



# JNANAPRAVAHA MUMBAI QUARTERLY

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2022

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# Director's Note

The just-completed academic year of 2021-22 was, like the previous one, totally virtual. The online format has its virtue of transcending geographies, enabling us to encompass scholars and participants globally, but we miss the physical presence and interaction vital for the understanding of knowledge systems. Hopefully our experiment beginning July 2022, of a hybrid method allowing physical lectures alongside seamless streaming will not be fraught with too many challenges.

We began July 2021 with an unusually large cohort of participants for the year-long course 'Indian Aesthetics', and were dismayed to have to close registrations both for the diploma and certificate segments, disappointing a large number who we hope will be able to participate this year beginning 23<sup>rd</sup> July. The course, as always, reflects current research and will be augmented with seminars that cannot be covered by the course syllabi. One such seminar is titled 'Grafted Arts: Art Making and Taking in the Struggle of Western India, 1760-1910'.

Following our convention of addressing Yoga and Tantra in-depth once in three years, the next iteration begins on 16<sup>th</sup> August and ends 10<sup>th</sup> November. This online course subtitled 'The Mind Meeting the Body in Transformation' is situated in the socio-religious order of the historical world even as it allows the speaking of the transcendental, esoteric and mystical dimensions of an array of yogic and tantric traditions.

Due to overwhelming demand, we are offering yet another freshly minted semester-long iteration of the 'Aesthetics, Criticism and Theory' (ACT) course beginning 23<sup>rd</sup> September. While keeping intact the foundational threads which make it unique, the course will conclude with an engaged look at the contemporary through new media practices such as social media.

Details of all the above courses are available on our website [www.jp-india.org](http://www.jp-india.org).

There is much on the anvil, and challenges aplenty. Your support has always been a source of inspiration and strength as we look forward to our next encounter, virtually, or physically in our refurbished space.

With my warmest wishes,

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

Rashmi Poddar Ph.D.  
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 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



A second online iteration of Jnanapravaha's Indian Aesthetics course came to a satisfying close this summer. The lectures in these two years, held in a radically different mode, have continued the success story of two earlier decades that established our course as unique, deep, and intellectually fulfilling. This year, the absence of personal interaction between students and scholars at our beautifully restored heritage premises was amply compensated for by the global reach of the course: in a year marked by the continuance of the Covid-19 pandemic, the students and faculty of the IA course joined the online lectures from as far afield as USA and UK, and of course from several cities in India apart from Mumbai. Even more ambitious in scope than usual, IA 2021-22 saw the addition of lectures on several new topics by freshly inducted scholars to charge classes with the energy of recent research.

Augmented by studies in fields such as archaeology, architecture, anthropology, literature, philosophy and religion, the IA course gives students a comprehensive overview of the various aesthetic visions that emerged in the Southasian region over the last five millennia. As in 2020-21, this year, too, the course boasted an enrolment of sixty-



two students. We began with Dr. Rashmi Poddar's introduction to classical Indian Aesthetics through appropriate Sanskrit texts which elucidate philosophies that can provide a meaningful base to the study of Indic visual culture. The speaker dived deep into Bharata's concept of *rasa* ('taste' or 'relish' in the field of aesthetics) which was originally restricted to dramaturgy, and applied it dextrously to the visual arts, showing that *rasa* is at the root of aesthetic experience. She also elaborated on aspects of form such as rhythm, harmony, iconometry, materiality, line, colour and proportion, and their relation to the content of art as well as its meaning. Such meaning can be grasped through an understanding of the subject matter of art, in addition to iconography, iconology and symbolism. Dr. Veena Londhe's delightful exposition of Sanskrit poetics and her explication of the *rasa sutra* rounded off these foundational lectures. Dr. Londhe briefly explicated some ideas on *rasa* put forward by the peerless Abhinavagupta, who elucidated the concept of *dhvani* or suggestion as a measure of exceptionally rich poetry or art.

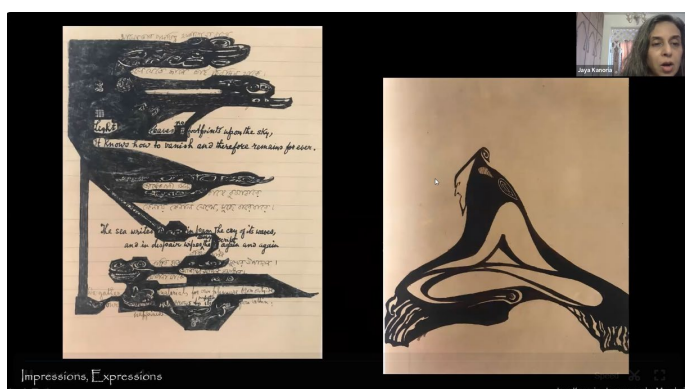
Dr. Kurush Dalal condensed recent research on the material remains of the Indus Valley Civilisation into an intensive Friday evening session that brought students up to speed with the present-day status of knowledge in this field. Buddhist and Jain philosophical positions, their narrative scaffolding and the art produced in the context of these atheistic Indic systems were elaborated by Dr. Supriya Rai, Swati Chemburkar and Dr. Viraj Shah. The sculptural and architectural magnificence of Vedic, Hindu-Agamic and Tantric systems came to the forefront in several lectures related to iconography, cave and temple architecture, and ritual practice. Funerary architecture, found in many regions of the subcontinent apart from the large power centres of Delhi and the Deccan, was used by Dr. Riyaz Latif as the base upon which an understanding of Islamic aesthetics was built. Scholars, as always, encouraged questions and discussion, and



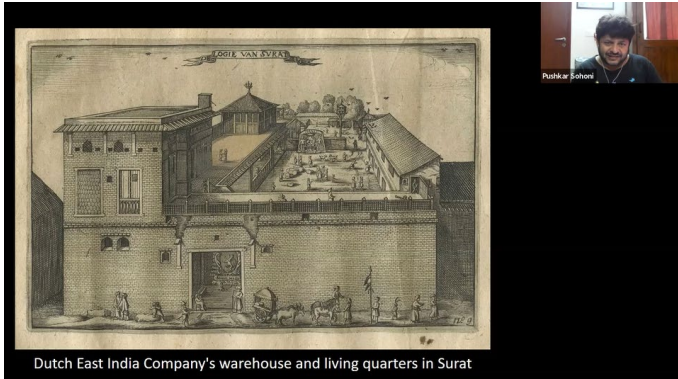
presented lectures which were no less than visual feasts augmented with ample reference to text and context: political, economic, social, and cultural.

The section of the IA course on painting began with an overview of the Ajanta Caves followed by an exposition of the world-renowned painted murals in Cave 17 by Dr. Leela Wood. Dr. Kavita Singh continued the journey into the paintings from the period before the Mughal ateliers came into their own, such as those seen in early Buddhist manuscripts. The Jainesque and the *Chaurapanchashika* style, as well as some Deccani illustrated manuscripts were also discussed in detail. A specially curated seminar series on South Indian Murals by Dr. Anna Lise Seastrand was held on two Friday evenings as part of the IA course. This series was also open to public participation and enriched the course by offering a deeper view of the art of South India. A broad yet detailed survey of Mughal, Pahari, Rajput and Deccani painting by Roda Ahluwalia formed the bedrock on which a freshly curated Saturday afternoon session on provincial Mughal painting at Murshidabad and Awadh gave students a glimpse of recent research by two young scholars, Mrinalini Sil and Dr. Parul Singh. A deep discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of Krishna *shringara* by Dr. Harsha Dehejia along with a mapping of devotional centres such as Nathdwara, Pandharpur and Puri, where related practices still hold sway, held students in thrall.

Dr. Himanshu Prabha Ray presented a lecture on Indian Maritime Historiography, a topic included in the course for the first time. She also explored the importance of the subcontinent's littoral history by looking closely at coastal shrines to throw light on the audiences that they might have served. The course then transitioned into the colonial, modern and contemporary period, using the critical ideas presented in Edward Said's *Orientalism* to discuss Company painting and other art produced during the colonial period. This session by Dr. Jaya Kanoria also examined the colonial



interventions in art and the so-called 'crafts', as well as the exhibitions of Indian art and artefacts that were held in the metropole in this period. Dr. Suryanandini Narain decoded colonial photography for participants, showing how this medium was used by the colonisers and subverted by the colonised for different purposes in the subcontinent.

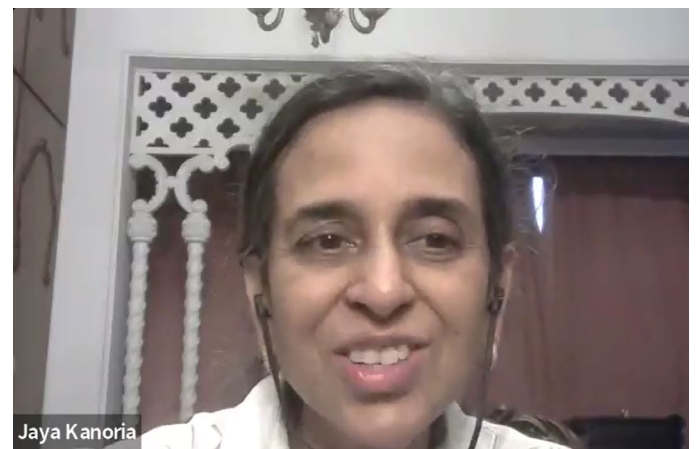


In April, the course moved to colonial and modern architecture. Dr. Pushkar Sohoni presented a sweeping overview of colonial architecture before putting forth a detailed exposition of the colonial market hall throughout the subcontinent, a subject that he has illuminated through primary research. Dr. Annapurna Garimella, an architectural historian of note, presented two thoughtful new sessions on vernacular Indian architecture after independence, in which she examined each of these terms carefully, problematising and questioning them profitably. Her primary research on the parks of Bengaluru over several years showed how close observation of human interactions with space reveal covert social, political and economic facets of our lives.



Our deep commitment to academic excellence continued this year in specially curated readings and bibliographies for every single session of the Indian Aesthetics course that were made available on our learning management portal JPM Think. The thirty students enrolled in the IA diploma have been through a stringent process of selecting and reading around three topics, providing proposals with images and sources, and writing cogent, well-composed essays and a thesis which have received extensive

feedback. Early in the course, Dr. Jaya Kanoria engaged two sessions on the basics of academic writing as she does each year. These sessions are designed both to help students hone their writing and gain more from their reading. As in the previous year, some students chose to share essays written for the IA diploma with their peers. These essays were uploaded on JPM Think so that feedback could be shared with ease. The institution takes pride in the fact that some student writing first produced for the Indian Aesthetics Diploma have found publishers in the recent past. This year, some of the topics chosen by students for the thesis submitted at the end of May were: 'Imagining, Illustrating and Interpreting: Approaches to Creating 'Copies' of Ajanta Paintings Across the Years', 'Indian Jewish Visual Art: A Study into a Baghdadi Jewish Megillah (Scroll of Esther) and Ketubah (Marriage Contracts)', 'Reframing Visual Histories: Looking at Aligarh Through a Familial Lens', 'Smile Please: A Study of the Family Photograph as an Index of New Indian Middle-Class "Familianness"', 'Angela Trindade: A Study in Style' and 'Contemporary Orientalism: Photographing the "Other" and the Ethics of Cross-Cultural Collaborations in the work of Waswo x Waswo'.



The institution, and I as director, feel a justifiable pride in the strong engagement, sincere efforts, application, and successes of our students. This year, too, the Indian Aesthetics course has been completed in a highly professional environment that nevertheless brought, in addition to intellectual stimulation and sustenance, warmth and cheer to all concerned. We look forward to running a hybrid version of the course next year, a necessity in a changed world where we are ready to face the challenge of retaining our online international audience while meeting the local hunger for academic and intellectual excellence. – J.K.



# FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

## Grafted Arts: Art Making and Taking in The Struggle for Western India, 1760-1910

August 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST | Prof. Holly Shaffer (Assistant Professor of History of Art and Architecture at Brown University)



*British Soldier in an Indian Landscape, Britain and Maharashtra, late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ink and opaque watercolor on printed paper, approx. 18 x 24 cm. Bharat Itihas Sanshodhak Mandal, Pune*

In the eighteenth century, Maratha military rulers and British East India Company officials vied for power in western India; this series conceptualises the artistic combinations that resulted as ones of 'graft'—a term that acknowledges the violent and creative processes of suturing arts, and losing and gaining goods, as well as the shifting dynamics among the artists, administrators, and soldiers who assembled such materials.

Session 1: Patrons and Artists

Session 2: Objects and Transformations

# Islamic Aesthetics

## PAST PROGRAMMES

### Ports and Shores in An Age of Sultanates: Tracing the Structures of Western Indian Ocean Trade, 1250–1500

February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST | Prof. Roxani Eleni Margariti (Associate Professor, Department of Middle Eastern and Southasian Studies, Ancient Mediterranean Studies Program DGS, Islamic Civilizations Studies PhD Program, Emory University)



Aden as portrayed in Georg Braun and Frans Hogenberg, *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, vol. 1 (1572/1612)

The series on the Mamluks concluded with a session presented by Dr. Roxani Margariti that surveyed the geography and political economy of Egypt and Syria in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries through the point of view of the sea, focussing on three port cities of the western Indian Ocean – Aden, Hormuz, and Cambay.

Ports of the medieval Indian Ocean developed into major economic and social hubs in the high and later Middle Ages. At least two distinct periods of transregional commerce brought spices, textiles, ceramics, and other luxury items across into the Indo-Pacific world as well as the Mediterranean. The trans- and intraregional traffic resulted in an accumulation of wealth and expertise in several ports at the interstices of land and sea of the western Indian Ocean. These cities and adjacent shores were controlled largely by local potentates with varying relations to the sultanates in the hinterland and more distant forelands.

Aden, Hormuz, and Cambay represent the geographies of transregional trade and regional power in the age of sultanates. Each city has a different relationship with its hinterland and state powers: Aden was part of the Rasulid realm, and the epicentre of their oceanic policy; Hormuz was an independent maritime kingdom

with a number of islands and shores in its dominion, and was associated with the Ilkhanids and Timurids; and Cambay was on the edge of the developing Delhi Sultanate, and was an important port even before it became the seat of the regional governor on behalf of the Delhi Sultanate in the time of the Tughluqs.

Each of these cities had a different trajectory and afterlife. Dr. Margariti discussed chronology and changes of the time, using archaeological and textual sources to reveal the histories of trade and society, as well as the relationship between local and regional history, and global connectivity in the age of the Mamluks.

A study of the material history began with the Broach coin hoard, a collection discovered in a brass pot by workers excavating a tank in Cambay's sister city, Broach. Among the findings were 448 gold coins and 1,200 silver coins from an astonishing range of places – Genoa, Venice, Mamluk Egypt, Mamluk Syria, Armenia, Ilkhanid Persia and the Delhi Sultanate, charting an extensive map of transregional trade dating mainly between 1260 and 1380.

Written records of the 14<sup>th</sup>-century traveller Ibn Battuta, who travelled to the region in the 1330s



and 1340s, rendered more detail. A quote from his description of Aden offered great insight into the geographical terrain and accessibility of the city.

An overview of the Rasulids, who ruled Yemen from 1229-1454, provided a window to the art and culture of the period. Of the extant material history, three Rasulid-period artefacts were studied, one of which was a Mamluk brazier (grill or heater) dedicated to the Rasulid sultan of Yemen, al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al Din Yusuf ibn Umar. This may have been one of many gifts exchanged by the two regimes. The other objects highlighted were an astrolabe and a tray, each with inscriptions providing details of possible provenance and context.

Rasulid coinage reflected the marine economy through its imagery of swirling fish on the coins. While these coin motifs may appear zodiacal, it is probable that they point to a local resonance, that is, towards the sea.

Well-preserved administrative documents reflected marine interests as well, mainly regarding controlling and taxing maritime goods such as dried and fresh fish.

In fact, the sea provided not just sustenance but also (and perhaps more importantly) luxury goods such as ambergris, an important ingredient in perfumes. Ambergris is a pathogenic secretion of the digestive system of the sperm whale. It is interesting to note that theories regarding its source proliferated from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The encyclopaedic author Zakaria al-Qazwini wrongly described ambergris as a

substance that naturally grows in the sea, like a plant, and gets swallowed by the whale. The illustrated manuscript *The Wonders of Creation*, now known as the London Qazwini, housed at the British Library, beautifully portrays this theory, showing fishermen capturing an ambergris-carrying whale.



Dr. Roxanni Margariti speaks during 'Ports and Shores in An Age of Sultanates: Tracing the Structures of Western Indian Ocean Trade, 1250 -1500

The cartography of Aden, as well as 20<sup>th</sup>-century photographs of the city and its water supply systems were studied next, after which Dr. Margariti turned the lens to the city of Hormuz, introducing it with a quote by the traveller Ibn Battuta, who described it as a "...fine, large city with magnificent bazaars, as it is the port of India and Sind, from which the wares of India are exported..." Most of Hormuz was built over by the Portuguese in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but what does survive today is its pottery, which has become a subject of renewed study in modern times.

Cambay too was introduced to the audience with a quote from Ibn Battuta's extensive travelogues: "This city is one of the finest there is in regard to the excellence of its construction and the architecture of its mosques." Unlike Aden and Hormuz, Cambay has been able to preserve many of its structures, some of which Dr. Margariti spoke of with the aid of stunning images and maps.

The session concluded with a contemplative juxtaposition of maritime economy and piety, followed by an explorative Q&A. - S.P.M.



Aden and the Swahili ports of Mombasa, Kilwa, and Sofala; Hormuz (Ormus) and Cambay in Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg's *Civitates orbis terrarum* (1572-)

# Yoga & Tantra

## Yoga & Tantra | *The Mind Meeting the Body in Transformation*

August 16<sup>th</sup> – November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022

The Yoga and Tantra (Y&T) course at Jnanapravaha Mumbai in its inception in 2013 was conceptualised with a view to revive new appreciation for the ancient traditions of yoga and tantra in the light of Indian aesthetics, philosophy, and culture. Extending from within a visual and philosophical orientation, the second edition which ran in 2016, was designed with the particular focus of bringing awareness to current research and publishing in the field. Inviting national and international scholars leading innovative research projects, and contributing to the ever-expanding field of yoga and tantra using both academic and praxis-based approaches. To trace the historical development of yoga and tantra, especially the ways in which their symbiotic relation contributed to the formation of hatha yoga around the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium CE. Y&T 2019 took this intention further, responsive to the growing influence of yoga globally, it sought to place these contemporary trends in rigorous historical context, from the pre-modern to the modern periods. Following the intermittent tradition of holding Y&T every three years, the Course is returning this August to run from August 16<sup>th</sup> to November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

To now speak about the Course in a different way, Y&T is at once a meditation on life and an encounter between the philosophical and the experiential. It is situated in the socio-religious order of the historical world even as it allows the speaking of the transcendental, esoteric and mystical dimensions of an array of yogic and tantric traditions. Yoga practitioners and enthusiasts are especially invited to further inform their current practice, and engage with internationally renowned scholars and tradition-keepers as they trace the history and practice of yoga and tantra.

### Public Seminars – Sharing Contemporary Research

As part of the course, three public seminars will be held for course participants and all those interested in October 2022.

Each Y&T seminar emphasises a specific theme within the larger context of the philosophical concepts, meta-theologies, and cosmologies of yogic and

tantric traditions as well as the aesthetics of the visual representations of those ideas (i.e., their manifestations in temple art, sculpture, painting). These public seminars are delivered by world-renowned scholars leading research projects in the field, who will share their primary material in the course of their seminars.

**In Week Eight of the course (October 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>), Dr. Shaman Hatley, Associate Professor of Asian Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston and a leading scholar of Tantric Saivism, yoga, and medieval Indian goddess cults, will introduce the audience to the world of Shakta Tantra. The three-part seminar titled '**Shakta Tantra and the Great Goddess in Early Medieval India**,' will examine the religious and historical contexts of the Shakta *Bhairavatantras*, the relationships between tantric goddess cults and popular religion, women's ritual roles and representations, the historical development of chakra systems and *kuṇḍalini*, and Shakta tantric art and material culture.**

**Week Ten of the course (October 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>) will feature Dr. Philipp André Maas, a Sanskritist, senior researcher, and currently a research associate at the Institute for Indology and Central Asian Studies, University of Leipzig, who was previously Assistant Professor at the Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies at the University of Vienna, Austria. He will deliver a two-part public seminar titled, '**Yoga and Ayurveda in Ancient India**', in which the first lecture will examine *Yoga in the Early Ayurveda of the Carakasamhita, one of the oldest transmitted classical Ayurveda works* and the second lecture will look at *Ayurveda and Medical Knowledge in Pre-modern Yoga*.**

In addition to these seminars which are open to the public on registration, the course will present in **Week Seven (September 27<sup>th</sup>)**, a free public seminar which will be open to all on **New Research on Physical Yoga | Findings from the ERC-funded Hatha Yoga project (2015-2020)**. The two-hour seminar will include individual presentations which will be followed by Q&A with the lead investigator of the project, Dr. James Mallinson and participating members, Dr. Jason Birch and Jacqueline Hargreaves. This presentation will cover the most significant research discoveries and developments of the Hatha Yoga Project,

including new recensions of several Hatha texts and the results of fieldwork that was carried out during the project. The philological work completed by this project has made possible the 'Light on Hatha' Project (2021–23), which is aiming to produce a new edition and translation of the fifteenth-century text called the Hathapradipika. The presentation will conclude by discussing recent findings from this new project.

Dr. James Mallinson is a returning scholar on the Course, having delivered a four-part public seminar in 2016 titled, 'Yoga and Yogis: The History of Hatha Yoga in India,' wherein in the final part of the seminar he presented an overview of the Hatha Yoga Project and a roundup of its preliminary findings. So, we're very excited to have him return to 'complete' that initial presentation along with two new members from the project, Dr. Jason Birch and Jaqueline Hargreaves, who along with Dr. James Mallinson will also be teaching on the course in this iteration.

The course is defined by its interdisciplinary character, inviting internationally-recognised scholars from the fields of Sanskrit studies and philology, philosophy, literature, aesthetics, art history, religion, and anthropology. You will find a complete list of the bios of the research scholars and faculty members of Y&T 2019 here: <https://www.jp-india.org/scholars/>

You will find the entire course lecture schedule here: <https://www.jp-india.org/courses/yoga-and-tantra>

### **A Word from the Course Director**

The Course is not so much interested in identifying first causes and origins of the human condition. Rather, it endeavours to bring awareness to, through the exploration and discussion of the variegated traditions of yoga and tantra, our own conditioned positions and by extension responses to life's deeper mysteries. It invites compatriots who feel called to undertake such a journey for the purpose of self-inquiry and informed practice.

Why am I directing this course on Yoga and Tantra at Jnanapravaha Mumbai? Because yoga has been a big part of my life-story; I grew up in a yoga-inspired home. My mother, a trained yoga teacher from the Yoga Institute, Santacruz, Mumbai (a historic institution teaching yoga since 1918), has been teaching yoga there since 1998. I completed my teacher's training in yoga from the same institute in 2001 and taught there intermittently over five years (2001-2006). Also, the happy chance to work with my academic mentor, Dr. Rashmi Poddar, was not an opportunity to be missed!

When I learned about JPM's 'Yoga and Tantra Course: Concepts and Visual History' (the first edition, 2013), I was excited to attend an academic course on yoga and tantra with an aesthetics concentration, a pioneering programme being offered in Mumbai, India. And to be invited to run the programme as Course Director in its second edition (2016) was a true honour and privilege– that continues to hold meaning six years on.

I was an early beneficiary of the Indian Aesthetics programme (IA), which I completed in 2002. Then, IA was a diploma programme certified by the Department of Philosophy, Mumbai University, formed under the aegis of Dr. Rashmi Poddar. It was a formative programme that shaped my academic journey – I went on to pursue a Master's in Archaeology, Indian History, and Culture at Deccan College, Pune; worked for three years in the applied field of cultural tourism at the Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation in Udaipur; and completed a second Master's degree in Social Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, writing a dissertation that compares the practice of yoga in Mumbai and London. I currently shuttle between Goa, Himachal Pradesh, and Mumbai in the main as I carry on with my ongoing research interests including therapeutics and yoga in the transformation of trauma and grief; the body and creative exchange at the edges and intersections of yoga and the larger field of movement and somatics.

I'd like to finish here fully mindful of the invitation: a potential expansion and obvious limitation of embarking on an introductory course on yoga and tantra, using one of the first quotes I picked up and internalised as part of my own sadhana and teacher training in yoga, quoting Vyasa: "Yoga must be known by means of yoga; yoga manifests itself through yoga."

I sincerely wish that Y&T 2022 sparks your interest and imagination, proves to be purposeful for you, and that you are able to participate to whatever degree possible in this moment.

In shining the light on yoga and tantra,

**Gazala Singh**

*Course Director*

*Yoga and Tantra: The Mind Meeting the Body in Transformation*



# Buddhist Aesthetics

## PAST PROGRAMMES

### Art and Architecture in the Pala Period

March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> & April 06<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST | Dr. Pia Brancaccio (Associate Professor of Art History Drexel University, Philadelphia, USA)



*Manjuvajra Mandala, Pala period, 11<sup>th</sup> century, Black stone, Dimensions: H. 46 in. (116.8 cm); W. 24 in. (61 cm); D. 7 1/2 in. (19.1 cm), Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, 1956. Metropolitan Museum of Art*

One of the wonderful things about JPM is that it occasionally provides a forum for scholars to talk about research that is still a 'work in progress', where they feel free to share their ideas and conjectures which may hitherto only be tentatively supported by evidence. Starting 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022, on three successive Wednesdays, Pia Brancaccio (PB) presented her recent work on Pala art and architecture, which she began with a candid disclaimer that Gandhara and not the Pala world has been her main interest for research.

*Session 1: The Pala Artistic World* was devoted to sculpture. In *Session 2: Building Buddhism in the Pala Period – Bodh Gaya and Nalanda*, PB covered the architecture of the famous and some not so

well known but equally important monasteries like Kurkihar, Teladha, Jagjivanpur and Somapura in Paharpur (now in Bangladesh). In *Session 3: Pala Art on the Go*, she dealt with the circulation of portable images and manuscripts.

There were three themes which stood out. First, that the Pala kingdom was a well-organised state, centred around Magadha. The symbolism conveyed by their art emphasised the geography of the Pala world, and at the centre of this universe was the great Sakyamuni who attained enlightenment in Bodh Gaya.

Second, that while the rulers patronised and promoted Buddhism, it coexisted, perhaps uneasily, with the Brahmanical religions. Even within Buddhism, the prevalent Mahayana and esoteric sects jostled amongst each other for attention.

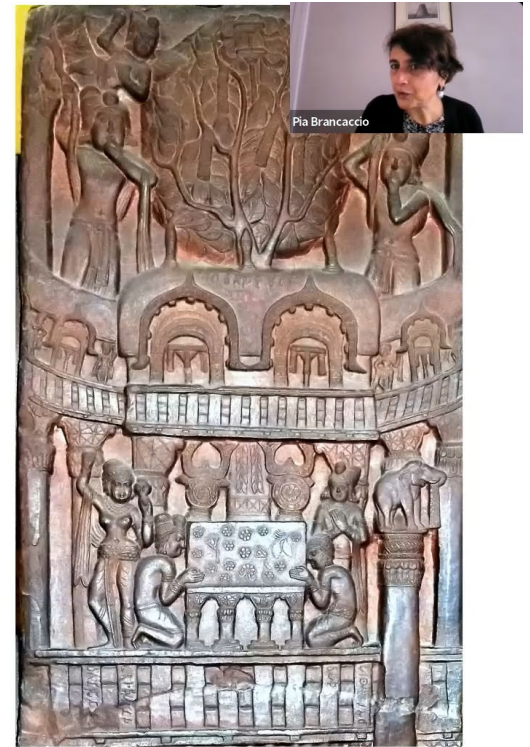
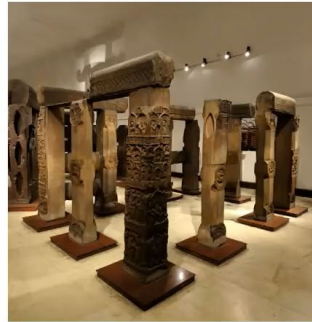
Third, an earlier Buddhist doctrine, which equated with offerings of objects, and had the 'ye dharma ...' verse written on it, with the sacred body of the Buddha, was popularised during their reign. This paved the way for the expansion of holy sites since it did not have to depend on the scarce supply of relics.

The broad themes apart, PB's presentation was rich with images concerning style, evidence for inferences, and iconography – for example, how to distinguish between a Mahayana and Vajrayana image. At several points, she referred to evidence that the predominant form of Buddhism in the Pala reign was Mahayana and not Vajrayana, as is generally believed, although esoteric Buddhism became very visible in the latter part of their reign. Then there were findings of the analysis of the hoard of 226 bronzes found at Kurkihar, and how the magnificent seven-foot-tall copper Buddha (at the Birmingham Museum), made by the lost-wax method, had remnants of straw which enabled it to be carbon dated to 600 CE.

Returning to the theme of the Pala empire, it is known from various copper-plate grants (and some rulers are confirmed by inscriptions on stone and bronze

## Bodhgaya before the Pala

- 3<sup>rd</sup> BCE: Material remains date the site to the Maurya period. The sacred landscape of the precinct or *bodhimanda* was marked by the Bodhi-seat shrine uncovered by Alexander Cunningham in the nineteenth century and still visible at the base of the Bodhi tree.
- 1<sup>st</sup> BCE: A stupa, a sandstone railing around the tree and some monasteries were erected.



Bhagavato Sakamuni Bodhi

donations) that the dynasty emerged in about 750 CE with Gopala, after the Guptas weakened in Magadha and Madhyadesha. Their origins are not known but this dynasty, whose name means 'guardian', filled a vacuum in the region. There was a succession of rulers who spanned an impressive period of almost three centuries, such as Dharmapala (775-812), Devapala and Mahendrapala (who straddled the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries), Mahipala (c. 988-1038), and Ramapala (c. 1077-1120), who was the last major Pala king. They were defeated twice by the Gurjara-Pratiharas, but in turn, the Rashtrakutas defeated them and left the Palas in charge of eastern Bihar and Bengal. Following Ramapala's death, the Sena dynasty ruled until the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, after which the region was ruled mostly by Islamic invaders.

The copper-plate inscription of Mahendrapala, from Nandadirghi *vihara* in Bengal, suggests a sophisticated administrative structure. The inscribed plate, weighing 11.85 kg, has a standard royal design and is written like a contract in which the king guarantees land, which is administered by a *samanta* (feudatory) to a monastery. The inscriptions are written in *siddhamatrika*, they invoke the Buddha, and are followed by a *prashasti* to the king, with details of the measurement of the land and its purpose, blessings, and the name of the executor (the *duta* or emissary of the king). These inscriptions provide a lot of information about the administrative structure of an agrarian society, an economy which is in touch with the Maldives (where *cowrie* shells come from), and the implied control of

resources by the kings via the *samanta* and probably the monastery.

Further evidence for a very organised administrative structure is the recognisable black stone, chloritoid phyllite (Asher), which is the trademark of Pala sculptures in most places other than Nalanda and Bodh Gaya. This basaltic stone was smooth, and from the traces of red pigment, it was inferred that it was probably painted in gold or covered in gold leaf. Since this stone was available only in the Matadih district of Bihar, its acceptance as the raw material for sculptural donations, and the expense to transport is suggestive of a centralised administrative structure which controlled it.

This is also true for the copper used in Pala bronzes and land grants. The source has been traced to modern-day Hazaribagh, and PB conjectures that the mines were probably overseen by monks. An interesting aside is that most of the so-called 'bronze' sculptures have not been tested, and contain varying amounts of copper and other metals, whereas bronze should strictly be copper with 12-12.5% zinc.

Evidence for the second theme, the key focus of Pala patronage of Buddhism, comes from many sources. It was not unusual for kings to support many religions, and there is evidence that the Palas gave grants to Brahmanical sects as well. However, they put their weight behind Buddhism, perhaps because they did not have a respectable genealogy to fall back on. Moreover, the monasteries probably provided

a counterpoint to the power of the *samantas*. The Palas did this by generously supporting the existing monasteries, or *mahaviharas* as they came to be called, such as Nalanda and Telhara, and building others with huge libraries, cells to live in, and considerable funding for repairs, maintenance and the provision of food, books and writing implements for monks.

Abhishekh Amar has plotted a “constellation” of 33 sites in the region, which he calls “settlement shrines”. They include important monasteries such as Nalanda, Kurkihar, Telhara, and Vikramashila. PB believes that this was to create a circuit for a pilgrimage, as is evident from the 93 inscriptions found at Kurkihar, mainly by visitors from other countries. Using Google Maps, PB estimated that many of these monasteries are about a day’s walk away and suggests that this cannot have been a coincidence.

Nalanda was a clear beneficiary of Pala patronage. Archaeological digs have shown that the main temple, known as Temple 3, and three or four *viharas*, were built during their reign. It is supposed to have had a library of nine million books (an exaggeration) but also housed an estimated 1,000–4,000 monks. In order to ensure that the money was spent well, the Palas used cheap brick for construction. The abundant clay in the region was also used to make the plaster for the monumental sculptures, which were placed at



the entrance of the *viharas* or in the courtyard of the *viharas*.

By the time the Palas came to power in Magadha and the eastern part of the subcontinent, it seems that Buddhism was in decline. The Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya, which was amongst the holiest of places for the Buddhists, had competition from Vaishnava and Shaivite sects. For example, the Vishnupad temple, just a few kilometers away, observed a ritual which involved the worship of Vishnu’s feet (*pada*), which is similar to a popular Buddhist ritual of worshipping the feet of Sakyamuni. In turn, the Buddhist pantheon started incorporating Shaivite rituals, goddesses such

as Tara became more popular, as did the goddess Marici, who is shown in a Devi-like pose but standing on a carriage drawn by seven pigs (referencing the seven horses driving Surya’s chariot).

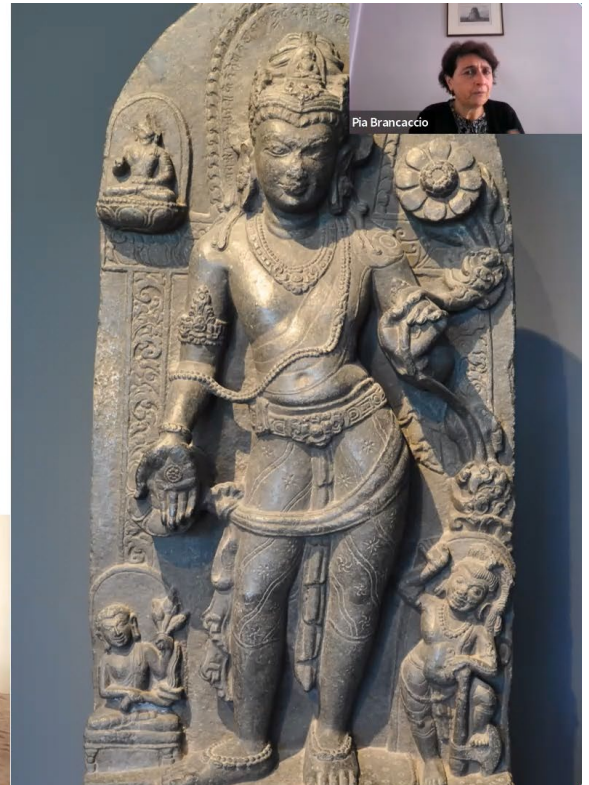
Evidence of an uneasy coexistence between religions also comes from Xuanzang (602–664), who records that the Bodhi tree at the Mahabodhi temple was cut, and an image of the Buddha above the diamond throne had been replaced by an image of Maheshwar by King Shashank in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. In a 17<sup>th</sup>-century historical text, Taranath writes that a silver image of Heruka, at Vikramashila monastery, was melted and made into coins by Sravakas from Sri Lanka, who considered Vajrayana practices as the work of Mara.

Taranath had a pro-Vajrayana agenda – he writes that Gopala became the first Pala king because he was directed by a *siddha* to gain the blessings of goddess Chunda, a form of Devi. His writings probably influenced the notion that esoteric Buddhism was predominant in Pala times. However, scholars like Alexis Anderson have argued that the predominant sect in the early Pala period was Mahayana, but later ceded ground to the esoteric sects. This is based on evidence from writings of Yijing (653–713) and Xuanzang (who may also have had an agenda) and corroborated by material evidence from the iconography of bronzes and sculptures. For example, in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries of Pala rule, the Buddha is usually shown in *bhumisparsha mudra* with a *prabhavali* of eight important life events. However, signs of esoteric practices are hinted at from the time of Mahipala (1027), when the Buddha is shown wearing a crown (which represents a royal initiation ceremony), signifying that he is no longer the enlightened ascetic.

The monastery at Somapura, in Paharpur in Bangladesh, is an incredible monument. It is designed like a *mandala*, and PB was able to convincingly compare it with a *thangka* of a later date and show how celestial buddhas, usually Vairocana, Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amoghasiddhi, and the elaborate hierarchy of deities and Bodhisattvas, would have been placed. The likely iconography of this *mahavihara* has more elements of the Vajrayana sect. The deities and animals depicted in clay relief at the base of this monastery are sometimes interpreted as icons of esoteric Buddhism. However, PB said that a range of similar icons are seen in other monasteries as well, such as Jagjivanpur and Nalanda, where they are more likely to be auspicious icons to demarcate sacred spaces which were generally accepted by the people.



- Excavated sculptures are housed in the Baladitya Museum
- A number of sculptures from the site had been already moved to museums during the colonial period: the Indian Museum houses a Maitreya and the twelve-armed Avalokitesvara images from Telhara, while a beautiful Avalokitesvara is currently in the holdings of the Rietberg Museum in Zurich



The third theme which emerged was how the sacredness of text was equated with relics. Votive plaques in clay, miniature *stupas* and other portable bronze objects were found in the many votive *stupas* at Bodh Gaya, as also at Sopara and Kanheri near Mumbai. Xuanzang records that the practice of making “incense powder *stupas* five or six inches high” was common, and when enough *stupas* were gathered, they would be piled up and made into a large *stupa*. Cunningham reported that Stupa No. 40 at Sanchi was made of “scores...of these miniature *stupas*...”.

Small clay offerings – with the “*ye dharma formula*”, which concisely expresses the doctrine of *pratityasamutpada* or that of *shunyata* – with the *dharmasharir* of the Buddha, is a long one. It is mentioned in the birch bark Kharosthi text dated c. 75 CE, in Pali texts as well as in Mahayana *sutras* in later centuries (Boucher). From the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, however, it became very common, and paved the way for a massive expansion of holy Buddhist sites during the Pala period.

The other interesting development was to associate the holiness of a place with the *Prajnaparamita*, a text which explains the *paramitas* or perfections which a devotee must attain. This text became the most copied and distributed text in the Pala world. PB showed images of manuscripts from Cambridge University (which can be viewed online) and Asia Society. These texts show the important sites of the time (Krishnagiri,

now known as Kanheri, is the only one which gets illustrated twice), and also illustrate the “eight great events” in the life of Sakyamuni. Therefore, during the Pala period, you have clay objects, stone sculptures, bronzes and even illustrated manuscripts emphasising the same storyline.

Inscriptions, specially from the Kurkihar hoard, provide evidence of a tightly administered Pala kingdom which created and supported many significant monasteries, traversed by pilgrims and teachers in a quest for enlightenment. – A.S.

# 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.



# Announcements

## POSTGRADUATE COURSE IN INDIAN AESTHETICS

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July 2022 – April 2023 | Typically Saturdays 2:00 to 6:00 pm

Hybrid mode: PHYSICAL & ONLINE | Online Platform: Zoom



Vasanta Ragini  
From Ragamala series, folio 21  
Kota, c. 1680, 25.5 x 17.5 cm  
Opaque watercolour on paper

Introduced in 1999, Jnanapravaha Mumbai's academic, year-long 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 premodern, 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.

### 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)



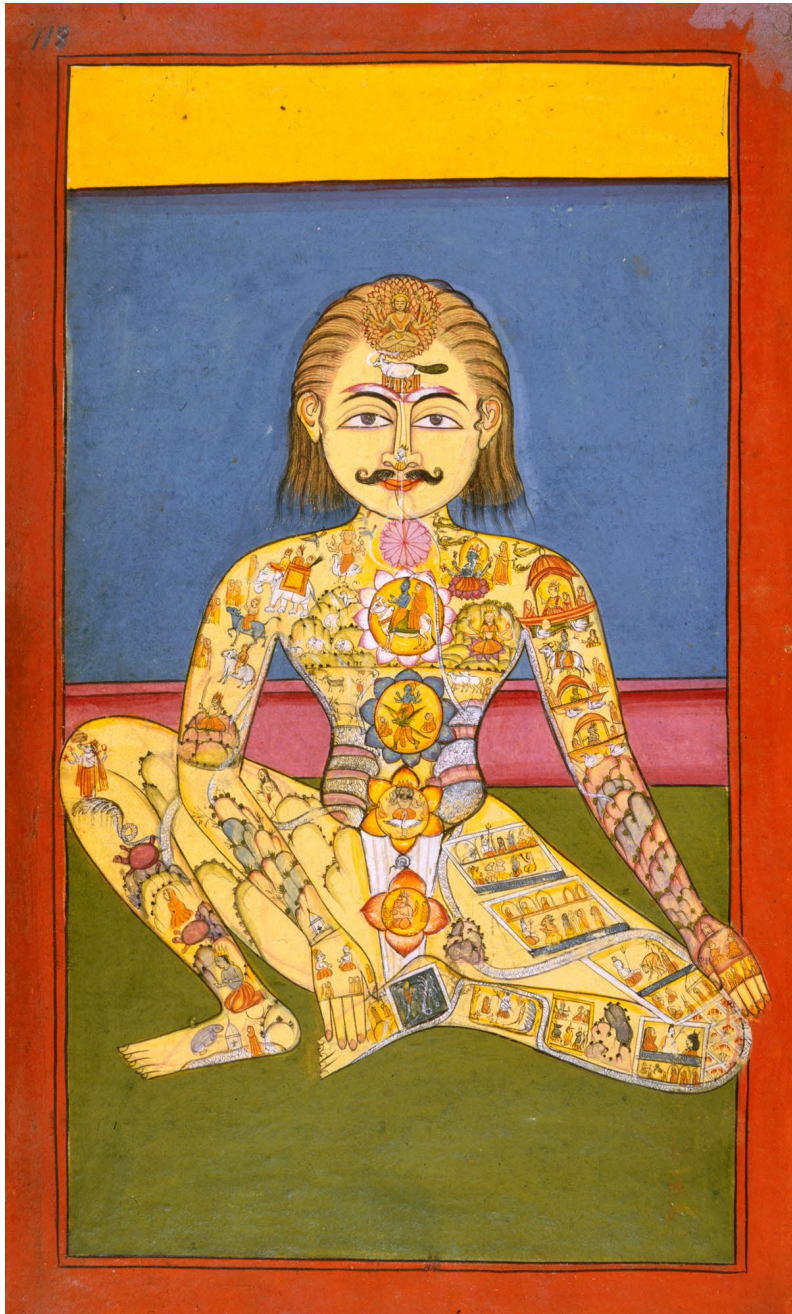
## YOGA & TANTRA - The Mind Meeting the Body in Transformation

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A semester-long certificate course offering fresh insights based on latest research findings

August 16<sup>th</sup> – November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022 | Mainly Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:30 to 8:00 pm

Online Platform: Zoom



Yogi with chakras depicted on the body  
Early 19<sup>th</sup>-century painting  
Add MS 24099, f. 118. British Library

Ambitious in scope and interdisciplinary, the Yoga & Tantra (Y&T) semester-long certificate course offers a critical inquiry into the field of yoga and tantra. A unique introductory programme, emphasising current research and publishing in the field, Y&T brings renowned national and international scholars leading innovative research projects to deliver lectures and public seminars that trace the historical development of yoga and tantra.

It aims to locate historical antecedents to modern-day practice, exploring the relation between yoga and tantra, and offers a broad understanding of the development of *yogic* and *agamic/tantric* traditions in the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain worldviews as well as syncretic interactions with Islam and vernacular *bhakti* traditions, including the *sufis* and the *nath yogis*.

Y&T is sensitive to the increasing popularity of yoga today, its globalised and modernised practices, and seeks to place these contemporary trends in rigorous historical context, from the premodern to the modern periods. The programme uses both academic and praxis-based approaches, presenting views from Sanskrit studies and philology, philosophy, literature, aesthetics, art history, religion, and anthropology.

### 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:

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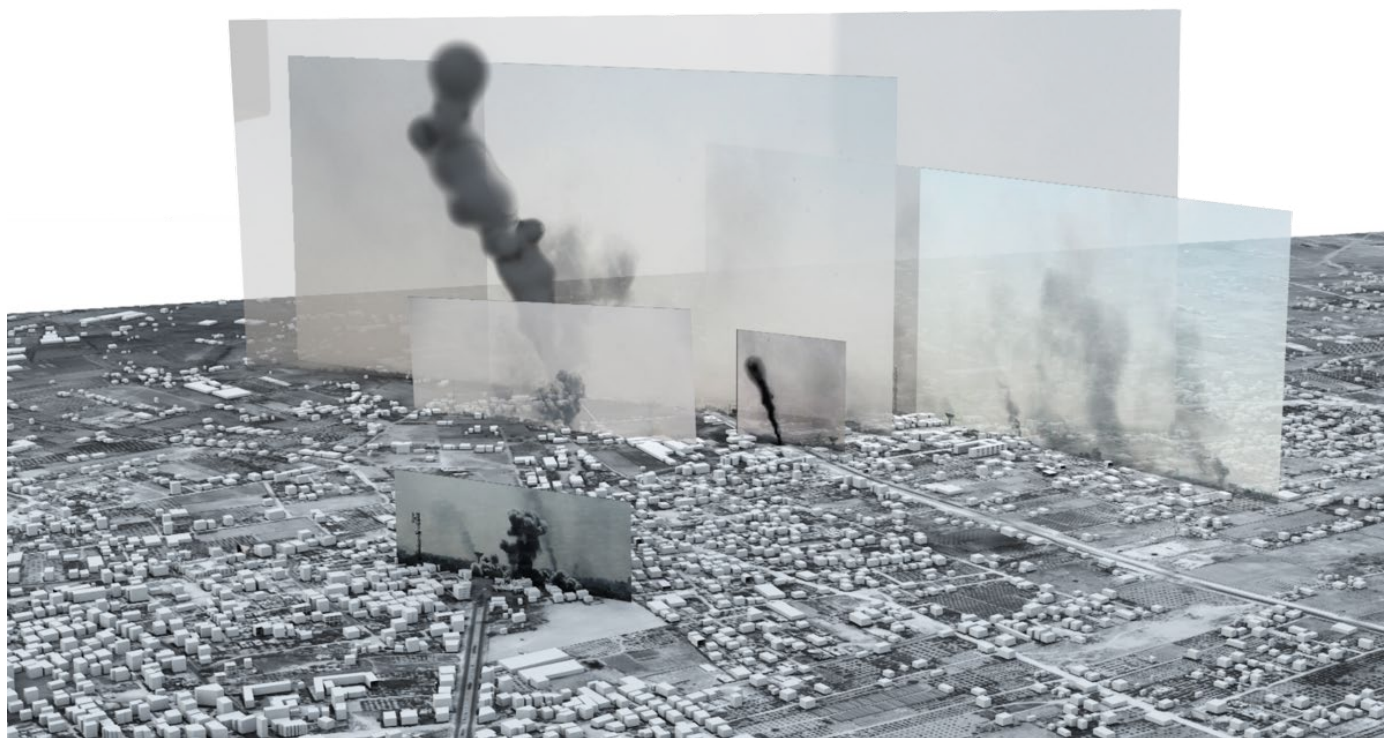
## AESTHETICS, CRITICISM & THEORY - Thinking through Constellations

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A semester-long certificate course offering fresh insights based on latest research findings

September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022 - February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 | Mainly Wednesdays & Fridays 6:30 - 8:30 pm IST

Online Platform: Zoom



*Forensic Architecture located photographs and videos within a 3D model to tell the story of one of the heaviest days of bombardment in the 2014 Israel-Gaza war. The Image-Complex, Rafah: Black Friday, Forensic Architecture, 2015*

The Aesthetics, Criticism and Theory (ACT) semester-long certificate programme offers a rigorous introduction to western philosophy, art history, aesthetics, critical theory and a breadth of artistic praxis. Led by pre-eminent Indian and international scholars working at the frontiers of their fields, the programme places current research and practice in dialogue with the histories of critical thinking.

This year, the ACT course takes a markedly fresh approach while keeping intact the foundational threads that make it unique. Its subtitle – Thinking Through Constellations draws from the seminal cultural theorist Walter Benjamin's analogy that ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars. That is to say, ideas allow us to form relationships between seemingly unrelated objects, concepts and phenomena, allowing us to draw linkages while also providing autonomy to individual ideas.

Largely focussed on the latest published research by the scholars leading the course, this year ACT moves across a grounding in western philosophy on aesthetics from the ancient Greeks to the contemporary, while also engaging with discourses on colonialism, anti-caste movements and the multiple histories of modernism. The roles of social media, art within and outside of neoliberal systems, and the use of aesthetics as a tool for discourse outside of expected boundaries are also critically examined.

### **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. 30,000

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

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# STUDENT REVIEW

## Architectural and social dichotomy in a city shaped by colonialism

Avni Singh - JPM Alumna | Indian Aesthetics course 2020-21

Light sifts through the pillared verandah of an all-white, domed building as people stroll about in a picnic-like atmosphere. The scene is one of the earliest formed memories of my childhood. The white pillars and the dome from this haunting memory belong to the Renaissance-style main building of what is now known as the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee. In Italo Calvino's book, *Invisible Cities*, Marco Polo says of the fictitious city of Zirma: "Memory is redundant: it repeats signs so that the city can begin to exist". Having conjured a memory, I will now begin to describe the city of Roorkee.

Roorkee rests on flat terrain to the south of the Sivalik Hills. It is a municipal corporation in Haridwar in the state of Uttarakhand in India. Mentioned as the headquarters of a *pargana* by the same name in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, it has been described in the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* as "a mere mud-built village on the banks of the Solani [River]" until the commencement of the Ganges Canal works in the early 1840s.<sup>1</sup> The construction of the Upper Ganges Canal by the East India Company spurred the evolution of this hamlet into a town, but the British chose the land east of the canal for all their developmental activities. The land to the west of the canal was settled by 'natives' who continued to live in *kachcha*-type constructions long after the eastern part was built over. The *pakka* constructions in the western part of Roorkee eventually took shape in palimpsestic fashion, with narrow lanes, maze-like small *bazaars* and houses constructed close together, preserving the old layout of village roads.

A close look at the current map of Roorkee (Fig. 1) prepares one for the transition that would meet the eye if one were to walk from Civil Lines over the Ganeshpur Bridge to the western side of the canal into Old Roorkee. This paper attempts to take that walk with the reader not only through the spatial and architectural evolution on either side of the town but also through the persistent cultural impact of this spatial duality that extends into the present. The paper will also delve into the colonial legacy of creating dichotomous cities with divorced blueprints, generally on either side of a metalled road or a river. The ancient city of Cairo, that was administered by the British for a significant period, presents a pertinent comparison for this analysis.

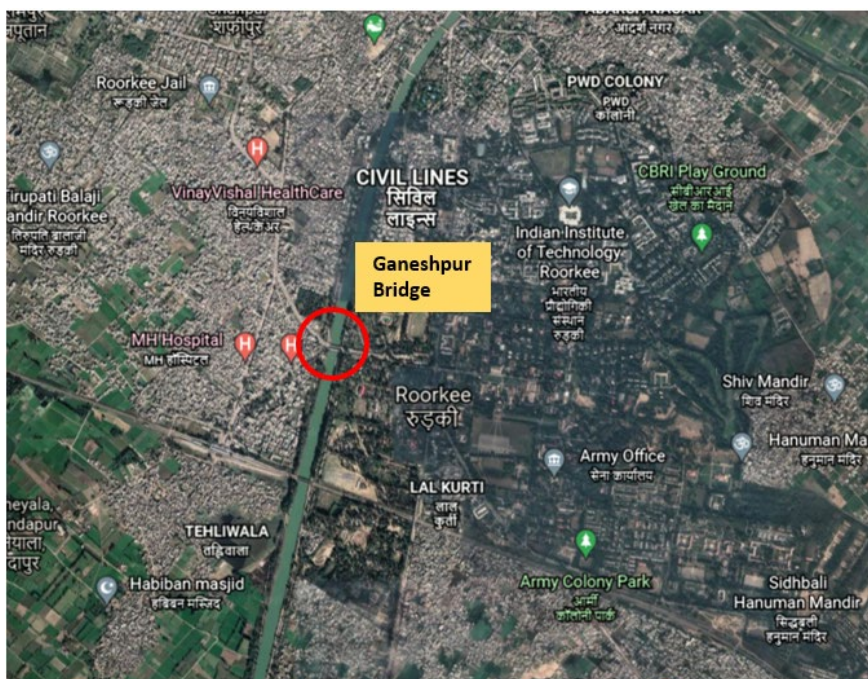


Fig. 1: A partial map of Roorkee showing Ganeshpur Bridge and the difference in construction density on either side of it

### Colonial legacy to the east of the canal

The genesis of the town of Roorkee can be traced back to the year 1847 when the Governor General of India gave his approval for the establishment of the Roorkee College. An institution that started as a training school in the year 1845 – to educate the native youth who would then assist in the on-going construction of the Ganges Canal and other public works that the East India

<sup>1</sup> Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol 21, p. 325.

company planned to undertake in India – transformed into the first engineering college of Asia in 1847. The reason for choosing Roorkee as the site of this college was given thus: “The Establishment now forming at Roorkee near the Solani aqueduct on the Ganges Canal affords peculiar facilities for instructing Civil Engineers. There are large workshops and extensive and most important structures in course of formation. There are also a library and a model room. Above all, a number of scientific and experienced Engineer Officers are constantly assembled on the spot, or occasionally resorting thither”.<sup>2</sup> Ironically, the engineering challenges that the village of Roorkee posed in the construction of the Ganges Canal – the site where the Ganges enters the high-land of the *doab* – were the factors that led to it being designated an engineering college and a *mofussil* of significance.

The order to establish the Roorkee College eventually led to the beginnings of a town. A brochure from the year 1851 – titled “Account of Roorkee College, established for the instruction of Civil Engineers, with a scheme for its enlargement” – expounded on the progress of the college since its first batch of admissions in the year 1848, while also proposing the expansion of its campus. This enlargement was approved and what was until then a small building comprising of just nine rooms (Fig. 2), was transformed into a sprawling campus (Figs. 3 and 4) by the year 1856. The name of the college was changed to Thomason College of Engineering. High ground to the east of the canal was chosen as the site for this construction. The main building,

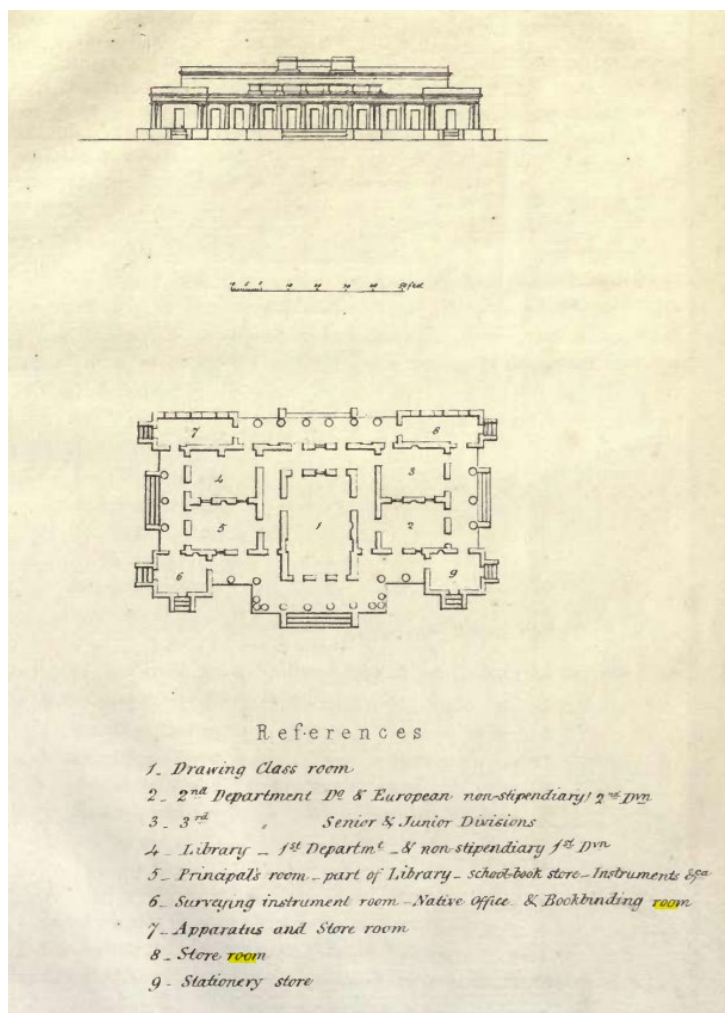


Fig. 2: Roorkee College building plan in 1851

designed by Lieutenant Price of the 1<sup>st</sup> Fusiliers, was the glorious nucleus of this transformation (Figs. 5 and 6). The symmetrical perfection of the main building, its columned entrance porch and the crowning dome were all drawn from Renaissance architecture. It is worth noting that the construction of this building precedes the beginning of the Indo-Saracenic movement in Indian architecture by a couple of years, and that it conforms purely to the European classical style.

2 Colonel Sir Proby T. Cautley. “Report on the Ganges Canal works: from their commencement until the opening of the canal in 1854”.



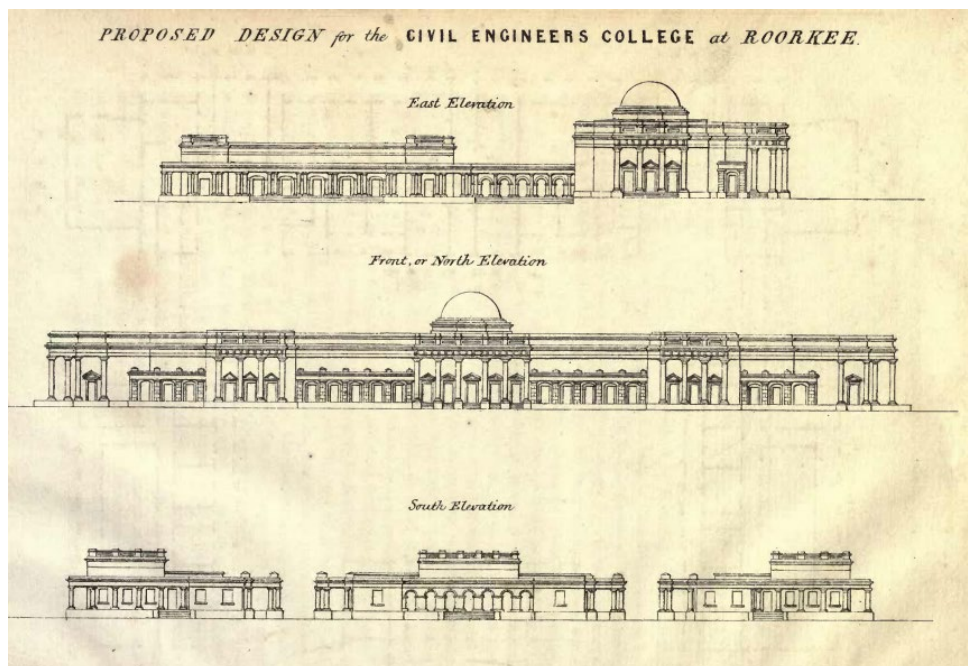


Fig. 3: Proposed design of the new buildings of Roorkee College for Engineers

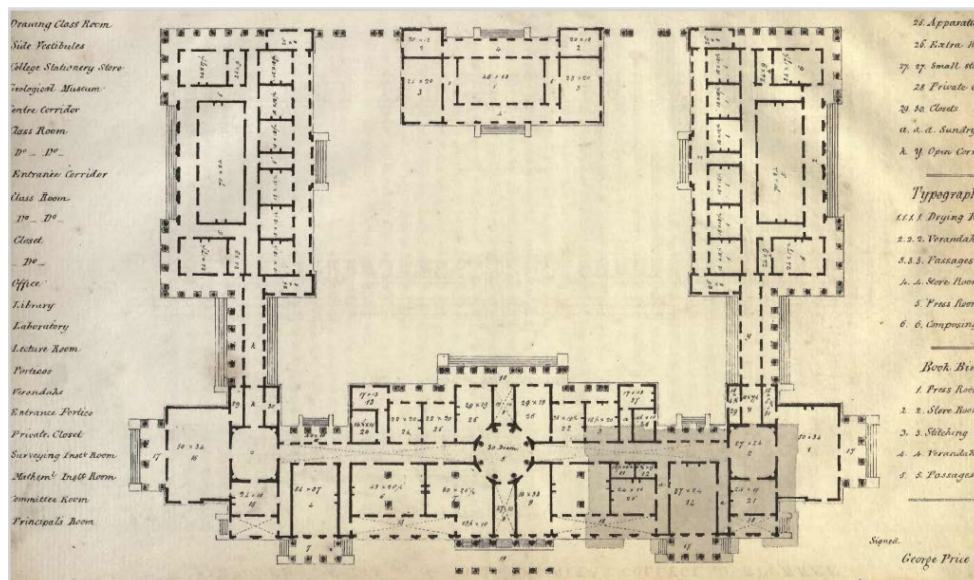


Fig. 4: Plan of the new buildings of Roorkee College for Engineers



Fig. 5: Main building of IITR on a postcard from the early 1900s





Fig. 6: A recent photograph of the Roorkee College (IITR) main building

With several officers of the Corps of Bengal Engineers involved in the construction of the canal, a cantonment area was established just south of the Thomason College campus in the year 1853 and was declared the headquarters of the regiment. The Bengal Engineer corps was originally part of the army of the East India Company's Bengal Presidency and the roots of 'bungalow' architecture are indelibly entwined with those of the Corps of Bengal Engineers. The first bungalow prototypes were built by this regiment for its officers: single-storied, *bangla*-roofed houses with big central rooms, large windows, doors and surrounding verandahs. These were generally built on raised platforms and were enveloped by lawns. As can be expected, the Roorkee cantonment and the Thomason College campus were soon dotted with such residences, introducing a new type of architecture on the eastern side of the canal.

Bungalow architecture evolved over the years and eventually came to mean, in essence, a house that stands aloof on a large plot of land and has some of the elements of the original bungalow style. The social and cultural connotations of the bungalow in colonial India stood for security and distance from the natives, while also offering a rather luxurious lifestyle, complete with a train of servants that would have been impossible for an army officer in England, the home country. During the mutiny of 1857, the European population of Roorkee took refuge in the Canal Foundry Workshop, guarded by British officers against any potential attacks by the mutineers in their corps. In an account of the mutiny at Roorkee, Lieutenant Colonel E.W.C. Sandes, then Principal of the Thomason College, had this to say about the unremarkable aftermath: "...normal life was resumed in the little station. The training of recruits proceeded in the Sapper and Miner lines. The European community reoccupied their bungalows and tried to forget the dark days in the Canal Foundry Workshops".<sup>3</sup> Life in the bungalows was everything. The comforting machinery of the household in the bungalow betokened normalcy for the British in a land far away from home.

As the number of disciplines and students increased in the Thomason College, more land was acquired to the east of the campus and further expansion achieved. In the year 1909, Thomason College acquired the land of the village of Malikpur (Mullickpoor in the map, Fig. 7) which was razed to build bungalows for its teaching staff.<sup>4</sup> The

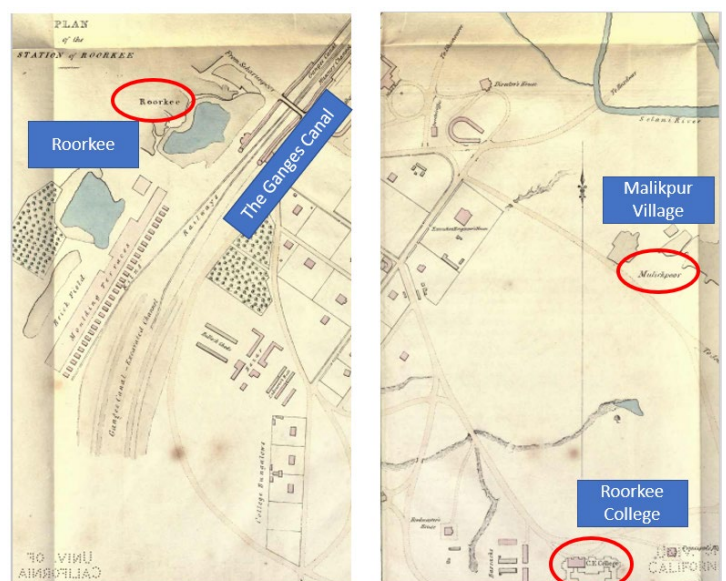


Fig. 7: The village of Malikpur on the east (Mullickpoor) in the town plan from 1851

3 E.W.C. Sandes, *The Indian Sappers and Miners* (Chatham: W & J Mackay & Co. Ltd.), 214.

4 The History of IIT Roorkee (The Institute Portal, 2007), 13.

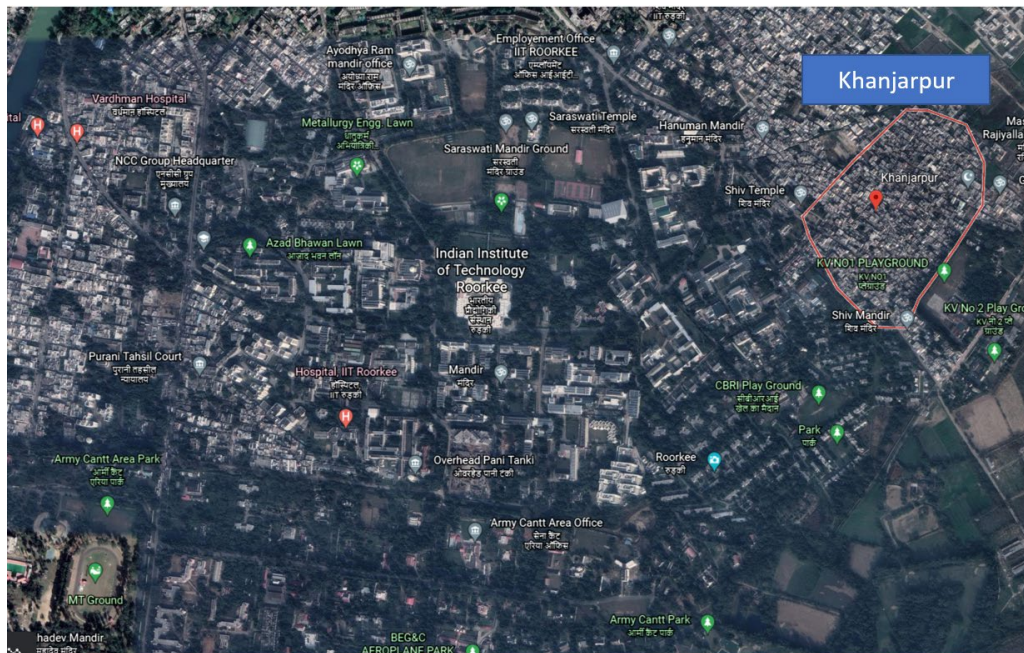


Fig. 8: The village of Khanjarpur to the east of IIT campus

an village population was pushed further east into adjacent village called Khanjarpur. Khanjarpur is still a cramped village as is evident in the map in Fig. 8. I remember walking into this village multiple times as a child, always in the company of a supervising adult. The entry point into the village – where we exited the clean, wide roads of the residential colony for government employees – was marked by a beaten dirt track with an open drain on one side and small shops on the other. The open drain ran along a tall boundary wall that kept the village out of sight from where we lived. The shops generally had tin roofs and sold cheap stuff. There was a barber's shop where I used to go with my father for haircuts when I was very young. Khanjarpur was where we went to buy terracotta piggy banks. It was where our house-help and watchmen came from. Except for the fact that internet access is now possible for the people who live in this village, almost everything else has remained the same as it was twenty-five years ago. All of this was also true fifty years ago when my father was a child, and also when, twenty years before that, my grandfather came to Roorkee as a young man. It appears that the colonial structuring of the surroundings and its social implications have spilled over into the present. The din of an independent India has not reached over the boundary wall, at least not into this village.

### Post-independence architectural evolution in Roorkee

A century after the iconic main building of the Thomason College of Engineering was built by the British, an independent India was striving to arrive at an architectural expression of its own creation. In the year 1947, the celebrated Indian architect Achyut Kanvinde was appointed as the Chief Architect of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and he led the way in sowing the element of functionalism into post-independent Indian architecture. One of the many buildings he designed for the Government of India included



Fig. 9: A panoramic view of the CBRI Roorkee building



that of the Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee (CBRI) (Figs. 9 and 10). This building was built on land taken on lease from the University of Roorkee (the new name that replaced Thomason College of Engineering after independence). This building of modernist architectural style was constructed within a mile of the



*Fig. 10: A section of the CBRI building*

Renaissance architecture-inspired main building of the University of Roorkee. The small part of the town on the east side of the canal too was witnessing a rapid change in its landscape, building style and population.

The CBRI main building reflects the idea of minimalistic simplicity, neatly maintaining the characteristic of its functional components. While the façade is designed in a manner that enables the viewer to instantly visualise the building in a cuboidal, three-dimensional perspective, the emphasis on horizontality is unmistakable. The disregard for mirror symmetry in the structure is noticeable, and the eye is often drawn to the abounding edges. The lightness that stands out when the building is viewed from a distance turns into an inclement darkness when one steps into the building. Once inside, there is not much natural light and there is a general feeling of damp heaviness, though the building remains relatively cool during the summer as a result. Interestingly, on entering the building one is greeted by an M.F. Hussain painting (Fig. 11), the free strokes of which are in keeping with the outer spirit of the building. Unfortunately, one must leave that spirit at the entrance as one climbs up the dim stairways and into corridors and rooms lit by tube lights.



*Fig. 11: Painting by M.F. Hussain at the entrance of the CBRI office building*

It would be incongruous to compare the modernist, post-independence functionalism of the CBRI building with the colonial luxury and aesthetics of the IITR main building. The circumstances of construction, the sources of inspiration and the resources at hand in the case of the two buildings stand in stark contrast to each other. However, such a comparison will be constructive in an attempt to grasp the variance in impressions that the two buildings invoke in the onlooker.

A postcard from the early



1900s, meant to be sent back home to England and carry the 'view' to the recipient, has the IITR main building on it (Fig. 5). This photograph is a wide-angle shot of the building and has consciously included the sprawling lawns and human figures within its scope, in keeping with what Gilpin termed 'picturesque' representation.<sup>5</sup> This can be seen in other postcards from the time as well (Fig. 12).

The post-independence photographs of Indian buildings by photographers such as Madan Mahatta and Sunil Janah are reflective of the functionalism of the photographed architecture. According to Tillotson, "Any work of art is in some sense an interpretation of its subject; but where the subject is itself the product of design then it has its own aesthetic; and this is a constituent part of the subject, with which the artist's interpretation can be in sympathy to a greater or lesser degree".<sup>6</sup> Post-independence photographs reflect the photographers' and the viewers' relationship with architecture. This is a relationship of familiarity and the subject's belonging, an instinct possibly stemming from the emotion of having just broken free of foreign rule. I could not find photographs of the CBRI building from that period, but other iconic buildings designed by Kanvinde and his contemporaries have been photographed in a manner that reflects such a sense of belonging (Fig. 13).

Soon after the construction of the CBRI building was completed, new department and hostel buildings began to come up in the University of Roorkee campus. Even though only a few of these, such as the Civil Engineering department and Afro-Asian hostel (Figs. 14 and 15), were designed by Kanvinde, most of them reinforced the minimalistic and functional elements that were seen in the CBRI building. In addition, the aspect of natural light and connection of all parts of the building to front-lawns was improved upon. The university campus eventually became an architectural *mélange* and continues its movement in this direction. The colonial buildings came to be looked upon as antiquity, specially by the new generation born after independence.

Fig. 12: St. John's Church at Roorkee on a postcard from the early 1900s<sup>7</sup>

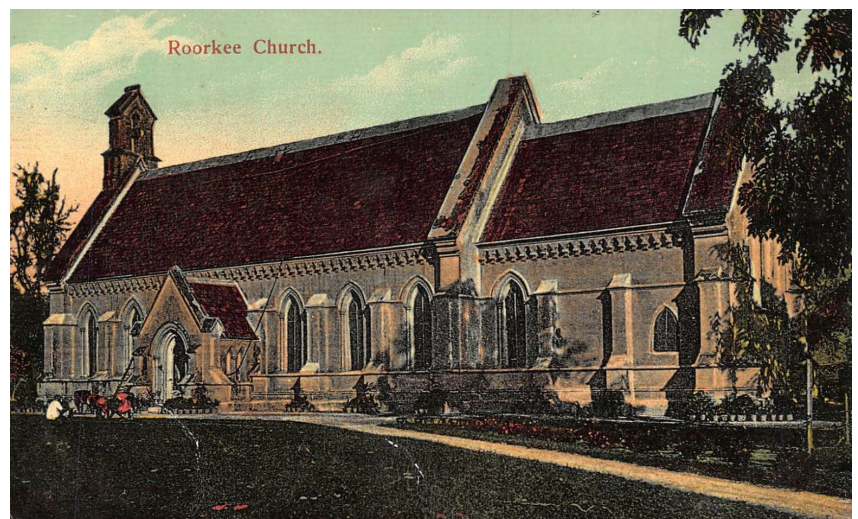


Fig. 13: A Madan Mahatta picture of the Gandhi Memorial Hall designed by Kanvinde & Rai

5 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/1151698/three-essays-on-picturesque-beauty-on-picturesque-travel-and-on-sketching>. Accessed 25 May 2021.

6 G.H.R. Tillotson, "Indian Architecture and the English Vision", *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1991), 63.

7 <https://picclick.co.uk/Collectables/Postcards/Topographical-Rest-of-World/Asia/India/>



Fig. 14: Civil Engineering department, IIT Roorkee



Fig. 15: Afro-Asian hostel  
(now Khosla International),  
IIT Roorkee

With the establishment of CBRI and the transition of Thomason College into a university, the number of employees in both institutions increased and there was an immediate need for residences for them and their families. Bungalow-style residences were a luxury of the colonial past. More people needed to be speedily housed in smaller spaces. Hierarchy was a prevalent criterion in deciding the amount of space a particular quarter was to be given. Right at the top, the head of the institute's residence, in both the university and CBRI, still conformed to the expansive spread and style of a colonial bungalow. The symbolism of authority and superior rank still rested within the idea of a bungalow. Some of the professors in the university continued to reside in the old bungalows from colonial times. New accommodations for other teaching staff and scientists, in the university and CBRI campus respectively, were built somewhat in accordance with the bungalow blueprint, but sloping roofs and large compounds were no longer features that were in evidence. The most recent development in housing for the teaching staff in IIT Roorkee is the construction of residential towers with flats. Hill View building is an example (Fig. 16).





Fig. 16: Hill View apartments, IIT Roorkee

For the employees of lower rank, quarters were cramped, miniature versions of the bigger houses. It is interesting that the plots of land on which these were built were the same in size as those of the bigger houses. However, the built area was minimal, with the front-lawns and the backyard occupying almost three times the area of the construction on these plots.

### Quietude to hubbub – developments to the west of the canal

The map from the year 1851 in Fig. 7 shows the western side of the canal marked as Roorkee. *The Imperial Gazette*, as noted earlier, calls it an inconsiderable village of mud-built settlements. The map does not even represent those settlements. The two ponds that have been marked on this map are now low-lying, densely populated landfill areas and constitute neighborhoods such as *Purani Tehsil* and *Sati Mohalla*. The only trace of British activity on the western side of the canal is the Old Christian Cemetery (Fig. 17) that can formally be dated to the year 1920 and has an entrance with a pointed arch in the Gothic style.



Fig. 17: Entrance to the Old Christian Cemetery, Roorkee

As far as the British were concerned, the western side of the canal played the role of the 'native' *bazaar* in the tripartite structure of Cantonment-Civil Lines-Native settlements that most British stations established. Before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the area just west of the canal began to be urbanised with *pakka* constructions, but this urbanisation did not have planned new roads or sewer lines. The aspirations to own bungalow-like detached houses travelled this side

of the canal only in the mid-1900s. Most neighbourhoods that were urbanised early had community-driven designs of construction. Some parts of the old city continue to remain the same as before. The streets are narrow and the houses on opposite sides of the street almost peek into each other. The façades of the houses give an impression of smallness, but on entering them, one is welcomed by open-to-sky verandahs surrounded by large rooms on all sides, giving a sense of space. Open drains run along both sides of the street.

The Partition brought refugees to Roorkee and a significant number were settled in a neighbourhood called Ramnagar Camp in the deep west of the town. The arrival of these new people with exposure to different architectural styles and culture altered the town's landscape. Most of the refugees were people who had once been wealthy, and some of them had managed to carry their wealth with them through the hardships



of the Partition. The small, content town was now challenged by the spirit of ambition and a knack for highly profitable businesses. Soon, big houses came up in the locality, or old ones were brilliantly renovated. The city was introduced to a new kind of architecture with *chhajjas*, balconies or big windows opening onto the street, in the fashion of a traditional North Indian *haveli* or *kothi*.

There were merchants in Roorkee who had begun to acquire wealth a few decades after independence. The timing of their coming to wealth matched very well with the availability of village lands for sale, in the manner of real estate. There was a steady rise in the construction of private bungalows in the vicinity of Civil Lines. Rich business owners wanted to live in bungalows now, emulating high-ranked government officials. The area adjoining Civil Lines was soon full of bungalows that belonged to rich people who ran businesses, and occasionally to retired army officers and government employees. But this small space was soon saturated and new land for construction had to be looked for on the western side. Apart from residential settlements, school buildings, government colleges, public and private hospitals began to appear on the western side of the canal. The town gradually expanded and transformed into a city.

### The chasm in the bridge

The change in name from Thomason College of Engineering to University of Roorkee after independence was highly symbolic of the way the institution was perceived by the native population. Until 1947, the university was under total control of the British residents and the campus belonged to them. The natives outside it did not have free access to the campus and seemingly had little inclination to venture into strictly British territory without purpose. But post-independence, the university campus began to generate pride as an important signifier of this small city. From 1947 to 2001, the campus was largely accessible to the public. In the years that I was growing up (1991-2001), the front lawns of the university main building were a place of recreation for anybody who wanted to be there. However, the university was declared an IIT in the year 2001 and efforts to install a gate for the campus began immediately. The general public was not allowed to enter without a pass or a verifiable purpose for their presence there. The drive to secure the campus for students and staff was relentless and focussed. Restrictions on the utilisation of IIT amenities by CBRI and the population of the cantonment were put in place. The main building lawns could literally not be stepped on anymore. Even now, so much as a child stepping on the grass by mistake draws a whistle and chiding from a guard.

Time elapsed before some compensation for the loss of the city's recreational area came into being. Eventually, parks and recreational spaces were planned along the canal, mostly on the western side. A promenade and a street-food corner by the canal are now prominent spots in the city. Though there have been sincere 'green city, clean city' drives for some time now, the administration has struggled to keep the promenade clean and free of notoriety. The most recent amusement added to the public spaces of the city is a selfie point that declares, 'I love Roorkee'.

The difference in the way two geographical communities in the same vicinity entertain themselves or celebrate festivals reveals different lifestyles and the historical use of the spaces they occupy now. Fêtes a few days before Diwali are usually organised separately in the cantonment, CBRI and IIT campus every year. In the month of March, there are flower shows in each of the campuses. There is considerable movement between these three communities at the time of these events as well as otherwise, which is not true for the people outside this small area. However, fêtes on the western side of the town have always been open for all and are of the traditional nature of a *mela*. *Ramlila* and a grand *Ravan-dahan* on Dussehra can only be witnessed in the old city.

As Roorkee continues to engulf the villages around it and expand, the part of the city with colonial relics now forms only a small portion of the whole. New bridges have been built over the Ganges Canal to connect the two sides, even as the wound-like chasm in the metaphorical bridge between their cultures and social structures remains largely unhealed. The two sides label each other. 'Intellectual class' and 'business class' are commonly used terms, even if those designated in this dichotomous manner sometimes share the same neighbourhood in private residential colonies. This cultural chasm has become permanent in the collective consciousness of this city.

## The Cairo chronotope

Cities with two inseparable but conflicting blueprints in juxtaposition are a reality in all nations that have been inflicted by imperialism. This physical, architectural contrast has manifested itself in a prominent manner as socially and culturally dichotomous cities. Just as the two-fold façade of the small city of Roorkee near the foothills of the Himalayas reflects this colonial legacy, so also the metropolis of Cairo, the great al-Qahirah of ancient times, is a city palpitating with two disparate limbs.

The following accounts of Cairo from the years 1889 and 1909, respectively, could be true in spirit for an orientalist's account of almost any colonial city:

*...with the polo, the balls, the races, and the riding, Cairo begins to impress itself upon you as an English town in which any quantity of novel oriental sites are kept for the aesthetic satisfaction of the inhabitants, much as the proprietor of a country place keeps a game preserve or a deer park for his own amusement.*<sup>8</sup>

*European Cairo...is divided from Egyptian Cairo by the long street that goes from the railway station past the big hotel to Abdin (palace)...And it is full of big shops and great houses and fine carriages and well-dressed people, as might be a western city...the real Cairo is to the east of this...and...is practically what it always was.*<sup>9</sup>

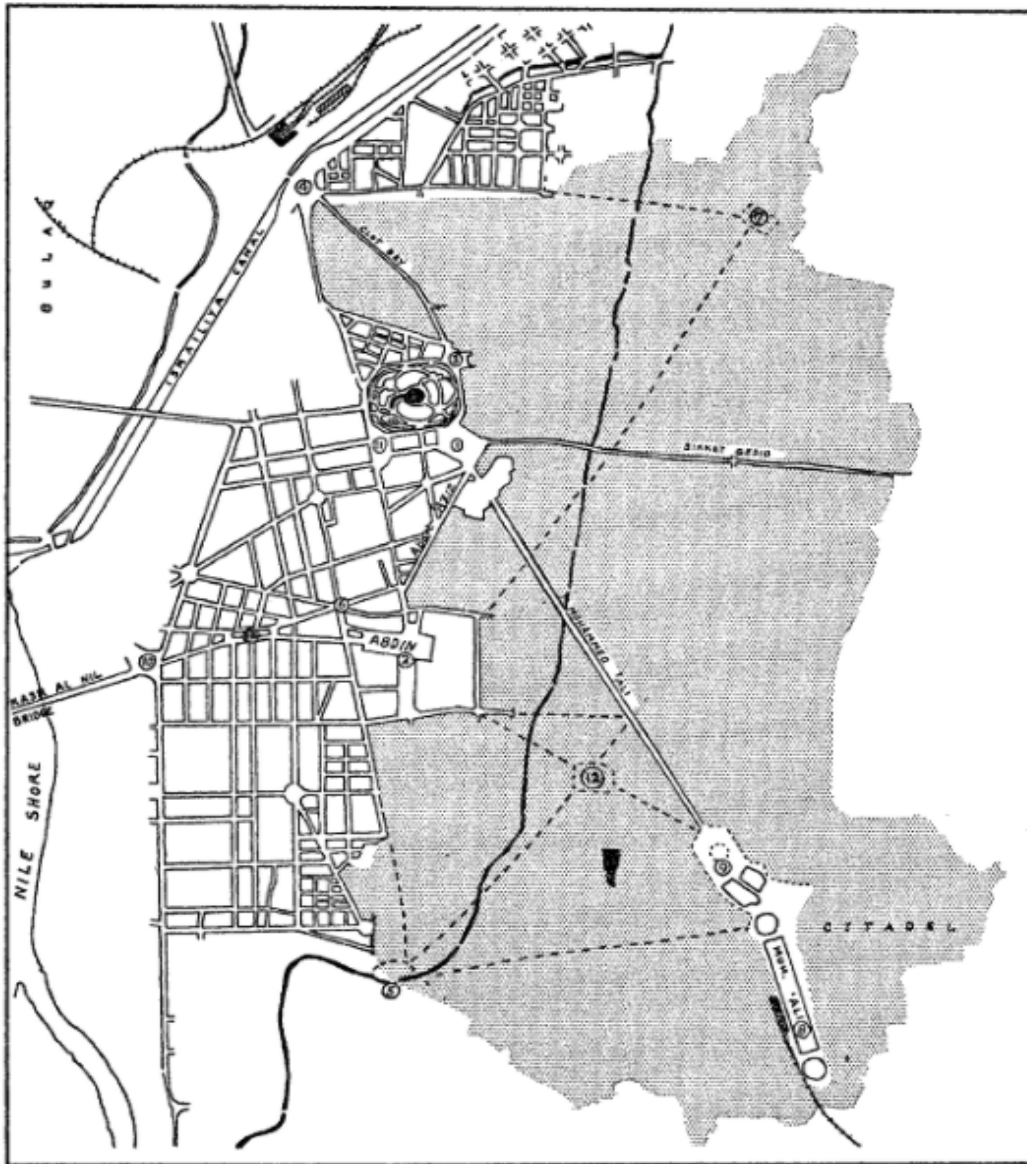
A look at the map of Cairo will reiterate the conflicting patterns in the layout of Roorkee and many other towns and cities with colonial pasts. The railway station road in Cairo, constructed by the British a century and a half ago (Fig. 18) is still representative of the division in the structure of the city today (Fig. 19). This road (now the Port Said road) neatly cuts away the old settlements on the east from the colonial, though almost equally dense, settlements of the west. The structural and cultural boundaries between the two sides are more blended today than at any other time since the colonial period. Even so, they seem to be two insulated pieces put together, inseparable in the dependence of one on the other, even as the separation seems to have become insurmountable.

It is a thought-provoking coincidence that some of the human resources who acted as the agents of historical architectures and constructions in the British colonies were common. Sir William Willcocks and Sir William Edmund Garstin were two civil engineers educated at the Thomason College of Engineering, Roorkee. They began their careers by working with the Indian Public Works Department and were then moved to the British colony of Egypt. Sir Willcocks went on to propose and build the Old Aswan Dam. Sir Garstin, an advisor to the Egyptian government as Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Public Works, was the one to grant an excavation license and a suitable digging site to Lord Carnarvon in 1905, who roped in Howard Carter as the excavation supervisor in 1907. The rest is well known as it culminated in the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun.

Due to the overall congestion in Cairo, a 'New Cairo City' has been raised some thirty kilometers to its east. The practice of creating ever new cities with the same names continues in developing countries to accommodate an increasing population in urban settings, or sometimes on political whim, but quite often for both reasons. A New Bombay and a New Delhi were created and now the dream of a 'newer' Delhi is in its nascent stages as government-commissioned constructions march on in a country that has slowly bled through a pandemic. There is a continuance of the will to segregate different parts of cities in post-colonial, self-governed democracies. I will end with words borrowed from Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*: "Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else."

8 Janet Abu-Lughod, "Tale of Two Cities: The Origins of Modern Cairo", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (1965), 430.

9 Janet Abu-Lughod, "Tale of Two Cities: The Origins of Modern Cairo", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (1965), 430.



Map 1. City of Cairo showing existing settlement (grey) and new additions and changes planned by Ismā'il c. 1867.

Fig. 18: A map of the city of Cairo showing existing settlement (grey) and new additions and changes planned in 1867



Fig. 19: A present-day map of the city of Cairo. The railway-station road constructed by the British is marked in blue



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