



# JNANAPRAVAHA MUMBAI QUARTERLY

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2021

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# Director's Note

To recap the just-completed academic year 2020-21 before we begin our next in mid-July, we are happy to report that in spite of the pandemic challenges, we successfully presented and completed several courses, seminars, and lecture series by going virtual. The online mode gave us a unique opportunity to reach a global audience, as well as invite specialists from all fields of academia. Scholars who have been on our wish list for a decade willingly taught and shared their profound scholarship with our global audience, which stretched from New Zealand to California. Along with our flagship yearlong Indian Aesthetics course and semester-long course on Art, Criticism & Theory, we were able to present several month-long courses taught by a single scholar, an impossible format in normal times.

As per policy, we refreshed the content of our annual courses by incorporating the latest research that scholars bring into the discourse. The existing vast terrain of knowledge allows this practice to flourish, giving our students and audience an opportunity to hear and interact with the best minds in our fields of study. This inherent policy is assiduously followed while curating all our other programmes as well. Hence, no topic of enquiry has been repeated since our inception.

Thus, the overarching subject for Islamic Aesthetics this year was The Sacred Journey of the Hajj, wherein five scholars delved into different aspects of this world pilgrimage. Buddhist Aesthetics explored the historical, political, cultural, social, religious, and philosophical underpinnings of *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*. We broke fresh ground by studying the foundational text on political philosophy – Plato's *Republic*, while also training our lens to Foucault and Aesthetics, New Media practices and the current discourse on Photography. The Nature of Landscape examined historical aesthetics as well as the contested geographies of land and territory. A close reading of Kailasanatha Temple of Kanchipuram showed how this 8<sup>th</sup>-century Pallava monument continues to reveal its layered meaning.

The upcoming academic year, the 15<sup>th</sup> since inception in 2007, starts mid-July. Along with the seminal Indian Aesthetics, and Art, Criticism & Theory courses (both have been substantively transformed for this iteration), we will be presenting an exceptional semester-long course on Southasian Painting. It is perhaps the first time that twelve leading scholars will be heard on a single platform as they take us through the Arts of the Book. We will also have the rare privilege to hear a lecture series titled 'Understanding Hindu Tantra' – a subject which continues to mystify. Continuing our thrust into Political Philosophy, four leading academics will be addressing the intricacies of Liberalism, Secularism, Nationalism and Islamism, topics of urgency and currency under the series titled 'Panoptical Views on Politics'. We also hope to address the Mamluk Period, Modernism, Pala Art and Architecture, and the relationship of Poetry and Painting in the Miniature Tradition as the year progresses.

A synoptic table of our programmes is given below for your convenient perusal:

Yearlong course: 1

Semester-long course: 1

Month-long courses: 6

Three-week-long course: 1

Seminar of 2-5 days: 1

Number of students in courses: Over 350

Number of participants in seminars: Over 100

International faculty and speakers: 12

Indian faculty and speakers: 21

Details of all the above can be obtained from our website [www.jp-india.org](http://www.jp-india.org), which also includes a payment gateway to assist paid registrations.

Please find the annual reports from the course directors of Indian Aesthetics, and Aesthetics, Criticism & Theory further on in this *Quarterly*, along with the posters announcing the various courses. Admissions have begun in full earnest.

Looking forward to meeting some of you virtually and wishing you good health.

With my warmest wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rashmi Poddar', with a stylized, cursive script.

Rashmi Poddar PhD.  
Director

# AESTHETICS



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

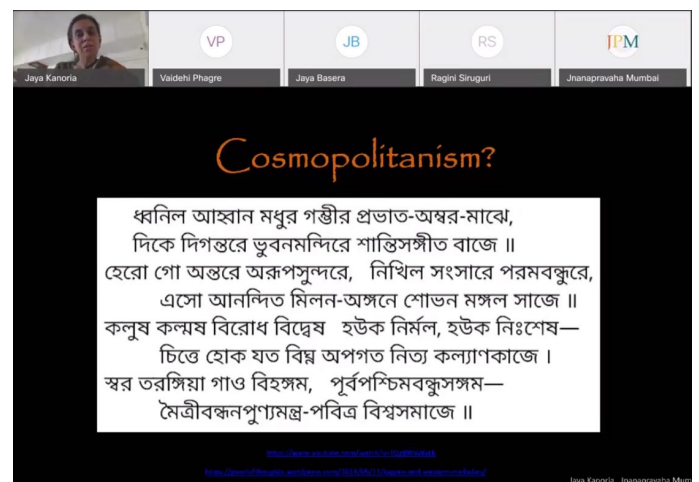
JPM's Aesthetics offerings include:

(1) an academic yearlong 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 & 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 Southasian Painting; and (7) occasional academic conferences and workshops in these fields.

## Indian Aesthetics

Every year comes with its own promise and possibility. Towards the end of the 2019-20 iteration of the Indian Aesthetics course, the institution and all its students were suddenly plunged into a well of uncertainty and left with no choice but to float. The grit and grace with which our scholars and students have continued to be part of the flow of knowledge that we facilitate at Jnanapravaha is remarkable. Since March 2020, all classes have been online. As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to devastate the world and the beautiful and resilient people of our country, it seems strange to focus on learning and the dissemination of knowledge. Yet, human beings are born to strive and survive. If we stagnate, we fall. The 2020-21 course has seen senior scholars manage online lectures with panache matched by the commendable commitment and cooperation

of our students. And so, we proudly soldier on, backed by a small but able team that has managed radical change smoothly.



Dr. Jaya Kanoria speaks during 'Indian Aesthetics in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century – Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo Ghosh'



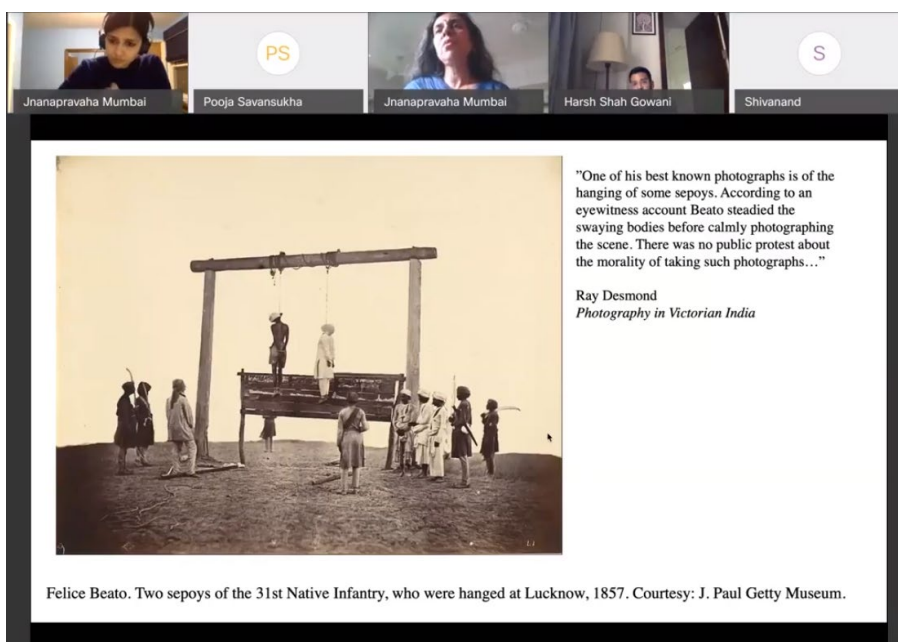
This year, the Indian Aesthetics course saw the unprecedented enrolment of sixty-two students. As always, the course began with a foray into classical Indian Aesthetics through particular Sanskrit texts, employing their underlying philosophy to present a synoptic view of Indic visual culture. The course uses art history bolstered by archaeology, architecture, anthropology, literature, philosophy, and religion, to give students a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Students were familiarised with *Rasa* theory and the possibility of its fruitful application to the visual arts. Dr. Veena Londhe offered a basic map of Sanskrit poetics. Participants were introduced to tools that can be deployed to decode artistic form, and formal concepts such as rhythm, harmony, iconometry, materiality, line, colour, and proportion. Dr. Rashmi Poddar showed how content and meaning in art can be read through subject matter, iconography, iconology, and symbolism.

by a close analysis of Mughal, Pahari, and Rajput, as well as Deccani painting. A discussion of the popular practice of Krishna *shringara bhakti*, and a journey through some of the rich murals of Ajanta preceded the sessions on the colonial, modern and contemporary period. Critical theory played a prominent role in the lectures that shed light on the art, architecture and photography of this period. Lecturers who engaged sessions in this section used Edward Said's *Orientalism* to comment on Company painting and employed Henri Lefebvre's understanding of the production of space to decode architecture. These sessions showed participants the productive manner in which critical thought can be used for analysis of visual material.

Every year, Jnanapravaha Mumbai strives to bring in innovative ways of enriching student experience. The Indian Aesthetics course not only offers an overview of 5,000 years of India's

art history and philosophy through multiple lenses, but also makes room for even deeper engagement through reading and writing. Since the last five years, curated reading material on the subject matter of each session of the Indian Aesthetics course has been uploaded in advance on Jnanapravaha's online learning management portal JPM Think. Bibliographies shared by our scholars provide students with extensive lists of and occasional access to sources. The Indian Aesthetics diploma boasted thirty enrolments this year. As usual, students have participated in a stringent writing programme,

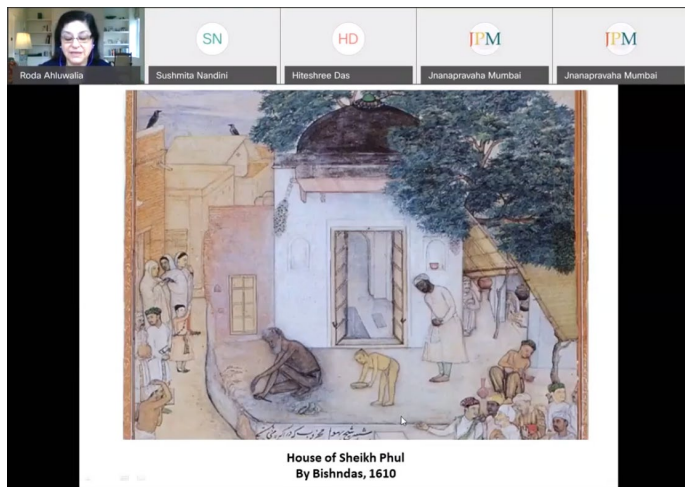
submitting two essays, the first in November 2020 and the second in March 2021, and their final thesis in May. This year, some students chose to share essays with peers, an exercise which was facilitated on the JPM Think portal. Each assignment receives extensive feedback. The satisfactory completion of these theses (on a wide range of topics, such as 'The Politics of Visuals: On the Nayak-contrived Primacy of Madurai Meenakshi', 'Architecture of Elephanta Cave Temple – An Intersection of Philosophical, Spiritual and Aesthetic Realms', 'The Unity of Diversity in Mughal Painting: Explorations in



Ms. Alisha Sett speaks during 'From the Colonial to the Contemporary: A Short History of 'Indian' Photography'

The aesthetics of the premodern era in the Subcontinent was explored by renowned scholar Dr. Shereen Ratnagar, who is an authoritative voice on the Harappan civilisation. Buddhist, Jain, Vedic, Hindu-Agamic, Tantric, and Islamic aesthetics were elaborated through visually stimulating sessions by scholars specialising in each area. Reference to relevant textual material and the cultural underpinnings of art enriched several sessions. The discussion of Indian painting opened with two sessions by Dr. Kavita Singh who presented a nuanced analysis of 'pre-Mughal' painting. These sessions were followed

European Idiom', and 'The Artistic Language of the Madhubani Painting: 1960 to 1980' is a matter of pride for the institution.



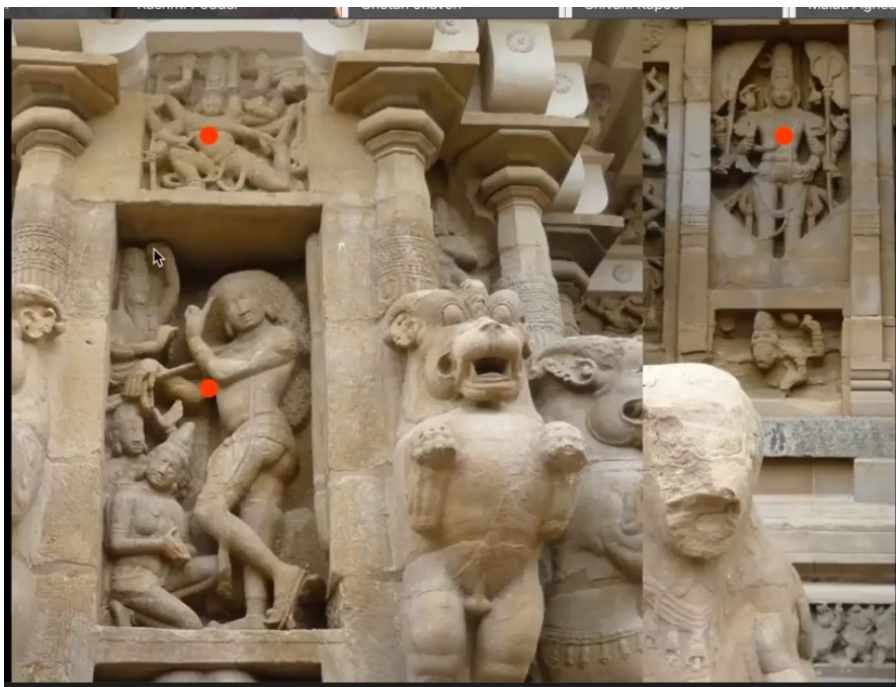
Ms. Roda Ahluwalia speaks during 'Lyrical Visions from the Hills – Pahari Painting and its Masters'

The Indian Aesthetics course 2020-2021 has been successful in the face of unprecedented challenges. The practically flawless completion of the course has been one of the factors that have helped Jnanapravaha establish a firm foothold in the international online space. Despite the disastrous situation that the whole of humanity continues to confront, students of Indian Aesthetics have conveyed that the course became an oasis of calm that helped them through the year. This is an extremely heartening dimension of the institution's incessant drive to achieve excellence. In 2019, Jnanapravaha looked forward "to facilitating a deeper engagement with the arts in the city, as it has done for two exceptionally rich decades". In reaching out successfully and meaningfully to the world this year, it moves far ahead of its own goals, redefining them and repositioning them at even greater heights. – J.K.

## PAST PROGRAMMES

### Opening The Temple: Meaning in Material Form at The Kailasanatha Temple in Kanchipuram

April 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 6:30 - 8:30 pm IST | Dr. Padma Kaimal (Michael J. Batza, Chair in Art History, Colgate University)



The Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram was built by the Pallava king Rajasimha in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. Dr. Padma Kaimal gave a series of talks on how to read the temple through

its architecture, iconographic scheme, and inscriptions.

The temple has three sections – the oldest, central structure, with the *vimana*, and the *prakara* or the courtyard, built by Rajasimha (c. 700-723 CE), the entrance, built by his son, Mahendravarman III, and a set of shrines built by three Pallava queens, including Rajasimha's wife and daughter-in-law. The *mandapa*, connecting two parts of the central structure, is of a later date.

In the first section of her talk, Dr. Kaimal considered the sculptures on the northern and southern faces of Rajasimha's *vimana*. Drawing attention to their placement, she brought in the ideas of *mangala* and *amangala*. *Mangala* is easily translated



as auspicious, but *amangala* is not simply the opposite, as in inauspicious, but is related to war, destruction, and asceticism.

Dr. Kaimal pointed out that the southern face of the *vimana* has images of Shiva with Parvati, Bhikshatana, Lingodbhava, Dakshinamurthi, and Lakshmi, all depicting *mangala*. They are all auspicious forms, showing growth and continuity.

In sharp contrast to this are the figures on the northern face – Kalantaka, Tripurantaka, Jalandhara samharam, and Mahishasuramardini – all depicting victory over evil, all fierce forms. This contrast is emphasised by the presence of Jyeshtha or Alakshmi, also on the northern face. Her name does not imply inauspiciousness, but rather, indicates that she is older, one past her fertile age, and thus, in a sense, the antithesis of Lakshmi, who represents fertility.

This placement is maintained, even in the *prakara*, which has numerous small shrines. Kalantaka, Tripurantaka, and the goddess with a trident are seen on the northern face, while images of Shiva with Parvati are seen on the southern face.

This continues in the open *mandapa*, where Lakshmi and Saraswati are on the south while Jyeshtha and Mahishasuramardini are on the north.

Rajasimha's system is continued by his son, Mahendravarman III, with Shiva-Parvati and Dakshinamurthi on the south, and Jalandhara and Gajasamharamurti on the north.

In the second section of her talk, Dr. Kaimal brought up the numerous images of Somaskanda seen on the eastern and western walls. Somaskanda, or Sa-Uma-Skanda, are images of Shiva and Parvati, with their son Skanda between them. They are often seen in Pallava temples, usually in the sanctum, on the wall behind the *lingam*.

At the Kailasanatha temple, images of Somaskanda far outnumber any other figures, highlighting their importance. These are alternated with images of Shiva and Parvati seated, without Skanda.

Among the Somaskanda images, Dr. Kaimal divided them into two types: four-armed and two-armed. While the figures with a four-armed Shiva are evidently Somaskanda, she speculated that the two-armed ones might be royal portraits, their placements hinting at their identities.

She drew attention to two Somaskanda images, one on Rajasimha's *vimana*, and the other on Mahendra's. They face each other, and both are two-armed, suggesting that both are royal portraits, the son facing the father's temple.

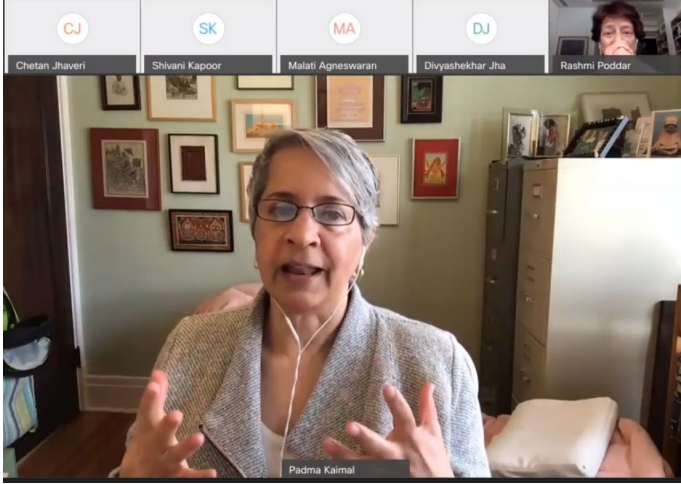
Dr. Kaimal also drew attention to inscriptions, which compare both Rajasimha and Mahendra to Skanda. Given the importance shown to Skanda in this temple, through images as well as inscriptions, Dr. Kaimal also suggested that this might have been the phase of inclusion of Skanda into the Shaivite pantheon.



The Kailasanatha Temple, Kanchi P1010689 c P. Kaimal



Dr. Kaimal concluded the first day's lecture with a figure of Gangadhara on the back wall of the temple. Gangadhara shows Shiva and Parvati together, with Parvati turning away from him. Considering the placement between the north and south walls, Gangadhara could signify the intersection between *mangala* and *amangala*.



Dr. Padma Khaimal speaks during 'Opening the Temple: Meaning in Material Form at The Kailasanatha Temple in Kanchipuram'

On Day Two of the lecture series, Dr. Kaimal began with the idea of circumambulation of the temple – *pradakshina* being the clockwise movement, and *apradakshina*, the counterclockwise movement. Today, *pradakshina* is considered auspicious, while *apradakshina* is not. However, Dr. Kaimal suggested that the architectural, sculptural, as well as inscriptional cues at the Kailasanatha temple encourage movement in both directions with equal emphasis. The monument, in her words, “frames the clockwise and the counterclockwise as reflections of each other – opposite yet identical, and equally accessible.” She believes that these paired movements correspond to the two life modes the Pallavas aspired to – the warrior asceticism that triumphs over threats, and a fecund, royal continuity from the ancient lineage to the birth of new sons. This complementarity is a continuation of the *mangala*–*amangala* theme. The *amangala* sculptures, reflecting ideas of war and asceticism, act as cues for counterclockwise movement or *apradakshina*, while the *mangala* images on the southern face serve as cues for the clockwise movement or *pradakshina*. She focussed on Rajasimha's *vimana* and *prakara* to highlight these concepts.

Architecturally, the temple is bilaterally symmetrical, and thus conducive to both,

*pradakshina* and *apradakshina*. Furthermore, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, there was also an entrance from the west, and the same principle holds good for this entryway as well.

Inscriptions at the temple are found in both directions – clockwise and counterclockwise. Inscriptions on the *vimana* are counterclockwise, while those on the *prakara* are clockwise. One of the reasons for this is the Sanskrit language, which is read from left to right. However, Dr. Kaimal believes that this is also intentional, since the inscriptions wrap around the structure, drawing the reader to circumambulate the shrine in a particular direction. The clockwise inscriptions on the *prakara* are simple ones, in praise of the king. The counterclockwise inscriptions on the *vimana*, on the other hand, are poetic and relate to the lineage of the Pallavas, comparing the kings and queens to deities.

Moving on to the sculptures, Bhikshatana is seen on both, the southwest and southeast corners. He faces right – the direction of clockwise movement; thus, Shiva is seen pointing the way ahead. Dr. Kaimal calls this a wall-piercing pair, as if Shiva walked through the stone wall and emerged in the other cell. In the counterclockwise direction, it is Tripurantaka who leads the way, facing right.

Images of Shiva as Natesa, his knees deeply bent, are seen in mirror poses at the far ends of the eastern and western walls of the *vimana*. Thus, a devotee circumambulating the temple would see the same images whether he moved in *pradakshina* or *apradakshina*.

Clockwise, one starts seeing the *mangala* figures, while counterclockwise, one sees the *amangala* images of warriors and ascetics. Thus, *pradakshina* gets connected with the idea of continuity, while *apradakshina* is associated with discontinuity. Furthermore, the narratives of the sculptures also foster these ideas of continuity/discontinuity.

Dr. Kaimal summed up this difference between clockwise and counterclockwise movements with a table. While texts inscribed clockwise are simple, and thus meant for the general public,

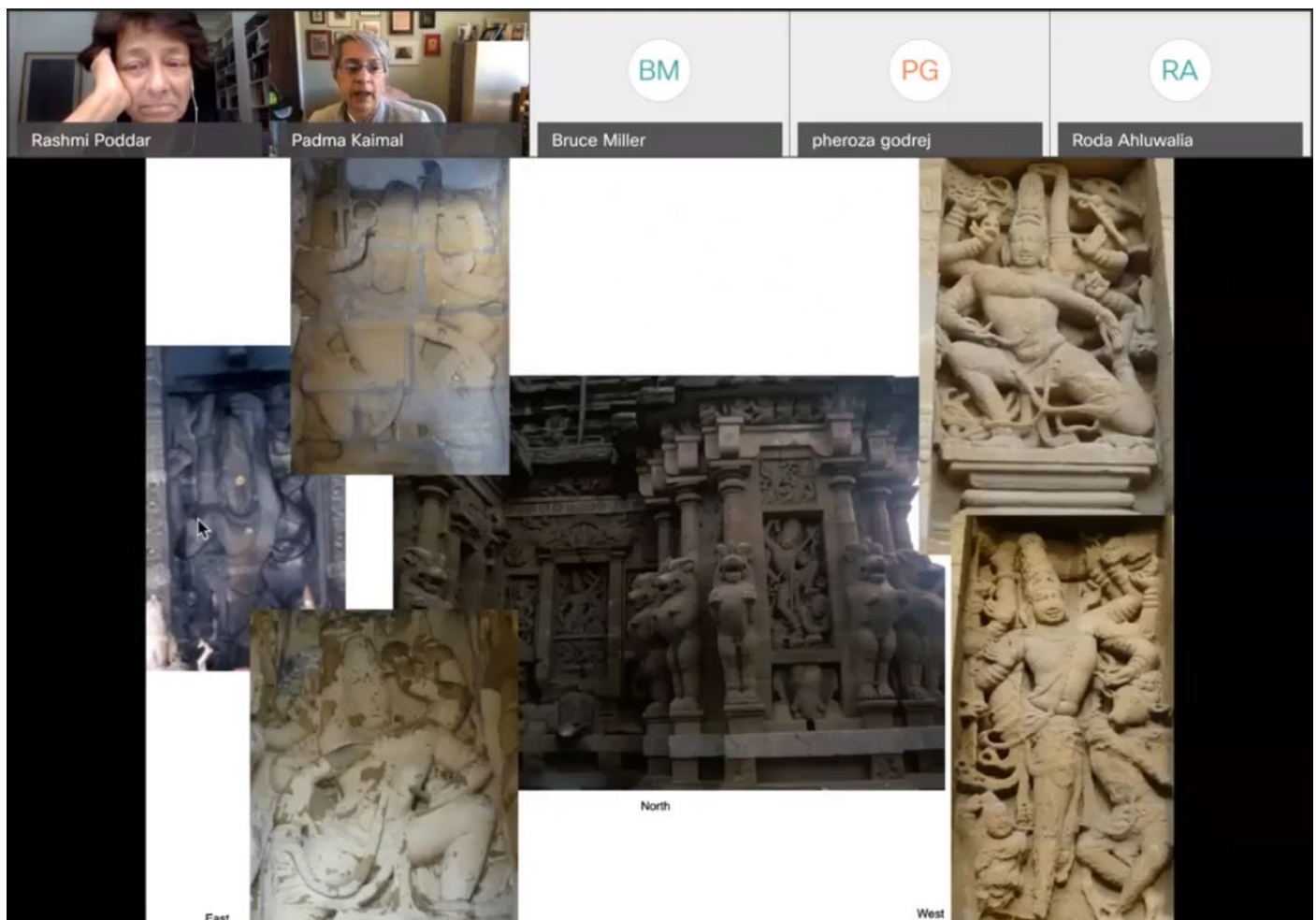
texts inscribed counterclockwise are poetic, elliptical, esoteric content, meant for a different audience. Clockwise movement first leads to the south-facing *mangala* figures, depicting acts of continuity and *samsara*, while counterclockwise movement leads to the *amangala* images depicting acts of asceticism and renunciation. The narratives of these sculptures are also different: while the former are stories of virility and seduction, the latter are of restraint and inviolability.

In the last session, Dr. Kaimal spoke of the inscriptions on Rajasimha's *vimana*, connecting the images with the words. These trace the lineage of the Pallava kings back to Shiva himself. The placing of the inscriptions below certain sculptures creates a parallel between the kings and the gods, as do the inscriptions themselves. Those on the north walls refer to the ancestors of the Pallavas, while the ones on the west walls refer to Rajasimha himself. References to Skanda appear below the Somaskanda panels. While the king is lauded, he takes the position of

Vishnu in Shiva's court – divine, yet subordinate. Inscriptions on the south wall refer to the temple, which is called Rajasimheshwara or Rajasimha Pallaveshwaram.

The inscriptions also refer to Shiva as the crest jewel, and the placing of inscriptions with the name of the king below the sculptures of Shiva highlight this association.

The temple has one of the earliest inscriptions referring to Shaiva Siddhanta, and invite Shiva to reside in this stone house. Dr. Kaimal elaborated on the Shaiva Siddhanta rituals, involving clockwise movement for those engaged in worldly life, and counterclockwise movement for ascetics. Dr. Kaimal suggested that the inscriptions, along with these ritualistic concepts, could imply the king taking Shaiva Siddhanta initiation and attaining unification with the divine. Thus, even back in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the *apradakshina* had a clear connection with renunciation and asceticism, while *pradakshina* clearly was for life in this world. – A.S.





# Yoga & Tantra

## FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

### Understanding Hindu Tantra

August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 6:15 - 8:30 PM IST | Dr. Gavin Flood (Professor of Hindu Studies and Comparative Religion, Oxford University)



A tantric form of the Hindu Goddess Kali. Folio from a book of Iconography, Nepal, 17<sup>th</sup> century

This course presents an overview of the history, beliefs and practices of the *tantric* traditions that developed from the early medieval period. We will examine the heyday of Tantrism from around the 8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and raise critical questions about how best to understand these complex forms of belief and practice and whether they have anything to say to us today. We will begin with the historical context within which the *tantric* traditions arose and with a clarification of terminology. The word '*tantra*' is, of course, a Sanskrit term referring to texts regarded as revelation from God (Shiva at first) that arose in the early medieval period, initially within Hinduism and later in Buddhism and Jainism. This new religion developed quite quickly and attracted the patronage of kings, spreading to Southeast Asia and even into China and Japan. *Tantric* traditions are to this day important and thriving in India and Nepal, and the course will trace their development.

- Day 1: *Tantra* in Historical Context
- Day 2: The Core Traditions of Shiva
- Day 3: The Netra-tantra
- Day 4: Other *tantric* traditions

# CRITICISM & THEORY

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

JPM's Criticism & Theory offerings include (1) a Certificate course in Aesthetics, Criticism & 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 workshops in these fields.

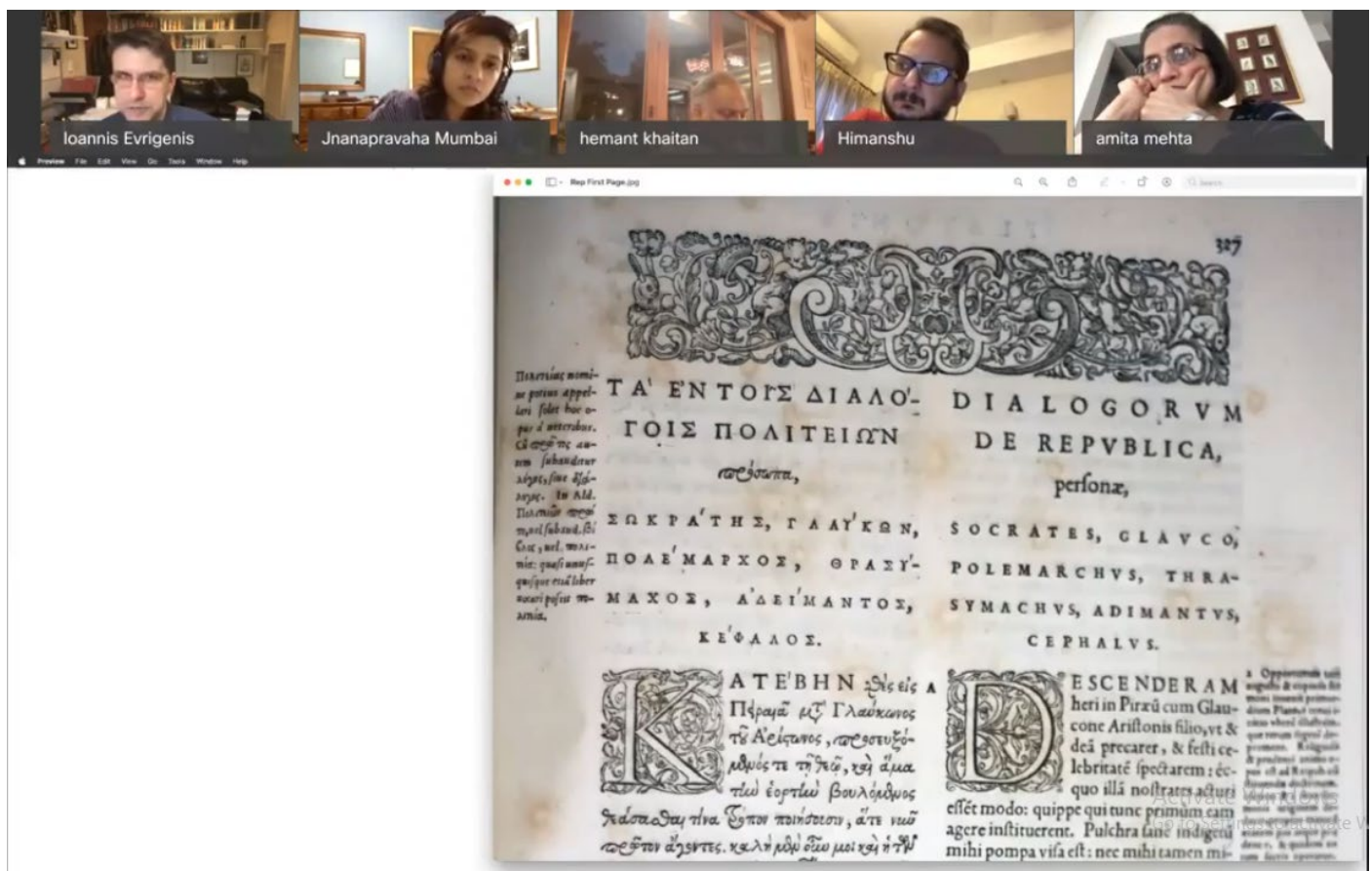


# Aesthetics, Criticism & Theory

## PAST PROGRAMMES

### Plato's *Republic*

February 26<sup>th</sup>, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021 | 6:30 - 9:00 pm IST | Dr. Ioannis D. Evrigenis (Professor of Political Science, & Director of International Relations, Tufts University)



Dr. Ioannis Evrigenis speaks during 'Plato's Republic'

In the ten-session intensive postgraduate online seminar, a close reading of Plato's *Republic* was undertaken with the guidance of Prof. Ioannis Evrigenis, who is a Greek American philosopher, professor of Political Science, and director of International Relations at Tufts University. In this quarter, we undertook the reading of the remaining seven parts of the book. Following is a session-wise report of the discussions that took place during these sessions.

#### Session 4

After Socrates divides society into three classes (namely: producers, guardians, and auxiliaries), he is met with an objection by Adeimantus that the guardians will not be happy as they will be precluded from making money. However, Socrates

reminds Adeimantus that it was agreed in the beginning that the aim was to make the city happy as a whole, and not a particular class. He explains that if each individual worked in a just manner and did their own work, it would lead to collective happiness. He takes the example of a craftsman who becomes richer. He states that one who gets richer becomes worse at what they do because they are no longer a crafter but have become a money-maker. Here, Prof. Evrigenis offered that the relation between the city and the individual is intertwined to such a degree that every individual act becomes political. Furthermore, he qualified Socrates's city apropos to a city 'only in speech',<sup>1</sup> that the city as described by Socrates can only exist in speech and it is created only towards the motive of understanding the 'form' of justice

within the individual. He also pointed out that there is a 'sweet spot' in relation to how big a city should be. It should be large enough to be self-sustaining but as suggested by Aristotle and Rousseau, the city should not be exceptionally large. The Aristotelian preference for small cities is based on the argument that a large city undermines the unity of the system, as socio-economic inequality grows exponentially in large cities.

Prof. Evrigenis also offered a formula for understanding 'justice' as explained in Book IV. The formula is "4-3 = justice". In Section 427 of Book IV, Socrates defines the city-in-speech as perfectly good. The notion of perfect goodness encompasses the sum total of justice, wisdom, moderation, and courage. In the subsequent sections, good counsel is understood as the source of wisdom, which is available exclusively to a small part of the population, that is, the guardians. Courage is practiced by the auxiliaries in the form of correct knowledge of what is to be feared. Moderation is practiced everywhere in the city, owing to which there is harmony in society, as there is a consensus about who should rule, and what the job of each individual is. Hence, justice is only when each individual does their own job, that is, "Justice is minding one's business and not being a busy body". This entails that each group does their own job without interfering with the work of the other group.

### Session 5

As Socrates proceeds to look at the 'form' of justice in opposition, and the numerous instances of justice, he is interrupted by interlocutors who demand clarification on the lives of the guardians, and consequently, the structure of the family within the guardian class along with the position of women. Socrates proceeds to make some radical claims in his reply. Firstly, he claims that just as all property, the guardians will own even wives and children in common. Upon Glaucon's contesting the dubiousness of such a hypothesis, Socrates retorts by explaining that if guardians own everything in common, including wives and children, they will be less prone to factionalism, as petty interests such as romance and inheritance will be disqualified for them. Then he proceeds to make an exposition into the nature of education

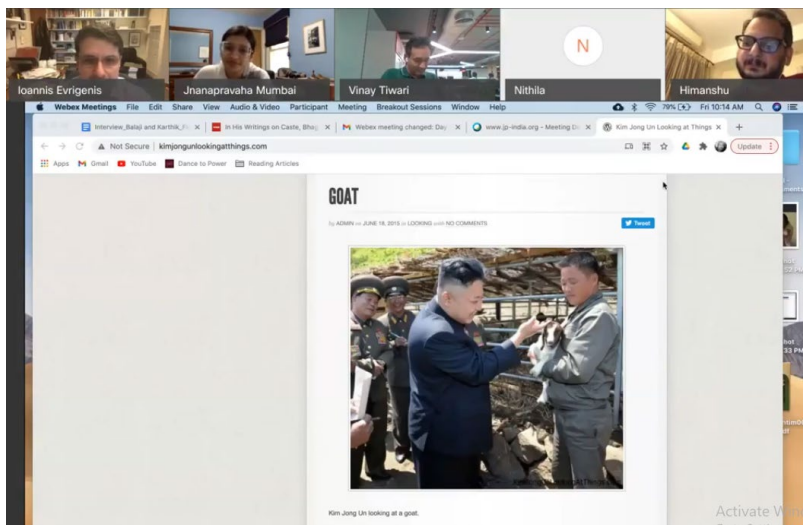
and the lives that children in common are to lead, and how they are to be raised as true guardians and 'Greeks'. On the question of women, while Socrates agrees that women are physically weaker than men, he also states that they should nevertheless be allowed to be guardians and practice gymnastics with other men. This remark about women being recruited to the army was followed by a classroom discussion about the case of lowering the standards of the required physical strength at the Ranger school of the U.S. army, in order to accommodate the graduation of women from the school. However, in the course of the book, Socrates's interlocutors are not convinced by the practicality of the plan. Socrates reminds them, just as Prof. Evrigenis was keen to remind students, that the city in proper only exists in speech and that if Socrates's model of the city was to be applied in real life, the city would certainly look different according to its own context. Secondly, Prof. Evrigenis, just as Socrates in the book, reminded the class that the primary aim of building the city is to identify the form of justice within the soul.

Another controversial claim made by Socrates in Book V is that the ruler should be a philosopher king. He provides a detailed exposition into the nature of the 'philosopher' and reinforces his theory of forms by reversing the analogy of sleeping and waking. He explains that the person who is only sensitised to the world of the senses understands only one part of the world and is thus asleep. However, the one who is aware of the world of forms is awake and is a philosopher, as he loves all of wisdom and not just a part of it. Prof. Evrigenis offered an in-depth analysis of the nature of the philosopher according to Plato by relating the historical narrative of how Socrates came to be known as the wisest man in Athens, and the Socratic view that one turns to philosophy 'by accident'.

### Session 6

Book VI further dwells on the nature of the philosopher. The central contention in Book VI is made by Adeimantus. He qualifies the philosophers of his age as useless at best and villainous at worst. In both cases, he dismisses the merit of the philosopher to be crowned as king. Socrates replies to this objection stating that the

degradation of the philosophers in his time was a product of the social conditions. He states that the corruption of a good philosopher is a result of the degeneracy of people at large. Furthermore, he invokes the analogy of the ship and the navigator, comparing the state to a ship and the philosopher to its navigator. Towards the end of Book VI, Socrates introduces the analogy of the divided line along with the analogy of the sun. Through these analogies, he begins his exposition of a theory of knowledge and what the supposed philosopher king should know.



Prof. Evrigenis offered a critical analysis of this section by highlighting the importance of the use of loose analogies and metaphors in order to make the dialectic move forward. He also reminded students that the importance of goodwill is seen in this book through the patience of interlocutors who allow Socrates to use loose analogies instead of protesting and nit-picking his argument. A brief discussion on the nature of knowledge, the difference between form and manifestation, and the nature of the philosopher – his disinterest in power and his gaze turned upwards towards the ideal forms – was conducted in the concluding part of the week's session.

### Session 7

In Book VII, Plato develops his theory of knowledge through the famous allegory of the cave. The allegory describes an underground cave with prisoners chained to their seats since birth, facing the back wall of the cave. They see shadows on the back wall of the cave. Socrates narrates the story of a prisoner who manages to free himself and makes the arduous journey upward, towards the broad light of day. He sees the sun, which has

been established as the metaphor for the form of good in Book VI, and then has to return to the cave to enlighten his fellow prisoners. Glaucon protests to this idea by telling Socrates that going back to the cave would not be a pleasant experience for the person who has arduously made the journey out of it. Socrates again reminds Glaucon that the aim of the ruler is to make the city happy and not just himself. He further clarifies the divided-line analogy and describes the two realms of opinion and two realms of knowledge. He also offers a full description of the education programme up to the age of 50 years, and the process of selection for rulers from the guardian class.

Prof. Evrigenis began the discussion by explicating further on the divided-line analogy. He remarked that according to Plato, there are infinite images for every form. According to Plato, the philosopher king should have the knowledge of forms and not be tangled up in the knowledge of senses. He also pointed out the function of the dialectical method as a 'springboard' to attain the knowledge of forms. Along with the 'springboard function', Prof. Evrigenis pointed out the insufficiency of the natural sciences as they are 'dry'. He explained that, according to Plato, the natural sciences must acquire a dialectical disposition (i.e., use the method of comparison) to qualify as a means to true knowledge.

### Session 8

In Book VIII, Socrates returns to discussing unjust regimes and rulers. He continues from where he was interrupted at the start of Book V by the protest of interlocutors. The major theme of discussion in Book VIII are the four types of supposedly unjust regimes. According to Socrates, these are: timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny. He narrates how an ideal state might degenerate into a timocracy due to the haughty greed and profligacy of a ruler, resulting in his exile from the kingdom. The successors of such a ruler will be cautious and begin to hoard wealth and power. This will lead to the establishment of an oligarchy. As the oligarchs proceed in their economic acts of lending, the general populace will be led into a cycle of over-consumption and

debt, leading to a revolutionary overthrow of the regime. At this point, according to Socrates, the society will be ruled by 'the great beast'. This great beast is destined to elect a megalomaniac ruler who will complete the thorough degeneration of society and establish a tyranny.

Prof. Evrigenis pointed out the dialectical movement between the character of the city and the character of the people. He said that Plato makes it clear that the soul of the city is dictated by the conditions of the soul of its people. According to him, this places the responsibility of affairs of the government, whether just or unjust, on the people.

### Session 9

To illustrate that the life of the just man is better than that of the unjust man, Socrates offers a three-part argument in Book IX. In the first part, he takes the example of the tyrant. He says that the life of the tyrant may look ideal to the observer as he is a master who rules by the sway of his whims and fancies. However, he is not a master in the true sense as he is also a slave to his desires. The second part of Socrates's argument invokes the tripartite theory of the soul. He relates the man of reason to the philosopher king, the man of spirit to the timocrat, and the man of appetite to a mix of the oligarch, the democrat, and the tyrant. According to the argument made by Socrates, each of these might answer affirmatively if they were asked whether they were happy as rulers. However, only the philosopher king would be a good judge of happiness as he alone possesses knowledge of the form of good, i.e., justice – which directly leads to happiness. He extends the second argument by qualifying pleasures as pure pleasures and illusory pleasures. According to Socrates, only the just man who is guided by reason experiences pure pleasure. This is the result of his engagement in the study of forms, which provides pleasure of the soul, which is not tied to the illusory pleasure of the body.

Prof. Evrigenis began the discussion by raising the possibility that most people could in fact be believers of Socratic arguments but might be too scared to admit and contest the arguments that are made in favour of the unjust life. He explained that the first part of Socrates's argument dwells

on the nature of public opinion. According to him, Plato is commenting on the way public consensus is tilted towards the unjust life as it is only taking into account a partial view of the situation. The tyrant's life seems pleasurable because what it takes to become a tyrant and sustain tyranny is not considered by them. Commenting on the distinction between pure and illusory pleasures, Prof. Evrigenis discussed the extent of the possibility of justice and injustice. According to his view, there is scope for infinite justice and injustice and consequently for pleasure and pain. The contextual universals of the said dialectical opposites are defined by the extent of experience.

### Session 10

In the final book of *The Republic*, Plato initially clarifies his views about the arts: visual, poetic, and dramatic. He illustrates how the artists merely recreate illusions of objects that are in turn recreated as copies of the ideal form. Thus, the artefacts are deemed to be thrice removed from 'reality'. Furthermore, he illustrates the ill-effects of the dramatic and poetic arts on the viewer's character. Sudden outbursts of laughter and tears are condemned by Socrates. He says that these outbursts are contrary to the function of reason and lead to the domain of the irrational. In conclusion of the debate on justice and injustice, Socrates offers the Myth of Er – a soldier who is martyred in war and returns to life upon his own funeral pyre, to narrate his experiences of the afterlife. Through this myth, Socrates illustrates that the fruits of leading a just life follow even beyond the death of the physical body.

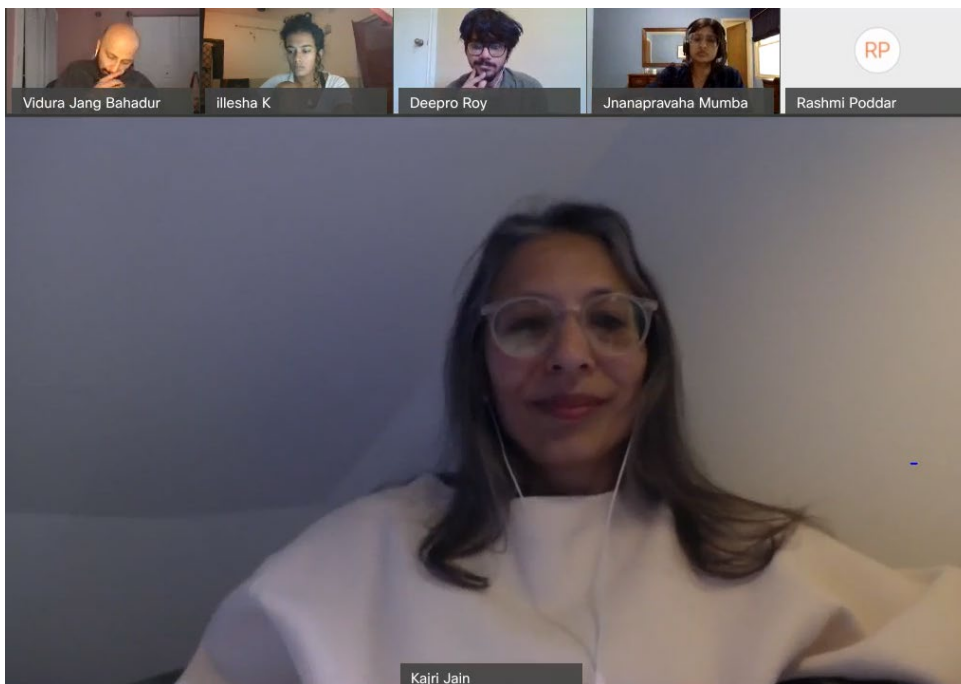
In the closing discussion, Prof. Evrigenis reminded students that the aim of *The Republic* is to find the form of justice within the soul. While some people may read *The Republic* as a blueprint for building a city, it remains an exposition into the nature of justice and the soul. He stated that the Myth of Er is a literary device used by Plato to reinforce the need of the soul to remain on the right path. - R. J.

1. The phrase 'city-in-speech' was used by Prof. Ioannis Evrigenis to re-enforce the idea that in *The Republic*, Socrates is narrating a conversation of the past to the reader. The emphasis on 'speech' in the phrase is an ontological remark on the nature of dialectic reasoning.



## Seminar: The Nature of Landscape

April 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 6:30 - 9:00 pm | Dr. Kajri Jain (Associate Professor of Indian Visual Culture and Contemporary Art, University of Toronto)



Dr. Kajri Jain speaks during 'Seminar: The Nature of Landscape'

Over four Fridays in April, as the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic swelled to a peak across India, we found a space of collective support and intellectual engagement in coming together with Dr. Kajri Jain for a unique online seminar series exploring the multifaceted intellectual, aesthetic, and theoretical discourses around landscape. Dr. Jain's carefully curated readings and moderated discussions opened a rich space to consider landscape across four seminars spanning art history, cultural geography, anthropology, pedagogical approaches, as well as issues surrounding land rights and political agency. Through this enriching month of conversations, discussions, and debates, as participants, we were also able to engage with each other's works, interests and concerns as practitioners, historians, and researchers, both during the live seminar sessions as well as through posts and discussions on the Jnanapravaha student portal JPM Think.

### Week 1: The Nature of 'Nature'

We began the first seminar with a close analysis of the ideological constructions of the term 'nature'. In the introduction to his book, *Making Sense of Nature*, Noel Castree highlights how this

term belongs to the family of "essentially contested concepts"<sup>1</sup>, given its range and variety of meaning, reference, and application. Beginning from this point where the term itself is revealed to be both external as well as universal<sup>2</sup>, we dove into the other readings. William Cronon's paper, *The Trouble with Wilderness, or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature*, brought forth a critical perception to the idea of wilderness as an untouched, idealised landscape. Cronon shows us how this idea, which drives

much of the discourse around environmental activism stemming from the West, is inherently flawed, as it furthers the idea that nature is separate and outside of all human presence and must be maintained that way even at the cost of human displacement. In an intense class discussion, we examined how the cost of this notion continues to be borne largely by indigenous and poor communities who are forcibly evicted from lands they have lived on for generations, in the name of environmental preservation.

One of our most engaging discussions arose from our reading of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's paper, *Land as Pedagogy*, which brought forth a strong critique of the appropriative and often fetishising nature of Western knowledge systems towards indigenous pedagogies. Her perspective as a Mississauga Nishnaabeg scholar highlights the importance of learning as an embodied and continually regenerating practice that is not reducible to an intellectual pursuit devoid of family, community, and the land.

1 Gallie, W.B., 'Essentially Contested Concepts', pp. 157–191 in Gallie, W.B., *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding*, Chatto & Windus, (London), 1964.

2 Castree, N., 'Making Sense of Sense Making', pp. 29 in Castree, N., *Making Sense of Nature*, Routledge, 2014.

It was within such a rich analytical framework that we considered T. J. Demos's introduction to his book, *Decolonizing Nature*. Although Demos attempts to address a wide range of important questions that intersect ecology, radical politics, visual culture, and contemporary art, it was precisely the sweeping nature of his commentary, without necessarily being as concerned with the specificities of each subject, that seemed jarring. This became more obvious to us through the context of Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie's chapter, *Decolonizing Perspectives on Place*, which rigorously stresses how decolonising perspectives and approaches must be spatially and temporally specific if they are to be meaningful.


## Week 2: European Genealogies: Vision, Knowledge, Property

In week two, we moved from the foundational arguments around the idea of nature within scholarship based in cultural geography into a more specific discourse around the idea of landscape in art history, specifically as it was considered within a European framework through the colonial period. Denis Cosgrove's essay, *Landscape, and the*


*European Sense of Sight – Eyeing Nature*, allowed us to deconstruct the connection between the modern usage of the word 'landscape' to denote a bounded geographical space, and the exercise of sight or vision as a principal means of associating that space with human concerns. His emphasis on the *relations* of landscape – between space, territory and meaning – became a key focus of our discussion.

We proceeded to look at this relationality more closely through excerpts from Charmaine Nelson's book, *Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica*. Her close analysis of the carefully constructed, picturesque landscapes of colonial territories showed not only how 19<sup>th</sup>-century Montreal was mapped, but also how an established European-settler colonial taste was applied onto the imagination of landscape; emphasising how the colonial site was produced not only through military occupation and enslaved labour, but also through the legitimisation of an imperial vantage point.


This analysis was important in leading us to




Kajri Jain




Toru Jhaveri




Jnanapravaha Mumbai



li



Rashmi Poddar



Caspar David Friedrich,  
*Cross in the Mountains* (1807-8).

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consider the nexus between landscape and nation building as laid out in Barbara Novak's introductory chapter to her seminal book, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825 - 1875*. In her astute unpacking of the ways the American imagination equated nature – specifically the vast North American wilderness – with Christian notions of the divine, she demonstrated the pivotal role this relationship played in cementing a nationalist, largely white American identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; one that remains entrenched today.

As much of North American intellectual thought of the 19<sup>th</sup> century owed its origins to debates occurring in Europe, Joseph Koerner's book, *Casper David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape* was critical to our discussion on European and North American art of this period. Koerner shows us how Friedrich's landscapes in their disorienting barrenness aspired to a complete dissolution of the subject of landscape itself, to mediate a religious experience. It was with this rich contextual framework that we turned our attention to the readings for week three.

### Week 3: Non-Western 'Landscape'?

We began the third week by shifting our perspective distinctly away from a Euro-American lens, beginning with Craig Clunas's chapter, *What About Chinese Art?*<sup>3</sup>. Clunas's nuanced observation of the trouble posed by the vast and diverse landscape of Chinese art on a strictly linear, Eurocentric art history was informative of the structural problem faced by the discipline when confronted by cultures that have developed completely independently of European knowledge systems. The critical issue raised by Clunas centred around a lack of acknowledgement, and an unwillingness of Euro-American scholarship to move beyond pre-determined vantage points from which to study the cultures of the 'Other'.

Jennifer Biddle's essay, *Country, Skin, Canvas: The Intercorporeal Art of Kathleen Petyarre*, took this question further through an examination of recent analytical shifts in Australian Aboriginal women's

art, exemplified in the work of Kathleen Petyarre. The essay highlighted how the materiality of the artist's canvas functions as a site for cultural memory to be embedded. During our discussion of both the essays, we also critically discussed how the location of their authors within Western universities, while also being outsiders to the cultures they study, impacted their perspectives, and their work within these communities.

Mika Natif's chapter, *Landscape Painting as Mughal Allegory: Micro-Architecture, Perspective and sulh-i-kull*<sup>4</sup> took this question of reading and translating art history further, through a fascinating examination of the intricate backgrounds of Mughal court paintings through the 1580s to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Largely focussing on court paintings from the reign of Emperor Akbar, Natif reveals how the detailed depictions of urban and rural landscapes peopled with travellers and locals engaged in activities of daily life, were of immense political significance for the Mughal empire. According to Natif, "the scenes epitomise the Mughal's sense of ownership, imperial pride, and economic success in the land of Hindustan"<sup>5</sup>. Reading this in conjunction with Sugata Ray's paper, *Hydroaesthetics in the Little Ice Age: Theology, Artistic Cultures and Environmental Transformation in Early Modern Braj, c. 1560 - 70*, we were also able to look at court painting of this time through the context of the drastic ecological changes affecting the Mughal empire. A critique that did arise through our discussion of Ray's paper was whether his method reinforced rather than refuted the nature-culture binary that we had been observing through the course of the seminar.

Finally, Deborah Hutton's chapter, *The Use of Imaginary Landscapes in Paintings from Bijapur*<sup>6</sup>, provided us with a fascinating lens through which we could consider the interconnectedness of the environmental, political, aesthetic, and imaginative realms within which art circulates,

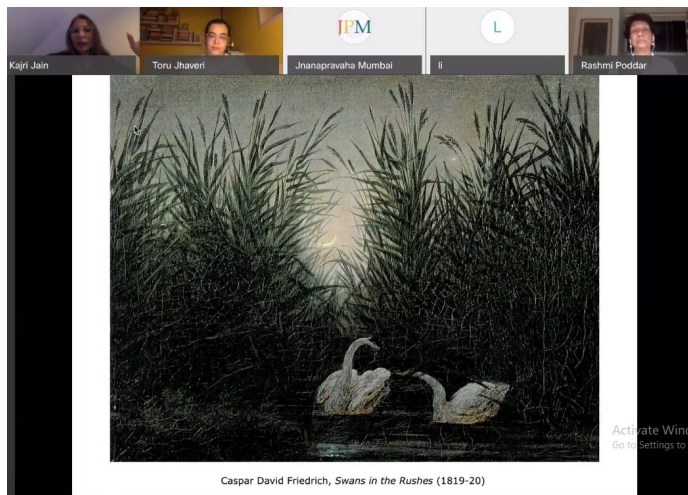
4 Natif, M., 'Landscape Painting as Mughal Allegory: Micro-Architecture, Perspective and sulh-i-kull', pp 152-204, in Natif, M., *Mughal Occidentalism: Artistic Encounters Between Europe and Asia at the Courts of India, 1580-1630*, Brill, 2018.

5 Natif, M., 162.

6 Hutton, D., 'The Use of Imaginary Landscapes in Paintings from Bijapur', pp 127 -147, in Daud Ali and Emma J. Flatt ed. *Garden and Landscape Practices in Pre-Colonial India*, Routledge (New Delhi), 2012.

3 Clunas, C. 'What About Chinese Art?', pp. 119 -42 in Catherin King (ed.), *Views of Difference: Different Views of Art*, Yale University Press, 1999.

using the especially intriguing example of contemporary artist Pushpamala N.'s self-portrait referencing the famous 16<sup>th</sup>-century Bijapuri painting known as the Chester Beatty *Yogini*. As many of us participants were photographers, artists and scholars engaged with image-making, we had an especially keen discussion with Dr. Jain around Hutton's noncritical reference to this work by Pushpamala N within her essay; a point that brought us back to the question of vantage points also possibly being blind spots.



#### Week 4: Postcolonial South Asia: Images, Practices, Spaces

In our final week, Dr. Jain focussed our attention on current and ongoing discourses on environmental activism, the politics around the preservation of indigenous lands, and debates around contemporary art situated within these contexts.

Amanda Boetzkes, in the introductory chapter of her book, *The Ethics of Earth Art*, looked at artists from the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards who have been working at various intersections of art and environmental activism in the West. The artworks discussed in the chapter encouraged a lively class debate on the roles that art – especially public art projects – plays within environmental discourses. T.J. Demos's essay, *Anthropocene India: The Art of Building New Worlds*, prompted us to take this debate further, with a critical look at Demos's positioning of select contemporary Indian art projects within a somewhat dialectical image of industrial development versus environmental degradation. The prevailing concern with his method involved the substitution of any location into a predetermined formulation, rather than

allowing each location to specifically inform his research. Kavita Philip's chapter, *Producing Transnational Knowledge, Neoliberal Identities, and Technoscientific Practice in India*<sup>7</sup>, allowed us to further articulate the issues with Demos's reasoning by pointing out the problem with misreading power structures as monolithic and of markets as global rather than transnational, and by acknowledging how art continually negotiates these intersections.

Vibha Arora's paper, *The Forest of Symbols Embodied in the Tholung Sacred Landscape of North Sikkim, India*, brought our discussion into the specific context of the long socio-ecological debate around conservation, indigenous identity, and the mediating role of the state within the Tholung sacred landscapes of the Lepchas in Sikkim. Her nuanced tracing of the shifting discourses around the perception and social construction of nature, and the employment of religious and cultural identity as a tool for asserting land rights, also gave us an informed lens through which to discuss Tariq Jazeel's fascinating paper, *Dissimulated Landscapes: Postcolonial Method and the Politics of Space in Southern Sri Lanka*. Through a critical analysis of Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa's carefully choreographed view from his estate, *Lunuganga*, Jazeel makes visible how this landscape has been designed to spatialise a Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony that goes unnoticed when it is observed purely through a Euro-American theoretical framework.

Across the four deeply engaging seminars with Dr. Jain, we explored the ideas of nature, landscape, the environment, and land through all its various intersections in linguistics, art history, cultural geography, anthropology, and activism, allowing for an incredibly rich space of discourse and debate. The fact that most of us participants were ourselves artists, scholars and practitioners allowed for a totally unique seminar series, as we could engage with perspectives emerging from theory as well as practice across diverse disciplines. - A. T.

7 Philip, K., 'Producing Transnational Knowledge, Neoliberal Identities, and Technoscientific Practice in India', pp 266 – 290, in Beatriz Da Costa and Kavita Philip (ed.), *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism and Technoscience*, MIT Press (Cambridge), 2014.



# Announcements

## POSTGRADUATE COURSE IN INDIAN AESTHETICS

July 2021 – April 2022 | Typically Saturdays, 2:00 – 6:00 pm IST | ONLINE



Introduced in 1999, Jnanapravaha Mumbai's academic, yearlong Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate course in Indian Aesthetics (IA) examines the historical development of visual forms in context, employing the disciplines of art history, archaeology, architecture, anthropology, literature and philosophy. The course traverses 5,000 years of Indian visual art, including pre-modern, modern, and contemporary forms as well as popular traditions, to illuminate aesthetic trajectories in the sub-continent. Internationally renowned scholars introduce students to this art, ensuring a material, geographical, historical, social and cultural base that is broad and extensively representative. In keeping with JPM's mission, the course has evolved over the years to include topics of current research.

*Panel with deities, outer wall,  
Hoysaleswara Temple, 12<sup>th</sup> century CE,  
Halebidu, Karnataka  
Photo credit: Arvind Sethi*

### For admission, you are required to submit:

A digital copy each of your last degree certificate, CV, short bio (100 words) and passport-size photograph.

### Fee structure:

Diploma (subject to writing and attendance) – Rs. 50,000 | Certificate (subject to attendance) – Rs. 40,000

Registration: [www.jp-india.org](http://www.jp-india.org)



## POSTGRADUATE COURSE IN SOUTHASIAN PAINTING

### ARTS OF THE BOOK IN SOUTH ASIA

August 2021 – November 2021 | Typically Wednesdays, 6:15 – 8:30 pm IST | ONLINE



Krishna returns to Dwarka with Jambavati. Folio from a dispersed series of the Bhagavata Purana  
Nepal ca.1800. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Stella Kramrisch Collection, 1994. 1994-148-614

This course covers Southasian arts of the book from the 12<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, focussing on illustrated histories, mythological stories, religious texts, and poetic works. Courtly as well as religious contexts of book-making will be considered; speakers will explore the different aspects of book patronage and production, including the nature of workshops and libraries, the formation of visual idioms, the aesthetics of the painted page, the relationship between text and image, the roles of originality and imitation in artistic practice, and the circulation of artists, materials, and ideas across the Subcontinent and beyond. A key goal is to foster an understanding of the role of illustrated manuscripts and illuminated books in the early modern world. This course will provide a unique opportunity to learn about the arts of the book from some of the leading scholars in the field who are rarely encountered in one place.

#### Faculty Scholars:

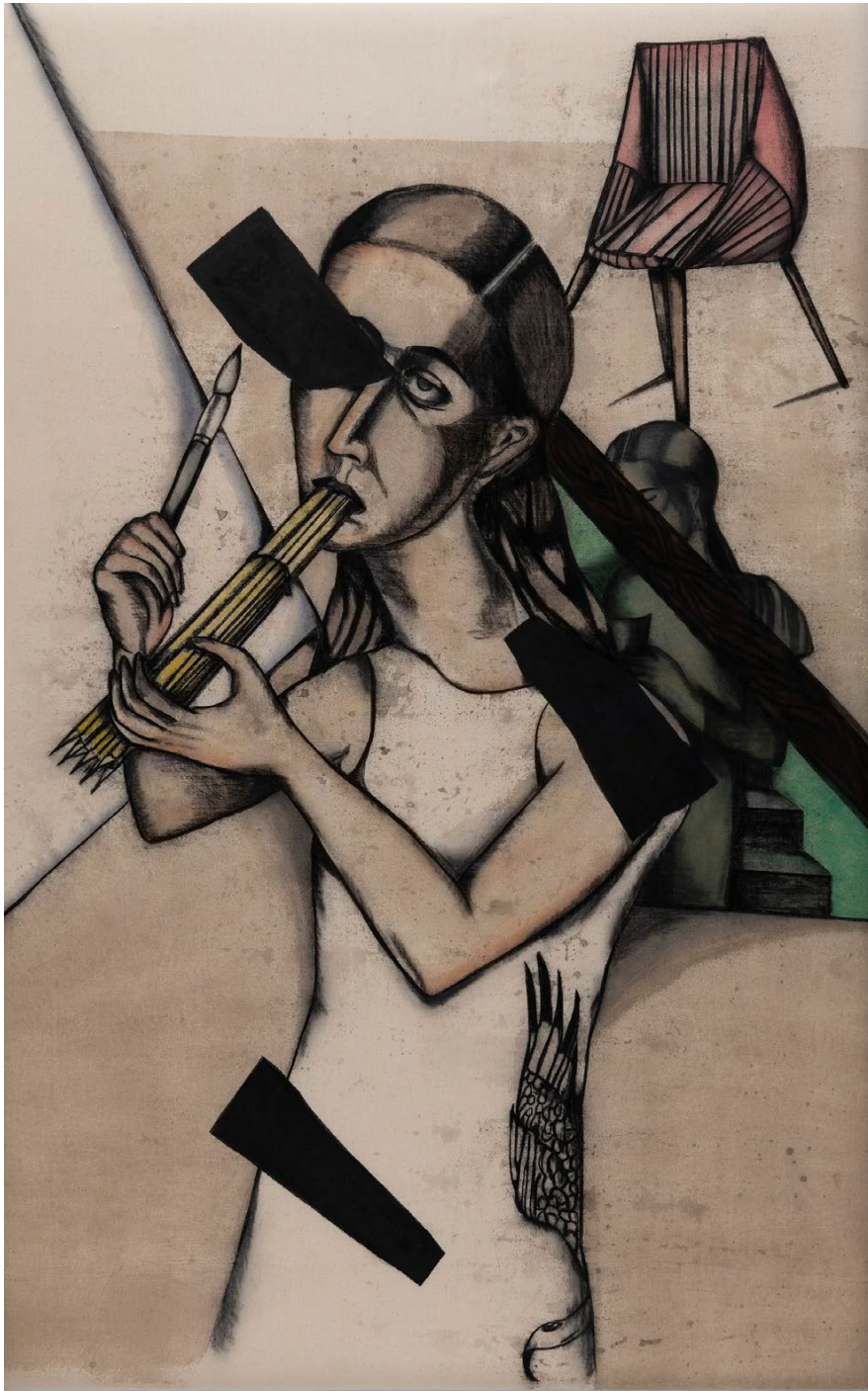
Caroline Widmer  
Daniel Ehnbohm  
Jinah Kim  
Kavita Singh  
Krista Gulbransen  
Laura Weinstein  
Marika Sardar  
Molly Aitken  
Navina Haidar  
Neeraja Poddar  
Robert del Bonta  
Yael Rice

**Fee structure:** – Rs. 15,000 | Student Discount (subject to verification) – Rs. 10,000



## POSTGRADUATE COURSE IN AESTHETICS, CRITICISM & THEORY

August 2021 – November 2021 | Typically Tuesdays & Thursdays, 6:30 – 8:30 pm IST | ONLINE



Anju Dodiya. *Studio (with Phoenix)*, 2019  
Watercolour and charcoal on unbleached cotton fabric stretched on padded board. 64 x 40 x 1 in  
Photo Courtesy: Chemould Prescott Art Gallery

Aesthetics, Criticism & Theory (ACT) is an intensive four-month online programme of in-depth seminars providing students with a rigorous introduction to art history, criticism, aesthetics, critical theory, and a breadth of artistic praxis.

The programme commences with a foundational grounding in aesthetics in Western philosophy with

careful attention to Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Foucault and the Frankfurt School. It then analyses the historiographies of Art History and Criticism through a transnational perspective, before critically looking at the colonial and postcolonial worlds, and the modern histories of South Asia. The final month focusses on contemporary debates around architecture, anti-caste struggles and resistance in art, as well as the philosophies of photography, new media and the sonic through approaches marrying theory and practice.

Students are exposed to a range of historical and contemporary creative practices through sustained engagement with scholars and practitioners who consciously move between disciplines, institutions, curating and diverse forms of making and exhibiting. ACT brings together the very best Indian and international faculty; those experienced in pedagogy that tacks between lecture, discussion, seeing and close reading.

Learning how to read and engage critically is an essential part of ACT. Scholars carefully select texts, films, exhibitions and artists for each session, and much of this material is available to the students on our online learning management-portal, JPM Think. Students are expected to come to class well-prepared.

### **For admission, you are required to submit:**

A digital copy each of your last degree certificate, CV, short bio (100 words) and passport-size photograph.

### **Fee structure:**

Certificate (subject to attendance) – Rs. 20,000

**Registration:** [www.jp-india.org](http://www.jp-india.org)

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Madras Central Train Station, Madras (ca. 1873)

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.

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