Jnanapravaha

JNANAPRAVAHA MUMBAI
QUARTERLY

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2020

CONTENTS

Director's Note

The unfathomable challenges that humankind has faced this past quarter, and will continue to face in the near future, has brought in quiet reflection and purposeful realignment in every sphere. For those of us invested in Buddhist philosophy, the understanding of the *brahma viharas* has been a refuge and a beacon.

The *brahma viharas*, literally the abodes of *Brahma*, are a series of four Buddhist virtues and related meditational practices that cultivate them:

1) *Maitri* – loving-kindness, i.e. benevolence and active goodwill towards all;
2) *Karuna* – compassion, i.e. identifying the suffering of others as one's own;
3) *Mudita* – empathetic joy, i.e. feeling joy because others are happy; and
4) *Upeksha* – equanimity, i.e. the even-mindedness and serenity of treating everyone impartially.

The relevance and practice of these are for us to understand and adopt.

The other important lesson learned during this past quarter is the role that technology plays, and how we all need to reskill in order to survive and thrive. Despite the suddenness of the lockdown, we were able to switch to online classes for both the courses that were in session and successfully complete them without casualties. Kudos to our course directors who navigated unknown terrain with tremendous dexterity and commitment. Going forward, to ensure unbroken and safe teaching, all our courses, seminars and lectures will be conducted virtually from our next academic year beginning mid-July. This will continue until we are able to convene physically, after which we will offer both options – live streaming and physical teaching in our well-appointed space. We are extremely excited about online teaching, which will facilitate a larger audience, especially those who have been unable to participate so far.

Besides the usual overviews, this *Quarterly* carries two student essays which are a result of unceasing efforts to research and write under the expert guidance of the course directors.

As always, we look forward to staying in touch and seeing you in person in not too distant a future.

With my warmest wishes,

Rashmi Poddar PhD.
Director

AESTHETICS

A Folio from the Manuscript of Kalpasutra and Kalakacarya Katha: Jaina Tirthankara Enshrined (upper panel), Celestial Dancers (lower panel). c.1475

JPM's Aesthetics offerings include:
(1) an academic year-long Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate course in Indian Aesthetics, as well as ongoing public seminars and lectures in the field; (2) a quarterly Postgraduate Certificate course in Yoga and Tantra, as well as ongoing public seminars and lectures in the field; (3) a quarterly Postgraduate Certificate course in Southeast Asian Art and Architecture, as well as ongoing public seminars and lectures in the field; (4) a fortnight of public seminars and lectures in Islamic Aesthetics; (5) an ongoing series of public seminars in Buddhist Aesthetics; (6) an ongoing series of public seminars in South Asian Painting; and (7) occasional academic conferences and workshops in these fields.

Indian Aesthetics

Dr. Rashmi Poddar speaks during 'Orientation & Classical Indian Aesthetics – Its Principles'

Conducting the Indian Aesthetics (IA) course has been especially rewarding this year due to almost sixty enrolments of strongly motivated students. The course continues to offer students a condensed, yet deep and extensive view of Indic visual culture as it has done in a dynamic manner for over two decades. Focussing on the aesthetic dimension – but including the polyvalence of philosophical, religious, literary, historical, art historical, political, anthropological and archaeological underpinnings in its reading of painting, sculpture and architecture – the course illuminates premodern, modern and contemporary forms.

This year's course began with an

introduction to Classical Indian Aesthetics, which gave birth to *Rasa* theory and Sanskrit poetics, offering fundamental intellectual tools that are required to decode the form, content and meaning of art. Formal analysis using the concepts of rhythm, harmony, iconometry, materiality, line, colour and proportion was illustrated by Dr. Rashmi Poddar, who explored content and meaning in art through its subject matter, iconography, iconology and symbolism.

SPACES OF COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL MODERNITY
- PROF. HIMANSHU BURTE
(11TH APRIL 2020)

The production of post/colonial space
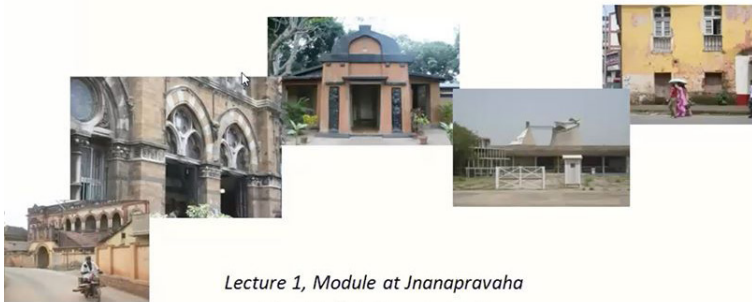
Lecture 1, Module at Jnanapravaha
Himanshu Burte, IIT-B

Dr. Shereen Ratnagar, one of the most important researchers of Harappa and the Indus Valley Civilisation, brought her formidable expertise to a session on the subject. Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical aesthetics were explored through many lenses by scholars immersed in these subjects, several of whom have engaged in primary research in these areas. *Agamic*, *tantric* and Islamic philosophy, as well as Islamic art and architecture were explored through textual and visual material before the course dived deep into Indian painting. The cave murals of Ajanta and Indic styles of painting in Jain and Buddhist manuscripts were discussed, in addition to Mughal, Rajput, Pahari and Deccani painting. The plethora of painting types and styles, and their rich variety, colours, textures and techniques were explored in detail before the course arrived at Krishna *sringara* and related visual, philosophical, religious and poetic developments. This was followed by a study of colonial archaeology, art and architecture, as well as theories of nationalism and orientalism, revealing that politics, power and knowledge are inextricably intertwined with visual culture.

During the last section of the course, from mid-March to mid-April, although challenged by the new coronavirus, Jnanapravaha, like many other academic institutions, was able to move smoothly to the conduit of online sessions despite the suddenness of this requirement. Dr. Jaya Kanoria used critical theory to create a nuanced understanding of the more recent period and its material culture, and repeated a session which applied Edward Said's ideas in his seminal treatise *Orientalism* to the visual arts, especially to the different genres of painting of the colonial era in the Indian subcontinent. This online session was for students of the Aesthetics, Criticism and Theory (ACT) course as well as the IA students who had missed her classroom session on 14th March due to the tense situation at the time. Dr. Kanoria's online session on 20th-century Indian Aesthetics was also attended by both batches, and explored colonialism and nationalist aesthetics in the art, thought and writing of Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo Ghosh. Popular and lesser known forms, and the grotesque were presented by Dr. Kurush Dalal, along with his primary research on *gadhegals* or ass-curse stones which are commonly found in Maharashtra. His generous cooperation, along with that of Dr. Himanshu Burte, who also conducted online classes, enabled Jnanapravaha to successfully complete the 2019-20 IA course. Dr. Himanshu Burte's intellectually stimulating sessions on colonial and postcolonial architecture were presented in relation to the ideas of Henri Lefebvre and his conception of everyday space.

The Indian Aesthetics rubric has been embellished this academic year by a talk by Sudipta Sen who presented *Ganga: The Living Pulse of Indian History*, based on his recently published book; by Naman Ahuja who presented the seminar *Gandhara by Design*, which is also the title of a 2019 *Marg* publication; and most of all by an exceptional week-long seminar conducted by Dr. Adam Hardy on *Temples and Texts*.


ORIENTALISM
BY DR. JAYA KANORIA
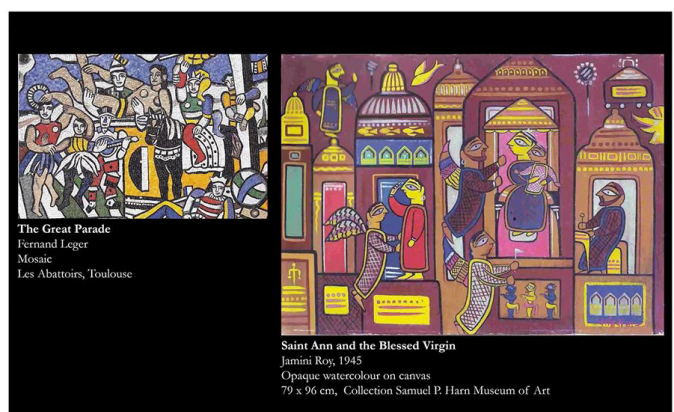
The Great Parade
Fernand Leger
Mosaic
Les Abattoirs, Toulouse

Saint Ann and the Blessed Virgin
Jamini Roy, 1945
Opaque watercolour on canvas
79 x 96 cm, Collection Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art

Increasingly, students of Indian Aesthetics at Jnanapravaha are able to gain additional knowledge by attending talks and seminars pertaining to the course, and also by participating in seminars of our other initiatives, which cover other aspects of related topics. These include Buddhist Aesthetics, Islamic Aesthetics which is held every January, and Indian Intellectual Traditions, all of which expand the field of Indian Aesthetics in significant ways. Internationally renowned scholars conduct these seminar series, large-heartedly sharing their current research with Jnanapravaha's intensely engaged audience.

The Indian Aesthetics course, as always, offered students a great deal more than an overview of 5,000 years of India's art history and philosophy. This is the fourth year of the JPM Think portal on which especially curated readings for each session are uploaded in advance, along with bibliographies provided by several scholars. This is a substantial and easily accessible resource for students. Students enrolled in the Indian Aesthetics diploma participated, as usual, in a demanding writing programme and submitted two essays and a dissertation. A special lecture on academic writing as well as extensive feedback and multiple drafts written for their essays helped them produce well-structured theses worthy of publication. The numerous theses researched wide-ranging topics such as *Bhavachakra: The Wheel of Samsara in Buddhist Philosophy*, *Ecology in the Sundara Kanda of the Valmiki Ramayana*, *From Rasa to Bhakti Rasa: A Historical Analysis*, *Postcolonial Modernity in Mithu Sen's Art*, *Memory and Reminiscence in the Gita Govinda* and more than a dozen others. It is a matter of pride for the institution that IA students are producing excellent writing.
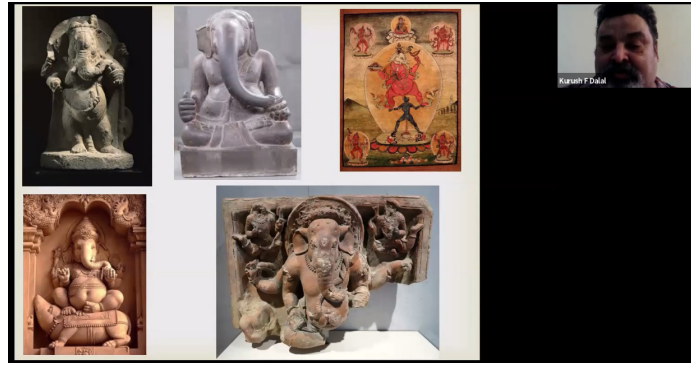
Dr. Kurush Dalal speaks during 'Dark Art History: (a) The Grotesque in Art; (b) Gadhegals: Punishing Men by Degrading Women'

Despite difficult circumstances all over the world since March 2020, the Indian Aesthetics Course 2019-20 has come to a successful close, as another chapter in Jnanapravaha Mumbai's constant striving towards excellence. Jnanapravaha's dissemination of authentic knowledge about the arts has already borne fruit with large numbers of alumni spread not only across Mumbai but also many other cities in India. With the decision to conduct the IA course both in the classroom and online (through livestreaming or on an online platform) in the coming academic year, the institution confirms its determination to fulfil its goals safely. This endeavour will also help us reach more students outside Mumbai. The institution looks forward to instilling passion and a thirst for knowledge of the arts in future students, readying them to face a sometimes dangerous but always richly aesthetic world. *– J.K.*

A glimpse of the final online class with the Indian Aesthetics 2019-20 students

South Asian Painting

Portrait of a Bird, Bikaner, dated VS 1842 / CE 1785, 20 x 16.5 cm. The work of Sahibadin, son of Abu. Opaque watercolour on paper

"Even when works are of a very small size, they convey a sense of monumentality."—Daniel Ehnbom, video interview, Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies.

The South Asian Painting course makes its way through a constellation of exquisite works on paper produced in Northern India from the 16th century onwards. Ranging in size from a few inches to a few feet, the paintings are often mistakenly referred to as 'miniatures'. Intimate yet monumental, quiet yet pulsating with life, worldly yet spiritual, these paintings have delighted viewers for centuries by allowing them a glimpse into a magical world. With their prices sky-rocketing, such works are the darlings of the art market, boosting the reputation of both, renowned and anonymous artists.

The course will introduce key terms and concepts that are essential to an understanding of South Asian painting. It will provide an overview of the methods employed in the examination of such works, and discuss scholarship that has defined the field. The value attached to these paintings in previous centuries—they helped their patrons realise spiritual goals, visualise and sustain royal identity, and so on—and the unpredictable demands of modern-day collectors, will be compared.

This will be accomplished while analysing iconic examples of manuscripts, series, and stand-alone works on paper. The aim of the course is to help students learn how to look at South Asian painting, and to familiarise them with the approaches that may be employed in their study.

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

Rajput Painting: Concepts and Realities

New Dates To Be Confirmed Soon | Daniel Ehnbom (Associate Professor of Art, University of Virginia)

Leaf number 13 from a dispersed series of the Bhagavata Purana. Krishna slaying the wind demon. Opaque colour and gold on paper. Sub-Imperial Mughal style at Bikaner (?), Rajasthan, India, c. 1600 CE. Private Collection, USA

The serious study of Rajput painting began in the early 20th century with the path-breaking work of A.K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), but except for his scholarship, it languished until the period after Independence. Then discovery followed discovery and scholars scrambled to establish order in this new visual world. Theories were proposed, promoted, and sometimes abandoned. Questions of the relationship of Rajput painting with Mughal painting were central to its understanding—was it part of a continuum with the Mughal style or was it oppositional? The course surveys the history of the study of Rajput painting and its implications for our understanding of its many styles.

Day 1:
Session I: Coomaraswamy's 'Main Stream' of Indian Painting and a Ground-Level View of the 16th Century
Session II: 'True Miniatures', 'Old Fangled Notions', and The Search for Order in the Post-Independence Study of Indian Painting

Day 2:
Session I: A History of Costume or a History of Painting?
How to look at the Pre-Rajput and Rajput Schools of the 16th and 17th Centuries

Session II: An Embarrassment of Riches: The Post-Independence Discoveries of Rajput Paintings and the Growth of Knowledge

Day 3:
Session I: Simplicity of Narrative(s) in the 16th Century: 'Rajput' (And Other) Painting and Embodiments of Stories
Session II: Complexity of Narrative(s) in the 16th Century: 'Rajput' (And Other) Painting and Illustrations of Texts

Day 4:
Session I: The 'Main Stream' Continues: Overt and Covert Manifestations of Compositional Forms
Session II: The Paradox of the 18th Century: Things Fall Apart and Things Come Together – Political Multiplicity and Aesthetic Convergence

Day 5:
Session I: A Final Flowering and a New Aesthetic Order: Patrons Old and New, Transformed Technologies and Another Way of Seeing
Session II: The Market, the Collector, and the Museum: How the Marketplace Inflects 'Knowledge'

CRITICISM & THEORY ⎯⎯

Apnavi Makanji | Untitled - Significant Other | 2018 | Courtesy Vadehra Art Gallery

JPM's Criticism and Theory offerings include (1) a Certificate course in Aesthetics, Criticism, and Theory as well as ongoing public seminars and lectures in the field; (2) an ongoing series of public seminars and lectures in Indian Intellectual Traditions; and (3) occasional academic conferences and workshop in these fields.

Aesthetics, Criticism & Theory

Ms. Alisha Sett speaks during 'Orientation - Introduction of Aesthetics, Criticism & Theory 2020'

This year's postgraduate certificate course in Aesthetics, Criticism & Theory (ACT) was shaped as an intensive three-month programme. The shift away from the ten-month format brought us students from other cities – Nasik, Delhi, Srinagar – and emerging artists for whom a shorter-yet-rigorous commitment was ideal. This mature group included many who were joining us at Jnanapravaha for the first time, who bore the transition to an online space for the final half of the course, and remained dedicated discussants till the end. We are grateful to them all for being with us through this difficult time and embracing the pros (and cons) of the Zoom classroom with enthusiasm.

Over thirty-three intensive sessions spread out over thirteen weeks, we addressed key philosophical debates in the field of aesthetics, explored the foundations of the discipline of art history, delved into the many trajectories of modernism, while also bringing Marx's historical materialism and the dialectics of enlightenment to the fore. The formative role that postcolonial theory, critical theory and the critique of orientalism have played in the discursive development of modern and contemporary art was not neglected, though several conversations on practice that were to have played out in artists' studios, which would have provided a foil to these conceptual discussions, were compromised by the lockdown.

Colonial, postcolonial and contemporary architecture also held a prominent place, serving our cohort of architects (who seem to grow in number each year), but also pushing all of us to think spatially and recognise this history as a part of our aesthetic repertoire. Finally, there was an exploration of contemporary practice: we delved into a diverse array of topics such as the Black Atlantic, radical curatorial strategies, and

the new documentary, which opened up provocative questions about our current predicament without giving too much weight to any singular medium or time period.

We have seen that students tend to engage in more dialogue when they meet the same teacher for a second or third time. Therefore, the course was also structured around repeated, in-depth engagement with a select group of pedagogues. A special thank you to those who truly exceeded themselves in their flexibility by agreeing to move their interactive sessions online at the last minute, or to fill in for others who were indisposed because of the pandemic.

Prof. Arun Iyer from IIT Bombay spent the first two weeks covering the expansive terrain between Plato and Foucault in a manner that combined close reading, provocative discourse, and expert, concise commentary on each philosopher's trajectory and continuing influence, laying the groundwork for the months ahead. One reason to choose Plato's *Republic* as our starting point is the disagreement, debate and often outright outrage which this text evokes (healthy sentiments for any course but particularly one on aesthetics). Another is the form of the dialogues themselves; in mirroring the kind of call and response we hope for in the classroom, they magnificently challenge pre-conceptions about the place of community, art and justice in the formation of an ideal society. Aristotle's *Poetics* on the other hand reveals the middle ground between formalism and moralism, or more broadly aesthetics and ethics. Plato's famous words in the last chapter of the *Republic* ("allow the champions of poetry...to offer a prose defence on its behalf") also make the *Poetics* a natural corollary. In a refreshing turn, rather than foregrounding only mimesis or catharsis, Prof. Iyer revealed the primacy

Dr. Arun Iyer speaks during 'Aristotle's Poetics'

of rhetorical strategies and turned the Greek giants into our thought-guides, their concerns shepherding us subconsciously throughout the three months.

The dramatic jump in time to Kant's *Critique of Judgment* in our fourth session was softened by the natural continuation of questions on beauty, taste and logic. The notion of disinterested pleasure and the need for aesthetic judgement to be universally valid in order to truly be considered a judgement of beauty, visibly troubled the conscience of aesthetes in the class. The gamut of questions raised were resolved in the move to Hegel's lectures on fine art, where Kant's influence on Hegel's *Aesthetics* could be made evident. Hegel's belief in art as one of the highest manifestations of the self-conscious free spirit, forced us to debate our understanding of the relationship between freedom and its communication to a broader public in objects of art. Could Kant's understanding of freedom be the same as Hegel's when the two thinkers differed so clearly on the question of beauty itself?

Hegel's contrasting method of analysis, focussing on particular works of art, and his interest in a global history of art allowed us to begin tiptoeing towards the beginnings of art history, but not before putting the German tradition aside for a moment. In Prof. Iyer's fifth and final lecture he turned to Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Manet and the Object of Painting*. This was also our first foray into looking at art together. Reading into a range of iconic paintings, such as 'Olympia' and 'C'est Ne Pas Une Pipe', we were able to see not only Foucault's arguments for Manet but also his key concepts taking shape.

The next four sessions brought back our city's pre-eminent curators, Nancy Adajania and Ranjit Hoskote, who have both been veteran teachers for ACT, to deliver survey lectures that not only brought alive the origins of art history and criticism but also cut the dominant Western canon down to size through the meaningful assertion of subaltern and 'majority world' histories. Because of their constant immersion in theory and practice over several decades, Adajania and Hoskote are always able to move between historical epochs, works of art, specific exhibitions, premodern, modern and postmodern trajectories, and particularly the history of art in India with a fluidity that is astonishing.

Dr. Masani's public lecture on 'The Theory and Practice of Imperialism: Locating the British Raj' inadvertently became the last public lecture of our academic year. It proved to be the most contentious seminar of the course as it presented a systematic critique of both postcolonial theory and subaltern studies, in favour of a traditional mode of writing history that has become increasingly unpopular among academics and students of the humanities in the subcontinent. His claim that "the efforts of the postcolonial purists are directed against a historical mode of understanding altogether" raised many eyebrows. For a detailed look, please visit our last *Quarterly* where we have shared the entire text of the talk under our *Slant/Stance* section.

It was an honour to welcome Prof. Jairus Banaji to Jnanapravaha for two seminal lectures that formed the fulcrum of the second half: 'From the *Communist Manifesto to Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason*' and 'Marx's *Capital:* A Basic Introduction (Architecture, Analysis, Definition)'. As one of the most foremost scholars of Marxist theory in the country, there could be no one better to present an integrated view of a field that has splintered into more subgroups than can be counted. To quote Prof. Banaji himself:

Ms. Nancy Adajania speaks during 'Art History and the History of Art Criticism II– The Indian Context, from Coomaraswamy to Geeta Kapur'

"Historical materialism as Marx understood this was an integrated conception or field of research, not one divided into disciplines. It is impossible to think of capitalism, for example, in purely economic terms, in abstraction from the state; or to think of the state in abstraction from the cultures that inure large masses of people to passive acceptance (Sartre would say 'serial acceptance') of authority and all the values it presupposes and sustains. If Hitler was possible, that is because a milieu existed that allowed Hitler to emerge and to be successful (to become the 'incarnation' of a 'people' moulded by decades of subjection to nationalism, militarism, etc.) This conception of Marxist theory as an essentially integrated discipline, if

we want to call it that, is what Sartre was trying to map out in *Question de méthode*. So, I see my work as a unified intervention at very different levels, in rather different fields."
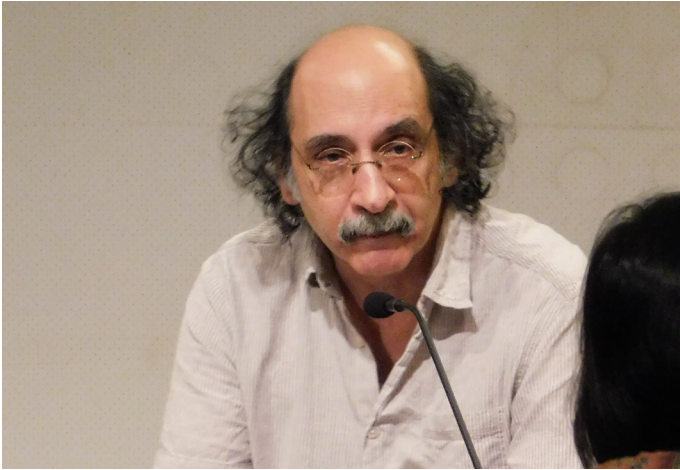
Dr. Jairus Banaji speaks during 'Marx's Capital: A Basic Introduction (Architecture, Analysis, Definition)'

Though perhaps some of the most intellectually challenging sessions of the course, they were deeply rewarding, providing a set of tools with which to approach the texts themselves. Learning to read critically through reading together is one of the key aims of the course, and Prof. Banaji opened up the intimidating world of Marx and Sartre with an intimacy which was astounding. We are grateful that the transition to Zoom took place after these lectures because the tea-time anecdotes about the mill era in Bombay, and the varied responses to the riots, to name just two, would have been sorely missed.

Mr. Prasad Shetty speaks during 'When is Space? Tendencies in Contemporary Architecture in India II'

The first lockdown lecture was given by Dr. Jaya Kanoria, our very own Course Director of Indian Aesthetics. During a four-hour treat titled 'Indian Aesthetics in the Early 20th Century: The Art and Thought of Rabindranath Tagore', Dr. Kanoria moved deftly between Tagore's writings, paintings, musings and music. The lecture also dovetailed beautifully with Prof. Alka Hingorani's riveting talk on 'The Life of an Image'. Beginning with Richard Davis and finishing with the history of the iconic *Shiva Nataraja* through the eyes of not only Ananda K. Coomaraswamy but

also Padma Kaimal, she left students rethinking every visit they had ever made to a classical museum in India. Dr. Kanoria then spent two evenings taking us through the most visually scintillating view of orientalism that we could have imagined, her every argument illustrated with a rare portfolio of images, providing an unexpected counterpoint to Dr. Masani's overview.

Our classes in architecture were inaugurated with a discussion of Henri Lefebvre's oeuvre. Prof. Himanshu Burte began with a breakdown of 'Production of Space' and its contemporary applications, and went on to provide students with multiple frameworks for the reimagining of colonial and postcolonial Indian architecture.

Ms. Rupali Gupte speaks during 'When is Space? Tendencies in Contemporary Architecture in India I'

Over the past decade, Rupali Gupte and Prasad Shetty have only grown in stature as global figures whose contributions to the field of contemporary architecture – whether through the building of a new institution like the School of Environment and Architecture, or through the production of interdisciplinary curatorial projects – are considered potent and piercing. Breaking down their unique perspectives on space, rooted in the decades of research they've done in Mumbai (and elsewhere) on "transactional capacity", we delved into their 'Transactional Objects' and were enraptured during an in-depth walkthrough of their groundbreaking exhibition 'When is Space?' (Jawahar Kala Kendra, 2017). The class ended with a discussion of how we can view the idea of the 'contemporary' in India, giving us the opportunity to touch upon Giorgio Agamben, J. Swaminathan and Salman Rushdie.

Our last session on architecture could be seen as a moving tribute to Charles Correa, a towering figure whose work can be studied over months. Yet, in one evening, Ranjit Hoskote was able to take us through the key tenets of his practice as an architect, while also making us feel as if we knew him through an attentive

ethnography. Moving seamlessly between 'Vistara' – the landmark exhibition that was an inspiration to Hoskote's own curatorial practice – and renowned sites such as the Jawahar Kala Kendra and the Kala Academy, Correa's vision came alive.

3. A Modest Ethnographic Proposal

Grand Machines of Modernism vs. Granular Local Con[

Goa and the Goan Diaspora: Divar, Moira, Bombay Communidade/ *Gaunkari*

Bombay's Liberal Cultural Elites
Intersection of disciplines, discourses, practices
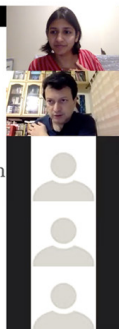
Mr. Ranjit Hoskote speaks during 'Charles Correa: Trajectories and Contexts'

Nancy Adajania also returned and spoke from a powerful personal position as a pioneer of feminist art historical practice in India, about the 'agency' of Indian artists of the 20th century. Moving beyond the politics of representation, and a biographical reading of each artist, into material and conceptual interpretations that reveal the unstable meanings that keep an artwork alive, she presented a masterclass in how to consistently expand the terrain of the modern and contemporary to include marginalised voices. Though she has taught this lecture for many years, it remained poignant because (in her own words), "each time I revise it to reflect both my own preoccupations and the political thrum of the day".

Aveek Sen generously agreed to teach five classes from his beautiful home in Calcutta. First, Sen took us on a phased tour through the landscape of the sublime. Beginning with Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, delving into the works of key figures in 19th- and 20th-century art, literature and music, such as Caspar David Friedrich, Keats, and Beethoven, Sen then moved seamlessly between existential questions, historical moments and seminal works of art. Making a monumental effort to provide take-home resources given the confines of the pandemic, Sen created a special document for students that laid out not only methods of reading the sublime, but also methods of feeling it, emotionally and politically. To quote only a few sentences:

"From its very origins, historically speaking, theories and practices of the sublime have always marked a vital shift from focussing on the work of art to being aware of the complex and unsettling effect it might have on the receiver, whatever the form of this reception. In this sense...the sublime compels us to be aware of ourselves as we encounter a work of art, and then to find a language for describing this encounter. As an idea, the sublime exists...at the living interface between subject and object, and never really becomes dated; it is always contemporary, quite literally so, for it marks the meeting of two moments of time, two positionalities, that of the work and its producer, on the one hand, and of the receiver of the work, on the other."

This sensitive conversation prepared us for writing about Alain Resnais's 'Hiroshima Mon Amour', which is no mean feat. In his critical writing workshop, Sen discussed strategies for approaching the film and broke down the walls that often keep us from writing along the way. Analysing both the script of the film written by Marguerite Duras, her groundbreaking novel *The Lover*, and reviewing an essay by each student over the course of two weeks, he moved each of us forward in our journey with words.


CRITICAL WRITING WORKSHOP
MR. AVEEK SEN (20TH MARCH 2020 | ONLINE SESSION)

The Frankfurt School was the unexpected subject of Sen's last two sessions, since our lecturer for these sessions was unable to join us at the last minute. Walter Benjamin's aura now lingers, perhaps more than any other writer, over the visual arts. And every return to his fragmentary constellations of text is fraught with a reminder of his unfortunate death. Though our emphasis was on the celebrated *Work of Art* essay, we could not help but speak also of Proust and Baudelaire, of why Benjamin's form of writing is uncategorisable and necessitates a shift in thought, of why he struggled with Marx, and ultimately why his angel will continue to haunt us.

Theodor Adorno's negative dialectics were the locus of our final class with Sen. We understood Adorno's

life and work through a careful unpacking of *The Meaning of Working through the Past* and *Education After Auschwitz*, before moving into a free-flowing discussion of *Late Style in Beethoven*. By listening to his tightly woven sentences spoken aloud, even over Zoom, with all of us scattered in different locations, we found a way to access his radical critique. Sen's own deep love for Western classical music particularly helped the novice listener to grasp 'late style'.
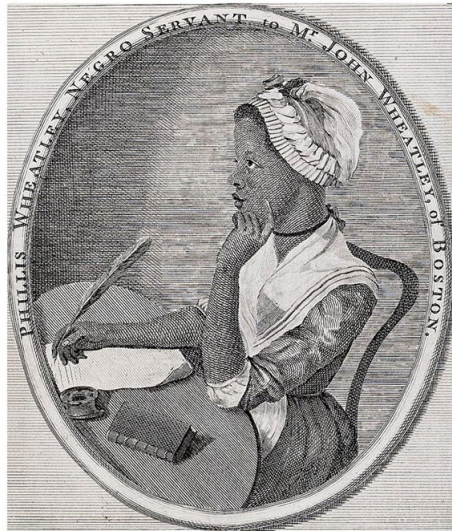
BLACK VERNACULAR AESTHETICS II: THEN AND NOW
DR. RADICLANI CLYTUS (29TH APRIL 2020) | ONLINE SESSION

Joining us from South Carolina again after a year, for two lectures on 'Black Vernacular Aesthetics', Dr. Radiclani Clytus outlined a genealogical framework to understand the regenerative ethos of Josiah Wedgwood's kneeling slave icon. An 18th-century "proto-racial" ideological emblem, it relies upon the cultural marker of clothing in order to define categories of human difference, a loinclothed supplicant in manacles making a pathetic appeal for black humanity.

Wedgwood's emblem remains a disturbing and antiquated example of how well-meaning representations of black precarity can both encourage and stifle those socially democratic principles that define human agency. When considering the relationship between the form and political content of this slave icon, and the last two-and-a-half centuries of black protest, Dr. Clytus revealed a complicated legacy of influence on activists who inadvertently mine the symbol's implicit depiction of violence and affective sloganeering. This eye-opening lecture amplified associations linking the visual rhetoric of transatlantic abolitionism to the graphic commemoration of black emancipation and the performative modes of black assembly embodied by civil rights protestors since the dawn of the 20th century.

Dr. Clytus' second class with us focussed on the mixed

transhistorical lineage of representational practices that figure books as objects of cultural, racial, and political mediation. They not only impact how we see and read black figurative representations visually but also reveal the importance of establishing a connection between art history and the unique ideological and material features that govern the legacy of books as sites of contestation and empowerment in American print culture. In order to get beyond interpretive simplifications, towards something that might be a viable understanding of the totemic power of the book – as much more than a mere prop within the arsenal of signification available to artists – we first examined the publication of Phillis Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773), and then traced the presence of 'black books' through the 19th and 20th centuries, ending with a discussion of the contemporary practices of Theaster Gates, Yinka Shonibare, and Rashid Johnson.

The final two sessions of the course were co-taught by our Course Director for ACT Alisha Sett, and curator-artist Sunil Shah from the University of Arts London. Looking 'back' at modernism through the lens of curator-critics Geeta Kapur and Okwui Enwezor, they allowed us to challenge the monolithic imperial history of the modern that museums in the West have shored up for over a century. Examining key exhibitions like 'Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945-1965' and 'Place for People' through the prism of texts like *When Was Modernism*, Sett and Shah opened up a postcolonial transnational discourse in contemporary art for our students.

The very last session connected the work of Allan Sekula, Ariella Aisha Azoulay and Hito Steyerl, three major figures whose contributions to the history of the image are rarely linked. Eschewing conventional boundaries between discussions of the image and the archive, Sett and Shah excavated the history of photography and current lens-based practices through the lens of 'unlearning', leaning not only on Sekula's 'Fish Story' and Susan Meisalas' 'Kurdistan' but also looking at the potential of projects like the Dalit Panthers Archive.

It was a grueling and satisfying marathon rush to the finish. The course could have definitely paced itself out a little more and attempted to be less ambitious over just three months. However, the response was overwhelmingly positive and we look forward to organising another ACT course very soon.

Endnotes
i   http://www.historicalmaterialism.org/interviews/jairus-banaji-towards-new-marxist-historiography

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

Module I - Foucault and Aesthetics

September 15th - October 14th, 2020, 6:30 - 8:30 pm | Dr. Arun Iyer (Assistant Professor - Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Bombay)

Michals, Duane. Magritte, 1965. Gelatin silver print with hand-applied text. Courtesy: DC Moore Gallery, New York

The course is an introduction to the conceptual relationship between painting and photography, and the questions it raises for the role of art in our time through the works of a 20th-century thinker most attuned to it. Comprising of eight to ten lectures over one month, it will juxtapose Foucault's discussions of the artists Manet, Kandinsky, Klee and Magritte, and photographers Duane Michals and Gerard Fromanger, with the discussion of their work by major art historians.

The course will deal exclusively with original texts, looking at the major essays by Foucault on these painters and photographers, which have already been translated into English, in addition to untranslated interviews and short essays from his collected of works *Dits et Ecrits* (*Speeches and Writings*).

Jnanapravaha Mumbai is deeply indebted to the following for their support:

BENEFACTORS

Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation
Vineeta & Arvind Kanoria
Dipak & Rohitashwa Poddar
Saroj Poddar, Adventz Group Of Companies
Madan & Usha Sethi
Sohni & Dipak Tanna

PATRONS

Vinod Doshi, Echjay Industries (CSR) Foundation
Dhruv Khaitan, Trustee, Kumudini Devi Khaitan Samvedna Trust
Dilip Piramal, VIP Industries Ltd.

PARTNERS

Shekhar Bajaj, Bajaj Electricals Ltd.
Minakshi & Shishir Bajaj
Avantika & Puneet Dalmia, Avanee Foundation
Deccan Heritage Foundation
Poddar Foundation
Jai & Sugandha Hiremath, Hikal Ltd.
Rochna & Tarang Jain, Varroc Foundation
Priyam & Gayatri Jhaveri
Ajay & Vandana Kanoria, Asiatic Oxygen Ltd.
Anurag Kanoria
Deepak & Smita Parekh, HDFC Ltd.
Maithili Parekh & Shashank Singh
Aditya Ruia
Shamina Talyarkhan
Bahram & Arti Vakil

FRIENDS

Lolita Shivdasani
Dayanita Singh

Announcements

POSTGRADUATE COURSE IN INDIAN AESTHETICS

July 2020 – April 2021 | Typically Saturdays, 1:30 – 5:30 pm
Also ONLINE | Lectures will be streamed live from the institute's classroom or hosted on an online platform

Krishna playing flute, Outer wall, Hoysaleshwara Temple, 12th century CE, Halebidu, Karnataka
Photo Credit: Arvind Sethi

Introduced in 1999, Jnanapravaha Mumbai's academic year-long Postgraduate Diploma/ Certificate Course in Indian Aesthetics (IA) examines the development of visual forms in historical and discursive context. Crossing the disciplines of art history, archaeology, architecture, anthropology, literature and philosophy, the course treats roughly 5,000 years of Indian visual art and aesthetics, encompassing premodern, modern and contemporary forms, as well as popular traditions. IA scholars comprise internationally renowned academics who ensure that the visual material presented is broad-based geographically, historically, culturally, and materially. Over the years, in keeping with JPM's mission, the programme has evolved to include subjects of current research.

For admission, you are required to submit:
A copy of your last degree certificate and two passport-sized photographs.

Fee structure:
Diploma (writing and attendance) – Rs. 40,000
Certificate (attendance) – Rs. 30,000

STUDENT REVIEWS

The Sacred and the Secular

A *Janamsakhi* illustration depicting Guru Nanak in Mecca (The Kapany Collection, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, USA)
Priyanka Panjwani - *JPM ALUMNA*

All art is in part about the world in which it emerged.[1]As part of a North Indian hagiographic manuscript written in the 19th century, the miniature painting depicts a miracle of the founder of Sikhism – Guru Nanak. This essay will deconstruct the visual elements of the simple watercolour painting and try to link it to different styles of miniature painting of that period. It will also attempt to answer a fundamental question formulated by French art historian and archaeologist Oleg Grabar – Can a work of culture be meaningfully understood through application of techniques developed outside of it?[2] The dynamism of icons (the sacred and the secular) due to cross cultural influences is evident through this investigative process.

Introduction

It is said that the genesis of Sikh Art[3] came about due to the traditional documentation of anecdotes based on the life of Guru Nanak,[4] which were formulated as simple, yet graphic[5] *Janamsakhi* manuscripts. A *janam* (life) *sakhi* (*sakshi*, a witnessed story) offers unique insights into Guru Nanak's life.[6] Guru Nanak undertook several spiritual journeys[7] accompanied by his disciples.[8] During his travels through the Middle East in 1517-22, a miracle[9] occurred in the holy city of Mecca (**Image 1**).[10] This incident is illustrated in a narrative painting (**Image 2**).

Image 1: The mosque complex in Mecca

---

1   Barrett, Terry. 2011. *Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary.* The Ohio State University. Mayfield Publishing Company Mountain View, California, USA.

2   Koch, Ebba. 2014. *Mughal Architecture.*2. Primus Books. New Delhi, India.

3   *Janamsakhis* (initially circulated orally) play an important role in Sikh culture and identity formation.

4   Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539) founded Sikhism in the Indian province of Punjab to spread the word of one god, equality, social justice and community service.

5   McLeod, W. 1991. 4. *Janamsakhis* were based on the Sufi tradition of the '*tazkira*' (a biographical memoir).

6   These life stories are sequenced to include events in a pattern influenced by the Indian tradition of the *ashramas* (life stages) which are the *brahmacarin* (student), *grihastha* (householder), *vanaprastha* (traveller and teacher) and *sanyasin* (wanderer).

7   McLeod, W. 1980.149. Guru Nanak travelled an estimated 20,000 miles on four '*udasis*' or voyages.

8   McLeod, W. 1991. 53. Bhai Bala (a Hindu) and Bhai Mardana (a Muslim) were Guru Nanak's well-known disciples. Bhai Bala is identified with a peacock feather whisk or '*chaurie*' and Bhai Mardana with his musical instrument, the *rabab*. *Janamsakhis* belong to various traditions based on patronage, such as Bala, Miharban, Adi, and Puratan traditions.

9   'With knowledge as the bouquet, compassion as the hostess, let the sacred music resonate in every heart, The One is supreme, the whole cosmos under its sway, Why revere feats and miracles which lead you astray?' (Japji or sacred verse) 29, *GGS* or *Guru Granth Sahib*). It is a paradox that Guru Nanak engaged with people on his journeys in order to eradicate belief in myths and superstitions, but his own life story is a hagiographic rather than literal history. (Brown, K. 1999. 5, 54.)

10   Image 1 shows a basic layout of the mosque complex in Mecca, containing the holy centre and a prayer courtyard around it, surrounded by Islamic arcades on all sides.

Image 2: Guru Nanak and his disciple encounter a Muslim cleric at Mecca

Following an evening of spiritual singing in the *musalla*,[11] Guru Nanak decided to lie down to rest. After a while, a Muslim *mullah*[12] noticed that the Guru's feet were in the direction of the *mihrab*[13] and he angrily pointed and shouted at Guru Nanak's irreverence. In some versions of the *Janamsakhi*, it is said that the *mullah* moved

---

11   *Musalla* - mosque courtyard or open space for prayer outside a mosque.
12   *Mullah* - cleric or head of the mosque.
13   McLeod, W. 1991. 55. *Mihrab* - the niche which marks the direction of the most sacred *Kaaba*, a black stone venerated by Muslims since ancient times.

Guru Nanak's feet away and realised that this action caused the *Kaaba* to move around as well.[14] To this, Guru Nanak responded calmly by saying, 'Turn my feet in the direction where God is not'.[15] The *mullah* realised the greatness of the Guru and took to the path of the omnipresent 'One God'.[16]

The painting in **Image 2** is narrative but passive, while the story indicates movement. The uniqueness of this painting lies in the distinctiveness of its origin.[17] The artwork resembles a Pahari painting in its use of primary colours and refined facial features. It is one of forty-two paintings in an unbound set belonging to the Kapany family, originally from Patna.[18] Professor Del Bonta believes that the painting is of the Awadhi style, while its tentative place of origin is deduced to be Murshidabad in West Bengal as per records of the museum where it currently resides.[19] **Image 3** traces the probable point of origin of the image in North India. Perhaps the artist travelled through all these places and gathered experiences that are manifested in the painting.
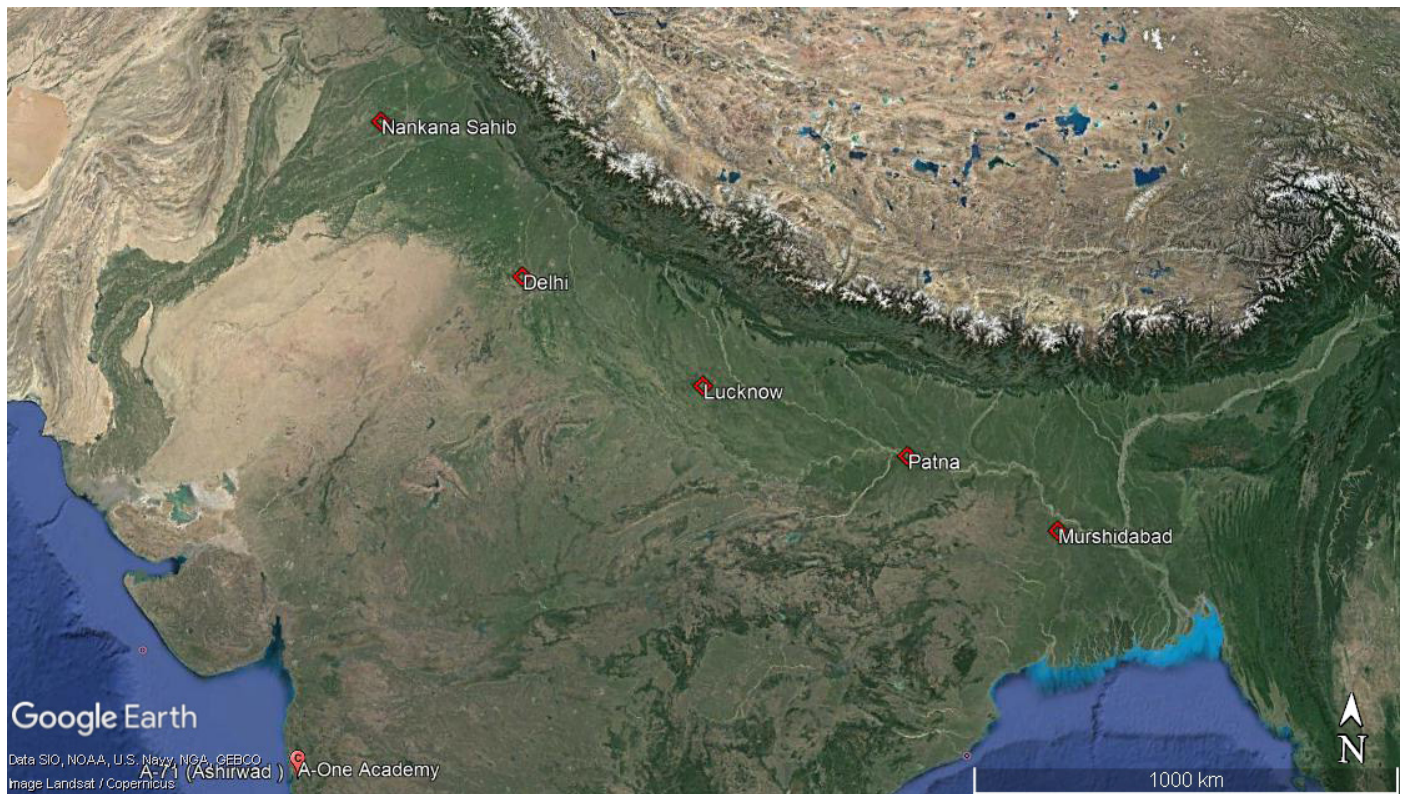

Image 3: Tracing the artist's footsteps

Templates conventionalised the mystic events of Guru Nanak's life into easily identifiable forms[20] and became a base for replicas in early *Janamsakhi* illustrations.[21]

They suggested the placement of figures and a rough setting as seen in **Image 4**.[22] Artists from various backgrounds adapted[23] the template to create a unique 'Sikh' tradition.[24]

---

14   Brown, K. 1999. 6. The *Kaaba* is said to move in a few Islamic legends.

15   Goswamy, Smith. 2006. 28. As the *Kaaba* turned, Guru Nanak made all Mecca turn to his teaching.

16   'One god', meaning *'Ik Omkar' (GGS)*. GGS is short for *Guru Granth Sahib* or *Adi Granth*, the holy book of the Sikhs.

17   Berger, J. 1972. 19.

18   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2015. 63. Dr. Kapany's great-grandfather was a chief custodian at the Gurdwara Sahib in Patna.

19   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2016. Dispersal of artists took place all across North India after the collapse of Mughal sovereignty.

20   McLeod, W. 1991. 6. The *Janamsakhi* illustrations became a way of stimulating imagination and etching stories in memory of the devotees.

21   Berger, J. 1972. 11. The past is a well of conclusions from which we draw in order to act. Woodcut templates communicated to a larger community and helped spread the word of Sikhism quicker. (McLeod, W. 1991. 18)

22   Goswamy, Smith. 2006. 100.

23   McLeod, W. 1991. 127. The artists transformed these guidelines with their own ideologies and talent. A woodcut image of the same scene in the V&A collection (Museum number: IM.2:161-1917) shows a *mihrab* with a Hindu Shiva *linga*. This represents a late interpolation in the tradition.
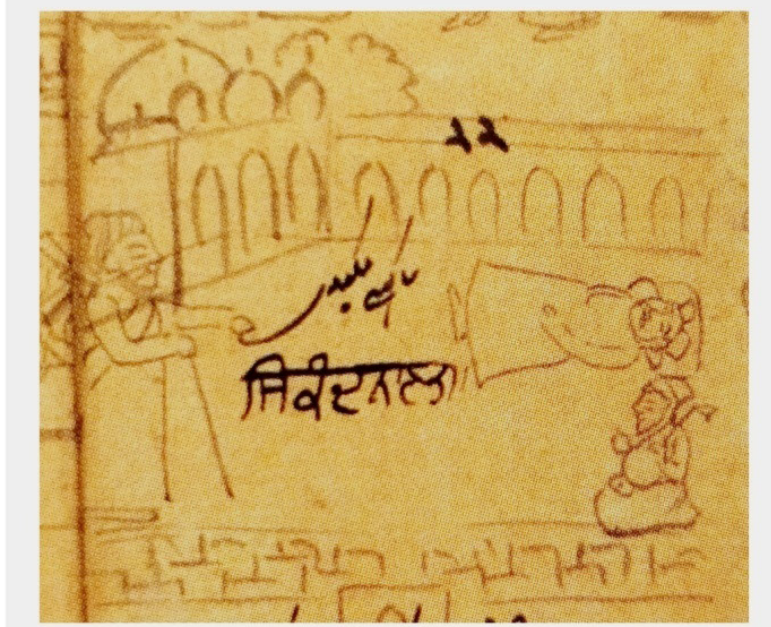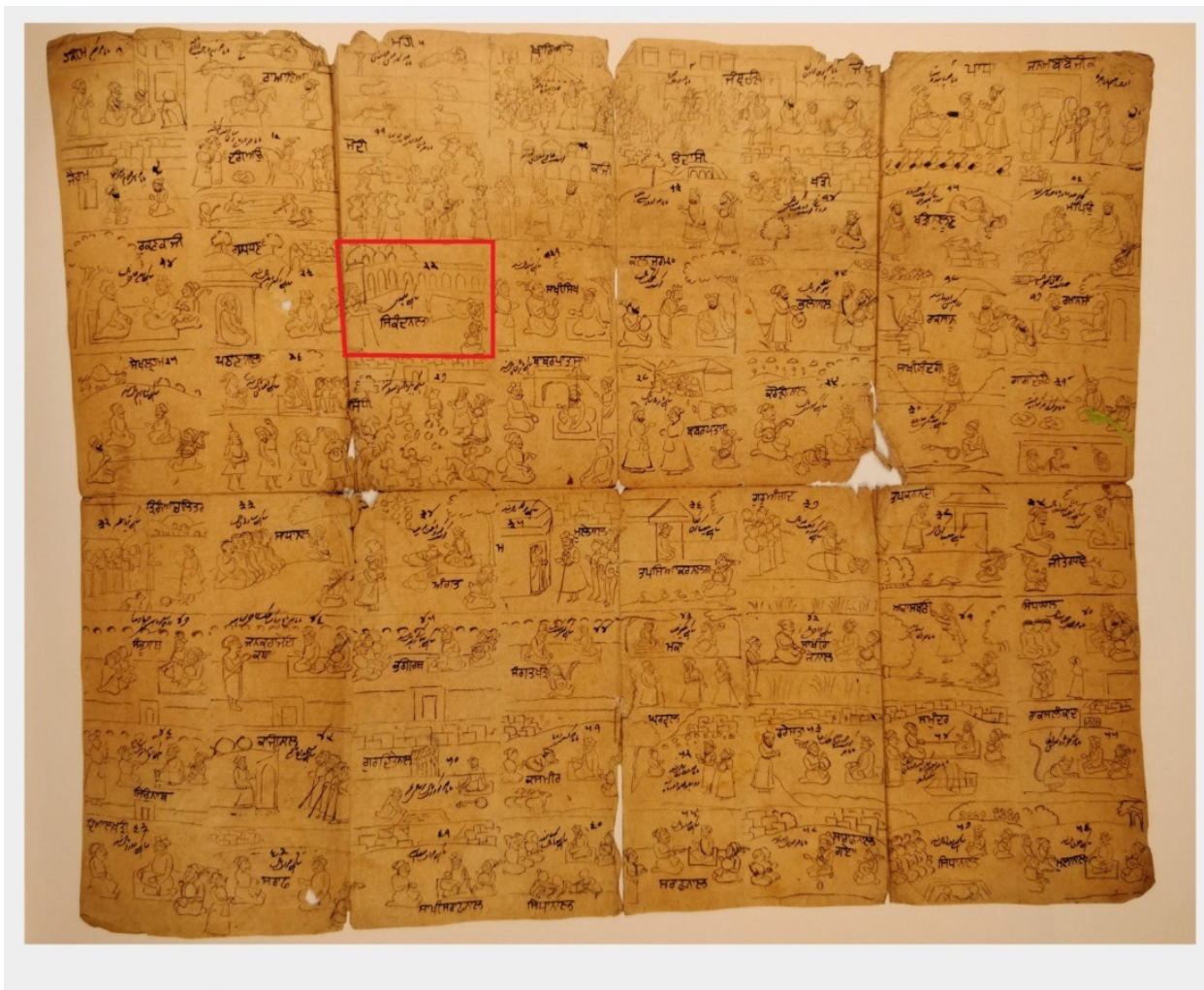
24   McLeod, W. 1991. 9.

Image 4: A *Janamsakhi* template in thumbnail format with the Mecca incident highlighted

Style: Colour, Shading and Design

Certain tangible elements of design[25]are prominent in the painting. These are the ornaments[26] of said painting (**Image 2**) highlighted in **Image 5**.

---

25   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2013. 62.The sleeping Guru Nanak takes attention away from himself and instead awakens the spectator to the richness that surrounds everyone at every moment.

26   Nardi, Isabella. 2006. 24 The *Visnudharmottara Purana* (III.41.10-15) explains that the ornaments of a painting are the lines, shading, decoration and colour.
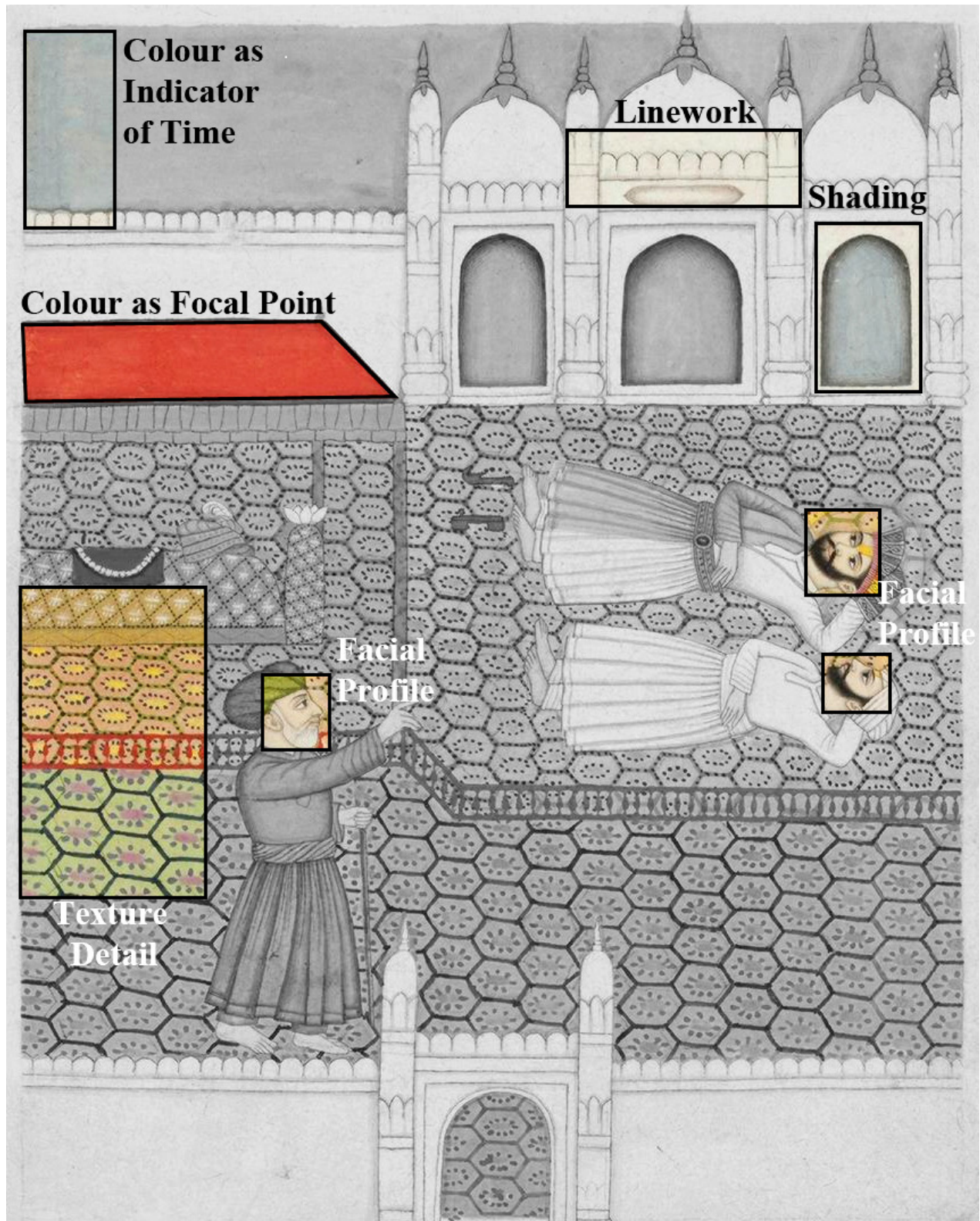
Image 5: Painting techniques driving the narrative in the illustration. (A detail of Image 2)

The illustrated scene takes place at dawn, which is revealed by the faint blue sky on a high horizon.[27] The opaque watercolour or gouache on viscous paper has made the painting bright but flat and lacking in any major tonal value. The linework overall is fine and restrained. The textures of the exquisite arabesque[28] of hexagonal tile or carpet patterns in the courtyard, intricate *jalidar*[29] balustrade and the cross diagonals of the cushions gain character as background detail. Other noticeable techniques used in the painting are minimal perspective (canopy) and contoured shading (mosque arches).[30]

---

27   Kour, Gurdeep. 2019. 95.
28   Kour, Gurdeep. 2019.251. Arabesque – decoration in the form of rhythmic linear patterns.
29   Kour, Gurdeep. 2019.251. *Jalidar* – latticework.
30   McLeod, W. 1991. 27.

The brilliant red used for the canopy becomes a focal point and iconographically significant.[31] The source of the red organic dye, *majith*,[32] is a symbol of devotion in Sikhism. The complexion of the figures and facial features – the sharp chin, nose almost in line with the forehead, and long eyes – have been generalised from the Kangra style of Pahari painting.[33] It is also important to note that the *mullah* and the disciple's faces are in profile while Guru Nanak's face is in three-quarter profile.[34]

Composition

The painting is in vertical format and is surrounded by thin, white padding and a thick, traditional, monochrome red border or *hashiya*[35] without any decoration. The scene unfolds within three registers,[36] and a hierarchy[37] is represented by the prominent figures placed in the central register (**Image 6**).
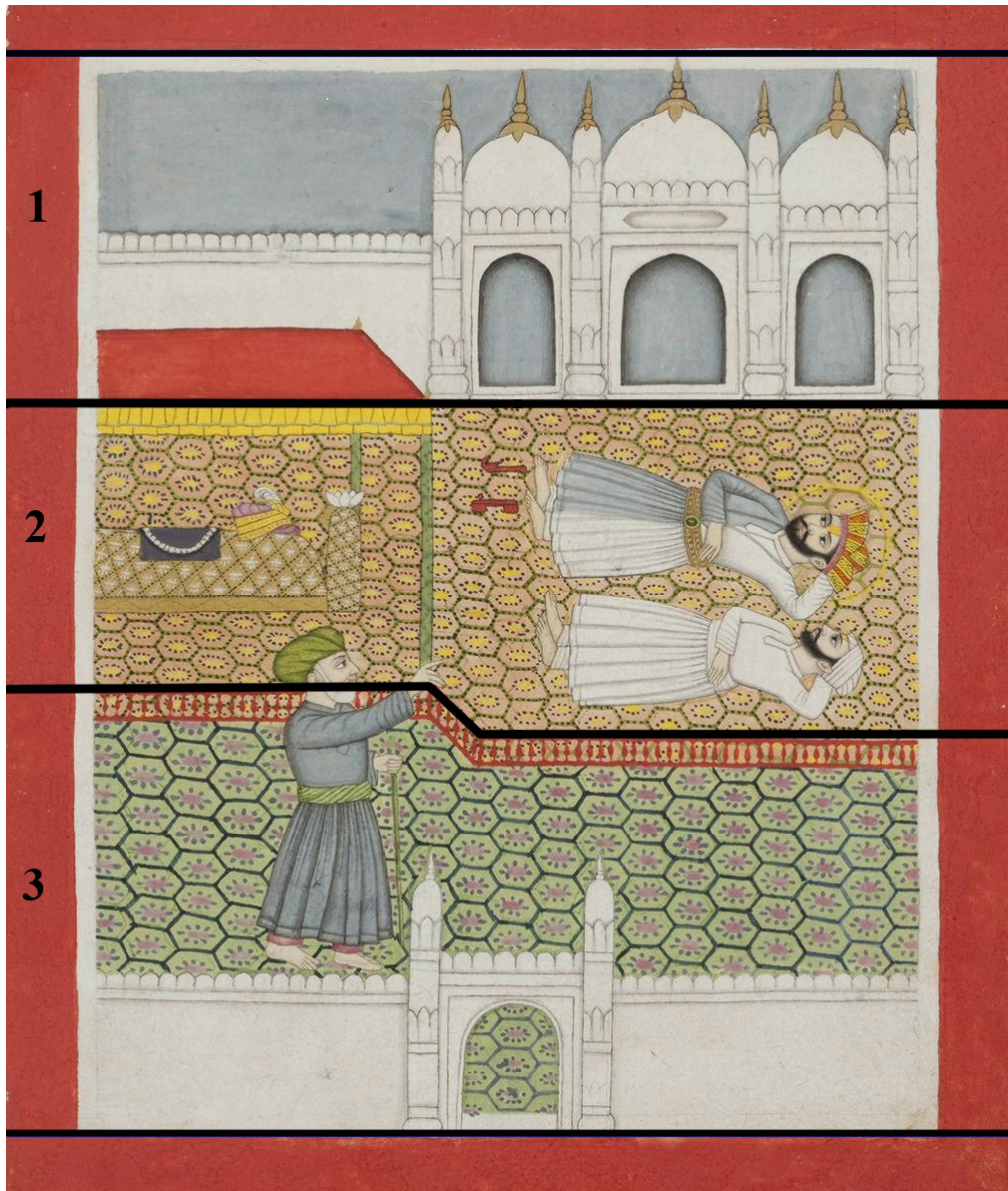

Image 6: Hierarchy of registers in the narrative painting. (A detail of Image 2)

31   Hans, Surjit. 1987. 7. Red is the colour of passion for the divine name.
32   Hans, Surjit. 1987. 7. *Majith – rubia cordifolia* or Indian madder.
33   Ahluwalia, Roda. 2020. No one in the present world has seen Guru Nanak, nor were there portraits of him during his lifetime.
34   Hans, Surjit. 1987. 8.
35   Kour, Gurdeep. 2019. 171. Red as natural pigment comes from cinnabar or a mercury sulphide mineral. The red border is borrowed from the Basohli style of Pahari painting.
36   Registers or horizontal planes were used for continuous narration of smaller scenes in early Indian manuscript paintings. Here it is used in context of the location of different characters and elements. A similar splitting of the register style is seen in paintings depicting Guru Nanak meeting holy men in Mecca – at the Chandigarh Museum *Janamsakhi* (Acc. no. 4072 (6), Asian Art Museum (Kapany) *Janamsakhi* (tagged 1998.58.22).
37   Hans, Surjit. 1987. 8.

The composition of the painting is very strong as verified by drawing a grid on top of it (**Image 7**). Apart from the prominent horizontal lines X2 and X4, X1 and X6 frame the painting with the mosque boundary walls.

X3 lines the placement for the *Kaaba* and Guru Nanak, while X5 goes through the *mullah's* waistband, offsetting the balustrade to touch the finial tops of the minarets. Vertical lines Y1 and Y2 become guidelines to place the *Kaaba* and the *mullah*. The central Y3 passes through central nave archways in the top and bottom registers making the painting almost symmetrical. It also guides the location of the slippers. Y4 intersects through the middle *pishtaq*[38] and the centre of the horizontal figures. Y5 passes through the last portal and the top of the heads of the Guru and his disciple.
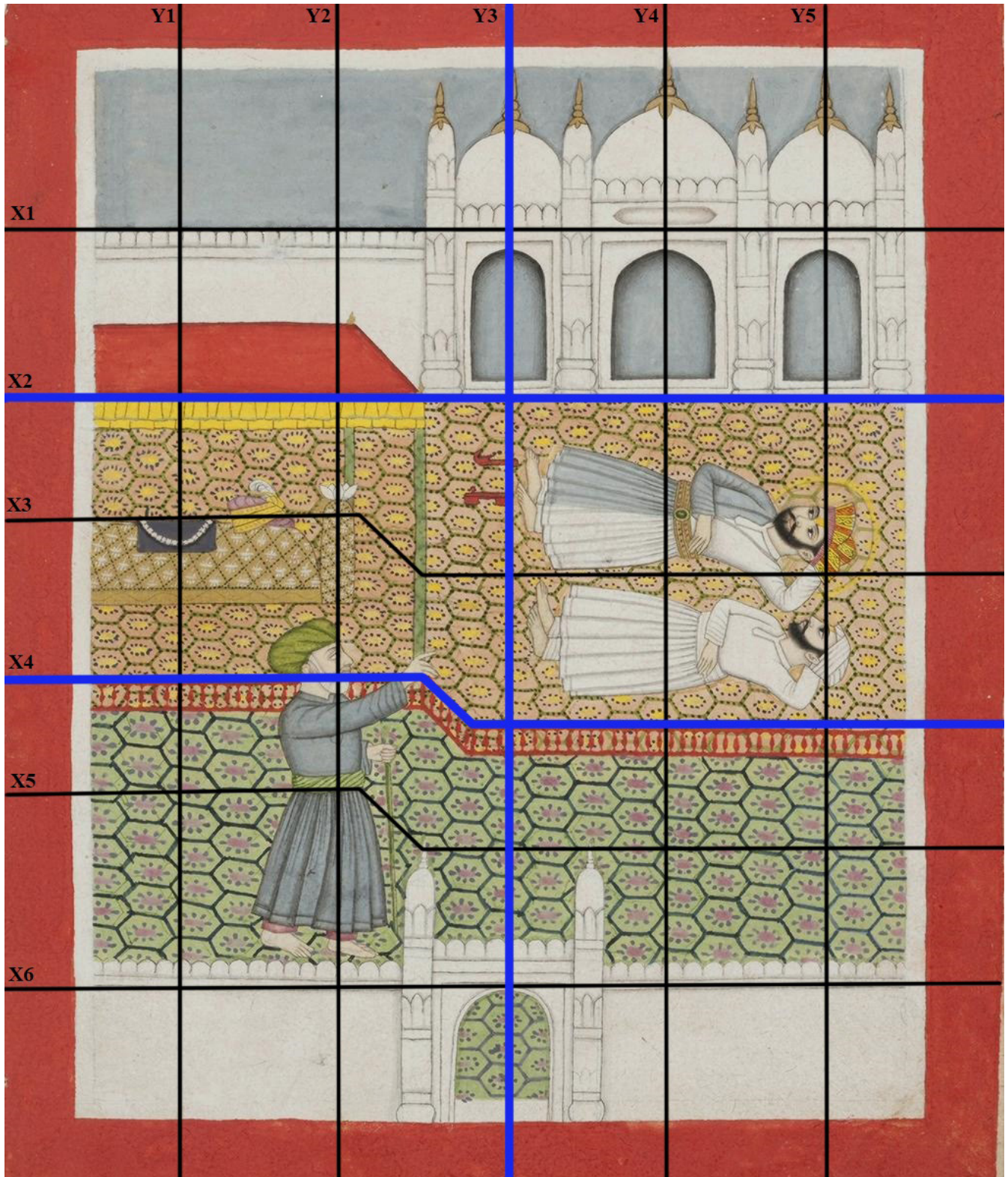

Image 7: Grid-wise planning of the narrative painting. (A detail of Image 2)

---

38   In Islamic architecture, *pishtaq* is a rectangular frame or a portal around an arched opening.

When looking closely, a subdued diagonal pattern emerges between the central figure and secondary figures. There exists a motion of circularity in the image[39] and the prime characters seem to unify in a balanced configuration (**Image 8**).[40]
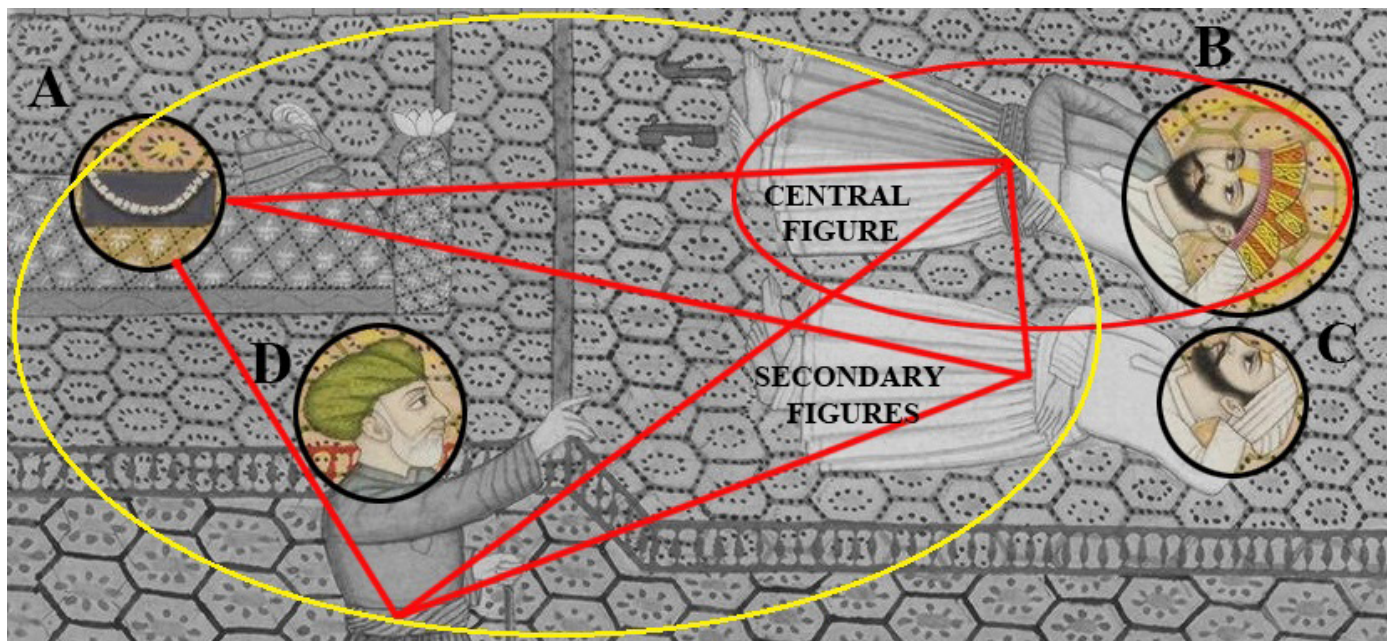
Image 8: Arrangement of characters in the narrative painting. (A detail of Image 2)
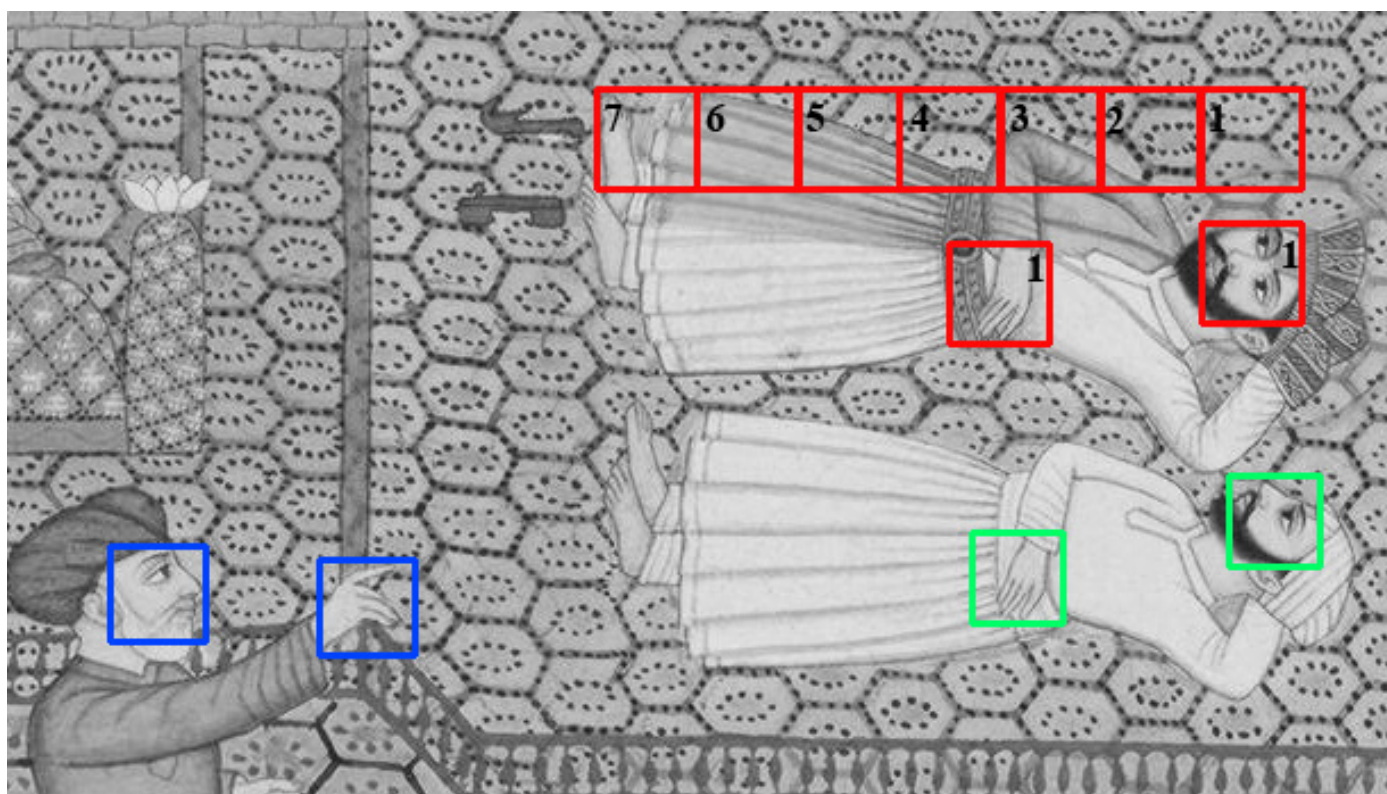
Image 9: Anatomical proportions of the characters in the narrative painting. (A detail of Image 2)

Traditional Indian painting relies on the theory of '*Citrasutras*'[41] for aesthetic proportions and beauty. When these theories are applied to the *Janamsakhi* illustration, it is found that the face and palm are equal[42] and the body of the central figure is approximately seven times the size of the face (**Image 9**). This is smaller than the

39   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2013. 64. The motion of circularity shatters rigid mental formulas and challenges societal assumptions, hence widening the viewer experience.
40   Berger, J. 1972. 13, McLeod, W. 1991. 20.
41   Nardi, Isabella. 2006.
42   Nardi, Isabella. 2006. The *mukha* (face) and the *tala* (palm) are ideally equal in size.

ideal nine-times proportion meant for a *cakravartin* or a king, and may indicate the modest nature of the Guru.[43]
Image 10 reveals other driving agents[44] of compositional unity in the narrative.
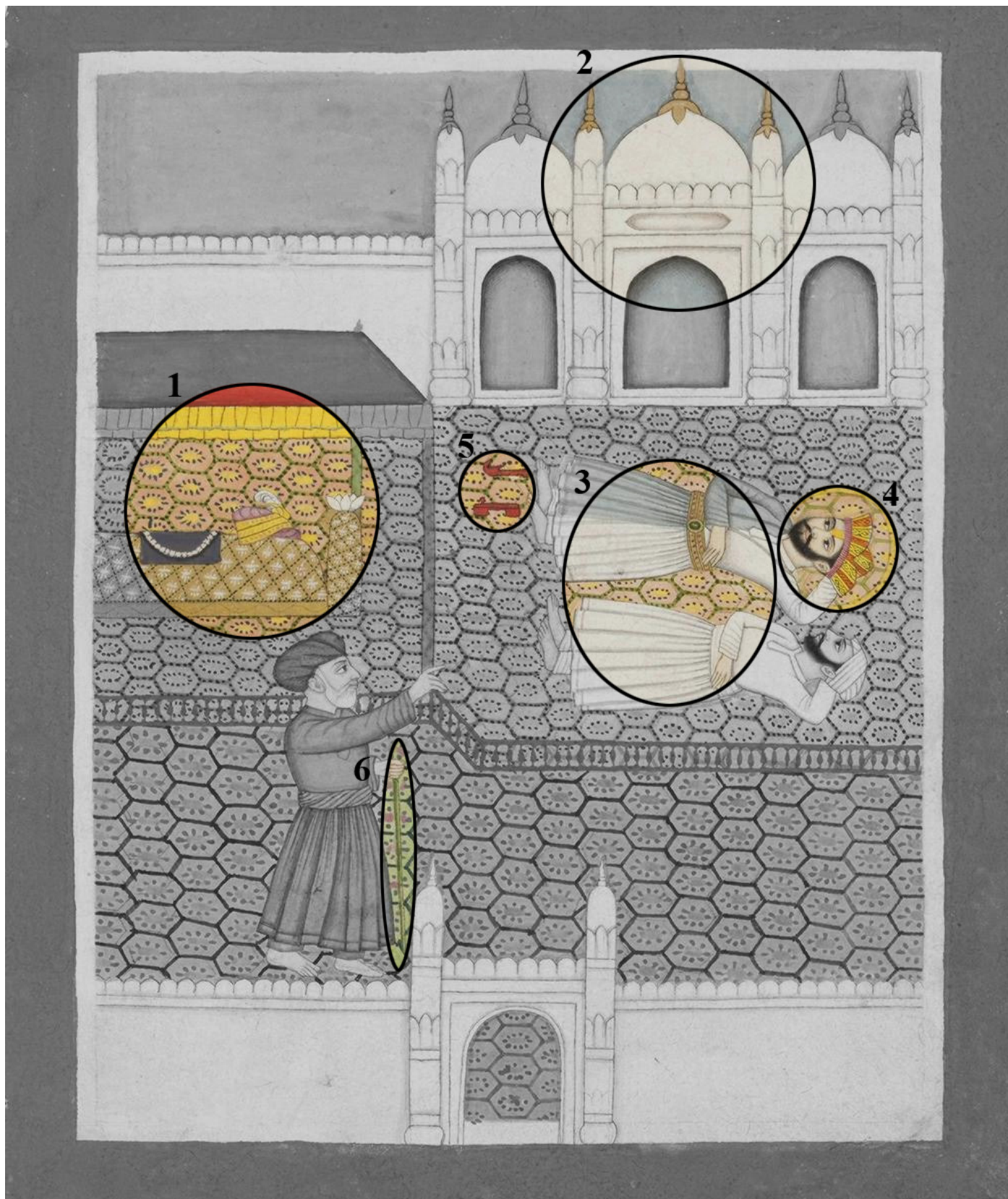
Image 10: Icons in the narrative of the *Janamsakhi* illustration. (A detail of Image 2)

(1: Royal throne and tent, 2: Mosque architecture, 3: Robes of Guru Nanak and Bhai Bala,
4: Guru Nanak's face, turban and halo, 5: Guru Nanak's wooden slippers, 6: *Mullah's* staff)

---

43   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2013. 35. He is not too tall, nor too large, depicted in the most normal way.

44   Berger, J. 1972. 9, 31, 91. Original paintings are silent and still in a sense that information never is. The static image instantly becomes dynamic through the use of metaphysical symbols.

The Sacred and the Secular

On the left part of the central register (**Image 10**), the black rectangular box symbolises the sacred *Kaaba*.[45] It is placed beside a traditional *takia and bairangan*, on an elevated *chauki or takhat*.[46] These represent royal and spiritual authority as illustrated by a throne[47]-like setting for a king or a holy book in **Image 11**.

Image 11: A royal tent for an emperor, a sacred tent for the holy book

The *Kaaba* is adorned by diamond[48] lace with a royal turban placed beside it, as if to indicate that the rich and mighty must bow to th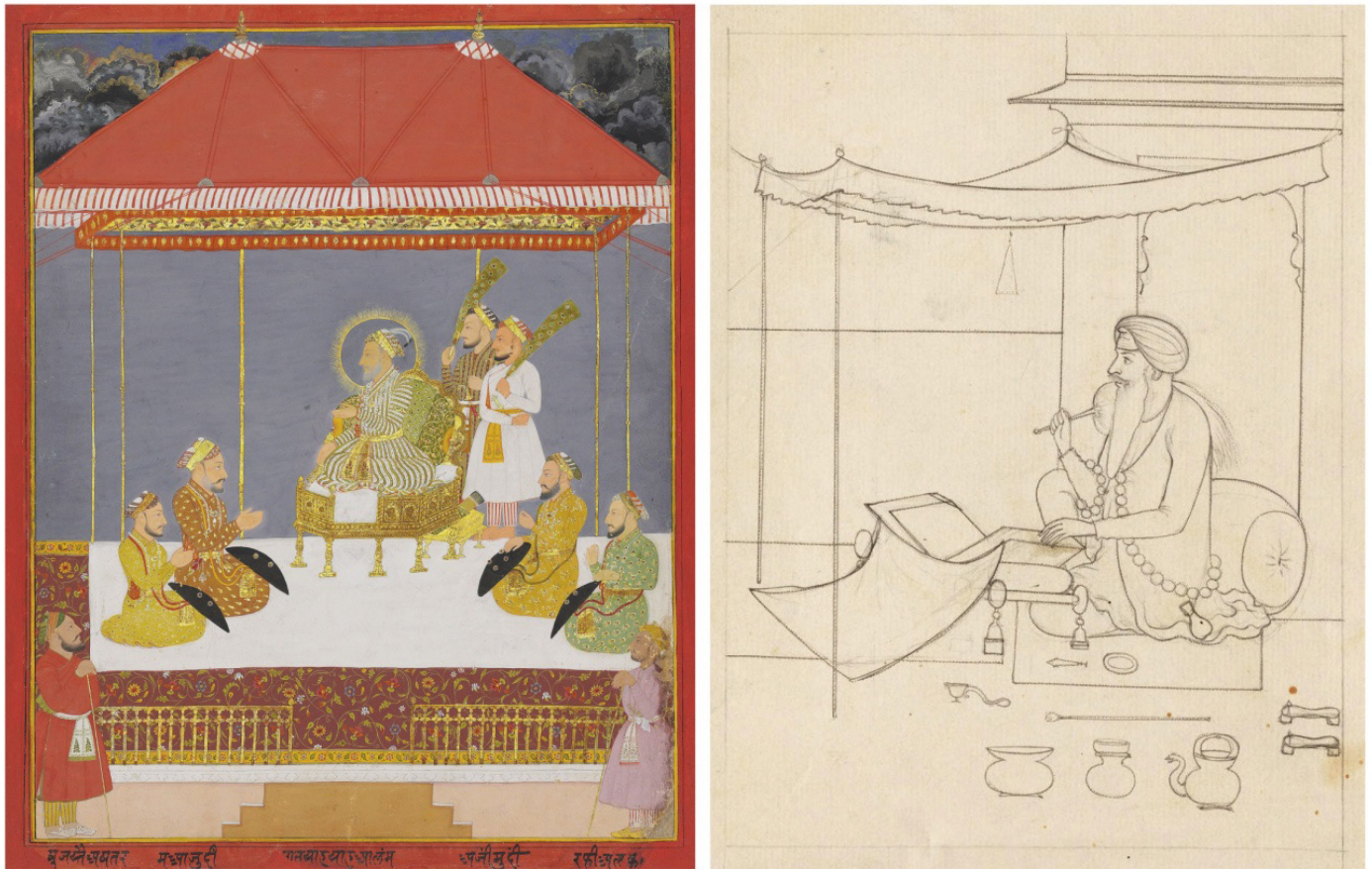e divine. The white marble mosque with its niches, doorways, minarets, cupolas and domes is arranged like an umbrella or a tree to shade Guru Nanak while he is asleep, denotative of his spiritual royalty.[49]

Guru Nanak was known for wearing a mix of Muslim and Hindu attire.[50] The full-sleeved, full-length, round-skirted robe (*gheradarjama*)[51] with trousers having ruffled ends (*chooridarpajama*), a wide *patka* or waistband with a brooch, and a collar tie is typical Oudh-style Muslim clothing.[52]

Sikhism flourished as a secular[53] concept despite being rooted in Indian thought and history. It is exhilarating

45　　Goswamy, Smith. 2006. 88. The author disagrees with B.N. Goswamy's interpretation that the objects below the canopy are part of a grave or a sepulchral structure.

46　　McLeod, W. 1991. 24. *Takia* meaning cylindrical cushion, *bairangan* meaning armrest, *chauki* meaning platform, *takhat* meaning throne.

47　　It is implicit that the artist may have been a Hindu who had never travelled to Mecca but had heard stories about it. With a sizable and influential community backing, the artist had access to the template of illustrations used in a typical *Janamsakhi* and imagined a religious setting with a throne and a canopy.

48　　Hans, Surjit. 1987. 7. Guru Nanak is the 'diamond of God' and the diamond is a symbol of *nam* (All-pervading Supreme Reality) in Sikhism.

49　　Hans, Surjit. 1987. 8.

50　　Brown, K. 1999. 56.

51　　Kour, Gurdeep 2019. 49.

52　　Brown, K. 1999. 68. After the annexation of the Muslim dynasty by the British in 1856, trained artists from Avadhi (Oudh) centres migrated from the Lucknow region.

53　　The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines secular as not overtly or specifically religious. Guru Nanak treated all religions equally. 'All have equal rights in affairs. Nobody is an outsider' (*Guru Granth Sahib* 97).

to delve within the mind of the artist who has tried to convey the secular nature[54] of the Guru with colours. Guru Nanak's robes are neatly half-grey and half-white, and serve as a metaphor for the rejection of any bias that may exist towards caste or class – in this case, Muslims (the *mullah* is dressed in grey robes)[55] and Hindus (here assumed to be Bhai Bala dressed in white clothes).[56]

Guru Nanak's tripartite conical turban is distinctive,[57] with ornate red and yellow detailing almost resembling a crown[58] or a Mughal turban as seen in **Image 12**. The halo or nimbus around the Guru's face symbolises supremacy.[59] The Hindu *tilak* [60] of sandalwood[61] is identified by the vertical yellow line on the Guru's forehead. It is also marked on the disciple's forehead, which helps us to infer that he is Bhai Bala, and that the manuscript the painting belongs to is of the Bala tradition.[62]

Image 12: Comparisons in the detail of the facial features in miniature paintings – Emperor Humayun and Guru Nanak

Image 13: Pair of *paduka* (Wooden sandals similar to Guru Nanak's slippers in the painting)

Indian *paduka* or wooden slippers are elegant, and it is said that Guru Nanak left his behind in Mecca[63] (**Image 13**). Guru Nanak views the staff of the Muslim cleric, a symbol of sacred authority, with a secular mysticism that leads him to say, 'Let faith be the staff you lean upon'.[64]

---

54   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2015. 61. This technique also visually promotes pluralism.
55   Dalvi, Smita. 2019. The green turban and waistband of the *mullah* add to the notion that he is a Muslim figure based on traditional Islamic associations.
56   The belief that the disciple is Bhai Bala is elaborated further in the text.
57   Brown, K. 1999. 66.
58   McLeod, W. 1991. 6.
59   McLeod, W. 1991. 24. The halo is a sign of sovereignty (Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2013. 36). It is an unusual feature which is missing in other *Janamsakhi* images. This confirms that the painting was deeply influenced by Mughal painting.
60   McLeod, W. 1991. 6.
61   Kour, Gurdeep. 2019. 71.
62   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2016. Ms. Singh also validates that the set belongs to the Bala tradition as the first image in the *Janamsakhi* portrays Bhai Bala.
63   Singh, Kirpal. 2004. 190. The wooden sandals have been preserved as a relic in the shrine of Uch Sharif.
64   Brown, K. 1999. 4. From Gurus to Kings – Early & Court Paintings. Gursharan Singh Sidhu. (Japji 28, *GGS*)

The displayed skill, iconic characterisations and subtle expressions[65] when examined simultaneously hint towards the personality traits of the characters and the mnemonics of sight[66] (through implied lines).[67] **Image 14** traces the line of vision which shows that both the *mullah* and the disciple are concentrated towards Guru Nanak while the Guru's gentle gaze is fixed skywards, as if in wonder.[68] The green dotted line traces the position of the Guru's feet, apparently away from the position of the *Kaaba*.
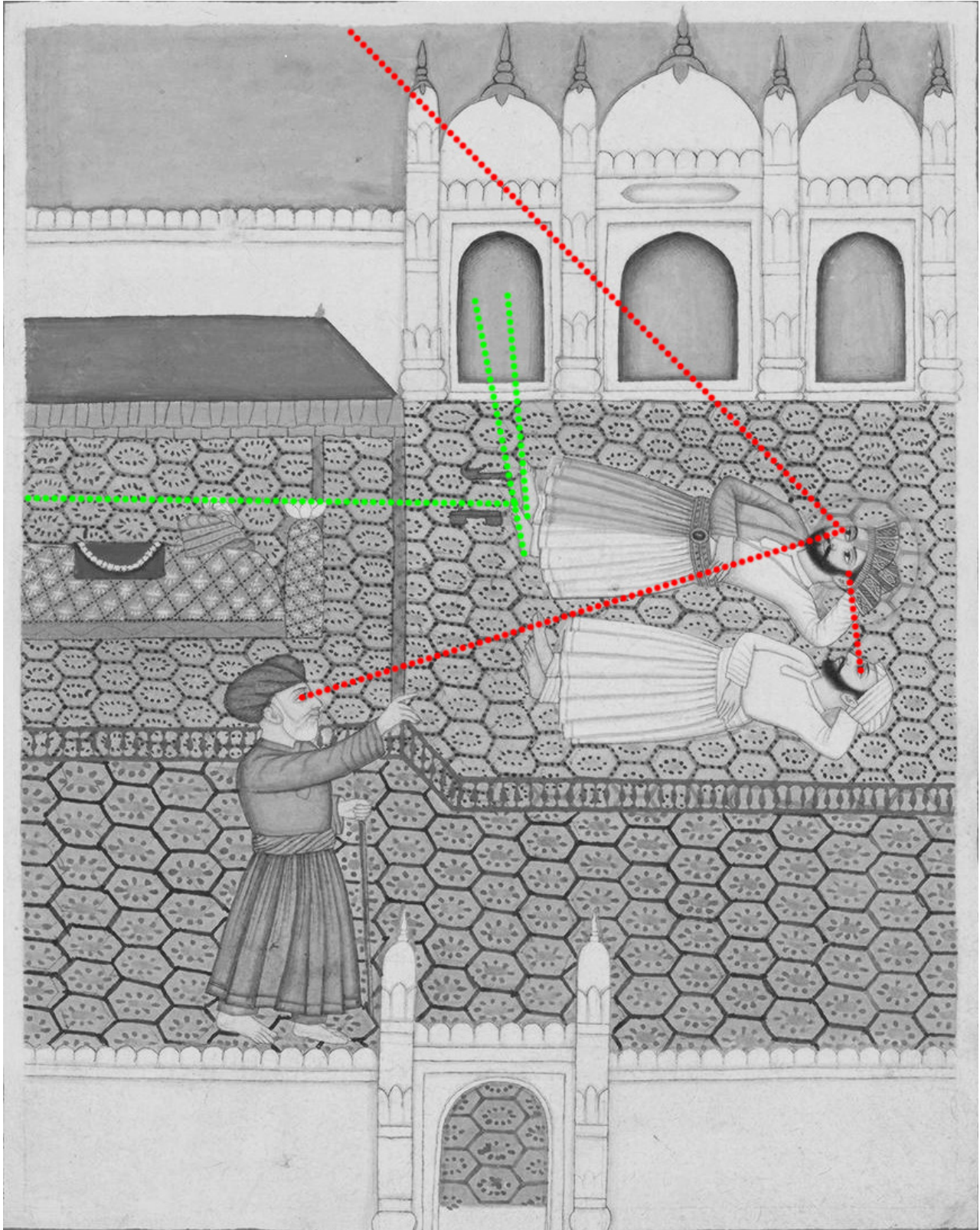
Image 14: Implied lines that give depth to the narrative painting. (A detail of Image 2)

65   Berger, J. 1972. 59. Signs and symbols in Indian style paintings are called '*laksanas*'.
66   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2016.
67   Berger, J. 1972. 14.
68   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2015. 80. Sikh scripture regards *vismad* (wonder) as the supreme aesthetic mood. In Guru Nanak's words, "wondrous are the forms, wondrous the colours; wondrous is the earth, wondrous the species." (*GGS*, 463-64)

Conclusion

Dated between 1800–1900 and handed down generations, the painting has been on display in the Kapany Gallery of Sikh Art at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, USA since 2003. The experience and authority of the *Janamsakhi* painting from a private preserve, sacred shrine or a religious gathering to a more open museum atmosphere has evolved into a secular setting with a collective sense of belonging.[69] What was once inserted loose leaf into text is now conserved and framed to be exhibited without the text.[70]

The permanent display of these in a major USA museum affirms the Sikh identity in a global perspective.[71] The space occupied by this painting in the world creates an illusion of its multi-dimensionality despite it being a strictly constructed two-dimensional painting.[72]

The *sakhi* is a discourse on the idea that the sacred and secular are not two divisive categories.[73] The image exposes cultural variations, expands imaginative and emotional horizons and becomes a direct testimony of the artist's sensitivity and contemplative experience while painting the scene.[74] Whether to view the painting as sacred or secular is a choice, but the use of metaphors for the convergence of religious metaphysical views[75] and the generation of a subtle moral becomes a visual reminder of the mutual solitude[76] between the viewer and the illustration.

List of Illustrations

Image 1: *The mosque complex in Mecca*
Cooke, J & Drake, E. 1768.*The Temple of Mecca.* A plate from 'A New Universal Collection of Authentic and Entertaining Voyages and Travels'. V&A Collections [online] Available at: http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1107238/the-temple-of-mecca-print-j-cooke/ [Accessed 7th Feb 2020]

Image 2: *Guru Nanak and his disciple encounter a Muslim cleric at Mecca*
1800-1850. Sikh Art, The Kapany Collection, tagged 1998.58.23. Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, USA.

Image 3: *Tracing the artist's footsteps*. Google Earth image.

Image 4: *A Janamsakhi template with the Mecca incident highlighted in thumbnail format*
The Samrai Collection, London. 18th cent. Goswamy, Smith. 2006. *I See No Stranger. Early Sikh Art and Devotion.*100-101. Rubin Museum of Art, Mapin Publishing & the Sikh Foundation. New York, USA.
_____

Images created by author:

Image 5: *Painting techniques driving the narrative in the illustration*. (A detail of Image 2)

Image 6: *Hierarchy of registers in the narrative painting*. (A detail of Image 2)

Image 7: *Grid-wise planning of the narrative painting*. (A detail of Image 2)

Image 8: *Arrangement of characters in the narrative painting*. (A detail of Image 2)

---

69   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2015.
70   Brown, K. 1999. 69. Few paintings were taken out of frames for an exhibition in 1992 and strips of paper were glued along margins.
71   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2015. 61.
72   Berger, J. 1972. 89.
73   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2016.
74   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2016.
75   While religions may differ in their metaphysical views, the Dalai Lama says that religious and secular views converge in the realm of ethics.
76   Berger, J. 1972. 96. The way in which one sees the other confirms his own view of himself. It helps to erase stereotypes and pave avenues for mutual empathy. (Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2015)

Image 9: *Anatomical proportions of the characters in the narrative painting. (A detail of Image 2*)

Image 10: *Icons in the narrative of the* Janamsakhi *illustration. (A detail of Image 2)*

Image 11: *A royal tent for an emperor, a sacred tent for the holy book. (Left to Right)*
1.   *The Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah (R.1707-12) With Four of His Sons, North India, Rajasthan, Mewar, Circa 1710-2.*
Sotheby's. Arts of the Islamic World. Lot 179. London, UK. [online] Available at: https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2019/arts-of-the-islamic-world/the-mughal-emperor-bahadur-shah-r-1707-12-with [Accessed 7th Feb 2020]
2.   *A Sikh Reciting the Guru Granth Sahib, Punjab.*19th cent. [online] Available at: https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/25585/lot/160/?category=list [Accessed 17th March 2020]

Image 12: *Comparisons in the detail of the facial features in miniature paintings – Emperor Humayun and Guru Nanak. (Left to Right)*
1.   *Emperor Humayun.* 1890. V&A Collections. [online] Available at: http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O430469/emperor-humayun-painting-gopal-ram/ [Accessed 15th March 2020]
2.   *Guru Nanak and his disciple encounter a Muslim cleric at Mecca.* 1800-1850. Sikh Art, The Kapany Collection, tagged 1998.58.23. Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, USA.

Image 13: *Pair of paduka (Wooden sandals similar to Guru Nanak's slippers in the painting)*
Sanskriti Museum of Everyday Art, New Delhi. Acc. No. R-59 a/b. 19th cent.
Goswamy, Smith. 2006. *I See No Stranger. Early Sikh Art and Devotion.* 154, 155. Rubin Museum of Art, New York, USA. Mapin Publishing & The Sikh Foundation. New York, USA.

Image 14: *Implied lines that give depth to the narrative painting. (A detail of Image 2).* Image – Author
----

Bibliography

▪   **Books**

[1]   Barrett, Terry. 2000.*Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary*. The Ohio State University. Mayfield Publishing Company Mountain View, California, USA.

[2]   Berger, John. 1972. *Ways of Seeing*. British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books. London, England.

[3]   Brown, Kerry. 1999. *Sikh Art and Literature*. Routledge. New York, USA.

[4]   Goswamy, Smith. 2006. *I See No Stranger. Early Sikh Art and Devotion*. Rubin Museum of Art, Mapin Publishing & The Sikh Foundation. New York, USA.

[5]   Hans, Surjit. 1987. *B-40 Janamsakhi Guru Baba Nanak Paintings*. Guru Nanak Dev University. Amritsar, India. [online] Available at: https://archive.org/details/B-40JanamsakhiGuruBabaNanakPaintings/mode/2up. [Accessed 14th January 2020]

[6]   Kour, Gurdeep. 2019. *An Analytical Narration of Sikh Influence in Miniature Paintings of Kangra- Guler Style from 18th- 19th Century in Punjab*. Lovely Professional University, Punjab. [online] Available at: http://hdl.handle.net/10603/270415 [Accessed 17th February 2020]

[7]   McLeod, W.1980. *The B40 Janam-Sakhi*. Guru Nanak Dev University. Amritsar, India. [online] Available at: https://archive.org/details/TheB40Janam-sakhi/mode/2up. [Accessed 11th March 2020]

[8]   McLeod, W. 1991. *Popular Sikh Art*. Oxford University Press. Delhi, India.

[9]   Nardi, Isabella. 2006. *The Theory of Citrasūtras in Indian Painting*. Routledge, London, UK.

[10]   Singh, Inderjit. *Account of a Muslim author who accompanied Guru Nanak from Mecca to Baghdad.* By Sant Syed Prithipal Singh ne' Mushtaq Hussain Shah (1902-1962). Sikh Missionary Society, UK. [online] Available at: https://www.sikhmissionarysociety.org/sms/smspublications/Taajudins-Diary-Nanak-Makkah.pdf [Accessed 11th March 2020]

[11]   Singh, Kirpal. 2004. *Janamsakhi an Analytical Study*. Amritsar, India [online] Available at: http://sikhbookclub.com/Book/Janamsakhi-Tradition-An-Analytical-Study.   https://archive.org/details/JanamsakhiTradition-AnAnalyticalStudy [Accessed 14th January 2020]

▪   **Articles**

[1]   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2013. *Corporeal Metaphysics: Guru Nanak in Early Sikh Art*. History of Religions Vol. 53, No. 1. 2013, 28–65. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago, USA. [online] Available at: www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/671249. [Accessed 25th February 2020]

[2]   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2015. *Visual Phenomenology. Seeing-in Guru Nanak at the Asian Arts Museum.* Sikh Formations- Religion, Culture, Theory. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. San Francisco, USA.

▪   **Videos**

[1]   Singh, Nikky-Guninder K. 2016. *'The Language of Colours: A discussion of Guru Nanak's JanamSakhi Life Stories'*. The Sikh Foundation and Asian Art Museum. San Francisco, USA. YouTube [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXZ-UAmOshQ [Accessed 7th Feb 2020]

[2]   Wagoner, John. 2013. *Art 206: Analysis of an artwork.*USA. YouTube [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckh_GOmkdx4 [Accessed 7th Feb 2020]

▪   **Lectures**

[1]   Ahluwalia, Roda. 2020. *Lyrical Visions from the Hills-Pahari Painting and its Masters*. Indian Aesthetics PG course. 25th January 2020. Jnanapravaha. Mumbai, India.

[2]   Dalvi, Smita. 2019. *Sufism-Mystical Path in Islam and its Expression in Art*. Indian Aesthetics PG course. 21th December 2019. Jnanapravaha. Mumbai, India.

[3]   Goswamy, B.N. 2020. *A Canopy of Arrows; a Mountain on Fire.* An Illustrated Talk. 13th February 2020. Experimental Theatre, NCPA. Mumbai, India.

*****

Re-visiting Ayodhya: A Politics of Space

Rishabh Jain - *JPM Alumnus*

In the three decades that followed the demolition of the Babri Masjid, which occurred on 6th December 1992, the sustained ideological propaganda that was disseminated throughout the course of the Ayodhya Movement to popularise the cause of the temple, has been a matter of widespread deliberation and scholarly interest. In *Empowering Visions*, Christiane Brosius suggests that the Ayodhya Movement marked the initiation of a phantasmagoria of the Hindutva vision[1] through the production of 'wish-images'. Brosius draws the concept of wish-images from Walter Benjamin, a "specific form of agency of images enhanced by Hindutva ideologues to control and position the viewer by representing national identity as a phantasmagoria, that is, a bright exhibition of glittering objects, imbued with symbolic meaning, displayed as objects of national desire"[2]. In this essay, my analysis of some key aspects of this multimedia phantasmagoria, including texts, images,

docudramas, participatory processions and slogans, will highlight the forms of abstraction that played a key role in the 'success' of the wish-images related to the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation. Specifically, drawing on Henri Lefebvre's concept of social space, I argue that the mythico-historical attributions to the piece of land on which the Babri Masjid stood, and the larger narrative of the Hindu identity and the Muslim 'Other' that was propagated during the lead-up to its destruction, abstracted the space of the mosque itself, turning it into a site where the struggle to assert identities through appropriation of space could be played out. Lefebvre emphasised that the abstraction of social space is a political act: "We already know several things about abstract space. On first inspection it appears homogeneous; and indeed, it serves those forces which make a *tabula rasa* of whatever stands in their way, of whatever threatens them — in short, of differences. These forces seem to grind down and crush everything before them, with space performing the function of a plane, a bulldozer or a tank."[3] We will see how nuanced the degree of bulldozing becomes during the entirety of the Ayodhya Movement and how critical the process of abstraction is to its success.

The desecration of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6th December 1992 marks the starting point of a new era of gruesome communal clashes within India. The images of this event, when approximately 25,000 *karsevaks* gathered around the mosque at noon and attempted to demolish it, continue to haunt and influence the popular imagination of the nation. On 9th November 2019, after decades of dispute, the Supreme Court of India ruled that a Rama temple could be built on the contentious site, to replace the mosque named after the Mughal Emperor Babur, whose court-noble Mir Baqi had commissioned its construction in 1528 C.E. The centre of the controversy has been the assertion that the mosque was allegedly built on the remains of a 'grand, ancient temple' which enshrined the birthplace of the Hindu deity Rama.

In Anand Patwardhan's documentary film *Ram ke Naam*[4], we see that the highly motivated *karsevaks* who gathered to bring down the mosque travelled to Ayodhya from across the Hindi-speaking heartland. Some travelled on foot while others arrived in buses, trains and cars, following the chariot or *ratha* which has come to be identified as a symbol of what L.K. Advani called the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi (hereafter referred to as RJB) Liberation movement. Reports suggest that more than 1,00,000 people were mobilised for the Ratha Yatra.[5] A chant like '*Jis Hindu ka khoon na khaule, khoon nahi woh pani hai*' is a powerful example of the kind of language that was used to stir up a sentiment of heroic liberation among the Hindu majority.

The 10,000-kilometre Ratha Yatra led by L.K. Advani of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which started from Somnath in Gujarat on 25th September 1990 and was supposed to end in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh after traversing through seven states of India, can be viewed as an extension of the march to Lucknow which was organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in 1984. This march marked the beginning of the politicisation of the Babri Masjid and aimed to appeal to the state government, demanding the erection of a Rama temple on the site.

The mythologisation of the site of the mosque was done by rewriting and popularising a 'Hindu' history of the site. This is evident in pamphlets like: *Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Sachitra Pramanik Itihasa* (An Illustrative and Authoritative History of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi), Ayodhya, 1986; *Mukti Yagya: Shri Ram Janmabhoomi ka Sampurna Itihasa* (The Authoritative/Authentic History of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi), Ayodhya, 1991; and *Ram Janmabhoomi ka Romanchak Itihasa* (The Thrilling History of RJB), date and place of publication not given, which were sold (or distributed) at pilgrimage sites along with images of deities, religious calendars, prayer books and the like. These pamphlets were often placed in shrines at home and were not used merely for reading in groups or private settings; Gyanendra Pandey offers keen insight into this process of rewriting history[6] in his analysis of these texts: "The Hindu history of Ayodhya…is not even about a spot now called the Ram Janmabhoomi; it is about a building on that spot. This entire history is focussed on a monument, which we can, for the moment, designate the 'grand temple' built (and re-built) on the site of Shri Rama's 'birth'. Everything revolves around this monument. The narrative begins with and returns to this point again and again."[7]

The marked emphasis on the structure of the temple that preceded the mosque served to produce an abstract space that could be used to legitimise and perpetuate the historicity of the cause of resurrection of the temple, and the demolition of the mosque. We see that the space of the mosque disappears behind the 'glittery' 'magico-real' space that is created through the image of the temple. RJB-related texts, which were bought from

pilgrimage sites and were placed as decorative items in household shrines, reified this abstraction. The wish-image of the grand temple is key to the abstraction of the site because through it, the ontological existence of this fictional architecture became invariably tied to the re-building of the temple and necessitated the demolition of the mosque.

The new-history pamphlets that were distributed were a supposed record of the number of battles that were fought for the liberation of RJB since the time of the Mughals with whom the history of Muslims in India was readily equated. Regardless of the discrepancy in other numbers across different versions, the magic number of battles was fixed at 76. The battle for the liberation of the RJB that was launched in the mid-1980s is always referred to as the 77th. Therefore, as Pandey has written, "The verities of fact that were testified through faith came to be represented with a scientific precision of numbers, of dates, of geographical location –testifying to the literal truth of this history."[8]Pandey also suggests that "the point of this history is to enumerate the many occasions when 'The Hindus' have risen in defense of the Janmabhoomi and to catalogue their enormous sacrifices".[9] The abstract space of the temple that supposedly preceded the mosque is thus historicised through the repetition of numerical fictions. This legitimisation of the space of the temple and the construed narrative of liberation through war, further abstracts the space of the mosque into a symbol of Muslim atrocity on Hindu cultural identity. Therefore, we notice a two-fold abstraction of space of the mosque. In the first case the mosque disappears into the wish-image of the 'grand-temple', while in the second case the mosque itself becomes a symbol in the linearity of a mythical history that traces itself from the legacy of Rama and his victory over Ravana who is the first perpetrator of Ayodhya.

This internalisation of narratives was not carried out solely through texts. The Ratha Yatra in 1992 was preceded by the Ram Shila Pujan among a series of 'public interventions' that accompanied and followed the Ayodhya Movement. In the scheme of Ram Shila Pujan, bricks inscribed with the name of Rama were consecrated and later wrapped in pieces of saffron cloth, to be transported to Ayodhya. These bricks were first revered as idols of worship in temple spaces and later moved to public spaces, propped up on vehicles adorned with saffron flags, and accompanied by the procession that moved through towns proclaiming the general consent and complicity of the majority towards the cause of the temple. These processions were met with frenzied religious fervor and were followed by women singing *bhajans* and men chanting slogans like *'Saugandh Ram ki khaatein hain, hum mandir wahin banayenge'* (We swear in the name of Rama, we will build the temple there, and there alone). As K.N. Panikkar notes: "The strategy of mobilisation employed by the Sangh Parivar was to clarify and communicate the symbolic meaning of Ayodhya through a series of public interventions from 1989 to 1992, from Ram Shila Pujan on 30th September 1988 to the demolition of the Masjid on 6th December 1992. The dual meaning of Ayodhya – a symbol of Hindu identity and Muslim atrocity – became socially visible through these interventions; more importantly, participation in them facilitated their internalisation as well, just as the salt *satyagraha* had made nationalism intelligible to the common man."[10]

According to a report in the Indian Express, quoted by Panikkar, the Ram Shila Pujan happened in 3,50,000 different places. In the act of participation in the Pujan itself, the abstraction was internalised through action. The consecrated bricks materially represented the 'magico-real'[11] space of the mythic temple. By consecrating these bricks, the individuals not only acknowledged the space of the temple but also contributed to its resurrection. However, these bricks were also a mark of the general consent for the demolition of the mosque. As Panikkar observes, "The *pujas* were followed by Mahayagnas in every Prakhanda which was in effect a site for propaganda – Prachar and Pradarshini, according to Nana Bhagwat, the all-India convenor of Shila Pujan. The booklets, leaflets and posters in these *pradarshinis* were intended either to arouse hostility to the Muslims or to underline the unity or militancy of the Hindus. A common refrain of the propaganda was that the Hindus have fought 76 battles to recover Ram Janmabhoomi in which they have lost 3,00,000 lives."[12] Within this propaganda we see that the two-fold abstraction of the space of the mosque is always dualised and tied to each other. The wish-image of the temple, and the mosque as the symbol of Muslim atrocity are always evoked together.

The image of the proposed temple (Fig.1) was widely distributed in pamphlets and featured on billboards, posters and banners. The image of the temple, which is designed in the Nagara style, popular in North India, presented a grand picture which was characteristically 'Hindu' in appearance, from the *shikhara* (the highest

point of the dome of the main altar) down to the pillars that held the structure up, thoroughly in contrast to the architecture of the mosque. Coupled with the narrative of a 'golden Hindu past', this served to perpetuate the historic claim of the VHP, regarding the presence and the subsequent demolition of a temple that stood on the site before the mosque was erected in its place. Brosius describes the image of Rama rising from the temple effectively: "the result was a Rama similar to a figure from a Hollywood or an Asian martial arts film, a muscular hero holding up bow and arrows aimed at an invisible target outside the pictorial frame, his strong body emerging out of the proposed temple model, his *dhoti* moving in an apocalyptic thunderstorm in fire-filled skies."[13] K.N. Panikkar notes similarly that, "the suggestion inherent in this transformation is quite clear: Rama is responding to the specific moment, the loss of Janmabhoomi, and is involved in the fight to retain it." [14] This evocation of Rama as angry and ready for war served to create and normalise a divine 'magical realism' that was attributed to the supposed temple that preceded the mosque, and consequently the site of the mosque itself.

In an article in the Indian Express on 17th September 1990, Advani claimed that the struggle was Rama's against Babur. The linearity of the Hindu history, which was traced from the victory of Rama over Ravana, consolidated the mosque yet again into a symbol of Muslim atrocity. Thus, the image of the temple stoked and made tangible the supposed aspirations of the mobilised majority purported to reclaim its socio-religious identity and neatly placed the historical necessity to liberate itself from the clutches of the antagonistic invaders within popular consciousness. The internalisation of this image of the temple clearly stands as the abstracted space of the mosque; the popularisation of the image can be seen as a moral and ontological statement of the 'truth' of the contended site, and the grandiose nature of the proposed structure suggests the aesthetic and cultural-spiritual value of the liberation of the site. As a symbol, it reiterates the negation of the mosque and subsumes its presence as illegitimate and transient while the temple is mythologised to eternity. This picture of the proposed temple also serves as the most tangible statement of intent in the scheme of the Ayodhya Movement.

On the night of 22nd December 1949, three men –Abhi Ram Das, Ram Shukla Das and Sudarshan Das, placed the idol of Rama inside the mosque. Krishna Jha and Dhirendra K. Jha[15] have written that Abhi Ram Das, who later came to be known as 'Ram Janmabhoomi Uddharak', i.e., 'the savior of the birthplace of Rama', was tried in court as the prime accused, following the First Investigation Report, but the case remained inconclusive. This incident marks the inception of the Ram Janmabhoomi controversy and is consequently central to the Ayodhya Movement. Following the inconclusiveness of the case and the historical distance from the remote night of 22nd December, the myth of what S.P. Udaykumar calls "Rama's miraculous appearance theory" was popularised through new media in the form of videographic dramatisations that were often mass-consumed through televisions and VCRs in public spaces. Brosius analyses one of these dramatisations called '*God Manifests Himself*' (hereafter called 'GMH').

A key scene in GMH takes place in the courtroom of Faizabad High Court in 1950. A Mr. K.K. Nayar, district magistrate, addresses a man in the witness box who is identified as *havildar* (guard) Abu'l Barakat. He is dressed in what looks like a police-uniform and, by the beard he wears, is clearly marked as a Muslim. Nayar asks Barakat about the events of the night of 22nd December 1949 at the site of the Babri Masjid. The witness reports that he was on duty at the site, "to make sure nothing wrong happens there". The camera moves for a close-up of Barakat's face as he describes the events of that night: "Around two o'clock, I suddenly saw moonlight striking the Masjid; strong light, becoming even stronger...With that strange, strong light, I saw a beautiful boy of about four or five years. I could see his face clearly, his hair was curly, his body very beautiful. In my entire life I have not seen such an innocent and beautiful child."[16] This description hints at the image of Rama Lalla or Baby Rama miraculously appearing inside the mosque. Brosius calls the style of these videos 'docudramas', i.e., "staged scenes claiming documentary status despite their reliance on staged setting and actors"[17]. The dramatisation of the incident and the visual tones of these dramatisations were similar to the popular dramatisation of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* that were aired over national television in the years that preceded the Ayodhya Movement. Brosius states that "the *Ramayana*, broadcast on DD in 1987, had already experimented with the creation of devotional moods *(bhava)* by means of special effects (montage, superimposition, trick photography, dissolving, split-screen effects, colourisation and sound effects). There is a strong visual reference to calendar art and to what I term '*darshan*-iconography', i.e., an emphasis on the depiction of compassionate relationships between the televised Gods and their devotees through use

of close-ups of the face and eyes"[18]. Aijaz Ahmad has shown how "the televising of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in quick succession created a sense of their mutual continuity, the story of Rama overlapping the heroic narratives of the sacred nation"; he further states that "the immediacy of the TV screen and the infinite repeatability of the celluloid image also served to compress time both into linearity and simultaneity, so that the reenactment of mythic time, projection of documentable historical past and the exhortation of the present moment get condensed into an eternal present."[19] The use of *darshan*-iconography (Fig.2), which simulated a resemblance between the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, legitimised the mythico-historic temple. The magico-real appeal of the wish-image of the temple is reiterated through these audio-visual presentations. The use of *darshan*-iconography coupled with the proximity of the television screen served to historicise the theory of Rama's miraculous appearance. The characteristic miraculous appearances of the deity within popular Hindu myths that inform the diverse cultural polylith of Hinduism is a mark of 'God taking matters into His own hands'. The popularisation of the myth of Rama's miraculous appearance in the mosque fed into the image of Rama as angry, riding his chariot, with his bow stretched and arrow ready to annihilate the enemy, which was popularised through reproduction and distribution, much like the image of the proposed temple was used to consolidate the Ratha Yatra in popular consciousness and legitimise the claim to popular historicity of the cause. The videoclips mentioned here are evidently another part of the wave of multimedia that was mass-produced and distributed as symbolic, textual and graphic propaganda to manufacture popular consent. Akin to the new-history pamphlets, the image of the proposed temple and the participatory processions discussed above, the two-fold abstraction of space is palpable in the videoclips of Rama's miraculous appearance. The appearance of Rama testifies to the divinity of the site as well as the reality of the alleged temple that had been demolished to build the mosque, and simultaneously symbolises Islam as the perpetrator of injustice on the religion of Rama.

'Saugandh Rama ki khaatein hain, hum mandir wahin banayenge' or popularly *'Mandir wahin banayenge'* has come to be recognised as the most popular slogan within the Ayodhya Movement and was evoked and chanted in political rallies and public-party gatherings repeatedly across the three decades, with a multiplicity of variations since the demolition of the mosque in Ayodhya. The slogan, which literally translates to *'We swear in the name of Rama, we will build the temple there, and there alone'* has come to be understood as the motto and the most popular trope that is associated with the movement. The slogan successfully incorporated the religious-cultural value of the cause within the scheme of mobilisations through public participation and ideological propaganda, because in the act of swearing in the name of Rama, a divine ordinance is manufactured with the deity. It is common knowledge that within the myths of the cultural elite of Hindu society, particularly in what is known as *kshatriya dharma*, the spoken word and its enactment into actions is considered of supreme moral value. Historians have noted that in the scheme of the Ayodhya Movement, the priests and saffron-clad God-men, often speaking on behalf of the Hindu Maha Sabha and the VHP, were the central ideologues peddling popular consent for the movement. The nexus of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary arms of political organisations that Aijaz Ahmad[20] notes within the structure of the Hindu nationalist organisations, and the manufacturing of popular consent through the evocation of the irrational, is made palpable through this slogan.

For K.S. Lal, the rationale of the movement and the issue of the temple were religious and therefore matters of faith and not proof. Along the same lines, following the failed courtroom negotiations between the representatives of the mosque and the proposed temple, a frenzied saffron-clad ideologue, claimed from the stage in Ayodhya, that the matter could not be solved by the court or experts in history and archaeology, as it was a matter of faith and had to be dealt with popularly, i.e., through the people. The slogan thus represents the point of convergence of this faith-based ideology and manifests in the fervour of the motivated *karsevak* as a de-individualised agent, hallucinating the presence of the hand of God in the history that he is rewriting through his fervent frenzy. In the act of proclaiming allegiance to the cause through this slogan, the two-fold abstraction of space was solidified into popular consciousness. The phrase *'Saugandh Rama ki khaatein hain'* evoked Hindu pride in Rama who had by then morphed into the young, angry warrior hell-bent on protecting his land and honour, hinting at the mosque and its symbolic representation of Muslim atrocity. Through the phrase *'mandir wahin banayenge'*, the site of contention is yet again placed into the chronology of Hindu history as sacred and as the symbolic historical remnant of a glorious Hindu past which is marked by a long series of perpetrations and liberation through war. The dual abstraction of space is thus palpable in the slogan.

While I have broadly discussed the abstraction of the space of the mosque, Ayodhya as a general category was also rendered atemporal through the RJB movement, as its history was rewritten to serve the historicity of the narrative claims that surrounded the history of the fabled temple. In more ways than one, attempts were made by Hindu historians to popularise a monolithic history of Ayodhya within the popular consciousness in order to concretise the cause of the temple and legitimise it through popular consent. The attack on Sahmat's exhibition, 'Hum Sab Ayodhya' in Faizabad, exactly a year after the demolition of the mosque, was a mark of the attempts towards this homogenisation, not just of the history of Ayodhya but also of religion and the emergent cult of Rama that was manifesting in the aftermath of the movement through organisations like Bajrang Dal, who literally believed themselves to be the monkeys of Rama's *vanar sena* or 'monkey army'. The exhibition in general explored the diverse cultures that had flourished in Ayodhya through historical evidence and accounts of travellers from across Southeast Asia from the 15th century onwards. The textual panels titled 'Rama Katha' became controversial because they briefly suggested the many versions of *Ramayana* that have been produced throughout the subcontinent. The attack on the exhibition, by who were later identified as members of the VHP, reflects the degree of the success of this atemporalisation of the geographical space of Ayodhya in general and the architectural space of the mosque in particular.

In the scheme of the Ayodhya Movement, the particularities of the nuanced history and cultural narrative of Ayodhya was bulldozed by the Hindutva forces to create a homogenous-ahistoric history through the appropriation of the space of the Babri Masjid. This strategy of appropriation of space to assert ideology is a reliable political ploy used by them. Over the past six years, under the current regime, attempts have been made to appropriate cities and urban spaces by changing their names (e.g. Allahabad is now called 'Prayagraj'), consequently enabling a retelling of the cultural history of the place. This retelling is instrumental to the construction and legitimisation of the rhetoric of the Hindu Rashtra which is, in the words of V.D. Savarkar, "civilisational" in nature. On 3rd June 2020, the Supreme Court of India rejected a plea for India to be renamed exclusively as 'Bharat'. This petition has been presented to the apex court for the second time in four years. The appropriation of space is not merely an appropriation of a piece of land. It marks the appropriation of a series of relations that the space enables.

Fig.1: Rama rising out of the 'grand temple'

. Ramlalla appearing behind the locked gates of the mosque

Ramlalla special effect.

Ramlalla with bow, with cosmic backdrop.

Portrait of Ramlalla.

Fig.2: *Darshan*-iconography in GMH (taken from *Empowering Visions*, Brosius. C)

Notes and References:

1   The Hindutva vision broadly encapsulated a Hindutva narrative of Nationalism that was formulated primarily by the *Sangh Parivar*. Aijaz Ahmad (see ref. no xviii, pg.23) has described this vision of nationalism as "the project of redefining and re-ordering Hinduism itself in a syndicated, monolithic, telegenic, aggressive form – part Brahminical, part electronic, part plebian. In other words, the Sangh claims and has always claimed to be a nationalism – at once the cultural nationalism of the Hindu community, and because the community is said to be co-terminus with nation itself, the political nationalism of Indian people as such. The Sangh Parivar draws this vision of Hindutva from the writings of V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar among others.

2   Brosius, C., Empowering Visions – The Politics of Representation in Hindu Nationalism, Anthem Press, London (2005)

3   Lefebvre, H., The Production of Space, trans. Donald Nicholson Smith, Basil Blackwell ltd., 1991

4   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMT18TMNQbY

5   Udayakumar, S.P., Historicising Myth and Mythologizing History: The 'Ram Temple' Drama, Social Scientist, Vol. 25, No. 7/8 (Jul. - Aug., 1997), pp. 11-26

6   Gyanendra Pandey eloquently described this history as ahistoric in nature, owing to the uniform narrative of 'irreligious' 'unjust invaders' and the 'eternal''recurring' Hindu activism for 'liberation through war'. He states that these new versions of supposed histories were peddled as true on the grounds that they were "an authentic Indian history" as opposed to the "slavish imitation of Western histories produced by deracine scholars ensconced in privileged positions in the universities and research institutions of the subcontinent"

7   Pandey, G.,Modes of History Writing: New Hindu History of Ayodhya, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 29, No. 25 (Jun. 18, 1994), pp. 1523-1528

8   Pandey, G.,Modes of History Writing: New Hindu History of Ayodhya, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 29, No. 25 (Jun. 18, 1994), pp. 1523-1528

9   Pandey, G.,Modes of History Writing: New Hindu History of Ayodhya, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 29, No. 25 (Jun. 18, 1994), pp. 1523-1528

10   Panikkar. K.N., Religious Symbols and Political Mobilisations: The Agitation for a Mandir at Ayodhya, Social Scientist, Vol. 21, No. 7/8

11   I have used the term 'magico-real' to elucidate the magical realist appeal of the wish-image of the temple. The new media employed by the VHP to manufacture the propaganda around the 'grand-temple' enabled a production of images and audio-visual content that depicted the temple in an increasingly realist style. This served to legitimise its historicity. Simultaneously, the history of the temple was mythologised and the stories of miraculous incidents such as "Babur had to use parts of the old temple as the walls of the mosque kept falling down" (refer Pandey. G, ref. vi) and GMH or Rama's miraculous appearance; gave the image a magical appeal.

12   Panikkar. K.N., Religious Symbols and Political Mobilisations: The Agitation for a Mandir at Ayodhya, Social Scientist, Vol. 21, No. 7/8

13   Brosius, C., Empowering Visions – The Politics of Representation in Hindu Nationalism, Anthem Press, London (2005)

14   Panikkar. K.N., Religious Symbols and Political Mobilisations: The Agitation for a Mandir at Ayodhya, Social Scientist, Vol. 21, No. 7/8

15   https://thewire.in/communalism/untold-story-rama-idol-surfaced-inside-babri-masjid, The Untold Story of How the Rama Idol Surfaced Inside Babri Masjid, Ayodhya: The Dark Night by Krishna Jha and

Dhirendra Jha, accessed on May 18, 2020, 3:41 a.m.

16   Brosius, C. Empowering Visions – The Politics of Representation in Hindu Nationalism, Anthem Press, London (2005)

17   Brosius, C., Empowering Visions – The Politics of Representation in Hindu Nationalism, Anthem Press, London (2005)

18   Brosius, C., Empowering Visions – The Politics of Representation in Hindu Nationalism, Anthem Press, London (2005)

19   Ahmad, A., pg. 38, Culture, Community, Nation: On the Ruins of Ayodhya, Social Scientist, Vol. 21, No. 7/8 (Jul. - Aug., 1993), pp. 17-48

20   Ahmad, A., Culture, Community, Nation: On the Ruins of Ayodhya, Social Scientist, Vol. 21, No. 7/8 (Jul. - Aug., 1993), pp. 17-48

*****

*****

We know we have made a difference. Our endeavour to encourage and facilitate pedagogy meaningfully continues with the firm belief that the humanities are indispensable to the well-being of the community and the individual.