śaktibhadra's text: *samprati hi*, "Now, truly .. . ." He will complete the sentence, by fully reciting the first verse of this act, only on Night 8, after enacting a series of critical events that preceded Hanuman's arrival in Laṅkā and that constitute his initial *nirvahanam* retrospective.

Eight nights for one sentence. Eight nights to explain, if that is the right word, how Hanuman was entrusted with the mission to Sītā and managed to jump over the ocean to Laṅkā. Eight nights to situate us in space (Night 3 gives a map of the known world, which the monkeys are meant to search thoroughly, looking for Sītā) and, perhaps more urgently, in time: "*Now*, truly .. . ." As always, in the course of presenting us with this present-ness, the order of the parent text is subverted: there, toward the *end* of the act, Hanuman gives Sītā a "password," an intimate "signal-story" (what Kūṭiyāṭṭam calls an *aṭayāḷavākku*) that is known only to Rāma and Sītā (and now to Hanuman) and that proves to Sītā that Hanuman is who he says he is, a bona fide messenger from Rāma. Rāma has told him this little vignette exactly for that purpose. It describes a night in the palace at Ayodhyā when Rāma arrives late in Sītā's room and is punished for this delay by having his arms tied with garlands of flowers by his beloved (6.18, *āyātaṃ mām*). The *aṭayāḷavākku*, suitably expanded, appears in *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* on Night 4, very close to the *beginning* of the entire work.

Why was Rāma late in coming to Sītā that night in Ayodhyā? Performance of the *aṭayāḷavākku* story explains. He was busy massaging the feet of his father, Daśaratha, until the latter finally sent him away to sleep. Sītā, irate, on edge, exhausted by waiting, ties him with the garlands, but Rāma, acknowledging his failure, says (following the Sanskrit verse): "It is my heart that you have tied!" This is the secret that only the two of them know, although the lamp, about to go out, served as witness.[13] As the episode is being enacted, the drums are hushed. Only a hint of their still active presence is retained, along with the periodic ringing of the *tāḷam*. A gentle silence, meditative and sustained, envelops the actor and the audience. Never have I seen so quiet or tender a performance. There is time, ample time, for the intimacy of the two lovers to be established and shared by the fading lamp—also by the whisper of the drums.

As I have said, Kūṭiyāṭṭam cannot leave any linear sequencing as it is. It will nearly always shape such a linear string anew, stretching it, filling it out, rethinking it, above all deepening its meaning. I would argue that this kind of re-shaping actually *precedes* the received text of the play and is intricately related to the condensed crystallization of the latter at some (perhaps early) point in time. Along with this general feature of the textuality relevant to all Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance, we have here something like a meditation on the idea of "now"—and with it, a statement about a secret piece of knowledge located in a particular character at a particular moment. Such secret knowledge might, however, serve as a model for other known things, including the *Rāmāyaṇa* story itself in its condensed forms (*saṅkṣepam*) inside the composition.

Continuous with this pattern is the syncopated verse 6.6, only partially enacted on the crucial Night 10 after the *namaskāram*, Hanuman's act of prostrating at

the feet of Sītā, and the first *nambyār tamiḻ* or prose recitation by the Nambyār drummer, in archaic Malayalam, of everything that has happened up to this point on stage. The verse reads:

pūtaṃ punāsi pitaraṃ mithilâdhirājam
rajarṣi-vaṃśa-tilakaṃ dayitaṃ ca rāmam/
vandyā janasya sarid ambara-gocareva
śailaṃ tuṣāra-śiśiraṃ patim ambhasāṃ ca//

You [Sītā] purify both your pure father, King of Mithilā,
and your beloved, Rāma, born in a family
of honorable kings, just as the river flowing in the sky,
loved by all, purifies the snow-cold mountain
and the ocean, the rivers' lord.

Only the first three lines are performed initially, leaving us in severe tension about the delayed conclusion. The performance now veers off, as it were, to the Dwarf Avatar of Viṣṇu[14] and then to the origin of the Ganges (*gaṅgolpatti*) before returning to this verse, and completing its recitation, in the middle of Night 12.[15] Much of the elaboration that fills the large space between Nights 10 and 12 is naturally, intrinsically linked to the main point of the verse, namely, the double purification achieved by both Sītā and the Ganges. We see the Ganges flowing over the Himalaya and into the sea (we see this not as representation but as an occurrence in real time). Such broken verses are not unusual in Kūṭiyāṭṭam; in the present case, the suspended performance of 6.6 is entirely consonant with the caesura present from the opening words of the Act.[16] It is also reminiscent of other prevalent forms of interruption and syntactic suspense in South Indian literary and performative modes, such as the *para-pūrita* verses—begun by one or more poets who then fall silent, leaving the listener dangling and tense until another poet eventually manages to complete the poem.[17]

The second overt *ākāṅksā* moment starts on Night 14. "*Tatas tasmin kāle* . . . Then, at that time .. . ." We are back in the ongoing conversation between Hanuman and Sītā. The latter, as we have seen, keeps asking in response to the information Hanuman has divulged: *tado tado*, "And then?" Night 14 begins with Bāli's reappearance in Kiṣkindhā and the first actual fight between him and his brother, Sugrīva. The latter, Hanuman says, was living on Mālyavān Mountain, where he was safe from Bāli because of a sage's curse on the latter. "*And then?*" "*Then, at that time* .. . ." The gap opens up. Hanuman enacts an *anukramam* series of retrospective questions moving backwards, step by step, from the present—"How did we reach this point? How did Hanuman see Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa walking through the wilderness near Mālyavān Mountain? And before that, how did Rāma happen to kill Marīca, who had become a golden deer?" And so on. He goes back as far as: "How was it that Rāma and Sītā were living on the banks of the Godavari?" As if to answer the questions posed by this series, we are given a somewhat truncated *Rāmāyaṇa-saṅkṣepam*, a gist of the entire *Rāmāyaṇa* story (the fourth in *Aṅgulīyâṅkam*) up to the point Rāma and Sītā arrive at the Godāvarī. As in the previous enactments of the *saṅkṣepam*, a distinct texture takes over on stage;[18] we feel a somewhat grim,

earnest immersion in a story unrolling forward, as it were, though seen from the dramatic present it is mostly far in the past. It takes some time. Each time we watch the *saṅkṣepam*, it is a little different.[19] As Heraclitus might have said, one never hears the same story twice (in Kūṭiyāṭṭam). Much depends, in fact, on our attunement to subtle differences that, like most subtle things, tend to be consequential. I doubt that repetition, *stricto sensu*, ever takes place in Kūṭiyāṭṭam.[20] In any case, we feel relief when we get out of the dense matter of the *saṅkṣepam* and return to the present with its precise, less-than-total memories.

Somewhere there lurks a master story, which can appear, to unnerving effect, from time to time, like a black hole sucking the present moment into itself. But the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* is far more than the telling of a story. It goes in and out of sequential narrative mode; what we see is mostly relatively autonomized fragments loosely inserted into the syntactic hiatus. Note, however, that the *ākāṅkṣā* gaps do provide coherence to the composition as a whole, effectively constituting a skeleton for performance, and that the first two are explicitly temporal in character: "Now, indeed .. . ." "Then, at that time .. . ." Each time the play returns to the present from the recollected or re-experienced or re-imagined past, something happens to our sense of the whole.[21] Indeed, the sense of the whole emerges *only* when such a movement takes place. Wholeness is a function of extended caesura.

The *saṅkṣepa* takes place in a different time zone. Here time is strangely autotelic, perhaps even deeply atemporal, thus relatively fixed, oblivious of the experience of real persons living (unconsciously) inside it. *Saṅkṣepa* time is only one, relatively limited form of temporality in this play. It is also crucial to note that this temporal range is itself thematized at the moments of hiatus and juncture. The caesura could, in theory, have come at any place in the prose conversation of Hanuman and Sītā. The Kūṭiyāṭṭam poet-actors have chosen phrases with a powerful temporal charge to serve as the opening for deep seeing and elaboration. We could also say that Kūṭiyāṭṭam is an art of sculpting time in three or, better, four dimensions, so that we can see time moving, momentarily focusing or crystallizing, in various forms and vectors before our eyes. In particular, futures and pasts have a baffling habit of turning into one another. Primary temporal disorientation—a constant in Kūṭiyāṭṭam and a deliberate effect of the medium—gives way, at moments, to lucid temporal perception in a "thickened" present. All such moments appear in relation to the internal rhythm of the hiatus, with its opening of tensile space, and are carried along by the actor and the drums. Syntactic suspense is one modality of intensification; apart from the tension inherent in the broken-off verse awaiting its eventual conclusion, the dense material pouring into, or possibly emerging outward from within, the gap always deepens or thickens the emotional reality filling the dramatic space at that time—so that the caesura, in effect, generates its own dense space inside space, or time within time, as Einat Baron has cogently said.[22] I will not try to characterize this space-time further at this point. Note, however, that a pregnant hiatus serves the more consequential aim of eroding boundaries as such by leading in to the nonsequential reality inside the gap.

The caesura, probably isomorphic with both experienced and imagined reality, serves pragmatic functions in these performances. Dr G. Indu, the brilliant actress

in the Muzhikkulam Nepathya troupe, says: "During the *nirvahaṇam*, the actor is building up the emotional intensity, building the thread of feeling; then comes a verse, recited by the Naṅṅyār, that breaks the tension."[23] So there is a natural pace of building, intensifying, and then pausing. This is one normal rhythm of performance, close to the *ākāṅkṣā* mode and also present in the basic drum-phrasing, with its final syncopation/pause. Don Handelman offers another explication: "The narrator must not be swept up in the ocean. The broken verse, or segment of text, reminds him not to continue the intensity to the point where he can no longer distinguish himself from the character."[24]

You could also say that the *śloka* forces an open space into the ongoing continuum of movement; you have to open up this "tear" or "hole" in order to have, or rather to make happen in real time, something like a story-sequence that, in the course of being created and performed, is much more than such a sequence and may even undermine the very notion of sequence per se. Once open, the hole takes over the stage and our attention. It has its own integrity and autonomy. But the triggering verse serves other purposes as well: in this field of intense imaginative activity unfolding in the mind of the actor and profoundly affecting the mind of the spectator, the verse sets off, and perhaps molds or shapes, further imaginative efforts. Margi Madhu says, "We imagine on the basis of the words."[25]

> [*There is the hushed hour before the performance. We wait in the Kūttambalam, drummers coming in and out. We spray ourselves against mosquitoes, who seem drawn to Kūṭiyāṭṭam each night. We look again at the* Āṭṭaprakāram*, remind ourselves of what is in store for us in the coming hours. Solemn, pregnant, darkness falls and thickens. A gust of wind, audible in the palm leaves. Rain, a murmur of anticipation. Then the conch. The first, isolated drum-beat cuts through the surface, shatters thought. The oil-lamp is lit, three strong flames: in the old times, one for the god, one for the actor, one for the owner of the temple. My monkey's mind steadies itself for the start. A real monkey arrives on stage. His tail peeps out from behind the simple curtain. He punches the curtain, tears a few strands of cotton from his tail, casts them into the flames. He roars, then subsides into quiet. He sniffs at his tail. The curtain is taken away. Why count the nights ahead? Time has to be reinvented in any case.*]

III. DEEP SEEING

Within the space of suspended syntax, where intensified wholeness dominates the logic of expansive performance, we experience a new kind of seeing, the dependable telos of all Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance. I will call it "deep seeing." This kind of seeing is hard work and takes time. It has a recursive element—very often we are "re-seeing" something partly or entirely visible before, but this time from a vantage point where seeing has been folded back upon itself, as if not the object but the business of seeing itself were what was being offered to us. Indeed, this is normally the case in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. We see Rāvaṇa fall in love with Sītā, whom he has never seen,

on the basis of his sister Śūrpaṇakhā's report of her beauty; we see him imagining her with tremendous intensity that brings her alive before our eyes. We see her as he sees her in his mind: overwhelmingly tangible and complete. We see his projection of her beauty become a fact in the world. As we watch, we also forget that we are watching Rāvaṇa's imagining; we are bewitched into imagining Sītā herself as the actor is imagining her into visibility, so that the various levels of perception and reporting—the actor as Hanuman the story-teller showing us Rāvaṇa's mental eye at work on Śūrpaṇakhā's description, then transcending that description—coalesce into the image he has painstakingly woven in space. This coalescence is in itself an intensification that enhances the glow of reality in the invisible image that is becoming visible in uncluttered (empty) space. The actor is not telling the story but telling the telling of the telling of the story in such a way that there is no story, only a living, that is, fully imagined, presence.

Seeing that is at the same time a seeing of the act of seeing takes place under the conducive conditions established by the form. The actor, poised between the drums and the lamp, his eyes active or hyperactive throughout, offers us repeated opportunities for seeing deeply. He does this by clearing away anything that could impede such vision. The stage is bare: there are normally no props except for the stool on which the actor sometimes sits or stands. The narrator may sit on the stool as he begins to weave reality into real-ness; after some twenty minutes, Indu says, "we are travelling *through* the actor and what the actor has made." In the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* that we witnessed, there was some anxiety about whether the monkey costume of Hanuman might get in the way of deep seeing; the costume has its own strong visual impact. In practice, one forgets it. Madhu says: "For the actor, the costume dissolves." In *Aṅgulīyâṅkam*, it often dependably dissolves for the audience as well.

Where does deep seeing take place? I think it happens somewhere behind the eye; or perhaps this is a world seen from somewhere inside the eyeball of the actor, refracted through an internal, nonexternalized process of empathic seeing from a similar place inside *our* eyes. It is as if there were an eye inside the eye: entire sequences of performance focus precisely on this possibility. One well-known example is the night devoted to an elaboration of the verse *śikhini śalabho* (1.9) in the first act of the *Subhadrā-dhanañjayam*. Here Arjuna is entering into an ashram near Dvārakā, where life is so idyllic that moths are not burnt if they fall into fire, the deer nurses at the breast of tiger, a baby elephant plays with the teeth of a lion, and a snake licks a mongoose and gently helps it fall asleep.[26] The actor shows us these scenes, in precise and overwhelming detail, merely by moving his eyes (*netrâbhinaya*, one of the hallmarks of Kūṭiyāṭṭam technique). It takes some hours and, in my experience, is utterly riveting. Such a performance raises the question of where what we are seeing is taking place. We are, of course, seeing something that is unfolding on stage. We see what Arjuna sees as he enters the ashram. But we see this only in the deep, highly active and expressive space of the actor's eyes, as if the actor, seeing as the character sees, were drawing us into his own eyes and, beyond them, into the seeing mind that organizes and imparts contours to what was seen. In order to follow the inward-moving gaze, an empathic and interactive dimension of shared seeing must be present; it is the actor's task to bring this dimension into being. But to say this

is to say that the actor's eyes, rolled into ours, are creating the reality that we see. Compounded seeing, always built up from the mutual embedding of various planes and vectors of vision, and always dependent upon an imaginative endeavor that is active and consequential (specifically, the generation of visible objects), emerges, with differential intensity, in every Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance. No perceptual act is devoid of an imaginative component. When seeing itself is thematized, as in the enactment of the verse just mentioned, an unexpected form of reflexivity begins to work its magic within the spectator's mind—a reflexivity that is entirely internal, inseparable from the field of vision and whatever that field contains. There is no projected, external Archimedean point. One sees, and sees what one sees, only from inside what is seen.

A theory of perception, built around a perspectivist view of interlocking multidetermined acts of seeing, could certainly be extrapolated from the praxis of Kūṭiyāṭṭam. It would have an Advaitic character. If we seek a linear formulation, with sequential stages, then probably the light radiating outward from the eye turns back upon itself, observes itself seeing, and goes still further back into the internal eye directing the gaze and shaping the entirety of its vision. Such seeing is profoundly dynamic, never static, never at rest, and probably idiosyncratic in quality in every spectator. It is also empirically linked to the words the actor is silently pronouncing by moving his eyes.

There is a rhythm to deep seeing as vision turns back into itself, erasing external boundaries, erasing the subject–object distinction. We know this happens in the *ākāṅkṣā* hiatus, before the broken sentence can be repaired. *The pause is the space where deep seeing can take place*.

Deep seeing is a realistic mode of perceiving, perhaps the only realistic mode in which vision sees into, or sees through, the relatively shallow surface of what is normally visible. It is as if the Kūṭiyāṭṭam form itself were saying to us: what we can know, all we can truly know, is what we imagine, and this process is what the artistic form allows us to see. To imagine in the elaborate, dense mode of deep seeing you have to have an open space without limits, without objects, including, ultimately, internal objects. And you have to open your eyes. When such moments of deep seeing cumulate, for example over twenty-nine nights, toward the end you may reach, and see, an event that is free from distortion and rich in insight—for example, when Hanuman hands Sītā the ring, and she gives him, in exchange, the jewel meant for her head. Such lucid perception is possible, but very rare. A full performance of a work with the dimensions of the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* may be the only way to achieve it. Such evanescent moments often have a meditative quality and proceed out of a slightly unconcentrated, floating awareness inside the spectator, who—judging from my own experience—is often drowsy, like Hanuman. One leaves behind the business of decoding the *abhinaya* hand- and eye-gestures as an expressive language or teasing out a structure infusing the composition as it unfolds; one enters into the act of seeing in an active but perhaps not clearly focused way that deepens from second to second until a point is reached that resists paraphrase or translation. I won't try to describe it further now.

In Kūṭiyāṭṭam, seeing means more than vision or visualization. The body as a whole is activated on stage, and a corresponding synaesthetic activation takes place in the spectator; one could say, with Don Handelman, that the entirety of one's being is present in each moment of seeing. During every full-scale performance I have witnessed, the rhythms of the *miḻāvu* drums resonated in my mind throughout each day, in the hours preceding the evening performance, and this resonance did not end with the final night in the *kūttambalam*. One might revise the dominant figure in terms of a *deep hearing*—but Kūṭiyāṭṭam insistently requires us to *see* the sound, in what we might think of as a Tantric pattern of working on the world. In Tantra, sound is routinely made visible and cannot do its work without becoming visible. A systematic axiology operates here, still awaiting formal, inductive articulation. In any case, the engagement of the entirety of one's being in seeing, hearing, and other tangible sensation is geared to states of deepening awareness, possibly deep to the point of becoming total, though not in the conventional, somewhat romantic sense of a total knowing.

[*After twenty-two nights, I am at last in a peaceful, receptive mode, capable of pleasure,* prīti, *of seeing and enjoying. So daunting is the challenge of understanding that I often forget the major goal of sustained pleasure; Madhu has mentioned it* en passant, *and I see at once that this aim should supersede my earnest attempts at analysis. Time has slowed and acquired the consistency of steady rain—though there is so much light that I think of rain falling through sunlight, one of the varieties of water used to make the* ab-iṣṭaka *bricks in Vedic ritual. I am happy. Often, now, ridiculously happy. But Kūṭiyāṭṭam continuously surprises you. Last night all kinds of traumatic traces from the distant past welled up in me, along with much anger and despair, for an hour or two. War, my student's death, unthinkable betrayal, irreparable losses. Then the anguish passed. Such moments of pain, of sleepiness or inchoate sorrow or inattention, have a role to play in watching this work. Even the days and nights when I was feverish and sick, near the beginning, now seem to me to have been a necessary, intrinsic part of my seeing or knowing. What you have missed through inattention will come back to claim you, without rancor. Inattention is one useful kind of attention. But there are also those moments when an unearthly lucidity takes over and then I see, open-eyed. I stop decoding the* abhinaya, *stop thinking, and stare.*]

IV. ADVAITA: THE METAPHYSICS OF FORM

What does it mean to use the word "Advaita" in the context of Kūṭiyāṭṭam, as I just have with reference to an implicit theory of perception? Why import a metaphysic that may stand in an oblique relation to this art, even if Kerala tradition, as we know, claims the philosopher-poet Śaṅkara as her own? And, indeed, why speak of metaphysics at all when we are trying to penetrate the art of seeing deeply and truly? Do we need a discursive point of view when the entire practice forces us repeatedly to see the intersection of diverse, often competing, often dissonant points of view?

I suppose the answer is "no." Yet the Kūṭiyāṭṭam tradition itself makes the connection with Advaita in one of those metapoetic oral stories that are always rich in insight. As it happens, the story touches on a verse that is part of the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam*, thus perhaps directly relevant to our attempt at analysis. So a natural, localized metaphysical coloring might well affect our way of watching Kūṭiyattam. I am not speaking of allegory, on any level, but of a certain set of intuitions that are formalized, on the one hand, by the early South Indian Advaitins and, on the other hand, by the performative praxis of the drama.

Like all important texts in South India, the text of the *Āścarya-cūḍāmaṇi* was, we are told, lost—in fact, destroyed deliberately by its author, Śaktibhadra. Here is how it happened. Śaktibhadra wanted the approval of Śaṅkarâcārya for the play he had just finished writing, so he went to the master and recited it to him. But Śaṅkara had taken a vow of silence (*mauna*) and did not respond verbally to what he heard. Śaktibhadra assumed this meant that Śaṅkara didn't like the play, so he burnt it. Years later he met Śaṅkara again, by chance; and this time the master was no longer vowed to silence. Śaṅkara asked the poet what had happened with his great play—and in particular, what about the wonderful verse ending with the beautifully alliterative line *bhavatu bhuvana-bhūtyai sarva-rakṣo-vadhena* (2.19), "May this (act of disfiguring Śūrpaṇakhā) bring prosperity to the world through the (eventual) killing of all demons." Śaṅkara then proceeded to recite the entire text of the play from memory, and the text has, therefore, survived.

The critical line is a blessing that incorporates the entire subsequent *Rāmāyaṇa* story. After the wounding of Śūrpaṇakhā by Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma realizes that a vast enmity, *vaira*, between himself and the host of demons has become inevitable; there will, he says, be no rest for his bow from now on (*asulabha iti nūnaṃ viśramaḥ kārmukasya*), only very temporary moments of relief. Disaster looms and will, indeed, shape the rest of the play. The best one can hope for is that the coming war will eventually lead to some sort of happy conclusion. Śaṅkara, not by chance, has selected this line as epitomizing the play. The drama—that is, its Kūṭiyāṭṭam enactment in visible space—is intended to generate the auspicious field of force intimated in the Sanskrit poem. This is not all that the work of performance is meant to create, but we could nonetheless speak of one possible vector, a rather precarious one, since any mistake might vitiate the auspicious wholeness of being that the actor is weaving night by night. Hence, the anxiety attendant upon this performance of the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam*: the tradition is that a mistake by the actor is likely to have fatal consequences for someone in his family.

The above verse is recited and enacted on Night 17 in the course of a more or less sequential rendering of Acts 1 through 4. A memorable blessing emerges, somewhat surprisingly, out of the incipient unraveling of the paradisical world of the wilderness as Rāma and Sītā have been experiencing it. Apparently, this moment of blessing has an Advaitic tinge to it, if we follow the oral tradition. Why should that be the case?

We can answer this question in several mutually compatible ways. We have just seen that the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* is set up so as to allow a moment of lucid perception (after many nights of criss-crossing misperceptions and the blandishments of demonic deceit). As

such, it repeatedly offers the spectator a choice, allowing him or her to ask, "What is real?" or "Is it or is it not real?" in a nontrivial way.[27] Advaita is a system set up to examine these same questions. Śaṅkara, its primary spokesman (I am speaking about classical Advaita), becomes himself a mark or sign—perhaps a touchstone—of truth in relation to illusion. Advaita theory assumes a level of illusion or, more technically, projection (*adhyāsa*) to be integral to all perceptual acts. In this sense, Śankara himself is the *cūḍāmaṇi* jewel that allows its bearer to distinguish the demonic from its alluring external form, once this jewel touches that form (as Sītā's *cūḍāmaṇi* allows her to reveal the true nature of a disguised demon, according to our play). The Sanskrit play, one could say, is about this touchstone-token and its modes of operation, as its very title indicates. Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance of the play is, among other things, aimed at palpably revealing and possibly undoing demonic misperception, thereby enabling a more lucid, penetrating, and ontically effective vision of reality. On another level, however, Kūṭiyāṭṭam generally seems drawn to the demonic, continually conjuring it up and exploring its cognitive and affective power.

But the story of the loss and recovery of the text suggests that there is another, more consequential reading of the play-in-performance. I am assuming, for the moment, that the *Āścarya-cūḍāmaṇi* was composed for performance in some sort of proto-Kūṭiyāṭṭam mode and that a complex textuality was active in it from the start. That is, I think, as mentioned earlier, that the rich performance materials that constitute much, indeed most of any living enactment of the still current acts (V and VI) of this play are *not* accretions or expansions of a given, fixed text (the Mediterranean model of textual growth) but were integral to the composition of the play at all stages. If this assumption is correct—if the text of the play is no longer imaginable without the rich performative materials that are hung upon its words—then Śankara's role in the story models that of any competent spectator, without whom the play is lost. Even if the play could, in theory, be performed without an awake audience, or with only the god and the lamp as spectators, in practice a total performance will ultimately pull the spectator into the work of palpable and consequential imagining. Perhaps an economic theory of energy transmission could take account of the spectator's work of deep seeing.[28] Margi Madhu often speaks of the flow of energies into the actor—from the audience, if they are awake, from the drummers behind him, from the text of the verses, from the flame.

Thus the first listener, Śaṅkara, like the last or most recent spectator, actively restores the wholeness of the play; and in doing so, all such sensitive seers are drawn into an interactive process of extended imaginative production, tangible in effect, necessary on several grounds, and possibly, if we are lucky, beneficent for the world.[29] At the same time, Śaṅkara's initial response is silence. The dualistic division into subjects viewing emergent objects is utterly undermined—Advaita again. Such a division is an illusion, worse than demonic, a perception that is truly the most existentially threatening of all. If one takes the Advaita system seriously, so that a level of unity continuous with itself and continuously regenerating itself is seen as real, then Kūṭiyāṭṭam is the artistic form best suited to experiencing this level of being. Criss-crossing and mutually embedded perceptual frames, omnipresent in these performances, are one basic mode sustaining this dynamic regeneration.

There are many points in the corpus of performance texts where this axiology is clearly thematized and articulated. A salient example is the opening, invocatory verse of the *Matta-vilāsam* as it is enacted in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam version of this play (which ignores the Sanskrit text by Mahendravarman entirely, with the exception of two opening verses). As performed over three days, *Matta-vilāsam* offers a powerful, reflexive self-vision, a narrative of origins that explains how this theatrical form crystallized and what pragmatic purposes it serves. On day 1 the actor, in the role of the Sūtra-dhāra or stage director, recites a little less than half of verse 1, then enacts the entire verse in *abhinaya*; he will return the next day to conclude the verse (in the *ākāṅkṣā* pattern I have described). The verse speaks of Śiva as at once the dance itself (*nṛttam*) and the spectator (*prekṣaka*) of the dance—and, by implication, as the dancer performing this miraculous and manifold form. The third day's performance fleshes out this statement by revealing the god as actor/performer who simultaneously fulfills both the other two functions as well. Here is a perspective internal to the tradition, elaborately worked out in the performance text that richly embodies and playfully extends an image of origins.[30]

Interestingly, the process of generating this form of truthfulness takes place in present time. Despite, or perhaps because of, the disjunctive temporalities operating in *Aṅgulīyâṅkam*, we can see the Advaitic insistence on time as *only* a present-tense reality working itself out on stage.[31] You are made to see the simultaneous thickness of a given moment, of any moment. In *Aṅgulīyâṅkam*, little happens, in the formal sense of dramatic dénouement, outside the meeting of Hanuman and Sītā and the exchange of the ring and head-ornament. But look at all that is brought to bear on such a moment—the interlocking memories and projections of a host of characters (monkeys, gods, demons, humans), the creation of the River, or the world, or the monkeys, or the family of Rāma, the whole history of the Ikṣvāku line's descent into misery and near extinction. All this is already hinted at, as I have said above, in the initial two words of the Act: *samprati hi*, "Now, truly .. . ." Any *samprati* "now" contains this richness, experienced as densely simultaneous; it is the task of the play to exfoliate it, twisting it round like a palm frond unfolding.

You see at once this is no ordinary play. The single actor-story-teller sits on the stool and begins to weave the world with his hands, an anti-entropic therapy that ensures the integrity of the invisible world we inhabit with him. His movements are fluid, rounded, and rhythmic, often culminating in a slight syncopation or hiatus before the final rounding and completion of the gesture, which is only partially external, as we would expect. Each of the movements proceeds from some internal, imagined, intimate space.[32] From there, kneading the world, playing with time as if in a laboratory, showing us the sounds in visible space, the actor unites the dimensions of existence: he is at once the archer, the victim shot by the arrow, and the arrow itself.[33] All become visible in a single sequence, usually turned inward on itself as it unfolds, like the *abhinaya*-gesture of the turning lotus that frequently signals transition in mode (*kamala-parivartanam*). In this sense, we witness an Advaitic world, profoundly unified, also pregnant with illusion or mistaken perception and, at moments, including the movement toward climax, with something that could be classed as truth. It takes many nights for truth to happen through various forms of

compounding, condensing, grafting, embedding, intensifying, all of them moving toward a full coming alive or making something alive—possibly the Advaitic goal par excellence and one that transcends even the attempt to see illusion or misperception for what they are.

[*Only once this year did we see the yellow light. We've seen it before. Toward sunset, the jungle starts to glow. Such light, soaking and enveloping, cannot truly be. You rub your eyes. If you step out of the Kūttambalam, you see the sky open up into a palimpsest of gold and mauve and red. Something in the wetness or greenness or the infinite absorption of the reddish soil produces this liquid yellow that washes over a whole world, that feels as if it belongs to the invisible world the Kūṭiyāṭṭam artists have made for us. I know we are in the domain of the gods, they are very close; this dense and gentle light is our secret sign.*]

V. LONELINESS

Does a Kūṭiyāṭṭam performance have a well-articulated ending? *Aṅgulīyâṅkam,* in particular, seems unable or unwilling to move toward closure. It ends, we could say, several times, each of them partial. There is an ending added as a postscript or supplement to the ending: Hanuman burns Laṅkā, jumps back across the ocean, reunites with the monkeys, and, dancing wildly, waves high in the air the jewel Sītā has given him. Then the Nambyār "translates" this strong gesture into words, in what is called "Tamil" but is really a Sanskritized, lyrical, slightly archaic Malayalam. Thus the play ends. A huge relief—perhaps also an emptiness—envelops the actor, the Naṅṅyār, and the drummers. We asked Madhu, "Is the play finished?" He said: "It's not finished. It goes into your minds, my mind, thinking, moving." This description is surely accurate.

But even without closure—on principle—the final night of performance moves toward a crescendo of overwhelming power and richness. I will try to sketch in the progression, noting the crucial *ākāṅkṣā* nodes as we go and the way threads left untied in earlier nights are here resumed and partially resolved. It is, I think, impossible to convey in words the full complexity of this final continuous performance (eight hours as we saw it) or the sense of its internal coherence and emotional logic. It is also impossible even to approach these questions of coherence and logic without watching the full twenty-eight nights that precede the final one. Astonishing as it may sound, no part of the performance—not even a single hour—can be dispensed with; each piece is integral to the emergent whole.

As always, there is a short *saṅkṣepam* introduction: Hanuman as narrator tells us how Sugrīva sees Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa approaching on the banks of the Pampā River and sends Hanuman to find out who they really are, what their *paramârtham*—their ultimate truth—might be. As we know, it's a worthy goal.

Off he goes. Soon he notices Rāma's footprints in the dust, with the personal auspicious marks of conch and discus. Hanuman picks up the dust and rubs it on his head. Golden earrings appear on his ears. This sign has been foreseen, long ago—on Night 7, to be precise. There Hanuman was told the story of his life by the aged

narrator Jāmbavān, who knew that only by hearing this story would Hanuman, normally a rather sleepy creature, discover his true strength. The narration works, as we can see by Hanuman's successful leap over the ocean—as it might work for each of us. Toward the end of the story we discover how Hanuman was educated. The Sun taught him grammar (not just any grammar but the lost Grammar of Indra, *aindra-vyākaraṇam*). The lesson took only one day and happened while the Sun was moving from east to west on his usual course; Hanuman, the diligent pupil, walked backward in front of the Sun's chariot with the grammar book in his hand. By sunset he had learned it all. He wanted to give his teacher a parting gift in thanks, *guru-dakṣiṇā*, and the Sun said that Hanuman's gift would be the friendship he, Hanuman, would one day instigate between Sugrīva (the Sun's son) and Rāma. But Hanuman wanted to know how he would recognize Rāma when the time came. The Sun replied: "If you take dust from his feet and put it on your head, it will become a pair of golden earrings."

Between the Sun's proleptic promise and the fulfillment of this promise, some hundred hours have gone by—again, the *ākāṅkṣā* gap, though of a somewhat altered type. We could be sure on Night 7 that the miraculous sign would eventually be enacted. The play cannot stop—this word may be better than "end" or "conclude"—until the sign is lived through or lived out. Note that this movement toward fulfillment, toward tying one strand, depends on a lost grammar learned from a written copy while the student is walking backward from one end of the world to the other. Is this another meta-poetic image of the art form itself?

We have already seen that this moment—the prelude to the dialogue with which we began—completes the broken syntax of the prose statement on Night 28*: tataḥ kasmiṃś-cit mahati vanântare*, "Then, in some great wilderness or other .. . ." One syntactic tear or gap holds within it another gap (i.e., Hanuman's delayed recognition that Rāma was nearby when the latter first appears in the Kiṣkindhā land) that is, however, distinct from the linguistic or verbal one given in the text. A single answer is, however, suited for both of them*: dṛṣṭaḥ devaḥ*, "I saw him, your [my, our] lord." God can now be created from out of the uncluttered, open space, from foot to head (*pādâdi-keśam*), following verse 6.7.[34]

Once Rama is in place in the imagined space, Hanuman launches into his full *nitya-kriyā*, a ritual piece of the *puṟappāṭu* and a strong sign that what has just happened is of crucial significance. At its end, as usual, he picks invisible flowers from space and offers them to the invisible world he has put in place. All of this is a signal to the audience that the long *nirvahaṇam* is finished and the play can actually start, after twenty-eight nights.

We need to state the transition a little more precisely, or with higher resolution: Verse 6.7 has been enacted thrice, in *ākāṅkṣā* mode, before eventually being completed with the enactment of the missing fragment of text; it has then been recited silently once, in full. A snippet of dialogue from the play is now brought in. Sītā says, "Now it's as if I could truly see my husband. And then?" Hanuman now twice utters the line, "And then he, our lord . . . "—breaking off *before* the verse (*kuvalaya-palāśâkṣi*, 6.8) that will complete the sentence. Hanuman performs *his nitya-kriyā*, at the end of which he goes offstage into the green room, where he

sprinkles water on his face and drinks a little. (Thus in the performance as we saw it; the *Āṭṭaprakāram* is unclear on the sequence.) One major structural node has been put in place.

Hanuman reemerges onto the stage. His first task is to create Sītā, now that Rāma fully exists in our mind's eye. He shows us her beauty—very slowly—from head to toe (*keśâdipādam*), as seen, nominally at least, through Rāma's eyes. Rāma has, please remember, lost her (we have seen her kidnapped by Rāvaṇa; or, in the formal terms of the play, Sītā has heard the story of her kidnapping, along with many other stories, as reported by Hanuman. We see them enacted as she is listening to them on another plane.). Now Rāma, elaborately materialized on stage through *abhinaya*, grows faint with passionate desire, just as his great rival, Rāvaṇa, tends to do whenever *he* thinks of Sītā. But then, as Lakṣmaṇa tells us in an important verse, in the wilderness Rāma wakes and wanders, lamenting, calling out to his lost beloved:

kuvalaya-palāśâkṣi kva tvam gateti lapan vane
smara-paravaśaḥ svāmī rāmo mayā samalakṣyata/

"Where have you gone, my sweet-eyed love?"
I saw him like this, overcome by longing.

Here the verse breaks off, half-finished—another major gap (though it does provide syntactic closure to the prose sentence that introduces it, *tatas tadānīṃ devaḥ*, "And then he, my lord . . . "). Something is missing from this moment, and the performance will immediately conjure it up. To make things worse, in a way, the monkeys produce the ornaments and upper cloth that Sītā had thrown from Rāvaṇa's chariot as she was being carried off into captivity. Hanuman, the single narrator, shows us these events. Rāma asks Lakṣmaṇa to study the ornaments: are they really Sītā's? Lakṣmaṇa can't say since, loyal brother that he is, he has never lifted his eyes to his sister-in-law's face; he can, however, recognize her anklets, since he often worshiped at her feet. This famous verse from the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* (*nâhaṃ jānāmi keyūre nâhaṃ jānāmi kuṇḍale/ nūpure tv abhijānāmi nityaṃ pādâbhivandanāt*, 4.6.22) is enacted before our eyes.

Rāma weeps. Now the suspended verse can be completed:

snapitam asakṛd bāṣpair āvir-maṇi-dyuti nūpuram
sapadi kaṭaka-sthāne maulīpade ca samarpayan// (6.8)

[Lakṣmaṇa is reporting to Hanuman, who reports to Sītā]:
He takes the jeweled anklet, bathed in his tears,
puts it where his armlets should be
and holds it on his head as a crown.

We are back in the play, and Sītā suddenly wants to know how Hanuman knows all this, since he wasn't present when it happened; and Hanuman explains that he was told about it by Lakṣmaṇa. This answer satisfies Sītā, but may not satisfy us—for her doubt, magnified many times over, applies to our sense of what the narrator is showing us. How does he know? How can he be both Hanuman and the story-teller/Sūta? What is the principle of selection for the vast material he has enacted over four weeks?

Hanuman (showing us in gesture the words of the text): "Why add words, my lady? The ornament you wore on your foot became for him an ornament on every spot of his body (*sarvâbharaṇam*)." Technically, we understand why this happens. On a deeper level, we see in operation yet another emblematic image of Kūṭiyāṭṭam as a form. Each site, each moment, each perception deserves to be fully or partially elaborated and made visible on stage and to our eyes. The art itself is an "everywhere ornament," a *sarvâbharaṇam*, filling in each tiny open space until fullness is achieved.

Such elaboration, as we know, as we have seen countless times, usually brings to our attention some specific and necessary elements that are hidden within the verbal artifice of the surface. These two principles—the *sarvâbharaṇam* technique in which every atom is brought into view, and the notion of an intrinsic, though usually unexpected, quality or relation that becomes apparent in the course of the elaboration—work together. What follows, as the composition moves slowly toward its culmination, exemplifies this double movement and its by-now familiar link to suspended rhythms and sudden structural gaps.

Attention brought to bear on every point or node. Visualizing elaboration that ontologically precedes the text for elaboration. A space, tense with syntactic incompletion, in which this work can be carried through. Add to these the intensifying emotional charge that fills the gap and spills over its edges, at once resolving and surpassing the syntactic suspense. The play may, given the full and active presence of these factors and the sustained perfection of the artist, be able to come to a temporary halt—to rest.

Five magnificent verses remain to be enacted. Each deepens the atmosphere of despair and incipient madness. Lakṣmaṇa hopes to distract Rāma from his grief by pointing out to him the natural beauties of the wilderness. This same theme has been present at earlier points in the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* in a relatively straightforward way; now it embodies an ironic, tragic dissonance. It is also, very unusually in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, repeated with a change of voicing: Lakṣmaṇa first speaks the verse, and then enacts it as Rāma, its true subject.

maratakaruco mādyad-bhṛṅgā mahīruha-jātayo
nipatita-nadī-nirdhautântā nitamba-bhuvo gireḥ/
pathika-suhṛdaḥ pampā-vīci-bhidaś ca samīraṇāḥ
kṣaṇam api vibhuṃ nâlaṃ hartuṃ haratsu guṇesu te//

Clumps of trees brilliant as emerald,
bees buzzing, drunk on honey,
mountain slopes washed by falling waterfalls,
breezes, sweet to the traveler, sprayed
by the Pampā's waves—
none of these, even for a moment, could distract
our lord, distracted only
by *your* beauties. (6.9)

"Your" means Sītā's: we are still inside the unfolding conversation between her and Hanuman. Each line of this poem is enacted separately, and at the end of each

of them we see, and are told in *abhinaya*, that Rāma remains indifferent to the beauty portrayed and evoked. Lakṣmaṇa can't move him from his depression and grief. He is entirely situated inside Sītā's missing presence, as are we. Separation, *viraha*, gnaws at the heart, growing worse moment by moment. Twenty-eight nights have prepared us for this sorrow. We are at a level of intense present experience, a moment (*kṣaṇam*) complete in its emotional and cognitive aspects unfolding line by line, and not for a moment within this moment is there room for any relief.

Rāma, says Hanuman to Sītā, was, or is, *sandeṣṭu-kāmaḥ*: desperate to send a message. Maybe the *cakravākī* bird would carry it? No, the male bird is absorbed in bringing moss to his beloved. Maybe the bee could do it? No, it is absorbed in drinking the nectar of the lotus flowers. What about the royal goose? He's immersed in the taste of lotus fibers, together with his mate. All the potential messengers are too busy with their own lives (6.10). We see each vignette fully activated, each line of the poem ending, after the actor's elaboration, in disappointment.

Rāma's very life is now in danger. The lethal combination of intense natural beauty and inner loneliness has to be fleshed out. So there are the calls of the peacocks, the winds gently shaking the *ketaki* flowers, the nights heavy with dark clouds . . . We see them. Then the list breaks off, an anacoluthon entirely in harmony with the *ākāṅkṣā* mode. His life may not survive the existential and verbal caesura (6.11).

Sītā, after each verse, demands: "And then?" (*tado tado*). She is impatient, alarmed, intensely curious. Hanuman aggravates her situation with Śaktibhadra's lyrical poems, beautiful to the point of pain. Sometimes, he says, there are flashes of lightning (*tatas tadānīm eva vidyut-prakāśe sati*) . . . These few words in prose introduce the poem that will fill another tantalizing gap:

> "See, she's stretching out her hands
> to me, as she sinks into the water!"
> That's what he says, rushing
> to grasp the *kandalī* flowers
> emerging from their leaves. (6.12)

The verse is first broken in half in enactment; then, when the second half arrives, its final words—*kandalīr vikośāḥ*, the sheathless *kandalī* flowers—are excruciatingly delayed until we have seen Rāma grasping at what he takes to be Sītā's vanishing hands. By now we have seen some seven hours of uninterrupted performance on this final night. It is long past midnight. We have dozed off, woken up, overcome the weariness and physical discomfort and mental exhaustion. We are with him. Nothing, in fact, could take us away from him again.

So we are ready for Rāma's final words, reported by Lakṣmaṇa and enacted in space by the actor:

> He makes a soft bed of fresh leaves
> and picks flowers to adorn your hair
> as he says, gently, to a flowering vine:
> "Come Sītā, my life, my fierce love,
> come now to me." (6.13)

Rāma is over the edge. The intimate theme of making the bed—the theme that constitutes his secret code or password to Sītā, as we have seen—recurs together with an image of binding and adorning Sītā's hair. Excruciating absence, even more than the presence on the stage of conventionally invisible persons such as a god, engulfs the audience and, I think, the actor. In this aching void, Rāma speaks and falls silent: *ehi*, "Come!" One word echoes without end. The most intense loneliness I have known—indeed, perhaps all the loneliness that exists in the world—wells up from inside.

As I have said, and as Madhu has confirmed, in effect the play ends here, although there is still a ring to be delivered,[35] and a Tamil-Malayalam synopsis of the action from Night 10 until now has to be recited by the drummer on a now nearly empty, and silent, stage. The drums have fallen silent; Hanuman has disappeared. He will re-emerge to finish the dialogue with Sītā and to offer her the ring as the Tamil Nambyār translates, line by line, standing oddly between the two interlocutors even as they exchange tokens. And the final, proleptic verse has to be recited and enacted; and Hanuman has to burn Laṅkā and jump back to Mount Mālyavān, the head-jewel held aloft in his hand. The visibly invisible reality in which we have lived for a month has to be burned before our eyes. Hanuman's tail will be given to the patron of the performance—*vāl-dakṣiṇā*, the gift of the tail. It is 2:30 a.m.

Can the expression or evocation of a god's ultimate loneliness, which is also our loneliness, infuse a work that is largely nondiscursive, abstract, resistant to paraphrase or verbal articulation? Yes, it can. These aspects, or vectors, actually co-exist without great strain. The latter (abstract composition) may even be the condition for the former (texture of aloneness), even as the former may condition the open-ended, unfinished quality of the latter. Can such a work convey, by its formal links and structural-syntactic order, a message like that Rāma wants to send to Sītā (he is, recall, *sandeṣṭu-kāma*, eager to find a messenger)? Whatever else it is, the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* is also a vast *sandeśa-kūttu*. It shares some features, on this level, with the *campū* or *prabandham* style.[36] But what kind of message is it, and from whom to whom? From us to the god? From the actor to the spectator, or from the latter to the former? From some part of the self to another, absent or blocked part?[37] From the art form to itself, the truncated narrative to its own submerged totality? From the drums to the words or the words to the drums? From the prime spectator, the temple deity, to his actors and devotees, or to himself? Madhu said to us with conviction: "I don't believe in the message." Yet it is not, I think, only the sheer beauty of the form that moves us.

Notice that the actor has first created the god in sheer space and then exposed his inner world of feeling before leaving him, on the edge of madness, in an agony of aloneness. It is also possible that the agony we feel at this final moment has to do, as Don Handelman has suggested, with the imminent stopping of the breathtaking cosmos-in-movement that we have inhabited for these short, too short, twenty-nine nights.

[*Two days ago, parts of the ceiling in our house came crashing down, luckily not crushing any of us. This is monsoon, and everything is waterlogged. We call our landlord who, reluctantly, sends workmen to bring down whatever else looks*

precarious and to rebuild the ceiling with mortar and cement. Today we clean the house madly, making order in cupboards, bookshelves, kitchen, and repeatedly washing the floor. By mid-afternoon the rain has stopped and it is hot, beyond relief. I sleep. At 6 the rain resumes. By now I am living inside the performance, and even falling ceilings seem only partly real, in comparison with that *world. Something has opened up, or cracked.*
Pouring percussion of rain, mingling with the miḻāvu. *It goes on for hours. Now I'm cold. Aware, at the same time, that everything I am seeing is singular, and that the emergent whole will be something immense. I know I will never again have thirty nights to see a single composition slowly take shape, in its natural rhythm, cutting no corners, making no compromises. How rare it has been in my life that I am able to go to the end, not holding back, not rushing on to whatever comes next.*]

VI. IN LIEU OF CONCLUSION

By now I have seen several hundred hours of Kūṭiyāṭṭam, mostly of unabridged, full-scale performances spread over many nights. If I examine my own experience, I can say that at no point was I ever, to the best of my knowledge, *sādhāraṇī-kṛta*, "universalized." Perhaps it's my failing. Maybe it's wrong to set up this empirical fact as a problem; that is, we may have no particular reason to think that Abhinavagupta's astonishing theory actually works in or for any living spectator. But what, then, might we begin to say about what really happens on the Kūṭiyāṭṭam stage?

If I have said relatively little about the story that *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* has made present, that is because I feel that it is in no sense an "object" in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam world. I agree with Madhu: The creative work of the actor on stage is mostly nonexpository. A sculpture, seen from inside its unfinished contours, has no discrete message for us—nothing, that is, that could be paraphrased. This statement is true, *a fortiori*, for all imagined realities sculpted in empty space. Besides, probably nothing that lives can be paraphrased.

If one takes the fusing of subject and object seriously, as a lived-through goal of such performances, then various consequences must follow. Although the composition has a logic, and the mechanisms of holding it together—tying it down—can be described, to speak of a structure is, perhaps, to miss the point. Here structure leaks, or becomes soggy. Each night the first beat of the *miḻāvu* shatters the bifurcated world in which objects appear to exist. In a way, the performance seems to move, with its characteristic suspended rhythm, through phases of greater and lesser objectivity. Lesser objectivity comes with the reappearance of the story line. It diminishes when the particular episode or moment is sucked into the black hole of the hidden *Rāmāyaṇa* text, performed as *saṅkṣepam*. In this deep reality mode, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is like the secret password, an intimate statement or story, with which Rāma entrusts Sītā and which comes back to him at the grievous moment of conclusion.

Greater objectivity makes objects as such disappear. It belongs to the creative kneading or weaving in imaginative space, to the generation of invisibly visible images, the only realities we can know since they are the only realities we truly create. But

greater objectivity belongs, it seems, to the syntactic gap, with its attendant anxiety. One could always make a perhaps fatal mistake. When the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* stops, the actors experience relief, and emptiness.

The knowable, intricate plan of this vast work has been lucidly revealed by Johan in the work referred to earlier; I will not address it further, except to note one general feature.[38] In effect, the linear story line that we recognize from the epic is continuously threatened in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam text by an inner, more powerful story—an as-if story—that threatens to submerge it from within. In this subversive story, future and past flow into one another, or are tied together, if something so liquid can be tied. Hearing the inner story is what gives Hanuman the strength to jump over the ocean and to tell the new one. It also gives Sampāti wings and activates them so he can fly out of the text.

Śaktibhadra should have come to watch what was left of his play. He would have seen the intimate logic of its form and understood its interwoven themes. Or perhaps the original, as Borges said, is not faithful to its translation. And is the original truly original, that is, prior to what we have seen? Rāma, too, could perhaps have understood his existence (as a human being) by coming to see this performance, assuming he would take the time to watch it in the manner I've described. As Winnicott famously said about Hamlet, Rāma's problem is that he couldn't go to see this play about Rāma. Here we may have a certain existential advantage.

As I have noted, the final night—but the penultimate Night 28 has created the conditions for our being there, capable of looking deeply—unfolds according to the logic of its own perfection. Night 28 sets up Night 29 by reverting to the syncopated and broken text: *tatas tasmin mahati vanântare*, "then, in some great wilderness or other .. . ." Note the indefinite deictic. Somewhere or other Rāma will become visible (Night 29), closing one sentence, opening another unfinished set. Lonelier and lonelier, he, and we, can stop to rest. There is, perhaps, a surprising link between loneliness and deep seeing.

In a composition tied together like this, the sequential story tends to be submerged or lost. Hanuman dances the abstract *nitya-kriyā* and later, at the end, a mad dance of return. This tells us something about the younger, subversive story and about the major nodes and linkages toward which it moves. Another way to describe the compositional logic is to speak of time as sculpted by the actor or molded by the play itself. Kūṭiyāṭṭam, I have said, is a laboratory for temporal experimentation. Within Kūṭiyāṭṭam time, a forward-moving sequence collides with the pre-existing story in which the character finds himself or herself, thereby recognizing his or her own reality and potentiality. Forward movement turns out to belong to, or to transpire within, one possible and seemingly necessary past, even if this past is rapidly folding into an unbounded and indeterminate present.

Necessary in what sense? Sītā hears her own story from Hanuman, along with other stories that intersect with hers, and this, she says, gives her confidence that Hanuman is truly Rāma's messenger (*na punar abhijñānârtham aparam/ āryaputrasyâbhijñāna-vacanaṃ bhaṇa,* prose before verse 6.18: "I don't need any other confirmation; just tell me what my lord said as a token of recognition"). She needs no additional surety for *abhijñāna*, "recognition," but her heart, she says, is still curious to hear the

words Rāma has given Hanuman as a password. We know these words: they belong to the story of making the bed in Ayodhyā on the night of Rāma's infuriating delay. We have learned them already in Night 4. Hanuman, interestingly, is very eager to further upgrade the process of recognition: *atra bhavatyāṃ vañcanā-bhūmau vartamānāyām abhijñāna-dṛḍhī-karaṇârtham idam apy āha*, "He [Rāma] also said the following in order to strengthen recognition, since you are wandering around in this domain of delusion." These words are followed by verse 6.18 (*āyātaṃ mām . . .*), that is, by the *aṭayāḷavākku* or secret text, which we have discussed. The verse itself ends with Sītā's powerful (*dṛḍhatara*) binding or tying of her husband.

Rāma's ring is thus very much like other well-known tokens of identity and/or recognition in classical Sanskrit drama, and we can assume that Sītā recognizes something by hearing the poem and holding this ring. What about us as spectators? Does recognition happen in and for us as well? What about the actor? At the creative moment, actor and character merge: who, after all, is performing Hanuman's *nitya-kriyā* if not the actor as Hanuman? Such moments have a power and an unearthly, yet profoundly earthly, bodily, beauty.

Let me say again: the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* is not an object, certainly not an object *in* the world. It has, or becomes, its own, self-created world, far more comprehensive, elastic, and effective than ours. For one who enters into that other world, recognition—including self-recognition—issues into something like a plentitude of awareness. Not words but embodied movement, the *abhinaya* in its various forms working in tandem with the drums, triggers that awareness. The *abhinaya* exceeds by far any possible decoding of its meaning as the live performance exceeds by far the verbal text of the play and the actor surpasses the characters he embodies and, in a very real sense, creates. The text remains, of course, built into the ongoing performance as a kind of "unreality check," but the text cannot begin to tell us what the play is about.

It is important to bear in mind that the *abhinaya* is, in itself, very beautiful, a startling, riveting flow of movement lovely enough to create whatever or whomever the artist wants. The creation will eventually displace whatever world was there before it came into visibility. Such was certainly my personal experience. And in the poetics of Kūṭiyāṭṭam in live performance, it is the highly personal experience that counts, that is demanded by the art itself. Personhood, including strong cognitive elements building up over the many hours, including individual, idiosyncratic reactions, is never effaced during those hours, unless falling asleep counts as effacement (it shouldn't). Nor does the end, with its climax of infinite depth, diminish the spectator's presence to himself or herself in any way. It is only the residual linearity of the story that may dissolve. It is *my* loneliness, not an abstraction or a universalization or a projection into some other ontic domain, that I come to recognize.

But a plenitude of awareness, if it is possible at all, requires the totality of the performance. Loosely strung along the lines of a broken syntax, the play, an integral work, never fails to resume and complete a thought or narrative element or textual hint that appeared earlier, like Hanuman's grammar lesson and his teacher's promise of recognition at some future point. Picking up these loose ends is a way of achieving further thickening, to the point where the space of imagining acquires the consistency of unbroken connectedness, like flames, like honey, like a loneliness equal to the

whole world. No wonder, then, that Margi Madhu says: "You can't really prepare for performance. It's in your life."[39] And also: "It [Kūṭiyāṭṭam] is not poetic in the technical sense. But in my sense it is *very* poetic. 'Poetic,' to me, means opening a door and another door and then another door."[40]

We are left with a few minimalist elements that together generate this wholeness: (1) the autonomous, compelling beauty of the form itself and the logic of its composition within the terms of that form; (2) coherence: a totality that stops rather than ends; (3) affective texture: a transcendent forlornness experienced personally and individually; (4) revelation: of the dense web of projections and misperceptions within a unified field; of the god, made present as witness, spectator, and actor; (5) themes: resistant to formulation, but depending on a cumulation of imagined artifacts as facts; (6) rhythm: syncopation, broken syntax, hiatus, caesura, anacoluthon, false starts truly resumed, eventual momentary completion; (7) an anti-entropic therapeutic: recognition momentarily holds the world in place; (8) pragmatics: slow intensification by continuous interweaving and intersection to reach the everywhere ornament, beautiful in every part; (9) narration: a sleepy story-teller who cannot know the end of his story, since it has none; (10) technique: deep seeing, not only with one's own eyes. But this list is only the beginning. Elements 1 through 9 seem to be mortgaged to 10, at once the means and the telos of an aesthetics played out in this form.

NOTES

1. I wish to thank the Nepathya troupe of Muzhikkulam, led by Margi Madhu and Dr G. Indu, for the full performance of the *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* we were privileged to witness in August 2012. My thanks as well to the Hebrew University Kūṭiyāṭṭam team and to Heike Moser Oberlin and her colleagues and students from the University of Tuebingen. This study is one of the first tangible fruits of the collaborative Hebrew University-Tuebingen research project, funded by the German Israel Fund, to which we are deeply grateful. I express my thanks to Yad Hanadiv and the Israel Council for Higher Education for the generous grant that allowed us to see performances in 2010–12.
2. Edited by K. G. Paulose, *Vyaṅgyavyākhyā*, *The Aesthetics of Dhvani in Theatre* (New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, 2013).
3. Virginie Johan, "Du « je » au jeu de l'acteur : ethnoscénologie du Kūṭiyāṭṭam, théâtre épique indien" (Thèse de PhD, Institut d'Études Thèâtrales, Université de Paris 3, 2014).
4. With the apparent exception of the *Svapna-vāsavadattā*: see HermannTieken, "The So-called Trivandrum Plays Attributed to Bhāsa," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 37 (1993), pp. 5–44.
5. Thus the editor of the text, K. G. Paulose, *Naṭâṅkuśa, A Critique on Dramaturgy* (Tripunithura: Government Sanskrit College, 1993), pp. xxvii–xxix; but the dating is very insecure.
6. Paulose, *Naṭâṅkuśa* 4.2, p. 28.
7. This basic feature of Kūṭiyāṭṭam is also explicitly attacked by *Naṭâṅkuśa* 4.8.

8. The proper noun *Aṅgulīyâṅkam* occurs in this essay only in the sense of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam composition-in-performance that constitutes this play—and not as the Sanskrit text of Act 6 of the *Āścarya-cūḍāmaṇi*.
9. The second is *Mantrâṅkam*, based on Act 3 of the *Pratijñā-yaugandharāyaṇam*.
10. Virginie Johan, "An Account of the Epical Aspect of Dramaturgy and Acting in Aṅgulīyāṅkam Kūttu," 2006, to be published in the *Bulletin d'Études Indiennes*. The diagram is also accessible in Johan's dissertation.
11. My discussion of the *ākāṅkṣa* mode fits well with Johan's stress on the dramatic technique of "stopping time" as a major feature of this tradition: see her dissertation (note 2 above).
12. Act and verse numbers refer to the Sanskrit text of the *Āścarya-cūḍāmaṇi*: Clifford Reis Jones, *The Wondrous Crest-Jewel in Performance* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984).
13. K. P. Narayana Pisharoti, *Āścarya-cūḍāmaṇi* (Trichur: Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademy, 1988), p. 208.
14. The Vāmana episode belongs only to the Ammanūr rendition of *Aṅgulīyâṅkam*; it is missing from the Pisharoti *āṭṭaprakāram*, which seems to follow the Kidaṅṅūr performance tradition (Pisharoti brought the text he published from Iriṅṅālakkūṭa).
15. Pisharoti, *Āścarya-cūḍāmaṇi*, p. 265 and p. 287.
16. Yigal Bronner, private communication: It makes you want to say, "Would you mind repeating that sentence (that has taken 3 days to complete)?"
17. V. Narayana Rao and D. Shulman, *A Poem at the Right Moment: Remembered Verses from Pre-Modern South India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 159–68.
18. As noted by Sivan Goren: there is a sudden depth and seriousness, very different from what came immediately before.
19. My thanks to Sarah Zweig, August 2012.
20. I refer the reader to Einat Baron's thoughtful paper on Kūṭiyāṭṭam, "The World of Hanuman the Monkey, Creating a Cosmos on a Kerala *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* Stage" (in press).
21. Thanks to Misha Shulman.
22. Baron, "The World of Hanuman the Monkey."
23. Private communication, August 2012.
24. Private communication, August 2012. See Virginie Johan's dissertation on the critical distinction between actor and character.
25. Private communication, August 2012.
26. See discussion in K. G. Paulose, *Kūṭiyāṭṭam Theatre: The Earliest Living Tradition* (Tripunithura: D C Books, 2006), p. 144.
27. My thanks to Veenapani Chawla of Adisakti for articulating this idea clearly.
28. See Tammy Klein, "When Imagination and Sign Meet: The Birth of a New Poetics in Kudiyattam. A Study of *Tapatī-Saṃvaraṇam*" (MA thesis, Hebrew University, 2009).
29. My thanks to Arshia Sattar.

30. We witnessed a full performance of *Matta-vilāsam* in Killimangalam in August 2011 (Painkulam Rama Chakyar playing the Kāpālin).
31. My thanks to Orly Naveh.
32. Margi Madhu in response to Don Handelman. "The movement is not really outside."
33. My thanks to Maayan Nidbach.
34. Hanuman performs verse 6.7 (*nakhodagrau pādau*) thrice, breaking off before the final two words (*pariṇata-śaśāṅkâkṛti mukham*); when he then recites the verse in full silently to himself, with his face hidden by his hands, to the accompaniment of the drums (*kŏttoṭu kūṭi cŏlli kaḻiccu*), this brings the *nirvahaṇam* to a close.
35. On the complex dynamics of giving the ring, see Virginie Johan's dissertation.
36. I owe this remark to G. Indu.
37. Thus Sarah Zweig.
38. With thanks to Yigal Bronner for discussions in Muzhikkulam.
39. Personal communication, Muzhikkulam, September 4, 2011.
40. Personal communication, Muzhikkulam, August 28, 2013.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baron, Einat, "The World of Hanuman the Monkey, Creating a Cosmos on a Kerala *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* Stage." (2012) In press.

Johan, Virginie, "Du « je » au jeu de l'acteur : Ethnoscénologie du Kūṭiyāṭṭam, théâtre épique indien," Thèse de PhD, Institut d'Études Thèâtrales, Université de Paris 3, 2014.

Johan, Virginie, "An Account of the Epical Aspect of Dramaturgy and Acting in *Aṅgulīyāṅkam Kūttu*." To appear in *Bulletin d'Études Indiennes*.

Klein, Tammy, "When Imagination and Sign Meet: The Birth of a New Poetics in Kudiyattam. A Study of *Tapatī-Saṃvaraṇam*." MA thesis (in Hebrew), Hebrew University, 2009.

Kulaśekhara Varman's Subhadrādhanañjayam. Edited by N. P. Unni. Delhi: NAG, 1987.

Narayana Rao, V. and D. Shulman, *A Poem at the Right Moment: Remembered Verses from Pre-Modern South India*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Paulose, K. G. *Kūṭiyāṭṭam Theatre: The Earliest Living Tradition*. Tripunithura: DC Books, 2006.

Paulose, K. G. *Naṭâṅkuśa, A Critique on Dramaturgy*.Tripunithura: Government Sanskrit College, 1993.

Paulose, K. G. *Vyaṅgyavyākhyā, The Aesthetics of Dhvani in Theatre*. New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, 2013.

Pisharoti, K. P. Narayana. *Āścarya-cūḍāmaṇi*. Trichur: Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademy, 1988.

Śaktibhadra. *Āścarya-cūḍāmaṇi*. in *The Wondrous Crest-Jewel in Performance*, ed. Clifford Reis Jones. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Tieken, Hermann. "The So-Called Trivandrum Plays Attributed to Bhāsa," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 37 (1993), pp. 5–44.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Realizing the Body in Movement: Gestures of Freedom in the Dance Aesthetics of Rabindranath Tagore and Kumar Shahani

RIMLI BHATTACHARYA

I. REALIZATION

I.1. Introduction

My chapter brings together two figures who are not contemporaries, and whose métier and matter are quite disparate, both seeking to explore "the contemporary" in their respective art practices.

I have chosen to focus on new realizations of the dancing body in their reconfiguration of the heterogeneous and cumulative aesthetics of the Indian subcontinent alongside what may be called a selective eclecticism.

An intense critical curiosity to explore "unfamiliar" traditions and a rigorous rethinking of their own artistic materials make for sharp breaks and unexpected continuities. The essay then rests on several such moments, with the desire to abstract arcs of material practices in time and space, both within and outside of the Indian subcontinent.

I use the verb "to realize" and "realization," drawing on their multiple meanings, namely, to understand, become aware, find fruition or discover one's inner resources. In French, the director is called the "réalisateur," one who realizes all the diverse elements and materials into sound and image on film. (It should be evident why one may be silent about realism here.)

The experiments with the nonlaboring body in Rabindranath Tagore's āshram school (and later, university) is traced through the early decades of the twentieth century as a colonized people seek to find strategies and forms of self-determination.

Dance has been integral to Shahani's films from the 1970s to the 1990s. *Chār Adhyay* (Four Chapters) (1997), made to commemorate fifty years of India's independence, has a more explicit link, based as it is on Tagore's last novella of the same name. The novella was completed in Kandy (Sri Lanka) in 1934, in the midst of a frenetic dance tour of the island led by the 73-year-old poet.

Working thus, at quite distinct historical conjunctions, poet, writer, painter, dramaturge, and educationist, Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) and filmmaker and writer, Kumar Shahani (b. 1940), have striven to eschew any essentialist understanding of "Indian aesthetics" or indeed of any singular "Indian aesthetic of dance."

Glimpses of multiple and interpenetrative *dhārā*s (streams or flows) in their aesthetics of dance may be found in the condensed passages that follow. There is no explicit reference to the exhausted investment in (and subsequent disenchantment with) the national/modern paradigm, though questions about modernity animate the direction of my quest.

I.2. Some Categories and Questions

Normative expositions of "*The* Indian Aesthetic of Dance" (emphasis mine) assume, if not claim, certain exclusive characteristics. Some of these we may put into question.

> A world view which regards the cosmic process as a dance . . . a rhythmic interplay of eternity and flux . . . Man . . . is in ceaseless dialogue with [nature]. There is no attempt to conquer it.
>
> (Kapila Vatsyayan, p. 165)

In the section on utsava *(ecological-festive)*, I shall propose that we have to articulate the emerging aesthetics by moving beyond such binaries of nature and culture: the Santiniketan–Sriniketan axis is in fact marked out as that nurturing site of relentless experimentation and mobility within and without. Of technological developments being selectively deployed to regenerate land, animals, and plant life. Of acknowledging a deep divide that precludes possibility of subsistence, of any desire to dialogue.

Besides, do not the epics *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata* provide enough scenarios of conquest, conflict, and destruction of nature? However, what commentators have found distinctive, particularly in the *Mahābhārata,* is the primacy of the *shānta rasa* through the intertwined narratives of slaughter and violence. It is precisely the possibilities inherent in the inharmonious or the apparently negative expressions of the *navarasas*—as a composite—that would compel us to rethink "traditional aesthetics" from our own locational contexts.

> The abstract principles of speculative thought are concretised in ritual performance of particular duration in consecrated space: the two are mutually complementary.
>
> (Vatsyayan, p. 166)

How can we theorize the relationship between thought, material practice, and *performative* contexts? How might new "rituals" be brought into being into spaces that human celebration will consecrate? Are these to be called art practices, stripped of all associations with former genealogies of the sacred, of the ritual inscribed in caste, gender, and so on?

Khelā, literally meaning play in Bangla, as a signature motif in Rabindranath's poetry celebrates the spirit of play, that is, against an identifiable teleological goal or any instrumentalist use that will render the body exclusively into a disciplined tool meant to perform specific and overarching productive functions. *Khelā* is not merely privileging the playful, the pleasurably childlike often accidental discovery (or conversely, the ironic comment), but following its own logic may be charged with a passionate energy that yields strange /unexpected dividends (Bhattacharya, 2012, p. 128).

Khelā extends into *līlā*, usually translated as "divine play" and crucial to Vaishnava aesthetics as well as other philosophical traditions. Divinity itself is conceptualized as playful, its manifestations taking on both recognizably formal tropes such as of the *rās-līlā,* or in varied intimate vignettes of passion between lover and beloved, played by the maestro of Odissi dance, Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra (d. 2004) in two of Shahani's films.

If play is at the heart of existence, can the erotic be far behind? And what of eros and the nation? A nation that is coming into being through different modes of participatory struggles, in which men and women are both to play a part?

Śṛňgāra is usually acknowledged to be the most superior of all the *rasas*. Are all its tropes outworn? When do abstracted codes of meaning-making through disciplinary techniques of the body—from limbs to micro muscles of the eyebrow—constituting *abhinaya* lose relevance? Or, cease to function as a language?

Many of the dance-dramas (*nritya-nāṭyas)* that flowered in the last decades of Tagore's life are reworked texts from the Buddhist *jātakas*. The urge to overturn the regulations on sexuality, juxtapose contraries, find humorous, even satiric, expression in other dance texts such as *Tāsher Desh* (The Kingdom of Cards).

"The performance of the *yagna* demands full community participation" leading to a desired equilibrium.

Aesthetics become central to imagining the self in a newly conceptualized community, in participation that is not mass mobilization, or as pure spectacle to be consumed without intellection.

Central too, is the recovery of femininity that is an alternative paradigm to the worship of the nation as mother, the embodiment of Shakti. And so, the crucial importance for Tagore of a category such as śrī in which beauty, grace, and plenitude combine: the girls/women's hostel is called Śrī Bhavana, and so is that contiguous area named Sriniketan (where Śrī abides), purchased and set aside for animal husbandry, arts and crafts, agricultural experimentation, health, and social welfare. The restoration of the feminine in the decades of anxiety about the colonized emasculated body, is further sutured through the praxis of *sevā*, dedicated or loving service. *Sevā*, *śṛňgāra*, and *śrī* are not mutually exclusive.

And finally, to touch upon that first treatise of the arts of performance, the *NāṭyaŚāstra* in which dance is one of many arts, the totality of which in judicious tastefulness and proportion would yield just the right state of joy or bliss that is arrived at through the senses and the intellect but eventually surpasses both— *ānanda*.

I would like to allude to the various inflections of the key category *ānanda* in a historical continuum, covering much of the British colonial period, in which the female performer dancing in public is considered an outrage and a moral blot. The male dancer who is upper-caste and does not labor for a living is a travesty.

II. EROS, WORK, AND DANCE

II.1. Aesthetics in Time

A barren though not uninhabited land of reddish earth is transformed over decades into spaces, open and sometimes enclosed, where boys and girls, men and women may dance and sing to the seasons, in and out of season.

Sometimes, they travel with their guru, who is poet, singer, composer, painter, and choreographer—already iconized as a sage and an eastern mystic. They perform in the neighboring metropolis of colonial Calcutta, on hired proscenium stages as well as in the courtyards and performance spaces of the sprawling ancestral mansion of their Gurudev, Rabindranath Tagore.

Criss-crossing metropoles and small towns across the subcontinent, crossing the ocean to their southern neighbor Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), they raise funds with their dance-dramas for the ever-hungry cash-strapped educational institution—that university of the universe, Visva-Bharati.

Their *nritya-nāṭya* is perceived as a harbinger of a new controversial modernity; yet, contemporary critics often lack the language to speak either of these new performance idioms or of their own experience as spectators.

A synoptic history of the 1920s and 1930s would necessarily touch upon these experiments in education, the struggle for self-realization of a colonized people, the engendering of new performance idioms and contexts.

We might begin with the word "dance": this is not the dancing body and its movement alone. Dance weaves its enchantment in rhythm (*chhanda*) with melody poetry, dramatic composition, architecture ritual and, nature. Evoking a range of emotions that are tempered and tempering—*rasa.*

It would be absurd to posit an unchanging continuity in "Indian aesthetics" and to claim its "essential quality" when, in every instance, a fresh equilibrium has to be arrived at with each of these components.

Any set of beliefs, ways of seeing, codes of representation that constitute a tradition can be only transmitted or translated through contestation and change. Even the "eternal" cycle of seasons collide with clock time, with the examination calendar and other formulae and the imperatives of public life.

One can no more dance in the same way. The rupture brings into being a new lexicon of movement of the body, of the lens of the eye, and of the camera. New

"rituals" may be initiated, even if the intent is toward opening up the process of initiation. In order that there might be ever-expanding circles of those who can savor traditions that have *necessarily* been mediated, played with a new creative energy. The past is not denied or cast off.

Smitten by the wondrous spectacle of dance and music during his visit to Java and Bali in 1927, Rabindranath is simultaneously wary of the past being frozen, of people having to carry its ghostly burden on their shoulders, and not being free to innovate and find new resonances to their lived experiences (Bhattacharya, 2012, p. 128).

Tagore's concern with how best to engage with the splendors of tradition and the realization that it can never be re-played or replicated comes from an insight that is borne out in a much later article by a recent historian. A. G. Hopkins alerts us to the efforts of the Dutch to "preserve" the culture of Bali, *after* large-scale violence in colonizing the islands (2002, pp. 225–27).

II.2. Initiating New Publics

Can the *rasika* (discerning spectator) be found in the new and larger sense of audiences for a ticketed performance? Among the spectators rushing to Santiniketan and of performances on the proscenium stage in new places. Fundraising tours. How would people accept these ticketed offerings? Are they too exclusively language based? Is there a universal language of *bhāva*, spirit of being? A prefatory note to *Shapmochan* goes:

> I am requested to give our audience some idea of the story upon which the musical play to be performed tonight is based. Let me confess that the story is immaterial, it can be ignored with impunity. I ask my audience not to distract their attention by seeking meaning which belongs to the alien kingdom of language; but keep their minds passive in order to be able to receive an immediate impression of the whole, to capture the spirit of art which reveals itself in the rhythm of movements, in the lyric of colour, form and sound, and refuse[s] to be defend[ed] or described by words. (May 12, 1934, Rabindranath Tagore) (Ghose, BS 1390, p. 132)

Alternatively, is there a certain urban national elite/intelligentsia with a pan-Indian sensibility that is being molded through the aesthetics of these dance-dramas?

We know that they were not happening in isolation; it is a period of revival and reconstruction of what are now recognized as "classical" dances.

Ritual performances are held in consecrated space and demands participation. Tagore draws on this element but gives it a different turn, with a replenishment of the spirit that restores a femininity, grace, and beauty to everyday acts, including labor. (In thinking about the ploughing festival, *Halakarshana*, we remember for instance that he had sent his son and son-in-law not to Oxbridge to study the arts but to study agriculture in Illinois, United States.)

Creating an initiated community in Santiniketan–Sriniketan, but also initiating the anonymous audience through the tours, which were not entirely for raising funds.

But Tagore also introduced an additional element to the process of participation; we see this from as early as *Phālgunī* (1916).

Further, by choosing to create and play certain roles that illuminated the sense of play (*khelā*), of the *rasika* who is marginal (imbued with the divine madness of the s*ufi* or the mystic *baul*) in many of these performance pieces, sometimes even dancing the role, he foregrounded the traditional basis of aesthetic pleasure in which the work of art is contemplated by the artist creator *and* the discerning viewer.

II.3. Education, Environment, and the Arts

As is well known, Santiniketan was born out of the *jātiya vidyālaya* or the national school movement in which Tagore and, in the early years, the charismatic Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861–1907), played a central role. Initially envisaged and started as a *brahmachāryāshrama* only for boys in 1901—son Rathindranath being one of the first five students, the scope and vision of Santiniketan gradually expanded to bring in girls as students. The provision for teaching girls from 1908 onward was discontinued for some time and their formal inclusion took place only in 1922 with a "women's section" (*Nāri-vibhāga*). Meanwhile of course, the daughters of teachers and other workers continued to be taught in the school.

The school was set up in the land and around the Santiniketan āshram, which was founded by his father Maharshi Debendranath in 1863 as a retreat for urban Brahmo householders.[1] As several conditions of the original title deeds indicate, Debendranath at no time intended the āshram to be cut off from the local communities. However, the nature of "the retreat" was to evolve in unexpected directions, often directly and always implicitly linked to the local, regional, subcontinental, moving outward from colonial India.

The collective search for an abstract indigenous alternative education was tempered by the varied experiences of Tagore's own life. The cosmopolitan milieu of the family home in Calcutta along with the strong *swadeshi* strand of business and artistic pursuits by various members of his extended family constituted a primary strand. Other more fruitful and individual impulses derive from his unhappy experiences of school life and his later sojourn as the zamindar in charge of the family estates of Silaida by the river Padma. The first-hand experience of rural life and of being a father and pedagogue to his own children comes alive not only in the primers that evolved over decades, but in other intangible ways. The belief that the child or a young person will work best, absorb most deeply and pleasurably when the body is allowed to find its own rhythm in the outdoors, in stillness and in movement, was put into untrammeled practice in Santiniketan.

Tagore may have initially conceptualized the school as a "forest retreat," but at least two major innovations gave a completely new material shape over decades to this concept. First, he sought to make learning a continuous process of absorption and discovery, through the creation of radically new primers for students, the open-air lessons, making exploration and observation as part of the natural science classes, and, by linking education and the arts with village reconstruction work. I would like to emphasize that this last aspect —which I refer to as the Santiniketan-Sriniketan axis, is critical in defining Tagore's contribution to performance arts.

Secondly, and more remarkably, was the increasing emphasis given to sports, dance, and physical activities for both boys and girls/women (the terms *balika* and *mahila* are used interchangeably in accounts of this period). These contributed toward a larger "experiment" with learning that often went against the grain of contemporary political atmosphere (Das Gupta, 1998, p. 12). The opening up of a *gurukula* model to a modern experimental kind of co-education came at a price. I do not only mean the often hostile responses of parents regarding the education being imparted to their wards. One may ask: Was Santiniketan doomed to be an artificial world in a colonial economy in which a rarefied notion of "culture" was "acted out"?

The strong emphasis on rural reconstruction and a fairly austere lifestyle, rich in the arts and in centers of learning on the one hand, and the continuous flow of talented and learned visitors from India and abroad for residencies, on the other, do not indicate an isolated world. The practice of linking art and craft, science and technology (particularly in Sriniketan) marks both a return to the indigenous as well as underlining the freedom in drawing on art and technological practices from elsewhere in the world. In the specific instance of dance practices, a former dancer Sukriti Chakravarty reminds her modern readers that costumes and make-up were designed with the build and features of the individual dancer in mind, as much as the nuances of the particular role s/he was playing.[2]

Nonetheless, one *could* argue that an element of playacting persists—of Tagore acting out his dream of an embodied Indian femininity in art and life, in all that a new India had to "offer" to the West and imbibe from the east and all those regions under the umbrella term the "Far East." Not since the displacement of courtly culture in the subcontinent and until the advent of the all-powerful theater director in the West, has a single figure exercised so much control over artistic composition, from conception through various phases of production, *and* publication, including successive transformations of the text in material and form. The cynical might be forgiven if they saw in Rabindranath a latter-day Wajid Ali Shah with his *gopinis* enacting the *Rahas* in Lucknow, or after the British takeover of Awadh, in the exile of Matiāburuj, Calcutta.[3] The comparison is not all that far-fetched: Sumitendra Tagore tells us that when he first ventured to express his desire to become a student at the Santiniketan school, grandfather Abanindranath scotched it by referring to Santiniketan as "Robika's *nava* [novueau]-Vrindavan"! (BS 1410, p. 1). Abanindra was nothing if not ironic; the nephew participated in and contributed with great élan to the theatricals and performances conceived by his uncle. Some of the most vibrant glimpses of the production details, elements of improvisation and the overall effect of Rabindranath's compositions emerge from Abanindranath's memoirs. The witty reference is not to be tossed away either: Tagore was muse, poet, choreographer, and a formidable stage presence, all in one. He was the presiding deity of Santiniketan: "*pujoniyo (respected) Gurudev*" is the most frequent term of reference in the *Santiniketan* magazine. Collaboration did figure in numerous ways, but Rabindranath was the prima donna.

Exclusive as Tagore's Santiniketan was terms of "authorship," there was a particular form of democratization taking place. In the *nritya-nāṭya* performances

in particular, unlike a traditional royal court, Tagore strongly believed that he was *offering* something precious to *all* of his countrymen, as in he rather imperiously wrote to Gandhi in the context of fundraising.[4] The responses to the Simhala tour available in the form of letters preserved in the Rabindra-Bhavana Archives suggest that the chords were subcontinental (Bhattacharya, 2012). For, it was not only the play or the dance drama that was on show; the young men and women themselves also embodied a philosophy of *vidyā* (knowledge, enlightenment). They represented a younger generation gesturing toward the possibilities of a new India, which encapsulated the liberation of the body as well. This possibility has to be seen against the sharp binaries emerging in the course of gentrification in colonial Bengal, of what came to epitomize *bhadralok* culture.

There is a fundamental rethinking of time *and* space in respect to the individual in the praxis of performance in Santiniketan-Sriniketan. The possibility of creating organic, fluid spaces, free from fear and servility, marks the democratic intent of performance praxis here. An aspiration of freedom of mobility for both sexes is critical to this vision of a civil society that is not entirely stripped of symbolic significance.

I shall suggest in the next section the exigencies of performance as participation, rather than representation. My effort is to re-view this very arduous and more often than not frustrating *process* as the site of a struggle for a new understanding of the body, finding a form in the utsava. The utsava then, is celebrated in actual movement, uncovering new relations to space and time, color and material, sound and gesture, food and sensibility that is, to Nature!. The difficulty, if not impossibility, was to transmute this potentially liberatory space of the utsava to the exigencies of the institution, and further, to the ticketed performance of the subcontinental cultural tours.

II.4. Utsava, the Festive in the Everyday

The training in music and dances, which was given since the days of the Santiniketan school, did not follow any syllabus fixed by ordinances and examinations; it was based on the needs of various functions and festivals.[5]

"Happiness is outmoded: uneconomic. For its idea, sexual unification, is the opposite of being at loose ends, namely ecstatic tension, just as that of all subjugated labor is disastrous tension."[6]

The breaking down of the conventions of the proscenium stage was in part initiated by artists such as Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, and Mukul Dey. A organic kind of reconfiguration was taking place in the very notion of participation. Santiniketan was to be distinguished by the prevalence of utsava (from the Sanskrit word meaning celebratory festival) comprising songs, performance, and dance and recitation, interlinked with changing seasons and marking every occasion as special. Utsavas had long been a part of the Brahmo calendar, the most important one being that of Maghotsav on Magh 11 (January 26), commemorating Debendranath Tagore's initiation to Brahmoism.

By and large these were solemn affairs in which *upāsanā* (sermon) and singing, both individual and choral, were primary components. There is a distinct shift in the

way Tagore draws on his Brahmo heritage even as he fashions and recontextualizes utsavas in Santiniketan.

Performance space was naturally extended outdoors in conjunction with trees—individually, and in mango groves or avenues of *shāl*; the landscape comprising the *bundh,* the *khoai*, and water bodies; a particular building, its environs; and the time of the day, the seasonal, and ritual calendar. The human body inscribes temporal dimensions into space in song and dance, as in the *baitālik*, when boys and girls wound their way through the habitat singing at dawn and in the evening—moving voices finding listeners in unlit paths.

The final list of festivals is long. Final, because the school did not start off with a fixed "calendar" of celebrations; many were added through the years, some celebrated annually and others intermittently. Thus we have Navavarsha, Varsamangal (heralding the rains), Dharmachakraparavartan (Buddhist), Vriksharopana (tree planting), Halakarshana (ploughing), Silpotsava (for the arts), Pous-utsava and Pous-mela, Christotsava, Maghotsava, Vasantutsava (heralding spring), Varshasesh (end of rains), and so on.

For Vasantutsava—the spring festival that would become "brand Santiniketan"—girls wore *vasanti* (yellow) colored saris with *palash* flowers tucked behind their ears (like the local Santal women?), and danced their way to the mango grove in "garba style"—a community dance from Gujarat. Immediately apparent is the hybridity of performance, of re-fashioning traditional ritual to the needs of what I shall provisionally call, a pan-Indian secular space.

There are several perspectives on the emergence and significance of utsavas. Attempting to categorize Tagore's corpus of songs, Shubho Guha-Thakurta foregrounds the seasons (*ritu*) and their relation to the utsavas as the re-creation of an "ancient āshram tradition." He cites Tagore in maintaining that the "revival" of this practice from 1908 onward was a means of countering the "*bichhed*" or separation/severance from the world of nature and of community that had taken place; implicitly linking this to wounds of a Western scientism, colonization, and modernity (pp. 117, 119).

Tagore's own gloss on one of his early festival-plays, *Śāradotsava* (1908): "When with the coming of every season the earth wears new colours . . . there is an invitation to our hearts, and if our hearts do not sing out, we become alienated (*bichhinno)* from the whole world . . . It is in order to do away with that separation that we have accepted and affirmed within us here at the ashram the festival of seasons in nature."[7]

Scholars have drawn our attention to the death of his youngest child Sami and the return to the utsava as an affirmation of life. When an intense personal loss is played out in a communal event of celebration, a new public space is being created, distinct from the memorial meetings (*shok-sabhā*) in which Tagore was an active participant.

The significance of the utsava may be summed up thus: first, its impact on building a community where there would be no mutually exclusive role of spectator and participant; secondly, in the cultivation of individual sensibility ("*hridoye rang*") in response to the changing moods of nature. Thirdly, the celebration of love between

man and woman in songs, almost as primeval bhava, thus legitimizing a space for the erotic, not confined only within the frame of conjugality, as in songs such as "*aj dhaner khete raudro chayaye luko-churir khela re bhai, luko-churir khela*" with its metaphor of hide and seek, in *Śāradotsava,* which is sung by the all-boy cast. Movement—sung, imaged, and embodied, along with music, and other arts would then constitute *both* natural and artistic activities.

There is a conscious attempt to make this creative melding of various strains of celebration (in dance idioms from different parts of India and particularly of Southeast Asia) distinctively "Santiniketani," where every one is a potential participant and no inmate a "mere" spectator.[8]

The interesting question would be, how would one *write* about these experiments in "aesthetic movement"?

Contemporary editorials on these utsavas in *Prabāsī* by Ramananda Chatterjee aim at "objective" distancing. They are in the nature of continuous detailed *reporting*, indicating that they are *historically* important and therefore worthy of documentation. In effect, utsavas are seen to constitute *more* than the sum of the "every day" of the āshram. The editorials have another explicit aim: to inform (and educate) the general public. Chatterjee takes on the task of interpreter of "translating," almost in the manner of an ethnographer, what might appear as the arcane or obscure elements of the innovations in Santiniketan: as in extensive pieces from the late 1920s: "Visva-Bharatite varsha-utsava" (Festival of the Rains at Visva-Bharati),[9] or, "Santiniketane varshamangal" (Varshamangal in Santiniketan), in which *vriksaropana* or the planting of saplings is described at length.

Chatterjee comments that festivals in Santiniketan are not "lifeless" rituals; it is the environment that allows for a different kind of engagement with the seasons. "From the college hostel (boys'), accompanied by music and song in a procession, an *amlaki* sapling decorated on a plate of flowers in a little palanquin with a festive umbrella held over it, is brought to the front of Śrī Bhavana [the girls/women's hostel]. It is planted there. Boys and girls sing before it, and Pandit Sri Bidhushekhar Shastri chants Sanskrit shlokas appropriate to the occasion." One could read more into this bare account: an entirely new configuration of participants, movement and space is taking place in the familiar locations of the everyday. He goes on: "In the late evening, a round of recitation, vocal and instrumental music was performed in the open space of Uttarayan around the poet's home, and two little girls sang a song, *swaying their limbs* to the music (emphasis mine)."[10] This diffidence in reporting on dance occurs intermittently, noted even in this piece written as late as the 1930s.

Another editorial about "Halakarshana" or the Ploughing Festival is an account of prizes given to farmers for the best bull and for farming. All five Santal villages within the land for the Krishi-vibhāga (agricultural unit) of Visva-Bharati participated in the utsava. There are reports on various efforts at schooling. The particular utsava includes within its wider ambit what, in contemporary terminology, would be called "developmental work" of various kinds.

How did Tagore himself elaborate on his concept of utsava? A series of short pieces most of which were read out or delivered as sermons (*upadesa*) and subsequently written up and published from the early years of setting up the boys' school could

be read as thought-in-progress.[11] Some of the seminal ideas that recur in these pieces: Tagore takes his cue from the natural world around us where every day is a celebration, of joyous awakening manifested. When we "come upon" (not "create" he emphasizes) an utsava, the celebration is through "circles of inclusion," extending beyond one's immediate family or friends, of a religious community *or even national boundaries* (e.g., beyond the Brahmo Samaj, or "even" Bharatvarsha) ("Navayuger Utsava," p. 596). The sharing and coming together (*milan*) is through a reflective process of looking inward. This involves realizing the potential of humanity within oneself and finding new energy to take on newer and greater responsibilities and to endure more. This ethic of work is meant neither to be oppressive, disciplinary, and alien; nor is it linked to any discernable or quantifiable profit. Although special days are marked out as days of utsava and embedded in the seasonal calendar, one has to *prepare oneself* to make of *every day* an utsava. For, the utsava is that which is surplus, in excess—beyond mere need or for selfish purposes. And this brimming or spilling over is *ānanda*.

As this bald summary suggests, it is through a redeployment of *ānanda* in experiential terms in the praxis of the daily life, that Tagore was seeking to move out of the usual formulation of entertainment *versus* education, or leisure *versus* labor, as it was also distinct from other articulated agendas for nation-building. At the same time, Tagore is aware that the practice of this philosophy did require a somewhat sequestered and nurturing environment. Santiniketan becomes a name and local habitation to the ideal of a school originally modeled on "ancient Indian culture." This had been more in the nature of a retreat or at least, a preparatory space for entry into the "world." If this new ideal of education had to succeed, it had to be different from the straitjacket of colonial education internalized by most middle-class Bengalis. Above all, by decidedly not wishing to "worship nationalism as the greatest good or god," no readymade program or curriculum could be put in practice. Inevitably therefore, there is an element of conscious and selective experimentation. Tagore is aware that this experience cannot be replicated and that it has to be one of a kind. That one would in effect have to create the space to sustain individuation and spontaneity along with community participation. That it could not fall into binaries of "Orient" and "Occident." This sentiment is also evident in his letter to Uday Shankar dated March 25, 1933, that I have cited elsewhere (Bhattacharya, pp. 122–23).

The need under colonial conditions for a "return" to earlier forms of communality, to mobilize and mingle with a large mass of people, is of course not new: one is reminded of the very name "Hindu Mela" in the 1860s. But the end of the century saw later forms of mass mobilization, notably through the Ganesha utsavas by Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1893. Brahmabandhab Upadhaya's fiery articles in *Sandhya* at the turn of the twentieth century satirized the formal space of "meetings," which, in his view, deracinated Indians have exchanged for the communitarian fluidity of the *mela* (In Ray, 1950, pp. 8–9).

Upadhaya stressed on the political need to explicate to the "*sādhāron*" or the general public (through the reading public) the symbolic significance of apparently casual/"idolatrous" acts of celebration, taking the *rath-utsava* as an example. In

Tagore's praxis as we have glimpsed so far, he chooses primarily to work with children/younger people in unfolding the multiple dimensions of utsava in the sensory dimensions of the everyday. More importantly, these children would not be confined any more to those from the House of Tagores. This decisive shift was to cause much anguish among the members of his extended family.[12] Their critiques allow us to locate within the apparently personal, the inflections invested in the category utsava in the early decades of the century. Unfettered from its Brahmo Samaj moorings, and transformed in every way through Tagore's own engagement with the world through his travels, writings, friendships, and visitors, the utsava marks the intent of a broader participatory space.

Coming back to the Santiniketan-Sriniketan axis: an elaboration of the āshram/*bāhir* complex surfaces in the magazine *Santiniketan* (1919–26). Although started just after the First World War, there is little about its aftermath as refracted in the life of the āshram. However, stray comments can be telling. Professor Sylvain Levi, while taking leave from Santiniketan, refers to the retreat the āshram had offered, away from the impact of the war, of modernity, in Europe (Mitra, *Santiniketan*, p. 90). Rathindranath Tagore's diary jottings on their European tour of 1920–21 refers explicitly to what his father's poetry and lectures, his very presence might have meant to war-ravaged Europe, both western and eastern (p. 167). For non-European colonized peoples, the 1920s and the 1930s may be seen as a kind of cusp where war-weary fratricidal west might even seek to collaborate with subject peoples with something like shared aspirations. The latter in turn, had to seek out new paths of "regeneration," without being tied down to a burdensome, if not oppressive past. The task was to also come to terms with modernity on one's own terms. In every sense therefore, the space of the āshram was to be one of experimentation and exploration. Implicit in the magazine is an urge to historicize the everyday, granting significance to the daily round of activities that are never to become a mere schedule. To me, this thrust is in the spirit of the utsava, which Tagore elaborates in several of his essays and which he seeks to weave into the rhythm of the āshram's everyday life.

Both ceremony and ritual are central to the utsava, but the praxis and the spirit of the festive is to emerge from a collective and not an isolated life. Rather, the fruitful tension between āshram and bāhir is fueled by *a constant mobility*, not only of Tagore himself, but a host of visiting scholars, of volunteers from different parts of the country and abroad, of students arriving singly or in groups to learn a range of skills, as well as a series of individuals who could be called the simply curious. Faculty and students regularly set off for field trips and would also be sent to other places in India and abroad to learn and teach, as in Santidev Ghose's travels to Kerala, Manipur, and later Java to learn dancing. Tagore's own traveling includes visits to various parts of India, and the long extended tours to various continents. In an unusually ebullient letter written to Kalidas Nag on his hopes for a meaningful exchange he writes, "I would like Visva-Bharati to be totally at one with the heart of Visva-Bharat. It is no more in a corner of Bolpur—but has set off on its travels—on a chariot festival. I had not hoped for so much; for Gandhi with his sanyasi's blanket had wanted to cover [up] Bharatvarsha against the world" (Tagore, *Chithipatra*, p. 290).

I believe this question of mobility, movement, and location is central to what Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati *hoped* to achieve. In effect, Santiniketan-Sriniketan was to be an environment that would bring into being a new citizen-subject (although that term is mine)—the individual who will be able to think of "home" in many ways. One notes for example, the importance given to hospitality: nurturing is inculcated in the little boys, the first learners of the āshram. This preamble about the creative tension between location and mobility, the āshram and the *bāhir*, is then critical in conceptualizing the performance spaces of the everyday, as well as later staged performances in other conventional locations.

In addition to a regular curriculum of sports, there are innumerable rounds of *sabhas*, in almost all of which music song and dance by a large number of adults and children predominate. A conscious movement on Tagore's part to move away from the larger public spaces—the streets, the halls, the squares of meetings, and demonstrations that emerged dramatically in the *swadeshi* era? (Or indeed, in more organized spectacles of the Russian revolution and the Soviet era.) Even as various strands of nationalist movements—Noncooperation, Quit India among others—drew strength from the mobilization of students, women, and various others, hitherto marginalized groups, in these very public spaces.

The environment—natural and architectural—is also in a constant state of evolution. (Tagore's interaction and correspondence with Patrick Geddes is instructive in this regard.) The erstwhile barren plains over the years acquire new gardens, avenues of trees, and so on, just as buildings, both *kutccha* and *pukka*, sensible and whimsical, keep getting added. Some burn down, others are pulled down and are rebuilt with new functions and forms in mind . . . while the *khoai* unbounds these clusters of human activity. Students, teachers, and visitors move from one habitus to another; the environs of the entire community are in a fluid state, at least for some decades. A fluidity not entirely dictated by lack of funds. Inherent is a search for newer forms in a dynamic ever-changing environment. In a letter of 1939 written to his granddaughter, Nandini (aka Pupé), Tagore mocks himself and his feudal-comprador ancestors: "Now the babu only *changes his mind*, his whim is only to change homes."[13]

The larger question is, how may alternative institutions sustain themselves without state funding? How are donations to be solicited? Who will carry the *bhikshār jhuli,* the begging bowl, from door to door? Who has the authority to raise funds on behalf of an institution, especially if they are to be raised through the arts? Especially, through the nritya-nātya in which men and women dance together, publicly. It is at best a moot point whether one may thus separate the cultural from the political.

To what extent then was Tagore successful in offering the utsava as a resolution to the usual binaries between the personal and professional, the religious and the secular, the high and low, work and leisure? Or, in overcoming hierarchies of caste, gender, religion, and age? Is the utsava mere nostalgia, an invention of a certain past, and a turning back on technology and industrialization? In what ways might it be understood as an affirmation of the body in movement?

By way of a limited response possible here, I would like to return to the everyday. All over the subcontinent, the seasons have given form, color, and shape to human

experience and to expressive forms in music, painting, performance, and verse. An integration of our emotional and spiritual worlds, have emerged from the material contexts and economies of cultivation, migration, and longing. Not only are they a major constituent in the aesthetics of court poetry, most memorably in Kalidasa, they are affirmed as well in the *padāvali* and other bhakti traditions. They are central to that humbler pan-Indian form of the *bārāhmāsi /baromashyo*, and so on, as well as to more specific North Indian forms such as *chaiti*, *hori*, and *kajri*. There is something else in the Santiniketan-Sriniketan space that also marks a rupture from these "timeless" forms.

Tagore unfolds a new sense of time that is not merely in reaction to industrial time or the "objectivization of time based on economic calculations." Besides a new understanding of "school" time, a more fundamental epistemic shift may be noted. Sibaji Bandyopadhyay has alerted us to the dialectic of the good and the bad, the industrious and the lazy, surfacing in literature and textbooks written for children in Bangla through the colonial period. In the activities encouraged and promoted in Santiniketan-Sriniketan we may mark a shift from printed text to praxis. Performance allows for other undiscovered and more daring dimensions of learning. Work and fun with a great degree of self-regulation, stretches into rehearsals into moonlit nights, opening up the "literary salon" for the very young, and all those desirous of learning. These potentially fluid and innovative practices oppose, sometimes persuasively and sometimes as command, the restrictions of "examination time." One may sense in this extensive reworking of participation and movement, in the large-scale experiment with rhythm color motion and variations of the aural—the return of the erotic and of motion to the workaday.

Nevertheless, the fragile nature of this project is apparent even at the time when the utsavas are at their flourishing best. Passes to attend these celebrations and ceremonies became highly prized by a primarily metropolitan Calcutta audience, sometimes leading to near riots. However, the breakdown is apparent during Tagore's lifetime. For example, Santidev Ghose is forced to change the choreography of the "procession nach" to accommodate ever-increasing crowds to the Dol-utsava. The solemn invocations of the ritual threaten to reify in the figure of "the Poet" as when Uday Shankar's visits to "Mahatmaji and Poet Tagore" are reported by the Bengali press: "The majestic figure of the Poet sitting in the centre, his brother in the group behind, the girls dressed in simple and beautiful costumes on one side, the scent of flowers all round, and the whole gathering solemnly chanting hymns and prayers—all this was a feast of art, the most wonderful thing that had come in his experience. 'It reminded me,' he said, 'of the glory and majesty of the days of the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata.'"[14] In other words, the utsava becomes a *re-play* of (imagined) puranic grandeur. The possibility of a practice that creates new meaning for a contemporary self is all but erased.

Much of the outward forms of utsava, not to mention the name itself, would be embraced by independent India, down to our own unabashedly liberal celebration of free flowing global capital in myriad packages of festivals.

III. THE *JOUISSANCE* OF DANCE

III.1. Movement and the Moving Image

> But if a shadow at a certain moment can suggest so much more than the actual gestures and words of men and women in a state of fear, it seems plain that the cinema has within its grasp innumerable symbols for emotions that have so far failed to find expression.
> Yet if so much of our thinking and feeling is connected with seeing, some residue of visual emotion which is of no use either to painter or to poet may still await the cinema.
> When some momentary assembly of colour, sound, movement, suggests that here is a scene waiting, a new art to be transfixed.
>
> (Woolf, 1926, pp. 3–5)

> The main component of the moving image is . . . the beauty and charm . . . of scenic progression . . . Why should not the progression of scenes be able to independently elicit *rasa*? This does not happen because of the lack of true creators/artists, and the ignorance of the lazy public. Since they do not have the capability to savour the delights of *rasa*, they indulge themselves in getting intoxicated and drown themselves in amazement.
>
> (Tagore, 1927)

> Abhinaya had to make him [Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra] appear going beyond the sense of performance into that of all pervading joy—the ever-changing bhavas had to be present in all our equipment, in front of it, as in every operational detail.
>
> (Shahani, 1995, p. 318)

Almost a century ago, Rabindranath Tagore and Virginia Woolf critique the cinema's slavish falling back on literature; both sensing in cinema—the youngest of the arts, a technology that will bring about a new art, yet to find its potential.

How to access or simulate the living materiality of performance, is one of the most recurrent questions about dance; how to write about dance? Many see the cinema as a means to "record" or "document" this most ephemeral of art forms. Yet, cinema (film and its more recent avatars) is equally ephemeral in the momentary conjunction or "assemblage" of color, movement(s), sound that the camera and other operational devices works with. In privileging that to-be-found movement, cinema and dance move beyond the telos of mere recording. They become a medium to forge a new aesthetics.

I end with a subjective notation of the artistic practice of a contemporary filmmaker who *resists* making dance practice solely an object of knowledge.

III.2. Vyānjanā, Gestures of Freedom

> Although *śṛṅgāra* or the erotic is only one of the nine major aesthetic *rasa*-s (relishable juices/genre-s) in classical Indian aesthetics, in Rupa Goswami's philosophy of Art, *śṛṅgāra* of different kinds is the source of all other art-emotions.
>
> (N. P. Bhaduri)

> During the shooting of *Bhāvāntarana*, when Kelu-babu (Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra) looked up the notes of the Gosain who had taught him, he said that *śṛṅgāra* is the basis of all the *rasas*, like a *shadja*. And what is *śṛṅgāra*? It begins with self-awareness and moves to discover the other—the opposite of the Narcissus myth.
>
> (Conversation with Kumar Shahani, January 24, 2014)

Chār Adhyay is difficult to "read" at first. Many viewings later, the gesture remains as a primary code of freedom that the protagonists aspire to. *Vyānjanā*—meaning that which is obliquely suggested, only evoked, is a key concept in Sanskrit poetics. It is also the chosen expressive form of the poet protagonist Atin—in his gesture of continuing with the "cause" long after he is disillusioned. Tagore draws our attention to *vyānjanā* in the slight, but wordy novella on which the film is based.

The choreographed sequences of Ela and Atin walking, talking, and looking away and askance lead dance to another dimension. (Aspirations shared by Pina Bausch in her choreography.) It might have been a stage-like space—the almost open terrace, bounded by the low walls eroding, against incomparable blues and many-hued skies, the jostling foliage of the palm tops—transforming the space into an island adrift in a sea of matricide.

In an earlier film, the tautened pulsating muscles of the right arm of the man (the carver-sculptor who will at best be recognized as the anonymous artisan) hewing the rock, takes up much of the screen space in the opening sequence of *Bhāvāntarana*. And the sculptor puts his foot on the stone as he transforms it with the corporeality of his muscles, chipping and striking out eyes from yet another kind of vision that lies in his hands, his grip.

Sitting out on the sands by Konark, the filmmaker had inquired of the dancer Kelu-babu how he responds to *prakriti*, the sea, the wind blowing, exchanges inspiring the *pallavi* by the seashore in which the waves, the tide, the sea and sky, the garment and the body emerge in glimpses that not only delight for that moment of perfection, but allows the viewer-listener-philosopher to extend the "choreography" to other spaces beyond the particular scenography.

During the research for *Bamboo Flute* comes the realization: the self is not only the body but is breath itself—*praāṇ*. The flute is crafted to the individual player's breath. Here, the flautist Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia carrying in his breath, the lineages of Annapoorna Devi and her father.

In the film, the dance to the *khayālnuma* (a composition of the mystic poet Rumi, sung by the late Pandit Jal Balporia) pulsates in the ancient capital of Champaner ruled at various times by both Muslim and Hindu monarchs. Like the Persian

bandish itself—the flute piercing the heart in pain and ecstasy—the lightness of the dancer breathing life into the cream-gold stones named after the golden *champā* flower, opening up vistas through the *mihrāb*-like frames of the windows or the camera sweeping up to the mystery and solemnity of the dome from within, unites celebration and suffering, in a sense transcending both.

The complex condensation of this sequence is made possible by an elaborate slew of shots—mostly *combined movements* in pan and zoom, numerous trolley shots, including the tilt-up trolley to the dome.

The slight presence of the female dancer here is unlike the period piece of popular cinema, just as the fort (and mosque within it) and indeed the entire complex of "monuments" resist being drawn into functioning as "setting" or "backdrop." Not appearing any more in the subsequent frames, to quote from Paul Valery, "she celebrat[es] all the mysteries of absence and presence" (*Dance and the Soul*). I understand that this sequence was not rehearsed; the dancer, Anandi Ramachandran with whom the director has worked in quite different ways in this and other films, had the freedom to choreograph her movements, her abhināya.

How then may we speak of this new relationship among the song, the dance, and the spaces brought into being through the camera movements in relation to the dancer, who "disappears" but whose presence is more than a trace in the camera movements that follow? The essence of the cinematographic image.

How does a filmmaker conceptualize and realize a new idiom of "representation," which foregrounds visual and aural pleasure to engage the viewer/listener in actively forging a highly individualized "reflective experience"? One which does not preclude an exploration of abstract historical configurations, moving into referents that can only emerge from the individual unconscious. In which pain is not made invisible.

"[D]arkness or a nocturnal state does not necessarily entail an absence of visibility" (Brubaker, p. 253). In *Bamboo Flute*, the primary touch is of the lips and of the fingers in rhythmic intervals to the pierced bamboo, itself an instrument brought to life with breath—*prāṇa*.

There is the touch of the Rāthwa shaman's fingers on the wall paintings celebrating Indra, wielder of thunderbolts; of the mother picking up the bird cage and the infant on her hips; the little girl playing hopscotch on the marks she has drawn on the ground, and the fisherman weaving his net, of the young woman bathing, washing, and touching and cleaning herself (the movement of her arms bringing in a glimpse of underarm hair that the Censor Board found so offensive). And there is the darkness of the womb . . . the groans of the childbirth.

For the filmmaker, discussions with Shyam Goswami inspires not just the mechanics of movement. The temple figures of the Vallabhachārya *sampradāya* shape the filming process in intangible ways.

In *Bamboo Flute* the arm extension resonates quite differently from the shots of Kelu-babu dancing in the earlier film, *Bhāvāntarana*. One wonders: it is not simply that the arm is *never* extended in a straight line (horizontal or oblique or whatever, but nevertheless straight), as in much of classical ballet and as well as in modern dances that have gone against ballet. The arms of the solo dancer working in synchronization seem to have a life of their own in their supple tautness, but also

in relation to the body and the face which do not hide age, or the vulnerability of the always dancing body to age and imminent death.

There is no close-up. But the camera while focusing on the torso for much of the time initiates the viewer's attention simultaneously to the part and the whole—the crook of the arm, the turn of the wrist, the separation of the fingers, or the coming together of tips barely touching, or only momentarily. A ripple-like effect that is not quite fragmentation, but suggestive of gestural parts always engaged in minute and fluid interplay. Which create a particular *rasa*, the secret of the best *layakāri*. *Tribhanga*— the three angles of the torso, the knee, and the neck also create *layakāri* between themselves.

The last shot, the day's end, at land's end, at life's end . . . land meeting sea in a promontory-like garden of a private mansion. Even the maestro Kelu-babu was nervous before the shooting began: the music was a homage to an ancestor, Alladudin Khan Saheb. The garden of bananas and palms and other natural and indigenous plants and trees densely planted, so ingeniously. The 180 degrees of sea and sky changing colors, of breeze that cannot hush those seductive colors. Not Kalidasa's āshram—this, and certainly no *āshram-kanya* in sight. The bald man . . . who is he, surely not the eternal dancer, not the proud Varahavatar of the stone relief in the temple we have scrolled up earlier, beneath whose legs move a powerful swirl of snake and human figure. Kelu-babu's vulnerability yields a different strength, his many-hued dark skin glowing like the silver waistband and the golden white of the dhoti.

Bhāvāntarana (which Shahani translates as "Immanence") suggesting both the change of emotions as well as the transformation through/in dance of the body, not in a unidirectional way, but into evoking the image—(Woolf's "visual emotion")—of the male dancer as the *nayikā* Rādha, herself experiencing and expressing a range of emotive states (*bhāva*s) in her love for Kṛsna.

In a seminar inspired by *Bhāvāntarana* held at Bhopal, all the six great dance forms of the subcontinent were presented. Whereas other dancers spoke of identifying themselves *either* with Radha *or* Krishna, Kelu-babu said, "I do not identify with either, I dedicate my dance to Narayani and that is how she comes first. Because the performer dedicates herself to the universalizing principle, she acquires premiership and *purusha deha* gets movement."

It is worth stating what Shahani does *not* attempt. He does not offer what is often termed a docu-dance; there is no explicatory commentary; nor is he interested in "recording" dance as an "objective event" mediated through pure technology, if indeed there be such a thing. The apparatus is to set the dancer free.

NOTES

1. Rabindranath Tagore, *Āshramer rup-o-bikash* (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1967), pp. 24–26, 52–54, p. 47. And finally, to make "education intimately associated with the life of the people . . . if ever a truly Indian school is established it must from the very beginning implement its acquired knowledge of economics, of agriculture, of health and all other *everyday sciences* in the surrounding villages" (emphasis mine). U. Das Gupta, *Santiniketan and Sriniketan* (1983) (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1998), p. 13.

2. See also Santidev Ghose, *Visva-Bharatir Nandanik Bikashe Nandalal Basu o Surendranath Kar* (BS 1390) (Calcutta: Subaranarekha, reprint 1414), pp. 24–25.
3. Rosie Llewellyn Jones, *The Last King in India: Wajid Ali Shah, 1822–1887* (Gurgaon: Random House India, 2014).
4. See for example, *The Mahatma and the Poet: Letters and debates between Gandhi and Tagore 1915–1941*. Compiled and Edited by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (1997). Delhi: National Book Trust, 2005, pp. 190–91.
5. Santidev Ghose, "The Place of Dance, Drama and Music in Gurudev Rabindranath's System of Comprehensive Education," in *Music and Dance* (New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1978), p. 54.
6. Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, Part 3, Section 139 (1946/47). Available at: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1951/mm/ch03.htm (accessed on October 3, 2010).
7. Rabindranath Tagore, "Bhitorer Katha," first published in *Santiniketan Patra*, Aswin-Kartik, BS 1326 (Reprinted in Notes to *Saradutsava*, *Rabindra Rachanabali*, Vol. 4), pp. 745–48.
8. See W. W. Pearson's account of the 1916 performance cited in Santidev Ghose, *Music and Dance in Rabindranath Tagore's Education Philosophy* (New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1978), pp. 39–41.
9. R. Chatterjee, "Visva-Bharatite varsha-utsav," *Prabasi*, ed. Bose, Somendranath. *Samayik Patre Rabindra Prasanga: Prabasi (BS 1308–48)* Calcutta: Tagore Research Institute, 1976, pp. 147–53.
10. R. Chatterjee, "Santiniketane varshamangal," *Prabasi*, ed. Bose, Somendranath. *Samayik Patre Rabindra Prasanga: Prabasi (BS 1308–48)*. Calcutta: Tagore Research Institute, 1976, pp. 174–75.
11. Rabindranath Tagore, "Santiniketan: 7 Poushutsav" (BS 1315), in *Rabindra Rachanabali* (BS 1395), vol. 7, pp. 549–50; "Utsavsesh" (9 Poush BS 1315) (in Section on Dharma), in *Rabindra Rachanabali* (BS 1395), vol. 7, pp. 555–56; "Navayuger Utsav," (Magh 11, BS 1315) in *Rabindra Rachanabali* (BS 1395), vol. 7, pp. 596–601; "Ashram" (7 Poush BS 1316) (from *Santiniketan*) in *Rabindra Rachanabali* (BS 1395), vol. 7, pp.; "Utsava" (BS 1312) (in Section on Dharma) in *Rabindra Rachanabali*, (BS 1395), vol. 7, pp. 449–52; "Utsaver Din" (Magh BS 1311) in *Rabindra Rachanabali* (BS 1395), vol. 7, pp. 485–90.
12. For a poignant response see niece Sarala Devi's memoirs, *Jibaner Jharapata*, Chapter 10 titled "Utsava." Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, *Jibaner Jharapata*. Calcutta: Subarnarekha, Reprint 2007.
13. Letter to his granddaughter "Pupe-didi" dated June 7, 1939, in Nandini Devi, *Pita—Putri* (Calcutta: Ananda, 1989), p. 32.
14. Acc. 118, Image 57, Rabindra-Bhavana Archives, Santiniketan.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ambalal, A., *Krishna as Shrinathji: Rajasthani Paintings from Nathdwara*. Ahmedabad: Bookwise and Mapin, Reprint 1995.

Bamboo Flute, Film directed by Kumar Shahani (Hindi and Tamil), 35mm, Feature, 1999.

Banerjee, M., *Aural Films, Oral Cultures: Essays on Cinema from the Early Sound Era*. Calcutta: Jadavpur University Press, 2012.

Bhattacharya, R., "My Indian Kinsman . . . " or, the Serendipity of the Archive," *Sangeet Natak Akademi Journal*, 46.1–4 (2012), pp. 121–56.

Bhāvāntarana, Film directed by Kumar Shahani (Oriya), 35mm, Feature-Documentary, 1991.

Brubaker, D., "Care for the Flesh: Gilligan, Merleau Ponty, and Corporeal Styles," in *Feminist Interpretations of Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Dorothea Olkowski and Gail Weiss. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006, pp. 229–56.

Chaki Sircar, M., "Tagore and Modernisation of Indian Dance," in *Rasa: The Indian Performing Arts in the Last Twenty-Five Years*, Volume 1: Music and Dance, ed. S. Kothari. Calcutta: Anamika Kala Sangam Research and Publications, 1995, pp. 243–54.

Chār Adhyay. Film directed by Kumar Shahani (Hindi and Bangla), 35mm, Feature, 1997.

Das Gupta, U. (1983), *Santiniketan and Sriniketan*. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1998.

Duncan, I., (1927) *My Life*. London: Sphere Books, 1969.

Ghose, S., (BS 1390) *Gurudev Rabindranath o Adhunik Bharatiya Nritya*. Gurudev Rabindranath and Modern Indian Dance. Kolkata: Ananda, Baisakh, Reprint BS 1414.

Ghose, S., *Visva-Bharatir Nandanik Bikashe Nandalal Basu o Surendranath Kar*. Calcutta: Subaranarekha. Reprint BS Baisakh 1410.

Guha-Thakurata, S., (BS 1359) *Rabindrasangeeter Dhara*. Calcutta: Dakshini, Reprint 1962.

Hopkins, A. G., "Globalization with and without Empires: From Bali to Labrador," in *Globalization in World History*, ed. A. G. Hopkins. London: Pimlico, 2002, pp. 230–42.

Kapur, G., *When Was Modernism: Essays in Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*. New Delhi: Tulika, 2000 (2nd Reprint 2007).

Mitra, S., *Santiniketan. Samayikpatre Rabindraprasanga: BS 1326 Baisakh-Kartik 1333*. Calcutta: Tagore Research Institute, 1980.

Shahani, K., "Immanence," in *Rasa: The Indian Performing Arts in the Last Twenty-five Years*. Volume 1: Music and Dance, ed. S. Kothari. Calcutta: Anamika Kala Sangam Research and Publications 1995, pp. 315–18.

Stewart, Nigel, "Dancing the Face of Place. Environmental Dance and Eco-Phenomenology," *Performance Research* 15.4 (2010), pp. 32–39.

Tagore, R., *Ashramer rup-o-bikash*. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1967.

Tagore, R., Letter to Kalidas Nag, 14, (in Bangla), Trivankur (Travancore), November 14, 1922, In *Chithipatra*, Volume 12. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1986.

Tagore, R., Notes to *Saradutsava*, *Rabindra Rachanabali*, Volume 4. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, BS 1392, pp. 745–48.

Tagore, R., (BS 1373) *Pitri Smriti*. Calcutta: Jignasa, Reprint BS 1387.

Tagore, S., (BS 1410) *Santiniketan Chena Achena*. Calcutta: Mitra & Ghosh.

Upadhyay, B., "Rath Jatra," *Sandhya*, in *Bangalir Pujaparban*, ed. Amarendranath Ray. Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1950.

Vatsyayan, K., "Indian Aesthetics of Dance." Available at: *www.indologica.com/volumes/vol23. . ./vol23–24_art12*_VATSYAYAN.

Woolf, V., "The Cinema", in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Volume IV (1925–1928)*, ed. Andrew McNeillie. London: The Hogarth Press, 1994, pp. 348–354. (First published in 1926 in two versions, one version as "The Cinema" in the journals Arts [June], and Nation and Athenaeum [July], and another slightly edited version as "The Movies and Reality" in New Republic [August]).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Aesthetical Paradox of the Hermit's Hut

KAZI KHALEED ASHRAF

Hermits and ascetics have famously played a leading role, down the ages, in developing various strands of philosophical thinking in India. Rabindranath Tagore went to the extent of finding the origin of Indian civilization in the forest. Robert Thurman goes further, beyond India, and describes the enlightened ascetic as "the summit of human evolution."[1] Yet the dwelling places of these glorified figures remain in an under-theorized shadow. In a sense, quite understandably so. After all these are people who have left their homes. Why should their homes be the subject of a philosophy of architecture? With such huts characterizing reductiveness and plainness and constituting only a phantasmal presence in the intellectual theater, a conceptual and aesthetical elaboration seems like a dubious prospect.

Buildings belonging to hermits and ascetics have existed since the first human walked from home to reconfigure his relationship to the world and transform himself. Since then, these simple structures—huts, hovels, shacks, and other reductive forms—have played a critical yet paradoxical role in cultural imagination. Notwithstanding its image of plainness and sparseness, the hermit's or ascetic hut is implicated in the development of iconic and monumental architecture, from intricate Hindu temples to elaborate Buddhist structures. More critically, and far less discussed, the *idea* of the hermit's hut embodies a deeper strata of the ascetic discourse.

At the same time, despite its ubiquitous presence in the literary, mythological, and socio-geographical landscape of India, the hermit's hut is considered a nondescript structure unworthy of inquiry or objectivity. The essay investigates how a hut belonging to the hermit/ascetic in fact structures an elaborate world of theoretical and visual narratives, and forms the basis of an aporetic aesthetics.

It is perhaps predictable that such a plain structure does not easily lend to a conceptual framing and aesthetical figuration. The theoretical dilemma is this: With attributes of "insignificance" that adhere to the huts, what can be the grounds for an aesthetical understanding? How can the diminutive structure serving as a destination for hermits and ascetics, and representing all things abandoned, constitute an aesthetical program? Can one trace in that structure of "constructed poverty," as such structures were described by the modernist German architect Bruno Taut, an edifice of elaboration?[2] Will that not constitute a contradiction?

To talk about the aesthetics of an artifact that remains largely invisible, and at best dissolved, in most mainstream discourses is to bring to the fore the enigmatic relationship between architecture and asceticism. If architecture is to be considered as an operation of building up and elaboration, and asceticism as a practice involving renunciation and reduction, it might appear that the two are not only distinctive categories but distinctively different, even antithetical in their purpose and practice.

I have argued that the ascetic hut, despite its appearance as an ordinary event, is an *otherwise*;[3] it consistently presents a polysemy, a source of proliferated representations and interpretations. Anticipating that the hut unfurls a dense topic despite its elemental appearance, we can expect that, whenever it is represented or narrated, it is part of a larger plot in a didactic narrative, discourse of aesthetics, or landscape of imagination. To discuss the hermit's hut is to be drawn into the nexus of architecture and asceticism for that seemingly ordinary structure is an emblem of ascetic practices, doctrines, and philosophies, as well as its complexities.

I. ENTERING THE BUDDHA'S HOUSE

A visit to the Buddha's house is a good point of entry for a narrative of the diminutive hut (Figures 13.1 and 13.2).

Gandhakuṭī, or the fragrant hut, is the name given to the dwelling that the Buddha lived in when he used to visit the Jetavana *āśrama* in Sravasti. Representations of that hut—representation is a sign of an aesthetical project—made few centuries after the passing away of the Buddha, show a sort of nondescript buildings not much different than ordinary structures that may have been found in rural areas. It was also a time when lavish palaces and elaborate mansions were built as well, the kind of architecture the Buddha may have enjoyed in his life as Prince Gautama Siddhartha in Kapilavastu.

Although Siddhartha, since his enlightenment, has been represented "housed" in various architectural or quasi-architectural situations, from being under trees and floral canopies, and inside caves and pavilion structures, the fragrant huts from Jetavana, as represented in the well-known reliefs from Bharhut and Sanci from the third-century BCE (there is also visual evidence from Mathura and Kanganhalli), are perhaps the clearest depiction of a residential form.

Reliefs from Barhut and Sanci show the huts as refined constructions in thatch roof on wattle and mud walls (figure 13.3). Two shapes for the plain huts are shown, one as square or circular with a domical roof, and another as oblong with a vaulted roof. Already in this earliest depiction of a hut-form, the entrance doorway is rendered in an elaborate way predicating the shape that will be known as the *caitya*. The *caitya*, with its horse-shoe shape, peaking at the top of the arch will come to have a closer association with the Buddha, or more correctly, his physiognomy, in a more visually precise sense.

Built or imagined at a time when asceticism had acquired a doctrinal foundation, the *gandhakuṭī* presents an array of thoughts on the dwelling. The house makes



FIGURE 13.1: The Buddha Figure Inside a Shrine Structure, Gandhāra. Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Missouri, Columbia.



FIGURE 13.2: The Buddha in a Trefoil Arch, Gandhāra, Second to Third Centuries BCE, Ingholt, *Gandhāran Art in Pakistan*.

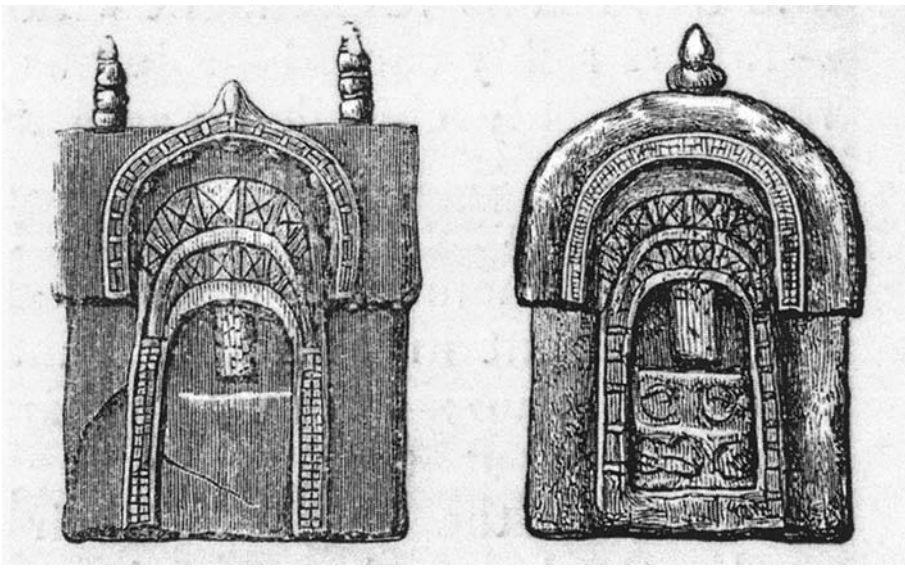


FIGURE 13.3: The Two *Gandhakuṭī*s at Jetavana, from Bhārhut, c. Third to First Centuries BCE, Drawing Based on an Image in Fergusson and Burgess, *Cave Temples of India*.

diverse appearance in Buddhist discourse, from the pragmatics of shelter to didactic and symbolic formations. As the Buddha's house, the *gandhakuṭī* serves as a metonym for reflecting on the scope and limits of the renunciation of the home-world, and the ritual and existential dimensions of asceticism. Most importantly, the plain structure becomes a mirror of the ascetic body creating a homologous condition whereby a metaphysical understanding of the suprahuman figure will be attributed to the building. All of these would be challenges for Buddhist artists and sculptors struggling to provide a visual precision and aesthetical coherence to a hut-structure with its attributes related to an arch-ascetic as a dweller.

With the Buddha as an arch-ascetic or *mahasamana*, the *gandhakuṭī* falls under the kind of architecture that can be described as belonging to the hermit or ascetic. The Buddha's house is a directed and aesthetically refined articulation of a dwelling type that dotted the Indian landscape since and before the time of the Buddha, that is, huts belonging to the hermit or the ascetic. Such huts, described as a *paṇṇasala* or *kuṭī*, are assigned lodging or space for forest-dwellers or renunciants from the early Vedic period to the doctrinal period of the fifth-century BCE (Figures 13.4 and 13.5). From the third-century BCE, visual and literary representations start giving attention to various types of ascetics including the Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Ajivika. The *paṇṇasala* or *kuṭī* represented a simple, independent structure constructed out of forest materials such as large leaves or woven reeds that served the dwelling needs of the hermit-ascetic.

There were also more radical practice of ascetic dwelling space that challenged the normative sense of enclosure and occupation. Living under a tree, for example, was a sanctioned practice in almost all forms of asceticism but received a more codified treatment in early Buddhism. The *paccekabuddha* ascetics, an earlier type of Buddhist practitioners, were allowed to live in a solitary manner in forest environments, living in a rigorous manner under a tree. Such ascetics would begin their practice by a ritual declaration: "I refuse a roof."

While extreme practices such as the *dhutaṇga* lasted for a while, the question of the dwelling gravitated more around the plain hut-like form. It is in the architectural framework of the hut that a conceptualized pairing of the dweller and dwelling takes place, and it is in that intertwining that the signification of the hut emerges and proliferates. What this implies is that a discussion of the ascetic dwelling cannot be conducted without an inquiry into the nature of the dweller even if there is a quandary about interpreting that relationship especially when the dweller—the hermit—himself is generally silent about it.

II. THE ASCETIC DWELLER

Asceticism and renunciation constitute a twined concept, in which asceticism presupposes a renunciatory condition leading to a logical sequence of events: first, the abandonment of social and familial circumstances accompanied by the annulment of ritualized social conditioning; second, the adoption of a life of *striving*, which is conveyed by the Greek term *ascesis*, and from which the term "ascetic" is

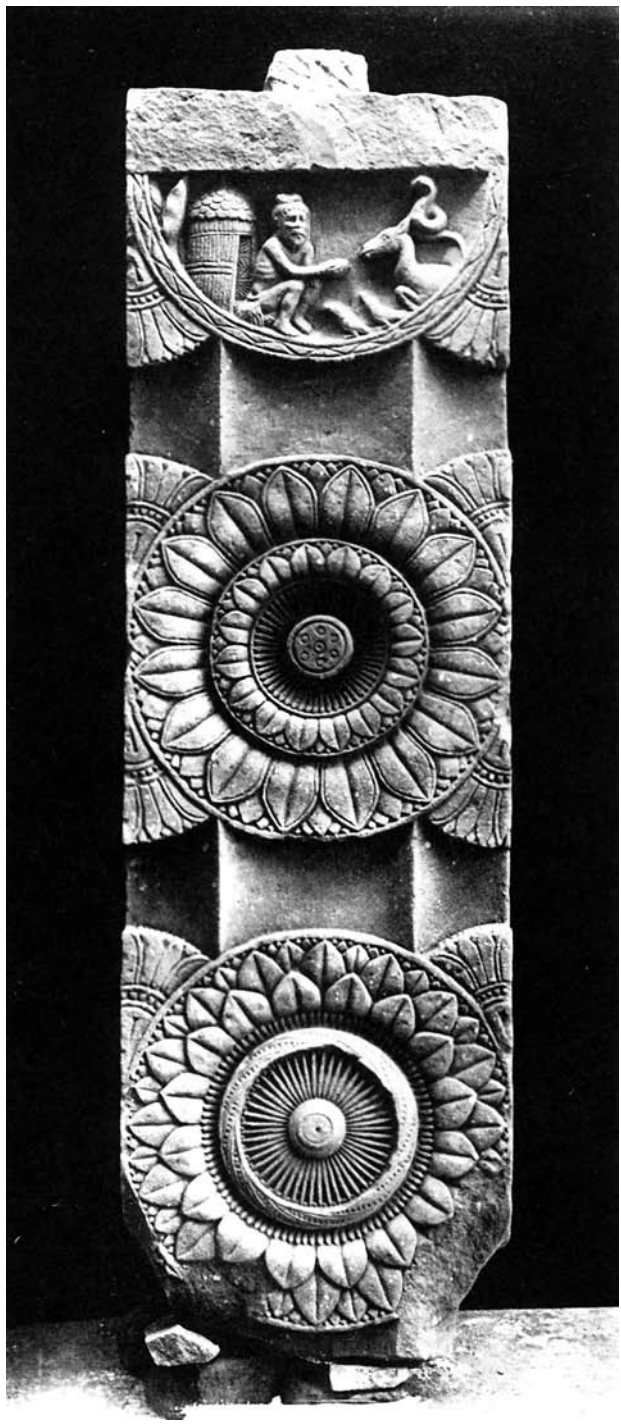


FIGURE 13.4: A Brahmanic Hermit in Front of His Hut in a Forest Setting, Mathurā, J. Ph. Vogel, *La Sculpture de Mathurâ*.



FIGURE 13.5: The Buddha Visiting a Brahmanic Ascetic Seated in a Woven Hut, Gandhāra, Ingholt, *Gandhāran Art in Pakistan*.

derived, or *labor* that is carried in the Sanskrit term *śrama*, an older Indic notion that characterized the career of an ascetic or sage. Both imply a set of rigorous psycho-physiological practices carried out in order to induce the transformation of the self, which is the core of all ascetic striving.

The term hermit also implicates a history of heterotopic existence: a "hermit," from the Greek *eremia*, desert (*eremos*, desolate), is an *eremite* (living in a desert), while in Sanskrit a *vānaprasthi* is literally a forest-dweller, the significance always pointing to a site of discontent. The hermit might have received his charismatic characterization from the social significance of the forest, but after that, his peripatetic nature carries that property wherever he is relocated.[4] When the hermit/ascetic resorts back to the city or human settlement, it is not that the heterotopic condition is nullified for the hermit then embodies and represents a portable heterotopia, and his dwelling, wherever it occurs, a micro-heterotopia.

The laypeople considered the ascetic as possessing extraordinary powers, a capacity derived not from a divine gift, mythic imagination or supernatural force; the extraordinariness of the ascetic is an actuality, a human possibility that such a personality as the Buddha has actually actualized. The emphasis is unmistakably

on the humanity of the ascetic, and the extreme distance he can go with it; this is his *inhumanism*, so to speak, to be human, and to use human potentiality to arrive at the farthest reach of his species to discover what it means to be a human in a nonconditional or essential way. And the human way to reach that shore is through the thoughtful, rational faculty.

The extraordinariness of the ascetic unfolds, slowly and cumulatively, by taking the ordinary and the putative to its natural limits, often paradoxically to a kind of unnatural degree or state. Mircea Eliade describes how yogins in order to achieve the extra-human condition of being a "perfected" ascetic aspires through their rigorous practices to bring to a stillness the normative and natural conditions of breathing and movement. The codification of such a practice is in mastering the dynamically virtuosos but otherwise static, seated posture of *āsana* that Eliade describes as "transcending the human condition." Raimundo Panikkar describes such a condition, an essential prerogative of the ascetic-monastic intention, as "suprahumanum," equivalent to reaching the summit of human evolution.

It is then not surprising that Buddhist and other Indian texts will describe the perfected ascetic as a *mahāpuruṣa*, a superman, an extra-special human being, even perhaps an "in-human." The later appellation was also used in a converse sense as when ascetics who had renounced the fire and sacrificial rituals of the Vedic universe were deemed to be ungodly and have joined the company of *āsuras*.

I stress the term "in-human" to describe the perfected ascetic not so much as someone who has fallen from the grace of humanity but who, adopting the artifice of primitivism, such as extreme methods of breathing and posture or the adoption of crude buildings that are not conducive for general humanity, pushes the human condition beyond the normative limits.

When considering the hut or dwelling of the ascetic, ascetic traditions will indicate that it has been made notable by its dweller because he is a figure of distinctive characteristics, a personality of "transhuman magnificence." It is from the idea of the "in-humanity" of the ascetic that the dwelling or the elemental shelter is propelled as a complex idea. The issue of the ascetic dwelling is not so much about the pragmatics of shelter, which it fundamentally is, but about the conundrum of the ethics and goals of renunciation.

With the idea of the Buddha as a super-ascetic, augmented by Buddhist discourse, the pairing of the dweller and his dwelling constituted a kind of "noble paradigm:"[5] the holy or enlightened human living in the wilderness or fringe of settlements and representing a potency and spirituality that is god-like (Figures 13.6 and 13.7). The hermit's hut, proposes Michael Meister, is a special kind of shelter because of the sheltered hermit-ascetic, a figure who represents a recognized spiritual potentiality; it is because of that the hut is humanized in a way that cosmological sacred monuments of early India were not.[6]

Beginning in the second-century BCE, and conventionalized by the eighth century CE, the pairing of the dweller and the dwelling constitutes a distinctive idea that is far more complex and richly nuanced than the business of shelters. Innumerable images, especially in miniature paintings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries show the pairing usually in a forested landscape often with kings and princes, and often



FIGURE 13.6: A Yogi in Front of His Hut with Various Utensils, Mughal Miniature Painting, Chester Beatty Library.



FIGURE 13.7: The Mughal Emperor Akbar Visiting the Ascetic Baba Bilas, Mughal Miniature Painting, Chester Beatty Library.

gods, paying homage to the venerable man of the wilderness. It is the occupancy of the hut by its special dweller that elevates it to a valorized structure.

Beginning from a plain shelter for renegades and renunciants, the hermit's hut develops into an idea. It is in the context of the hut as an idea, with its provenance in an ascetic milieu, that an architectural and aesthetical measure is sought.

The idea of the hermit's hut was first valorized in morphological terms when the simple forest structure was transformed into a shrine-type by the modulation of the roof into a "double-dome." Historians such as Alfred Foucher and Ananda Coomaraswamy have argued that there is an unequivocal transformation in which the simple shape of a forest hut with a leaf-roof evolved into a "double-domed" structure through a deliberate reduplication of the roofing element.[7]

Brahmanical and early Buddhist temples have evolved morphologically from an elementary hut-like form or they continue to be hut-like in carrying on the idea of a shelter for a spiritual being. The particular morphological feature is noted in the tierification of the temple spire, often terminating, as in the Shore Temple in Mahabalipuram, in a clear hut-form. What Foucher and Coomaraswamy identified was the ascetic provenance of the temple in the hut-like form. In short, the elaborate Brahmanical and Buddhist temples that emerged from the eighth century onward developed genealogically and morphologically from the hermit's hut.

The basic strategy of duplication and tierification would be deployed in a more elaborate manner to configure the complex superstructure of Hindu temples. Early Buddhist architecture adopted a similar practice in erecting its honorific structures. A representation from Gandhara shows the enshrining of a stupa in which the main structure is conceived of as a leaf-covered dome and cornice form with a *caitya* archway. A shrine depicted in the Gangavatarana relief in Mahabalipuram—an early representation of Hindu shrines—is shown with its roof split horizontally and expanded into a cornice above which rises a domed roof in the manner of a *paṇṇasala*.

III. THE IDEA OF THE HUT

The hermit's or the ascetic hut is a distinctive type in a broader family of what has been described as imagined or ideated huts. The idea of that hut-type, whose common character is the elemental or primitive nature of the architectural physiognomy, appears in a number of conceptual categories such as the "first," originary, or archetypal. The elemental hut, whether actual, fictional, or ideational, is at the center of the ascetical narrative in architecture.

Such inconsequential structures also constitute the ontological basis of architectural thoughts. As a highly charged emblem in the thinking and making of architecture, the iconography of the hut as an elementary structure has a pervasive presence in human imagination. Joseph Rykwert, in his masterful study of architectural artifice,[8] argues that the hut is far less about architecture as a formal and tectonic matter than about the impulse to construct a microcosm for the anthropological purposes of habitation. The hut becomes a site for, and the instrument of an ineradicable longing of the human to be *at home*.

Much of that discourse invokes the idea of a "first" house, that prehistorical or mythical object of inquiry and imagination. If the hut is the ideogram of home, the ascetic hut exposes a more vulnerable and cantankerous relationship with the home-front. The ascetic by attempting to overcome the desire for home only enters deeper into the matter and complicates the idea of the hut.

The lack of discussion of the phantasmal presence of something like a hermit's hut in the ideology and production of what came to be known as modern architecture suggests that either the hut has little to do with the ideology of that grand movement or it has been sublimated in its narratival fabric.

Among the major modern architects, Le Corbusier had been involved directly with the monastic tradition. His design for the Dominican Monastery in Sainte-Marie de la Tourette near Lyon in 1953 speaks strongly about the neighborliness that exists between the language of modern architecture and the aesthetics of asceticism. Le Corbusier did not have to reinvent himself for the ascetic task at Le Tourette; his own vision of a modern architecture came closest to the twin programs that have defined asceticism: "poverty" and "reduction." It translated at Le Tourette into lucid, logical forms in rough-hewn surfaces.

Le Corbusier's contact with the monastic tradition is deep-rooted and goes back not only to his travels through Italy, Greece, and Turkey in 1907–11 and visiting monasteries, but also to his family roots to the Cathars, the thirteenth-century heretics suppressed by the Catholics. The Carthusian Priory in Galuzzo near Florence, also known as the Charterhouse of Ema, and Le Thoronet in France fascinated Le Corbusier and informed the formation of his architectural inventions. What appealed to Le Corbusier was the spatial matrix of the monastery: the cellular spaces with their minimal spatial and functional requirements and the clustering of the cells and other collective spaces in a self-contained community. In the designs of Le Corbusier, the monastic matrix became the basis of modern mass housing projects.

While the fully formed monastery represents a collective dwelling, it is in essence an ensemble of cells—"living cells." On the one hand, the "living cells" are the actual units of the larger organism, the monastery, and on the other hand, the "living cells" embody an irreducible intimacy between the individual monk and his space of habitation that created the locus of the dwelling. A primary character in the various housing projects by Le Corbusier is the configuration of the room within an ascetic aesthetic. While Le Corbusier shared with his other modernist colleagues in promoting a sparse spatiality, his interiors were particularly austere, and becoming from the 1940s increasingly primitivist through the deliberate application of *beton brut* and naked baked brick. In certain drawings, Corbusier presented human figures populating that space who were engaged in a kind of physical exercise that reflected a kind of athletic or ascetic labor. The modern human, as Corbusier envisioned, had to exert himself or herself in the process of occupying the ascetic space, and therefore engage in the transformation of the "self." Le Corbusier himself lived a rather austere life not only in Paris but also in the single-cell primitivist cabin—*Le petit cabanon*—that he built for himself in the south of France.

IV. THE PARADOX OF DWELLING

To return to the ascetic hut, the simple ascetic hut is not so simple after all, and neither was it put together with a simple motive. The ascetic hut, the sine qua non of asceticism, condenses the rich imaginary and complex practices of ascetic imagination. In the ideation, imagination and representation of the ascetic hut, one is drawn to the heart of the ascetic project. One is also compelled to wrestle with its paradoxes.

A dwelling, however make-shift or minimal, is an enclosure where one keeps one's belongings or ensconces oneself. How can one without any belonging, such as an ascetic, who has burst open all enclosures, deliberately re-assign oneself to a "room of one's own"? Stories about the Buddha himself reveal a fundamental fact: that the master ideologue of homelessness also needs a sheltering device, that is, an *āgāra* reappears for the *anāgārika*. This is the central aporia: how can a hermit, one who has left home-life, have a home?

A number of contradictions describe the project of the hermit's hut when theorizing its formal appearance, its "beauty," so to speak. Can we even speak of the beauty of a construction that was conceived to renounce all appeals to the senses, and that in its avowed manner of "constructed poverty" was dedicated in its refusal to be beautiful?

Finally, dwelling indicates an enclosure, a place to stay in, for a sense of permanence, for maintaining possession, for "self"-making. A hermit or monk, especially a Buddhist monk, has either attained or is striving to attain complete cessation of the illusion of selfhood or permanence. How can such an egoless, essence-less "flowing stream" find even in natural mountain caves, or leaf-cottages, a resting place for a nonexistent self? How then can a Buddhist ascetic/monk, who is committed to breaking the fetters of enclosure, achieving impermanence and nonpossession, commit to a dwelling?

Two significances adhere to the plain fabric of the hut: the hut as a hieroglyph of home, and the hut as image of "self." The idea of the hut as a hieroglyph of home is not addressed through the elaborate monasteries and glorious temples but in the intimate, singular space of the cell—the ascetic's dwelling.

Coursing through the terrain of asceticism is its recalcitrant relationship with dwellings and abodes, or simply the home-world, and that is what narratives on the hut usher. The question of the dwelling is encountered the very moment the ascetic-renouncer steps into a counter-social space with the first and formal renunciation of home, making home literally the point of departure of the ascetic project.

The immediate implication of the hut as hieroglyph of home involves the primary ascetic mission of renouncing the home in its most literal, material, and pragmatic sense as defined by the Vedic notion of *grihya* in order to enter the codified realm of homelessness. *Grihya* inscribes an entire milieu of activities and rituals in which the sacrificial altar occupies the life focus of the home-world. Various Vedic texts constituting the *Gṛhya Sūtras* codify the rituals related to the marking of home ceremonies in which home is more than a tectonic construct; it is a socially ordered, socioeconomically structured, and ritually constructed event around the sacred fire of home.

With the sacred fire as the focus, the *Gṛhya Sūtra* represent a total package for home improvement and maintenance. It is a coordinated scheme for the domestic life of a Vedic man starting from his *brahmacāri* life and moving on to marriage, the birth of a child, initiating the child's tutelage—eventually inscribing the full circle of Vedic life. The Vedic home, structured and maintained by an altar, is a cosmos, and as Raimundo Panikkar observed, the main symbol of being-in-the-world. What it means for the Vedic man to be in the world is the maintenance and continuation of the ritual fire in order to uphold the moral, cosmic, and social orders, all of which are emblematized by the *grihya*.

It is precisely this structure of *grihya* that bound the Vedic man to the home project that the ascetics of the sixth-century BCE in India revolted against. Siddhārtha is an example of someone who had conducted a close analysis of home in all its dimensions—the relational, religious, ritual, and sensual—and found nothing of an enduring efficacy other than a vineyard of suffering. The series of questions around the seduction of home would culminate in Siddhartha's "great departure," and the beginning of his grand homelessness.[9]

When Siddhartha left home he was not merely giving up on the sensual and pleasurable life at the palace; he was, like many of his contemporaries, turning against the vast paraphernalia of *grihya* rituals that not only determined the life of a man but also subjugated him to an endless and mechanical chain of obligations. Home is therefore double-edged: home may represent well-being and stability, but also imply rootedness and bondage. The ascetic movement, by questioning all these, calls for its destabilization.

It will not be surprising to find that the nomenclature surrounding the idea and practice of dwelling in the ascetic re-scripting of home will steer away from *grihya* (the Pali *gaha)* and, deliberately adopting terms such as *kuṭī* and *vihar*ā, develop alternative terminologies. The adoption of a forest hut as a dwelling produces a counter-thesis to *grihya*.

Considering that "home" is a conceptual category, its abandonment takes place in phases. Having renounced *grihya* or *gaha*, the novitiate-ascetic is not completely free from the need for lodging or dwelling, even if such conditions may mean being in a natural cave, under a tree, or on a tuft of grass. An existential struggle ensues between a complete abandonment and fundamental need for dwelling. The four *nissayas* outlined as the foundation of the Buddhist monastic codes (things that are deemed necessary for the ascetic practice) that included dwellings, clothing, food, and medicine, also inaugurated a tension between renunciation and reconfiguration.

The struggle for a conclusive termination continues until the moment of the ascetic climax, when the hut takes on a completely ideational, conceptual quality by becoming analogous to the ascetic body. In this ultimate equivalence, the body is the *gaha*, the final vestige of domestication or socialization. In most ascetic narratives, the body is a hut—a body-hut—whose existing lineament and ligaments must be shattered before the enlightened life can begin.

Home, as far as the phenomenon of fire is concerned, is a situated condition requiring a territorial location and geographical rootedness. Ascetic renunciation, of almost all varieties, aspires toward sitelessness as a deliberate denial of place and

territory. What is set up as an opposition to home is either a literal or conceptual homelessness. Ascetic homelessness implies a peripatetic existence where the planned de-mooring becomes synonymous with giving up of a habitual life around a centered, enclosed space with its psycho-emotional investment.

In the matter of articulating the nature of dwelling, and re-defining the constituency of home, an irreconcilable panorama appears in the ascetic horizon. The repudiation of home, as much as it is central to the ascetic itinerary, and as much the image of the hermit's hut portrays it, is a fundamentally paradoxical enterprise. Home, even if it is the target of ascetic critique and the singular point of departure for the ascetic movement, is hard to relinquish. It appears and reappears in hauntingly recalcitrant ways, in readjusted and recalibrated configurations.

This conflicted entanglement is brought up in more than one way in Buddhist narratives and practices. At his climactic ascetic moment, at the time of achieving his nirvana, Gautama—the about-to-be Buddha—positions himself in a seated yogic posture under the shelter of a fig tree. In the mythopoeic description, at one point of the meditation, a big storm arises keeping the skies overcast and the weather rainy and cold for seven days. The serpent king Mucalinda emerges to encircle Gautama's body with its coils and spreads its great hood over his head declaring: "Let no cold annoy the Lord, let no heat annoy the Lord, let not the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind and heat or creeping things annoy the Lord."[10]

Elemental conditions of a dwelling are already inscribed in that fabulous narrative of the Buddha's enlightenment, forecasting how dwelling would come to play a crucial role in ascetic practices. Even if the sheltering serpent is a fable, and parts of it were added much later to the narrative of the great enlightenment for popular consumption, its enumeration nonetheless reveals the necessity of shelter in ascetic practice.

Dwelling or shelter in the ascetic context registers numerous ambivalences. At a pragmatic level, the fundamental challenge for the ascetic is to build or not to build. A practical shelter is needed for ascetic efficiency as the use of dwellings of the Buddha after his enlightenment attests, or even as the fabulous story of the serpent king Mucalinda illustrates. The quandary over building and not building reflects the tension between settled and the wandering ascetic. The creation of the rain-retreats as proper dwellings for the monks during the monsoon testifies to a partial resolution of that tension, culminating in the *vassa-āvāsas*, the proto-monasteries.[11] The dilemma is echoed in the Buddha's bivalent statements, exhorting against building and dwelling and urging his monks to live in desolate places, on the one hand, and approving huts and lodgings, on the other hand. The *Cullavagga* demonstrates another level of ambivalence—between a minimal structure and an elaborate dwelling.[12]

The *Cullavagga* text reveals the Buddha's gradual turn toward the paraphernalia of home from a previous announcement of living under a tree or on a tuft of grass as the most efficacious way of monkhood. The text describes monk's dwellings, even in distinction to Buddha's huts in Jetavana, as more related to constructional, technical, and functional issues. The text also reveals the basic ascetic ambivalence between building and not building, and between the elaborate and the minimal.[13]

In a section of the *Milindapañha* called "The Dilemmas,"[14] highlighting the perplexities of the Buddha's teachings, Milinda (Menander) points out to Nāgasena that the Buddha seems to have urged for two contradictory positions on dwelling, one in favor of the house, and another in renouncing it. For favoring the house, Milinda cites the Buddha's statement that an ascetic "should have charming dwelling-places built and lodge those who have heard much therein."[15] And for renouncing the house, Milinda refers to the Buddha when he said that "fear springs from fellowship (intimacy), dust is born of a house." The goal of a sage is to be "houseless and independent (unintimate)." Nāgasena explains that the urge to renounce the house is directed particularly to the monks who may reflect on the forest-deer who "roaming about in a forest or a wood, lies down to sleep wherever it likes, having no abode, and no home." The house was favored because the gift of dwelling-places by laypeople is considered to garner merit even if such accommodations generated a desire for home.[16]

As much as it is portrayed as a villainous protagonist in the ascetic theater, home determines the charter of ascetic ideology. Even the ascetic-renouncer's dramatic departure from the city—the acknowledged site of home conditions—is eventually modulated by his ultimate return to or traversal of the city. The Buddha spent more years in the cities of Rājagaha and Sāvatthī (Srāvastī) than anywhere else. The towns provided the ascetics with an audience, patronage, and possible new recruits. The ascetic's return to the city is seen first in building up retreats at the edge of town, or not too far away from the city; many of the monasteries grew along travel routes as an outcome of socioeconomic exchange with the patronizing class, and the need for recruiting new monastic candidates.[17] Renunciation and asceticism thus seem to be caught in a web of disengagement and mediation.

The issue of dwelling implies an implicit relationship between place and human identity. If the act of the hermit represents a struggle to free himself from the world, there is something paradoxical about his dwelling. He has given up his name, his family ties, his worldly resources, what is he going to do with his shelter? If the house is the final emblem of "being-in-the-world," and if the ascetic goal is to renounce all ties to being in this world, then architecture—the hermit's hut—assumes a very critical role in ascetic imagination.

V. THE PARADOX OF APPEARANCE

There is one thing common about hermit's huts whenever they occur or are depicted; they are by all tectonic standards a primitive structure in comparison to most other buildings of its time. An appearance of primitivism or "constructed poverty" seems to define the aesthetical stratagem of asceticism.

Going primitive was not without its contradictory articulations in the history of asceticism. The debate in the Cullavagga verses on monk's housing is about buildings that are seen as crude by the lay community in preference for those that are not only well-built and developed but socially acceptable. The community was mystified as to why enlightened people as ascetics lived in crude and plain buildings

when they can have it better. But such types of simple building are everywhere in the ascetic landscape, contemporaneous to that period and in previous times. The developed iconicity of the hermit's hut is based on this very production of primitive countenance, which appeared consistently in Buddhist art and narratives.

The Buddha is depicted visiting Brahmanic ascetics who are seen in front of coarse buildings. The Buddha's own residence in the Jetavana, the *gandhakuṭī*, was no different than what can be surmised about conventional houses of that time built in villages and small settlements, but certainly rudimentary compared to what may be the palace he abandoned in Kapilavastu.

And in the various doctrinal tracts, the Buddha exhorted his followers to take up shelters under trees, caves, and such natural conditions. Extreme ascetics, such as the *paccekabuddhas*, would do exactly that, by making an ideology of heading toward and living in a primitive condition with that categorical declaration, "I refuse a roof." Clearly, such an ambitious declaration can come only from someone who has a roof. And it is from this production of "deliberate piece of extravagantly coarse"[18] buildings that the ascetic or hermit's hut will have to be distinguished from the general perception of primitive structures.

The valorization of the "primitive"—essential to Indian asceticism—brings up the perplexity of theorizing the formal appearance, the "beauty" of the hut. There is a distinction between an ascetic hut and a primitive dwelling, between a building occupied particularly by an ascetic, and one, because of its literal tectonic and material property, is designated as primitive. The ascetic hut is a primitive structure or condition, being constructed and aligned morphologically with rudimentary huts of a particular region. Such a structure does not propose any tectonic distinction from those prosaic buildings nor does it present any advancement in the general problem of dwelling. The significance of that structure lies in its participation in an ascetic discourse. And in the center of that discourse is the ascetic himself.

Dwellings at the social fringe, which have adopted primitive tectonics and presentation as a common denominator cover a varied ground, from habitations that are voluntary or involuntary, and situations that are permanent or provisional, but in all cases, are measures of a spatial relationship with a "mainstream" society.

Similarly, the hermit's hut is a dwelling at the social fringe that presents its undeniable and contrived coarseness as a badge of honor. Like other figures in the fringe, the hermit-ascetic defines a certain kind of cultivated estrangement and alienation but as prerequisites for a large goal. The ascetic hut is inhabited by a very particular dweller who, not unlike the escapee or renegade is more or less a solitary and self-absorbed creature, but operates from and within a more defined and clearer sense of intellection and purpose. The ascetic has a project: the plan to transform himself. That is the key difference from the various groups of people harboring a primitivist ethos or strategy. To being an extra-societal being is an interim stage for becoming an extraordinary one.

The primitiveness of the hermit's hut is both interim and instrumental as the fuller property of the hut is gathered from its wider performance in the ascetic narrative. As for the ascetic, being a contrasocietal figure at the fringe of society by adopting a primitive weltanschauung becomes an interim stage for becoming an extraordinary

figure. As part of a transformative process, the adoption of primitivism marks for the ascetic a journey toward the edge of civilization, toward becoming a *mahāpuruṣa*.

A constructed primitivism also proposes a spatiotemporal schema in which a passage is choreographed to structure a teleological process. The Lomas Rsi cave, built by the Ajivika ascetics in the third-century BCE, is a demonstration of the structuring of passage through primitivism. There are two aesthetically distinctive depictions of the hut at Lomas Rsi: the outer "hut" at the mouth of the cave that functions as a portal and the inner hut as some kind of shrine (Figures 13.8 and 13.9).

The outer hut, more elaborate than the inner hut and resembling a *caitya*, inaugurates an entry into the world of asceticism. Simultaneously, it marks a departure from the normative, mundane world—the well-crafted hut on the portal is just such a representation of the world left behind—and the beginning of a period of arduous labor to reach the other limit, the climactic point in the inner hut. The inner hut, by comparison, is shown to be crudely constructed and invokes features of a leaf-roof hut of a forest-dweller. The climactic hut, the "last" hut, so to speak, is also the point of a symbolic egress, the location and occasion of the glorious "release," where the outer hut-portal represents ingress into the phenomenal world of asceticism, and the inner hut a conceptual and symbolic egress.



FIGURE 13.8: Interior of Lomas Rishi Cave, Barabar Hills, Gaya, c. Third-Century BCE, Photo by Tim Makins.

Lomas Rsi is an allegory of the ascetic journey, the striving to reach the other end, at the threshold of which is the *final* hut. One needs to traverse the actual physical distance between the outer and the inner hut, even if it is conducted in the ritual framework of shrine devotion. Embedded in the allegory is the structure of an ascetic journey, of initiation and crossing the threshold, and arriving at some kind of termination or apex.

The ascetic ethos of reaching the heart of humanity through an extreme humanism makes the hermit's hut a civilizational project. In other words, the hermit's hut may be primitivist but it is not part of a primitive world-view. The hermit's hut, in fact, is the last vestige of civilization in the sequential enterprise of asceticism considering that achieving the ascetic goal ,which is nothing less than a most sophisticated and intellected human pursuit; the hut is an instrument of that process.

Asceticism is thus not only a practice but also a rhetorical and semantic expression in which a persistent theme is setting up of a contrariness, presented through a spatial distinction between the city and the forest, and the aesthetical and morphological difference between the elaborate and the reductive. Whenever such a constructed coupling is encountered—a coincidence that is actually more than the sum of the two—it presents a dialectic between what is taken to be the normative and what is considered primitive. This is the closest approximation to what may be described as an "ascetical aesthetics" involving both a simultaneity of oppositional values, and a movement from one to the other.

The hermit's hut complicates the simple narrative of the origin of architecture. The place of the hermit's hut is not in some *ur*-situation of a prerecorded time

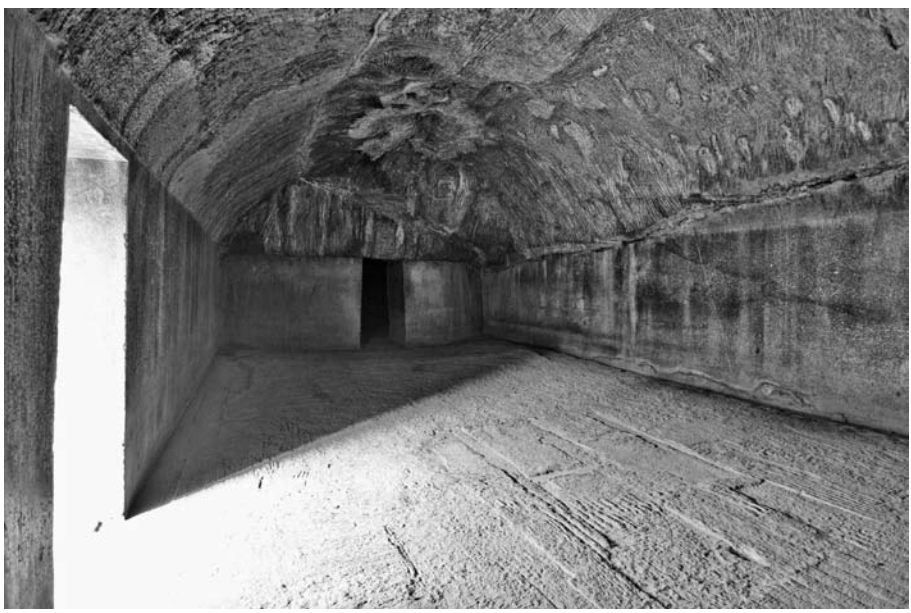


FIGURE 13.9: Exterior of Lomas Rishi, Photo by Tim Makins.

when the primordial hut might have been fashioned using whatever constructional ingenuity was at hand to respond to practical matters. It is also not about an *ur*-form, encountering the earliest problems of dwelling and responding to it with the first bit of technology and material resources at hand. If a meta-narrative is to be detected in the ascetic hut, it is in the notion of "beginning," in the uncompromising and relentless praxis of proceeding toward an irrevocable finality that terminates the tentacles of the samsaric world, and inaugurates a "non-conditioned mode of being." It is the preponderance of this idea, of a new beginning, that makes the poverty-laden ascetic hut a thoughtful or intellectual project.

VI. THE PARADOX OF RENUNCIATION

The presentation of the primitive is a fundamental but interim protocol in the ascetic project; the most important purpose remains heading toward and arriving at a final destination I describe as the "last" hut. The idea of the "last" hut provides a most compelling imagery of the ascetic tradition's adoption of a rigorous and laborious process to achieve the terminal goal of emancipation or enlightenment. And it is also not without its conundrum.

The "last" hut in the most basic sense is the familial and social dwelling that must be renounced before the ascetic enterprise can begin; this process is conceptualized by Buddhist ascetics as entering homelessness (*pabbaja*), or becoming *anāgārika*. From the pragmatic dismantling of the parameters of home as a fundamental point of departure, the ascetic strategy is gradually built up toward a more conceptually articulated renunciation of the "last" hut, one that engages complex theoretical framings. Whenever the idea of the "last" hut appears, explicitly or tangentially, it foregrounds a threshold: a termination of one condition and the beginning or promise of another that is superior and refined.

The final ascetic experiment—the end of dwelling—when taken up on the body site or building fabric, works through the simultaneous occupation and destruction of the body-building. Announcing the end of architecture, as well as the body as we know it, the idea of the "last hut" serves as an arrival at the edge of civilization. This is the culmination of an evolutionary process in which home, from a socialized, ritualized space, has been re-conceptualized as a last hut whereby the ascetic body made homologous to a structure, and finally, the body-hut positioned for a cataclysmic transformation.

Vivaṭa-chhado, or the "shattering of the ridge-plate or roof," is the most climactic and cataclysmic image of termination that occurs. In Buddha's description it coincides with the final goal of asceticism, of attaining "freedom" from social fetters, achieving a "second birth," purer and better, or acquiring a "non-conditional state." While Buddha himself will need actual dwellings even after his enlightenment, he is perhaps saying that, the need for a "hut," in psychological and erotic terms, is over after the cataclysmic moment (Figures 13.10 and 13.11).

Comparable to attaining a nonconditioned mode of existence, or what is "unoriginated" and "unmade," the destruction of the body-hut becomes a single-

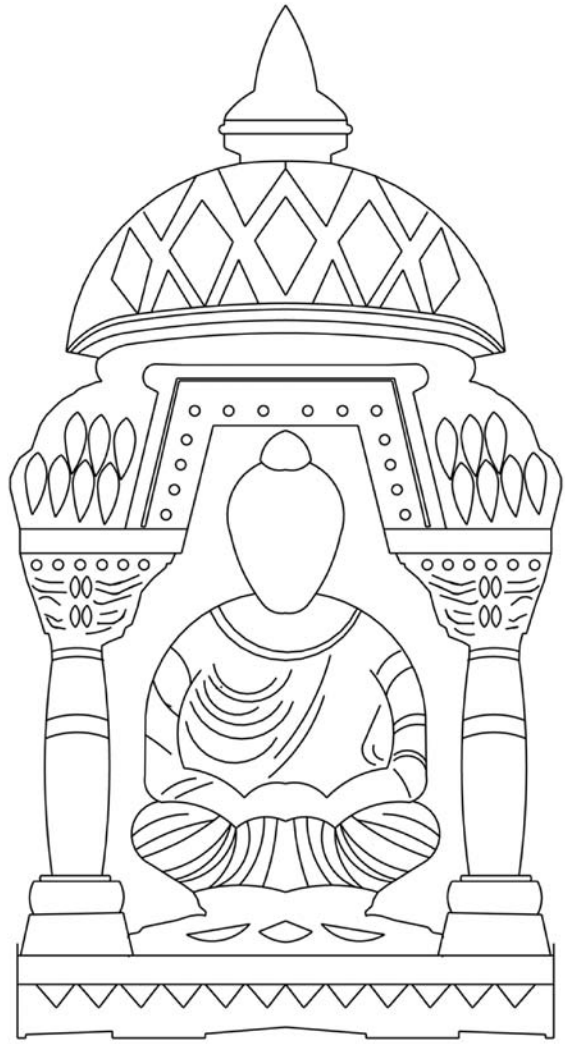


FIGURE 13.10: The Buddha Under a "Distended Lintel" in a Domed Pavilion, Gandhāra, Drawing by Raphael Tran.

minded pursuit of the ascetic, but for which the whole Buddhist edifice of codes, practices, and doctrines has been erected. The image of the final hut becomes a powerful metaphor and didactic tool in articulating the subtleties of the ascetic program, and a lasting ideogram for approximating the ineffable destination of *nirvāṇa*.

Despite being the emblem of asceticism, the last hut is not an affable project. The end—the arrival at the nonconditioned state presenting itself as a theater of



82. Relief with Buddha enthroned.
Found at Muhammad Nâri in Yûsufzâï. Cole, *Pr. N. Monts.* pl. 1.

FIGURE 13.11: The Buddha Under a "Distended Lintel" with Bodhisattvas in Pavilions, Gandhāra, from Burgess, *Buddhist Art*.

destruction—is not without some ambiguities, it exposes the contradictions and incongruities of the ascetic imagination. First, the final destruction announces a terminal point that resists or defies easy description, maintaining a semantically elusive term such as *nirvāṇa* and remaining an internal experience of the ascetic psyche. Furthermore, what appears to be the object of destruction is required as an ontological necessity in the whole process. Despite being nondescript and unremarkable, the hut was erected in order to achieve an overcoming.

In the exegesis of asceticism, the hut—a cryptogram for the dwelling—was considered as the ontological fundament of asceticism. Even when the ascetic body is brought to the foreground of the final frontier, the narrative is related through the semantics and aesthetics of the hut.

Taking up the matter of the dwelling, the hermit's hut recalibrates it along the axis of renunciation, pushing it to its limits, to the edge of civilization. Oscillating between contraction and expansion, between rejection and elaboration, and between rootedness and sitelessness, the problem of the dwelling is not brought to a full resolution but left in a suspended truce in which the matter at hand is neither completely nurtured nor fully nullified. From the beginning to the end, the world is needed as a given; it is where renunciation begins, for asceticism and renunciation presuppose a world, a socialized and cultivated realm, which then is to be transcended. Even when the body is conceived of as a hut, it is seen as a vestige of sociality, perhaps the last one. The representative repertoire of the hermit's hut—from simple dwelling structures to the image of the hut in elaborate architecture—illustrates a basic ascetic paradox of profiling a certain condition and, at the same time, attempting a transcendence. Hovering over the ascetic project, both literally and thematically, the shadow of the dwelling continues to invoke an intractable contingency.

Two contrary ideas are condensed simultaneously in the metonymic character of the hut: being-in-the-world and outside it. The schema is paradoxical because the significance is based on acknowledging the ontological necessity of something that then needs to be abandoned. In other words, the ascetic realizes that movement out of the world can be made through the world. This is evident in how ascetic praxis is always structured with its converse or conflicting self. In this matter, what is true for building practices is true for the ascetic body. The great ascetic experiment, when taken up on the body site, works through the simultaneity of occupation and destruction of the body-building. It is not truly a destruction, however the rhetoric may be, but a radical reconstitution or transformation, where "something" remains, although the old measures of identity are no longer significant. What is significant is the required presence of the hut-body in the cataclysm: the given body is needed upon which the great experiment can take place.

This paradoxical practice, or double nature of the project, is perhaps an essential feature of all asceticism. The durability of asceticism lies, Geoffrey Galt Harpham has written in the context of Christian asceticism, in its capacity to structure oppositions without collapsing them, to raise issues without settling them.[19]

The relation between the opposites is far more intertwined and interpellated than we realize. Reaching beyond an adversarial standoff between the two, Harpham regards asceticism as the "cultural element in culture," where culture articulates itself through ascetic tropes and ideograms. Harpham insists that "where there is culture there is asceticism: cultures structure asceticism, each in its own way, but do not impose it" Raimundo Panikkar, on the other hand, described the relationship from a grander standpoint by arguing that monkhood is a human archetype, "a constitutive dimension in human life,"[20] making the relationship not oppositional but integrative or constitutive. Harpham eventually considers asceticism as the basis of culture, where his theme of "ascetic imperative" is positioned as a primary, transcultural structuring force. In describing this intertwined relationship between culture and asceticism, Harpham notes how an inherent aspect of the cultural experience, whether emerging out of an ethical or existential exigency, is an uneasiness, "an ambivalent yearning for the precultural, postcultural, anticultural, or extracultural."[21]

For Indic and Buddhist asceticism, it is not enough to merely posit an opposite with the constructed binary. It is also not, to go another degree further into the relationship, simply a dialogical structure where one infiltrates the other, informing and shaping each other. While a dialogical interaction is certainly taking place between culture, or the lay community in this case, and asceticism, where the former is informed and disciplined in some ritual way, the Indic ascetic goal is more ambitious in its advocating an objective of transformation. Whereas asceticism certainly provides and encourages a new discourse for culture, it reserves for itself a very particular and dedicated axis leading toward the enigmatic goal of self- transformation. The two—asceticism and culture—are not in parity as far as that designated goal is concerned. The opposition is legibly structured and configured, but asceticism sets up its own distinctive topos. A "compromised binarism" may be argued as far as the tactical purpose of asceticism is concerned, as when, other than extreme ascetics, most Indic-Buddhist ascetics, and certainly the Buddha himself, resorted to returning to the societal milieu that was once renounced.

In expanding the idea of the "last" hut, it is pertinent to juxtapose it against a more widely known trope: the so-called first house. The production and imagining of the first house is a manifestation of culture's equivocal yearning for countercultural or precultural conditions. An invocation of the extra- or precultural aligns more precisely with a discourse on hypothesized origins, including the imagining of the primitive. The two notions—the first and last huts—represent a condensation of a broader human enterprise around the idea of the house/dwelling.

Despite the common presentation of a primitive ethos and form, there is a distinction between the first house and the last hut, between the role of the former as a fabulous model of emulation, construction, and manifestation, and the latter's teleological and dissipating nature. As an affirmative and authenticating trope, the imagined first hut develops primarily from a sense of loss, a condition of disassociation that has occurred in some mythical or prehistorical time from an originating context. The quest for the first building represents more than an architectural enterprise; it is part of a vaster project for restituting the values of a paradigm that will make everything right or validate a current time. The paradigmatic purpose of the first house as an exemplar of perfection is its most important cue, whose contours are then perpetually sought in an architectonic and spatial mimesis.

From the mythopoeic Adam's house to the fabulous primordial hut speculated by many, there is an air of loss and dissociation. It is this asymptotic quality of being irrevocably lost and being re-searched, from a beatific and pure to the deteriorated present that makes the first house or its search so tantalizing. No wonder the pursuit of that ideal model remains a tantalizing prospect, with architectural construction continually attempting a mimesis or approximation.

Indian asceticism, more specifically Buddhist, posits an anti-mimetic teleological scenario; there is hardly any concern with regaining a lost or past "perfection." The intention of the ascetic strategy, on the other hand, is to overcome the consequences of the given first artifact or its descendants even as one lives with it. It is the first artifact that binds, being one that started it all as humanity's original and pragmatic way of being ensconced in the world. Holding the first as spawning a gradual sequence of complex needs, with their concomitant satisfactions and dissatisfactions, the

ascetic position analyzes this as gradually generating a whole panoply of increasingly labyrinthine imaginings and conduct. It is this social nexus that the ascetic wants to challenge and turn asunder, and it is the perception of enslavement that fuels the appositely opposite goal of freedom and emancipation.

In the ascetic theme of the "last" hut, the sense of an authentic home is clearly not the focus; in fact, home as understood as a matrimonial and familial concept is repudiated. What is reflected upon—or what the ascetic is trying to arrive at—is a house that is both a literal building and an analog of the ascetic's body. What is the nature of this house? The house is portrayed as a minimal structure, shorn of all or most of its trappings, as in a similar manner the ascetic body is conceived, with all conditioned properties peeled away; what is perhaps best is when there is no need of a house, as is expressed in the corporeal drama of the shattering of the house in the Buddha's momentous description. The "last" hut, employing an architectural image, denotes a condition that defines and describes the invisible but actualized psychophysiological dynamic of the arduous ascetic.

NOTES

1. Robert Thurman, *Inner Revolution: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness* (New York: Penguin, 1999).
2. Bruno Taut, *Houses and People of Japan* (Tokyo: Sanseido Company, 1958).
3. Kazi K. Ashraf, *The Hermit's Hut: Architecture and Asceticism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013).
4. The hermit in the forest is an ideal heterotopic figure, taking up Michel Foucault's discussion of "heterotopia." The forest may be said to conform to Michel Foucault's description of spaces that "suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect." Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Architecture-Movement-Continuite* (October 1984).
5. Joseph Rykwert, *The First Moderns: The Architects of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980).
6. Meister also argues how Coomaraswamy who makes the first important point about the significance of the primitive hut in the historical development of shrines and other elaborate architecture did not elaborate a difference between sheltering a divinity and sheltering an ascetic, see Michael Meister, in introduction to *Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: Essays in Architectural Theory* (New Delhi: IGNCA and Oxford, 1995). While the principal role of shrines was to shelter an image of the divinity and thus seemed to be at a higher level of architectural elaboration, the role of the hermit's hut that provided a model for such shrines had the pragmatic purpose of sheltering an ascetic.
7. Meister, *Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: Essays in Architectural Theory.*
8. Joseph Rykwert, *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of Primitive Hut in Architectural History* (first published by the Museum of Modern Art, 1972, republished by the MIT Press, 1981).

9. In Buddhist terminologies, the antithesis is codified in the well-regarded concept *pabbaja* (Sanskrit, *prabajya*), which literally means going from "home to homelessness" (*agarāsamā anagāriyaṃ pabbajjā*) making homelessness synonymous with the ascetic-monastic life. The ascetic is also described as an *anāgārika*, one without home. There is a literal, conceptual, and ideological usage of the sense of homelessness as implied in *pabbajja*, from its similarity with many Brahmanical and other ascetic practices to its restructuring in Buddhism to mean "joining the *saṇgha*," the cenobitic monastic order.
10. The *Mahāvagga* I.2, trans. I. B. Horner as *The Book of the Discipline*, vol. 4 (London: Luzac, 1951).
11. Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962).
12. Considered in the sixth chapter of the Cullavagga called the "Senasana khandaka."
13. There are other narratives that illustrate the quandary faced by early ascetics when they were chastised by lay-people for living in primitive conditions (such as the root of a tree, a cave, a cemetery, or wandering around) and offered proper dwellings. And that was how the early *āvāsas* and *ārāmas* as rain-retreats came into being in the first place, and opened the way for located and sedentary monasteries. Mentioned in *Cullavagga* VI.I. It was during one of those dilemma of choices when a merchant in Rājagaha offered to build houses for the monks that the Buddha agreed for the five dwellings: "I allow, monks, five (kinds of) abodes: a dwelling-place, a curved house (*aḍḍhayoga*), a long house (*pāsāda*), a mansion (*hammiya*), a cave (*guhā*)."
14. *Milindapañha* IV, trans. I. B. Horner as *Milinda's Questions* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1990–91).
15. The statement is found in the *Vinayapiṭaka* II.147.
16. The Sanskrit word used for home here is *alaya*. I. B. Horner in his translation in the *Milindapañha* explains that the primary meaning of *alaya* is "roosting place, perch, and so a place to settle in, abode," while a secondary meaning is "hanging on," clinging.
17. Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1978), pp. 70 and 79. Thapar notes that there may be two phases in the development of asceticism: first, the premonastic, in which the element of protest is stronger, and the monastic, which is engaged in mediating with social normativity.
18. Joseph Rykwert makes this observation in the practice of some early modern work but one that reflects a recurrent theme and practice in architecture to resort to deliberate expression of a cruder form of architecture, *On Adam's House,* p. 23.
19. Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
20. Raimundo Panikkar, *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype* (New York: Seabury), pp. 7–8.
21. Harpham, *Ascetic Imperative*, xi–xii.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ashraf, Kazi K., *The Hermit's Hut: Architecture and Asceticism in India.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013.

Dutt, Sukumar, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India.* London: Allen & Unwin, 1962.

Foucault, Michel, "Of Other Spaces," *Architecture-Movement-Continuite* (October 1984).

Harpham, Geoffrey Galt, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Meister, Michael, in introduction to *Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: Essays in Architectural Theory*. New Delhi: IGNCA and Oxford University Press, 1995.

Panikkar, Raimundo, *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype.* New York: Seabury, pp. 7–8.

Rykwert, Joseph, *The First Moderns: The Architects of the Eighteenth Century.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980.

Rykwert, Joseph, *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of Primitive Hut in Architectural History.* First published by the Museum of Modern Art, 1972, republished by the MIT Press, 1981.

Taut, Bruno, *Houses and People of Japan.* Tokyo: Sanseido Company, 1958.

Thapar, Romila, *Ancient Indian Social History.* New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1978, pp. 70, 79.

Thurman, Robert, Inner Revolution: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. New York: Penguin, 1999.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Aesthetic of Touch and the Skin: An Essay in Contemporary Indian Political Phenomenology*

GOPAL GURU

Specific social and historical contexts of experience tend to produce specific structures of meaning that could, mutually, be quite contradictory. Because logical relations gravitate toward context-neutral universality, and contradiction is a logical relation, at the methodological level, contradiction in meaning becomes a universal cognitive structure. But the meanings themselves remain as wedded to the context as the time-and-place-sensitive experiences. It is in this context that one could possibly argue that the task of political phenomenology is to analyze the contradictory structures of meaning that we find in our conscious experience of not just seeing or not seeing or smelling but also doing, touching, grabbing, refusing to touch, viewing, and thinking as fit or unfit for handling. Thus, in the Indian context, the social aesthetic of the touchable castes seeks to bracket within its logic the object of consciousness that surrounds the life of reality specific to these castes. A kṣatriya or vaiśya or kāyastha attaches a set of meanings to desiring, hating, or not caring to touch an object or a person. It is in terms of these meanings that a member of such a "touchable" caste usually "imagines" what it is like to live as an untouchable. Because of this crucial role that imagination plays, mediating between the tactile and haptic sensation and the understanding of the meaning of the skin that the political phenomenology turns here into a politics of aesthetics, though perhaps not in Ranciere's sense.[1] Thus, for these castes, leather and the leather ball takes form as an object of consciousness, which in turn surrounds the cricket ground. The consumerist life that is built up around this object of consciousness becomes real for these castes. Thus, the community of cricket lovers becomes a social reality. This bracketing of an object of consciousness within its surroundings is done with the specific intent of focusing on the sense or the meaning through which the object is experienced. Thus, the touchable in India develops a particular meaning around leather in different forms (from rawhide to sophisticated leather ball) and then seeks to construct a meaning

around the object in order to gain a distinct experience from the latter. A leather jacket or a cricket ball, therefore, becomes an object of the touchable's aesthetic experience. This experience is acquired in isolation without developing any thinking about the experience of the subject (leather worker) that is responsible for producing the object of experience at the first instance. In fact, the touchable does not have the cognitive need to think about the experience of the subject separately, as he/she does not differentiate between the object of experience (rawhide) and the subject (leather worker) that treats rawhide so as to transform it into a beautiful leather ball. For all practical purposes, the touchable transfigures rawhide onto the leather worker thus making the later an ontological part of rawhide.

The focus of this essay is twofold. First, it will try to understand the intentionality of the touchable that seems to be behind the discursive dissolution of leather into worker and worker into leather. Second, it will try to explore the tension between ethics and aesthetics and possibly suggest the need for the higher forms of aesthetic sensibilities that will address the ethical underpinning of the former. It is at the primary level of the leather production that the touchable sees the worker not in his authentic form but in the form of leather. The persisting perception mediated by the ideology of purity–pollution motivates the upper caste to reduce the leather worker to the raw leather. Thus, the idea of ritual pollution reinforced by its physical quality becomes an essence that sustains this dissolution. It is also necessary to explain further the content of this essence. This essence involves asymmetry in social relations, which are built up around the two contradictory flows of moral attitudes. One attitude flows from the bottom up showing an ascending sense of reverence for the touchables. The other attitude, which is generally associated with the upper castes, has a top-down flow thus suggesting the descending sense of respect for the lower castes.

Although the moral grammar of the flow is contradictory, however, the logic of the flow is one-dimensional to the extent that the power of regulating the flow is concentrated into the hands of the touchables. Thus, the social consciousness of being socially superior to the lower castes, therefore, has a structure that involves several properties such as perception, imagination, judgment, emotion, evaluation, and volition. The upper caste perception, which constitutes this structure, suggests that Dalits (untouchables) are no different from the repulsive object. They are perceived as part of the obnoxious dirt.[2] Similarly, in the aesthetic judgment of the touchables, Dalits acquire a moral status and are consequently treated as less than a human being or even a wretched animal. In the emotional assessment of the touchables, a leather worker is an object of repulsion. And finally, in the evaluation of the upper caste, the Dalits are a moral menace and hence are to be avoided both in terms of time and space. We shall try to explain the location of this element in the aesthetic consciousness of the touchable as well as the counter aesthetic as developed by the untouchables who are ontologically at the receiving end of these elements (as mentioned above).

Following from the above phenomenological frame, it is possible to argue that the essence of a leather worker is not his poverty but his foul smell or his being a moral menace. Taking a cue from Kant it could be argued that the phenomenological frame that traps the Dalit into the structures of repulsive meaning ultimately

renders the Dalit or a leather worker morally impenetrable to the extent that he comes to be composed of these properties, which seem to fill the entire body of untouchable with their repulsive force.[3] Thus, untouchability not only forms the essence of the untouchable's existence but it constantly remains with the leather worker. Untouchability as an essence thus overdetermines the leather worker's social existence the same way blackness determines the existence of the American black.

At this level, one finds the object of experience that is the cricket ball or the other leather goods to be the source of upper caste aesthetic and not the subject that produces the ball at the first instance. In the upper caste aesthetic judgment the Dalits do not grow in the eyes of the former. It is only the object-like ball abstracted from the raw hide and toil of the leather worker that forms the basis of the aesthetic judgment. In fact, the quality of upper caste judgment is negative in as much as it involves the vicarious pleasure that the former derive through the intensification of this sense of repulsion. For example, in early twentieth-century Uttar Pradesh, Achutananad, a Dalit hero belonging to the Chamar caste is converted into "*Jutananad*" (leather shoe) by the upper-caste politicians who belonged to the nationalist party during the freedom struggle.[4] The intention involving negative description essentially seeks to reduce the Dalit to the objective level where the distinction between the human being and the leather shoe is made to disappear.

However, the conception of the aesthetic of the upper castes undergoes a radical shift. In this transformed perception, as we shall see in the following pages, the upper castes are prepared to elevate the dead skin or leather to the highest level of aesthetic appreciation while they are found to be completely reluctant to extend their association with the live skin of the leather worker. To put it differently, it is the sophisticated form of the leather that forms a fascinating object of aesthetic attraction while the leather worker is treated as the source of repulsion. It as an object rather than a subject provides the base for the upper-caste aesthetic judgment. The upper caste begins to appreciate and enjoy the experience of the object that is the cricket ball or other fancy-looking leather goods. This affirmative change in the aesthetic sense of the upper castes is associated with the changing form of leather, which gets transformed from the rawhide to ultimately becoming finished leather. As we will argue in the following few lines, that leather in its sophisticated form becomes the source of aesthetic pleasure for the upper castes in India. In the world of cricket, raw hide transformed into a cricket ball with a "tricky" seam thus, provides the ground for the urbanized upper-caste cricket lovers to develop aesthetic sense.

However, the cricket ball does not produce this aesthetic appreciation on its own. In fact, a cricket player has to mix his/her skill with the ball and only then the ball becomes a source of aesthetic value. And of course the material value that gets produced through mixing becomes the private property of these particular cricket players. In contemporary times, the role of TV becomes absolutely crucial, not only to intensify the degree of enjoyment, but also to create an unprecedented visual impact on the aesthetic sensibility of the spectators both inside and outside the stadium. Along with the skill of a cricketer, the conception of space constitutes an important background condition without which it is impossible to produce the aesthetic value of leather. Thus, a cricket ball is set to heighten the excitement the

more it is set to conquer the larger physical space. Thus, a ball being hit for one-two-three runs or beyond the boundary line or over the boundary rope for a six, or even outside the stadium, definitely add to the enjoyment of the spectators.

However, there is a "Dionysian" principle that is involved in the life of a cricket ball on the ground. The ball in the test match is a bore, for example. Similarly, in the contemporary time, the cricket ball does not excite even over one day cricket. Here as well a cricket ball does produce a certain degree of boredom. Hence the need for the shortest version of cricket that is, 20×20 cricket as the medium to satisfy the heightened sense of enjoyment. By the same logic a ball not yielding any runs would be quite frustrating. However, the varying degree of excitement that is produced by a player through the ball is only temporary and immediate. In fact, the cricket ball arouses in the spectators the need for an ever increasing degree of excitement. A cricket lover expects the player to hit the ball to the longest distance possible. Hence, there is no end to an exciting experience. Thus, aesthetic experience comes to us not in kind but in degree. The Dionysian principle also produces a paradox in the very aesthetic conception of the touchable.

I. PARADOX IN THE AESTHETIC CONCEPTION

Similarly, the aesthetic experience, which necessarily comes in the form of evaluation and judgment, comes in stages involved in the production of the leather ball. Thus, in the initial stage of its production, the leather ball does not invoke the aesthetic pleasure particularly among those for whom the raw hide is the source of ritual pollution. Secondly, at this level, the leather is still in raw form and hence it as a physical substance carries foul smell with it. But the metaphysics of untouchability converts the materiality of smell into spiritual substance. To put it more clearly, in the upper-caste perception the foul smell continues to bracket the leather into its predatory logic even if the leather worker has walked out of its condition of production. The logic of smell thus produces a paradox where the leather ball as an attraction for the upper caste cannot exist without their repulsion from the leather worker. Thus, at the initial level, raw hide becomes the constant source of continuous and concentrated expression of repulsion filling the body of the leather worker. The upper caste perceives the body of a leather worker as a cesspool that is completely stuffed with a deep cause for repulsion. At the latter stage of leather production, the leather transformed into a leather ball becomes an object of attraction for the cricket players and lovers alike. This shift in the touchable's perception is the result of the market mechanism. The market and money seek to fragment this continuous and concentrated sense, first into the degree of expression, and secondly by assigning a differential value to this expression. However, it is the object of expression—superfine leather rather than the subjugated worker that is isolated for aesthetic treatment. This aesthetic of leather thus, suggests that the cricket ball as a substance is present in the subject that is the leather worker and yet it is not a part of the subject. The aesthetic judgment of an upper caste achieves this separation. The upper-caste aesthetic consciousness that gets articulated through judgment changes the properties of leather, however, without

changing the upper-caste perception of the leather worker's identity. The power of judgment assigns independence to the aesthetic experience of the upper castes, which do not connect this experience to its truth—the leather worker. Moreover, the upper caste aesthetic produces its own validity. On a most charitable note, it could be argued that the cricket ball also becomes the source of fulfillment for the pure if not the material ambitions of a cricketer. For spiritual gains, to become a legendary batsman or bowler, a particular cricketer makes leather so intimate to his body that he does not mind licking the leather ball. (We always see the upper-caste bowlers using their salvia for shining the leather ball.) In some sense leather as skin achieves its liberation only in its dead form and not in its live form. Put differently, the same cricketer may not touch the skin of a leather worker who has contributed immensely in the production of this ball. The personal ambition together with the material force of the market achieves a limited destruction of the physical distance between the leather as a ritual substance and corporeal human touch. Remember, leather—as the carrier of the ideology of purity-pollution—has been regulating the human touch among the Indians. In fact, the cricketer assigns not only material value by touching and licking the leather but some of them go to the extent of summoning god's power into the cricket ball. Look at Lasit Malinga's bowling action, for example.[5]

Although the touchable's perception of leather has progressed in a positive direction, where leather no longer remains as an object of repulsion; but at the same time, the leather workers do not figure in the aesthetic imagination of either the cricketer or the cricket lovers at large. This act of exclusion happens because the cricketers or the larger public do not find any unity between aesthetic/conceptual space and the unchanging place—tanneries—where the leather worker is located. The spectators are on the ground and not in the tanneries where the raw hide is treated or in the leather factory where the leather receives further superfine touch and attractive shape and design.

We often see in cricket commentary an aesthetic elevation of the skill that the batsman demonstrates in the cricketing shots. However, extraordinary as the shot may be, one cannot forget the fact that the roots of this superlative language are in the "ordinary" labor power of the leather worker. To put it differently, an extraordinary talent, for example, in Sachin Tendulkar, the legendary figure in the world of cricket, has its roots in the ordinary labor of the leather worker. This attraction in Sachin's cricketing talent and beauty thus has roots in the "repulsion" of the leather worker. But we do not come across the talented and extraordinary cricketers recognizing the value of the ordinary. Forgetting about the ordinary may not be intentional but it is certainly structurally inbuilt into the labor process that tends to highlight one kind of labor and overshadows another kind. Hitting a ball for a sixer is a concrete expression of skilled labor, which is treated by the electronic media as a pure abstraction as it does not inform us about the ontological grounds on which the life of a cricket ball rests. Were this expression analytic, perhaps it would connect the viewer or knower to the process of production and focus the TV camera on those workers who are involved in the leather production. Taking cue from Bologh, we feel encouraged to argue that the abstract provides aesthetic experience to many while the analytic would help at least some of us to unfold the pain of the worker.[6]

At another level abstract labor also constitutes an irony. The relation of a leather worker to a leather ball is also that of alienation—a kind of abstraction. To put it differently, the labor of the leather worker is independent of the immediate use-value of its product (the leather ball). It is only in the rare cases that one finds the son of a leather worker concretely enjoying the fruits of exchange value of the labor. In Mumbai cricket, the second son of leather worker could become the leading all-rounder during the 1930s.[7] Generally speaking, the only value that leather worker has for his labor is money. The leather ball increases both the material and moral value of a cricketer, as they are sought after by the media, and the corporate world, which makes the world of cricket glamorous. In such a world of glamor, the leather worker's labor would be treated only as an infinitesimal part of the final product—the cricket ball. To put it differently, in the upper-caste perception, the labor of a leather worker in the entire process becomes extremely small and meaningless. The labor of a leather worker is meaningless except as an exchange value that the former has for money.

II. THE METAPHYSICS OF SKIN AND TOUCH

The ideological (purity–pollution) mediation of dead skin (flayed skin) has some bearing on the upper-caste perception of meaninglessness. In this sense of meaninglessness, the live skin of the leather workers is treated as defiling and disgusting, while the dead skin in the form of leather ball, as mentioned above, becomes intimate to the upper-caste body. The ideology of purity–pollution generates an uneasy tension between dead and live skin. The leather workers in India treating the flayed skin of dead cattle also become a stigmatized object, whose skin therefore becomes untouchable for the upper caste. Leather workers' skin, which undergoes an ideological construction, assumes self-limiting boundaries that are no more open for intersubjective touch. To put the point differently, it is the ideology of untouchability that provides a definitional ground for corporeal touch. Conversely, lack of concrete experience of corporeal touch in effect acts as the proof for untoucability. In a caste-ridden society such as that of India, if the Dalits decide not to touch the twice-born person, this inversed form of untouchability would lead to a moral chaos threatening the social relevance of the socially dominant castes. They need to pollute the top of the twice-born in order to make the latter socially relevant. The leather workers are not only treated as a moral menace for the upper caste, but, at the corporeal level, they also become an object of disgust for the entire society. Different kinds of chemicals that are used in the tanneries and leather factories have a devastating effect on the skin of tannery workers' body. These chemicals, which very often lead to deformation of tannery workers' skin, ultimately reduce the worker to the socially degraded status of a leprosy patient. The leather workers with deformed skin in a certain sense cannot brandish it as a cultural asset. In both the ritual as well as material sense the leather worker is ontologically at the receiving end of the negative description as the wretched as well as the physical leper.

At the phenomenological level, vicarious pleasure of the upper castes feeds itself on the perception of the Dalit as a menace that gets combined into a moral as well as physical menace. A leather worker becomes a complete source of condescension. The phenomenological frame set around the Dalit by the upper caste, creates almost a wither-down impact thus diminishing the moral content of a Dalit-self struggling to acquire equal worth that is so necessary to retain their morally integrated personality. Arguably, this morally devastating impact does not encourage the Dalit even to cognitively develop the skin-ego, even as the source of subversive snobbery.[8] Snobbery as a subversive practice by a Dalit is set to perform a historical function of disturbing the settled sense of the white-skin ego that is normally associated with the top of the twice-born. Subversive snobbery would necessarily create a negative consciousness among those who think that their skin is the source of hegemonic power over others.

In this context, it is necessary to make it clear that I am not dealing here with skin as a sensorium of background conditions for the ultimate sexual pleasure.[9] On the contrary, I would treat skin as the substance with sociocultural value. Neither am I interested in the color of the skin as is the case in the United States, although I cannot deny the argument that it is the color that overdetermines the social existence of the black in America. In this particular chapter I would like to take the discussion of skin beyond the psychological/clinical understanding of skin.[10] Hence, I would like to argue that skin carrying stigma on its surface, performs the social function of destroying even the possibility of singularly directed corporeal touch. For normative reasons one would prefer the mutual touch, which as a civilizational category loses its moral force and becomes disempowered in terms of sustaining reciprocal interaction. Ideological construction of corporeal touch effectively prohibits the human being from touching the live skin that forms the surface of corporeal body. Skin, as the barbed-wire, thus produces mutual reification of touch. That is to say that both the untouchables and the touchables do not find it urgent to take an initiative in producing mutual warm touch. In such reification, at the ethical level, the skin of both the upper caste and the lower caste becomes like the shrinking pumpkin that loses its skin due to excessive sun stroke. The vitality of skin, therefore, is dependent on the ethics of touch. Ethics of touch, certainly belongs to the same logical class as the ethics of face, an important insight provided by Levinas.[11] It would not be out of place to argue here that the ethic of skin belongs to the same logical class as the ethics of face in Levinas's philosophy.

At another level, Dalit skin is analogous to the skin as a physical substance with a porous surface that emits foul smells through sweat, for example. At the ethical level the upper caste also treats Dalit skin as a porous surface emitting almost incessantly the foul smell of untouchability.[12] An untouchable, irrespective of the physical state of his/her body, is constantly being made aware of his or her body as the source of repugnance and the object of stigmatism. For the upper caste, a Dalit becomes a source of moral panic. Thus, a totally sanitized body of an untouchable is treated as an object producing foul smell. How does an untouchable get the consciousness that his/her body is an object of repulsion? Dalits get the consciousness of their body as an object of repulsion through moral microwaves that communicate this sense of

repulsion to the untouchable. The upper castes do not need a verbal speech act to communicate this sense of repulsion to the untouchables. In fact, the very physical presence of the upper caste becomes a sufficient condition to send appropriate signals to the untouchable that he/she is the "walking carcass." Thus, a Dalit perception, which operates through his sensitive skin, receives the signals about airborne casteism that is associated with the upper-caste person who communicates it without uttering it. This airborne casteism or the sense of repulsion touches a Dalit's skin and informs him about his being a repulsive object. However, it is not all kinds of skin that are capable of receiving this airborne casteism. In fact, it is socially and morally sensitive skin that makes the untouchable aware about the airborne casteism. Casteism in the air bites the untouchable the same way the chilly wind during the harsh winter does. For the Dalit a harsh winter is always around the corner. The untouchable's biting sense is dependent on the moral sensitivity of the skin. Here skin is morally sensitive and alive, not just physically sensitive and alive. The skin of an untouchable—or for that matter any sentient being—in order to remain sensitive, has to be porous if it wants to remain open for the reception of the airborne casteism. If the skin is seamless, then it is not at all capable of capturing the airborne casteism. To put it differently, if a person is thick-skinned, then this person will not be sensitive to the casteist message that is communicated to him/her. The morally dead skin does not make one sensitive to the airborne casteism. One needs to shed off the seamless skin in order to acquire agency. Ambedkar's conversion to neo-Buddhism was a symbolic act of shedding the seamless skin. Hinduism, in a symbolic sense, was a seamless skin that Dalits donned for a very long time on their ears and also their eyes. Buddhism made Dalit skin as sensitive as the skin of the snake. Just to conclude this section, let me state that leather or skin as an improvised form, that is, leather ball, seeks to aid a skilled cricketer to induce superior aesthetic taste to his skilled labor. However, this talented cricketer is oblivious of the fact that his capacity to produce an elegant shot is dependent on the condition of the production of this ball. It is in this sense that the aesthetic life of the cricketer and cricket lover is unreflective. It is also without any moral responsibility. It may be talented but may not be sufficiently intelligent to access the aesthetic life that is also available to those who deal with the production of the ball. Let us look at the aesthetic of skin and touch in Section III of this chapter.

III. RESIGNIFYING THE SKIN AND DALIT AESTHETIC

As mentioned in the above section, the leather worker is at the receiving end of the stigma that is attached to his skin through the ideology of purity and pollution. Similarly, he is also the victim of the physical deformation of his body and the skin. Lack of safety at the workplace is the main cause that leads to the physical infirmities of the leather workers. Leather workers do not have any protection against the different kinds of chemicals that are used for the leather production, and which deform the skin. As mentioned in the first section, these adverse working conditions do not prompt the cricketer or the cricket lovers to acknowledge the labor of the leather worker even at the

level of aesthetics. The self-obsessed cricket player, commentator, or the general cricket lovers do blame the leather worker in case the leather ball is losing its shape and seam too fast. It resembles the following Marathi saying: Shelicha Katal gele jivani ani Patil mhanto dafal *watal zali* (The goat has lost its live skin but the head of the village says it has become placid). It only shows limits of upper-caste sensitivity toward the plight of the leather worker. In this context it would be quite important to know whether the leather worker develops any aesthetic sense to cope with the adversarial conditions. It would further be interesting to know: In how many ways does the Dalit choose to perceive leather? To put it yet differently, how many kinds of social meanings can be produced around the leather object?

Within the Dalit discourse on aesthetics, one would find the language expressing Dalit reality at crossroads. There are, for example, literary writers from among the Dalits, who do not seem to be proposing the elevated language for the expression of Dalit social reality. For example, a Dalit poet from Andhra Pradesh has offered rather a dispelling critique of an aesthetic mode of expression. This rejection of an aesthetic mode is evident from the following observation made by this particular Dalit writer. He says, for example, "I am speaking to the truth about a pain haunting us, for thousands of years. I do not wear a mask, any longer, to cobbler's lament and words; no language barriers now. Today, I dump aesthetic on the dung heap; I chuck my present frame into the abyss; I stomp under my feet the rhythm and melody of my old poetic lines; I chase away the fine sound of poetry; I now speak just as I am; as Madiga, a cobbler; a slipper stitching slugger, a carcass collector; a grave digger; a scavenger; these are me."[13] This poem by a Dalit poet hides no anger against the aesthetic mode of expression. He in a way suggests an affirmation of the ordinary language over the aesthetically elevated representation of Dalit life. This poet seems to belong to the younger generation of Dalits. But there are some Dalit writers who belong to older generations, but who hold a very inspiring view that radically differs from the one held by the younger generation of Dalits.

Annabhau Sathe, a leading Dalit writer of the early 1950s and 1960s, considers aesthetic language as an important medium through which Dalits could express their social reality much more effectively. The social context in India, as he argues in his work, has produced a reality that is hydra-headed in that articulating such reality in an immediate, unmediated language would turn the social face of the Dalit completely grotesque.[14] Sathe further suggests that in a caste-ridden society such as ours, the Dalit requires a new aesthetic so as to make beautiful what is considered grotesque. At the subjective level, as Sathe earnestly suggests, Dalits require aesthetic much more urgently so as to retain their human face. To put it differently, Sathe suggests an aesthetic modification of Dalit reality. Sathe thus suggests that the Dalit can acquire aesthetic sense through creative imagination rather than raw empirical language. Approaching reality with naked languages thus unaided by aesthetics would be less inspiring and hence Sathe avoids the use of what he calls a "*batbatit*" language or grotesque language. Sathe suggests aesthetic language as the substitute for the *batbatit* language. However, Sathe also cautions us and says that creative imagination has to be used with immense care. Too much use of imagination might lead a person to drift away from reality, which is the inspirational source of the

aesthetic, Sathe observes. *Batbatit* language, just to take Sathe's aesthetic concern forward, may lead to an un-self-conscious display of reality.[15] To put the point differently, aesthetic expression would help create the possibility of a self-conscious form of life, which would eventually overcome the "*batbatiti*" expression of Dalit reality. In fact, the Dalit poet who was interested in putting the aesthetic language on the dung heap cannot avoid resorting to the aesthetic mode of expression of his subjectivity. His aesthetic seems to be politically active against upper-caste domination.

The Dalit poet referenced above, who has a social background of treating leather at different levels of its production however, has chosen—perhaps unwittingly—to deploy aesthetics as the resource to score a point against the upper castes who seek to denigrate Dalits. He asks a series of questions to his upper-caste adversaries: "Did your grandfather stitch the slippers?; Did your father beat the drum; Did you even know the smell of leather?" Then the Dalit poet invites this upper caste to visit the Madigawada once:

> You will learn the difference between your street and our locality; you will grasp the heart beat of drumbeat. We now are asking for our rights; our leather straps afire; cobbling knives sharp and shouting anvils are roaring and the leather belted bell of oxen.[16]

It takes no effort for anyone to detect the aesthetic that is deeply mired into a fascinating language. The language suggests the possibility of a new emancipatory music emanating from the melodious leather belted bell and also from the drum that produces its own enchanting melody. This language, which involves a subversive aesthetic, however, contradicts with poet's earlier position that seeks to put the aesthetic on the dung heap. How does one understand this contradiction, which at one level seeks to suppress the need for aesthetics as a medium of Dalit expression and at another level also takes recourse to the aesthetic in order to sharpen the Dalit moral critique of the upper caste? One can perhaps understand this inconsistent Dalit life, which is the result of a self-contradictory movement; a subjectivity that is divided into opposing moments that are constitutive of the Dalit poets' life. This contradiction can be resolved only through the resignification of an object (in the present case, one of skin or leather). Leather gets resignified by the power of the Dalit aesthetic that its subject—that is the leather worker—generates with the intention of interrogating the larger structure of discrimination. Thus, the aesthetic of leather provides Dalits with a communicative channel to unite the object and subject in a very meaningful way. There is a unity of purpose in the language of the aesthetic of leather.

The Dalit seems to be using aesthetics at a higher level of contestation. The substance of skin offers the Dalit the site for this contestation. Before we focus on skin as the site of contestation, it is necessary to offer some clarification. In the Indian context, color as an extended property of skin does not become an object of contestation as it becomes in the Western context. In the Indian context, the color of the skin does not become an asset or a liability as it becomes in the Western context. Unlike the West, particularly the United States, the color of the skin, generally speaking, does not acquire that political charge. In fact in Indian context

color acquires a confusing character. A large number of people who are from the upper caste do have black skin and many Dalits do possess a fair skin. However, the dark skin of a person from touchable caste that otherwise is considered a liability is converted into an asset through adding ritual value to skin as the corporeal property sitting on the body. The skin acquires value and privilege through the mediation of ritual touch. To put it differently, it is not an ordinary or natural touch that assigns additional value to the skin in the Indian context. Thus, the dark skin acquires an enormous ritual importance in the moral economy of touch. Conversely, the fair skin of the untouchable is grafted with certain markers that are inscribed onto the untouchable body though not with the intention of adding to the aesthetic value of the Dalit body. But the Dalit body gets grafted with markers that act as a radio collar that is used to keep track of the wild animal. Markers on Dalit skin are needed because it helps in detecting the Dalit body in the color-blind situation or in the confusing situation. Dalit skin with derogatory meaning grafted onto it is thus deployed to wither down the normative essence (self-esteem) of the Dalit personality. Thus, the skin is used as a standard to limit the reciprocity of touch both in terms of time and space. The skin of a Dalit thus becomes a "signboard" that is then used by the upper caste to avoid the moral menace, that is the untouchable. In this context an act of resignification thus involves elevation of the grotesque; repulsive and wretched to its universal beauty. Dalit intellectuals adopt an aesthetic language not only to restore universal value to their morally condemned existence but also to invite those who have acquired moral/cultural power to deliver negative judgment on others. The source of a Dalit aesthetic therefore is a touchstone that not only beautifies their own reality, but also the reality of those who seek to malign this life with negative description at the first instance. Let us see in the following section how the resignification plays out in the social imaginary of the Dalits.

One of the leading Dalit intellectuals Baburao Bagul has produced the following metaphysics to attempt a moral surgery of the heart, which is filled with the moral resources that produce negative judgment about others. Bagul in his literary imagination restores an aesthetic power to the Dalit life that has been sought to be morally degraded by the twice-born in India. He says, "You (twice born) call us untouchable; yes we are untouchables so is the SUN can you touch the SUN? You treat us as untouchables; so we are. Can you conquer panchamahabhute? You refuse to embrace us because you think we are untouchable. Can you embrace Death?"[17] The metaphorical vocabulary that is a mixture of affirmation (SUN, Panchamahabhute) and negation (death) is self-explanatory, requiring no further elaboration. Its aesthetic is something about producing an authorial meaning; then Baburao's meta-language is also producing a different and perhaps authorial meaning of the world of untouchables. Similarly, the addressee in this imagination is the social tormentor who in light of the moral force of universal reason is supposed to transform himself into a decent human being.

However, one finds this production of authorial meaning quite problematic on the following grounds. First, Baburao's imagination involves Romanticism, which in turn makes "untouchable" as the category of imagination quite central for the Dalit aesthetic. One might find Baburao taking the twice-born into the romantic world

and thus replacing the need for confronting the latter in the domain of concrete social life. Those upper caste who take the need for moral surgery seriously are supposed to subject them continuously to this metaphysics as some of them may have the infinite capacity to "refill" the heart with "morally objectionable" content. Thus, a successful moral surgery depends on the simultaneous elimination of sources that fill this heart with the "dirty substance." Secondly, as corollary to the first, an act of resignification itself has an inherent limitation. It can be accused of involving a contradictory assumption: optimism and pessimism. At the level of optimism, it tries to recover the human essence in the Dalit self; but at another level it also suggests an impossibility to seek recognition from the touchable in whose eyes the Dalits never morally grow out of their stigmatized Dalithood. Thus, resignification does not receive reciprocal recognition as the touchables' aesthetic power, dependent on their reified essence: an ascendant sense of social arrogance and the totality of social dominance. The Dalit literary imagination that is central to their aesthetic also performs as the standard to define what a warm touch is and what is cold. The Dalit literary power to evaluate the moral quality of touch would always imagine the untouchable as a live-wire, which then is inaccessible to the cold and hence conditional touch of the upper caste.[18] Thus, the upper-caste reluctance to offer reciprocal recognition to the Dalit has to be understood in terms of the reciprocal reification of social relations between the two. In fact it is the upper-caste imagination to communicate benign judgment that gets reified. The touchable refuses to take flight into the ideal Dalit world. This ideal world of the Dalit is not built up around the sociological premise but around the normative promise of mutual respect and mutual recognition of equal human worth. Finally, in the absence of mutual recognition, Dalit attempts at resignification look not only to be self-satisfying, but these efforts also look prodigal. They look prodigal in terms of the moral economy of vocabulary. The vocabulary such as the Dalit as glowing sun and hence the symbol of equality and freedom adds to the interpretive value of aesthetic. Ironically, this aesthetic value also requires untouchablity as a constant negative reference point for triggering the aesthetic imagination of Dalits. However, Dalits do not have control over the reproduction of structural meanings embedded in untouchability. Secondly, on the brighter side, refusal to recognize the moral worth of the Dalit ironically provides the basis for a Dalit aesthetic, which they progressively deploy to eliminate stigmata as ontological wounds. The Dalit aesthetic at the political level is deeply agential. Let us see in the next section how Dalits put political content into the category of skin and touch.

Let me bring back the aesthetic from its elevation to metaphysics by Bagul to its material substance. In this particular section I would like to put forth the argument that the production of leather as a material practice produces the aesthetic of leather. Secondly, the Dalit imagination involving the object of leather tends to produce different meanings that get differentially built up around the different kinds of musical forms that the leather produces in the process of its own physical expansion—for example, tauting. The production of leather demands the delicate handling of hide or raw skin of animals. The process of flaying the skin from the dead cattle requires both skill and energy. That is to say, to separate the hide from the carcass in one piece, it is risky to use the knife that might damage the skin. Hence

one has to thrust the hand or fist into the hide and separate it from the carcass. Thus there is an art involved in such separation.

The process of producing superfine leather thus involves a division of labor, which is sanctioned and regulated by the caste ideology. At the initial stage that involves flaying the skin from the animal, it is one of the subcaste of untouchables to which the caste rules have mandated the job of flaying. Incidentally these are also castes that are at the lower rung of horizontal hierarchy. Thus in Maharashtra, it is the Mahars who used to do this job a few decades ago. In Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka states of India, it is the Madiga caste that does this job. Treating the raw hide that is the next stage is done by the caste called "Dhor" in Maharashtra. This particular caste plays the most important role in converting a raw hide into a semi-finished leather. At the third stage semi-finished leather travels to another untouchable caste, Chambhar, who then converts this leather into different articles such as leather buckets, footwear, and so on. Production thus involves a division of labor that also assigns an aesthetic value to leather. This aesthetic value is different from the aesthetic that the touchable whose experience involves the consumption and the offer of an utilitarian angle attached to it while the aesthetic value that the Dalit attaches to leather is subversion. Let us look at the question as to how a Dalit aesthetic associated with resignification of leather produces different but emancipatory meaning out of leather.

The ideological construction of leather by the Dalit tends to produce a normative language that definitely militates against the "batbatit" of Annabhau Sathe's vocabulary, meaning that the upper caste tend to attach to leather either through consuming the cricket ball or through using leather as a poison weapon to humiliate Dalits (e.g., the Dalits are forced to carry chappal on their heads in Tamil Nadu).

Dalit literary imagination uses the act of flaying the raw hide from the carcass in order to produce a politically subversive meaning that has implications for creating anxiety in the upper-caste self that otherwise feels quite settled without any intellectual challenge from below. In the Brahmanical metaphysics of caste, flaying the skin is related to the ritual act of rendering the skin of another human being untouchable. Thus, flaying as a symbolic act, is tantamount to the grafting of a stigma onto the skin of an untouchable. This grafting is of course different from the skin grafting in the medical science. Grafting of skin in the second sense is temporary while it is permanent in the former sense. However, the Dalit seems to shed this skin with stigma attached to it through modernist mediation at one level and ethical transformation at another. Shedding of skin not in degree but in absolute terms could also be seen in terms of the untouchables converting to Buddhism in 1956. Casting off dead or stigmatized skin is evident in the literary imagination of the prominent Dalit poet who says:

> Jenvha tumi fadat hota; tenvha amhi fadakt hoto,
> Jenvha amhi fadakto tenvha tumhi fadata[19]

(When you, the upper caste, were dissecting our skin through the ideology of purity–pollution, we the untouchables were flaying the skin of the dead cattle. Now we are flaying your skin through the force of modernity; you are dealing with the dead

skin.) Thus the Dalit poet is turning the defiling meaning of leather against those who produced this meaning so as to push the Dalit out of the civilizational sphere that is based on the corporeal touch of skin. In this regard, it is important to bring in here the difference between the social meaning attached to skin in the cultural context in which white skin is treated as the touchstone of social gradation and social status. In Jamaica, for example, hierarchical status valuations of different people were made according to different grade of skin "shading," with pure whiteness being widely valued in hegemonic cultural discourse as superior to all, and declining value corresponding to lesser degrees of whiteness and the lowest value for blackness.[20] In the Indian context, on the other hand, this pyramidal notion of skin is not relevant as the color is a confusing category in caste terms. It is the scale of touch that decides the social value of a person.

At the assertive level where Dalits take recourse to modernity, the vocabulary undergoes an inversion, thus acquiring a subversive meaning of Dalit aesthetic existence vis-à-vis the socially dominant castes. Thus, in such inversion the vocabulary in Marathi "fadane" (flaying) acquires a discursive character available for the intersecting purposes of both the socially dominant and those who are fighting their cultural subordination.

At another level, leather also provides discursive ground for Dalits who then put an emancipatory meaning, thus making language a normative resource to bring out a sense of reason within the recalcitrant touchable. Leather provides reason as a weapon with which the Dalits seek to fight upper-caste prejudice. Let us look at the following folk song that was composed by the Dalit in the early 1950s with the intention to expose the contradiction within the upper castes' social attitudes. "You (upper caste) drink water from the 'mot' leather bucket that we stitched for your irrigation. But you do not touch us!"[21] This particular song clearly brings out the sense of unfairness that is associated with the discriminatory social attitude of the upper caste. This song also shows that the upper caste have introduced a hierarchical meaning in an object of leather according to which the live skin of the untouchable is not worthy of touch. As against this even the dead skin (mot) of a cow, for example, is less problematic for the upper caste. The Dalit aesthetic hints at the language of justice and equality, which is folded into the leather bucket but which flows with the water that is released from the leather bucket. The cognitive capacity of the Dalit unfolds the emancipatory meaning that is hidden in the leather bucket. Dalits through their cognition take on leather, render the very idea of leather much more complex in a conceptual sense. The complex language emerges from their experience of discrimination. The social construction of a leather bucket provides universal ground on which the Dalit acquires not only morally, but epistemologically superior discursive position from which to reason with the upper caste that the former are right and equality and justice are on their side. Social construction of leather has a goal in as much as it seeks to persuade the upper caste about the fact that there is an unconditional value to reason. For the Dalit, therefore, reason is an instrument to attain truth and to neutralize prejudice that is linked to the hierarchical construction of skin or leather.

This force of reason also opens up the dialogue within the Dalit community that has spiritualized the idea of skin to the extent that the live skin of their body has acquired a negative meaning in their own cognitive scheme. In Maharashtra, the lower-caste women have developed a spiritual reason not to cover their skin that is associated with the top of their corporeal body. They further argue that it is the greed for skin of the dead mythical deer in Rāmāyaṇa that was the root cause for Rāmāyaṇa. In Rāmāyaṇa, Sita had the fascination for the skin of a mythical deer, as she desired to stitch a "kancholi," an upper garment made out of the skin of deer. Hence she sends Laksman to get the deer but in the process renders herself vulnerable to Ravana's evil designs. Since skin is the root cause of such calamity, why wear the blouse at all? This thinking can come under heavy rational scrutiny if one takes the force of reason as available in the Dalit songs as mentioned above.

The tactile auditory aesthetics from the Dalit perspective results from the leather dynamics, which is built up around two opposite conditions: tauting and flaccidity. When leather is molded into a tauting form or when it is transformed into an expansive mode, it is in such condition, that leather creates the condition for music and rhythm. In this regard, it is also interesting to note that it is not the skin alone that is responsible for producing rhythm and music when its gets mounted on the two metal rings that connect this leather. In fact the melody is guaranteed by the leather cord that is used to stitch the leather to the metal ring. The leather drum that the Dalits beat on several occasions is the symbol of the arrival of their freedom. The sound of the drum travels across both the physical and spiritual boundaries that in the olden times had constrained the sound of drum to both time and space. To put it differently, Dalits were forced to beat the drums not only on certain religious and cultural occasions but also to announce their arrival in the public sphere that was regulated by the ideology of purity–pollution. This ideology did not allow the Dalit to enter the public spaces at will. They were forced to announce their arrival, even if they had entered the traditional village boundaries at the designated time in the evening and in the afternoon. This time was reserved for the untouchable because it is during this time the Dalit would not carry their shadows with them as shadows were also considered as the source of ritual pollution by the top of the twice-born. The liberating sound of the "halagi" that was played in the late evening continues to permeate the entire "panchcroci" village vicinity with spiritual meaning. This spiritual music does have a soothing impact on the troubled soul of the Brahmin even today. If the upper caste raises objections to a Matang (Dalit) playing the Dafale (drum) for his own spiritual satisfaction, then the Matang can turn the same musical instrument into a poison weapon, which can then be used in the art of resistance against the local lords. The Dalit would refuse to taut the leather in case it has become flaccid due to moisture conditions. For the satisfaction of the local lord, the untouchable would try to warm the drum on a fire but he would not warm the crucial part of the drum (the leather stitched to the metal ring with leather cord) with the intention of producing a high musical note, but to retain its flaccidity. This would not give any clue to the lord who would feel completely frustrated and ultimately accuse the drum of emptiness, of not yielding music.

However, there are rather intellectually agile Dalit aestheticians who would not buy into this description of Dalit drum as empty pot. For example Sumitra, a Dalit woman who taught music at the Maharaja College at Mysore in Karnataka, would argue that the Dalit drum is not empty. In fact, she would argue that it is filled with moral significance. According to her, while producing music for the upper castes, it shows tolerance toward upper-caste arrogance and hence involves endurance of pain. Sumitra's elevation of the drum to the highest level of aesthetic expression where the word-stretching is ontologically linked to the existential condition of a poor who is perpetually involved in the struggle to stretch within the limited resources. At another level, the phenomenon of stretching or expanding the skin also involves both pain and joy. The expansion of skin of a pregnant woman, which metaphorically acquires the size of a drum, involves both physical pain and worldly joy. The male's inability to expand the skin the same way as pregnant woman does may lead to psychological pain that the former cannot expand the skin as he is not biologically equipped for pregnancy. Yet in another sense, the leather drum plays a vicious role in terms of subsuming the cry of the widow who does not want to die with her husband on the pyre. In the heyday of Sati, the upper-caste patriarchy used to play drums loudly so that the people around the pyre as spectacle could not hear this cry. Thus in the case of the Dalit, using drums as the symbols of freedom, but in another case of a high-caste Hindu widow it assumes the role of a villain.[22] The ontology of melancholy produced through the music of the drum resonates with the cry of a burning woman.

From the above presentation, one might get the sense that the universe of the aesthetic has fragmentary articulation. This kind of articulation emanates essentially from interesting forms of aesthetic consciousness. The absence of an ethical element in the formation of aesthetic consciousness necessarily accounts for this intersecting nature. Thus, aesthetic consciousness in the Indian context acquires not just the differential but the discriminatory expression rooted in the hierarchical conception of skin. Thus, the upper caste would consider "formatted" dead skin as an aesthetic object. The people of this caste, however, would treat the live skin of an untouchable as an object of repulsion. Even today, the upper castes take every care to protect their skin not only from the touch but even from the "defiling shadow" of the live skin of the untouchables. But it is also worthy of our attention that satisfaction of aesthetic taste, in modern times, eliminates the separation between skin and touch. The realm of the "laukika" (quotidian) brings about a certain intimacy between skin and touch. However, the logic of the ideology of purity–pollution continues to prevent the upper caste from touching the live skin, while it—for pragmatic reasons—touches the formatted dead skin (the leather ball). The idea of ritual repulsion continues to produce a differential sensual response to dead skin as against the live skin. In a paradoxical way, dead skin and the live skin of the upper caste, which lack sensitivity of touch, achieve ontological unity in as much as both kinds of skin lose their porous surface and become seamless. The dead skin loses its porous surface and hence sensitivity through its separation (flaying) from the beast's body, while the impact of the ideology of purity–pollution converts the live skin of the upper caste into a dead skin as it resists subtracting the vitality that can be obtained

through touching the other live skin. Paradoxically, the upper caste—for aesthetic reasons—finds more value in the dead skin (the cricket ball) than in the live skin of an untouchable leather worker. An aesthetic privileging dead skin over live skin introduces a contradiction between ethics and aesthetic. The core concern of this essay was to address this contradiction and suggest its resolution by making vitality of touch dependent on the ethics of touch. Touch, in an ethical sense, is the vital moral need of the decent society. The realization of decent society in turn is based on the gradual elimination of the sense of smelling and sniffing. Sniffing and smelling provides the basis for the hierarchical aesthetic sensibilities. Sniffing regulated by the norms of purity and pollution in the Indian context makes the mutual touching of live skin difficult, if not impossible. Sniffing—not as the physical sensation of a property, but more as ritual resource—aids the upper caste in protecting themselves by creating distance and cordoning of the boundaries around the socially privileged body. Thus, smelling and sniffing generates both moral and social resistance to the human act of touching the live skin. Unconditional touching assumes the absences of smelling and sniffing. In an unconditional touching, that which is used by the upper caste as banisters (such as smelling and sniffing) would no longer be needed for acquiring aesthetic sensibilities. By intensifying the distance from hearing to seeing, the aesthetic becomes nonvisceral. In fact, unconditional touching would produce unity between ethics and aesthetic. It would remove the very basis that seeks to put the aesthetic of dead skin before the ethics of touching the live skin. In fact, ethics of touch would have moral power to convert the live skin that has been deadened by the ideology of purity–pollution. We can substantiate this point by citing the most clinching scene in the epochal novel *Sanskara*.[23] In the novel the authorial character Praneshacharya—an upper-caste Brahmin who is constituted and activated by the ideology of purity-pollution—uses smell and sniffing so as to insulate his ritually pure skin from touching the skin of an untouchable woman. This folding of oneself into "pure" skin, however, in an ethical sense produces deadness in his skin. Praneshacharya's struggle to fold him into "pure" skin, effectively dissolves into moral insignificance and hence through insulation it acquires deadness. It is the emancipatory touch of Chandra, an untouchable woman and the protagonist of the novel, that converts the dead skin of Praneshacharya into live skin. This happens through Chandra's revolutionary act of embracing the self-insulated orthodox Brahmin. This divine touch of Chandra helps this orthodox Brahmin to flow freely out of the body that had become a cesspool filled with the ideology of purity-pollution. Chandra's ethical move in the novel also sends a message, to some of the leading poets such as Baburao Bagul and folk singers such as Waman Kardak, for example, not to become a sparrow and to not remain merely in an imagined world,[24] but to remain a human being in the concrete world and to become both the subject and object of the aesthetic of emancipation. It would also suggest that the Dalit and its opposite (the Brahmin) should flow like a clean wind and clean water. Flowing like wind and water is another name for freedom. The benefit of initiating a politically responsible aesthetic of touch would be the breathing of ethics back into the philosophy of the senses. Aesthetic sensibilities derived from the sensation of the eyes like seeing and from the ears listening to music may be an important component

of the philosophy of the senses, but such philosophy without the ethics of touch would be breathless. In order to restore breath to this philosophy of aesthetics, one needs to reflect on the ethics of touch. It cannot assign completeness based on eyes and ears, if it lacks sensitivity to and readiness for active touch. Politically and vitally, aesthetics without ethics is breathless.

NOTES

* I would like to thank Prof. Arindam Chakrabarti for his social and cognitive generosity that helped me in believing that there is some worth in my essay.

1. Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004).
2. Gopal Guru, "Rejection of Rejection," in *Humiliation: Claims and Context*, ed. Gopal Guru (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 212.
3. Paul Guyer, *Kant* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 161.
4. This is my personal conversation with the dalit activist from Lucknow. Many dalit activists preserve this memory even today.
5. Lasit Malinga is the Srilankan fast Bowler.
6. Roslyn Wallach Bologh, *Dialectical Phenomenology: Marx's Method* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 20.
7. P. Balu, a leather worker's son, was a leading cricketer from Mumbai in the early 1920s. This has been documented by C. B. Khairmode in the *Biography of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar* (Marathi) (Pune: Sugawa Publication, Vol. 2, 1991), p. 146.
8. N. Judith Shklar, *Ordinary Vices* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984). The focus of this important study is on the negative aspect of snobbery.
9. Anzieu Didier, *The Skin Ego*, trans. Chris Turner (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 104.
10. Ibid., p. 61.
11. Levinas has discussed Ethics of Face in his work on *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969). For the discussion on ethics of face refer to section III of the volume.
12. Sundar Sarukkai, "Phenomenology of Untouchability," in *Cracked Mirror*, ed. Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 157.
13. "Drumbeat, Yendluri Sudhakar," trans. Syed Mujeebuddin, in *Steel Nibs Are Sprouting: New Dalit Writings from South India*, ed. K. Satyanarayan and Suzie Tharu (Noida, Uttar Pradesh: HarperCollins India, 2013), p. 592.
14. Ashok Chousalkar and Randhir Shinde (eds.), *Collection of Essays by Annabhau Sathe* (Marathi) (Kolhapur Shramik Prathistahn, 2011), p. 38.
15. Ibid.

16. K. Satyanarayana and Suzie Tharu, *Steel Nibs Are Sprouting: New Dalit Writings from South India* (Noida, Uttar Pradesh: HarperCollins India, 2013), p. 592.
17. Guru, *Humiliation*.
18. N. K. Hanumanthaiah, "Dossier In Hannda," in *Steel Nibs Are Sprouting: New Dalit Writings from South India*, ed. Satyanarayana and Suzie Tharu, (Noida, Utter Pradesh: Harper and Collins, 2013), pp. 372–74.
19. This is an oral communication with P. I. Sonkamble who taught me English Literature at Babasaheb Ambedkar College, Aurangabad.
20. Anna Marie Smith, "Rastafari as Resistance and the Ambiguities of Essentialism in the New Social Movements," in *The Making of Political Identities*, ed. Laclau Earnest (London: Verso, 1994), p. 184.
21. Gopal Guru, *Dalit Cultural Movement and Dialectics of Dalit Politics in Maharashtra* (Mumbai: Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, 1997), p. 6.
22. Sumant Muranjan, *Purohit Vargache Varchsvae ani Baharatcha Samajik Itihas* (Marathi) (Wai: Pradnya Path Shala, 1973), p. 134. In this particular work Muranjan has taken trouble to document important testimonies of the Western travelers who made moving observation about Sattee as a spectacle.
23. U. R. AnantMurty, *Sanskara*, 2nd edition (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012).
24. This has been the theme of leading dalit poets such as Baburao Bagul and Waman dada Kardak from Maharashtra. The metaphor of a bird is used as the symbol of freedom and it also expresses the desire to escape the trauma and stigma of untouchability and casteism.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Demands and Dilemmas of Durga Puja "Art": Notes on a Contemporary Festival Aesthetic

TAPATI GUHA-THAKURTA

I. INTRODUCTION

The essay has as its backdrop the transformed artistic profile of the Durga Pujas of contemporary Kolkata and the new identity of the festival as one of the city's biggest, most spectacular public art events. It places itself against a long-standing discourse that has celebrated the extraordinary artistry of the images of the goddess (*pratimas*) and the elaborate architectural pavilions (*pandals*) in which she comes to be housed (Figures 15.1 and 15.2), even as it has decried the increasing desacralization and commercialization of the religious festival. My study sets out to complicate this discourse by arguing a case for the overlapping configurations of the traditional and the contemporary, the devotional and the commercial, the artistic and the corporate in today's Durga Pujas. It does so by focusing its lens closely on the time frame of the present and the urban space of a single city, whose image has grown to be synonymous with this grand autumnal festival of the goddess. It looks in particular at the coming of age at the turn of the twenty-first century of new categories of Durga Puja art and artist, alongside a new thriving vocation of Puja designing: one that has emerged both in competition and collaboration with the older hereditary trades of clay idol-making and *pandal* constructions, and opened up novel spaces for popular art production and spectatorship.[1]

Yet the designation of art and artist are neither easily wrought nor secured in this transient domain of mass festivity. One of my main intentions in this essay is to interrogate the notion of the aesthetic and the terms on which it may be inserted within the residual religious occasion and the consumerist extravaganza of today's festival. The demands and difficulties of such an insertion are the heart of my concerns. To what extent does the envelope of the aesthetic enable the ephemeral ritual icon to become a work of art? How effectively can it mediate the commercial publicities, promotions, and competitions that have invaded the current economy of the Pujas? How does art provide a special form of branding of the contemporary festival? What kind of special dispensation of artist



FIGURE 15.1: Example of an innovative "Art" Durga—Bhabatosh Sutar's Goddess with Butterfly Wings, made for the Sikdarbagan Sarbojanin Puja, 2012, now on display at a Warehouse Gallery in the Dhakuria Lakes.



FIGURE 15.2: A Buddhist Pagoda Tableau, serving as the Architectural Setting for the Goddess—BE Block (East) Puja, Salt Lake, 2009.

and designer has the festival nurtured, and what are the inbuilt constraints of the field that keeps destabilizing these? And how does one contend with the ever-slipping lines of distinction between the artist and the artisan in this sphere of practice?

The essay brings these many questions to bear around set of individual designer profiles and the specific variants of "art" or "theme" Pujas that they have brought into the field. A curious local term that came into circulation over the past decade, the notion of the "theme" Puja is one that is premised on the figure of the artist/designer and the idea of an integrated production, conceived and executed by a single designer and his work team that often involves a professional idol-maker, with added titles and concept notes (Figures 15.3 and 15.4). The earlier convention of a tripartite division of commissions—between a decorator firm, frequently of a suburban town, which was given charge of constructing vast architectural pavilions out of intricate scaffolding of bamboo and ply planks; an idol-maker and his workshop (primarily from the city's oldest and main clay-image-making hub at Kumartuli) that produced the Durga image-group in a variety of styles (ranging from the traditionally stylized single-frame units to multiple-frame individually positioned realist figures); and the small electrical workshops (coming especially out of the district town of Chandannagar) that specialized in creating decorations and scenes through colored light bulb panels—is never fully displaced. But it becomes the identifier of an older practice of Puja productions and a certain type of big community Pujas that have

consciously continued with this practice. In contrast, the period's new entity of "theme" Pujas heralded a marked shift in production formats, placing a particular premium on individual authorship and style, also on synchrony and coordination between all parts of the tableau (the image, the pavilion, the lights, and even the music).[2] It offered up a variety of tableau-types, ranging from exact replicas of historical monuments and archaeological sites to theme parks and tribal art villages (both national and global) to new orders of "conceptual art" (Figures 15.3, 15.4). Through the careers of these designers and their work, plotted over the first decade of the new millennium, I trace the emergence of a particular aesthetics of vernacular modernism and a new genre of festival art that negotiates the different resources of traditional Indian architecture and sculpture, craft and tribal art idioms, and modern installation art (Figure 15.5).

At the same time, I also address the fragility and ambivalence of the claims of art in this field of production and viewership. If the destinies of these Durga Puja artists remain perilously dependent on sponsors and awards, also increasingly now on the political patronage of neighborhood organizing clubs hosting the Pujas, artistic aspirations here have to also battle two other trajectories that are germane to the festival phenomenon—the trajectories of excess and ephemerality. The bane of excess is today manifest not only at the visual level of the advertising and



FIGURE 15.3: Replica of the Sanchi Stupa, created by designer, Dipak Ghosh, who specializes in the production of exact copies of Indian Historical Monuments—Jodhpur Park Puja, 2011.



FIGURE 15.4: Recreation of a South African Village by designer, Amar Sarkar, whose Forte Lay in the Production of Folk and Primitive Art Tableaux—Bosepukur Shitala Mandir Puja, Kasba, 2005.



FIGURE 15.5: Puja Courtyard installation by artist, Bhabatosh Sutar, using the ten arms of the Goddess and the decapitated Buffalo Head—Rajdanga Naba Uday Sangha Puja, Kasba, 2010.

sponsorship clutter that threaten to smother the work on view (Figure 15.6), but also at the level overproduction and inundation of the form of the "theme" Pujas to a point of saturation. How do stakes on originality and authorship (that are so essential to the notion of art) survive in such spheres? What explains the huge investment in funds and the intensity of labor, time, and creative energy that is invested in art productions that are intended to last only the week of the festival? Whereas the older seasonal practices of idol and *pandal* making have had the logic of destruction, dismantling, and recycling of materials built into the logic of their trades, the newer genres of Durga Puja art are left struggling to come to terms with their ephemeral life as public tableaux and postfestival redundancy as collectible or preservable artworks. The essays works itself around these fundamental tensions that surround the dispensations of art in this field of festival productions.

I.1. The Vocation of Puja Designing

Let me begin by considering the way the new trend of "theme" Pujas stands defined by the complimentary vocations of art, craft, and design. Notions of "art" in this sphere, I argue, stand inseparable from the skills of designing and fabrication. There is a long background history that can be invoked, in this context, of the changing structures of colonial and nationalist art education in Bengal and in other parts of India, where over the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the



FIGURE 15.6: Dense Cluster of Puja Award Banners outside the 25 Pally Puja, Khidirpur, 2012.

promotion of the "industrial" and "applied arts" was continually set apart from the training in the "fine arts." Caught in these structures, handicrafts and ornamental design remained relegated to a different social sphere of artisanal practice as against the emergence of a distinctly middle-class profession of art.[3] Studies of art and nationalism in early- and mid-twentieth-century Bengal—especially of the alternative ambience of art education at a place such as Santiniketan—have also looked at the new compulsions of modern art to reintegrate itself with its rural other, and enter into a new dialogue with the aesthetics of design and the idioms of craft and folk arts.[4] Yet all through these negotiations, right into the present, craft and design have remained distinctly separated and hierarchized spheres of training and practice that are always appended to art. What has not been studied adequately is another transition that takes place over the middle years of the twentieth century, with opening up of new departments of crafts, commercial art, and graphic design within art schools, whereby the practice of design moves from the artisanal arts to becoming a thriving middle-class profession.

In these specific settings of art pedagogy of early twentieth-century Bengal, can we think of an emergent notion of design as a new area of practice that falls between the two separated spheres of art and craft, even as it continually seeks to build bridges between them? How may we conceive of this intermediate identity of design as never quite becoming "modern art," while ceasing to be the preserve of the nineteenth-century category of India's "industrial" and "decorative arts"? The city's Durga Pujas provide an ideal site for thinking about these questions. They show how, on the ground, these social and institutional separations of worlds of art from those of crafts or commercial design are seldom fully in place, and how frequently blurred are the lines distinguishing the middle-class artistic profession from other lesser livelihoods that feed off the same pool of skills and training. As against a few Durga Puja designers, who have secured a niche for themselves in the enclaves of modern art, are a host of others operating at the margins who are coming into this seasonal circuit of art activity from these parallel livelihoods in craft-making, *pandal*, and pavilion construction, interior decoration, and cinema and television set design, and their round-the-year run of commercial work. In the first years of the "theme" Pujas, there was a novelty to this figure of the artist and distinctiveness to his presence. Over time, with the indiscriminate proliferation of the trend, the artistic qualification of those taking up commissions for Puja designing becomes as loose as the genre of productions themselves, opening the field to new hierarchies and contestations.

In October 2010, a lavishly illustrated magazine feature on Kolkata's Durga Puja talked of around 200 art college graduates "infusing a carefully crafted artistic energy" into that year's event. The main intention of the feature was to profile on a national forum what it called "The Durga Puja Zeitgeist," a new spirit of the festival that was leaving its spectacular artistic imprint in novel Puja installations across different spaces of the city.[5] There were other important statistics that the article provided—that this annual festival in the city is now a forty crore rupees industry;[6] that there were around forty-five different kinds of companies (ranging from multinationals to local electrical manufacturers, including a growing number of print and television media houses),

which were pouring their investments into festival coverage, advertising, and awards; and that over 1,000 of the 4,500 odd Durga Pujas held in Calcutta, in conjunction with Salt Lake and New Town Rajarhat, were offering "theme" or "art" productions. These statistics point to a clear link between the flows of corporate capital and professional artistic enterprise into the festival, suggesting that the new aesthetic "zeitgeist" of the city's Durga Pujas is inextricably tied to the transforming commercial logistics of the contemporary event.

The same year, we find other newspaper reports pushing against the grain of this equation. Talking of their drift away from Puja productions, a group of artists, who had all worked on festival tableaux during the early- and mid-2000s, complained about how the obsession of Puja committees with awards and the "heat of competition" (even where they had not enlisted for any of the contests) had soured their work experience. What specially irked them was the presumed right of persons with no "appreciation of art" to dictate terms or offer suggestions of how to design their Pujas, creating situations where a sponsor or organizer becomes "more adept at talking about art than a professional artist."[7] What surfaces is a new register of contrasts between the period's indiscriminate spread of "theme" Pujas and the exclusivity of a select repertoire of "art" productions, pitching the notions of "theme" and "art" Pujas on contrary lines. The more, it was commented, that "themes" rule the market and Puja contests keep multiplying, the less becomes the draw into the field of a different kind of artist. If the one phenomenon ("theme" Pujas) is seen as constitutively grounded in sponsorships and awards, the other (the "art" Puja) is held up as a different order of researched creative endeavor, with its makers looking askance at the perfunctory mass production of "themes" by persons without either the professional training or the groundwork that is apparently required.

What also emerges is an internal splitting of the art profession as it throws itself, with varying intensity, into this unbounded mass domain of festivity and finds itself struggling to hold on to a notion of "true" creative practice within this sphere. To whom then, does the field belong? What marks out the "greater" from the "lesser" artists in today's booming vocation of Puja designing, and what kinds of criteria of discerning judgment are being proposed here, that rides above the choices of awards and mass appeal? How are new markers of artistic eligibility and ineligibility being sought out in a sphere that can barely sustain these fine divisions? It is along this shifting temporal grid of new waves of Puja productions, where the categories of "theme" and "art" Pujas will both merge and unmerge, that I will undertake a curatorial tour through space and time of the work of a small selection of Puja designers. What will unfold in the process is also a new spatial topography of the festival across a series of small older and newer neighborhoods of the city.

I.2. The Artist as Puja Designer

I.2.1. Sanatan Dinda

Our tour begins in a dingy alley in the run-down, congested North Kolkata *para* (neighborhood) of Hatibagan that serves as an archetypal site of the city's "theme" Pujas. It is a series of similar obscure nonelite neighborhoods spread across the city,

which becomes the main breeding ground of the new style of Pujas, where local organizing clubs begin seeking out a new social order of viewers and corporate sponsors and lay claim to a new upgraded profile through the creativity of their Puja designer and the cultural distinction of their Pujas. It is from these lanes of Hatibagan that we can track the rise and meteoric success over the past decade of Sanatan Dinda as one of the star Durga Puja designers of contemporary Kolkata—with a career in Puja designing that stretches from the end of the 1990s into the present, and a parallel career as a gallery artist that began to take off in the late 2000s. There is a palpable excess in his self-projections—whether in the pontification he plunges into about his creative practice and cosmic conceptions of the goddesses; or in his mouthful of references to Dadaism, Surrealism, or Pop Art all of which he claims to draw on; or in the flashy sartorial styles he revels in. A carefully cultivated image has been all important for Sanatan Dinda, as he has moved from being known mainly as a Puja designer in this North Kolkata locality to becoming an artist at large with a growing success with art galleries and sales of his paintings (Figure 15.7).[8]

In 2007, the year he completed a decade of his career in Puja designing, the artist's face was prominently on display, side by side with the image of his award-winning Durga image of the previous season, on the publicity banner of the Nalin Sarkar Street Puja of Hatibagan. Marking its seventy-fifth year that season, this Puja had come to carry the signature style of this artist. There are a number of novelties to be flagged



FIGURE 15.7: Puja banner advertising the artist, Sanatan Dinda, his Durga image of 2006, and the Nalin Sarkar Street Puja, 2007.

here. Never before in the thickening topography of the city's Puja hoardings had the face of the designer been featured alongside his name and work; and seldom had we seen a promotional caption that played a clever pun around the name of the designer. The term, *sanatan*, which refers to the very ancient and pure in a religious tradition, was used by the advertisers to mark out a particular legacy of Durga Puja creations as well as this artist as the special pride of the Nalin Sarkar Street Puja.[9] This was also possibly the only Puja in the city where several private art galleries came into the scene as sponsors. The artist told us that a few individual buyers of his painting had also contributed funds that year for his Puja, and parts of his season's installation would be given to these galleries and collectors. Sanatan Dinda was all out to drive home his hard-won identity as an artist, strewing his Puja neighborhood with its imprints.

Sanatan Dinda's recounting of his own past has subtly shifted over the different years we have interviewed him, each retelling inflected by his changing stature as an artist. But the one constant point of reference has been to his humble social background and his years of growing up in the slums of Kumartuli, where his father ran a local ration store. Here, he learnt to make his own idols by watching the work of senior *mrtishilpis* (clay-modelers) and found in their image-making process the main inspiration for his own dabbling with sculpture. His parental home has remained at Kumartuli, while he came to live and work out of Hatibagan, bought his own apartment and set up his studio at neighboring Goabagan, and more recently acquired a large studio-cum-residence at one of the most exclusive high-rise apartment enclaves on the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass. Sanatan keeps dwelling on his proverbial "rags to riches" story. He bristled at the memory of being labeled a *patua* (folk painter) who had turned to idol-making because he could not become a modern artist, by the same people who later jumped on to the bandwagon of Puja designing. That he could not afford to enroll in the sculpture department at the Government Art College and had to specialize instead in painting is another frequent theme of recall. And he also constantly stresses the fact that it is because he has risen from the "grassroots" that he has been specially committed to offering his art to the common public through the forum of the Durga Pujas.

Graduating from the Government Art College, Calcutta, in 1992, venturing into solo and group exhibitions of his paintings and sculptures, Sanatan Dinda began designing the Hatibagan Sarbojanin Puja of his neighborhood in 1998. He took his cue from an innovative pavilion that one of his seniors from the Art College had created for that Puja the previous year, bringing to it the coveted Asian Paints Sharad Samman. It is significant to note the early craft orientations of his pavilion designs, featuring Madhubani painting (1998), the appliqué cloth work of Pipli in Orissa (1999), or the painted wooden dolls of Bardhaman (2000). The foregrounding of the "conceptual" comes about, in his case, with his deepening engagement with Tantrik art and philosophy, and with the historical iconography of the Devi—concentrating his attention on the form of the goddess that he has always sculpted himself and maintained as the center piece of each of his Puja installations. As with many of his colleagues in the field, extensive prior research (in his case, on the sculptural forms of the goddess in Indian art) and field visits to different shrines in India became the prime markers of authenticity of his work. Sanatan Dinda's goddesses have been

his speciality, each one emerging out of a closely studied corpus of the Hindu and Tibetan Buddhist pantheon of Eastern India (Figure 15.8). His forte also lies in the fabrication of shrine-like structures in the narrow lane of the Puja site, and in the creation of the ambience of an inner temple sanctum leading up to an image of the goddess, that simulated the look of a worshipped stone icon. In a production of 2002, for instance, the smearing of oil, turmeric, and sandal paste on the recreation in clay of a Pala period relief stone sculpture, and the playing of a recorded scriptural chant of the *Gayatri Mantra* completed the effects of a temple experience. The infusion of a heavy dose of the spiritual into his images and installations becomes the distinguishing mark of Sanatan Dinda's Pujas, providing us with a powerful instance of the way the "religious" becomes an integral part of an "art" production.



FIGURE 15.8: Sanatan Dinda's Durga, conceived in clay in the form of a Tibetan Buddhist Bronze Sculpture—Nalin Sarkar Street Puja, 2006.

The smallness of the spaces and budgets he worked with made each of Sanatan Dinda's productions archetypal of the "art" Pujas of the period.[10] In 2003, with his relation with the Hatibagan Sarbojanin Puja Committee embittered by unpaid dues, Santan shifted his allegiance to a neighboring puja on Nalin Sarkar Street on a similar narrow alley—which remained thereafter his sole chosen turf, where he carried over the same aesthetics and ambience of his Devi worship. Over successive Puja seasons, thereafter, we see this single Puja site hosting the now-branded art productions of Sanatan Dinda. Each year, the narrow length of the alley has been put to use to conceive of temple- or pagoda-like structures, with an open corridor of decorated walls leading to a towered spire above the goddess, with fabricated motifs in plaster, thermocol, and fiber covering the bamboo and ply scaffolding (Figure 15.9). Sanatan Dinda's ties to this one location and Puja singled him out among all his peers in this field of work, and have provided a unique site-specific dimension to his artistic profile in the city.[11] In turn, a steady flow of awards, a dense cluster of designer banners and commercial signage, and new groups of judges, sponsors, and viewers have dramatically transformed the social and visual festival profile of this nondescript alley.

Sanatan's Durgas have been stand-alone figures, with the goddess' accompanying children (the deities of Ganesh, Lakshmi, Saraswati, and Kartick) reduced to small figures on the framing arch or on the lower pedestal. His Durga of 2010 was bigger, more



FIGURE 15.9: Architectural Pavilion and decorated corridor, designed by Sanatan Dinda—Nalin Sarkar Street Puja, 2006.

vibrant and youthful than all his earlier creations. With a dramatically enlarged face and eyes and a spread of ten outsized hands, she rose like an animated figure out of her base (Figure 15.10). Unwavering in his emphasis on the deep religiosity of every one of his Durga images, on the morning of *Mahalaya* (the ritual beginning of the Pujas, the first of



FIGURE 15.10: Sanatan Dinda's Durga made for the Nalin Sarkar Street Puja, 2010.

the ten days of *Devipaksha*), Sanatan was perched high on a ladder, bringing his goddess to life by painting on her eyes to the sound of specially recorded scriptural chants in a choreographed spiritual ambience. The much awaited and photographed event of the *chakkshudan* (painting of eyes) of the deity had moved out of the idol-making hubs of Kumartuli to the artist's open studio on Nalin Sarkar Street. The goddess' abode he designed that year was also strikingly innovative—instead of a closed architectural structure, he introduced a crescendo of swirling silver-painted lotus stems and buds, converging on a central petal-shaped cupola, bringing an elegant flavor of Art Nouveau design amidst the drab house-fronts of the alley.

In 2011, Sanatan would undertake one of his most extravagant Puja production to date, transforming the alley into a massive boat covered with blue and silver fishing nets and hanging window frames, leading to a large vertical monolith with laser lighting effects. The theme music playing here was the song, "*Moner Manush*" by Lalan Fakir, the mystic bard of rural East Bengal, to match the symbolic setting of a boat on a river. We also now find him inserting his gallery art into his Puja installation, in the form of fiberglass sculptures with intricately embossed surfaces—a large gesturing hand, a standing male nude, and in the final sequence, a hanging bronze-tinted fiberglass figure of the goddess, breaking out of a wall, suspended above a prostrate demon conceived again as a male nude. The artist was taking all the liberties he wished with the iconography of the goddess, now that he had achieved its metamorphosis into an artwork and secured it with his signature and date. But how effectively, we may ask, does such an artwork tag hold in this sphere of reception? Its main spin-off came in the large numbers of awards that rolled in and the even larger crowds that clogged the Nalin Sarkar Street Puja. Inside that claustrophobic space, viewers were being instructed not to stand photographing the goddess but to avail of different-sized pictures prints of the image being sold outside for 10–30 rupees. The artwork here was being absorbed within a long-standing practice, that goes back to the sale of photographed images of Ramesh Pal's Durgas during the 1960s and 1970s, which this Puja committee revived in the mid-2000s with pictures of Sanatan Dinda's award-winning creations. In this milieu, it is impossible to discern whether these pictures were selling as works of art, icons, festival touring souvenirs, or a jumble of all these.

None of this, however, compromises Sanatan Dinda's standing as *the* artist in the city's Durga Pujas. Especially important is the emphasis he places on the noncommercial and purely artistic nature of his Puja productions. From the time in 2002, when he complained about the Hatibagan Sarbojanin Puja committee snatching away his prize money while still owing him 25,000 rupees for his previous year's work, he soon arrived at a position where he could now support the entire 18–19 lakhs budget of the Nalin Sarkar Street Puja from the sale of his paintings. In recent years, as he has moved far out of his home-turf to the new high-budget Pujas of South Kolkata, he has been working more and more with nonimmersable material such as fiberglass, with each of his signature-style Durga taking on the aspirations of a signed, collectible artwork. With each season have come newer social venues and greater artistic self-projections. In 2012, as he carried his work into the posh neighborhood of Jodhpur Park, he performed his line drawings on the pavilion walls

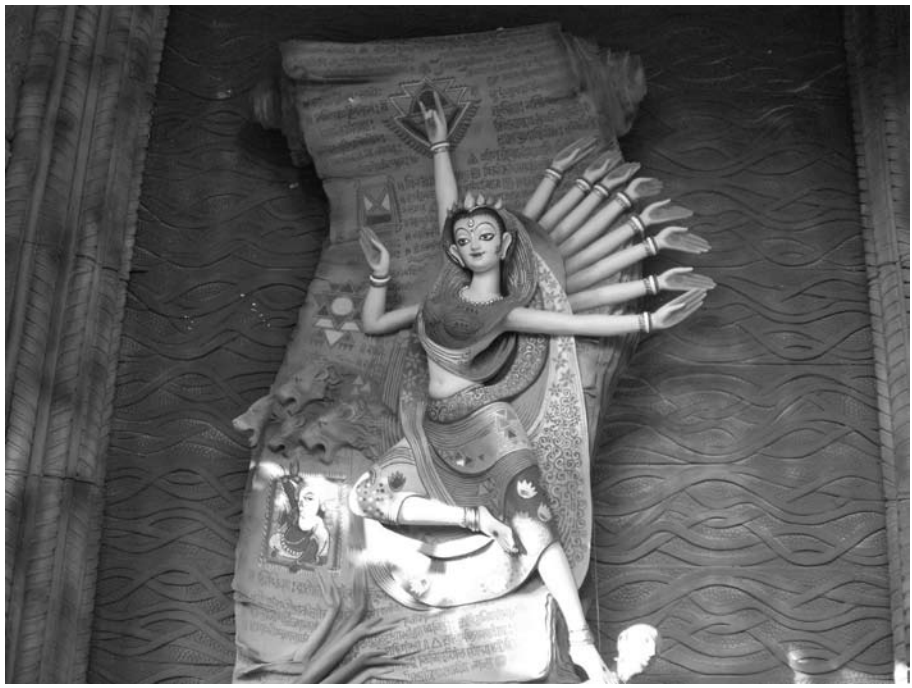


FIGURE 15.11: Sanatan Dinda's signed Fiberglass Durga Sculpture at the 95 Pally Puja, Jodhpur Park, 2012.

in the style of an M. F. Husain in a production he dedicated to the deceased veteran, and embellished with another of his signed Durga sculptures (Figure 15.11). Looking back on his career, Sanatan Dinda would like to see himself as sailing out of art college in 1992 into a full flow of success as a painter. His reluctance to acknowledge that this long repertoire of Durga Puja designing is what has created his renown in the city becomes crucial to his artistic self-positioning—it is what boosts his sense of his singularity vis-à-vis his many other art college-trained colleagues in this sphere of practice.

I.2.2. Bhabatosh Sutar

Our next designer, younger by some years to Sanatan, emerges as a sharply contrasted personality. Reticent, shy, only gradually drawn into conversation about himself and his artistic conceptions for the Pujas, Bhabatosh Sutar's long-sustained profile as one of the city's most talented Durga Puja artists has clear parallels to that of Sanatan Dinda.[12] As does the story of the acute poverty and struggle that lies behind his carefully wrought success in this profession. For the past few years, Bhabatosh Sutar has been an active member of an environmental art collective that has now set itself up as an artists' residential community over a sprawling expanse of land at Khudirampally, on the rural margins of Sarsuna in Behala, in a beautifully designed space that they have named "*Chander Haat*." Including residences alongside large

painting and sculpture studios, the space has grown to be a thriving hub of art classes, exhibitions, workshops, and collective art activity in this inner suburbia.[13] In his aspirations to pursue a full-time artistic career, he looks on his Durga Puja commissions not only as an integral part of his creative practice but also as a key source of his livelihood. The earning from the three Puja commissions he takes on each year provides a main support for his other experimental artwork, from which, he admits, there is never much money flowing in.[14]

Bhabatosh Sutar has come a very long way from the time I first encountered his work at the Barisha Shrishti Puja at Behala in 2002, where he had sculpted the Durga image for the Madhubani village complex that had been created there by a senior designer, Amar Sarkar. He remembered how hard he had to bargain for 25,000 rupees for his images with the Puja committee, which said that it could get a much cheaper idol from a traditional idol-maker. To claim a separate artwork price for his images seemed impossible then for this fresh art college graduate, who was also skilled at making clay sculptures from his teens. Looking backward and forward from this stage, Bhabatosh's emergence as an artist unfolds in close conjunction with worlds of craftsmanship and artisan skills. The chance to get admitted to the Government Art College was itself fortuitous. Losing control over the agricultural lands they owned in Barisal, Bangladesh, his family was among the late refugee peasant migrants who came across the border in 1981–82 (when Bhabatosh was 8 years old) and moved to Behala, to cheap rented rooms in these rural outskirts of Khudirampally. Bhabatosh somehow made it through school, driving a van rickshaw outside school hours. He considers as his greatest savior a local artist, Tarun Dey, who was himself a struggling art teacher in a government school in the vicinity, who bought him his first art materials and helped him gain admission in 1995 to the Government Art College, Calcutta. Through his art college years, Bhabatosh shared a rented room in Khudirampally with a friend, the two supporting themselves by taking on orders from city clients for various kinds of decorative craft objects in clay, plaster, wood, or bamboo.[15] As with innumerable such cases of those who come to be trained as artists in today's art schools, the social lines of division between art and craft practices get easily blurred.

It seemed natural that Bhabatosh would turn to various craft and folk art traditions as his main resources as he took on for three years (2003–5) the sole charge of designing the award-winning Puja of Barisha Shrishti Club of Behala. Like Sanatan Dinda, he would begin with conceiving and sculpting the Durga image, as the prime authored unit and plan the larger tableau around it. In keeping with the spreading trend of such folk art tableaux, he too talked about using the Pujas a forum for promoting these dying rural art-forms and emphasized how much he learnt about different materials and techniques from these craft traditions. But he also believed that it was because he had a more trained and creative eye than these crafts-persons that he could draw from their work-processes the confidence for his own experimental leaps with form and design. This is how he subsumed these craft idioms to evolve his own modernist folk style.

In 2003, in an enclosure filled with terracotta decor, his Durga pantheon rose as a large stylized ensemble in an open-air-pillared canopy, which used the Bankura

horse motifs as pillars to support the full structure, where the entire ensemble grew out of a series of decorated terracotta funnels and pipes that were designed to fit into each other. The next year, he switched from the monochrome of terracotta to a more colorful painted wood and bamboo carvings, where the small Puja site was transformed into the large hull of a wooden boat, leading through the simulation of river waters, into an inner open structure housing puppet-like figures of Durga and her family. We see here, once again, a pointed endeavor to transform the Durga image from an ephemeral worshipped icon to a collectible art work, with the artist negotiating the twin demands of the religious and artistic lives of his images. While he described "the divine vibrations" he experienced every time he worked on his Durga images, he was also consciously working with durable material with an eye to the post-Puja preservation of his works. His terracotta Durga of 2003, its many parts detachable to allow its transportation and reassembling in another space, made festival news that year by finding a place in the outer lawns of one of the city's five-star hotels, the ITC Sonar Bangla. It was a matter of immense pride for the artist and for the Barisha Shrishti club that their Durga images came to be acquired for the next two years as well—the wooden image of 2004 was bought by a Puja enthusiast and collector; another lacquer-work image of 2005 was commissioned by the state archaeology and craft museum at Behala. However, such pride and confidences about the artistic future of his Durga Puja creations would not endure. None of these collected works, Bhabatosh Sutar later rued, got the kind of care, attention, or display they deserved—underlining the difficulties of Puja productions of ever securing a postfestival identity as "art."[16]

From 2006 onward, Bhabatosh stuck to the more practical option of making immersable clay images, each of which became part of his distinctive oeuvre. These were the years when he moved far out of the deep south of Behala to take on multiple commissions for designing Pujas in places all over the city, spreading his work across the distances of Lake Town and Ahiritola (in the northeast and north), Khidirpur (in the west), and Bhowanipur, Naktala, and Rajdanga (in the south and southeast). Such movements across far flung parts of the city became characteristic of the vocation of Puja designers, enabling them to negotiate higher fees with every new hosting committee and inscribe different locations with the markings of their art. Bhabatosh's first move was from Barisha Shrishti Club to an obscure Puja of Natun Pally Pradip Sangha in the depressed inner quarters of Lake Town, where he took on the challenge of bringing to this unknown location crowds, connoisseurs, and awards. It is also here that he experimented with what he felt to be his first "conceptual" productions, combining rural craft resources with digitized sound technology to play out the effects of different sounds in visual objects. Erecting a conglomerate of white cave-like structures (similar in style to the Husain-Doshi Gupha in Ahmedabad), with their outer covering in plaster and the inner walls layered with mud, he placed several ventilation holes in the caves to allow air to whistle through and bounce off water-filled clay pitchers, hanging bells, and wooden cart wheels. As with all his productions, the Durga image that he had worked on months ahead in his studio was later installed in the Puja site and given its finishing touches and color to blend with its surroundings. A cluster of awards that this Puja

won that year, including the most coveted Asian Paints Sharad Samman, was the surest sign of the coming of age of such new forms of festival installations.

For the artist, the claims of art production are transferred from the investments in a collectible Durga sculpture to an entire display, which he conceives and executes from scratch to finish, with the full knowledge that it would be dismantled and sold off piece-meal by the clubs after the Pujas. It appears strangely anomalous that the artist, in this sphere of production, retains no authorial rights over his installation, which becomes the "property" of the clubs that paid for its making. The economics of this festival art is such that Bhabatosh (and many other designers like him) prefer working for a contracted fee, out of which he pays only his own team of helpers, leaving the organizing committees to supply all the raw material, labor, and infrastructural support against a fixed budget, and to dispense with the production at the end of the Pujas. It is on these transient and infirm grounds—where his "art" is continuously returned to recyclable and dispensable material and his quotient as an artist rises and falls with the ebb and flow of awards—that Bhabatosh decided to take his Puja productions into new levels of "conceptual" art.

Working the next year (2007) at the Khidirpur 25 Pally Puja, by now a well-marked "theme Puja site," Bhabatosh created one of the finest installations in this field of festival art. The work grew out of the metaphors of agriculture and cultivation, inspired by lines of an eighteenth-century Ramprasad *Shyama-sangeet*, which talked of how the human mind like the soil would yield its bounty of gold only if properly ploughed.[17] What is worth noting, though, is the striking disjunction between the deeply rural devotional affect of this song that the artist draws on and the recognizable modernist idioms of visualization that he opts for. Within a bamboo-lined enclosure and a gateway with an ornate awning, he constructed as a dramatic centerpiece a vast radial sun with bamboo poles, standing above a decorated mound of vegetation and foliage, encircled by half-bloom buds, plants, and stems that took on the form of the *trishul* (the three-pronged spear of Durga) (Figure 15.12). Beyond this stood a large angled wooden plough, through the frames of which viewers glimpsed the figure of the goddess that was also given a circular radial frame. In choosing to use expensive materials such as cement, concrete, metal, and wood, the artist was once again pushing against the grain of ephemerality of these festival tableaux. He had hoped, in vain, that his radial sun and cemented earth installation would be collected and preserved, and had even offered to remake it for a potential art collector for about 8 lakhs.

That such hopes continually circulate is as important as the fact they are seldom fulfilled. This emerges as a perennial condition of this sphere of festival production and consumption, where such laboriously created installations struggle for an identity as art amidst spaces and publics that can barely sustain them. A small children's park in a neighborhood such as Khidirpur (that demands to be returned to its everyday use immediately after the festival) and the mixed crowds that throng this Puja hardly make for an appropriate milieu for this kind of public artwork. Yet, it is with a different sense of gains and returns that artists such as Bhabatosh continue to pitch their artistic energies into a Puja installation and look on the festival as providing

them with an opportunity for creating public art, albeit temporary, that is not forthcoming from the state or any other corporate sponsor.

His productions of 2009 give a good sense of the spreading range of his themes, installation designs, and work materials, as well as his choice of the most special and innovative among these. With each of his themes, Bhabatosh works without any fixed models, continuously improvising with materials and designs, giving his artisanal team instructions for work for only few days at a time. Tight coordination and control, however, are essential as his work has now come to be regularly spread out across three Puja sites each year, among which one is typically set out by him as his primary creative work. At Rajdanga Naba Uday Sangha, beyond Kasba, off the Eastern Metropolitan Byepass, where he had been working then for two years, he returned to a traditional craft-theme—handloom weaving in Bengal—but radically broke out of the template of the simulated village complex. Instead, he used dramatic enlargements of forms of weaving looms and rows of yarns, and especially of the weaving shuttle, to create rocket-like structures, wrapping the entire installation in pastel blue and pink woven cloth (Figure 15.13). At the Abasar Puja of Bhowanipur, where he worked for the first time that year, he chose to profile the art of calligraphy in a more minimalist, streamlined installation. Drawing centrally on a Japanese design aesthetic, he used back-lit colored stenciled patterns of various script forms, with the effects of stained glass, to cover the entire arched enclosure.

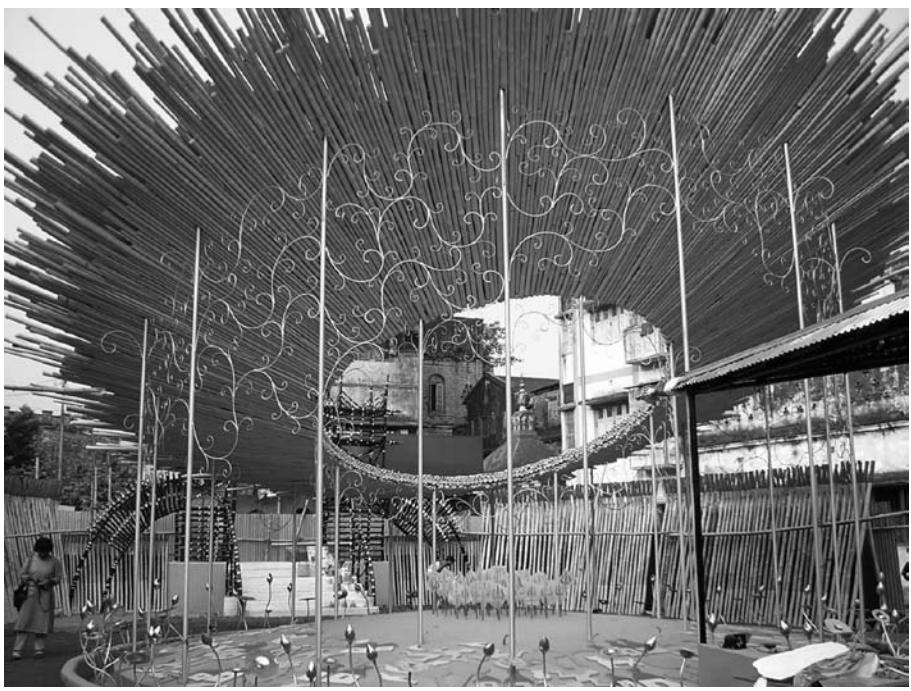


FIGURE 15.12: Bhabatosh Sutar's installation with a vast radial Sun standing above a mound of foliated Earth—25 Pally Puja, Khidirpur, 2007.



FIGURE 15.13: Bhabatosh Sutar's installation with enlarged forms of handloom weaving shuttles and looms—Rajdanga Naba Uday Sangha Puja, Kasba, 2009.

His artistic imagination and labors peaked, that season, in the work he produced at the Naktala Udayan Sangha Puja, where we saw him working again with cement and concrete, along with dried wood, to create a maze of cave-like structures decorated with abstract relief motifs. Inside he created the impression of a deep clay oven out of which emerged a semi-anthropomorphic image of Durga as a giant flame—a vast head with ten arms and multiple eyes bursting out like small fire sparks around her tree-trunk torso (Figure 15.14).

The suitability of such radically experimental iconography for a Durga Puja, and its public acceptability as a new order of festival art, could be continuously debated. His ratings on the awards circuit was fluctuating, but, undeterred, Bhabatosh was working every year at transforming his Puja productions into his chosen forms of installation art at a few select locations. An open rotunda, dramatically enclosing a vast buffalo head with the ten giant spear-wielding hands of the goddess serving as gilded and embossed fiberglass pillars, was one of his season's best of 2010, at the Rajdanga Naba Uday Sangha Puja (Figure 15.5). In 2011, he returned to conceiving of his Durga as a preservable work of sculpture in polished mahogany, within a large triangulated boat-shaped wood and bamboo pavilion at the Naktala Udayan Sangha Puja. With the change in the ruling regime had come a new avid wave of political patronage for both this Puja and its artist, and promises of the government's acquisition of this sculpture for reinstallation in one of its cultural complexes at New Town Rajarhat.[18]



FIGURE 15.14: Bhabatosh Sutar, Durga in the form of a giant flame—Naktala Udayan Sangha Puja, 2009.

I.2.3. Sushanta Pal

Of the same generation and art college background as Sanatan and Bhabatosh, Sushanta Pal's credentials are more those of a professional designer, leading us to think of how the two identities of artist and designer both overlap but also subtly stand apart in this

festival sphere.[19] Graduating with a Master's degree from the Government College of Art in 2002, he used his specialization in textile designing to set up a fabric boutique in Kasba and began working with costumes and interior designs for the new genre of Bengali films of the director, Rituparno Ghosh. There are distant family connections here with the Kumartuli Pals, with the famous idol-maker Jitendranath Pal, who (interestingly) in the 1960s and 1970s had also worked in the sets of the Tollygunge film studios—but Sushanta Pal hardly dwells on this lineage. Unlike Sanatan and Bhabatosh, he has never sculpted his own Durga idols, although he insists that each Durga image that is made by other *mritshilpis* for his tightly authored productions are done under his design specifications, with him doing the final detailing and coloring of the image from the basic structure that is produced for him. Sushanta Pal here represents a widespread trend of the times, where designers take charge of the conception, design, and execution of the full production, working in collaboration with a younger generation idol-maker of Kumartuli, many of whom like Nabakumar Pal have come to specialize in the making of sychronized "theme" Durgas.

In our many interviews, he has also made it a point to distance himself from the field's obsession with the revival of dying rural crafts and folk arts, and was skeptical about the extent to which poor crafts-persons are actually benefited in this format of production. Sushanta Pal has over the years evolved his alternative preference of working with found objects and industrial materials such as tin and scrap metal; while deeply invested in processes of object making, he has tended to push outward from organic craft material to experimenting with synthetic fibers and fabrics and digital printing, blending vernacular forms with a modern design aesthetic. He has consciously worked every year, not with teams of crafts-persons, but with batches of art students from different art colleges in the city, and strongly believes that this seasonal work of helping with Durga Puja installations should now be actively encouraged as a part of the art college curricula.

It is out of his two areas of professional work in designing textiles and film sets that Sushanta Pal conceived of the best of his early Puja productions of 2002 and 2003 at the Barisha Sahajtri Club at Behala. In a site that stood adjacent and in stiff competition with the Barisha Shrishti Puja (then the center of the "art" Puja wave), Sushanta Pal designed in 2002 a pavilion with murals using old wooden textile printing blocks that he had amassed from printing godowns, highlighting the intricacy of carvings that made each of these blocks an "art work." The measure of success of this production lay not in awards but in the later commissions that these forgotten wood block makers gained for putting up such murals elsewhere, and the new interest that was shown in preserving these blocks in places such as the Gurusaday Dutt Museum or the Weaver's Service Centre. In 2003, at the same Puja site, he simulated a full film studio set, complete with lights and camera, ready to shoot a tradition *ekchala* Durga image in a *zamindari thakurdalan*, as has been a favorite sequence in innumerable Bengali films. Using the technical hands of the film studios to create the set and even play the background musical score, he surrounded the site with old Bengali cinema posters and a screen running old film-clippings to suffuse it with the theme of the Pujas in film history.[20]

From these first years, Sushatan Pal's Puja career is marked by continuous shifts both in club locations and in forms, as he moves his work over the decade across all parts of the city, to Hatibagan, Selimpur, Santoshpur, Naktala, Baishnabghata Patuli, Bosepukur, Kalighat, or Khidirpur. In the dizzying pace of his movements, it is hard to identify any unified stylistic repertoire—nor it seems was there a demand for such a unity to build his reputation in the field. In 2004, at two not-too-distant sites at Selimpur Pally and Santoshpur Trikone Park, he was working, in one space, with colorfully painted parachute fabric to set up conically shaped pavilions, and, in the other, with the form of Rajasthani *haveli* with painted walls, sculpted relief, and mirror reflections, getting the matching Durga images to be sculpted by the art college-trained Kumartuli idol-maker, Nabakumar Pal. In the coming seasons, we would see him turning to the traditional forms of *pandal* and idol-making, trying out the old format of the bamboo, ply and cloth *shamiana*, and recreating, in another instance, a typical Kumartuli workshop shanty, strewn with straw-stuffed molds, half-painted figures, and clay face masks that took us through different stages of the making of these idols. Between 2005 and 2008, Sushanta Pal's work took on the more serial form of site-specific installations on the small grounds of the Naktala Udayan Sangha Puja, where he evolved a close relationship with the Puja committee to make this his chosen location of work for four years from 2005 to 2008. Using his skills in textile designing, he carried out here in 2006 a remarkable experiment with the art of woven tapestries, where he dissected digital prints of miniature paintings of the Devi into ribbon-strings, which he then had woven in the mode of pictorial tapestries and laid out against the structures of weaving looms in a matted enclosure (Figure 15.15). The novelty in his genre of work came to rest less in an overarching idea, more in innovations with materials and forms.[21]

As at Naktala, we see this designer's oeuvre taking on a greater stylistic density in certain locations over successive seasons. We could take, for instance, his work for the Santoshpur Lake Pally Puja in 2008, which focused on the theme of child art, and recreated a fantasy landscape with a sun, houses, plants, and flowers, using painted taffeta cloth and found objects such as bathroom pipes, buckets, watering cans, and sprays around the goddess. And we could track its carry-over, the following year, in a pavilion in the same site dedicated to the "festival of Durga" ("*Dugga Utsab*"), which was filled with fluttering banners, colorful cloth-draped poles, and featured a large-headed folk-doll Durga, whose arms, weapons, and drapes were spread out like the wings of an angel. By the end of the 2000s, Sushanta Pal was beginning to work more and more, in this period, with tin and metal sheets, aluminum foil and metallic objects, embossing their surfaces, creating stenciled forms out of them, making creative use of items ranging from round steel scrubbers to conical loudspeaker phones. While he keeps closely to the theme of Devi worship and inevitably gives his productions names such as "*Yogini*" or "*Mahamaya*" (elaborating these through concept notes that he puts up at their entrances), his work with tin and metal increasingly takes on a sleek modernist slant (Figures 15.16, 15.17). Yet, the adjective "modernist" always hangs a bit uneasily on these styles of Durga Puja pavilions. If some of these Puja-themed installations of Sushanta Pal come closest to a modernist style, it is also important to note how much of this modernism stands



FIGURE 15.15: Sushanta Pal, Pavilion made with woven mats and colored strings, and Tapestries of Miniature Paintings on Durga—Naktala Udayan Sangha Puja, 2006.

mediated with Tantrik motifs and with the repeating forms of the three-pronged spears, lotus petals, or the three eyes of the goddess that permeate all the modern art of the Durga Pujas.

What I would pick out as the choicest work of Sushanta Pal's Puja designing career had a different colorful and festive flavor, taking its lead from the child art pavilion that he had created at Santoshpur in 2008. Over different years, a narrow Kalighat lane, lined with old houses from the 1920s—the site of the Badamtala Ashar Sangha Puja—had emerged as another serial site for his seasonal productions. In 2008, he had visualized here in striking three-dimensional form the imagery of the nineteenth-century hand-colored wood-cut prints of Battala, recreating a columned architectural structure, inhabited by gods, winged angels, and costumed figures, which seemed to almost blend with the surrounding houses.[22] From here grew the idea in 2010 of transforming the full neighborhood of Badamtala into a brilliant painted installation, where brightly colored designs and motifs of suns, stars, trees, and foliage spread from the open-air Puja pavilion to cover the walls of four surrounding houses of the locality. Called "*Parar Pujo*," it used for the first time an entire section of the *para*—the houses, the trees, the pavements, the railings, and the lamp-posts—as the decorated and synchronized site of the Puja (Figure 15.18). The small *para* with its old houses lent itself ideally to such a design scheme. It did take a lot of persuasion to get permission from the residents to have their dilapidated houses repaired and painted free of costs, to get them to agree to the bold patterns that would come in tow. The end result turned out to be a unique sample of public

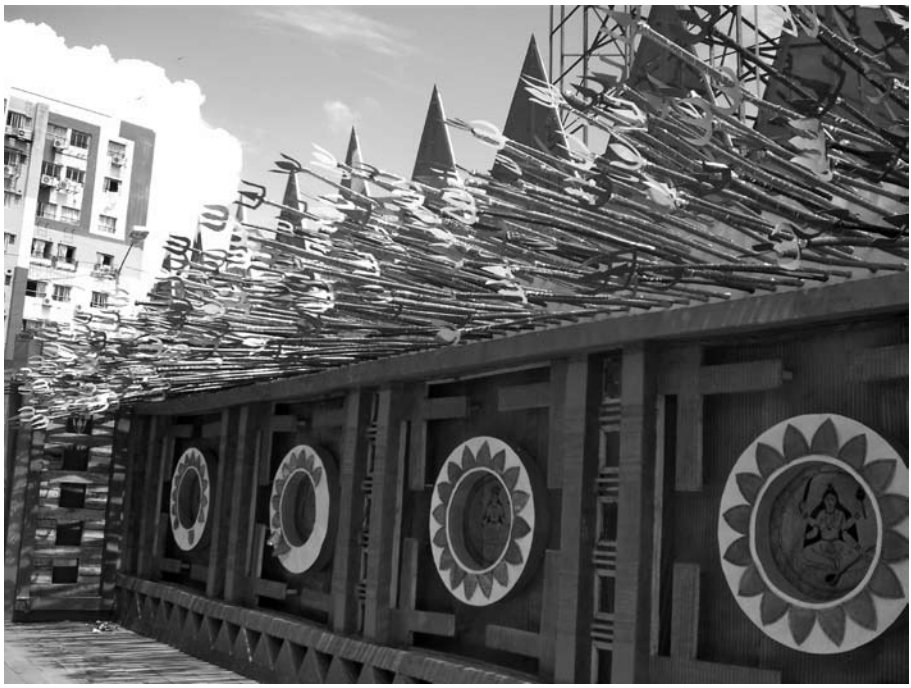


FIGURE 15.16: Sushanta Pal, installation featuring a flurry of three-pronged spears, titled *Yogini*—Bosepukur Shitala Mandir Puja, Kasba, 2009.



FIGURE 15.17: Sushanta Pal, installation with aluminum foil, tin, and metallic objects, titled *Mahamaya*—Khidirpur Pally Sharadiya Puja, 2010.

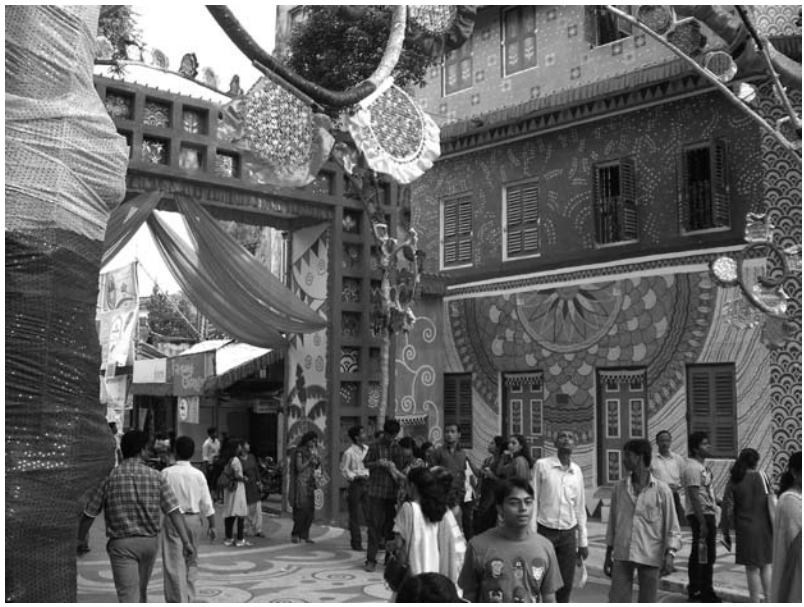


FIGURE 15.18: Sushanta Pal's transformation of an entire neighborhood into a painted installation—Badamtala Ashar Sangha Puja, Kalighat, 2010.

art, one that encompassed the extended space of a *para* and had the added advantage of remaining in place even after the Pujas were over.[23] In a rare move, Puja art had come to stay and enliven the *para* the full year round.

What Sushanta Pal shares with Santatan Dinda and Bhabatosh Sutar is a commitment to his Puja productions as an integral part of his professional career and a crucial public forum of his creativity. Each year, he sets aside two-and-a-half months from his regular work in textile and film-set designing to devote exclusively to the three Pujas that he usually takes on each year—even as his commissions for the next Puja season are booked as one year's festival ends, and many Puja clubs have to wait in queue for two years before they can hire him (as is the case with many of these prime designers). He may not have the same stake as the other two in becoming "pure" artist, nor in sculpting his own repertoire of Durgas in durable material such as wood or fiberglass for postfestival preservation. But he too has been harboring the desire to hold exhibitions for a different art-public of his own curated selection of parts of his pavilion installations that he keeps stored in his studio and remixes and uses in different Puja seasons.

I.3. Networks and Mobilities: The Craftsman as Designer

My larger study presents several other Puja production histories and designer profiles of varying social stature to fill out the larger canvas against which the oeuvre of these three designers may be located. Within today's mixed and increasingly crowded milieu of "theme" Pujas, my invitation is to think of these select careers as most

effectively testing the claims of art in a domain where it is in continuous risk of dissembling and evaporating. They allow us to extend ideas, however debatable, of "experimental" art into this circuit of ephemeral festival displays and explore spaces of connoisseurship that are not reducible only to the winning of awards and media publicity. Yet, the more the cast grows, the more the awards there are for the asking, and the more thickly "theme" Pujas proliferate across all parts of the city, the more difficult it becomes to hold on to such markers of artistic pedigree. Distinctions prove hard to unearth, even harder to hold on to. The spreading phenomenon has expanded the boundaries of opportunity and eligibility to enable the rise in the field of many with none of the same training or credentials as artists. The prolific field of Durga Puja art will be shown to thrive, more than ever before, on a continuously dissolving hierarchy between artist, artisan, and craftsman.

We have seen how figures such as Sanatan Dinda and Bhabatosh Sutar pulled themselves over the thin arc that took them from artisanal skills into a professional artistic career. Their examples draw our attention to an increasingly sharp dichotomy between the valorized image of the artist in intellectual, middle-class circles and the nonaffluent social and nonelite case class backgrounds of a large group of those who come into the art colleges of Bengal and eke out livelihoods in art practice.[24] In recent times, this gulf has taken on a different edge and proportions—as only a select few of the city's older and younger artists have moved into the cosmopolitan national and international worlds of contemporary art activity or the worlds of high design, leaving the majority unhappily trapped in the provincialism and limited opportunities of the local art scene. It is largely the latter group that can be seen to have most actively taken on the period's new vocation of Durga Puja designing and to have found in it an alternative forum of identity and local renown. The very nature of the work process in this vocation rests on a division of labor and distribution of creative skills that generate their own patterns of social mobility and career aspirations in the field. To have been part of the work team of a senior designer opens up a route by which many, in recent years, begin to chart out individual careers in Durga Puja art. The group here includes young art college students as well as amateurs without any institutional training, some coming from within the hereditary trade of idol and *pandal* makers, others from entirely rural and suburban circuits of craft practice. As my last case study, let me play off the figure of the artist as designer with that of the craftsman as designer, in a career where the social transitions have been the most remarkable.

Starting off by painting hoardings and wall graffiti in the district town of Tamluk in East Medinipur, Gouranga Kuinla first began working in Kolkata in 2001 as a worker of the Sree Durga Decorators firm of Tamluk that was then putting up the *pandals* each year at the Bosepukur Shitala Mandir Puja, according to the design concepts of an amateur designer, Bandhan Raha. From this time onward, he would begin combining his year-round *pandal*-making orders (that took him to cities such as Jamshedpur or Nagpur) with working on the pavilions of some prominent Kolkata Pujas. What differentiated him from others in this trade was a parallel reputation he built up for decorative craft work in material ranging from jute and hemp to wood and bamboo, which he submitted for national awards and began supplying for emporiums and interior décor. And it is with the credentials of a national award-

winning craftsman that Gouranga Kuinla enters the city's Durga Puja circuits around 2008 in an independent capacity as a Puja designer.[25] Over the next two years, this late entrant stages his prodigal success by functioning with a tightly organized cottage industry team out of his district home-town, Tamluk, which begins to work months in advance on the four Kolkata Puja commissions he takes on, for each of which he has on offer a range of intricate and innovatively designed craft objects and forms.

In 2008, we found him working primarily with organic natural materials such as wood shavings, bamboo strips, stone chips, dried leaves, gravel, and shells, with which he produced minutely patterned panels and architectural structures at the Bosepukur Puja, or jute fibers with which he created a set of spectacular horses at a Lake Town Puja. In subsequent years, in different Puja sites that become his stronghold—at Dumdum Park Bharat Chakra Puja, the Lake Town Adhibasibrinda Puja, or the Kankurgachhi Mitali Sangha Puja—we see him moving toward a greater pragmatism and economy of materials, with the investment in elaborate workmanship matched by a close attention to the portability and reuse of his productions. So he begins to effectively simulate the look of *Dhokra* metal sculptures in painted thermocol, the look of painted wooden puppets with folded and collapsible paper cartons, and puts to use small colorful umbrellas with back-lit painted acrylic sheets. At the same time, he also inventively fills his tableaux with stylized figures made out of converted bamboo baskets or inverted clay pots that he clothes like puppets in *Vaishnava namavali* attire and places in a festive *Rathayatra*-style pavilion (Figure 15.19), and occasionally gets his team to laboriously recreate the painted motifs of Bengali *patachitras* as exquisite silk-embroidered panels.

The definition of art in this sphere seems to inevitably grow out such a cornucopia of objects, materials, and designs. How is all this different, we may ask, from the gimmick of outlandish material that was once the rage of Puja *pandals*, and was shunned in art circles as cheap and tasteless? Well into our times, we find newspapers wryly commenting on the continued fad for gimmicky material in Puja décor, where everything from cotton towels to firecrackers, soaps, edible sweets, or Horlicks jars were being used for constructing *pandals*.[26] How and when do claims of artistry inflect these experimentations with materials and novelty of objects? Is there a pronounced design aesthetic that redeems these productions and gives them the stamp of artistry? We are left groping for an answer. What is easier to identify is a new well-honed professionalism with which a figure such as Gourange Kuinla has made Puja designing his main livelihood. If he too has desires to be a painter, he is equally aware that there is no career to be secured in that line of work and sticks closely to the crafts and commissions that bring him his earnings. What he claims as his credentials are the many Puja awards that have come his way, and an assured income from four or five big-budget Puja commissions every year, for which he maintains a round-the-year work team of rural artisans at his home-town in Tamluk.

Each Gouranga Kuinla production could be seen to carry a touch of his authorial design. But it is also in the nature of the trade that most of these forms (be it figures made with bamboo trays and baskets, or rows of clay pot puppets with bobbing heads) come to freely proliferate across multiple Puja sites and quickly lose all marks of any singular creator. More than issues of patent and authorship, designers like him are more



FIGURE 15.19: Gouranga Kuinla, Pavilion designed like Jagannath's Chariot-Car, flanked by costumed clay-pot puppets—Dumdum Park Bharat Chakra Puja, 2010.

concerned with maximizing the life and travels of each season's work. To maximize his gains, he (in contrast to artists such as Bhabatosh Sutar or Sushanta Pal) ensures that he brings in his own labor and material and retains his full ownership over his productions for selling and recycling in other mofussil Pujas. Thus each of these tableaux are fabricated in a way that allow for their careful dismantling and repacking by his team at the end of the Durga Pujas in order to be reused, in part or in whole, in the Kali Pujas and Jagaddhatri Pujas of suburban towns. For entire *pandals* to be sold off at drastically lowered prices to district Kali Puja and Jagaddhatri Puja committees (who scour the city's Durga Pujas for such purchases) is the fate of most "theme" productions, even the ones most deserving of preservations as public installations. What is notable here is the way the designer keeps control over this process of movement and recycling of his works across the season's many festivals, with the key intention of profit and the recovery of the cost of his production.

I.4. Art, but Not Quite

One of the main aims of this essay has been to lay open the claims of art in this contemporary urban festival, both as a set of insistent projections as well as a mesh of incomplete formations. There is a critical distinction that the field continually confronts with—between the phenomenal artistry of design, conception, skills, and workmanship that pervades this sphere, and the different institutional and ideological authority

of artworks that seems to somehow elude it. There are many in art circles who are loathe to grant any of these productions the name of "installation" or "conceptual" art—designations that they rightly say come out of an altogether different history of avant-garde practice. A key paradox I explore here is the aspiration of some of today's Puja designers to take on the idioms and materials on installation art in an arena, where none of the other attendant parameters of curating, criticism, and reception can ever be in place. This is what makes the terminology of contemporary installation art a nagging impropriety in this field of an ephemeral mass spectacle. That all these Puja displays, so intricately conceived and laboriously together over months by a large creative teams of workers, are unceremoniously dismantled, dispersed, and recycled in parts at the end of the festival week, is a taken-for-granted factor in this domain of art production and spectatorship. That ownership and authorship over these productions constantly spill outside the hold of the designer—or, that even within the time of the festival, these productions must pitch themselves into an undifferentiated space of mass reception and meet the standards of popular appeal produces a series of other ambivalences in their claims to be art. The importance of asserting and holding on to this identity of artist in his field of work, we find, escalates precisely in proportion to the difficulties of doing so. Thus, as I have argued, the designation of art or designer, and the prestige and acclaim that they generate, is never a secure index in this creative domain. Rather, it is one that needs to be carefully negotiated within a vortex of shifting styles and production processes and given its new markings within a register of popular tastes.

All transitions in this sphere remain incomplete. Thus, each Puja production, however ambitious, is left with no other name in local parlance but a *pandal*—in the same way, that each designer Durga image, however innovative its iconography, is left grappling to transcend its status as an idol and become a work of art. The term *thakur* (deity) is one that continually queers the grounds on which the religious festival contends with its life as a burgeoning exhibitionary and art event. So, the experience of touring the city-wide display of Puja pavilions is still routinely termed *thakur dekha* ("seeing the gods"), even as this practice of spectatorship has little that is devotional about it, and nothing that equates it with other expanding circuits of pilgrimage tourism. So it is also that a new converted warehouse gallery, tucked away deep within the grounds of the city's freshly rejuvenated Dhakuria Lakes (now called Rabindra Sarovar), into which have come a small selection of "art" Durgas of the seasons of 2012 and 2013, is referred to by the locals of the area (with wonder and bemusement) as *thakur-der* gallery ("gallery of the gods"). Stored and displayed here are some of the recent art-brand Durga images of Sanatan Dinda and Bhabatosh Sutar (Figure 15.1), alongside a handful of other goddess images (including one by Gouranga Kuinla), brought in by award-winning and politically backed Puja clubs across the city. Many of these images arrived here soon after *Bijaya-Dashami* (the last day of the Pujas) with all the festival feel of an immersion procession, traveling at times via the river banks where the ritual was maintained of the immersion of a smaller clay vessel or image. Most telling has been the complete absence of any professional curatorial involvement and the lack of publicity surrounding the forming of what we may think of the city's first gallery of collectible Durga Puja art. Few in the city's art circuits know or have cared to know about its existence and future, and even fewer have ever visited it.[27] Each of these factors underscores the incommensurability of the art

of the festival with the larger institutionalized spaces of art practices and viewing, and keeps scuttling the potentials of a postfestival artistic afterlife of these objects.

I will conclude with the proposition that the Durga Pujas of contemporary Kolkata has yielded an aesthetic and a category of modern public art that calls for its own criteria of evaluation. If it seeks out its connoisseurs and discerning public, its main pedagogic thrust lies in the cultural refinement of mass tastes, offering local viewers specialized orders of art, archaeological, and craft tours across India and the globe. If we are to give today's new genres of Durga art their rightful place within the domain of the modern and the contemporary, we must also underline the extent to which this art stands grounded on the resources of ritual, folk, and vernacular art traditions and revolves around the experimental iconographies of Bengal's Durga pantheon. The notion of the "vernacular" becomes a critical term to think with in this field. It is to be pitted less against the ideas of the "classical" and more against the worlds of national and cosmopolitan high art, where it defines not only the dominant stylistic vocabularies that come into circulation but also the circuits of regional art practice and local viewership in which the festival stands ensconced. The "vernacular" here can encompass the citations of the works of Bengal's modern masters (such as Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy, Ramkinkar Baij, or Ganesh Pyne) as freely as it can absorb the idioms of tribal arts and ethnic design (Figures 15.20 and 15.21), or draw on historical architectural and sculptural traditions

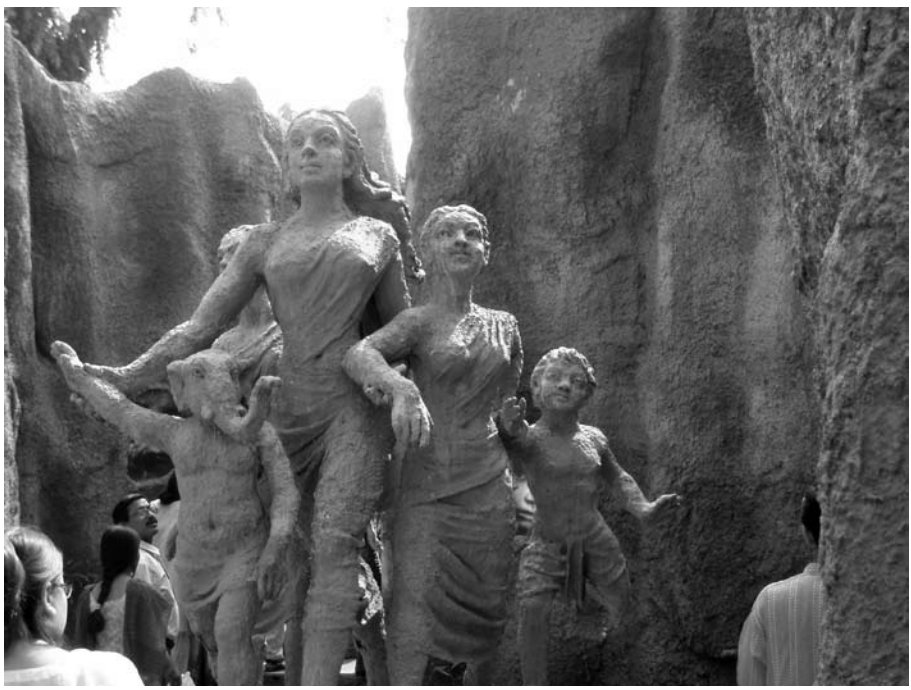


FIGURE 15.20: Rupchand Kundu, Durga and her family, modeled after Ramkinkar Baij's *Santhal Family* and *Mill Call* sculptures, in a Santhal Village Tableau—Dumdum Park Bharat Chakra Puja, 2006.



FIGURE 15.21: Subodh Ray's folk-art Durga to match a Pavilion designed by him, using the tribal artists of Chattisgarh—Behala Agradoot Club Puja, 2006.

from all over India. We could also extend the notion to conceive of a sphere where the discourses of art stand curiously inflected with that of religious sanctity—where the aesthetics of modern pavilion décor coexist with a search for organicism of materials or the historical authenticity of religious architecture and imagery. The claims of art production in today's festival, far from excluding or erasing the religious, reinvents it within new frames of spectatorship. The praxis of touring and worship are made to coexist in an exhibitionary field that still centers on the performance of the ritual event. The result is a conscious staging of both artistic effects and devotional affect within the body of the urban spectacle.

NOTES

1. These themes are explored at length in my recently completed book, from which this essay is extracted—*In the Name of the Goddess: The Durga Pujas of Contemporary Kolkata* (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2015). The book explores the possibilities of writing a "non-religious" "visual" history of the urban festival phenomenon.
2. From the end of the 1990s, there is a distinct shift from the premium on glitter, magnitude, and opulence of the older style of Puja productions to an alternative

streamlined aesthetics of art, craftsmanship, and design that marks out the new genre of "theme" Pujas in this period.

3. A large body of scholarly writing exists on the pedagogic and institutional obsession of Victorian England and nineteenth-century colonial administrators with Indian industrial arts and design—beginning with Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 221–51, and Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New Indian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 57–68, to more recent works such as those of Saloni Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 1–79. Two key books in this field now are Arindam Datta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty: Design in the Age of Its Global Reproducibility* (London: Routledge, 2007), and Abigail McGowan, *Crafting the Nation in Colonial India* (London: Macmillan/Palgrave, 2009).
4. On this theme, see, Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "Visualising the Nation: The Iconography of a 'National Art' in Modern India," *Journal of Arts and Ideas* 27–28 (March 1995), pp. 29–37; R. Siva Kumar, *"Introduction," Santiniketan: Growth of a Contextual Modernism* (New Delhi: NGMA, 2007), and Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1922–1947* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 78–99.
5. "The Durga Puja Zeitgeist," Cover Feature on Art by Shamik Bag, *Mint Lounge, The Weekend Magazine*, Saturday, October 9, 2010.
6. This calculation of collective spending in the season of 2010 is made on the basis of a rough count of 4,000 Puja units in the Kolkata Greater Urban Area, with an average annual budget of around 10 lakhs rupees.
7. Arka Das, "Artists Drift away from Puja," *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, September 21, 2010. Among the artists quoted in this article are Robin Roy, whose 2004 work at a Behala Puja won an award; Srikanta Pal, who designed Pujas right through his undergraduate days at Rabindra Bharati University in the mid-1990s till he moved to MS University of Baroda; and Partha Dasgupta whose Puja pavilions at Behala, done from 2002 to 2006, were all said to be "one-of-a-kind site specific installations" and described as "works that were way ahead of their times."
8. Sanatan Dinda (like the other two designers who follow) was interviewed almost every year, from 2002 to 2011, and his work closely studied every season. I have drawn here mainly on the interviews with him taken on September 23, 2002; October 12, 2004; September 30, 2005; September 19, 2007; and October 7, 2010.
9. The banner read, "*Sanatani amader aithijhya, Sanatan-I Amader garba*."
10. In the first years of the "theme" Pujas, in contradistinction to the ostentatious, crowd-pulling Pujas that had so far dominated the festival map, smallness became a new point of self-articulation—smallness of budgets, sizes of productions, spaces out of which they grow, and localities that sought a new social and cultural profile through the distinctiveness of their Pujas. By the end of the 2000s, even as many of the designers continued to work in small alleys and preferred intimate neighborhood spaces to large grounds, the financial markers of smallness no longer stay in place, with the steady escalation of production budgets and designer fees.

11. It was only in 2012 that Sanatan Dinda entirely moved away from this location and carried his now-familiar trail of publicities to two Puja productions that he took on in South Kolkata, at the much-promoted "art" Puja site of the Barisha club and the emergent one at 95 Pally Puja of Jodhpur Park.
12. Several long interviews were conducted with Bhabatosh Sutar over different seasons at the different sites of his Durga Puja productions—at the Barisha Shrishti Puja sites on September 14, 2003 and October 17, 2005; at the Natun Pally Pradip Sangha Puja in the interiors of Lake Town, on September 20, 2006; at the 25 Pally Puja, Khidirpur, September 6, 2008; and at the Naktala Udayan Sangha Puja, on September 16, 2011.
13. The name "*Chander Haat*" (literally meaning a fairground on the moon) implies a place given over to wishes and dreams. In the making from the late 2000s, the "*Chander Haat Prangan*" formally launched itself on February 8, 2013, through an opening exhibition, a three-day art festival, and a lavish fold-out brochure.
14. Along with Bhabatosh Sutar, several other artists of the Environmental Art group, such as Tarun Dey and Nirmal Malik, have been working on Puja installations, individually and as group productions, and look on these experiments in "public art" as a vital source of income that has made possible their "*Chander Haat*" venture.
15. Reluctant to discuss this past personal history, wishing only to discuss with me his artistic conceptions for each of his designed Puja, Bhabatosh finally gave me this candid account of his life in my interview with him at the Naktala Udayan Sangha Puja, on September 16, 2011.
16. Bhabatosh's 2002 terracotta Durga ensemble lay largely neglected and hidden at an outer corner behind wedding pavilions the ITC Sonar Bangla lawns—and now it is nowhere to be found, with that portion of the hotel grounds sold off to another estate. And Derek O'Brien who acquired the painted wood and bamboo Durga group of 2003 had still not placed it on display in his office grounds in 2006, and could not remember the name of the artist who made the work.
17. These particular lines from this song of Ramprasad was cited—"*Emon manab jamin roilo patit, abaad korley pholto sona, mon re krishi kaaj jaaney na*" and the title for this production was given as—"*Esho Sobai Langol Dhori, Manab Jamin Abaad Kori*" (loosely translated as "Come let us all plough the earth, and make the human mind reap its crops"). Concept Note of the 25 Pally Sarbojanin Durgotsav Samiti, in its 63rd year, October 2007.
18. The Trinamul State Industries Minister, Partha Chatterjee, emerged as the main patron of this Naktala Puja and of Bhabatosh Sutar. This scenario of direct Trinamul backing of Durga Puja art and artists would now be played out in several other locations and prop up many other Puja designers. Sanatan Dinda was also riding on the same wave of political backing of the two South Kolkata Pujas he designed over 2012–13, with the chief minister rubbing shoulders with the artist at her inaugurations of these Pujas.By now, Bhabatosh Sutar and Sanatan Dinda were also being touted as the busiest, most marketable "brands" of the city of "theme" Pujas—

Rwiju Basu, "*Painter Thekey Adman, Themenagarir Byastatama Brand*," *Ananda Bazar Patrika,* Kolkata, October 9, 2013.

19. While his works were tracked from 2002 to 2011, the main interviews with Sushanta Pal were conducted at the Barisha Sahajatri Puja, on September 20, 2003, at the Naktala Udayan Sangha Puja on October 12, 2005 and September 21, 2006; at the Badamtala Ashar Sangha Puja, Kalighat on September 15, 2007, September 6, 2008, and September 14, 2010; and at the adjacent Sanghasree Puja at Kalighat on September 15, 2011.
20. Titled "*Rupali Parday Shonali Durga*" ("The Golden Durga of the Silver Screen"), this Puja theme broke new grounds in 2003. A decade later, in 2013, the theme would repeat itself in a very different kind of exhibition on "100 Years of Indian Cinema," curated and sponsored by the Alliance Francaise, Kolkata, at the Pally Mangal Samiti Puja on Anwar Shah Road.
21. The rhyming couplets publicizing his Pujas (a typical feature of these popular productions) also highlighted the play with material—the pull and stretch of woven ropes ("*Tanaporener notun khela, debir anganey dorir mela*") or the traditional feel of bamboo, straw, clay, and color ("*Bansh, khor, mati or rong, ebar Pujor sabeki dhong*").
22. Many of these design themes of Sushanta Pal—whether it be child art, or the art of Bat-tala wood engravings—are not new in themselves. So, pavilions with rag dolls or puppets, interspersed with paintings by children from local sit and draw contests, have come up in different seasons in Pujas at Hindusthan Park or at Khidirpur. In 2004, for instance, two local designers had put up a large display on the wood-cut prints of Bat-tala, with enlarged panels of these black and white prints filling the enclosure, and the goddess modeled on the appearance of the figures on these prints. Sushanta Pal's novelty lay in converting the architectural backdrops and figures from these engravings into a three-dimensional tableau. What was remarkable, as in many of these productions, were the intricacies of object fabrications and the sheer labor involved in making straw stuffed molds of these figures and their conversion in hollowed plaster casts, that were then given the hand-daubed painted look of the Bat-tala images.
23. "United Colours of Badamtala till next Puja," *The Bengal Post*, Kolkata, October 24, 2010.
24. Surnames such as Dinda or Sutar places figures such as Sanatan and Bhabatosh among artisanal and peasant castes (such as *Mahishyas* or *Sutradhars*) from which they have risen to stake an alternative identity as Puja designers and artists. This may be seen as a noticeable feature about the sociology of the art worlds of modern Bengal, more generally, where some of the renowned names are Baij (Ramkinkar), Pyne (Ganesh), Karmakar (Prahlad and Prakash), or Haloi (Ganesh), all markedly outside the upper-caste (*Brahmin-Kayastha-Baidya*) groupings of the Bengali elite who have long dominated the literary, intellectual, and service professions.
25. Interview with Gouranga Kuinla, at a private Marwari residence in Salt Lake, where he had been commissioned to do an elaborate tableau for their Janmashtami Puja, September 1, 2010.

26. "An ode to oddity this autumn," *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, Mahasaptami Guide, October 2, 2003; "Towels to Soaps, all adorn Ma," *Hindusthan Times*, Puja Special, September 30, 2003.
27. Tapati Guha-Thakurta, "Goddesses by the Lake," *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, November 22, 2012. Two years after it was set up, this lakeside gallery of Durga Puja art lies ignored and rampantly neglected, with many of its outside exhibits of sections of Puja pavilions reduced to wreckage.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Sky of Cinema

MOINAK BISWAS

I.

These thoughts are occasioned by what I perceive as a deep crisis of contemporary Indian cinema. I would like to suggest that it is both a political and an aesthetic crisis. Critical discussion of cinema in India has turned decisively away from the aesthetic question, the source of which is a theoretically shallow belief that aesthetic concerns are elitist. And this seems to be mirrored by a renewed belief in representation. This essay will borrow from Indian aesthetic theories and their modern reformulations to propose that it is necessary to dispel a false faith in representation in order to bring the real function of cinema back into reckoning.

The crisis I speak of is deeply contemporary in the sense that it pertains to the re-configuration of technology, tastes, and audiences that cinema has experienced over the last two decades, almost exactly coinciding with the liberalization of the Indian economy. This is not the place to go into the details of that transformation, but it would be useful to remember a few aspects of the context. post-liberalization Indian conventional cinema, following the general pattern of cultural production in the era of globalization, has thrived on the gradual dissolution of the art and popular distinction. The mass character of the erstwhile popular film, as the addressee of which one could imagine a body of people removed in taste and status from the articulate citizen, eroded to a large degree. It is a development paralleled by the decline of the art-house film that often received state support in the past. The new economics of film distribution and exhibition have made it possible for the industry to turn from the faceless "mass" to a more nameable, predictable profile—the urban middle class. This class is now recognized more in terms of consumption patterns and choices than through its relationship with production. It is, consequently, more inclusive (with consumption habits spreading across class barriers) and uniform. Among other things, this has led to a new legitimacy of commercial cinema, which now addresses "us," rather than those faceless "others at large." Gone is the dismissal of the conventional industrial film product as debased entertainment, the opprobrium of being vulgar and escapist. Even the generational divide in taste no longer remains an issue. Cinema has found a legitimacy that was never accorded to it among respectable citizens. The film industry is now a proper cultural provider of civil society in India. Economy and culture, as the American thinker Fredric Jameson pointed out in his diagnoses of the postmodern condition,

have indeed overcome the distance that used to separate them. It would not be possible for the economy to take a neoliberal turn tailored for India without the reform of mainstream cinema that we are pointing to, and vice versa. It is no longer a question of one determining the other really, but the two forming sides of the same coin.

One outcome of all this is the demand that films deal with socially responsible "issues." It is here that the new moral investment in representation finds its motivation. The new middle class has adopted a cinema where social life is meant to appear in the form of "issues," as already formulated problems. The crop of films I have in mind can be divided into two broad sections, one deals with social problems—corruption, individual's fight against injustice, and so on (*Nayak*, 2001, *Rang De Basanti*, 2006, *No One Killed Jessica*, 2011); the other with individual disabilities—congenital illnesses (in some cases, even gay sexuality), and accidental impairments (*Black*, 2005, *Tare Zamin Par*, 2007, *Paa*, 2009, *My Name Is Khan*, 2010, *Barfi*, 2012). The new Indian citizen seems to be engaged in a typical task of retrieving a sense of the familiar as a gift of representation. I would like to see this as an occlusion of the aesthetic and a general crisis of film as art.

The current valorization of films with social messages is based on an assumed transparency of film on the one hand and a consensus about what reality is on the other. This, again, could come about only through neutralizing the internal class and other differences of the audience. Consensus is the characteristic of the postpolitical order that neoliberalism is expected to foster everywhere. Issues are voiced by characters in these films, upon which no one will disagree. It is hard, I suppose for a theory of art or theory of film to have any purchase on this ground. As I hope to show, Indian aesthetic theory provides a critical opportunity for imagining an alternative matrix of audience engagement and subjectivity.

The new faith in representation inevitably tries to dissolve the fact of representation itself, tends to deny that things are not just presented on the screen, they are presented again, in another place, always in another time. The conflation of social life (or rather what constitutes social reality for the perceiving class in question) with the screen is presumed in such a way that criticism of the film is often construed as opposition to the sentiment the film voices. This points clearly to an aesthetic failure, if we think of the sophisticated theory of emotions that Indian aesthetic philosophy offers. One major aspect of the concept of *rasa* is indirection, something that emotional manipulation of necessity overlooks. It is by denotative absence that "Rasa nishpatti" works, not by presenting characters and situations that embody some legitimate feeling. It is *bhava*, the "loukika" or worldly "uncooked" emotion that is easily traded. *Rasa* arrives only when there is denotative absence of *sthāyībhāva*, which has to pass from determinants (*vibhāva*) to consequent (*anubhāva*) feelings, combine with fleeting other feelings (*byabhicharibhava*), and is then experienced only intuitively in art, as the *rasa* that thus emerges. Indirectness, obliqueness cannot be part of a pathetic manipulation of feeling that our middle class now demands of the cinema.

Take the example of *My Name is Khan*. Made a decade or so earlier, the director Karan Johar would have been content with the offshore romance set in the United

States, maybe with a dose of patriotism thrown in. But now he has to aim for relevant art, for seriousness. The result is a romance imbricated with the post-9/11 predicament of Muslims. A man named Khan is enjoined to prove that all Muslims are not terrorists. No one but the complacent urban viewer would need such an absurd humanism rehearsed for itself. But that is not all. The man in question suffers from Asperger's Syndrome, an autism. He has to mumble, squint, and hobble along his path to prove that there are good Muslims in the world as well. And bad Muslims are easy to tell—they congregate in a mosque to talk about their intolerance. For the audience to be drawn into a circle of sympathy, you need the pathetic supplement along with perfect transparency of acts and emotions. This is the Indian cinema that rules middle-class hearts now. Aesthetically speaking, it does not have much to "relish," as it does not even begin to satisfy the conditions of *rasa* nishpatti, contrary to what the occasional efforts at understanding Indian popular cinema in terms of *rasa* theory claim. The theory of *rasa*, in its most developed form, demands obliqueness not only on one level. Secondary meanings are supposed to arise from the primary narration, without being stated anywhere. Even that is not the true realm of *rasa*, which has to arise from the shimmer of emotional intensity that looms over the work, beyond literal and secondary meanings, as a "tertiary perfume."[1]

Rasa theory does not try directly to connect the overall narrative form of a work to the particularities of affect generated by elements in the work, whereas textual criticism in the recent past has dealt with narrative form to considerable success. The true crisis of a form is perhaps best understood when we consider the relationship between the form in the architectural sense (narrative) and the function of particular elements within the work. I am trying to ask if there is anything symptomatic of our time that motivates us to treat *bhava* as justifiable artistic sentiment for cinema, since that is what everyone seems to be doing.

A film has to allow its elements to relate to each other so that the questions that emerge from these relations do not appear foretold. The question—not the issue—as it emerges should be able to destabilize the set of beliefs and certainties that the film starts with. This is one meeting point of the ethical and the aesthetic. It is unethical not to allow questions to emerge that do not have answers within the film's apparent consciousness. It would be a violation of the norms of communication to deny the audience the scope of transforming the content by relishing it. Ethics is accorded a privileged place in contemporary culture. I am trying to suggest, however, that it occupies a wrong place as regards art, especially, the cinema. The constant effort to make transparent all contradictions by translating them into ethical issues about family, misfortune, individual character, and so on—testifies to this misplaced ethics. It could be a cinematically unethical use of ethical matters. And it is politically inert too. Such cinema (and television) fastens itself to a reflectively inert community. The near consensus among this community about the need to arrive at social orders bypassing the political process is reflected in the cozy sociality of the "cinema of concern." In his recent writings, the philosopher Jacques Ranciere has identified an "ethical turn" in contemporary culture in general, which evacuates the "political" from the community (by eliminating what he calls "dissensus"). He uses ethics and politics in their more complex political philosophical resonances, but locates the

driving force for the new development in the humanitarian "consensus." Ranciere presents a powerful argument warning us that not only artistic compromise, but even global military invasions are justified on the basis of this "ethical turn."[2]

But I am also thinking of an artist and writer far removed in space and time from Ranciere. Abanindranath Tagore, in his book on art and aesthetics, *Bagishwari shilpa prabandhabali* (based on lectures given during 1921–29), made a distinction between "mat" (opinion) and "mantra" (universal truth). Both, he believed, were part of art, but "mat" is what one should begin with, keep only on the surface, never arrive at, never be content with. Mat is supposed to change and does change constantly—one reason why art should not be "committed" to it. Mantra, on the contrary, embodies the (changeless) truth in art. Art needs both, but the author is concerned about the tendency to forget their distinction. As in many other instances, Abanindranath quotes Mammata to demonstrate how one can avoid having an absolute attitude to art, but still develop a universally acceptable description of what art is.[3] Mat here is, indeed, primarily about opinion on art, not general opinions, but the author connects opinion- mongering on this count to two things—the failure to transcend the pursuit of express purpose, and the relationship between the "abidyaman," the absent, and "bidyaman," the present. For him, the bidyaman should not only evoke abidyaman, but exist as a "becoming" of the latter.[4] One may or may not concur with Abanindranath about the existence of mantras, or universal aesthetic principles, but the lesson we learn from him is about the necessity of telling the opinion from the universalizable principle. In aesthetic terms, the inability to make that separation could well align itself with the tendency to treat express subject matter/statement, the bidyaman, as content itself.

One should mention that Abanindranath, not unlike others of his time, was deeply skeptical about photography and cinematography, for the obvious reason that they are committed to the visible reality held before the recording machine. Once again, what is more important for us than this distrust of the medium per se is the fact that, like all other forms, film also has an internal threshold to cross before it acquires form, becomes an aesthetic entity. It is not only Abanindranath in the 1920s, the German philosopher and critic Theodore Adorno, as late as 1966, raised a similar objection to film's claim to art. In his essay "Transparencies on Film" he expresses his skepticism about the power of film to transcend technical reproduction of visual reality, to introduce the negative into the affirmation of what is.[5] Both of these are conservative positions, but cinema being no longer at risk of being ontologically discarded as art, we could pay attention to the intuitions underlying these ideas. The crisis of film form may not owe itself to the fact of its being tied to the surface of the world, but as part of the long rumble of the bourgeois era, cinema's claim to truth does continue to stem from the affirmation of the given. The given could be read here as social, rather than purely physical reality, where things and their relations, as they appear in their familiar form, are heavily dependent on social agreements among the members of audience. A meaningful aesthetic practice should be able to cut through the political compromise that now serves as the source of pleasure in cinema. The theoretical approach I underline below is based on the belief that for a proper political understanding of the situation, a return to the aesthetic question is

in order. Political analyses in such contexts tend to settle on the issues being raised in the films, of what the film says, which is precisely where the crisis as I see it begins. Instead, one should return—without listening to the fashion of contemporary cultural criticism—to the question of film as art, and ask what possibilities of the latter exist in the history of its practice, and how they are suppressed in the new bourgeois sociality about the cinema in India.

Cinema in our times, through the digital means of circulation, has been subjected to a dispersal it has never seen before. Its very body now undergoes a scattering beyond the frame that we all used to know through our experience of films projected on the theater screen. While the new sociality I discuss above can be seen as a desperate attempt to draw a margin of recuperation around the spectral diffusion of cinema, to keep it within limits of habitual perception, it remains the aesthetic task of filmmakers to explore the virtual relations that obtain between the present and the absent. Abanindranath, interestingly does not draw an analogy between the bidyaman-abidyaman dichotomy and the "rup-arup" distinction. He dismisses the arguments of his time on whether art should attend to rup, the visible, or arup, the abstract essence, as meaningless. Both are facts of art for him.[6] The present–absent distinction is of a different nature, as he conceives it, from the standard material–spiritual distinction. The absent is a potentiality for the present, into which it promises to take shape. I find this useful in understanding the virtual relations attending the frames and joints of film.

The most satisfying films are those that induce potential relations in the viewer's mind between what falls within the frame and what lies beyond that rectangle, what is viewed and what is heard, and so on. Iran's Abbas Kiarostami or Taiwan's Hou Hsiao-hisen are masters of this art in our times. Kiarostami constantly refers to the out-of-frame through sound, and character's lines of look and address. The gracefully natural way this is presented in early films such as *Close Up* (1990) goes a step forward in *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999), where we never see an entire set of characters who seem to be hovering around the protagonist. And in his more recent film *Shirin* (2008), set in a movie theater, we see only spectators looking at a film. We hear the soundtrack of the film, but never the screen from which it emanates. Yet we can reconstruct the film shown within the film in our heads.[7] The faces of the viewers slowly turn into a second screen reflecting the film being played, and the gaze we cast at these faces gradually turns half back upon itself, as there is always a flicker of suspicion that these faces, mostly film actresses in the role of spectators, could also at times be looking at the camera. Such cinema carefully avoids molding the screen into a space for making statements. The utterance or the image is not complete without the audience's participation. The audience enters the space between the seen and the unseen, the seen and the heard, and contributes to the completion of the film. We will remember that the Indian *rasa* theory also stresses the role of the audience, without whom the circuit of the *rasa*—the relished object and relishing—cannot become whole. It would be arrogant for cinema not to leave the space, the "abakash," for the spectator to occupy the work. The social problem-solving films are arrogant in this sense. It is not surprising that films sensitive to this issue often figure the listener or the viewer within the story itself, though that is not the only

way of allowing the audience to participate. We do not commonly come by viewing or listening as processes pictured in films; when we do, there are interruptions in the picture, the "abakash" materializes itself through silence, through caesura. Consider the occasional case of songs in our films that are sung but not really performed, not appear as part of the song-and-dance routine. Sometimes, as if by accident, a pause follows such involved singing; nothing happens for a while, and one begins to see listening, almost as a remnant, not as a part, of representation. Rabindranath was fond of the word abakash, which is why I am using it here. It is no accident perhaps that some of the most telling examples of listening being figured in our films are found when his songs are sung.[8]

The new faith in representation has to close off all possibilities of the absent in the image since it is closely integrated with an economic and cultural order where everything is recorded, increasingly in real time. Cameras and sound recorders are everywhere—from the handheld phone to street signals to supermarkets. The belief that we see all is quickly translated into the belief that what we see is all there is to it. It seems to be the need of the hour to turn to the nature of the subjectivity that inheres in cinema and its role in our aesthetic enjoyment. The gaze locked on representation can be deflected in that direction by putting before it, rather than objects, the object of subjectivity itself.

II.

The obverse of the representational faith in the "objective" and familiar appearance of things is the faith in the "person." All problems in our cinema are glimpsed through the experience of individual characters, an indication of the fact that the sociality at issue is not exactly social in nature, it is a sociality of individuals with shared concerns, forming a gated community of sorts. The individual suffers from rare diseases, gets embroiled in system-generated troubles, undertakes crusades, and at the end, shining in the full transparency of resolution, is reconciled to the family and the society. It is not in itself a new development, since bourgeois melodrama and generally bourgeois fiction have historically shown a predilection for refracting all experience of reality through the individual person. This could prove productive in contexts where instituting a notion of the modern individual, the perspectival relationship between "man and society" as it were, appeared to be a task to be fulfilled, where one had to articulate the individual as an agent of thinking and action free of the communitarian mythical/ traditional sanctions. But as it becomes the convention, it begins to disavow the underlying ideological project and appears as the normal and sometimes the only option for telling stories. The standard cinema, Hollywood cinema for instance, is entirely locked in this mode. Its entire gamut of techniques, to some extent even technology, have developed around this idealization of the person. Indian cinema for long was faulted on this particular count. It was common to come by the complaint (till the 1980s) that popular cinema in India had not developed a full vision of the modern individual. Narratives seemed to be governed in those films by myth and destiny, feudal values of kinship and family

seemed to determine individual action, and so on. By contrast, a mark of the new popular cinema of our times is its individualism, which is the norm, and no longer the sign of unconventional filmmaking.

But modern cinema, in its most meaningful attempts, has endeavored to step beyond anchoring all experience, all feeling, and thought in the individual character. It has done so by various methods, of which the most noticed are the modernist styles where the narrative tries to embody the structure of arguments and ideas. Jean-Luc Godard, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Alexander Kluge, Glauber Rocha and Nagisha Oshima, among others, have created eminent instances of this. These filmmakers have often been identified as Brechtian. The Soviet Avant-Garde cinema (Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov) attempted to do away with the individual protagonist in favor of collective subjects. These tendencies were all generally critical of realism. But within the realist schools, which are usually not cited in this connection, there have been significant attempts to break away from the habit of person-oriented narration. The films that replace stars with nonactors, or single narrative line with multiple threads, tend to free themselves of the burden of the person-centric narration. The two contemporary filmmakers mentioned above, Kiarostami and Hou, would be representatives of this practice.

In fact, realism, though considered culturally aligned with person-centric narration, has in the most creative hands explored modes of speech and expression that are not personalized. Closer home, we have the example of the great realist Satyajit Ray, whose early films, especially the celebrated Apu Trilogy (1955–59), is known to have introduced a mature realist principle in Indian cinema. A close look at this early work will reveal that narration in them often displaces the protagonist Apu, a powerful exemplar of the modern individual, from the center, and allows the background, nature itself, to occupy the central place. The horizon with the looming dusk, the fields of white flax dancing in the wind, sheets of rain covering the open expanse come to fill the space of representation. And then there is pure duration—the rise and fall of the day, the rhythm of the seasons, the enfolding flow of a mute but sensate nature. All this afford us a vision beyond the bildungsroman plot of the individual's journey, whose classic mode of presentation involves a duality of the character in the foreground and environment/society in the background. The world itself could take over the image and remind us of the other possibility of cinema. I shall return to this through the work of Ray's contemporary, Ritwik Ghatak. But before that, a detour through Indian aesthetic thought.

A specific interpretation of the *rasa* theory would see *rasa* (understood both as aesthetic relish and its object) as an emotion, which is ecstatic, if we take the latter in one of its original senses of standing outside oneself. As we experience aesthetic emotion, we know it is different from all other emotions: we lose ourselves into the world of feelings that arise from the aesthetic engagement. Arindam Chakrabarti, drawing upon Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya's thought, has called this "ownerless emotion."[9] Bhattacharyya in his essay "The Concept of Rasa" (1933), finds in aesthetic enjoyment a contemplative joy in which "I freely become impersonal."[10] The expression "free" is no less important in this statement than "impersonal" since, following upon his major book *The Subject as Freedom* (1930), "The Concept of

Rasa" puts the subject on a spectrum of progressive cognitional freedom. The primary "object feeling" ties the subject to the object. At the second stage, "sympathy" (where a character feels for and with one having the primary feeling) still ties the secondary subject to the primary subject. At the third and final stage, that of contemplative feeling or aesthetic enjoyment/*rasa*, "(m)y personality is, as it were, dissolved and yet I am not caught in the object . . . I freely become impersonal." He gives the example of one enjoying contemplating an old man affectionately watching his grandson playing with a toy. "Although the old man is not immersed like the child in the enjoyment of the toy, his feeling is not yet of the artistic character" as it is a personal interest in the particular child and his feeling, but:

> My contemplative joy has no such personal complexion. I am interested in the child's feeling reflected in the grand-father's heart as an eternal emotion or value. I enjoy the essence of the emotion, get immersed in it even like the child in the toy, without, however, being affected by it and thus losing my freedom . . . My personality is, as it were, dissolved.[11]

Bhattacharyya keeps the eternal value and the question of essence outside the pale of the purely speculative or religious. The question of feeling is supreme here. The imaginary person standing at the second stage is "not one particular person but *some one or any one* person. He has the value of a concept of a person in general; only here we have in the concept an efflux of feeling and not of the intellect." In aesthetic contemplation the felt person who is sympathizing with primary feeling (the grandfather with the child), in generalized form, may be "semi-mythologically called the Heart Universal."[12] Bhattacharyya calls it a "ubiquity," he locates its source in the second sympathetic stage (as I contemplate and relish the feeling of the sympathizer I am one with a feeling, and no longer tied to a particular person feeling something like the sympathizer occupying the second stage). But actually, it is a place with no place, an everywhere. That is the action of freedom. All feeling in art is reflected in this Heart Universal, the latter sympathizes with all feeling depicted or contemplated in art. To quote him again:

> Artistic enjoyment is not a feeling of the enjoyer on his own account; it involves the dropping of self-consciousness, while the feeling that is enjoyed—the feeling of the third person—is freed from its reference to an individual subject and eternalized in the Heart Universal.[13]

For us, the particular power of the concept derives from the fact that the Heart Universal does not need to be other-worldly or magical. It is a logical space of dissolution of the ego arising out of the conjugated dynamics of human feeling and subjectivity. Aesthetic enjoyment or *rasa* is not unreal by being abstract. It actually overcomes the "felt unreality" that occurs at the level of primary feeling (since the object offers resistance to primary feeling, refusing to be fully enjoyed). The unreality in question is overcome when the object is dissolved in my feeling. I do not have to go out to consume it in my feeling. At the third level, that of aesthetic enjoyment, there are two corresponding movements in the identification with the object. The first Bhattacharyya calls the projective or creative direction, and the

second the assimilative or abstractive direction. We can enjoy "eternal value" of *rasa* in both movements—by entering the object freely and seeing myself mirrored in it, or alternatively, by dissociating myself from the object as mere fact, where the soul of the object tends to dissolve and merge in my enjoyment, that soul is drawn out and reposefully enjoyed. This second movement seems to echo the concept of "tranquil repose" or "Vishranti" of Abhinavagupta. And Bhattacharyya makes the significant observation that Indian art largely shows the second tendency, that is, it is "prevailingly abstractive and contemplative in character and not dynamically creative," correspondingly, in the Indian theory of art, "the aesthetic essence is conceived as a subjective absolute or rasa rather than an objective absolute or beauty."[14]

In his *The Subject as Freedom*, Bhattacharyya outlines the logical steps of conceiving the subject itself as given in a process of progressive "freedom." Aesthetic relish is not his special concern here, but it is relevant for the discussion below to remember how through an analysis of the stages of subjectivity—the bodily, the psychical, and the spiritual—he arrives at a notion of individuality that cannot be collapsed into individual consciousness. "I am never positively conscious of my present individuality," he writes, "being conscious of it only as something that is or can be outgrown."[15] One aspect of bodily subjectivity is the "felt body," which is distinct from the body feeling external stimuli through the senses. It is feeling inwardly through the body something that is not presented to the senses directly.[16] In a remarkable reading of the Bengali poet Jibanananda Das, Arindam Chakrabarti has shown the "felt body" to be an experience close to the savoring of sensuousness aroused by the poetic utterance.[17] These ideas help us think of the artistic experience as one where the normally held distinctions between the body and consciousness, outside and inside, and finally, subject and object, are altered. They allow us to conceptualize cinema, which is apparently wholly immersed in appearances, as bearing the power of opening up spaces that are neither interior to a person, nor impersonal and objective in the ordinary sense, holding up what I would like to call the "worldly beyond" to our contemplation.

Arindam Chakrabarti connects Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya's essay on the "Concept of Rasa" to its Kashmir Saiva antecedents, especially to Abhinavagupta. The latter dismissed the notion of *rasa* as sympathetic emotion for the character or actor, or as imitation of their emotions. Commenting on the scene from "Abhijnan-Shakuntalam" where a deer is running in terror for life chased by a hunter king on a chariot, Abhinavagupta invokes the heart-universal:

> There occurs in the qualified relisher's heart a special intuition (pratibhaA) that transcends the apprehension of literal or implied meaning. To this intuition, the young deer loses its particularity and even the actor or the medium falls away as non-ultimate. What remains is the pure essence of fear-in-general in a heart-universal which is not his personal fear, nor the fear of the dancer impersonating the deer. Such a relishing of egoless *fear-in-general* is enjoyably expansive, without spatiotemporal limits and is better enjoyed together with fellow-relishers because it tends to spill over from one heart to another in that unpredictable moment of

> charm that effaces all boundaries. In such pure form all emotion-essences, even fear, revulsion, ridicule, anguish become charming simply by the enlivening touch of free creative playful Intuition.[18]

Chakrabarti has shown over a series of essays how the concept of the "akasha" or sky, the space of the "heart universal," unites many strands of Indian theoretical reflections on emotion, especially aesthetic emotion. I would like to dwell on the latter point for a while as I want to develop the last section of this essay around the idea of akasha. Chakrabarti locates the first mention of akasha in relation to *rasa* in Chandogya Upanisad, but finds similar use of the word, as what he calls a logical space of "unconstrained recombinations," all over the Upanisads. It is blissful, full of vibrant feelings, void of objects.[19] He also shows how the concept of akasha can be found in various forms in *Yoga Vasistha* and in the Santiparva of the *Mahābhārata* as that extended space, which is already alive with consciousness.[20] It transcends the consciousness versus outside world division, and could be used to re-orient the entire mind–body problematic. Chakrabarti sees the image of the "Heart Lotus" (hritkamal), the Heart Universal, and "akasha" as parts of the same tradition of conceiving "hrdaya" or heart as space, which is both inside and outside. The tantalizing aspect of this dimension of the hrdaya, glimpsed in the experience of art, is the public emotion, which is not anchored to an individual, not owned by this or that person, and therefore is an abstraction of emotion per se. Nevertheless, it is felt intensely by the individual participating in art.

III.

I would like to suggest that it is possible for cinema to actually figure this sky, the akasha. The Indian filmmaker who came close to achieving this was Ritwik Ghatak (1925–76), and he did so through an actual "displacement" of the feeling person into an ambient consciousness. This was, and indeed is, unthinkable in our film culture where instituting the person as a centered consciousness and agency has been considered the mark of modern expression. Ghatak is considered a major purveyor of the modern cinema in India, but his career proved difficult to assimilate within the story of the modernity in question. That difficulty owed itself in no small way to his tendency to lapse into melodramatic excesses, the use of plots marked by coincidences, characters who veer close to allegorical embodiments—the kind of personhood that the "moral occult" of melodramatic narratives present.[21]

For a leftist, Ghatak was unusually responsive to Indian traditions of art and philosophy. He used to say that one has to enter Indian traditions with a scientific mind in order to find sources of creativity. From the 1960 film *Meghe dhaka tara* (Cloud-Capped Star), where he consciously adopted the melodramatic mode for the first time, all his films, right up to the final *Jukti takko ar gappo* (Arguments and a Story, 1974), bear references or allusions to ideas drawn from Indian epic, puranic, or Upanishadic sources. Those elements create a deeply resonant tapestry in combination with folk material and modern cultural citations. This heterogeneous content could not but be reflexive in nature. On the other hand, it could not remain satisfied with the psychologically defined rational character as the anchor of thought and feeling. The emotional "excess" of his

films alienated his critics, but what has been almost wholly overlooked is that unlike the cinema that exploits well-defined emotions, emotional high points in his films, much like the thinking process, take flights beyond the individual person, following a logic of ecstasy. It is not possible to enjoy emotions in Ghatak's cinema without contemplating their universal impersonal dimension. And he would combine nature and history in equal measure to create an image of that dimension of universality.

Perhaps the most famous example of this is from the finale of *Meghe dhaka tara*, where the protagonist cries out her last words to her brother. As she says, "I wanted to live, my brother, I want to live," her words literally leave her borne aloft by a panning camera, and start echoing from the surrounding hills and the sky. As the panning shot ends it signals the fading breath of the woman. Before this erasure of the human into the grand and distant landscape, Ghatak introduces a logic of displacement into his very compositions. In the build up to this climax, we increasingly see Nita, the protagonist, and her brother being framed in the most unconventional way. They are pushed to the margins of the frame, sometimes the frame-line cutting out part of the face, allowing the background, the landscape itself, to occupy the center of the image (Figure 16.1).

This method of composition, more profoundly shaping emotional expression in his films than the logic of sentimental identification with characters, is sustained through the films that followed. In *Subarnarekha* (The Golden Line, 1962), for example, the first expression of love between Sita and Abhiram is presented in whispers that merge with the sound of wind coursing through the surrounding trees. The shots present the man and the woman from the back, so that we do not connect the words to speaking mouths, which would be the normal thing to do given the romantic intensity of the moment, but receive them as half emerging from the enveloping nature itself (Figure 16.2).

Let us revisit the film where he first developed the method, *Ajantrik* (Pathetic Fallacy, 1958), his second film. It is particularly curious to see how *Ajantrik* introduces dissociative movements within the realist narrative logic it adopted. The film tells the story of an eccentric taxi driver, Bimal, a loner who has a deep attachment to his rickety old car. He calls it "Jagaddal," the immovable. We learn from him that the car came into his life the year his mother passed away. It is not only a source of livelihood but of larger sustenance for him. His obsessive attachment to it makes his fellow taxi drivers in the small town remark in jest that the car might also be the woman in his life. The film follows this relationship through a series of trips. Apart from the passengers, we see a set of characters that create a sort of cognitive grid for reading Bimal's character. Among them are the tribal Oraons, the garage-boy Sultan who manages to strike up some intimacy with the reticent Bimal, and a madman at the taxi-stand. Ghatak wrote that the tribes people, the madman and the children are but extensions of Bimal, whose mind should be understood in relation to them.[22] This method calls for a structural rather than psychological understanding of character, thereby offering a challenge to the viewer despite its simple story. No direct access to Bimal's mind; we are instead offered a grid of extensions and echoes. At moments of crisis one has to move one's gaze from the protagonist to the characters that surround him, and then to the very landscape. And along this path of displacement, feelings take on a body, they occupy the very space that we look at and listen to. Commenting



FIGURE 16.1: *Meghe dhaka tara*: Before the Last Cry.

on the commercial failure of the film (that failure dogged him throughout his life), Ghatak wrote that it would have been easier for the audience to identify themselves with the story if the hero was in love with an animal or even a river. Relationship with a car, at once inanimate and part of the machine age, is hard to assimilate.[23] In terms of emotional response it meant that a part of the relationship could not be given a human countenance. The film invites us to imagine consciousness and feeling through the landscape. This is indeed a challenge to an audience used to respond to emotions on the screen through the conduit of the person.

The car responds to Bimal's words and actions. In fact the only conversation Bimal seems to be capable of is with Jagaddal. It makes noises of slaking thirst when Bimal feeds water into the engine, its big eye-like headlights turn in reaction to things that Bimal do. But at the end, we have a story of the failure of this humanizing



FIGURE 16.2: *Subarnarekha*: The First Utterance of Love.

project. Ghatak's images take in the hilly Chhotonagpur terrain, lying next to the Western border of Bengal, in a way that makes the ambient space play a role in embodying aspects of the human. Jagaddal will finally prove its name to be true: it will refuse to move, its inert core will offer resistance to the strange animism that Bimal performs on its body. The film is about the loss that we have to suffer in the process of industrialization, the loss of a mode of relating to things as if they could all come alive through some willful invocation. But how does the film figure the deep sadness of this realization of loss? We see Bimal suffering, and also perhaps coming to the realization that there are others in world, the tribal Oraons or the child (who at the end plays with the horn of the car after Jagaddal is sold off as scrap metal) who know better about the secret of conversing with the nonhuman.

But more curious is the cinematic method Ghatak employs of pushing the human character to the margins of the frame in moments of emotional saturation.

Characters and objects appear in more or less centered compositions in the first hour of the film. We have the standard foreground–background relationship, the familiar axis between the individual and environment.[24] But this perspectival presentation undergoes an unexpected change as we draw near the first climax of the film. A woman, a runaway bride, brings on this transformation. Bimal drives the woman and her partner to a guest house. At the very first glimmer of some interest in Bimal for the woman, Jagaddal starts to behave strangely, as if out of jealousy. It even comes close to run over the woman in an accidental turn. It is all part of the comic logic of identification between the man and the car that we see in the first part of the film. But soon something else happens, foreshadowed in the scene in early compositions of Bimal, the woman, and the car (Figure 16.3).

We come to know some time later that the man she had eloped with has cheated her of her valuables and abandoned her. She had run away from her wedding, and now has no one to turn to. Bimal chances upon her in the wilderness, takes her to the railway station, buys her a ticket to the city. She leaves without a word. As this sequence of events unfolds, involving Bimal, the woman, and Jagaddal in some sort of a triangular relationship, the images begin to invert the relationship between background and foreground. The human figure is pushed to the very end of the frame, flouting the norms of composition. When he finds her in the plateau, the camera places them at diagonal corners of the frame, reduced almost to specks, and allows the undulating terrain dominate the image. This is the first moment of a possibility of a romantic relationship in the hero's life, which any filmmaker would capture through dramatic accents on bodies and faces. Ghatak decides instead to let the surroundings heave into the frame, embody the possible range of emotions that he leaves unarticulated in dialogue. The person recedes to the background (Figure 16.4).



FIGURE 16.3: *Ajantrik*: Bimal and the Woman.



FIGURE 16.4: *Ajantrik*: The Abandoned Woman.

The shifts of emotion are presented in minimum words and gestures as we move through the sequence. The young woman is silent from the shock of abandonment, and Bimal does not have the necessary skills of communication. After he buys her a ticket for the train to Calcutta, Bimal manages to ask her where she would go. She

says she doesn't know. Bimal suddenly turns back to counter to return the ticket. Has he decided to keep her with him? The train arrives, the woman boards it. Bimal runs back to hand her the ticket. She says something that he can't hear; he runs along the platform desperately trying to catch her words, but fails. As the train leaves we find him captured in shots occupying the edge of frame. In one of them, Jagaddal and Bimal are partially visible along the bottom line of the shot; the tree and the sky instead occupy the central place (Figure 16.5).

Bimal finds out that the woman has left her only belongings in a little sack in the car. He tries to catch her train in the next station driving through the hills. But Jagaddal betrays him. It would not start at first, and then it breaks down on the hills, killing the last hope of a union between Bimal and the woman. As the car groans and ambles through the plains it looks insignificantly small in relation to the wide expanse. But more than that, that expanse, the hills and the trees, are presented in such a way—both visually and through sound—that the whole horizon appears to



FIGURE 16.5: *Ajantrik*: The Railway Station.



FIGURE 16.5: continued

be standing there silently watching this little episode. It is almost uncanny the way the horizon begins to cast a gaze (Figure 16.6).

The developments in the narrative make it clear that this radical re-orientation of vision is meant to lead to the climax where the car would freeze in its tracks, the narrative thread will be cut off, and the tribal Oraons will take over the action with a long ritual procession. The film gives over to another language in the Oraon dance that displaces the story of Bimal's pursuit at the point of the breakdown of Jagaddal. In an essay on filming the Oraons, Ghatak indicated that what drew him to them was their power of ecstatic expression and of imagining life in inert things.[25] At the moment of emotional saturation Ghatak figures a spill over in the form of receding individual form and the surrounding space coming into life.

This space could be called the sky of cinema, which embodies emotions as they are distilled into their structural basics. In order for this sky to become visible emotion has to leave its tethering in the person and spread over the surrounding world. Cinema is especially privileged to bring forth a picture of the akasha by actually starting with the feeling person and then moving to an impersonal but profoundly saturated space of feelings. But only rarely in our cinema has space taken on this dimension, and it has often happened partially, or inadvertently. Ghatak is the only consistent practitioner of this form of emotional representation. It is instructive to return to his films at a time when Indian cinema has lost all capacity to imagine anything beyond the person expressing feeling, anything but familiar and safe modes of accessing the human.



FIGURE 16.6: *Ajantrik*: The Gazing Horizon.

NOTES

1. See Arindam Chakrabarti, "Sound, Time and Thinking in the Heart-Lotus: Understanding Indian Music." Unpublished lecture delivered in 2007 at ITC Sangeet Research Academy, Kolkata, India.
2. Jacques Ranciere, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), esp. Chapters 1 and 3.b.
3. Abanindranath Tagore, "Mat o mantra," *Bagishwari shilpa prabandhabali* (Kolkata: Ananda, 1999).
4. "Antar bahir," in *Bagishwari shilpa prabandhabali*. Abanindranath speaks of the "abidyaman" as lusterless fire, not yet given in flames, and as the "janani" or the mother of "bidyaman," p. 87.
5. Theodore W. Adorno, "Transparencies on Film," trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *New German Critique* No. 24/25 (Autumn 1981–Winter 1982).
6. "Arup na rup," *Bagishwari shilpa prabandhabali*.
7. It is an adaptation of the twelfth-century Persian tale of Shirin-Khosraw, originally told in the Shahnameh.
8. "Abakash" is both scope and space. I have, of course, instances from Bengali films in mind here. Sequences figuring the space of listening following the song can be found in films such as *Udayer pathe* (1944), *Komal gandhar* (1961), *Subarnarekha* (1962), *Diba ratrir kabya* (1969), and *Nimantran* (1972).
9. See Arindam Chakrabarti, "Play, Pleasure, Pain: Ownerless Emotions in Rasa-Aesthetics," in *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, Vol. 15, Part 3 (*Science, Literature and Aesthetics*), ed. Amiya Dev (New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilizations, 2009).

10. Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya, "The Concept of Rasa," in *Studies in Philosophy*, ed. Gopinath Bhattacharyya, 3rd revised and enlarged edition (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 2008), p. 353.
11. Ibid., pp. 352–53.
12. Ibid., p. 354.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 357.
15. "The Subject as Freedom," in Bhattachrayya, *Studies in Philosophy*, p. 454.
16. "The bodily feeling is but the felt body which is not known to be other than the perceived body. Yet the perceived body is distinct from it so far as it is an 'interior' that is never perceived and cannot be imagined to be perceived from outside," Bhattacharyya, " The Subject as Freedom," p. 413.
17. See Arindam Chakrabarti, "Jibanananda o antarmukh dehabodh," *Deha geha bandhutwa, chhati sharirak tarka* (Kolkata: Anustup, 2008).
18. Cited in Arindam Chakrabarti, "Sound, Time and Thinking in the Heart-Lotus: Understanding Indian Music." Unpublished lecture delivered in 2007 at ITC Sangeet Research Academy, Kolkata, India.
19. "Play, Pleasure and Pain: Ownerless Emotions in Rasa- Aesthetics," p. 200.
20. Arindam Chakrabarti, "Where am I? Three Spaces in the Metaphysics of the *Moksopaya*," in *Engaged Emancipation, Mind, Morals and Make-Believe in the Moksapaya (Yogabasistha),* ed. Christopher Key Chapple and Arindam Chakrabarti (New York: SUNY Press, 2015).
21. "Moral occult" is a concept developed by Peter Brooks in his landmark study of melodrama, *The Melodramatic Imagination, Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976).
22. See Ritwik Ghatak, "Manabsamaj, amader aitihya, chhabi kora o amar prachesta," *Chalachitra manush ebang aro kichhu* (Kolkata: Dey's Publishing, 2005).
23. Ritwik Ghatak, "Some Thoughts on *Ajantrik*," *Rows and Rows of Fences* (Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2000), p. 39. Also see Ritwik Ghatak, "*Ajantrik* niye kichhu bhabna," *Antarjatik angik*, Sit-Basanta, 1380.
24. One must mention though that from the very beginning the soundtrack signals the dissociation between the body and the sound by mixing the honk of the car horn with the ambient sound of the Oraon musical horn. The car always seems to make a noise that comes half from outside.
25. Ritwik Ghatak, "About the Oraons of Chhotanagpur," *Rows and Rows of Fences*, Appendix.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adorno, Theodore W., "Transparencies on Film," trans. Thomas Y. Levin. *New German Critique*, 24/25 (Autumn 1981–Winter 1982).

Bhattacharyya, Krishnachandra, *Studies in Philosophy*, ed. Gopinath Bhattacharyya, 3rd Revised and Enlarged edition. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass Publishers, 2008.

Brooks, Peter, *The Melodramatic Imagination, Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976.

Chakrabarti, Arindam, "Sound, Time and Thinking in the Heart-Lotus: Understanding Indian Music." Unpublished lecture delivered at ITC Sangeet Research Academy, Kolkata, India, 2007.

Chakrabarti, Arindam, "Jibanananda o antarmukh dehabodh," *Deha geha bandhutwa, chhati sharirak tarka*. Kolkata: Anustup, 2008.

Chakrabarti, Arindam, "Play, Pleasure, Pain: Ownerless Emotions in Rasa-Aesthetics," in *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, Vol. 15, Part 3 (*Science, Literature and Aesthetics*), ed. Amiya Dev. New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilizations, 2009.

Chakrabarti, Arindam, "Where am I ? Three Spaces in the Metaphysics of the *Moksopaya*," in *Engaged Emancipation, Mind, Morals and Make-Believe in the Moksapaya (Yogabasistha),* ed. Christopher Key Chapple and Arindam Chakrabarti. New York: SUNY Press, 2015.

Ghatak, Ritwik, "*Ajantrik* niye kichhu bhabna," *Antarjatik angik*, Kolkata: Sit-Basanta, 1974.

Ghatak, Ritwik, *Rows and Rows of Fences*. Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2000.

Ghatak, Ritwik, "Manabsamaj, amader aitihya, chhabi kora o amar prachesta," *Chalachitra manush ebang aro kichhu*. Kolkata: Dey's Publishing, 2005.

Ranciere, Jacques, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009.

Tagore, Abanindranath, *Bagishwari shilpa prabandhabali*. Kolkata: Ananda, 1999.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Toward a Gandhian Aesthetics: The Poetics of Surrender and the Art of Brahmacharya

TRIDIP SUHRUD

"Jesus was, to my mind, a supreme artist."[1]

I.

It is not through the invocation of this beautiful, enigmatic, and sublime image that I wish to begin this exploration in the possibilities of surrender. Instead, I wish to draw attention to something that is opposed to the very idea of sublime beauty, an experience that is "degrading," "dirty," "defiling," something that is deeply repugnant to the conscience of Gandhi. It is through the un-aesthetic or more aptly anesthetic that one can capture something of Gandhi's striving to lead the life of a "supreme artist."

On April 14, 1938, Gandhi had an involuntary discharge. This was not the first time that he had involuntary discharge. Involuntary discharge was, if anything, a routine occurrence with him. In 1936 he wrote to an ashramite; "I have always had involuntary discharges. In South Africa they occurred at intervals of several years. I do not remember exactly. Here in India there have been months."[2] In 1927 he had admitted to having similar experience twice in two weeks. "I had an involuntary discharge in sleep twice during the last two weeks. I cannot recall any dream."[3] The April 14th incident was unlike all previous experiences. The emission occurred while he was fully awake and he was in such a "wretched" and "pitiable" condition that he could not control the discharge though fully awake. Some two years before this he had a similarly troubling, defiling experience, he had a sudden desire for intercourse. He narrated it thus: ". . . the experience in Bombay occurred while I was fully awake and had a sudden desire for intercourse. I felt of course no urge to gratify the craving, there was no self-forgetfulness whatever. I was completely master of my body. But despite my best efforts the organ remained aroused. This was an altogether strange and shameful experience."[4]

He wrote of his feelings of utter despondency; "That degrading, dirty, torturing experience of April 14th shook me to bits and made me feel as if I was hurled by God from an imaginary paradise where I had no right to be in my uncleanliness."[5] Gandhi, through this unmistakable Biblical image sought to convey not only his imperfect Brahmacharya but a deeper sense of inadequacy, a more fundamental failing. His submission to *Satya Narayan*, truth as God was incomplete and hence he had no right to represent truth and nonviolence. He lamented; "Where I am, where is my place, and how can a person subject to passion represent non-violence and truth?"[6]

Gandhi posited a relationship between submission and self-knowledge, between surrender and capacity to represent truth and nonviolence. It is in this relationship that his craving to lead life as a supreme artist emerges.

II.

The walls of his house, *Hriday Kunj*, were bare, completely bereft of any mark, artistic or otherwise. Gandhi had no need for outward expressions of beauty created by human hands. He said, "There are two aspects of things—the outward and the inward. It is purely a matter of emphasis with me. The outward has no meaning except in so far as it helps the inward."[7] Gandhi argued that there are moments, however rare, when one's communion with oneself is so complete that one feels no need for any outward expression, including art. He asserted, "There comes a time when he supersedes art that depends for its appreciation on sense perception."[8] Gandhi described this beautiful moment of communion with oneself as a moment when one acquires the capacity to hear that "small, still voice within," what he often described as "the inner voice."

This need, this desire and ability to hear the voice speaking from within was Gandhi's principal quest. It signaled to him his nearness or distance from *Satya Narayan*. In his autobiography; *An Autobiography or the story of My Experiments with Truth* Gandhi articulated his vocation and calling. He wrote: "What I want to achieve—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years—is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *Moksha*. I live and move and have my entire being in pursuit of this goal."[9] He emphasized that all his actions, including those in the political realm, were directed to this end. This remarkable desire to see God face to face, to attain *Moksha*, is predicated upon one possibility: that it is possible for us to know our self, to attain self-realization. Without this possibility of self-realization God would remain ever elusive.

He was equally aware that not all that was experienced by the self was fully comprehensible and even less communicable. He said, "There are some things which are known only to oneself and one's Maker."[10] It is in this realm that language fails. Gandhi's quest to know himself involved both these realms; a public realm of experiments and a private, intensely personal realm of *sadhana* that was known only to him and his Maker. Both these realms are spiritual, moral, and religious in the sense that religion is morality. It is a realm where the seeker and his quest are one.

The implications of this quest become apparent when we situate it in the site of the experiments, which is the Ashram; the modes of experiment, which are Truth, Ahimsa (nonviolence or love), and Brahmacharya and their manifestation in Swaraj.

Ashram, or "a community of men of religions"[11] is central to Gandhi's striving. He was to later claim, "ashram was a necessity of life for me."[12] Ashram as a community of coreligionists, is bound together not only by a common quest but by a set of obligatory observances that make them the ashramites. Ashram therefore is where there are ashramites. Thus, Yeravda prison-mandir or temple as he called it—the Aga Khan Palace Prison were as much an ashram as the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati and Sevagram at Wardha. Thus, the ashram went with him on his lonely pilgrim to Noakhali and to Bihar that was his Karbala.

Before establishing the Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab on May 25, 1915, Gandhi had established two ashram-like communities in South Africa. Ashram-like, as he steadfastly refused to describe them as ashram. One was merely a settlement—the Phoenix Settlement—while the other a farm—the Tolstoy Farm. Phoenix was established in 1904 under the "magic spell" of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* but acquired an ashram-like character only after 1906. It was in 1906 that Gandhi took a vow of Brahmacharya, initially in the limited sense of chastity and celibacy. Gandhi says: "From this time onward I looked upon Phoenix deliberately as a religious institution."[13] Thus, observance of *Vrata*, which is often inadequately translated as vows,[14] is the defining characteristic of the ashram. It is only through the observances that a community becomes a community of coreligionists and a settlement becomes a place for experiments with truth.

This he hoped would allow him and his fellow ashramites to attain the perfect ideal; "when it is night for all other beings, the disciplined soul is awake."[15] This was the ideal for himself and the ashram. He said; "Let us pray that we shall see light when all around us there is darkness . . . we should thus be ready to take upon ourselves the burden of the whole world, but we can bear that burden only if we mean by it doing *tapascharya* on behalf of the whole world, we shall then see light where others see nothing but darkness."[16]

This desire to be awake, to feel the presence of light when surrounded by darkness is for Gandhi the only true sign of a *bhakta*, a devotee. A devotee is one for whom God is *ananya*, of which there is no other, as the devotee is imbued with the presence of truth as God. This single-minded devotion comes from *parayana* by repetition, by *namasmaran* of God. The day at the ashram began with the congregational morning worship at 4:15 a.m. to 4:45 a.m.;[17] and closed with the evening prayer at 7:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. So central was this worship to the life of the community that Gandhi could claim: "Ever since the Ashram was founded, not a single day has passed to my knowledge without this worship."[18] Gandhi would agree that full realization of the Absolute is almost impossible for an embodied being and hence they repeat the name of their *ishta deva*, the personal god. "The Absolute is devoid of all attributes and thus difficult for men even to imagine. Therefore, they are all worshipers of a personal God, whether they are aware of it or not."[19] For Gandhi his *ishta deva* was Rama.

This Rama was not the embodied Rama, he could not have a physical form. Hence, "the Rama whom one wishes to remember, and to whom one should remember, is the Rama of one's own imagination, not the Rama of someone else's imagination."[20] This Rama of Gandhi's imagination was the Perfect One, He was the one who saved and purified even those who had fallen and committed sin, He was *patit pavan*. It is such Rama that he sought to worship. "We should worship Him, the Inner Ruler, who dwells

in the hearts of all, yet transcends all and is the Lord of all. It is He of whom we sing: *Nirbalke bal Rama.*"[21] It was this formless and flawless Rama that Gandhi wished to see face to face. The Rama that he referred to and the name that he repeated all his life and at the moment of his death was not that Rama who we know as Dashrath's son.[22] It was that Rama whose name Dashratha gave to his son. That Rama was *Atmarama*, it was Truth. Truth is not merely that we are expected to speak. It is That which alone is, it is That of which all things are made, it is That which subsists by its own power, which alone is eternal. Gandhi's intense yearning was that such Truth should illuminate his heart. Despite his awareness that Rama had come "home" to him, He was not near enough, and hence he needed to keep the recitation of the name. He spoke of this distance and his need for utterance; "Even now, although Rama is near, He is not near enough to me; hence the need to address Him at all. When He is with me all the twenty-four hours, there will be no need to address Him even in the singular."[23]

With the disappearance of the form what remains is the Name. The absence of the form does envelop the disciples with darkness. This darkness is the result of longing, an intense desire to feel the presence of the body. But this darkness can only be temporary, as what is permanent is not the body but the thought. And that is why Poet Tulsidasji sang the glory of *namasmaran*. Name, that is pure thought, is higher than the form. Because thought does not disappear with the death of the form; it in fact shines forth more clearly. The name Rama was more potent than the person or the exemplar. Gandhi believed that it was given to him to utter the Name, to speak of Truth. The Name was the savior, it was pure devotion. Gandhi liked to describe himself not as a man of learning but as a man of prayer. Prayer was the very core of his life. He had an intense need for prayer. Prayer was not just repetition of Ramanama. Prayer was the expression of the definitive and conscious longing of the soul; it was his act of waiting upon Him for guidance. His want was to feel the utterly pure presence of the divine within. Only a heart purified and cleansed by prayer could be filled with the presence of God, where life became one long continuous prayer, an act of worship. Prayer was for him the final reliance upon God to the exclusion of all else. He knew that only when a person lives constantly in the sight of God, when in the heart every moment. Such a prayer could only be offered in the spirit of nonattachment, *anasakti*. Gandhi spoke beautifully of the power of *namasmaran*. "You must learn to repeat the blessed name of Rama with such sweetness and such devotion that the birds will pause in their singing to listen to you—that the very trees will bend their leaves towards you, stirred by the divine melody of that Name."[24]

This *namasmaran*, this *ananya bhakti* required total self-surrender and all-embracing love.[25] He claimed that all his actions were undertaken with the object of generating such devotion within him.[26] This *bhakti* he hoped would lead him on the path of self-realization, make him a *jnani*, a self-knowing one. "The true meaning of *bhakti* is search for the *atman*. When the *atman* realizes itself, *bhakti* is transformed into *jnana*."[27] To be a seeker after this knowledge is to be a Brahmachari. Gandhi preferred the term brahamchari over the term Vidyarthi (one who strives for knowledge). "In our languages, there is a beautiful word, equivalent for the word student, that is *brahamchari*. Vidyarthi is a coined word and a poor substitute for *brahmachari.*"[28]

III.

Body, *deha* for Gandhi is an impediment to this state of *jnana*, of self-realization. In a curious transposition Gandhi altered one of the most well-known of couplets of poet Tulsidas. In a discussion on the nature of Soul-Force or Truth-Force in his 1909 text *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi invoked Tulsidas. He wrote; "The poet Tulsidas has said 'Of religion, pity or love is the root, as *egotism of the body.*[29] Therefore, we should not abandon pity so long as we are alive'."[30] This transposition is not accidental. It is a transposition expected of one striving for Brahmacharya. Since 1906 Gandhi had begun to observe Brahmacharya in a limited and restricted sense of chastity and celibacy. His relationship with his body had undergone a fundamental transformation and this observance was an external signifier of that. Brahmacharya, described as a Mahavrata, came to Gandhi as a necessary observance at a time when he had organized an ambulance corps during the Zulu rebellion in South Africa. He realized that service of the community was not possible without observance of brahmacharya. At the age of 37, in 1906 Gandhi took the vow of brahmacharya. The same year saw the advent of Satyagraha as an expression of Soul-Force, as Truth-Force and as a covenant between human and God.

The day was September 11, 1906. The Jewish-owned Empire Theatre in Johannesburg was packed from floor to ceiling with men of Asiatic origin. Men, because there was not a single woman in that audience. They had come together to declare their opposition to the Asiatic Registration Act or the Black Act, which required every man, woman and child of eight years or upward of Asiatic origin to submit to registration by providing prints of all ten fingers; failure to register was an offence under the law and the defaulter could be punished with deportation. The meeting was expected to pass several resolutions, the most significant of which was the Fourth Resolution by which "The Indians solemnly determined not to submit to the Ordinance in the event of its becoming law in the teeth of their opposition and to further all the penalties to such non-submission".[31]

Gandhi was to confess later that he had not understood all the implications of the resolution he had helped to frame. The resolution was duly proposed, seconded, and supported by various speakers. Among the speakers was Sheth Haji Habib, an old and experienced resident of South Africa. Deeply moved, he invoked *Khuda*. He used two terms, "*Khuda Kasam*" (an oath taken in the name of God) and "*Khuda*" as "*hazar nazar*" (within the presence of God and with God as witness.) When Sheth Haji Habib came to the solemn declaration, Gandhi was "at once startled and put on my guard. Only then did I fully realize my responsibility and the responsibility of the community."[32]

Gandhi was aware that it was part of public life all over the world to pass resolutions that were either amended or were not observed by all concerned. Gandhi seized the moment, as he was to do time and again, intervened in the meeting and clarified the true nature of the proposed manner of passing the resolution. "To pledge ourselves to take an oath in the name of that god with him as witness is not something to be trifled with. If having taken such an oath we violate our pledge we are guilty before God and man."

He ended the long intervention on a personal note. He spoke of his personal responsibility.

> I am fully conscious of my responsibility in the matter. It is possible that a majority of those present here may take the pledge in a fit of enthusiasm or indignation but may weaken under the ordeal, and only a handful maybe left to force the final test. Even then there is only one course open to someone like me, to die but not to submit to the law. It is quite unlikely but even if everyone else flinched leaving me alone to face the music, I am confident that I would never violate my pledge.

This long reminder of the defining moment is to remember that Satyagraha in its moment of conception is a covenant, a covenant of the self with God and of the self with the embodied person, if they can be thought of as distinct from one another. This element of pledge would become a central feature of Gandhi's thought and practice of Satyagraha.

Three years after this event Gandhi in his seed text *Hind Swaraj* explained the meaning of the term "Satyagraha" or passive resistance, a term that was an inadequate rendering of the term "Satyagraha." In Gujarati original he used two terms that do not appear to belong to a shared semantic universe, these are Satyagraha (Truth force) and *Atma Bala* (Soul force).

Before we examine the significance of this usage let us examine the terms through which he explains the idea of Satyagraha. "Satyagraha or soul-force, is known in English as 'passive resistance.' This word refers to the path of self-suffering chosen by men to secure their rights. Its intent is reverse of armed force. When I refuse to do what I do not approve of, in so refusing I make use of Satyagraha or soul-force."[33] In his English rendering Gandhi invoked the idea of conscience there by establishing a relationship of Satyagraha with soul-force. He said, "When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use Soul Force." There are two notions that are foregrounded: idea of conscience and the practice of suffering.

Idea of conscience would play an increasingly larger role in Gandhi's life. Let us examine one instance of this to understand its working and its relationship to Satyagraha. On April 30, 1933, Gandhi made a public announcement to go on an unconditional and irrevocable fast. This was his purest fast, a fast of twenty-one days. It was a fast for self-purification. He declared that this resolution was made in submission to his inner voice. Gandhi undertook the fast and of course survived it. Subsequently he explained the voice of the inner voice. "The night I got the inspiration, I had a terrible inner struggle. My mind was restless. I could see no way. The burden of my responsibility was crushing me. But what I did hear was a voice from afar and yet quite near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking to me, and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time when I heard the voice. The hearing of the voice was preceded by a terrible struggle within me. Suddenly the voice came upon me. I listened, I made certain that it was the voice; and the struggle ceased. I was calm."[34]

Gandhi claimed that he heard a voice, a voice that he described as a voice of Lord. But two questions arise. How does one acquire the capacity to hear the voice, and two, how does one know, make certain that it is the voice of Truth, of Rama and not of Ravana.

The voice that he heard came from within and not from a force outside of him. Gandhi made a distinction between an outer force and a power beyond us. A power beyond us has its locus within us. It is superior to us, not subject to our command or willful action, but it is still located within us. He explained the nature of this power. "Beyond us" means a "power which is beyond our ego."[35] According to Gandhi one acquires the capacity to hear the voice when "the ego is reduced to zero."[36] Reducing the ego to zero requires total submission to *Satya Narayan*, Truth as God. This is the true meaning of a covenant made in the name of God, and with God as witness.

The other characteristic of Satyagraha is that it is a mode of suffering. Suffering requires a witness, a being that would bear witness to, provide testimony of suffering. Of course, the final act of bearing witness is that of God. He recognizes the suffering of human heart pining for Truth as none else. But, it is equally possible for us, the embodied beings to bear witness to both suffering and Truth.

The suffering of Satyagraha requires both those acts of bearing witness. A Satyagrahi therefore, must recognize the goodness of others, especially of those whose actions are sought to be opposed and transformed through the act of Satyagraha. It requires a conception of human nature, which accords to the others however evil, capacity to recognize good, virtue, suffering, and truth. This is why Gandhi called Satyagraha as love force. Love as the way in which Christ lived, suffered, and gave up his life for us.

Satyagraha is also predicated upon a conception of means and ends that is unique to Gandhi. Gandhi likened means and ends to seed and tree, "there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree."[37] Satyagraha also presupposes another relationship between the means and ends and that is of purity of both. Satyagraha requires both pure means and pure ends, the purity of ends does not justify the use of impure means. Means brings us to the Satyagrahi. Means and ends are linked by the practices of the Satyagrahi. The question what are pure means can be answered in two ways. First posits the Satyagrahi at the center. Pure means are those that are employed by a person cleansed through a process of self-purification.

The other answer could be that pure means are nonviolent means. The quest for Ahimsa is central to the pursuit of truth and hence for Satyagraha. Gandhi approaches the question of pure means from both these routes.

Gandhi described Satyagraha as a *Sarvadhari*, which means both, in all directions, all sided, and something that everyone can bear, or carry. It affects both the parties, those who wield it and on those it is wielded. Gandhi lists several attributes in the discussion on Satyagraha in *Hind Swaraj*. Courage, freedom from fear (abhaya), adopt poverty (aparigraha and asteya—nonstealing), steadfastness to truth, and Brahmacharya. These would later develop into Gandhi's *Ekadash Vrata*, the eleven vows.

Before we go to the relationship of Satyagraha and the *Ekadash Vrata*, it is necessary to examine Gandhi's insistence upon Ahimsa, not as a mere technique, as instrumentality but the philosophical necessity for Ahimsa. This we can do by meditating upon the categories, the terms through which Gandhi sought to understand the nature of violence and nonviolence, as also the opposition between

the two. First a clarification about translation, the term "Ahimsa" is often translated as nonviolence, nonkilling, or noninjury. Gandhi was aware that these terms do not always capture or contain the meaning of Ahimsa. However, in his letters on the *Ekadash Vrata* to the Ashramites written from Yeravda prison he chose to translate Ahimsa as love. And it is this meaning that should inform our reading of Ahimsa.

Gandhi described violence as "brute-force" (Sharir bal or *tapobal* in Gujarati) and nonviolence as "soul force" (atma bal or daya bal.)

The distance between the two, between the beastly and the human is marked by nonviolence. The idea of brute-force locates violence in the body and the instruments that the body can commend to inflict injury or to cause death. It connotes pure instrumentality. By locating violence within the realm of the beastly, Gandhi clearly points out the absence of the conscience, of the normative. He wrote "Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law—to the strength of the spirit."[38] The term "soul-force" is indicative of the conscience, of the human ability to discern the path of rectitude and act upon this judgment. In a speech given before the members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh in 1938 he brought this distinction sharply in focus. "Physical strength is called brute-force. We are born with such strength . . . But we are born as human beings in order that we may realize God that dwells within our hearts. This is the basic distinction between us and the beasts . . . Along with the human form, we also have the human power—that is the power of non-violence. We can have an insight into the mystery of the soul-force. In that consists our humanity."[39] It is only by this capacity for Ahimsa that we can fulfill the human vocation, which for Gandhi is the pursuit for self-realization. Violence for Gandhi creates an impregnable distance in the path of self-realization. Gandhi said: "The more he took to violence, the more he receded from Truth."[40] As we, by use of violence recede from Truth, Satyagraha is not possible, as Satyagraha is the essence of this quest and yearning.

Satyagraha as a quest for truth is linked to the quest for Swaraj and for a civilization wherein self-realization is not structurally precluded. Gandhi's ideas of civilization and Swaraj were rooted in this possibility of knowing oneself. Gandhi argued in the Hind Swaraj that modern Western civilization in fact de-civilizes, and characterized it as Black age (Kali Yuga) or satanic civilization. It was so because modern civilization sought to shift the locus of human worth, making it untenable to have any sense of religion or morality. He wrote "It's true test lies in the fact that people living under it make bodily welfare the object of life."[41] By making bodily welfare the object of life, modern civilization had shifted the locus of judgment outside the human being. It made not right conduct but objects the measure of human worth. In so doing, it had closed the possibility of knowing one self. He wrote: "Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and passions. So doing, we know ourselves."[42]

This act of knowing oneself is not only the basis of spiritual life but also of political life. He defined Swaraj thus, "It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves."[43]

This act of ruling oneself is not possible without knowing oneself. Knowing the self requires capacity for Ahimsa, steadfastness to truth, a delicately tuned breast capable of listening to the inner voice. Swaraj cannot be conceived in absence of Satyagraha. Satyagraha, with its invocation of the soul force is based on this. Satyagraha with its necessity of purity of means and ends as also that of the satyagrahi is in the final instance based upon the recognitions of one's own conscience, on one's own conscience, on one's ability to listen to one's inner voice, and submit to it.

This necessity about the purity of the Satyagrahi brings us to Gandhi's *Ekadash Vrata*, or the eleven observances. These taken together constitute what Gandhi called his experiments with Truth. This ever wakefulness, he hoped would allow him to hear the call of Truth as distinct from voice of untruth. This would give him the capacity to wait upon *Satya Narayana*. Prayer was one made to express his intense yearning to merge in God. It was his act of waiting upon him for guidance. Only a heart cleansed through prayer could feel the utterly pure presence of God, of Truth.

This need for vrata should not be underestimated in Gandhi's conception of Satyagraha. Gandhi later saw that his self-purification through the practice of Brahmacharya was a necessary precondition for Satyagraha. He wrote: "I can now see that all the principle events of my life, culminating in the vow of Brahmacharya were secretly preparing me for it."[44] This is the most significant glimpse that we get of the inward preparation that was required for Satyagraha. In absence of self-conscious self-purification Satyagraha as Gandhi understood and practiced it would not have come to him. He also said that Satyagraha cannot be sustained without a lifelong and continuous striving for purification.

IV.

In this we have an understanding of Gandhi's experiment and his quest. His quest is to know himself, to attain Moksha, that is to see God (Truth) face to face. In order to fulfill his quest, he must be an ashramite, a satyagrahi, and a seeker after swaraj. Experiment with Truth in this sense is an experiment with self-knowledge, with attaining mastery over himself, with performance of duty and observance of morality, with Satyagraha, with swaraj, with true civilization, and with brahmacharya.

Since he never claimed to have attained it, truth had to be practiced every day, every moment of wakefulness, and also of sleep. This quest is made possible by the means of ashram and its observances. Satyagraha and swaraj as modes of self-realization are based on Truth because without Truth there can be no knowledge. That is why the word *chit*, or knowledge is associated with *sat*. Hence, Truth becomes a primary observance, it constitutes the root of the ashram. What can be known by Truth is knowledge, what is excluded from it is not Truth, not true knowledge. Steadfastness to Truth, even unto death, requires immense and inexhaustible faith in God of Truth. And yet, Gandhi would confess that such perfect self-knowledge, realization of perfect Truth might not be possible so long as we are imprisoned in a mortal body.

This impossibility leads the seeker to Ahimsa or love. Violence and quest for Truth cannot exist together; as Truth is not outside but within and as Gandhi said: "Hence, the more he took to violence, the more he receded from Truth."[45] If violence makes a person recede from truth, it also makes a person recede from self. Thus violence leads to self-forgetfulness, therefore neither Satyagraha nor swaraj, which are based on self-realization are possible with violence. Thus Truth is the end and Ahimsa the means to it.

A man whose only object is Truth, his method satyagraha, cannot be faithful to anything but Truth. "The man, who is wedded to Truth and worships faith alone, proves unfaithful to her, if he applies his talents to anything else."[46] This is the true conception of Brahmacharya, *Charya* that is mode of conduct that brings one closer to *Brahman*, that is, Truth.

This conception of Brahmacharya made all eleven observances essential to self-purification, integral to surrender. Toward the end of his life they lost all distinctiveness. He said: "Therefore, it is essential that all the disciplines should be taken as one. This enables one to realize the full meaning and significance of *brahmacharya*. In practice he alone is a true *brahmachari* who observes, in thought, word and deed, the eleven fold vow in its entirety."[47] He asserted that there could be no hierarchy in vows: "All vows have the same importance. Violation of any one of them amounts to violation of all."[48]

Gandhi repeatedly spoke of his desire to become a *brahmachari* such as Sukhadev, who it is believed experienced no passion whatsoever, so complete was his Brahmacharya that those around him also were cleansed of their passions, they for the moment of that contact became pure and unsullied like him. This ideal is also the ideal of the *Sthitpragnya*, one whose intellect is secure, as expressed in the *Gita*. Gandhi said that long before Brahmacharya came to him as a necessary observance he was attracted to the *Gita's Sthitpragny* contained in the verses 62 and 63 of the second discourse. They read:

If one
Ponders on the objects of the sense, there springs
Attraction; from attraction grows desire,
Desire flames to fierce passion, passion breeds
Recklessness; then memory– all betrayed–
Lets noble purpose go, and saps the mind,
Till purpose, mind, and man are all undone.[49]

The essential training of the brahmachari is to learn to be indifferent to the pleasures that the objects of the senses give. A sthitpragnya is one who puts away "all the cravings that arise in the mind and finds comfort for himself only from the *Atman*,"[50] and one "whose sense are reined in on all sides from their objects,"[51] so that the mind is "untroubled in sorrows and longeth not for joys, who is free from passion, fear and wrath";[52] who knows attachment no where; only such a brahmachari can be in the world "moving among sense objects with the senses weaned from likes and dislikes and brought under the control of the atman."[53]

One mode by which the mind is so trained is an act of fasting, not in the sense of mortification of the flesh but in the sense of *Upvas*. Gandhi knew that according

to the Gita, "when a man starves his senses, the objects of those senses disappear for him, but not the yearning for them."[54] The yearning disappears when one has a vision of the Supreme Truth. Gandhi argued that this verse in fact advocated fasting for self-purification. Fast as self-purification is *Upvas* (to dwell closer to Him), *Upvas* can be done only when fasting of senses is accompanied by a desire to see God; as "there is no prayer without fasting and there is no real fast without prayer."[55]

The other is *Yajna*. The Gita declared that: "Together with the sacrifice did the Lord of beings create,"[56] and the world would sustain so long as there was sacrifice, as "sacrifice produced rain."[57] Gandhi found the word yajna full of beauty and power. He interpreted the word to mean sacrifice, an act of service. He saw this idea of sacrifice as basis of all religions. His ideal was Jesus Christ. It was he who had shown the path, Gandhi said that the word yajna had to be understood in the way Jesus lived and died. It was not sacrifice when other lives were destroyed, the best sacrifice was giving up one's own life. He wrote: "Jesus put on a crown of thorns to win salvation for his people, allowed his hands and feet to be nailed and suffered agonies before he gave up the ghost. This has been the law of *yajna* from immemorial times, without *yajna* the earth cannot exist even for a moment."[58] Yajna for Gandhi was service to others and in the ultimate sense sacrifice of self. He said: "This body has been given to us only in order that we may serve all creation with it. And therefore, says the *Gita*, he who eats without offering *yajna* eats stolen food. Every single act of one who would lead a life of purity should be in the nature of *yajna*."[59]

But how does one perform such a sacrifice in daily life? Gandhi's response was twofold; for one he turned once again to the Bible and the other was uniquely his own.

"Earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow," says the Bible. Gandhi made this central to the life of the ashram and borrowed a term "bread labour" from Tolstoy to describe the nature of work. This was an eternal principal; it was dharma, duty, to perform bread labor, as those who did not perform this form of yajna ate, according to the Gita, stolen food. The other form of yajna was according to Gandhi peculiar to his times, as every age may and should have its own particular yajna, this was the yuga-dharma. Gandhi said that the yajna of his times was spinning; it was the yuga-dharma. Spinning was an obligatory ashram observance; each member was required to spin 140 threads daily, each thread measuring 4 feet.[60] This spinning was called sutra-yajna; sacrificial spinning. As his conviction that sacrificial spinning was the only true yajna for his times deepened, he along with the ashramites resolved to change the name of the Ashram itself. Ashram, hitherto called Satyagraha Ashram was re-named Udyog Mandir (literally, Temple of Industry); explaining the term Udyog Gandhi said: "Udyog has to be read in the light of the *Bhagvad Gita*."[61]

This striving to be a bhakta, a jnani, a seeker after Swaraj, an Ashramite, a Satyagrahi whose only true devotion through an unceasing practice of Brahmacharya was to Truth was for Gandhi the only real part of him. "What is of abiding worth is my insistence upon truth, non-violence and *Brahmacharya* which is the real part of me. That permanent part of me however small, is not to be despised. It is my all."[62] It was for this reason that Gandhi insisted that Brahmacharya must remain inviolate in any condition. He sought through

this the capacity to hear his inner voice, to submit to *Satya Narayan* and the power that purity of life, strict vigilance, and ceaseless application produce. He believed and hoped that his submission to Truth would produce in him Ahimsa that would touch and imbue others with similar Ahimsa. He was conscious of the distance that he needed to walk in this quest. "I have not acquired that control over my thoughts that I need for my researches in non-violence. If my non-violence has to be contagious and infectious, I must acquire greater control over my thoughts."[63]

He time and again described himself as an imperfect Brahmachari. The sense of imperfection, the awareness of one's sinfulness is mark of a Bhakta. Bhakta is a sinful one and Gandhi like Tulsi and Surdas thought of himself as one. "Tulsidas considered himself to be the most sinful person. 'Who is there so crooked, so wicked and so sensual as I?' sang Surdas."[64] This was not a language of modesty but an expression of what the heart felt. What Gandhi claimed for himself was not to be known as perfect brahmachari, a claim that would sully Brahmacharya and dim the luster of truth. "Why should it not be sufficient for the world to know that I am a genuine seeker, that I am wide awake, and that my striving is ceaseless and unbending?"[65] He therefore could assert that his life and thoughts tend toward that state. After his public admission of his discharge many associates questioned him on his seemingly unattainable quest. They argued that perfect Brahmacharya that he sought cannot be attained by one who lives and serves the world. Gandhi argued that unattainability of the ideal is not a failing of the ideal but of the seeker. The quest for perfection is the only endeavor given to the seeker. He also argued that if the same measure were to be applied cultivation of Ahimsa would also be negated. "A perfect *brahmachari* should remain unaffected by passion in any circumstance. If you say that nobody has ever been, and nobody will ever be, able to cultivate such freedom from passion, then it means that we should abandon the struggle to cultivate *brahmacharya*. If this is correct, then it follows that one can never cultivate perfect ahimsa."[66] Gandhi was aware that in his self-chosen path there was no relative merit, either he had to succeed or accept failure as his lot. A close associate wrote reassuringly to him that Gandhi was too pure for sexual consciousness. He dispelled this impression quickly. "I wish this was a true certificate. I am sorry to have to disillusion you. I am trying to lose that consciousness. But I have not lost it. Loss of that consciousness cannot be relative; it must be absolute. I do not know of any historical instance. It is difficult, I know, for history to record such instances."[67]

It was also argued that Gandhi should eschew all contacts with all women under all circumstances and at any rate. This shifted the agency of his failings to women associates. Gandhi was quick to rebuke this: "You miss the crucial point. It is not the woman who is to be blamed. I am the culprit. I must attain the required purity."[68] He had another argument. His experiments in Brahmacharya were done as a satyagrahi. An experiment of a satyagrahi cannot harm anyone else, because the subject and the object of the experiment is the satyagrahi. "If my experiment is that of a Satyagrahi, no harm at all can come to anyone."[69]

V.

In the final years of his life Gandhi gave himself up to Ramanama. He was surrounded by failure and a raging fire. It was at once a sign of Gandhi's deep faith and his utter despondency and loneliness. Ramanama became the cure and perhaps the only form of cure that he came to rely upon. In the midst of intense debate about the nature of India's independence Gandhi often retreated to Uruli-Kanchan, to a naturopathy clinic. The retreat was a mode of finding a cure, a healing, not only for the diseased body of patients that he treated but also for the disease of India.[70] To one and all he said recite the Ramanama with a pure heart. The cure for the disease, both of the body and the body-politic of India, lay in the Ramanama. He spoke of Ramanama as infallible remedy, as he put it in Gujarati *ramban*.[71] Ramanama was no longer a symbol, nor was it a metaphor. Ramanama had become the thing itself. Ramanama alluded to no reality or presence outside of itself. It had become, for Gandhi, Real. It was incumbent upon him to prove this reality. He was convinced that the violence that surrounded him was due to his own failing, his imperfect Ahimsa, and imperfect *brahmacharya*. As he walked through the ravaged villages of Noakhali and Bihar sleep eluded him. Even the chanting of Ramanama failed to bring repose. He lamented: "Why can't I, who preach all healing virtues of Ramanama to others, be content to rely on it exclusively myself?"[72]

Surrounded by raging fire Gandhi embarked upon the final *yajna*. Manu Gandhi became a willing partner in this *yajna*, which involved sharing his bed. His closest associates termed this "experiment" as immoral, as *adharma*. Gandhi responded to almost universal opprobrium with uncharacteristic spiritual arrogance. He argued that his endeavor was to expand the notion of Brahmacharya itself. "A reformer cannot afford to wait till others are converted, he must take the lead and venture forth alone even in the teeth of universal opposition. I want to test, enlarge and revise the current definition of *brahmacharya,* by which you swear in light of my observations, study and experience."[73] He claimed to represent true Brahmacharya better than any of his associates.[74]

His other argument was far more fundamental. He claimed that what he had embarked upon was *yajna* and not an experiment. An experiment has a beginning and an end, it is subject to human volition, while *yajna* being duty, being dharma, was not so. "'Experiment' or *prayog* is an ill chosen word. I have used it. It differs from the present in the sense that one could be stopped by me, the other being dharma could not be."[75] Gandhi seems to suggest that his submission to Truth had not left in him any vestige of autonomy. He hoped for this reason that his *yajna* would give him a glimpse of the ideal and if he were to have that even fleeting glimpse the world would be redeemed. "I believe that even if only one Brahmachari of my conception comes into being, the world will be redeemed."[76] In this short-lived *yajna* he felt that his strivings had reached their culmination and that finally he had the glimpse of the pure state. He shared this with Manu Gandhi, his partner in the *yajna*. "I have successfully practised the eleven vows undertaken by me. This is the culmination of my striving for the last sixty years . . . In this *yajna* I got a glimpse of the ideal of truth and purity for which I have been

aspiring."[77] This is the most direct and clear statement of Gandhi's claim, never before this *yajna* did he ever claim to have had even the slightest, most fleeting glimpse of the ideal of truth and purity.

But having attained that pure state he was plagued by deep doubts about his vision. Manu fell ill. Her frail health, her illness, which finally required her to be operated upon plunged Gandhi into deep crises. He was convinced that if Ramanama had actually taken firm root in his heart Manu would not have suffered any physical ailment. "After all I have made her my partner in this *yajna*. If Ramanama is firmly rooted in my heart, this girl should be free from her ailments."[78] He shared his despondency with Manu. "Since I sent you to the hospital, I have been constantly thinking where I stand, what God demands of me, where He will ultimately lead me . . . I know my striving is incomplete; your operation is a proof."[79] Manu's ailment and surgery became the metaphor for the partitioned India.

He needed one final proof of his vision, of his striving, of his *yajna*. Gandhi began to speak of his death, death as final ultimate *yajna*, a final sacrifice. He hoped that through his *iccha mrutyu* the glow of Ahimsa would spread all around. Gandhi imagined this death: a violent death at the hands of an assassin and at that moment his ability to face the bullets on his chest without any trace of hatred for the assassin and to meet his maker with the name of Rama on his lips. Such a death, he hoped, would show that he had been a true devotee of god as Truth, *Satya Narayan*. Speaking to those who had come to listen to his prayer discourse and also to those who sought to prevent him from taking the name of Rahim in his prayers as also his would be assassins Gandhi said: "I shall have won if I am granted a death whereby I can demonstrate the strength of truth and non-violence . . . Yes, if I have been sincere in my pursuit of truth, non-violence, non-stealing, *brahmacharya* and so on and if I have done all this with God as my witness, I shall certainly be granted the kind of death that I seek. I have expressed my wish at the prayer meeting also that should someone kill me I may have no anger against the killer in my heart and I may die with Ramanama on my lips."[80] In private he has expressed his desire to give one final proof, one definitive demonstration of his faith, of his striving to see God face to face. He said to Manu Gandhi that his striving was to meet death with the name of Rama on his lips. He believed his striving to be incomplete but hoped that death would be his witness. He said to Manu, "If I should die of lingering illness, it would be your duty to proclaim to the whole world that I was not a man of God but an impostor and a fraud . . . But if I die taking God's name with my last breath, it will be a sign that I was what I strove for and claimed to be."[81]

He must discover the full potency of Ramanama or perish in the attempt. And perish he did. On January 30, 1948 as he stopped three bullets in their path of hate[82] Gandhi uttered the name of Rama. He met his maker as a supreme artist would, having crafted his own sacrifice through submission to that Truth that dwelled in his heart.

The raging fires subsided and the country was stunned into silence only when he gave himself up to Ramanama.[83]

NOTES

1 *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (henceforth, *CWMG*) (New Delhi: The Publications Division, 1954–1994), vol. 25, p. 255.

2 *CWMG*, vol. 62, pp. 428–29.

3 Ibid., vol. 35, p. 379.

4 Ibid., vol. 62, p. 429.

5 Ibid., vol. 67, p. 61.

6 Ibid., p. 58.

7 Ibid., vol. 25, p. 248.

8 Ibid., vol. 29, p. 397.

9 M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* translated from the Gujarati by Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan. 1939), p. x.

10 Ibid.

11 M. K. Gandhi, *Ashram Observations in Action*, translated from Original Gujarati by Valiji Govindji Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1955, 1998), p. v.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., pp. v–vi.

14 On October 31, 1930, Gandhi explained the inadequacy to J. C. Kumarappa, "The Word 'Vow' Is also an Unsuitable Equivalent for the Original 'Vrata,'" *CWMG* vol. 44, p. 264.

15 II: 69 of the Bhagvad Gita.

16 *CWMG*, vol. 37, p. 122.

17 The time of the morning prayer was subject to much experimentation and change but was finally fixed at 4:20 a.m., a time when the tiller of the soil and a true devotee of God woke up.

18 *CWMG*, vol. 56, p. 152.

19 Ibid., vol. 49, p. 136.

20 *CWMG*, vol. 36, p. 164.

21 Ibid.

22 The idea of Rama being a son of Dasharatha also grew with time. If Rama is merely Dasharath's son he could not be all-pervasive, but if a devotee were to think of Rama as all-pervasive then his Dasharath too becomes all-pervasive. See, *CWMG*, vol. 85, pp. 331–32.

23 *CWMG*, vol. 24, p. 197.

24 *CWMG*, vol. 57, p. 446.

25 Ibid., vol. 49, p. 136.

26 Ibid., vol. 54, p. 468.

27 Ibid., vol. 12, p. 126.

28 Ibid., vol. 34, p. 422.

29 Emphasis added.

30 *M K Gandhi's Hind Swaraj: A Critical Edition,* trans. and ed. Suresh Sharma and Tridip Suhrud (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2010), p. 72. The couplet cited in the original Gujarati reads:" *daya dharam ko mool hai, deha mool abhimanTulsi daya na chhadiye, jab lag ghatmein pran."* Gandhi's citation differs- *deha* (body) in place of *pap* (sin)—from the one prevalent in Hindi: " *daya dharama ko mool hai, pap mool abhiman."*

31 M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa,* translated from the Gujarati by Valji Govindji Desai (Madras: S. Ganesan, 1928), p. 95.

32 Ibid., p. 96.

33 M. K. Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj: A Critical Edition*, p. 74.

34 *CWMG*, vol. 55, p. 255.

35 *CWMG*, vol. 53, p. 483.

36 Ibid.

37 Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 66.

38 *CWMG*, vol. 18, p. 133.

39 *CWMG*, vol. 66, pp. 420–21.

40 M. K. Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir*, trans. Valiji Govindji Desai from original Gujarati (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1932, 2003), p. 5.

41 Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 31.

42 Ibid., p. 53.

43 Ibid., p. 56.

44 Gandhi, *An Autobiography*; *CWMG*, vol. 39, p. 254.

45 Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir*, p. 5.

46 Ibid., p. 8.

47 *CWMG*, vol. 88, p. 59.

48 Ibid., p. 332.

49 Sir Edwin Arnold's translation. See, Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p. 57.

50 II: 55 of the Bhagvad Gita.

51 II: 68 of the Bhagvad Gita.

52 II: 56 of the Bhagvad Gita.

53 II: 64 of the Bhagvad Gita.

54 II: 59 of the Bhagvad Gita.

55 *CWMG*, vol. 53, p. 259.

56 III: 10 of the Bhagvad Gita.

57 III: 14 of the Bhagvad Gita.

58 *CWMG*, vol. 20, p. 404.

59 Mahadev Desai, *The Gospel of Selfless Action or The Gita According to Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1946), p. 177.

60 Initially spinning was time bound, half an hour; later the measure was changed to threads spun.

61 *CWMG*., vol. 43, p. 203.

62 Ibid., vol. 30, p. 16.
63 Ibid., vol. 67, p. 197.
64 Ibid., vol. 26, p. 33.
65 Ibid., vol. 30, p. 15.
66 Ibid., vol. 67, p. 106.
67 Ibid., vol. 47, p. 9.
68 Ibid., vol. 67, p. 118.
69 Ibid., vol. 79, p. 192.
70 The metaphor of the diseased India had stayed with him since the time that he wrote the *Hind Swaraj*; wherein he spoke of the need to find a physician for diseased India.
71 Literally, the arrow of Rama, as infallible as the arrow.
72 *CWMG*, vol. 86, p. 218.
73 Ibid., vol. 87, pp. 90–91.
74 Ibid., p. 91.
75 Ibid., p. 104.
76 Ibid., vol. 88, p. 348.
77 Ibid., vol. 87, p. 384.
78 Ibid., vol. 86, p. 486.
79 Ibid., vol. 86, pp. 521–22. This sense deepened with his own fast. The last fast affected both his kidneys and liver, a sure sign that the purity that he had wished and prayed for still alluded him.
80 Ibid., vol. 90, p. 489.
81 Ibid., vol. 86, pp. 521–22.
82 This is Ramachandra Gandhi's formulation.
83 Ramachandra Gandhi captured this invocation thus: "'He Rama!' is a consummatory extreme thanksgiving invocation of Rama who is God, a rare and holy final accomplishment. Only the rarest bhakta of Rama invokes Rama undespairingly and unpetitionarily as death suddenly and unexpectedly takes him. All of Gandhi's life was an immersion in Rama Nama, vehicle and sakti of the whole man and his civilization, metaphysical Indian civilization, spiritual Hinduism, which the satyagrahi was pitting against the anti-metaphysical, unspiritual, gasping bullying unbelieving modern times, also against cowardly decaying Indian society and hard-heated privileged Indian individuals and classes unmoved by the plight of starving millions." See, Ramachandra Gandhi, *I Am Thou: Meditations on The Truth Of India* (Poona: I. P. Q. Publications, 1984), p. 13.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. New Delhi: The Publications Division, (1954–1994).

Desai, Mahadev *The Gospel of Selfless Action or the Gita According to Gandhi*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1946.

Gandhi, M. K., *Satyagraha in South Africa,* translated from the Gujarati by Valji Govindji Desai. Madras: S. Ganesan, 1928.
Gandhi, M. K., *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth,* translated from the Gujarati by Mahadev Desai. Ahmedabad: Navajivan. 1939.
Gandhi, M. K., *From Yeravda Mandir*, translated from the Gujarati by Valji Govindji Desai, Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 2003 [1932].
Gandhi, M. K., *Ashram Observances in Action,* translated from the Gujarati by Valji Govindji Desai, Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1998 [1955].
Gandhi, Ramachandra, *I Am Thou: Meditations on The Truth Of India*. Poona: I. P. Q. Publications, 1984.
Sharma, Suresh and Tridip Suhrud, (eds and trans.), *M K Gandhi's Hind Swaraj: A Critical Edition*. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2010.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Aesthetic Judgment of Disgrace*

GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK

This chapter represents my highest hopes for the humanities as the institutional teaching of aesthetic judgment. It was two years later that I realized that my convictions had been fed by an artificially preserved "authentic" tribal group in the interest of feudalist benevolence. That shock has been matched by the joining of political correctness and corporate funding at the other end. I have kept the outlines of this piece undisturbed because of the internal consistency of that deluded conviction. Read it with bemusement, then, and a suspicion of golden-agist culturalisms, which I discuss below.

The editor of this volume has chosen this chapter as an example of Indian philosophizing on aesthetics. I am convinced that if an idea is good, perceptive human beings will have thought some version of it everywhere in the world. The access to its elaboration depends on classed and gendered access to institutional education.[1] The staging of the idea finds its logic within the permissible narrative in the particular social formation, which has diversified material determinations, not necessarily fully chartable. Roland Barthes thought of this last fact as the "writable," an unfortunate but symptomatic and "archetypal" metaphor that can, though not necessarily will, by the logic I am proposing, make us aware of the materiality of intellectual description, for which a national essence—an "Indian aesthetic"—is equally symptomatic. Although born and educated in India, I am a Europeanist by choice and am often obliged to listen to the spirituality-claim of the Indian way of thinking. In order to locate the "Indianness"—spiritual or not—of the argument of this chapter, the reader would have to focus on my attention to Rabindranath Tagore's robust use of "*apoman*," as it helps understand J. M. Coetzee's word "Disgrace;" and on my attention to class apartheid on education in India. But first a few European instances. But please remember that, by my reckoning, such ideas exist elsewhere. We must learn to spot, to track, to look.

It is practically persuasive that the eruption of the ethical interrupts and postpones the epistemological—the undertaking to construct the other as object of knowledge, an undertaking never to be given up. In recent European discourse, Levinas is the generic name associated with such a position. This beautiful passage from *Otherwise than Being* lays it out, although neither interruption nor postponement is mentioned. That connection is made by Derrida.[2]

Here, then, is Levinas, for whom Kant's critical perspectivization of the subject and the rigorous limits of pure theoretical reason seem to have been displaced by the structuralist hermeneutics of suspicion. For Levinas, structuralism did not attend to what in Kant was the mechanism that interrupted the constrained and rigorous workings of pure reason: "The interests that Kant discovered in theoretical reason itself, he subordinated to practical reason, become mere reason. It is just these interests that are contested by structuralism, which is perhaps to be defined by the primacy of theoretical reason."[3]

The relationship between the postponement of the epistemological in Levinas and the subordination of pure reason in Kant is a rich theme, beyond the scope of this chapter. Let us return to what Levinas will perceive as a general contemporary hermeneutics of suspicion, related to the primacy of theoretical reason: "The suspicion engendered by psychoanalysis, sociology and politics weigh on human identity such that we never know to whom we are speaking and what we are dealing with when we build our ideas on the basis of the human fact."[4] Over against this Levinas posits the ethical with astonishing humility: "but we do not need this knowledge in the relationship in which the other is the one next to me [*le prochain*]."

Kant thought that the ethical commonality of being (*gemeines Wesen*—repeatedly mistranslated as "the ethical state") cannot form the basis of a state. I will conserve from Kant the discontinuity between the ethical and the political, from Levinas the discontinuity between the ethical and the epistemological. I will suggest that the discontinuities between the ethical and the epistemological and political fields are tamed in the nestling of logic and rhetoric in fiction.[5] Fiction—*maya*—gives us the experience of the impossible. For such an "experience," let us turn to Levinas's gnomic statement, a continuation of what I cite above: "for reasons not at all transcendental but purely logical, the object-man must figure at the beginning of all knowing."

The figure of the "I" as object: this representation of the holy man in Levinas does not match our colloquial and literal expectations. The protocol of fiction, giving us a practical simulacrum of the graver discontinuities inhabiting (and operating?) the ethico-epistemic and the ethico-political, can, however, take such a figure on board; to produce this in the social field is impossible today. Yet some of us will of course continue to want to say that fiction offers us an experience of the discontinuities that remain in place "in real life." That would be a description of fiction as an event—an indeterminate "sharing" between writer and reader, where the effort of reading is to taste the impossible status of being figured as object in the web of the other. Reading, in this special sense, is sacred and will remain sacred, wherever the profane takes us.

In this chapter I consider, because I was in that earlier more confident mode, not only fiction as event but also fiction as task. I locate in Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) and J. M. Coetzee (1940–) representations of what may be read as versions of the "I" figured as object and weave the representations together as a warning text for postcolonial political ambitions.[6] I am obviously using "text" as "web," coming from Latin *texere*—"to weave."

In the second part of the chapter I move into the field of education as a nation-building calculus. I examine planning as its logic and teaching as its rhetoric—in the strong sense of figuration.

On the cover of the first *Pratichi Education Report*, there is an artwork by Rabindranath Tagore, containing a poem, in English and Bengali, nestled in a tinted sketch, written and painted in Baghdad in 1932.[7] Here is the poem, in Tagore's own translation:

> The night has ended.
> Put out the light of the lamp of thine own narrow corner smudged with smoke.
> The great morning which is for all appears in the East.
> Let its light reveal us to each other
> Who walk on the same path of pilgrimage.

The Bengali is slightly more active: *Nikhiler alo purba akashe jolilo punyodine/ Ekshathe jara cholibe tahara shokolere nik chine*. The universe's light burns in the eastern sky on this blessed day/ Let those who'll walk together recognize each other. These lines resonate with what might be the mission statement of the moral entrepreneurship of the international civil society today, which, however laudable, is put together, not by democratic procedure, but largely by self-selection and networking. I am aware of course, of the same forces at work in "democracies." But the presence of mechanisms of redress—electoral or constitutional—however remote, produces a faith in electoral education, which is useless if our faith is put entirely in self-selected international helpers.

"*Apoman*," the poem Tagore wrote more than twenty years before this, after reading Kshitimohan Sen's translations of Kabir, is much darker.[8] In this poem, Tagore uses the exact phrase "human rights"—*manusher adhikar*—already at the beginning of the last century. What is to me more striking is that, instead of urging that human rights be immediately restored to the descendants of India's historical unfortunates, he makes a mysterious prediction, looking toward the historical future: "*apamane hote habe tahader shobar shoman*"—my unfortunate country, you will have to be equal in disgrace to each and every one of those you have disgraced millennially, a disgrace to which Kabir had responded.

How can this enigmatic sentence be understood? The idea of intertextuality, loosely defined, can be used to confront this question. Indeed, my discussion of the impartial geography of thinking always awaits the establishment of intertextuality.

I will offer an anecdotal account of intertextuality. It will help us coast through Tagore's India, Coetzee's South Africa, and the space of a tiny group of *adivasis*.[9]

In November 2002, Roald Hoffman, a Nobel Laureate chemist, gave a popular mini-lecture with slides in the basement of the Cornelia Street Café in New York. The topic was "Movement in Constrained Spaces," by which Hoffman meant the incessant microscopic movement that goes on inside the human body to make it function. To prepare for his talk, he had asked a choreographer from neighboring Princeton to choreograph a dance for the space of the stage, which is very small.[10] This is already intertextuality, where one text, Hoffman's, would make its point by weaving itself with another, the dance. A shot silk, as it were. The venerable sense of text as in text-ile, and *texere* as weave.

The choreographer managed a pattern of exquisite and minute movements for two dancers, male and female, in that tiny space. And, at the back of the long and narrow bar, two singers, female and male, sang *La ci darem a mano* in full-throated ease. That wonderful aria from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, sung with such force and skill, allowed the choreographer to add the deep space of the bar to the tiny stage at its end, as well as the "space" of the opera's long history that has been heard and loved by millions for a few centuries. Yet her dancers gave something to Mozart as well. Full of lyric grace as a love song if heard by itself—a man telling his beloved the exquisite beauty of the place to which they will escape—*La ci darem* is, in context, a brutal seduction song of the most vicious class-fixed gendering, a gentleman seducing a confused farmgirl only to fuck, and the audience sharing the joke. The two impish and acrobatic dancers on the diminutive stage, wittily partnering, gave the lie to the possibility of any such interpretation.

This is intertextuality, working both ways. Just as the chemist gave the dancer the lie, somewhat, for the movements *he* spoke of made the dance possible, so did the dancers give Mozart the lie by taking away his plot. Yet each gained something as well.

But in this case it did not work completely. Mozart is too elite, too conventional, too old-fashioned, for a radical New York audience. They did not catch the allusion. When the boring literary academic referred to it in a timid question, the choreographer melted in gratitude.

This *is* sometimes the task of the literary academic. To restore reference in order that intertextuality may function; and to create intertextuality as well. In order to do a good job with the Tagore poem, I have to read Kabir carefully. And that will be another session with the fictive simulacrum of the helpless strength of the ethical.

"Helpless strength." Get it? Not a cash cow. Not something ignorant cost-analysts can ask a corporate university to close down. Not teaching only legalized greed to bring the whole world to crisis. Not helping from above, taking no historical responsibility for those who were disabled cognitively from suddenly using high-end help now.

J. M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* may be put in an intertextual relationship with Tagore's poem.[11] In representing *jare tumi niche felo she tomare bandhibe je niche*—the one you fling down will bind you down there—in rural South Africa, Coetzee offers an illustration of what that enigmatic prediction might mean: "*apamane hote hobe tahader shobar shoman*"—— you will have to be equal in disgrace to all of them. Here too, intertextuality works two ways. Where Tagore alters his refrain in the last line: *mrityumajhe hobe tobe chitabhashshe shobar shoman*—you will then be equal to all of them in the ashes of death, thus predicting the death of a nation, Coetzee, writing an unsentimentally gendered narrative, makes his protagonist choose life. (I should add that Tagore's last stanza is somewhat more programmatic and asks for a call to all.)

Here is a plot summary of Coetzee's novel: David Lurie, a middle-aged male professor, sentimental consumer of metropolitan sex-work, seduces a student, and is charged with sexual harassment by the appropriate committee. He refuses to utter the formulas that will get him off. He leaves the university and goes to his possibly

lesbian daughter Lucy's flower farm. The daughter is raped and beaten and he is himself beaten and badly burnt. The daughter is pregnant and decides to carry the child to term. One of the rapists turns up at the neighboring farm and is apparently a relative of the owner. This farmer Petrus, already married, proposes a concubinage style marriage to Lucy. She accepts. The English Professor starts working for an outfit that puts unwanted dogs to sleep. He has a short liaison with the unattractive married woman who runs the outfit. He writes an operetta in a desultory way. He learns to love dogs and finally learns to give up the dog that he loves to the stipulated death.

These are some of the daughter Lucy's last words in the novel. Her father is ready to send his violated daughter back to her Dutch mother. Holland is the remote metropole for the Afrikaner:

> It is as if she has not heard him. "Go back to Petrus," she says. "Propose the following. Say I accept his protection. Say he can put out whatever story he likes about our relationship and I won't contradict him. If he wants me to be known as his third wife, so be it. As his concubine, ditto. But then the child becomes his too. The child becomes part of his family. As for the land, say I will sign the land over to him as long as the house remains mine. I will become a tenant on his land." . . . "How humiliating," *he* says finally . . . "yes, [she says] I agree, it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again . . . To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity." (pp. 204–5; emphasis mine)
> *Apamane hote hobe tahader shobar shoman*.

In so far as *Disgrace* is a father–daughter story the intertextuality here is with *Lear*. If Lucy ends with nothing, Cordelia in the text of *King Lear* begins with the word "nothing." That word signifies the withholding of speech as an instrument for indicating socially inappropriate affective value. In Cordelia's understanding, to put love in the value-form—let me measure how much—is itself absurd.

Indeed, in the first impact of the word "nothing" in the play, this protest is mimed in the clustering of silences in the short lines among the regular iambic pentameter lines. "*Cor.* Nothing, my lord. [six syllables of silence]/ *Lear.* Nothing? [eight syllables of silence] / *Cor.* Nothing. [eight again]/ *Lear.* Nothing will come of nothing: speak again" (I.i.87–90). The meter picks up and Cordelia speaks.

Now Cordelia shows that she is also a realist and knows that love in the value-form is what makes the world go around. She is made to chide her sisters for not thinking of the love due to their husbands: "Why have my sisters husbands if they say/ They love you all?" (I.i.97–98).

Just as *Disgrace* is also a father–daughter story, so is *King Lear* also a play about dynastic succession in the absence of a son, not an unimportant topic in Jacobean England. It has been abundantly pointed out that the play's turnaround can be measured by the fact that "the presence of Cordelia at the head of a French army . . . marks the final horrific stage in the process by which Lear's division of the kingdom goes on turning the world upside down."[12] Thus the love due to fathers bows to the love due to husbands and is then displaced, as

it were. It is this story of fathers and husbands, and dynastic succession at the very inception of capitalist colonialism, that *Disgrace* de-stabilizes, re-asking the question of the Enlightenment ("let those who will walk together get to know each other by the dawning universal *light*," says the cover of the *Pratichi Report*) with reference to the public sphere and the classed and gendered subject, when Lucy, "perhaps" a lesbian decides to carry the child of rape to term and agrees to "marry" Petrus, who is not (one of) the biological father(s).

Lucy's "nothing" is the same word but carries a different meaning from Cordelia's. It is not the withholding of speech protesting the casting of love in the value-form *and* giving it the wrong value. It is rather the casting aside of the affective value-system attached to reproductive heteronormativity as it is accepted as the currency to measure human dignity. I do not think this is an acceptance of rape, but a refusal to be raped by instrumentalizing reproduction. Coetzee's Lucy is made to make clear that the "nothing" is not to be itself measured as the absence of "everything" by the old epistemico-affective value form—the system of knowing-loving. It is not "nothing but," Lucy insists. It is an originary "nothing," a scary beginning. Who imagines that centuries of malpractice—*shotek shatabdir ashommanbhar*—can be conveniently undone by diversified committees, such as the one that "tried" David Lurie for rape Enlightenment-style?[13] Literature is not a blueprint for action, but is there a lesson for the feudality of the international civil society here? Even if there were, it would be in the double bind of the literary.

"Unaccomodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art," Lear had said to Edgar's faked madness, erasing the place of the phallus: "a poor, bare, *forked* animal." What does it mean, in the detritus of colonialism, for one from the ruling race to call for interpellation as "unaccomodated woman, a poor, bare, forked animal," and hold negotiating power without sentimentality in that very forkèdness? What if Levinas's catachrestic holy man is a catachrestic holy woman, quite unlike the maternity that Levinas embarrassingly places in the stomach in the passage from which I quoted? Is it a gendered special case, or can it claim generality, as making visible the difficulty of the postcolonial formula: a new nation. Without the practice of freedom. I repeat, neither *Lear* nor *Disgrace* is a blueprint for unmediated social policy. These are figures, asking for dis-figuration, as figures must. And it is the representation of the "I" as figured object—as woman relinquishing the child as property, as always, and as former colonizer in the ex-colony. This is how critique is operated through fictions, a critique no longer available in the rational choices of globality, at best—and only at best—manipulated by the hopelessly precritical models of the human mind presupposed by behaviorist economics, Barack Obama's choice of Cass Sunstein as the Head of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs.

I emphasize that it is not an equality in death—*mrityumajhe*. It is not the sort of equality that suicide bombing may bring. Suicidal resistance is a message inscribed in the body when no other means will get through. It is both execution and mourning, for both self and other, where you die with me for the same cause, no matter which side you are on, with the implication that there is no dishonor in such shared and innocent death. That is an equality in disgrace brought about by the withholding of

response, or a "response" so disingenuously requiring duress as to be no response at all, as from Israel to Palestine.[14]

If Lucy is intertextual with *Lear*, Lurie is intertextual with Kafka's *The Trial*, a novel not about beginning with nothing, but ending like a dog when civil society crumbles.[15] Here is the end of *The Trial*, where Josef K.'s well-organized civil society gives way:

> Logic is no doubt unshakable, but it can't withstand a person who wants to live. Where was the judge he'd never seen? Where was the high court he'd never reached? He raised his hands and spread out all his fingers. But the hands of one man were right at K's throat, while the other thrust the knife into his heart and turned it there twice. With failing sight K. saw how the men drew near his face, leaning cheek-to-cheek to observe the verdict. "Like a dog!" he said; it seemed as though the shame was to outlive him.

This is how Lurie understands Lucy's remarks about "nothing but." Not as a beginning in disgraceful equality but the end of civil society (with the withdrawal of the colonizer?) where only shame is guaranteed continuity. This is a profound misunderstanding. And this brings me to the second point about literature. The literary text gives rhetorical signals to the reader, which lead to activating the readerly imagination. Literature advocates in this special way. These are not the ways of expository prose. Literary reading has to be learned. Metaphor leans on concept and concept on metaphor, logic nestles in rhetoric, but they are not the same and one cannot be effaced in the other. If the social sciences describe the rules of the game, literary reading teaches how to play. One cannot be effaced in the other. This is too neat an opposition, of course. But for the moment, let it suffice as a rule of thumb.

What rhetorical signal does *Disgrace* give to the canny reader? It comes through the use of focalization, described by Mieke Bal as "the relation between the vision and that which is 'seen'."[16] This term is deemed more useful than "point of view" or "perspective" because it emphasizes the fluidity of narrative—the impression of (con)sequence as well as the transactional nature of reading.

Disgrace is relentless in keeping the focalization confined to David Lurie. Indeed, this is the vehicle of the sympathetic portrayal of David Lurie. When Lucy is resolutely denied focalization, the reader is provoked, for he or she does not want to share in Lurie-the-chief-focalizer's inability to "read" Lucy as patient and agent. No reader is content with acting out the failure of reading. This is the rhetorical signal to the active reader, to counter-focalize. This shuttle between focalization and the making of an alternative narrative as the reader's running commentary, as it were, used to be designated by the prim phrase "dramatic irony" when I was an undergraduate. You will see immediately how much more effortful and active this counterfocalization is than what that term can indicate. This provocation into counterfocalization is the "political" in political fiction—the transformation of a tendency into a crisis.[17]

Thus when Lurie asks, after Lucy's impassioned speech, "Like a dog?" Lucy simply agrees, "Yes, like a dog." She does not provide the explanation that the reader who can work the intertextuality will provide. *Lear* and *The Trial* are not

esoteric texts. (But then neither was *Don Giovanni* and not teaching the humanities is now encouraged.) We can sense the deep contradiction of a split understanding of postcoloniality here: between the risk of beginning with nothing and the breakdown of civil societies. If not, we can at least see that Lurie literalizes his daughter's remark and learns to love dogs as the other of being-human, as a source, even, of ethical lessons of a special sort. He is staged as unable to touch either the racial or the gendered other. These may be Lucy's last words, but the novel continues, focalizing Lurie loving dogs, avoiding bathos only by his obvious race-gender illiteracy, as we counter-focalize the absent Lucy.

Literary reading teaches us to learn from the singular and the unverifiable. It is not that literary reading does not generalize. It is just that those generalizations are not on evidentiary ground. In this area, what is known is proved by *vyavahāra*, or setting-to-work. Martin Luther King, in his celebrated speech "Beyond Vietnam," given on April 4, 1967, in Riverside Church, had tried to imagine the other again and again. In his own words, "[p]erhaps the more difficult but no less necessary task is to speak for those who have been designated as our enemies . . . Surely we must understand their feelings even if we do not condone their actions."

Here is a setting to work of what in the secular imagination is the literary impulse: to imagine the other who does not resemble the self. King, being a priest, had put it in terms of liberation theology, in the name of "the one who loved his enemies so fully that he died for them." For the secular imagination, that transcendental narrative is just that, a narrative, singular and unverifiable. When it is set to work, it enters the arena of the probable: King's imagination of the Viet Cong. I believe this is why Aristotle said *poiesis* or making-in-fiction was *philosophoteron*—a better instrument of knowledge—than *historia*—because it allowed us to produce the probable rather than account for that which has been possible.

In my words on suicide bombing, I was trying to follow Dr King's lead halfway, use the secular imagination as emancipatory instrument. When I was a graduate student, on the eve of the Vietnam War, I lived in the same house as Paul Wolfowitz, the ferocious deputy secretary of defense who was the chief talking head for the war on Iraq. He was a Political Science undergraduate, disciple of Allan Bloom, the conservative political philosopher. As I have watched him on television lately, I have often thought that if he had had serious training in literary reading and/or the imagining of the enemy as human, his position on Iraq would not be so inflexible. This is not a verifiable conviction. But it is in view of such hopes that humanities teaching acts itself out. These hopes are dashed by inanities like the "Next Big Thing."[18]

To repeat, literature is not verifiable. The only way a reading establishes itself—without guarantees—is by sharing the steps of the reading. That is the experience of the impossible, ethical discontinuity shaken up in a simulacrum. Unless you take a step with me, there will be no interdisciplinarity, only the tedium of turf battles.

Insofar as Lucy is a figure that makes visible the rational kernel of the institution of marriage—rape, social security, property, human continuity—we can check her out with Herculine Barbin, the nineteenth-century hermaphrodite who committed suicide but left a memoir, which Foucault edited and made available.

Herculine Barbin was a scholar—a diligent student who became a school mistress. But when she was named a man by doctors she could not access the scholarly position—of writing and speaking to a general public—that Kant secures for the enlightened subject in "What is Enlightenment?"[19]

Let us look at Herculine/Abel's cautious elation at the moment of entry into the world of men:

> So, it was done [*C'en était donc fait*]. Civil status called me to belong henceforth to that half of the human race that is called the strong sex [*L'état civil m'appelait à faire partie désormais de cette moitié du genre humain, appelé le sexe fort*]. I, who had been raised until the age of twenty-one in religious houses, among shy [*timides*] female companions, was going to leave behind me a past entirely delightful [*tout un passé délicieux*], like Achilles, and enter the lists, armed with my weakness alone and my profound inexperience of men and things![20]

It is this hope—of entering the public sphere as the felicitous subject—that is dashed as the possibility of agency is annulled in suicide (p. 98).

Barbin cannot articulate the relationship between the denial of agency and the incapability to reproduce. Yet, Tiresias-like, he offers a critical account of marriage:

> It has been given to me, as a man, the most intimate and deep knowledge of all the aptitudes, all the secrets, of the female character. I read in that heart, as in an open book. I count every beat of it. In a word, I have the secret of its strength and the measure of its weakness; and just for that reason I would make a detestable husband; I also feel that all my joys would be poisoned in marriage and that I would cruelly abuse, perhaps, the immense advantage that would be mine, an advantage that would turn against me. (p. 107; translation modified)

I presented "Can the Subaltern Speak?" as a paper over thirty years ago. In that paper I suggested that the subaltern could not "speak" because, in the absence of institutionally validated agency, there was no listening subject. My listening, separated by space and time, was perhaps an ethical impulse. But I am with Kant in thinking that such impulses do not lead to the political. There must be a presumed collectivity of listening and countersigning subjects and agents in the public sphere for the subaltern to "speak." Herculine Barbin wrote abundantly, presuming a reader repeatedly. And yet she could not speak. Her solution would be the normalization of the multisexed subject, a civil and agential rather than subjective solution. There would then be a listening public who could countersign her "speech act."

In the arrangement of counterfocalization within the validating institution of the novel in English, the second half of *Disgrace* makes the subaltern speak, but does not presume to give "voice," either to Petrus or Lucy. This is not the novel's failure, but rather a politically fastidious awareness of the limits of its power. By the general dramatically ironic presentation of Lurie, he is shown to "understand" Petrus by the neat reversal of the master–slave dialectic without sublation: "Petrus needs him not for pipefitting or plumbing but to hold things, to pass him tools—to be his *handlanger*, in fact. The role is not one he objects to. Petrus is a good workman, it is an education to watch him. It is Petrus himself that he is beginning to dislike"

(pp. 136–37). Once again, the novel and Lurie part company, precisely on the issue of reading, of control. This is a perfectly valid reading, as is the invocation of the end of Kafka's *The Trial*, to describe the difficult birth of the new nation. It is precisely this limited perfect validity of the liberal white ex-colonizer's understanding that *Disgrace* questions through the invitation to focalize the enigma of Lucy. It is interesting that Petrus's one-liner on Lucy shows more kinship with the novel's verdict: "'She is a forward-looking lady, not backward-looking.'" (p. 136). If we, like Lurie, ignore the enigma of Lucy, the novel, being fully focalized precisely by Lurie, can be made to say every racist thing.[21] Postcoloniality from below can then be reduced to the education of Pollux, the young rapist who is related to Petrus. Counterfocalized, it can be acknowledged as perhaps the first moment in Lucy's refusal of rape by generalizing it into all heteronormative sexual practice: "'When it comes to men and sex, David, nothing surprises me any more . . . They spur each other on." "And the third one, the boy?" "He was there to learn'" (pp. 158–59). The incipient bathos of Lurie's literalism ("like a dog" means love dogs; forgiveness from Melanie's parents means prostrating himself on the floor before them [p. 173]; loving dogs means letting a dog into the operetta he is composing [p. 215]; even the possibility that the last Christian scene of man giving up dog may slide into a rictus,[22] given the overarching narrative context) can be seen, in a reading that ignores the function of Lucy in the narrative, as the novel's failure, rather than part of its rhetorical web.

I want now to come to the second way in which Tagore's refrain can be understood: the failure of democracy.

The Pratichi Trust in India, whose *Report* I have referred to above, is doing astute work because it realizes that, if the largest sector of the electorate misses out on early education, democracy cannot function, for it then allows the worst of the upper sectors to flourish. Democracy sinks to that level and we are all equal in disgrace. When we read statistics on who wins and who loses the elections, the nonspecialist located middle-class as well as the rest of the world, if it cares, thinks it shows how the country thinks. No. In the largest and lowest sector of the electorate, there is a considerable supply of affect, good and bad; there is native sharpness and there is acquired cunning. But there is no rational choice. Election does not even pretend to be based on rational platforms. (This applies to the United States as well, in another way. But it would take me too far to develop that here.) Gendering must be understood simply here: female teachers are preferred, though they have less authority; gendering presuppositions must be changed through education, and so on.

There is little I can add to the Trust's magisterial work. After a general caution, that work in this sphere runs the risk of structural atrophy, like diversified committees in *Disgrace*, and therefore must be interrupted by the ethical, I will add a few codicils here and there.

Professor Sen, the founder of the Trust, supports the state in opposing "the artificially generated need for private tuition," artificial because generated by careless nonteaching in the free primary schools.[23] While the state waits to implement this opposition legally, I have been trying to provide collective "private tuition" to supplement the defunct primary schools, to a tiny sector of the most disenfranchised.

It is my hope that private tuition in this form can be nationalized and thus lose its definition. I will ask some questions in conclusion, which will make the direction of my thoughts clear. The one-on-one of "private" tuition—at the moment in the service of rote learning of generally uncomprehended answers to set questions that cannot relate to the nurturing of the ethical impulse—is the only way to undo the abdication of the politically planned "public" education. "Private tuition," therefore, is a relation to transform rather than prohibit. The tutorial system at the other end of the spectrum is proof of this.

I must repeat that I am enthralled by the report and whatever I am adding is in the nature of a supplement from a literary person. The work of the Trust is largely structural. The humanities—training in literary reading in particular—is good at textural change. Each discipline has its own species of "setting to work"—and the texture of the imagination belongs to the teacher of literary reading. All good work is imaginative, of course. But the humanities have little else.

There is a tiny exchange on page 69 of the book: "On the day of our visit [to a school in Medinipur], we interviewed four children of Class 4 . . . well, can you tell us something about what was taught? All four children were silent."

Part of the silence rises from the very class apartheid that bad rural education perpetuates.[24] The relationship between the itinerant inspector and the child is, in addition, hardly ethical.

Training in literary reading can prepare one to work at these silences. I will submit an example that it would be useless to translate here. It is lesson 5 from *Amader Itihash*, a Class 4 history book, specifically devoted to national liberation, one item in which is the story of Nelson Mandela.[25] Let us overlook the implicit misrepresentation of Gandhi's role in Mandela's political victory in the lifting of apartheid, or the suggestive detail that the section on national liberation starts with George Washington. One cannot however overlook, if one is a reader of Bengali, the hopeless ornamentation of the prose, incomprehensible to teacher and student alike at the subaltern level, in the outer reaches of rural West Bengal. The point is not only to ask for "a radically enhanced set of commitments" "from the primary teachers," as the *Report* stresses. The real disgrace of rural primary education is that even the *good* teacher, with the best will in the world, has been so indoctrinated into rote learning that, even if s/he could understand the lugubrious prose and even if s/he had retained or imbibed enough general knowledge of the world—both doubtful propositions—the technique of emphasizing meaning is not what s/he would understand by teaching. Elsewhere I have emphasized this as the systematic difference in teaching between *baralok* and *chhotolok*—translated by Pratichi as high-born and low-born, brave attempts—*gatar khatano* and *matha khatano*—manual labor and intellectual labor does not quite translate the active sense of *khatano*—setting to work, then, not of the body alone, and of the mind as well—that keeps class apartheid alive. The common sight of a child of the rural poor trying to make the head engage in answer to a textbook question and failing is as vivid a figure of withholding humanity as anything in Tagore or Coetzee. The "silence" is active with pain and resentment.

The solution is not to write new textbooks, the liberal intellectuals' favorite option. The teachers at this level do not know how to use a book, any book,

however progressive. Many of the textbooks, for instance, have a list of pedagogic goals at the top of each lesson. The language of these lists is abstract, starting with the title: *shamortho*, capacity. Some times, for nine or ten lessons in a row, this abstract title is followed by the remark: "see previous lesson." No primary or nonformal teacher over the last thirty years has ever noticed this in my presence, and, when informed of the presence of this pedagogic machinery, been able to understand it, let alone implement it. Given the axiomatics of the so-called education within which the teacher has received what goes for training, it is foolish to expect implementation.

There are progressive textbooks that try to combine Bengali and Arithmetic—the famous *Kajer Pata*, and now more on that model (see note 26). This combination causes nothing but confusion in student and teacher alike on this level. And frankly, it serves no specific purpose here. There are also books where some metropolitan liberal or a committee of them tries to engage what they think is a rural audience. I wish I had the time to recount the failure of their imagination case by case. There is no possibility of the emergence of the ethical when the writing subject's sense of superiority is rock solid. The useless coyness of these failed attempts would be amusing if the problem were not so disgraceful. Both Hindu and Muslim poets are included—communalism must be avoided at all costs, of course. The point is lost on these children—though a sort of equality is achieved. All poetry is equally opaque, occasions for memorization without comprehension, learning two-way meanings—what does a mean? b; and what is b? a, of course. The author's name is memorized with title and text. The meaning of meaning is itself compromised for these children, these teachers. A new textbook drowns in that compromise.

Two girls, between 11 and 15 years of age, show me what they are being taught in primary school. It is the piece about South Africa. I ask them some questions. They have absolutely no clue at all what the piece is about, as they don't about any piece in the book, about any piece in any book. To say "they haven't understood this piece" would be to grant too much. The girls are not unintelligent. Indeed, one of them is, I think, strikingly intelligent. They tell me their teachers would go over the material again the next day.

The next day after school, we meet again. Did the teachers explain? "Reading *poriyechhe*," is the answer—an untranslatable Bengali phrase for which there are equivalents in all the major Indian languages, no doubt. They made us read reading would perhaps convey the absurdity? Any piece is a collection of discrete spelling exercises to be read in a high drone with little regard to punctuation. The scandal is that everyone knows this. It is embarrassing to put it in an essay about Tagore and Coetzee. Better to present social scientific surveys in English. This too is a way of disgracing the disenfranchised.

To continue with the narrative: After the girls' answer I begin the process of explaining. As I have already mentioned, the experience of a head attempting but failing to set itself to work is killingly painful. Most of us interrupt such silences with noise, speak up and create a version of explanation to break the experience. At that point we think we are teaching, although no teaching is taking place. Sometimes we learn to resist this by excruciating self-control that often fails.

In *Foe*, another novel by J. M. Coetzee, there is a moment when a character called Friday (as in *Robinson Crusoe*), an abducted savage with his tongue cut out, resists the attempt of the white woman to teach him how to write.[26] Varieties of such resistance in the ground level rural classroom can be read as the anger of the intelligent child not being able to work his or her head. Such readings are necessarily off the mark. But the literary critic is practiced in learning from the unverifiable.

If the older girl was just frustrated by not grasping at all what I was trying to explain, the younger one, the strikingly intelligent one, faced me with that inexorably closed look, jaws firmly set, that reminds one of Friday, withholding. No response to repeated careful questions going over the same ground over and over again, simplifying the story of Nelson Mandela further at every go. These are students who have no concept or percept of the neighboring districts, of their own state of West Bengal—because, as the *Pratichi Report* points out, they have arrived at Class Four through neglect and no teaching, and the current authorized statewide practice of "no failure." How will they catch the reference to Africa?

Into the second hour, sitting on the floor in that darkening room, I tried another tack. Forget Africa, try *shoman adhikar*—equal rights. It was impossible to explain rights in a place with no plumbing, pavement, electricity, stores, without doors and windows. Incidentally, do people really check—rather than interrupt the painful experience of having failed to teach—the long-term residue of so-called legal awareness seminars? What is learnt through repeated brushes with the usual brutality of the rural judiciary is not significantly changed by the conviction that the benevolent among the masters will help them litigate. What is it to develop the subject—the capital I—of human rights, rather than a feudal dispensation of human rights breeding dependency and litigious blackmail and provoking a trail of vendetta in those punishers punished remotely? Let us return to the schoolroom in gathering dusk.

It is commonsense that children have short attention spans. I was so helpless in my inability to explain that I was tyrannizing the girls. At the time it seemed as if we were locked together in an effort to let response emerge and blossom with its own energy. The ethical as task rather than event is effortful. And perhaps an hour and a half into the struggle, I put my hand next to the bright one's purple-black hand to explain apartheid. Next to that rich color this pasty brown hand seemed white. And to explain *shoman adhikar*, equal rights, Mandela's demand, a desperate formula presented itself to me: *ami ja, tumi ta*—what I, that you. Remember this is a student, not an asylum seeker in the metropole, in whose name many millions of dollars are moved around even as we speak.[27] This is just two students, accepting oppression as normality, understanding their designated textbook.

Response did emerge. "Yes"-s and "no"-s were now given; even, if I remember right, a few words uttered as answers to questions. In a bit I let them go.

The next morning I asked them to set down what they remembered of the previous day's lesson. The older one could call up nothing. The younger one, the more intelligent one, produced this: "*ami ja, tumi ta, raja here gachhe*"—what I, that you, the king is defeated. A tremendous achievement in context but, if one

thinks of all the children studying under the West Bengal Board, including the best students from the best schools in Kolkata, with whom these girls are competing, this is a negligible result. I have no doubt that even this pitiful residue of the content of the lesson is now long lost and forgotten by the older one. The younger one is dead of encephalitis.

The incident took place about fifteen years ago. When the two girls were young women in high school, I spoke to them and their teachers. I stressed repeatedly the importance of explaining the text, of explaining repeatedly, of checking to see if the student has understood. A futile exercise. You do not teach how to play a game by talking about it. No one can produce meanings of unknown words. There are no dictionaries, and, more important, no habit of consulting dictionaries.

As I continued with the useless harangue, I said, "as two of you might remember, I spent two hours explaining Nelson Mandela to you some years ago. It is important to explain." A fleeting smile, no eye contact, passed across the face of the bright one, sitting in the last row. It is unusual for such signals to pass from her class to mine.[28]

The number of calculative moves to be made and sustained in the political sphere, with the deflecting and overdetermined calculus of the vicissitudes of gendered class-mobility factored in at every step, in order for irony-shared-from-below communication to be sustained at this level, would require immense systemic change. Yet, in the supplementary relationship between the possibility of that fleeting smile,—a sign of the interruptive emergence of the ethical—and the daunting labor of the political calculus, we must begin with the end, which must remain the possibility of the ethical. That inconvenient effort is the uncertain ground of every just society. If the political calculus becomes the means *and* the end, justice is ill served and no change sticks. The peculiar thing about gendering is that, in Lucy's vision of "starting with nothing," in the reproductive situation shorn of the fetishization of property, in the child given up as body's product, the ethical moment can perhaps emerge—at least so the fiction says.[29]

I have recounted this narrative to make clear that although on the literary register, the register of the singular and the unverifiable (this story, e.g., is unverifiable because you have nothing but my testimony) the suggestive smile, directed by indirection and a shared experience, is a good event; it has no significance in terms of the public sphere, to which education should give access. The discontinuity between the ethical and the political is here instrumentalized—between the rhetoric of pedagogy and the logic of its fruition in the public sphere. For the smile of complicity to pass between the *adivasi* and the caste-Indian, unprovoked, marks an immense advance. But it is neither a beginning nor an end, only an irreducible grounding condition.

When I was attempting to teach in that darkening room, I had no thought but to get through. It so happened that the topic was *shomanadhikar*, equal rights. Writing this for you, on the other hand, I put myself grandiosely in Tagore's poem: *manusher odhikare bonchito korechho jaare, shommukhe danraye rekehe tobu kole dao nai sthan*—those whom you have deprived of human rights, whom you have kept standing face-to-face and yet not taken in your arms . . . So, spending considerable skill and labor, to teach precisely the meaning of

shomanadhikar, was I perhaps undoing the poet's description of the behavior of the Hindu historical dominant, denying human rights over centuries to the outcastes (today's *dalit*-s) and *adivasi*-s? The point I am laboriously making is that it is not so. Although the literary mode of instruction activates the subject, the capital I, in order to be secured it must enter the political calculus of the public sphere. Private voluntarism such as mine remains a mongrel practice between the literary and the rational, rhetoric and logic.

And so the reader of literature asks the social scientists a question. Is it not possible for the globally beleaguered state to institute civil service positions that will call, on a regular and optional basis, upon interested humanities professionals from the highest ranks to train ground-level teachers, periodically, yet with some continuity, gradually integrating and transforming the existing training structure, thus to deconstruct or sublate private tuition and slowly make it less possible for "a teacher of [*sic*] Birbhum village" to say: "How can we carry over the training to our classrooms? *Baro baro katha bala soja*—Talking big is easy."[30]

Before I had started thinking about the heritage of "disgrace," I had tried to initiate the production of same-language dictionaries in the major Indian languages, specifically for ground level teachers and students. It came to nothing, because the situation was not imaginable by those whom I had approached, and because the NRI (Non Resident Indian, general Indian designation for diasporics) has other kinds of uses. Should the NRI have no role but to help place the state in metropolitan economic bondage? Is it not possible to think of subaltern single-language dictionaries as an important step toward fostering the habit of freedom—the habit of finding a meaning for oneself? Is it not possible to think, not of writing new textbooks, but of revising what is now in existence—to make them more user-friendly for the least privileged, even as such teachers and students are texturally engaged? I do not believe the more privileged child would suffer from such a change, though I can foresee a major outcry.[31] It must be repeated, to foster such freedom is simply to work at freedom in the sphere of necessity, otherwise ravaged by the ravages of political economy—no more than "the grounding condition [*Grundbedingung*] for the true realm of freedom," always around the corner.[32]

Shakespeare, Kafka, Tagore, Coetzee, Amartya Sen. Heavy hitters. My questions are banal. I am always energized by that paragraph in the third volume of *Capital* from which I quote above, and where Marx writes, in a high philosophical tone: "the true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself begins beyond [the realm of necessity], though it can only flourish with this realm of necessity as its ground." That sentence is followed by this one: "the reduction of the working day is its grounding condition." In Marx's text philosophy must thus displace itself into the everyday struggle. In my argument, literature, in so far as it is in the service of the emergence of the critical must also displace itself thus. Its task is to foster yet another displacement: into a work for the remote possibility of the precarious production of an infrastructure, that can in turn produce a Lucy or her focalizer, figuring forth an equality that takes disgrace in its stride.

No one will take this task seriously any longer. The point is funding.

NOTES

1. * This essay was first presented at the Centre for Social Sciences in Kolkata, India. Part of its point is to give the US reader the sense of how alien ethical discourse might seem on a remote terrain. By this logic, I have been able to make a connection between Nimai Lohar's song and the central intuition of Kant's philosophical system ("Freedom after Independence?," unpublished lecture; and between deconstruction and practiced *bhokti* at Lalan Shah's gravesite monastery in Kushtia, Bangladesh.
2. Derrida Jacques, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 51–53. Not being an Indianist, I can access this interruption as "Indian" by way of no more than two Sanskrit tags repeated by my diagnostic radiologist father: *grihitameva kesheshu mrtyuna dharmam acharayet* (ethics), *ajarāmaravat vidyan chintayet* (epistemology). If there are "mistakes," put it down to a childish memory.
3. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, trans. Alfonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), p. 58; translation modified. If "fatalism" is seen as part of an "Indian" cultural stereotype, here is an account of its rewriting by Kant, written in a piece where the matter of "India" came to inhabit a Europeanist's essay on Coleridge: "Kant did indeed inaugurate modernity by binding free will, rewriting fatalism by a rearrangement of the desire for philosophy, which desired the danger of the entire mistake, declaring free will by determined necessity, leaving fatalism unguarded in the *longue durée* of history. That counter-intuitive mark of the modern largely misfired. What took its place was the race-class-determined binary opposition of free will and fatalism that runs our world today, with the so-called abstract workings of capital running a deconstruction. For the rest, the task is for the readers of the future" (Spivak, "Willing Suspension of Disbelief. Here, Now," forthcoming in collection edited by Jacques Khalip and Forest Pyle, *Constellations of a Contemporary Romanticism*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).
4. Levinas, *Otherwise*, p. 59; translation modified. There is a footnote in the text to Paul Ricoeur's *Conflict of Interpretations*, trans. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 99. The next quoted passage is from the same page.
5. I first learned to notice this from Derrida's article "White Mythology" whose subtitle is "Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" (Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Allan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, pp. 209–71).
6. In the second lecture of the series at the Centre, I offered a reading of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, as a President Schreber style critique of postcolonial political ambitions.
7. Pratichi (India) Trust, the *Pratichi Education Report*, introduction by Amartya Sen (Delhi: TLM Books, 2002).
8. Rabindranath Tagore, Poem No. 108, *Gitanjali*, 20 Ashadh 1317 BE (i.e., approximately 1910). The title "Apoman" would have been acquired at a later stage, as the poems in Gitanjali had no titles. Kshitimohan Sen's Bengali translations of Kabir were read and discussed by Rabindranath long before he published his own English translations of them. See Rabindranath Tagore (trans.), *Kabir, Songs of Kabir*, trans. from Kshitimohan Sen (New York: Macmillan, 1915).

9. Adivasi is the name used commonly for so-called Indian "tribals," by general account the inhabitants of India at the time of the arrival of Indo-European speakers in the second-millennium BC.
10. Diann Sichel, "Mass, Momentum and Energy Transport (Living Space)," Dancers: Josiah Pearsall, Melanie Velo-Simpson, Singers: Wendy Baker, Erik Kroncke. Performed at Cornelia Street Cafe, November 3, 2002.
11. J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (New York: Viking, 2000).
12. William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Arden Edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 141.
13. For an analysis of this rhetorical question, see Rosalind C. Morris, "The Mute and the Unspeakable: Political Subjectivity, Violent Crime, and 'the Sexual Thing' in a South African Mining Community," in *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*, ed. Jean and John Comaroff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 57–101.
14. Since 1983, when I delivered "Can the Subaltern Speak?" as a lecture at the Summer Institute at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, I have been interested in suicide as envoi. Partha Chatterjee reminded me in conversation (October 31, 2003) that the "cause" is metaleptically constructed by the suicide, as the effect of an "effect." My point is that Lucy is not represented as the "subject" of a "cause." Her representation may be read as Levinas's object-human as the figure that subtends all knowing, including the cognition of a cause. About suicide bombing I speculate at greater length in "Terror," included in Spivak, *Aesthetic Education in an Era of Globalization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).
15. Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, trans. Breon Mitchell (New York: Schocken Books, 1998). The quoted passage is from page 231.
16. Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 100.
17. Karl Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 3, in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Volume 37, trans. Richard Dixon (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), pp. 365–66. Marx uses this to describe why the tendency of the rate of profit to fall does not result in increasingly lower profits.
18. See Patricia Cohen, "The Next Big Thing in English: Knowing They Know That You Know, *New York Times*, April 1, 2010; and the accompanying series of blogs on *Neuro Lit. Crit*, available at: http://roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/04/05/can-neuro-lit-crit-save-the-humanities/. None of the commentators had been present at a meeting arranged by the United Nations on November 9, 2008 with eminent neuroscientists to see if they could provide an ethics for the world. All the participants (except the man working for the Air Force) vehemently insisted that this was not possible. To understand literature or philosophy as such by way of neuroscience is like testing out the roundness of the world by walking across it, or telling the time by the theory of relativity. To respect the experiencing being that lives and dies in spite of impersonal scientific descriptions is becoming less and less possible. The imagination cannot sustain the double bind.

19. Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment," in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
20. Michel Foucault, ed. *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 89, translation modified.
21. For a debate over such readings, see Peter D. McDonald, "Disgrace Effects," and David Attwell, "Race in Disgrace," in *Interventions* 4.3 (2002), p. 321–41.
22. This possibility of an uneasy snigger (as well as the "giving up") may mark something irreducible, the seeming "abyss"—we think also of the incessant back-and-forth of the abyssal—between the "I" of the "I think" and the presumed self-identity of the animal: "This automotricity as auto-affection and self-relation, even before the discursive thematic of an utterance or of an *ego cogito*, indeed of a *cogito ergo sum*, is the character that one recognizes in the living and in animality in general. But between that self-relationship (that Self, that ipseity) and the "*I*" of the "*I think*" there is, it seems, an abyss" (Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet and trans. David Wills, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, pp. 49–50; translation modified). The dull effort of a cogitative Lurie has an abyssality that must not be forgotten as we attempt to acknowledge the enigmatic historiality of the mixed-race postcolonial child of rape deliberately given up as property for the adopted father, Black Christian, or Peter, upon which rock, the future, guaranteeing tenancy for the colonial turned native, is founded. It is not the object-human as a figure with nothing that comes before all else, but the look of the naked animot (a word that the reader must learn from the book by Derrida I am citing; a word [mot] that marks the irreducible heterogeneity of animality). This is Derrida's critique of the philosophical tradition of the West. I have often felt that the formal logic of Coetzee's fiction mimes ethical moves in an uncanny way. The (non) relationship between the cogitation of animality and the setting-to-work of gendered postcolonialism in *Disgrace* may be such an uncanny miming. The "dull decrepitude" of the former is where equality in disgrace is impossible, we cannot disgrace the animot. It is the limit of *apamane hote habe tahader shobar shoman*; and to call it a limit is to speak from one side. Since my ethical texts are Kant, Lévinas, Derrida, and my fictions are "Apaman," *Disgrace*, and the uncoercive rearrangement of desire, I have not considered J. M. Coetzee's staged speculations about animality and the human in "Lives of Animals" (in Amy Gutmann, ed. *The Lives of Animals*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). I am a product of the early Ramakrishna movement. Always given that I can be "Indian" only from common life and not by scholarship, I ask: is my attention to the animot—the *bohurup* (many manifestations) of *the* animal—determined by familial instruction in Vivekananda's tag: *bohurupe shommukhe tomar/ Chhari kotha khunjichho ishwar?/ jibe prem kore jei jon/ shei jon shebichhe ishwar* (Why seek the creator/ but in the created manifold?/ Who loves the creature/ serves the creator best).
23. *Pratichi Education Report*, p. 10.
24. I have developed the idea of the role of rural education in maintaining class apartheid in "Righting Wrongs." See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Other Asias* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 14–57.

25. This textbook has now been changed. There is a real effort at using "modern" methods, but the system of teaching has not changed.
26. J. M. Coetzee, *Foe* (New York: Penguin, 1986).
27. Clyde Prestowitz, *Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions* (New York: Basic Books, 2003) argues that the United States wants to make everyone American and there left and right meet. The paperless immigrant, the new subaltern, needed by capital but rejected—sexualized and racialized—by the state—transgresses that desire. The same, I think, can now be said of Europe. This is too big a topic to develop here. What I urge in the text is the need to imagine a world that is not necessarily looking for help.
28. Her name was Shamoli Sabar. She is memorialized in Figure 1.2 of my "Righting Wrongs," *Other Asias* (New York: Blackwell, 2008), p. 49. She was one of the signatories of the petition. I offer this essay to her memory. Indian to Indian—"Indian" aesthetics? It is only in the aesthetic that you judge, said a European *kavi* (as in—another tag) *kavayo vadanti.*
29. We have to have an idea of how fiction can be made to speak through the transactional heading beyond the limits of the author's authority, which would expose the frivolousness of a position such as Rajat Ray's in *Exploring Emotional History: Gender, Mentality, and Literature in the Indian Awakening* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 79, 115 n. 28.
30. *Pratichi Education Report*, p. 68.
31. I know better now. I was informed, in an informal and unpublished conversation with the Education Ministry in Calcutta that the smart new texts must be useful in winning back those upper middle-class children who otherwise are directed to English-medium schools. A real double bind on behalf of language, which consolidates class apartheid in education.
32. Marx, *Capital 3*, p. 959.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Attwell, David, "Race in Disgrace," *Interventions* 4.3 (2002), pp. 321–41.

Bal, Mieke, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985, p. 100.

Coetzee, J. M., *Disgrace*. New York: Viking, 2000.

Coetzee, J. M., *Foe*. New York: Penguin, 1986.

Cohen, Patricia, "The Next Big Thing in English: Knowing They Know That You Know," *New York Times*, April 1, 2010.

Derrida, Jacques, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, pp. 51–53.

Derrida, Jacques, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Allan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, *1982*, pp. 209–71.

Derrida, Jacques, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet and trans. David Wills. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, pp. 49–50.

Foucault, Michel, ed., *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite*. New York: Pantheon, 1980, p. 89.
Gutmann, Amy, ed., *The Lives of Animals*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.
Kafka, Franz, *The Trial*, trans. Breon Mitchell. New York: Schocken Books, 1998.
Kant, Immanuel, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment," in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
Levinas, Emmanuel, *Otherwise Than Being*, trans. Alfonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Dusquesne University Press, 1998.
Marx, Karl, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 3, in Marx and Engels *Collected Works*, Volume 37, trans. Richard Dixon. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975, pp. 365–66.
McDonald, Peter D., "Disgrace Effects," *Interventions*, 4.3 (2002), pp. 321–30.
Morris, Rosalind C. "The Mute and the Unspeakable: Political Subjectivity, Violent Crime, and 'the Sexual Thing' in a South African Mining Community," in *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*, ed. Jean and John Comaroff. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006, pp. 57–101.
Pratichi (India) Trust, *The Pratichi Education Report*, introduction by Amartya Sen. Delhi: TLM Books, 2002.
Prestowitz, Clyde, *Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions*. New York: Basic Books, 2003.
Ray, Rajat, *Exploring Emotional History: Gender, Mentality, and Literature in the Indian Awakening*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 79, 115 n.28.
Ricoeur, Paul, *Conflict of Interpretations*, trans. Don Ihde. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 99.
Shakespeare, William, *King Lear*, Arden Edition, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959, p. 141.
Sichel, Diann, "Mass, Momentum and Energy Transport (Living Space)," Dancers: Josiah Pearsall, Melanie Velo-Simpson, Singers: Wendy Baker, Erik Kroncke. Performed at Cornelia Street Cafe, November 3, 2002.
Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, "Freedom after Independence?," unpublished lecture, Netaji Bhavan, Kolkata, January 24, 2014.
Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, "Willing Suspension of Disbelief. Here, Now," forthcoming in collection edited by Jacques Khalip and Forest Pyle, *Constellations of a Contemporary Romanticism*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016.
Spivak, Gayatri Chakrvorty, *Other Asias*. London: Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp. 14–57.
Tagore, Rabindranah, *Gitanjali* Poem No. 108, Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Press, 20 Ashadh 1317 BE (approximately 1910).
Tagore, Rabindranath, trans., *Kabir, Songs of Kabir*, translated from Kshitimohan Sen. New York: Macmillan, 1915.

INDEX

abhidhā 94–5, 97, 99–100
Abhijñānaśākuntalam 59
Abhinavabhāratī, *anukṛti*, and *anukarana Vada* in 81–9
Abhinavagupta 1, 13, 15, 17, 48, 50, 57, 72, 74–5, 147n. 13, 221–2, 243, 361
  aesthetic theory 142
  anukarana-vada, rejection of 80, 85, 88–9
  demolition of the theory of *anukṛtri* 82
  factors responsible for selfless enjoyment of feeling-essences 11
  Locana on *Dhvanāloka*, commentary on 6
  NāṭyaŚāstra, commentary 81–2
  "pure" hideousness, notion of 162
  śakti- śaktimat theory 111
  Sāṃkhya metaphysics 6
  śānta sentiment 113–14
  theories of emotions 9–10
  on theory of mimesis 79–80, 82–3
  tranquil dispassion, sentiment of 156–8, 161
  for unworldly selfless enjoyment of feeling-essences 11–12
  zsādharaṇākaraṇa, ceoncept of 97–8
"absolute" universal 49
adbhuta rasa 1, 3, 46
Adorno, Theodore 356
aesthetic emotions 46–7, 49–51, 53, 359, 362
  Abhinava's concept of 52
  across ontological divide 131–3
  aesthetic consciousness 133–6
  aesthetic emotional subjectivity without first-personal salience 136–8
  being fictional 128–9
  bhakti 50, 107, 112–15, 175, 211, 376
  center-less subjectivity 143–5
  de-centered self 143–5
  denial of ownership to 141–3, 147n. 14
  "depersonalization" of subjectivity 141–3
  dissolution of personality in aesthetic experience 139
  dramatic imagination and contemplative feeling 138–41
  fictional engagement and disengagement 129–31
  free 141
  impersonal subjectivity of 133–7, 139–40, 142–4
  madhurarasa 109
  śānta sentiment 57–9, 100, 113–15, 117, 119, 154
  selflessness and universality of aesthetic experience 137
  subjectivity and ontological constraint 127–8
  ujjvalarasa 113
aesthetic judgment 173, 178
  anecdotal account of intertextuality 393–4
  equality in death—*mrityumajhe* 396
  ethical interrupts and postpones 391–2
  J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* 394–9, 408n. 22
  Mozart's *Don Giovanni* 394
  of touchables 298
  upper caste 299–300
aesthetics
  aesthetic consciousness in the Indian context 312–13
  aesthetic "presence of the past" 188
  of an artifact 201, 206, 246, 270, 292
  bhakti sentiment 50, 107, 112–15, 175
  carnal desire (*kamarūpa*) 116–19
  connection between amorous and aesthetic 107
  cosmic sport 108–9
  crisis of contemporary Indian cinema 20
  of dance and filmic representation 18–19
  emotion 46
  objects/texts 53

rāsa dance with the gopīs 108–9, 123–5
rhetoric of difference in nondifference 111–13
sākhyarasa (the sentiment of friendship) 115–16
śānta sentiment 57–9, 100, 113–15, 117, 119, 154
savage 119–20
splitting the divine "i" into me and you 109–11
in time 252–3
ālāpa 101–4
Ānandavardhana 25–6
Dhvanyaloka 26
Dhvani theory 29–30, 34–6, 38n. 4, 39n. 13
distinct mode of signification 29
emotional content 27–8
figurative or secondary signification 29
literary transmission of unstated meaning 26–8
metaphorical identification between king and god 27
poetic mode of expression 25, 31–4
reality of resonance and its importance in poetic language 34–7
"resonance" (*dhvani*) theory 30–1
śāntarasa 113–14
suggestion of *rasa* 28
"suggestive reverberation"–theory 12
varieties of suggested meaning 26–31
ancient art 167
anubhāvas 46, 52, 58
anukaraṇa vāda
anukṛti and problem of translation 72–3
art historical discourse 73–7
in contemporary context 78–80
critiquing 87
Śaṇkuka on 83–4, 86
use of inference as an explanatory model for 86
anukaraṇavadins 86
"aptness" in aesthetics
in literary aesthetics 158
of time (or history) 57
art-appreciation and aesthetic evaluation 3, 143, 147n. 14, 211
Arthashastra 16
artistic representation 16
Attenborough's film *Gandhi* 21
Auden's poem "O Tell Me the Truth about Love" 45

Bagul, Baburao 307–8, 313, 315n. 24
Balagopalastuti 217
Bamboo Flute 264–5
Bandyopadhyay, Sibaji 16–17, 262
Bandyopadhyaya, Manik 15, 155
Bankimchandra's reflections on discourse on literary taste 170–1
critical writings on the past 175–6
essay on Vidyapati and Jayadeva 172–4
essay "Sakuntala, Miranda and Desdemona" 174–5
Uttararamacarita 16, 171–2
Barthes, Roland 391
Baudelaire, Charles 151, 155
A Carrion 154
Bengali culture 190
between *baralok* and *chhotolok* 401–2
Bengali films 338, 370n. 8
Bengali/Indian dance-drama 18
Bengali literature 168–9, 189
Bankimchandra's reflections 170–6
Rabindranath's reflections 176–90, 200
Bengali patachitras 344
Bhagavadgita 22
Bhāgavata Purāṇa 108–10, 114, 118, 120
bhakti sentiment 50, 107, 112–15, 175, 211, 376
Bhaktirasāmṛ tasindhu (*BRS*) 113, 192n. 26
Bharata 4, 8–9
definition of theater 14
drama 75, 156
NāṭyaŚāstra 1, 3, 25, 27, 43, 72, 81–2, 105n. 1, 113, 116, 122, 221–3
rasa sūtra of 44, 48, 50, 52–3, 82, 85, 98, 115, 155–6
The Science of Drama 7
visual engagement 76
bhāṣya 49–50, 54
Bhattacharyya, Krishnachandra 20, 137–41, 145, 147n. 11, 159, 359
Bhāvantarana 264–6
Bhojadeva 1
Brahmanic ascetics 275, 285

Brahmavaivarta Purana 217
Akrura, story of 217–18

Cakravartin, Viśvanātha 108, 115–16, 118
"*camatkāra*" 2, 11, 17, 46, 50, 110, 221
center-less subjectivity 142–5
Chakrabarti, Arindam 15, 50, 52–3, 59, 142–3, 145, 359, 361–2
Chakravarty, Sukriti 255
Chamar caste 299
Chari, V. K.
Sanskrit Criticism 74–5
Chaudhury, Pravas Jivan 13, 56
Christian asceticism 291
Citrasūtra 75, 77, 81–2, 89
citraturaganyāya 84
climactic hut 286
Coetzee, J. M. 21, 391–4, 396, 401–3, 405
"cognitive appraisal" theory of emotion 131–2, 146n. 3
cognitive theory of emotion 133, 146n. 5
commonality within Indian culture 61n. 13
comparative aesthetics 13, 21, 56, 60, 72
anukarana-vada and 80
between ancient India and Greece 74–5
comparativism 74, 80, 174
consumerist life 297
contextual compatibility of *rasa* theory 57
continuity of *rasa* theory 54
Coomaraswamy, A. K. 14, 17, 71, 74, 76, 78, 81, 89, 162, 216, 218–19, 279
The Transformation of Nature in Art 75
copy, theory of 206–11
cricket player 299–300, 305
Cullavagga text 283–4
cultural compatibility of *rasa* theory 56–7

Dali aesthetic 19, 304–14
Dalit discourse on aesthetics 304–5
Dalit drum, description of 312
Dalit literary imagination 308–9
sniffing and smelling 313
to fight upper-caste prejudice 310
tactile auditory aesthetics, Dalit perspective 311–12
Dalit drum, description of 19, 312
de-centered self 136, 143–5
denial of ownership to aesthetic emotions 141–3
"depersonalization" of subjectivity 10–11, 141–3, 223
dhutanga 273
Dinda, Sanatan 324–31
"Dionysian" principle 300
disgust (*bibhatsa*) 44, 46, 58 *see also* ugly, concept of
aesthetics of 159–63
as counter-point for a contrast 160
determinant/excitants of 156–9
as emotional justice 160
as ironic to ridiculous 160–1
as a prop for artistic relish 161
transformation of disgust to dispassion 161–2
dissolution of personality in aesthetic experience 139
dramatic imagination and contemplative feeling 138–41
Durga Pujas 19–20
artist as designer 324–42
claims of "art" 345–8
craftsman as designer 343–5
designation of "art" and "artist" 317–19
Durga image-group in a variety of styles 319
puja designing 322–4
puja productions 319–2
Trinamul backing of 350n. 18
dwelling of the ascetics 273–9

emotions, aesthetics of *see* aesthetic emotions
empathetic sadness (*karuṇa*) 44, 46, 58, 172
epistemic violence 79–80
equality (*samatva*) 22, 308, 310, 396–7, 402
eroticism 109, 117, 121, 123, 173
ethical commonality of being 392
expert, ability in painting 82
extramarital love 15, 122–5

fiction, practice of 128–30
institutionalized cultural practice of 146n. 2
logic and rhetoric in 392

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* 159
gandhakuṭī 270–3, 285
Gandhi, ashramic life 21

Gandhian aesthetics
act of knowing oneself 380–1
Ashram 374–5
attainment of *Moksha* 374
bhakta 375
Brahmacharya 377, 383–4
glory of *namasmaran* 376
idea of Satyagraha 378–81
involuntary discharge 373
Rama of Gandhi's imagination 375–6
Ramanama 385
self-realization 377
sense of *Upvas* 382–3
truth 381–2, 384
violence and nonviolence 380
yajna 383, 385–6
Ghatak, Ritwik 20, 359, 362–70
The Gita 21, 59, 175, 382–3
Gītagovinda 16, 116, 188
Gopīgītā 107, 109–10, 117–20, 123
theme of friendship 119–20
ujjvalarasa synthesis of 111, 113, 120
Gopis 14–15
and Rāsa dance 15, 108–9, 116–19, 124
Gosvāmin, Jīva 112, 116
Gosvāmin, Rūpa 107, 109–18, 120, 122–4
Gṛhya Sūtras 281–2
Guernica 46
Guha-Thakurta, Tapati 20

Harpham, Geoffrey Galt 291
hermits and ascetics
adoption of primitivism 285–6, 293n. 6
appearance 284–8
ascetic dweller 273–9
ascetic ethos of reaching the heart of humanity 287
ascetic homelessness 283
asceticism and renunciation 273, 288–93
Brahmanic ascetics 285
Buddha's house 270–3
buildings of 270
Christian 291
dwell in morphological terms 279
emblem of 289–90
exegesis of 290–1
final ascetic experiment 288
Indic and Buddhist 292
paradox of dwelling 281–4
historical aesthetics 168–70
hlādinī 112
Hogan, Colm 48
horror (*bibhatsa*) 46, 57, 156, 160–1

illicit love of a paramour or married woman 122–3
imagination 5, 9, 57, 127–8, 137, 157, 167, 177, 179, 181, 201, 209, 270, 275, 279–81, 284, 290, 298, 301, 397–8, 401–2
contemplative 138–41
contrast between belief and 128–9, 145n. 1
creative 189, 305
cultural 80, 269
Dalit 305, 307–9
distinction between the mental and the sensory 182–3
dramatic 138–41
imagined feeling 138
literary 76, 307–8
musical 101, 104
visual 184–5
imitation theory (*anukarana*) 4, 9–10, 14, 72, 105n. 1, 171, 186, 201
anukarana-vadins 87–8
difference between mimesis and imitation 87–9
object and agent of imitation 79
rasa as 85, 87, 361
Western theorization of mimesis 74–5, 78
Indian aesthetics 3–5, 7, 13–14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 47, 50, 54–6, 59–60, 72, 74, 107, 109, 113, 115, 140, 159, 208, 250, 252, 264, 353–4, 359, 391
of dance 250
heterogeneity of 3
sensibilities 3
Indian art historiography 73–7
Indian cinema
Close Up 357
concept of *rasa* in 354, 359–62
digital means of circulation 357
feelings 360–1
Ghatak's cinematic method 362–70
modern 359
My Name is Khan 354–6
representational faith 354, 358–9

Shirin 357
Soviet Avant-Garde cinema 359
valorization of films with social messages 354
The Wind Will Carry Us 357
Indian culture's aesthetic self-understanding 4
Ingalls, H. H. 114
intuitive insight 49

Javanese tradition 56–7, 60
Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 13, 60

kala 4
kalachakra 216
kāmadeva 118–19
Kāmadeva, Śiva's contest with 108–9
kārikā (aphorism in verse) 49
Karnad, Girish 56
Katha Upanishad 3
Kavirāja, Kṛṣṇadāsa 111, 121
Kāvyamīmāmsā 16, 207–8, 210
Keats's poem 44
khayālnuma 264
Khelā 251
Kolatkar, Arun 57
Kramrisch, Stella 74, 76, 81
Krishna, Daya 46
Kṛṣṇa's amorous charms 108, 119
with gopīs' 15, 108–9, 116–20, 124
polyamory 121–2
with Rādhā 107–12, 116, 121–5
Kūṭiyāṭṭam 17–18
"Advaita" in the context of 233–7
ākāṅkṣā mode in 225–30
final night of performance 237–43
Hanuman's arrival in Laṅkā and discovery of Sītā 225–30
kind of seeing in 230–3
nitya-kriyā of Hanuman 238–9
notes on 222–5
saṅkṣepam introduction 237–8

Laghubhāgavatāmṛta 112
"language" of music
abhidhāand vyañjanā, difference between 94–7
ālāpa 101–4
idea of a "nonbelonging" emotion 99
meaningful projection of a raga 104
notions of paśyatī and parāvāk 103
sādhāraṇīkṛt emotion, aspect of 97–100
subject–object relation 100
leather workers 302
Lefevre, Vincent 77
love (*śṛṅgāra*) 44
sense of 45
love-in-separation 15
loved one (*bhaya*) 44

Mahimabhaṭṭa 31, 33–7
Mandela, Nelson 22
Manto, Sadaat Hasan 152
Meister, Michael 276
metaphorical identification (*rūpaka*) 27
metric forms 189
Mewar painting 215
Milindapñha 284
mīmāṃsā (analysis) 49
mimesis 6, 14, 72, 154, 201
see also *anukaraṇa vada*
Abhinavagupta's views on 79–89
and actor's mimicry 87–8
architectonic and spatial 292
differences between mimicry and 88–9
rejecting generality as object of 87
through inferential semiotics 83–4
in visual arts 80
as a Western domain 74, 78–80
miniature painting 17, 276–8, 339–40
Monitor, Julian Ana Lia 76
Mughal miniature 3, 17, 185–6, 219–20, 277–8
Mukulabhaṭṭa 31–2, 34–7, 39n. 16

Nagel, Thomas 143–4
nāma-rūpa 100
Nandi, Tapasvi 58
naturalism 71, 76
NāṭyaŚāstra 1, 3, 25, 27, 43, 72, 81–2, 105n. 1, 113, 116, 122, 221–3
near-spiritual experience (*ānanda*) 51, 259
negative emotions 49, 52–3, 59, 142, 250

objective self 143–4
openness of *rasa* theory 49–50
organic criticism of *rasa* theory 60
outer hut 286

pabbajja 288, 294n. 9
paccekabuddha ascetics 273, 285
Pal, Sushanta 337–42, 351n. 19, 351n. 22
Pancarātra texts 111
Pandey, K. C. 56
Panikkar, Raimundo 291
"past," concept of 167
perceptions (*vāsanās* and *saṃskāras*) 45
pity (*karuṇa*) 46
Plato's *The Republic* 197, 201–2, 206
polyamory 121–2
Pramāṇavārttika 83
Pratichi Trust in India 400
Pratyabhijnā 111–12
Primeval 155
provisional universal 53
provisional universality, concept of 47–9
pseudouniversalism 48

Quantum Physics 43, 46

Rajput miniatures 17, 216, 218–20
rasa-aesthetic enjoyment 15
rāsa dance with the gopīs 108–9, 123–5
Rāsa Pentad 123–5
  approach of paramour 124
  madhurarati of 125
rasa sūtra of Bharata 50
rasa theory 4, 7, 97–8, 155–6
  ālaṅkārikas 48
  application of 55–60
  assumptions 44
  Bharata's 44, 48, 50, 52–3, 82, 85, 98, 115, 155–6
  combination 44
  concept of provisional universality 47–9
  in context of Sanskrit studies 55
  contextual compatibility of 57
  cultural compatibility of 56–7
  emphasis on suggestions 51–2
  incompatibility of nonfigurative and nonperformative art 46–7
  insightfulness through differences 58–9
  in Javanese tradition 57
  mechanistic and imitative approach use of *rasa* 59
  negative emotions 49, 52–3, 59, 142, 250
  notion of legitimacy 55
  openness of 49–50
  organic criticism 60
  philosophical richness of 53
  reactionary criticism 59–60
  relevance to contemporary aesthetics 49–55
  sādhāraṇīkaraṇa in 45, 48
  structural compatibility of 58
  thematic compatibility of 57–8
  universalization of aesthetic experience 53–4
reactionary criticism of *rasa* theory 59–60
"resonance" (*dhvani*) theory 6, 12, 17, 25–6, 45, 53, 57–9, 74, 111, 221
  Ānandavardhana's theory 29–31, 34–6, 38n. 4, 39n. 13
  Mukulabhatta's figurative signification 31–2
  types of suggested meaning 26–31
ritual pollution 298
Rsi, Lomas 286–7
Rudraṭa 115

sādhāraṇībhāva 54
sādhāraṇīkaraṇa 45, 48
sādhāraṇīkṛt or universalized emotion 97–100
sadrsya karanam 81
sākhyarasa (the sentiment of friendship) 115–16
Sāma-singers 105n. 1
"samam brahma" (Bhagavadgita) 22
samikṣā (review) 49
saṃskāras 54
Sanskrit or vernacular Indian poetry 2
śānta sentiment 113–15, 119
Sathe, Annabhau 305
savage aesthetics 119–20
sexual transgression 121–2
Shah, Wajid Ali 255
silpa 4
śilpaśāstras 74, 81–2
Sivaramamurti, C. 81
sniffing and smelling 313
social aesthetic of the touchable castes 297
South Indian Gopuram 3
Spivak, Gayatri 13, 21 *see also* aesthetic judgment
  Aesthetic Education after Globalization 21
Sri Sankuka 6
Śrīdharasvāmin 108–9
"statistical" universal 49

Sthāyībhāva 52, 83, 85
structural compatibility of *rasa* theory 58
structural complexity of aesthetic experience 137–8
suggestions 51–2
Sūr Sagar painting 218
suspicion, hermeneutics of 392
Sutar, Bhabatosh 331–7, 350n. 14
sūtra (aphorism in prose) 49–50
sūtra-bhāṣya as 54
sympathetic feeling 137–8
sympathy 137–8

tactile auditory aesthetics, Dalit perspective 311–12
Tagore, Abanindranath 20, 181–4
  Bagishwari shilpa prabandhabali 356
  Krishnalila paintings 184–5
  Mughal miniatures 185–6
  use of aesthetic blur/fading and the dominance of color 186–8
Tagore, Rabindranath 16, 18, 20–2, 161, 392
  abstract indigenous alternative education 254–6
  "*Apoman*" 393
  contribution to performance arts 254–6
  courtyards and performance spaces of 252–3
  curriculum of sports 261–2
  element of playacting 255
  movement and the moving image 263
  music and dances functions and festivals 256–62
  nritya-nāṭyas performances 255–6
  poems on Meghaduta 179–81
  provision for teaching girls 254–6
  reading of the epics 176–8
  rural reconstruction 255
  Sakuntala 178–9
  Santiniketan-Sriniketan axis 260–1
  school as a "forest retreat" 254
  sense of play (*khelā*) of the *rasika* 253–4
Tagore, Sumitendra 255
Tauta, Bhaṭṭa 85
text, theory of 202–6
  difference between a *trace* and a *sign* 204
  originality and aura 206
  "will to play" and "will to record" 205
thematic compatibility of *rasa* theory 57–8
ṭīkā (assessment) 49
Trivedi, Sam 58

ugly, concept of 149–52
  philosophical uglification of the beautiful 152–4
  pornographic enjoyment of disgusting sights 154
  transformations of loathsome 159
Ujjvalanīlamaṇi 109–11
universalization of aesthetic experience 53–4
Upacitivāda 82–3
Upadhyay, Brahmabandhab 254
upper castes, aesthetics of 299
  Dalit, perception of 303–4
  ideology of purity–pollution 302
  paradox in aesthetic conception 300–2
  perception of meaninglessness 302
  sense of repulsion to the untouchables 304, 310
  social attitudes 310–12
  vicarious pleasure of 303

vācya-vācaka-bhāva 97, 100
Vaiṣṇava philosophy 110–11
Valmiki, sage 2
vānaprasthi 275
vāsanās 54
vatsalabhaktirasa 115
vayugati 77
vibhāvas 44, 46, 52–3, 58
Vidagdhamādhava 111–13, 116
Vidyasagar, Ishwarchandra 168–70
visual arts, relationship between time and 216
Vivaṭa-chhado 288
vṛtti (elucidation and illustration) 49
vyabhicāribhāvas 44
vyākhyā (elucidation) 49
vyañjanā 6, 25, 27, 94–100, 264

Western culture and aesthetics 54–5
Western problematization of emotions 51
Western theorization of mimesis 74–5, 78
will, notion of 199–202
will to play 16
will to record 16, 195–6, 200, 202–3, 205, 208–9

Yoga in Bhagavadgita 22



FIGURE 10.1: The Month of Shravana. From a Laur Chanda Series. Pre-Mughal, Possibly Rajasthan, c. 1525. Lahore Museum, Lahore.

9781472528353_Plates_txt_print.indd 221 12/11/2015 6:09:20 PM



FIGURE 10.2: A Priest's Rituals. By Nainsukh of Guler. Pahari, c. 1735–40. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



FIGURE 10.3: Radha and Krishna Exchanging Roles. From a Sursagar Series. Mewar, Rajasthan, ca. 1720–30. Formerly in the Nasli and Alice Heeramanak Collection.



FIGURE 10.4: Basu Beheads Namadposh, Disguises Himself, and Cajoles His Way into Acre Castle. Mughal, c. 1566. Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

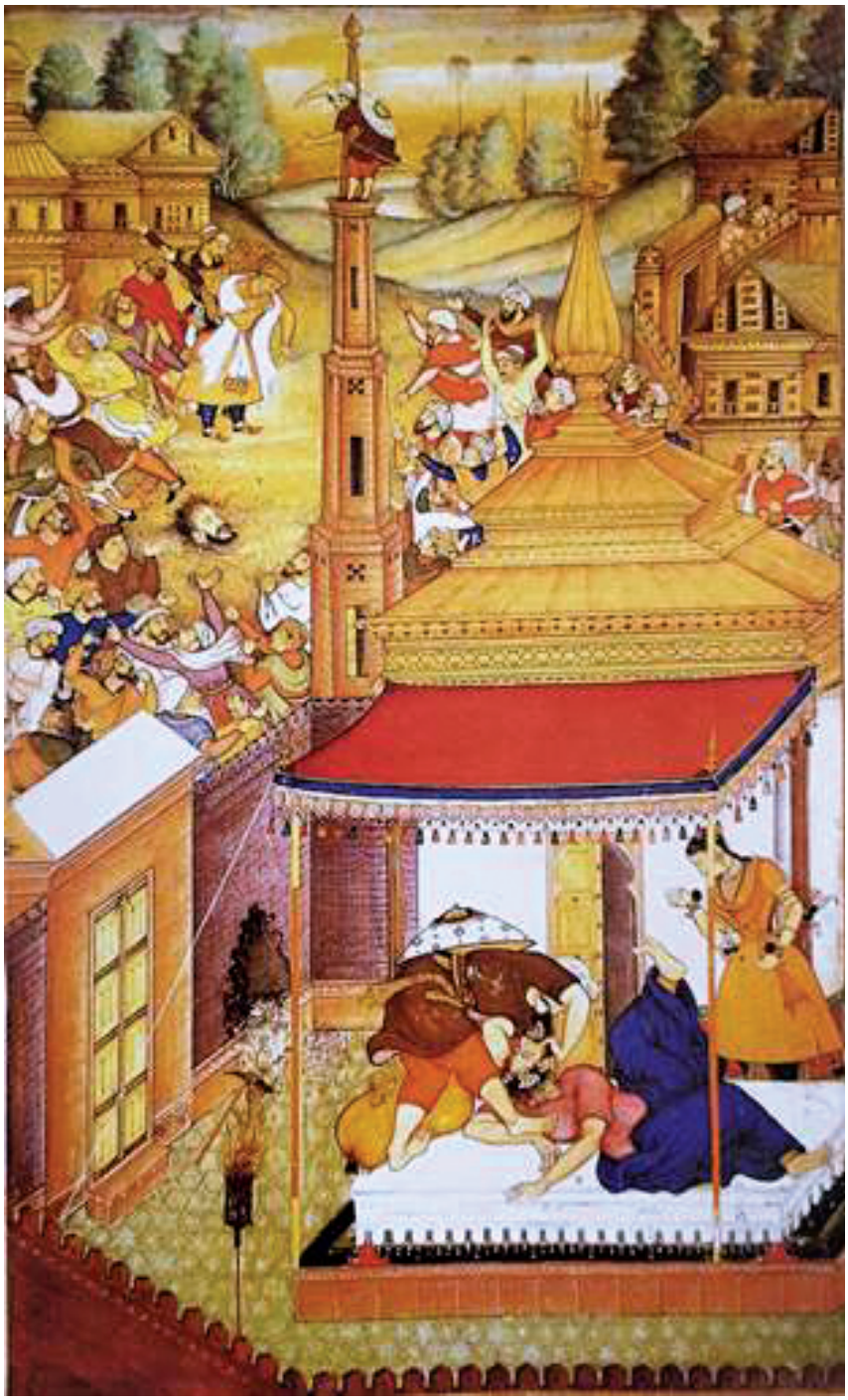


FIGURE 10.5: A Murder Scene. Mughal, c. 1600. From the Jahangir Album. Berlin.

9781472528353_Plates_txt_print.indd 224 12/11/2015 6:09:33 PM