



# JNANAPRAVAHA MUMBAI QUARTERLY

JANUARY - MARCH 2023

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# Director's Note

As we look forward to the new year, we find ourselves navigating a different mode of communication, a new normal, with our courses. 'Hybrid' is definitely the preferred method, giving us access not only to the finest international resource scholars but also to audiences worldwide, thus providing opportunity to a wide swathe of the interested and curious-minded to sign in. However, the buzz of a real live space with endless conversations and rich discussions is incomparable - not to mention the famed 'chai' that accompanied such exchanges. Sadly, we find audiences preferring the confines of their private spaces compelling enough to not want to participate in person. Large numbers sign in for our seminars and lecture series but only a fraction of them attend in person in spite of being local, and the legendary scholars available in the flesh! One wonders whether the charmed encounters of yore will return....

One such legendary scholar amidst us last month was Prof. Richard Davis, whose nuanced insights of the worlds of Indic religion are essential readings for both undergraduate and graduate courses. He magnanimously shared his research from a soon-to-be published book, giving us much to mull over and respond enthusiastically. The detailed report is in the inner pages. Similarly, another such scholar, Southasian painting specialist Prof. Molly Aitken, will be with us in early January, leading us through the surface, depth and bewilderment found in feminine representations of Mughal painting. This three-part series, along with four parts, one on 'Multiple Modernisms - Europe, Asia and Beyond' by Dr. Chaitanya Sambrani, will certainly set the tone for a joyous new year.

The Mughals continue to rule - they were the subject of a fascinating seminar - their funerary monuments, embedded with deep religious symbolism, were situated within the context of prevalent Islamic beliefs systems, thus demonstrating the manner in which their architectural choices were made. The coming quarter will also address the life of Humayun Padshah - Inventor and Visionary on the Mughal Throne, the second and least appreciated of the six 'Great Mughuls'.

Much was thus accomplished in the last quarter, not least the successful completion of a transformative semester on Yoga & Tantra. The detailed report of the course, along with individual seminar reports, in this *Quarterly*, bear testimony to the immense scope of the course and the magnitude of current research being undertaken globally in this hottest of topics.

Meanwhile, the ACT course continues its enriching trajectory as does the one on Indian Aesthetics, details of which can be read in the inner pages.

As I sign off, it is with hope and warm wishes that the holiday season and new year bring joy and peace to you and your near and dear.

With my warmest wishes,



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.

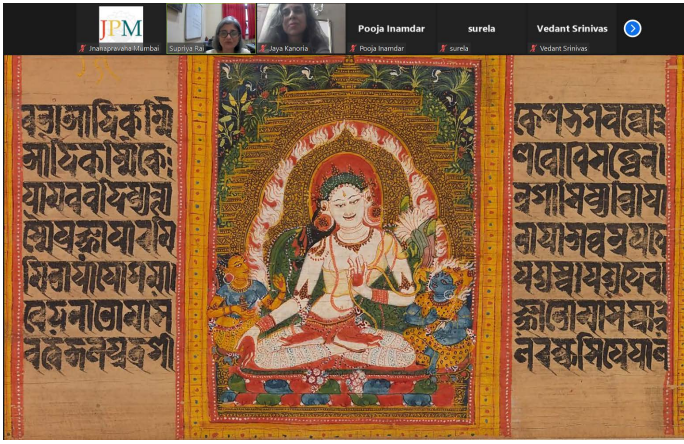
## Indian Aesthetics



Since July 2022, students have explored Indian art and sculpture through the lens of classical Indian aesthetics and *Rasa* theory, examined important facets such as form, content and meaning in relation to art, and peeped through the window at Sanskrit poetics. They have also been introduced to the Harappan civilisation, and early Indian terracotta and numismatics before being privy to a comprehensive introduction to Jainism and Buddhism. Two evening lectures on the basics of academic writing, including an interactive session where students analysed scholarly writing, were also conducted especially for IA diploma students, but were open to all those enrolled in the IA course this year. These lectures provided useful tools on how to both read academic writing and write in this genre. Students submitted their first essays for the IA diploma at the end of November after a rigorous process of supervised writing.

In October, Dr. Supriya Rai elaborated on the Buddha,



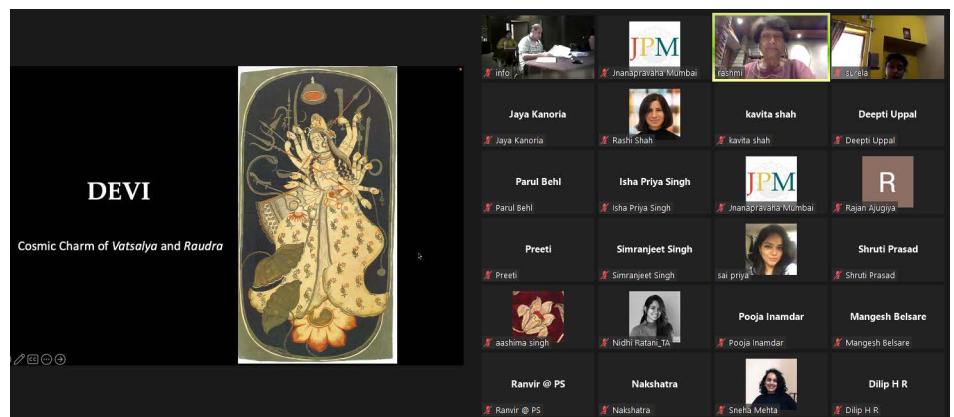


Dr. Supriya Rai speaks during '1) Buddha – Life, Events, and the 3 Bodies: Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, Nirmanakaya; 2) Dhamma – Early Buddhist Philosophy: The Noble Truths, Doctrine of Dependent Origination; 3) Sangha – Tripitakas'

the *dhamma* and the *sangha*, exploring the philosophical concept of the three bodies and the doctrine of dependent origination put forward to explain the ideas of the creed by Nagarjuna. The speaker examined both *Theravada* and *Mahayana* Buddhism, using art to show the differences and commonalities between these sects which both looked back to the Buddha's teaching in discrete ways. She also used stories, myths and legends to illuminate the subject. Swati Chemburkar's session on *Vajrayana* Buddhism left students spellbound; she dwelt not only on the use of the horrific as auspicious in these esoteric sects of Buddhism but also examined the highly political nature of tantric Buddhist practices deployed in the present day by personages such as the Dalai Lama. The second half of her session illuminated the connections between medical practices and knowledge on one hand and *Vajrayana* Buddhism on the other.

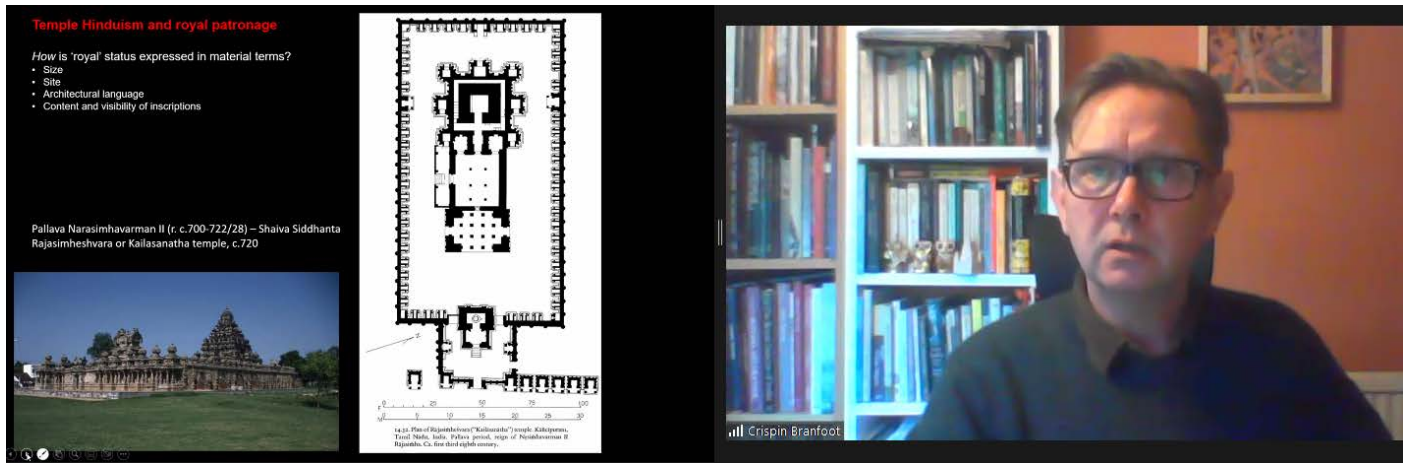
The strategy of using stories was adeptly deployed in the section of the course on iconography by Arvind Sethi and Dr. Rashmi Poddar. Arvind Sethi delved into the complexity of Brahmanical iconography, showing that there is no simple way in which to understand the numerous figural forms found in temples throughout the subcontinent. His sessions included the iconography of Surya, Ganapati, the *ashtadikpalas* and the *navagrahas* as well as major deities such as Shiva and Vishnu, the latter in all his *avatars*. The sessions used stories, myths and legends to explain the inclusion of

specific iconographic details. His richly illustrated lectures elaborated on the importance of space and place, introducing students to not only the deities but also to the present location of their images and icons. Dr. Rashmi Poddar's session on the divine feminine, designated as *Devi* in Brahmanical literature, explored the contradictory nature of this concept and its rendering in visual art. A study of texts, philosophy, hymns and art reveals that *Devi* is both the protective mother and the fierce destroyer of evil. She is therefore the epitome of the emotion of *vatsalya*, associated with motherliness, and equally imbued with *raudra rasa* in her dangerous yet auspicious manifestations such as Durga and Kali. Associated with tantric rites and blood sacrifice, *Devi* is worshipped by warriors and *Shaktas* who draw inspiration and strength from her *raudra* persona, denoting potent might and the kinetic principle of *Shakti*. Theology designates her as the locus of supreme power, a symbol of ultimate reality, unitary and independent: she is unattached to any male god. Rather, she animates such male deities, including Shiva, through her force. Dr. Poddar introduced her session by explaining that myth and symbolism are integrally connected to meaning-making because they are used to explain the unexplainable. As such, the rationalist argument that myth is not the truth is extremely limited and problematic.



Dr. Rashmi Poddar speaks during 'Devi – Cosmic Charm of Vatsalya and Raudra Origin, Legends, Icons, Sacred Spaces and Places'

The architecture of temples confirms that they are both hallowed spaces and representations of sacred time. Temples were carved in caves, hewn out of rock and built on sacred earth. Dr. Pushkar Sohoni's exploration of the temple began with a sweeping overview of its development and morphology. The carving and design of early cave temples such as the one at Barabar indicates that



Dr. Crispin Branfoot speaks during '1) Imperial Temples, Goddesses and the Gopura in South India; 2) Festivals, Processions, and Tamil Temple Urbanism'

they followed now-lost wooden precursors. The examples chosen by the speaker comprehensively illustrated the wide variety of temples in the subcontinent, their origins in the form of a hut and how this motif plays out in these houses of worship, splitting and repeating itself in their overall structure as well as in the decorative elements that embellish them. His presentation concluded with his primary research on the relatively recent Maratha temples of Western and Central India which were commissioned by rulers who wished to make political gains through them. The temples, with their mixed and often unsatisfactory architectural styles, are largely still active. Dr. Crispin Branfoot's detailed exploration of the South Indian temple included his primary research on the ritual processions which gave life to temple towns and to the architecture of an especially South Indian feature of temples: the *gopura*. This lecture was freshly curated for this year's IA students and generated a thoughtful response. Kamalika Bose presented the hybrid temple typology of Bengal that imitates the thatched huts in the region. Terracotta and brick are used in these temples due to the lack of local stone for building. The scholar's primary research reveals that socio-political and economic exigencies led to the emergence of unique Jain temples of Bengal and Ahmedabad in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, where acculturation is evident in architecture, location, and manner of worship.

Dr. Rashmi Poddar explained that the term 'tantra' describes the anti-ascetic, anti-speculative, and heretical philosophies and practices that used radical experiential methods. Their secret nature and body-centric methods are responsible for the present-day negative biases regarding these tantric systems and their goals. Tantric practice

seeks to expand the practitioner's consciousness through esoteric and forbidden means, such as the use of *panchamakara*, that is the excipients *madya* (alcohol), *mansa* (meat), *mina* (fish), *mithuna* (sex) and *mudra* (parched grain), abhorred by mainstream practice. Such means, practised under the guidance of a *guru*, can heighten the senses and bring about the highest bliss in this very life, in contrast with the seeming deprivation of asceticism which promises salvation only in the afterlife.

Dr. Riyaz Latif's exploration and elaboration of the funerary architecture of the subcontinent revealed the aesthetics of Islam to the class. Beginning with Middle-Eastern and Egyptian examples, the scholar introduced students to premodern Islamic architecture, the tombs of the Sultanate period, as well as Mughal forms where exquisite examples such as Akbar's tomb at Sikandra and the Taj Mahal are available for study. The extensively illustrated sessions did not neglect regional architectural funerary expressions, ending with an analysis of Dawoodi Bohra *rauzas*.

This quarter makes apparent the sheer breadth and depth of the Indian Aesthetics course, and the wide-ranging topics it brings to the attention of students who now eagerly await their immersion into the painting of the subcontinent, beginning in January. The flexible hybrid format of the course caters to both online and in-person participation and has made engagement comfortable and engaging for both students and scholars. – J.K.



# Islamic Aesthetics

## PAST PROGRAMMES

### The Religious Significance of Mughal Imperial Tombs: A Comparative Perspective

November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 7:00 - 9:00 PM IST | Prof. Azfar Moin (Department Chair and Associate Professor of Religious Studies, University of Texas at Austin)

Online Public Lecture | Platform: Zoom



Sikandra Bihistabad, 1575-1625, Agra. Photo credit: Robert D. MacDougall

Dr. Azfar Moin's wide-ranging and analytical talk dwelt on the innovative aesthetics of the tombs of the six great Mughals, the largest, most elaborate mausoleums in Islamic history, and on their connections with comparable Islamic commemorative architecture, imperial religion, and kingly aspirations. The speaker began by discussing current approaches to Mughal mausoleums. Art historians have generally classified the six tombs of the great Mughals into three pairs: those of Babur and Aurangzeb, modest and open to the sky, are said to have conformed to the strictures of Islamic simplicity;

those of Humayun and Shah Jahan are thought to have been built in the Timurid mould with grand domes but innovatively set within a *chahar bagh* garden (which in the Timurid world was associated with pleasure tents and not tombs); and the final pair of Akbar and Jahangir's tombs, which are also large edifices set in *chahar bagh* gardens, but are unusual in not having domes. Instead, the remarkably innovative buildings seem to be designed as raised plinths on which cenotaphs were set (now missing from Jahangir's tomb). The scholar also noted the different patterns and languages of inscriptions (or the lack of them) on each tomb.

Before offering his own explanation of the Mughal style of tomb building, Dr. Moin presented a rapid, yet detailed account of developments in Islamic royal funerary architecture, explained its typology and logic, and compared the motivations and tomb designs of the Mughals to these earlier patterns. Dr. Moin also posited that royal tombs should be viewed through the eyes of kings because monumental architecture served sacred kingship. He argued that the relationship between religion and the king's body can be seen in tombs just as it manifests in royal oaths and coins. This relationship was one of great tension because biblical monotheism opposed the sanctification of earthly rulers, avowing God as the only true king. The biblical ban on images was meant to reduce the status of kings, since royal imagery was used to project earthly power and legitimise the state.

Dr. Moin pointed out that early Islamic commemorative structures found in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Northeastern Iran between 900 and 1100 CE mainly consisted of graves of Alid figures and smaller Persian dynasties that followed heterodox and Shi'i practices.



Dr. Azfar Moin speaks during 'The Religious Significance of Mughal Imperial Tombs: A Comparative Perspective'

Nevertheless, the broad popularity of these sites as centres of pilgrimage under the Shi'i Fatimids and Buyids spurred the growth of Sunni tombs and shrines. Between 1100 and 1250 CE the Arab Mediterranean, Mesopotamia and Iran became Muslim majority regions and Sunni dynasties replaced the Fatimids and Buyids; however, the revival of Sunni power did not lead to the elimination of Alid shrines but rather to their valorisation as non-sectarian sacred sites.

In the post-Mongol period, the imperial-saint shrine gained currency in which royal and saintly bodies were buried together in an effort to sanctify ruling dynasties. The Chinggisids embraced Alid and Sufi saints, aligning these sacred bodies with their own dynasty even as they rejected the Abbasid caliphal line. In terms of tomb architecture, the key moment came in 1302-1312 with the building of Oljeitu's imperial mausoleum complex in Sultaniyya, which had the largest dome in the Islamic world at the time. Rather than a standalone tomb, it was a complex of buildings built under a single endowment—an educational-charitable complex—and was anchored by the graves of Muslim saints and kings. This set the pattern for later royal burials in Iran, Central Asia, and India. Echoes of such a grand burial complex are seen in Timur's tomb in Samarkand (circa 1404) where his Sufi guide is also buried. The general non-sectarian attitude of the Ilkhanids and the Timurids was reflected in royal burials and the patronisation of the graves of Sayyids (from the clan of the prophet Muhammad), Shi'i imams as well as Sunni Sufi saints. This attitude was reflected in their coinage where the names of the first four Caliphs with

their epithets surrounded the centrally-placed *shahada*.

The Safavids of Iran made Shi'ism an imperial religion for the first time. However, in patronising Alid saint shrines and burying their kings with Alid saints, they were still following in a broad sense the Ilkhanid and Timurid model. However, the Safavids broke from earlier patterns by declaring their extreme partisanship of Ali. Not only did they declare the tomb of the eighth Shi'i Imam at Mashhad their imperial shrine, but also instituted the public cursing of

Sunni Caliphs and destroyed competing Sufi shrines and lineages. Their coinage included the Shi'i *shahada*, in which the name of Ali was surrounded by the names of the twelve *imams* but not the three Caliphs before Ali.

Coeval with the Safavids, the Ottomans imposed Sunni Islam upon their territories straddling the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia, a policy that was also reflected in their imperial burials. After the conquest of Constantinople, the Ottoman sultans were entombed in small, covered mausolea set behind giant imperial mosque complexes, built within the city walls to commemorate each ruler's conquest of Christian lands. Taxes collected from such lands were utilised for these conquest mosques, symbolising primarily an opposition between the Muslim Ottomans and Christian Europe, and secondarily between the Sunni Ottomans and Safavid Shi'i Iran. The Ottomans patronised Sufi shrines but did not create an imperial shrine like Safavid Mashhad. Instead, they converted the entire city of Istanbul into a type of imperial mausoleum.

In the Ottoman and Safavid milieus, Sunni and Shi'i Islam was reflected in imperial burials: the Ottoman conquest mosque and the Safavid imperial shrine. Nevertheless, the king's body in both empires was treated as above religious law. For instance, the Safavid kings, despite claiming descent from Shi'i Imams, observed *Nowruz*, the pre-Islamic Iranian New Year festival, and condoned ritual cannibalism among their Qizilbash devotees. Similarly, the Ottoman kings made an imperial custom out of princely fratricide



and an imperial institution out of enslaving Christian boys, both of which are transgressions of Islamic doctrine. Furthermore, in their post-Constantinople coinage, the Ottomans praised themselves as 'Striker of Gold, Lord of Honour and Victory on land and sea', with no mention of God or Islam. Clearly, Islam served these empires, rather than the reverse. Accordingly, royal tombs sacralised the dynasty by using symbolic and rhetorical resources, both religious and royal.



Dr. Azfar Moin speaks during 'The Religious Significance of Mughal Imperial Tombs: A Comparative Perspective'

The scholar argued that the Mughals absorbed post-Mongol sensibility in the same way that the Safavids and the Ottomans had done earlier by refusing to subordinate the royal body to doctrinal religion. However, this dynasty did not impose either Sunni or Shi'i Islam as an imperial religion, a policy that was also reflected in several of their mausolea. Dr. Moin posited that to decode the choice of design and location of Mughal tombs, we must apply Clifford and Hildred Geertz's anthropological framework of the problem of sinking status. The loss of inherited status is the unavoidable problem of monarchs. As generation follows generation and as siblings in each generation multiply, the king's genealogical distance from the heroic founder grows as does the number of competing royal lineages. To counter this dilution of status, kings must proactively manage the royal dead as well as use energetic methods of self-promotion. To promote his status, Humayun turned to astral and solar magic and the thaumaturgical skill of Shattari Sufis. He moved Babur's body twice but Babur's tomb, built in Kabul, apparently became too distant from the centre of power and wealth to remain significant in the later Mughal management of the royal dead. Akbar, early in his reign, used Timurid-style coinage and a massive

Timurid-style tomb for Humayun to raise his father's status. Perhaps Humayun's tomb, which is mysterious in its lack of inscriptions both religious and royal, was designed as a dynastic mausoleum. At a later stage, Akbar adopted Ajmer as an imperial shrine, apparently emulating the Safavid model of combining dynastic and saintly charisma. Finally, in a return to the model of kingship closer to the Chinggisid ideal, he promoted himself as the millennial sovereign who espoused a policy of *sulh-i-kull* or peace for all religious communities. This was most controversial from an Islamic perspective as it raised Akbar's status to an unacceptable degree, as reflected in the new millennial oath on his coins from this era: *Allahu Akbar Jalla Jalalahu*. In juxtaposing Akbar's name with that of God, this echoes the Chinggisid assertion: "In Heaven there is God, the One, Eternal, Immortal, Most High / On Earth Chinggis Khan is the only and supreme Lord." Such divinising claims along with Akbar's ritual association with the sun were meant to raise his status above any ancestor, including even Timur. Akbar's son Jahangir treated his father as his greatest ancestor, projecting himself as Akbar's cosmic twin. Accordingly, Jahangir's coins link him with Akbar, often alongside the sun. The Persian inscriptions on the gateway of the plinth-tomb which Jahangir built for Akbar reiterate the latter's connection with God through the sun. In Dr. Moin's view, it was Akbar's solar-derived imperial status that explains the unusual design of his tomb. Without a dome, Akbar's cenotaph which also carries his new oath, is elevated to be closer to the sun, surrounded by 72 cartouches with Persian panegyric but notably no Quranic inscriptions.

Shah Jahan, to elevate his status, moved away from Akbar and Jahangir and revived a direct connection to Timur, declaring himself 'the second Lord of Conjunction' on his coins. His distancing himself from Jahangir might explain why the latter's tomb, even though built in the architectural design of Akbar's mausoleum, is located in Lahore. Shah Jahan focussed far more attention and wealth on building the Taj Mahal, inscribing upon it a vast number of Quranic verses. But despite a major embrace of the Quran, Shah Jahan did not abandon his association with the millennium or the sun: he inscribed the Quranic chapter beginning with an oath upon the sun in the prayer niche of his mosques in Agra. Dr. Moin

argued that Shah Jahan thus sought to absorb both Islam and the millennium in his dispensation and continue, in his own distinctive style, Akbar's policy of *sulh-i-kull* or peace with all religions. Aurangzeb's modest burial alongside a saint reminiscent of earlier Timurid practice but with the declining wealth and power of the dynasty, subsequent Mughal rulers may have simply lacked the wherewithal to manage the royal dead.

In summary, Mughal sacred kingship leaned on Mongol and Timurid practices adapted to the Indic environment. Like the Safavids and Ottomans, they honoured Sufis and saints, but unlike the other two dynasties, the Mughals professed to protect all religions and sects, a policy that came to be reflected in the imperial declaration of *sulh-i-kull* as well as in several of their magnificent tombs. – *J.K.*

## FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

### Surface, Depth, Bewilderment: Propositions for Thinking about the Feminine in the Paintings of Mughal India

January 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 6:15 - 8:30 PM IST | Prof. Molly Emma Aitken (Associate Professor at The Graduate Center and The City College of New York (CUNY))

Physical with live streaming on ZOOM

Paintings are objects in relief. They are textured by paper, brush strokes, burnishing, and pigments ground to different consistencies. They bear thick dots of white, thin lac glazes, precious metal leaf, sometimes betel wings adhered to their surfaces. Here they glisten; there they are velvety. Hindustani poets, North and South, liked to imagine paintings to be like women and women to be like paintings. They took inspiration from how painters confounded skin with pigment, hung gold on ears of paint, and let translucent washes drift across bellies of colour to be confused with veils that might be lifted. These lectures are about feminine beauty as image as paint as illusion in paintings of pre-colonial North India and the Deccan. Feminine beauty was an expressive medium for artists of the Mughal era, and paintings of beautiful women invite us to think in fresh ways about what painting meant and enabled for people in Mughal times. The course moves from surface into depth and from insight into bewilderment. What we think we are holding when we hold paintings of women slips from our grasp. This is a class about unknowing what we think we know, and in the end, it is about women and also not about women at all. It is about the art of being human.

Session 1: Surface

Session 2: Depth

Session 3: Bewilderment



Two women sharing a quiet moment, Polier Album, I 4597 fol 39v, Late Mughal, 40 x 28 cm, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin

## The Planetary King: Humayun Padshah: Inventor and Visionary on the Mughal Throne

February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 6:15 - 8:30 PM IST | Prof. Ebba Koch (Working with The Aga Khan Trust for Culture on a Museum for Humayun's Tomb at Delhi)

Online Public Seminar | Platform: ZOOM

Humayun, the son of Babur and the second Mughal ruler, reigned intermittently from 1530 to 1556 in Agra, Kabul and Delhi. Until now, his numerous achievements, including winning back the throne of Hindustan, have not been well recorded. The lectures introduce Ebba Koch's latest book *The Planetary King* (Mapin 2022) which takes for the first time a holistic look at Humayun. After following briefly Humayun's travels and campaigns in Afghanistan, India and Iran during the political and social disturbances of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the first part of the lecture will draw attention to the padshah's deep involvement with literature, poetry, mathematics, astronomy, astrology and occultism and then focus on his extraordinary inventions, his planetary court and its settings. We will look at the literary descriptions of Humayun's court historian Khwandamir of the Cosmic Carpet and its use as a gameboard, and of the Floating Palace, which will confront us with the issue of ekphrasis, the verbal representation of visual objects and how it can serve for reconstruction. The second part of the lecture will be devoted to Humayun's patronage of architecture and the arts and discuss the padshah as builder and the founder of the Mughal school of painting. The presentation will conclude by looking at Humayun's mausoleum as the posthumous sum of his visions and dreams.



Humayun\_Sun\_©Jill\_Watson2021



# Yoga & Tantra

We recently completed the fourth iteration of *Yoga & Tantra: The mind meeting the body in transformation*. In a 13-week immersive journey, we examined premodern ideas of the mind-body complex in different Indic traditions, including *Samkhya*-Yoga, Jaina and Bauddha *dhamma*. We also studied the yogic body in the *Shakta* Tantric and *Hatha* Yoga traditions, alongside the practices that make for the cultivation and potential transformation of the spiritual adept/seeker. While the course may be theoretical, it does include a praxis-based approach, and in this particular iteration, we were able to blend in these orientations to a greater degree through the presence of many participating scholars who were also practitioners sharing their knowledge from their biographical context.



Ms. Rajula Shah speaks during 'BHAKTIKAAL: Walking the Word, Singing the Path'

In the **concluding week**, dedicated to the world of praxis, we had two presentations, inspired by the Buddhist tradition, speaking to the image as sacred from two artistic perspectives: the first from the world of cinema and the second from the world of painting. Rajula Shah, an award-winning filmmaker and poet whose nature of filmmaking is ethnographic, presented **BHAKTIKAAL: Walking the Word, Singing the Path**. Sharing from the lens of *bhakti*, described and understood as intense spiritual love and even 'perfect love', we watched images from her two films. The first, *Word within a Word*, following the song of *bhakti* as transmitted from the world of Kabir and Gorakh as part of an oral tradition, still alive, was presented through the eyes of the proverbial common Indian man and woman. The second film, *At Home Walking*, was an

exploration in response to her guiding question on why one goes on a pilgrimage, and then to ask herself as a filmmaker whether she was able to communicate the experience of a pilgrimage through the universal language of cinema, and whether it could go beyond the word. This film, through the act of walking, an ancient practice in the saint or '*sant*' *parampara* in the Indic tradition, traces the Warkari pilgrim making his/her journey through the equalising and democratic force of *bhakti*, renewing and continuing a connection to the flow of the radical tradition of *bhakti*, which began as early as 9<sup>th</sup> century CE as a renaissance movement in opposition to systemic cultural hierarchy and division, across the geography of the Indian subcontinent.

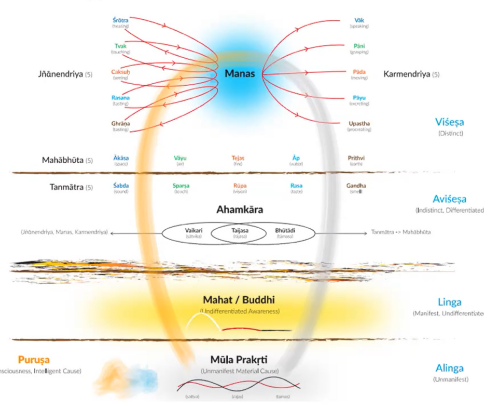
In the **final session**, we had a course participant share information and her experience regarding the traditional Newari sacred art form of **Paubha painting**, a precursor to the Buddhist *Thangka* painting. We were very appreciative of learning about this indigenous form of sacred image-making that dates to 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, from within the group, as Dr. Renuka Gurung is one of the few Nepalese women artists traditionally authorised to practice in a system which has been traditionally patriarchal. She gave us a whistle-stop tour of *Paubha*, including its etymology, its meditative process of making, and its intent and purpose, a spiritual act of earning *punya* or spiritual merit which includes tremendous discipline from the painter, and who needs to be especially initiated for the purpose from a practicing Buddhist *Vajrayana* priest. It was most fascinating to learn about the changing system of patronage of *Paubha* from the ancient past to contemporary times, including its revival, which has much to do with Renuka's contribution as a teacher in her home country, transmitting *Paubha* to young Nepali artists as part of her commitment to preserving the tradition, and also as tutor at The Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Art (PFSTA) in London, where she has been teaching since 2007.

In **week 12**, we came full circle with *Samkhya*

Cosmology as was explicated by Prof. Chapple from his book, *Yoga and the Luminous* in week 1, from a different lens though, trying to understand the mind and body continuum from the states of health, illness, and healing. This session was in alignment with one of the aims of the course: to further inform and provide meaningful insight to yoga practitioners about their current practice as they engage with a tradition-keeper of a specific yoga school. In this iteration of the course, we invited Saraswathi Vasudevan, a yoga teacher, trainer, and therapist in the tradition of Sri T. Krishnamacharya, who is often referred to as 'The Father of Modern Yoga'. Ms. Vasudevan has been a direct disciple of his student and son T.K.V. Desikachar for over 17 years, and today, is a teacher in her own right, as well as the founder of Yoga Vahini, the first school in India to receive accreditation for its Yoga Therapy training programme by the Association for the Integrated Approach to Yoga Therapy. In week 10, we began an exploration of ancient Indian medicine, Ayurveda, and therapeutics with Dr. Philipp Maas. In this session with Ms. Vasudevan, we looked at 'The Psychosomatics of Illness and Healing' as taught and practiced in a foremost living tradition of yoga in contemporary times. By providing a clear explanation of the mechanics of the mind or *manas* as understood in a modern sense as well as helping us understand the mind as understood in yoga, referred to as *chitta*, she explained the therapeutic framework as described in the second chapter of the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali through the conceptual constructs of *heyam*, *hetu*, *upayam*, and *hanam*, as the yogic approach to illness and healing.

Three public seminars were held as part of the course, which were open to all, in adherence to our commitment to help disseminate the latest research in the fields of yoga and tantra today. In **week 10**, Dr. Philipp Maas presented a two-day seminar titled, *Yoga and Ayurveda in Ancient India*. This seminar follows from the current interest in what scholars today refer to as globalised Ayurveda, which seems to be an integral part of modern yoga practice and contemporary lifestyle. But what are the roots of yoga and Ayurveda

### *Sāmkhya* Cosmology



Ms. Saraswathi Vasudevan speaks during 'The Psychosomatics of Illness and Healing: Yoga Therapeutics in the Tradition of Late Sri T. Krishnamacharya, 'The Father of Modern Yoga' and T.K.V. Desikachar'

in premodern India? Do they share common roots, and how? Can they really be called the two sister systems of knowledge? And echoing the question of Dr. Jason Birch, a collaborator of Dr. Philipp Maas, were these two systems as intimately connected in premodern times as they seem today? To respond to these questions, we invited the research scholar, Philipp Maas, who has conducted extensive research in Ayurveda in the context of a series of consecutive research projects led by Prof. Karin Preisendanz at the University of Vienna, where he was previously an assistant professor at the Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies. This project, housed at the Austrian Academy of Sciences and at the University of Vienna, aimed at delivering a critical edition of the oldest classical text corpus of Ayurveda, the *Charakasamhita*. The public seminar not only responded to these questions but also added some more pertinent questions from the world of textual criticism, helping raise our historical awareness of the Indic textual tradition and its transmission in general and in particular with reference to the *Patanjalayogashastra* and the *Charakasamhita*. Furthermore, it was most wonderful to have him deliver his well-known and well-argued scholarly position of the *Patanjalayogashastra*, being the work of a single author. You will find a dedicated piece on the seminar in this *Quarterly*.

In **week 11** (originally planned for week 8), Dr. Shaman Hatley, Associate Professor of Asian Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and a leading scholar of Tantric *Shaivism*, yoga, and medieval Indian goddess cults, introduced the audience to the world of *Shakta* Tantra. Each public 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, and painting). The three-part seminar, titled '**Shakta Tantra and the Great Goddess in Early Medieval India**', examined 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* (wheel) systems and *kundalini* (the serpentine vital force that ascends through the body in yoga), and *Shakta* tantric art and material culture. Even as the field of yoga and tantra is now fast-changing, there still remains much to be done with plenty of primary sources still left unpublished, and important texts waiting to be critically edited. Our scholar, Prof. Shaman Hatley, a textual historian, is making his fine contribution in this direction, currently studying and translating a 10<sup>th</sup>-century *Shaiva* Tantra text, *Kaulajnananirnaya*, which will result in a critical edition of the text with the aim of providing the key context to understanding the rise of body-centred *Hatha* yoga in the late-11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. He is currently collaborating with Dr. James Mallinson and Dr. Jason Birch, both scholars who taught on this iteration of the course, on a three-year project on the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century text on the eve of colonialism, *Yogachintamani* or the wish-fulfilling gem of yoga. He began the seminar with us conceptualising the category of 'tantra' through eight problems, where tantra is simultaneously traditional and radical. This seminar was very well-received and we now eagerly await his article expected at the end of the year or early next year, particularly relevant to his second lecture on the yogic body, concerning the genealogy of the tantric *chakras* and *kundalini*. As he shared with us, it shall argue for *chakras* to have a closer affinity in conception to the anatomical ideas of the body, or as was referred to as the medical body in 19<sup>th</sup>-century scholarship, a popular view of the time which was then refuted by later scholarship. A dedicated piece on the seminar will be shared in the next *Quarterly*.

In **week 9**, we had Dr. Jim Mallinson return to present ***A Historical Overview on the Nath Sampradaya Drawing on Textual, Ethnographic and***

***Art Historical Sources*** in continuation of our *Hatha* yoga lecture series. In this lecture, he tracked the evolution of the *Nath Sampradaya* from its origins in first-millennium tantric traditions to its consolidation in the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries as a pan-Indian ascetic order to speak to the current structure of the mostly-male ascetic yogis, organised into twelve (older grouping) and eighteen *panths* or lineages, as well as into the widely popular nine *Nath* groupings or *nava naths*. Even as there is no fixed grouping for the particular nine, it is indicative of a complex historical process of assimilation. For instance, as we were shown in a later development in Maharashtra, the *Nath Sampradaya* was further integrated into the Hindu pantheon with each of the *nava naths* identified with a great *devata* or deity. He drew on textual sources, including hagiographies and yoga manuals, in a variety of languages (Marathi, Kannada, Hindi, and especially Telugu, in which he has found the earliest reference to the nine *Naths* in a 14<sup>th</sup>-century text called *Navanathacharitramu*) which he supplemented with art-historical material including temple sculpture and Mughal miniatures. These included the sculptures which have received very little scholarly attention so far and are a wonderful early resource depicting a twelve-*Nath* grouping from the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Mahudi Gate in Dabhoi in Gujarat, which he and his colleague Daniela Bevilacqua first visited in 2016 and discovered that as well as having some of the earliest depictions of *Nath* yogis, they also include the earliest known depictions of complex yoga postures. Arguably, the most fascinating aspect of the lecture was to be shown photographs from his field trip to *Nath* shrines in modern-day Pakistan in March 2020, even as he has yet to write an article on his findings from the sites, which include: Nath ki Madhi in Sindh, Hinglaj, Tilla Jogiyan, Haji Rattan, and the important historical site Gorkhatri, which has been featured in a Mughal miniature depicting the visit of Emperor Babur (1590 CE).

As the lead investigator of the very successful *Hatha* Yoga Project, Dr. Jim Mallinson, along with his two participating members on the project, Dr. Jason Birch and Jacqueline Hargreaves (all of whom taught on the course) kickstarted the first public seminar of the course in **week 7**, titled, ***New Research on Physical Yoga | Findings from the ERC-funded Hatha Yoga Project (2015-2020)***. This public seminar, which was open to all, delivered



the latest and most significant discoveries and developments of the *Hatha Yoga Project* (HYP), a very successful project that has overturned many ideas that we've had about the history of yoga. An important output of the project will be the preparation and publication of the critical editions of ten Sanskrit texts about yoga, all of which had hitherto been in manuscript form stored away in libraries in India and across the world. They couldn't be bought at a bookstore before, and now some of these are being made available to read online for free and are available to purchase in hard copy, courtesy the HYP. The purpose of the project was to chart the history of physical yoga by means of philology, i.e., the study of texts on yoga, and ethnography, i.e., fieldwork among practitioners of yoga in India. A very exciting yet slow inference for James Mallinson has been a total switch from his previous understanding of these practices being really old and being written down for the first time a thousand years ago, to now believe that the physical practices of yoga were an *innovation* on the Indian scene about a thousand years ago. Through individual presentations, we learnt from his two colleagues, Dr. Jason Birch and Ms. Jacqueline Hargreaves, who have done pioneering work in bringing to light and life an important 18<sup>th</sup>-century text focussed on a very sophisticated premodern postural practice, the *Hathabhyasapaddhati*. If we are to follow their research impulse, this text could be seminal to our understanding of the history of modern yoga as applied and received in the teachings of Shri T. Krishnamacharya. The session concluded with an engaging Q&A.

Also, mid-course, in **weeks 7 and 8**, we had two sessions with course participants, where we made time for each person to share their individual insights from the lectures as well as share their own individual practice in light of the course. In conclusion here, I return to where I left off in the previous review, where you may also learn about weeks 1-7, which was published in the *Jnanapravaha Quarterly* (October–December 2022) – to find the territory even more expanded. This iteration of the Yoga & Tantra course is the third with me as Course Director (*the course is in its 4<sup>th</sup> cycle since its inception in 2013*) and is, for the first-time, online. If I may take a pause, humbled and '[staring into the lake] astonished', borrowing a thought-feeling from the poet David Whyte from his poem, *Tilicho Lake*, to describe

an inexplicable and also exhilarating feeling, with the following words shared by Preksha Sharma in personal communication with me on the heels of her earlier response (and with her kind permission):

*"From the questions in the group, I realised that most of us feel the void of not having a guru – something that our texts deem foundational to spiritual practice. At least for me, the faculty of the Yoga & Tantra course are the gurus and the Kalyan Mitras who have pointed us to a direction, and hence we now begin our journey."*

In addition, I leave you with three more reviews from our course participants:

*"I joined the Yoga & Tantra course to deepen my understanding on the interconnectedness of esoteric practices in diverse philosophical traditions. As a practitioner and student of spiritual practices, this course opened up the wide dimensions of academic scholarship currently being undertaken by renowned scholars from all over the world. We were exposed to a most amazing breadth of highly recognised scholars, their interpretations and their academic research. Known texts such as Patanjali's Yoga Sutras were discussed and analysed; for me, unknown texts such as the Amrita Siddhi were introduced and debated, we practiced Metta and breathing meditations, learned about new research findings on Hatha Yoga practices amongst a variety of lectures that spanned a range of esoteric traditions. Professors generously shared a list of highly interesting reading material and sources both as preparation for their own lectures and also for students' own further reading and interest."*

*I must take this opportunity to thank Gazala, the course director, for her commitment and the level of research, dedication and enthusiasm she put into this course. As students, we were all made to feel comfortable within the group, were encouraged to ask questions, debate and discuss. All this led to a new way of understanding and thinking on many of the topics presented. A wonderful three months!"*

- Anuradha Chowdhury-Sorabjee shares her time between Vienna and Mumbai and works with tangible cultural heritage.

*"My study of Yoga has been going on for over twenty*

years, and it will continue for the rest of my life. The Yoga & Tantra course allowed me to sink into the depth and breadth of Yoga as it moved through time, culture and religion. The academic lectures were warmly presented by dedicated and eminent scholars. We were given ample time in our lectures for dialoguing with the scholars and were encouraged to ask questions. We were able to prepare for the lectures with the reading materials provided by the scholars, and form study groups. Gazala Singh, course director, created the course with integrity, and exercised care and diligence during the course. When the course came to an end, I felt hopeful in humanity, in our capacity to develop ways to transform our bodies, minds, and ways of bringing meaning to life."

- Rachael Hammerlein lives between USA and India and works at the intersections of arts and education.

"The course brought together the lifelong expertise of academia and practitioners. Both the speakers and participants had a deep commitment to understanding the various aspects of tantra and were relentless in offering extensive content

presentations and digging into the interpretations of various topics. The scholars were open with their embodied knowledge and generous with their time. The participants were dedicated to the course and kept a close community via Telegram, which is alive even after the course ended. As a Vajrayana and Hatha Yoga practitioner, I have learned a lot about other traditions such as Jain, Shaivite or Newari. The reading list was ample - lots to work on even after the course ended. Overall, very happy to have been exposed to the rich information this course provided - it broadened my understanding of the interconnectedness of all spiritual practices. All is really one."

- Livia Constantinescu is based in London and works in capital/financial markets.

Our participants have shared with us their wish-list for future iterations and seminars, letting us know their keen desire to continue this journey, and may it be so.

In shining the light on yoga and tantra, namaste.  
- G.S.

## PAST PROGRAMMES

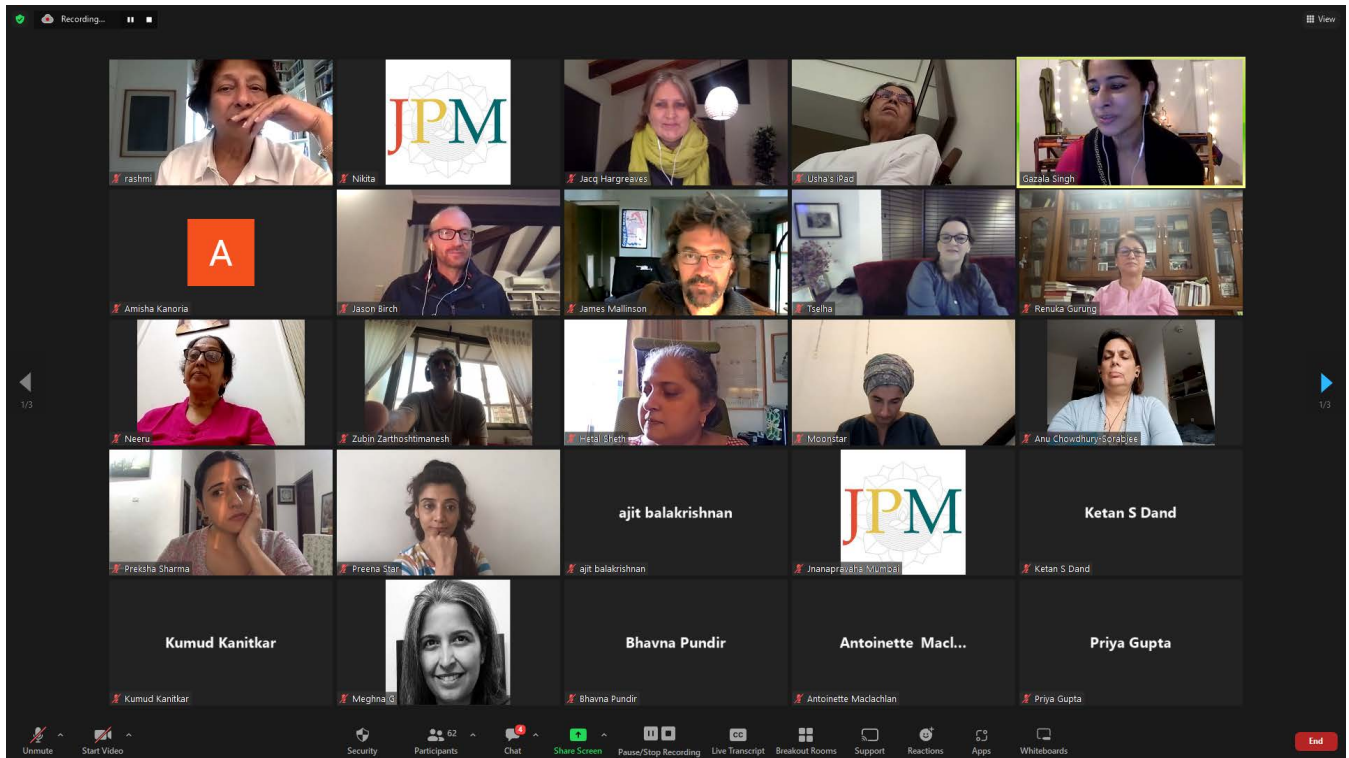
### New Research on Physical Yoga: Findings from The ERC-Funded *Hatha* Yoga Project (2015-2020) And Current Research Projects

September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 5:00 - 7:00 PM IST | **Dr. James Mallinson** - Lead Investigator (Reader in Indology and Yoga Studies at SOAS University of London and chair of the SOAS Centre of Yoga Studies) **Dr. Jason Birch** (Senior research fellow for the 'Light on *Hatha* Yoga' project, hosted at SOAS University of London and the University of Marburg) & **Ms. Jacqueline Hargreaves** (Programme Convenor for Yoga Studies Online at SOAS University of London)

The presentation discussed the most significant recent discoveries of the *Hatha* Yoga Project including new recensions of several *Hatha* texts and the results of their field work. The output is ten critical editions of the earliest possible available Sanskrit manuscripts on physical yoga, four monographs, multiple articles, and other media projects, which are open-access and available on their site. The primary methodology used for the research were philology (study of

texts), ethnography (field work in India) and art history (artifacts).

Their dynamic and contemporary research overturns our ideas on the history of *Hatha* yoga. The first text to teach physical yoga was written by Buddhists and later appropriated by the *Shaivites*. Today, we understand yoga as *asanas* (body movements) and *pranayam* (breath control). But the research shows us an evolution in the



technique, in the practice, in the context, and the practitioners. The project shows that the cultivation of the body as part of yoga (*Hatha* yoga) is only c.1,000 years old. It traces the history of *Hatha* yoga from early Buddhist (*Vajrayana*) texts to *Shaivite* practices such as *tapas* (extreme body mortification) among others, to a vast variety of modern-day yoga practices. The early practitioners were Buddhists and yogis, seekers of deep meditative states (*samadhi*). Today, *Hatha* yoga is a global movement to bring bodily strength and vitality to the general populace.

*Hatha* yoga denotes methods of yoga in which physical practices predominate. The term '*Hatha* yoga' originated in a Buddhist milieu and was first used in c. 3<sup>rd</sup>-century *Bodhisattvabhumi*, whose meaning, though ambiguous, almost certainly means 'by the application of force' or 'with effort'. The next usages of *Hatha* yoga are in *Vajrayana* (tantric Buddhist) texts dating from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, where they are associated with mastering *bodhicitta*, a term referring to the restraint of orgasm by the male practitioner in sexual ritual. The first text to teach in detail any of the practices which came to be classified as *Hatha* yoga is the c. 11<sup>th</sup>-century *Amritasiddhi*, which was composed in a *Vajrayana* milieu but rejects sexual ritual and teaches a yoga for celibate ascetics involving forcing *prana* (vitality) into the central channel (*kundalini*) through a practice involving *nada* (internal resonance). It was a change from

restraining *bindu* to *kundalini* practice. It teaches three core *mudras* - *mahamudra*, *mahabandha*, and *mahavedha*, physical methods of locking the breath in the abdomen and then propelling it up the central channel.

The first non-Buddhist text to use the term '*Hatha* yoga' to denote a specific system of yoga is the *Amaraughaprabodha* (c. 12<sup>th</sup> century), a *Nath* *Shaiva* work which identifies as *Hatha* yoga the methods of the *Amritasiddhi*, and places it second in importance in a hierarchy of four yogas: *Mantra*, *Laya*, *Hatha*, and *Raja*. The *Amaraughaprabodha* is likely to have been composed at Kadri in Mangalore, where *Vajrayana* Buddhism flourished from at least the 9<sup>th</sup> century before being subsumed within *Nath* *Shaivism* in perhaps the 13<sup>th</sup> century. That the author of the *Amaraughaprabodha* knew the Buddhist *Amritasiddhi* is clear because he takes verses directly from it. He would also have known of the *Vajrayana* concept of *Hatha* yoga, which is mentioned in the *Guhyasamaja*, whose cult flourished at Kadri (Dr. James Mallinson).

Svatmarama, the author of the *Hathapradipika* (1400 CE), incorporated a larger repertoire of techniques and synthesised diverse teachings of various yoga traditions into a cohesive system, which he called *Hatha* yoga. It encompassed fifteen postures (*asanas*), eight types of breath retention (*kumbhaka*), ten techniques for manipulating the vital energies (*mudra*), and concentration upon



the internal sounds (*nadanusandhana*). In keeping with the earlier literature, the main goal of these techniques was *Raja* yoga wherein the yogi attains *samadhi* (a deep meditative state), and *jivanmukti*, 'liberation while living'.

After the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the composition of yoga texts which teach and integrate *Hatha* yoga flourished. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the popularity of *Hatha* yoga made it an auxiliary practice for people of various religions and social statuses, including householders (Dr. Jason Birch, 2015, 8–10).

The philological work completed by this project has made possible the 'Light on *Hatha*' project (2021-2023), which aims to produce a new edition and translation of the most influential text, the *Hathapradipika*.

The ethnographical study in India correlated with the 12<sup>th</sup>-century myth of sage Dharomnath in Kutch, who is said to have stood on his head for twelve years in *tapas*, which created a flame of energy to dry the sea which, even today, creates annual open grasslands in the Rann of Kutch.

Interestingly, the seismological data tallies with the event. But there are no recorded instances of such *tapas* found earlier.

The study of art history was undertaken to complement the other sources. In Dabhoi, outside Baroda, they found the earliest depictions of complex *asana* sculptures on the Mahudi Gate dated between 1230–1240 CE. They seem to be sculptures of the *Nath* yogis in non-seated postures. In Varanasi, *Hatha* yogini Rampriya Das was photographed in the '90s in an inverted *padmasana* posture which parallels an image found on a pillar in Hampi from the early 14<sup>th</sup> century.

An absence of evidence shows that no complex yoga was practised till a 1,000 years ago. The development of yoga *asanas* seems to begin in the early modern period with the finding of numerous compendiums on yoga. Just as the physical practice of *Hatha* yoga moved seamlessly from a Buddhist to a *Shaiva* milieu at the beginning of the second millennium, so did the practice of postures move from *tapas* to modern yoga in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. - **M.M.**



James Mallinson, Hampi, Vitthala temple, 2016



## Shakta Tantra and the Great Goddess in Early Medieval India

October 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 5:30 – 8:00 PM IST | Prof. Shaman Hatley (Associate Professor of Asian Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston)

Online Seminar Series | Platform: Zoom



Detailed reportage will be made available in our next JPM Quarterly (Apr - Jun 2023).

Basohli painting of Kali being paid reverence by Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

## Yoga and Ayurveda in Ancient India

October 18<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 5:30 – 8:00 PM IST | Dr. Philipp Maas (Research Associate at the University of Leipzig, Germany)

Online Seminar Series | Platform: Zoom

Professor Philipp Maas offered an overview of the connections between yoga and ayurveda in ancient India through a careful reading of multiple recensions of important texts on these subjects. In the scholar's opinion, the contention that yoga is 5,000 years old is not borne out by the material remains of the Harappan civilisation. Beginning with a brief discussion of Southasian religious history encompassing Vedic Brahmanism, *Sramana* traditions, and the politically motivated fusion of religious identities which came about in the Kushan and Gupta period, the scholar noted that yoga and Ayurveda cannot be seen as sister sciences and that their relationship to the *Vedas* is problematic, though they share a

cultural heritage. The interconnections between Vedic Brahmanism and Buddhism make it virtually impossible to gain an independent understanding of yoga and Ayurveda in each.

The *Veda* considers causes of disease to be external demonic beings or forces rather than physiological functions; healing in these texts leans on magic and ritual. Most later Brahmanical systems, though not all, believed in a concept of cyclical time, and that *karma* or action determined not only the realm of rebirth in the world but also the quality of experiences. The cycle of rebirth made suffering inevitable and therefore ultimate liberation was desirable. The healer or *bhisaj* was



Charakasamhitā (Volume 1) Ed. by Vrajvallabh Hariprasad with a Hindi translation by Ravidatta Shastri, Mumbai: Nirnayasagar Press 1911

assigned to a low social stratum. In yoga, spiritual liberation plays a role but is not the only goal; this is understandable considering that the core ideas of the discipline were drawn from Buddhism.

The speaker discussed medical conceptions in early Buddhism that can be seen in particular texts: the *Satipatthana Sutta* and the *Sivaka Sutta*. The lower social status of healers in Brahmanism was taken over in the *Shramana* traditions, even though Buddhism exhibited a far more liberal attitude to the human body, which was not affected by notions of pollution, as is apparent in the *Satipatthana Sutta*. The *Sivaka Sutta* refers to the three *doshas* of Ayurveda. It is difficult to assess whether Buddhism is the source of Ayurveda or whether there was a common source in the Greater Magadha region from which Buddhist texts and the *Charaka Samhita* both drew.

In the light of the above, Professor Maas examined medical conceptions as well as the understanding of yoga and spiritual liberation in the *Charaka Samhita*, which was written at the Kushan court, as these rulers tried to legitimise their rule by favouring local religions in their kingdom. The *Charaka Samhita*, the bulk of which remains consistent over multiple recensions, claims to be associated with the *Atharva Veda* despite a lack of commonality, perhaps to gain acceptability. The compendium draws on early Buddhist medical conceptions and texts such as the *Agnivesha Tantra* and does not have a fully developed theory of the three *doshas*: *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. Instead, it is complex, discussing causes of disease in terms of food (or the essence which produces pure matter – *dhatu*s, or impure matter – *doshas*) and has a theory of flavours or taste. However, the speaker asserted the importance of avoiding generalisations about specific texts; for example, early Ayurvedic theory predates the concepts of the *tridoshas* and the seven *dhatu*s. Overall, the *Charaka Samhita* has a positive view of medicine as it considers health to be the ultimate root of the four goals of life, that is *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*, because disease takes life away, preventing the achievement of these *purusharthas*. The text does not contradict the authority of the *Veda* but espouses a fusion of Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jaina values such as generosity, asceticism, sacrificial rituals, truth, not harming, chastity and *moksha*. The understanding of the value of yoga as religious reaffirmation is seen in the text; the aim of the practice in the *Charaka Samhita* is rebirth in heaven. This is clearly not a systematised text (as was the *Patanjalyogashastra*) showing evidence of contradictory assertions and of interpolations by scribes.

Professor Maas offered a detailed historical introduction of the many recensions of the *Patanjalyogashastra* which has been referred to, seemingly erroneously, as a *Yoga Bhashya* ascribed to Vyasa. The scholar opined that the text was the work of a single author named Patanjali. The transmission of the text occurred over a period of more than seven hundred years, with manuscripts being copied and recopied during this period, introducing many textual variations and making the creation of a single translation challenging. The 11<sup>th</sup> century emergence of Patanjali as a semi-divine being with the appearance of a snake



*Patanjalyogashastra 2.5. cont.*

In a passage like "This girl, lovely like the line of the new moon, truly seems to be made of the two components honey and nectar of immortality. One realizes that she, with her eyes long like leaves of the blue water lily, came forth after she had split the moon since she seems to comfort the world of living beings with her eyes full of coquetry," which items are really connected with which? Nevertheless, in this way, an erroneous notion of pureness arises with regard to something impure. With this example, the notion of merit with regard to something that is demerit as well as the notion of something meaningful with regard to something that is meaningless is explained.

naveva śaśāṅkalekhā kamanīyeyam kanyā madhvanṛtāvayavanirmiteva candram bhitvā niḥsrā jāyate nilotpalaśrīyāṅkṣī, hāvagarbhābhyām locanābhyām jīvalokam āśvāsyanṛtveti kasya kenābhisambandhaḥ? bhavati caivam āśucau śuciviparyāśratyaya iti. etenāpunye punyapratyayas tathāivānartho cārthapratyayo vyākhyātaḥ. (unpubl. critical draft ed. Maas).

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Dr. Philipp Maas speaks during 'Yoga and Ayurveda in Ancient India'

cannot be maintained as historical reality.

It is evident that in this work written around 400 BCE, Patanjali referred to Vasubandhu's *Abhidhammakosha* of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Patanjali created here a new system of the ontologically dualist Samkhya philosophy (putting forth the concepts of *purusha* or pure consciousness and *prakriti* or matter) in which the mental categories of *buddhi*, *manas*, and *ahamkara* merged into the *chitta*. The incorrect identification of *purusha* with the content of consciousness in the *chitta* due to the fundamental affliction or *klesha* of misconception (*avidya*) leads to the storing of mental impressions or *samskaras* together with *karma* in the mental faculty. Liberation – *kaivalya* or *apavarga* – is possible by ending the erroneous identification of the *purusha* with the *chitta* in meditative insight or *vivekakhyati*. The *Patanjalyogashastra* avers the existence of nine obstacles or *vyadhi*, all of which are related to mental faculty except the first, that is disease. Health is the condition for all the four aims of human life. This echoes the Buddhist four-fold path to liberation which it related to medical science. Commonalities with the Buddhist view of the body as impure but necessary in the *Satipatthana Sutta* are apparent. Patanjali mentions *chikitsashastra* and not Ayurveda, though the text displays a deep understanding of the latter in its references and affirms the *tridoshas* and the seven *dhatu*s, the balance of which will bring about health.

The four-fold medical division of disease, cause of disease, health and medicine is mirrored in yoga as cycles of rebirth, cause of cycles of rebirth, liberation and the method leading to liberation. While medicinal knowledge in the text is limited to the body, Patanjalyoga aspires to create complete release from suffering. The *Patanjalyogashastra* has a negative attitude to the human body which is impermanent and impure, as well as the source of misidentification and craving. Once the *yogi* becomes aware of the impurity of the body, he practices purity through asceticism and avoids contact with other unkempt bodies. The body is nevertheless a precondition for the path of the *yogi*, enabling him to move towards spiritual liberation through concentration on God (*ishwara pranidhana*) and *svapurushadarshana* (self-realisation of the *purusha*). Yogic meditation is the means to obtain freedom from disease.

Jason Birch's research on the texts of *Hatha* and *Raja Yoga* finds a general reference to health and healing in them rather than specific allusions to classical Ayurveda. Practical healing and health through yoga techniques may have been the reason for their interest in the *tridoshas*. The claim that a particular system of yoga cured disease may have been to promote that type of practice.

– J.K.

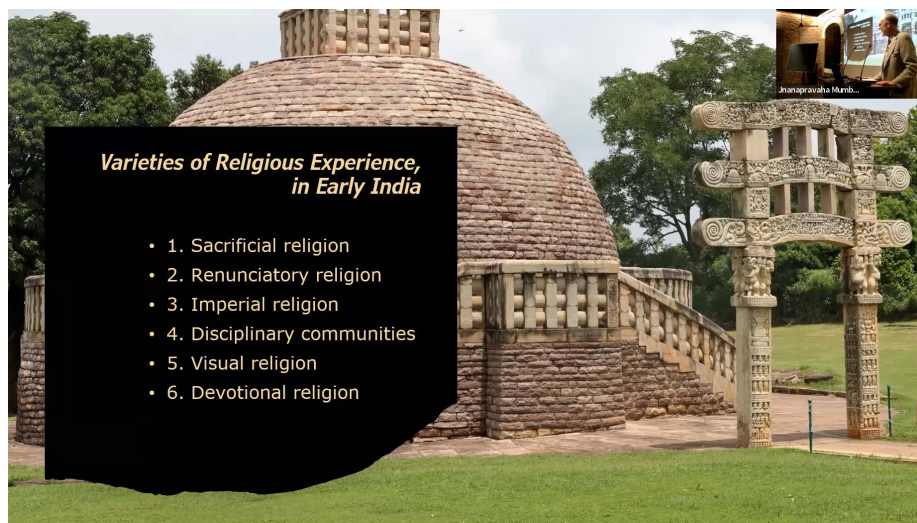
# Indian Intellectual Traditions

## PAST PROGRAMMES

### Varieties of Religious Experience in Early India

November 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, & 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 6:15 - 8:30 PM IST | Dr. Richard H. Davis (Research Professor of Religion and Asian Studies Programs at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY)

Physical with live streaming on ZOOM



Dr. Richard H. Davis speaks during 'Varieties of Religious Experience in Early India'

A three-day lecture series on a 'Variety of Religious Experiences in Early India' was organised at Jnanapravaha, Mumbai, where Professor Richard Davis presented selected portions from his upcoming book tentatively titled 'Yogis, Monks, Nuns, and Dharma Kings: Religious Cultures of Early India'. His project is an outcome of thirty-five years of teaching undergraduates in various colleges of the United States, and he hopes this textbook becomes a "kind of a gateway into the study of South Asia for college students in North America".

Prof. Davis launched into the session by laying down six varieties of religious experiences – sacrificial religion, renunciatory religion, imperial religion, disciplinary communities, visual religion, and devotional religion. The innovations and interactions between these religious cultures can be examined from the post-Harappan times up to the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE.

The earliest form of religion in early India was

sacrificial in nature. It was introduced by a community of nomadic migrants who spoke a form of Indo-European languages and appeared in this part of the world around the first millennium BCE. These communities, also known as the Aryans, established a series of cultural norms and practices, which included making offerings in a sacrificial fire to the gods who attended invisibly, and seek their blessings for material

benefits such as rain, good harvests, health, and so on. Agni or the god of fire was considered instrumental in bringing the gods to the sacrificial altar and transmitting the prayer hymns recited in their honour. The culture of sacrifice gave birth to an exclusive class of practitioners known as the Brahmins who held authority over the hymns recited during rituals. The *Rigveda* is one of the earliest collections of such sacrificial hymns, and some of its hymns also lend insight into the social ideas at the core of the Indo-Aryan culture. The *Purusha Sukta* verses of the *Rigveda* describe different *varnas* or classes of people emerging from a unitary figure known as *purusha* or the original entity from whom various elements of the living world emerged. The hymn relates the Brahmins, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas*, and *Shudras*, to the mouth, arms, legs, and feet, of this *purusha*, respectively. Thus, the Brahmins rose to the top of the social pyramid, and their role became inseparable from sacrificial religion.

Renunciatory religion challenged the disproportionate importance given to the

act of sacrifice by the Vedic Brahmins. The *Shramanas*, a new class of thinkers, who grew alongside urbanisation of the Gangetic plains, gave more importance to *karma* or good action. To achieve a transcendental form of life, the *Shramanas* advocated renunciation of all worldly ties and goals, which included detachment from material possessions, and relationships. However, renunciatory life did not end their ties with society, and they chose to reside in close proximity to villages and towns where they could beg for food, and also find new followers amongst a growing population of merchants, traders, and various professional communities. The individual *Shramana* movements of Jains, Buddhists, and *Ajivikas* gathered pace and presented a combined challenge to the Vedic Brahmins. Some of the common features that marked the *Shramana* community included renunciatory living, self-discipline, self-restraint, and severe austerity. Two examples of the critical intervention by the *Shramanas* includes one of Harikesha, a Jain ascetic, who redefined an ideal sacrifice as doing no harm to living creatures, following the vows of the Jains, and abandoning all harmful actions. Similarly, the Buddha refused to accept different castes or *jatis* among humans, but instead classified humans by their activities. He defined a Brahmin as one without attachment, possessions, and whose status is derived from restraint, wholesome living, and self-control. In this way, the most important *Shramana* in history redefined what it meant to be a Brahmin. These examples are indicative of the fact that the *Shramanas* had developed an independent ideology and alternative variety of religious experience that lay outside the boundaries of sacrificial religion.

Imperial religion took root with the rise of the Mauryan empire, and especially during the reign of the Mauryan emperor, Ashoka. He made a conscious effort to retain the teachings of the Buddhist *dhamma* in his edicts, without directly referring to them as Buddhist teachings. Instead, he used the term '*dhamma*', which lends the authorship of these principles to Ashoka rather than any religion or ideology. The *Arthashastra*, which was contemporaneous with the Mauryan period, also liberated kingship from the authority of religion or divinity, dealing a heavy blow to the established tradition of a *Kshatriya* ruler deriving his sanctity from Brahminical authority. Ashoka's *dhamma* advocated co-existence of

different religions and encouraged people to examine ideas propagated by religions other than their own. While he frequently uses the term *Brahmana-Shramana* to differentiate between the Brahmins from the new school of renunciatory practitioners, he, at the same time, asks people to respect them equally. Ashoka was thus trying to establish a meta-religion that could encompass a variety of religions and ideologies.



Prof. Davis argued that imperial and social support to the *Shramana* schools compelled Brahmin communities to also implement rules and regulations that ensured the continuity and standardisation of their own community practices. The *Dharmasutras* and the *Grihyasutras* evolved from this need to self-regulate and ensure continuity of practices central to the Brahmin communities, such as recitation of *mantras*, Vedic hymns, and other ritualistic traditions. Similarly, the Buddha laid down very specific rules for the monks and nuns who dwelled in the Buddhist *sangha*. The membership to the *sangha* was not dependent on birth but the acceptance of



the Buddhist vows. Inscriptions from the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> CE tell us that the Buddhist order had several specialisations such as preaching, *Jataka* storytelling, memorisation, and meditation. While the Vedic Brahmins and the Buddhists were equally concerned with accurate transmission of their teachings, the Vedic Brahmins paid particular attention to the language and intonation of the recitation of their hymns. On the other hand, the Buddhist canon was transmitted in the local languages and dialects of the geographies where the teachings travelled. Therefore, disciplinary communities were prevalent in the Vedic, Jain, and Buddhist orders, and held common principles at the core such as the five *yamas* of Brahmins, the five vows of Jains, and the five principles or *panchasheela* of the Buddhists. The extent to which these communities focussed on self-discipline is evident in the split amongst Jains based on those who took the vow of non-possession to the extreme limit of not even owning a shred of cloth to cover their body, and similarly amongst the Buddhists, among whom Mahaprajapati, the proponent of women entering the Buddhist order, accepted additional rules meant for women if they wished to enter the Buddhist order.

The Yaksha, Naga, and other earthly deities were the first to be sculpted in stone and of giant proportions, such as the Yaksha statue discovered by Alexander Cunningham in a place known as Parkam, near Mathura. Icons, and especially anthropomorphic images have been a part of Indian culture since the Indus Valley civilisation where they appeared mostly on seals, but giant images sculpted in stone only appear with the rise of the Jain and Buddhist *Shramana* religions. The Sunga and Kushan periods are especially marked by the appearance of giant figures. Mathura served as the pioneering school of image development, where gigantic images such as the well-known Bala's Buddha, measuring nearly ten feet tall, were sculpted in red sandstone that was quarried near Mathura. Early images were crafted in central places such as Mathura and then transferred to locations that were significant to the Indic religions of that time. Images of Jain *tirthankaras* depicted their perfect form and individual characteristics such as the serpent hood depicting Rishabhdev. Brahmin communities, especially the *Vaishnava* sect, evolved their own tradition of creating images of Vishnu and other

deities. The idea of the *Purusha* gained a physical form, whereby priests made sacrificial offerings to the stone image, before bringing the image to life by opening their eyes with a needle or pointed object. Thus, the inanimate stone image was transformed into a living god who could be worshipped in homes and temples. Worshippers made offerings of food, perfumes, garlands, and other sensory offerings that became part of image worship. Image worship took firm root in all the Indian religions and continues to form an integral part of worship to this day.

The origins of *bhakti* or devotional religion can be traced to the *Bhagavad Gita*, where Krishna states that anyone, including *Shudras*, could attain *moksha* or a blissful afterlife through devotion. This idea is very distinct from the Vedic concept of conducting sacrifices and making offerings of physical objects. The *Bhagavad Gita* is generally dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, and is preceded by the *Mahabharata* in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, and the *Harivamsa* from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. The rise of the *Shramana* schools seem to have sparked the vigorous development of a Brahmin narrative that upheld the ideas from the *Vedas*, especially those of a social hierarchy and sacrifice. Even the Sunga dynasty indulged in sacrificial rituals such as the *Rajasuya Yajnya*, after overthrowing the Mauryan dynasty which had patronised the *Shramanas*. However, the *Shramana* movements gradually reduced the significance of sacrificial rituals in society, and to sustain Vedic ideas in the face of this growing challenge, the Vedic Brahmins adopted image worship, devotional worship or *bhakti*, and developed literary works such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* which enabled continuity of the Vedic pantheon of gods and their worship.

Prof. Davis concluded the third day of the lecture hoping that the multiplicity and interconnectedness of the religions from early India were apparent to those attending these sessions, and he re-emphasised that religions in India continue to innovate and assume new forms, without resulting in the end of prevalent religions. Thus, India does stand out as an example of co-existing religious ideas despite their divergent philosophies and practices. – **R.P.**

# 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

What is it to think with constellations? For the indomitable 20<sup>th</sup>-century German-Jewish cultural theorist and philosopher Walter Benjamin, the constellation, or more specifically the star-image (*sternbild*) was the embodiment of a relationship – of individual objects (or concepts or ideas) to each other and to its viewer. Yet crucially, this relationship is not static; it is ever-changing and evolving, as concepts break down, new ideas emerge, and even as thoughts contradict each other – a relationship containing necessary tension. To think within this tension, allowing for its frictions and its nuance to seep into our understanding, is what the role of a thinker really is. It is to grasp both the whole and the one, as they remain in constant motion and relation.

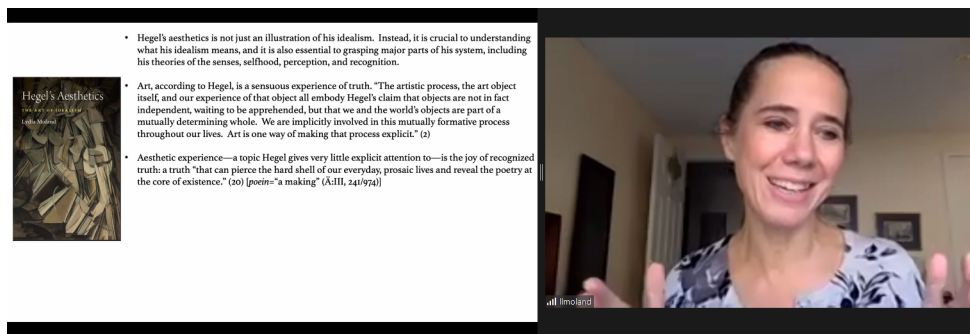
most direct parallel, and there, the questions of censorship, propaganda, power and influence do unquestionably get more complex. While Plato left us in a difficult position of both recognising the danger of art as well as grappling with our desire to rise to defend it, it was in Aristotle that we found an important response to Plato. While acceding that art is in fact imitation, Aristotle argues that imitation is a crucial way to learn, and in being witness to art, especially in the form of tragedy, could be a transformative experience of learning, growth, and famously – catharsis.

The study of philosophy can never be linear, although a grasp of the chronology of thinkers does help us in tracing a specific movement of

thought. The leap (both epistemic and chronological) we took from Aristotle to Kant was certainly challenging, but the ideas themselves – of beauty, taste, and judgement, were in seamless continuation and dialogue with the questions put forth by the

ancient Greeks. How universal is the judgement of beauty? And how does a judgement of the beautiful relate to a judgement of the 'good'? The examination of the bond between beauty and ethics, between art and the notion of justice remained our focus as we delved from Kant into the world of German Idealism through Hegel. Dr. Lydia Moland, Professor of Philosophy at Colby College, took us through a deeply insightful view into Hegel's classificatory system of art, and discussed the delicate and often unstable balance Hegel attempted to achieve in his study of art as both art historian and philosopher. Interestingly, although Hegel is often considered the father of art history, he is also seen as the prophet of art's end. Prof. Arun Iyer returned to further illuminate Hegel's specific framing of what art is, its connection to his notion of the 'spirit' and ultimately its relation to human freedom.

The debates through the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries on the work of art, aesthetic judgement and



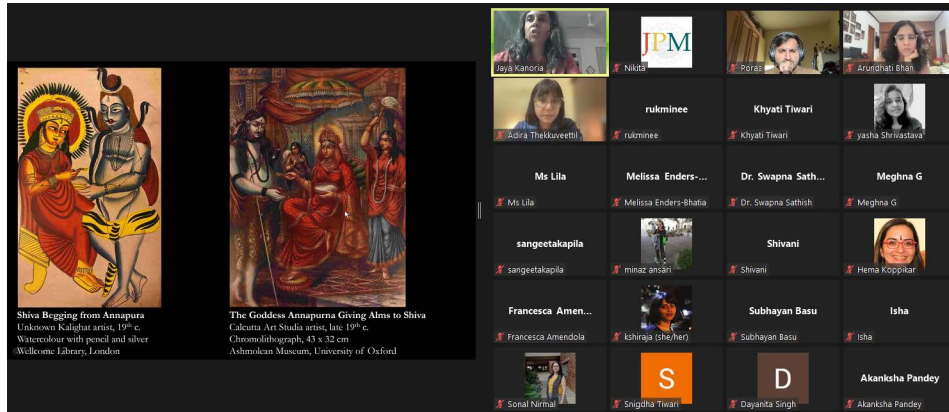
Dr. Lydia Moland speaks during 'Hegel and Aesthetics'

By popular demand, the semester-long *Aesthetics, Criticism & Theory* course has returned for the second year in a row. Given the success of the ACT course in 2021 and the engaged feedback received from its participants, this year the course has been structured to provide a more in-depth engagement with the philosophies of aesthetics within Western thought. We thus began in ancient Greece with Dr. Arun Iyer of IIT Mumbai, with whom we confronted Plato's fierce opposition to artists being a part of his republic. Through a nuanced reading of his notion of the value of art and the inherent danger that art – especially drama – always poses by being a mere imitation of reality, we came to an important discussion around the question of censorship in society. Does Plato really have a fair point in envisioning the influence that drama holds upon its audience and its transference into political power? As modern audiences, it is in the world of cinema that we can perhaps draw our



freedom took on a new dimension when we were confronted with the theoretical articulation of the notion of the Sublime. Prof. Robert Doran, Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Rochester, took us through a rich and complex journey through the history of modern philosophical thought from the

had a long history of engaging with and depicting cultures foreign to themselves, the advent of colonial expansion in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century marked a distinct shift in the power dynamics of such encounters. Said's central argument, that the Orient was almost an invention of the Occidental imagination, was evident in Dr. Kanoria's examples using European paintings, and especially its literature, where 'the other' was clearly seen as both docile and dangerous, unknowable, yet ripe for conquering. Yet, while Said was undoubtedly right in pointing out harmful racism and often violence in stereotypical depictions of the Orient by largely white, Euro-American interlocutors, his methodology too came under



Dr. Jaya Kanoria speaks during 'Refraction, Reflection, Representation: The Gaze of the Coloniser'

mysterious figure of Longinus back into Kant, and their attempts to articulate the experience of terror and transcendence that we have when faced with greatness. Be it in the terrifying beauty and power of nature, or the incomprehensibility of human actions like war, the Sublime is a concept that cuts across philosophical aesthetics, art history as well as literary theory. Although to fully understand the Sublime in a single session is an impossible task, Prof. Doran's survey of the movement of its conceptualisation through the history of philosophical discourse allowed us to gain some insight into the central place that it held through history.

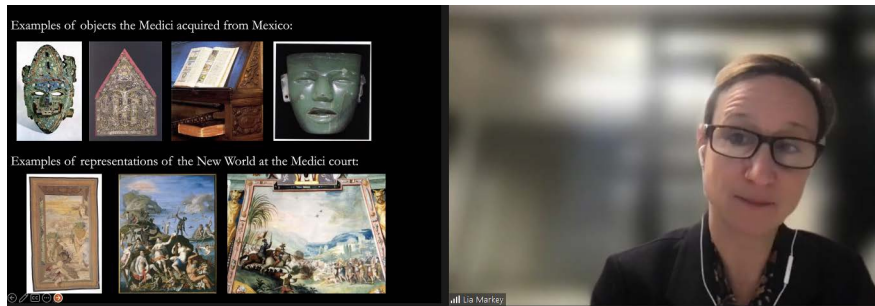
What is often so intriguing about the lives of thinkers is the fact that they were not simply isolated figures contemplating the world in vacuums but were often fully engaged with the social and political worlds of their time. One such thinker was Edmund Burke, whose reflections on the Sublime in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century provided us with our initial introduction to his thought, but fascinatingly, the ghost of Burke lingered in the background as we proceeded through the 18<sup>th</sup> century and into the 19<sup>th</sup> and confronted the complexities of a world reshaped by colonialism. Over two expansive sessions, Dr. Jaya Kanoria, Course Director of Indian Aesthetics at Jnanapravaha, led us through an analysis of the long colonial encounter using Edward Said's seminal 1978 book *Orientalism* as both a guide as well as a point of departure. Although Europe has

criticism for its own sometimes-essentialising tendencies.

The nuance of this criticism as well as the validity of Said's claim was further examined, albeit tangentially, by Prof. Matthew Rampley (Professor of Art History, Masaryk University), in his lecture titled 'Myths of Colonial Innocence'. Although within the schedule of the ACT lectures, this talk in fact preceded Dr. Kanoria's lectures on Orientalism, Prof. Rampley made a very precise point on the issue of essentialism that both Said, as well as his critics, emphasised. In shifting our attention away from the centres of Empire to the largely unexamined peripheries of Central and Eastern Europe, Prof. Rampley stressed how the distinctions between 'European' and 'Asian' were tenuous at best, and often fell apart on closer examination.

The questions of allegiance to identity, frictions around assimilation and evolving notions of cultural and racial belonging remained together, thickening our discourse into a more complex plane as we journeyed to the very beginnings of the colonial encounter in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Medici Florence. Prof. Lia Markey, Director of the Center of Renaissance Studies at the Newberry Library, led us into a nuanced look at the Medici's engagement with the Americas through their collections of codices, masks and feather-work objects. This early study of colonial collecting also allowed us to have a more complicated

discussion on both the violence of the encounter of Europe and the New World and the deeply human experiences of those involved in every side of that encounter.



Dr. Lia Markey speaks during 'Vicarious Conquest: the Medici and the Americas'

As we turned our gaze to our own subcontinent's long and difficult history with colonialism and its aftermath, we did so through a reckoning with the figure of Mohandas K. Gandhi, through Prof. Sumathi Ramaswamy's (Professor of History at Duke University) illuminating lecture on Gandhi's relationship with his own image – his battle with iconicity, his acute awareness of himself as a political figure and his quest to 'reduce himself to zero'. By leading us through a visual journey through the work of artists through the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the contemporary moment who have dealt with the figure of Gandhi as man, image and idea, Prof. Ramaswamy examined the curious irony of Gandhi's ubiquitous presence in the visual life of India with the failure of his own desire to move beyond representation, beyond the material. And yet, as we came to see, such a binary understanding fails us when we come to think of the intelligent ways in which Gandhi used his own image as a tool of political struggle, coming to be called an 'artist of non-violence' himself, despite his apparent indifference to art. Within our discussion, many questions emerged around the contemporary relevance of a figure like Gandhi, the various readings his image elicits to audiences through time, as well as the nature of iconicity, and how they may become tools with shifting intentions.

Emerging from the difficult negotiations we encountered within colonial and post-colonial discourses, our foray back into the world of philosophy through the work of Friedrich Nietzsche came as a refreshing challenge. Dr. Arun Iyer returned to introduce us to *The Birth of Tragedy*, a text Nietzsche wrote as a young man, which reflects on his conviction that tragedy is a true fusion of the *Apollonian* and the *Dionysian*

elements of existence – that of measured appearance with primordial unity. Nietzsche believed this delicate balance, fundamental to all true art, to have been lost since Euripides who privileged Apollonian order above Dionysian immersion. And yet, Nietzsche was optimistic about a rebirth of art, particularly through the music of Wagner, which he believed heralded a transformation. To read Nietzsche in our own time is an experience of both loss and immense hope,

and as Dr. Iyer reminded us in our discussion, quoting from Nietzsche's later work *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, "You should first learn the art of consolation in this life – you should learn to *laugh*, my young friends, even if you wish to remain thoroughly pessimistic".

Although Nietzsche and that other giant of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Karl Marx, weren't quite contemporaries and aren't seen together often, a central similarity between both was their deep love for art. Both wanted to be artists in their youth, Nietzsche a composer, and Marx a Romantic poet. So, examining Marx's early writings on alienation through the lens of aesthetics with Adira Thekkuveetil, Course Director of ACT, was a coming together of the lineage of Hegel, Marx as well as Nietzsche. In an expanded session, we examined the journey of the idea of alienation through Hegel who believed in its potential for developing our consciousness, into Marx for whom alienation was the estrangement of people from the possibility of self-actualisation through the fragmentation imposed by capitalism. Furthering the discussion with a look at 20<sup>th</sup>-century Frankfurt School thinker Herbert Marcuse's theory of total alienation, we considered how alienation can both be a necessary condition and one that is debilitating within capitalist society.

Dr. Iyer returned to fully immerse us in the Frankfurt School through the two interestingly divergent perspectives of Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno. In Benjamin's seminal text *The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility*, we examined his notion of the cult value of a work of art, one that seemingly diminishes with techniques of reproduction. And yet, for Benjamin, this loss is not to be mourned, but rather to be embraced, as new forms of art,

especially cinema, emancipated its viewers from the bounds of ritual and placed them firmly within the public sphere.

*Aesthetic Theory*, Theodor Adorno's magnum opus on aesthetics, came out over three decades after Benjamin's visionary treatise, and it is in his nuanced disagreements with Benjamin that we see his immense ability as a thinker of modernity. Adorno subtly critiques Benjamin's revolutionary belief in the power of modern forms of art to effect real political change in a capitalist system that subsumes every form of opposition to itself, ultimately turning it back into a commodity for us to consume. And yet, as Prof. Iyer points out, it would be a mistake to see Adorno's critique as a direction for us to simply reconcile ourselves to this depressing reality. Rather, for Adorno, true art works out its inner contradictions in a precise way where the society that witnesses it finds itself unable to comfortably ignore its own contradictions.

The horrors of Nazism, the Holocaust and two devastating world wars within the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had left a world grappling to understand what had led to such a complete break with the ideals of truth, justice and reason that the West had long claimed to be the doyens

of. Perhaps one of the most profound books to have come out of this struggle to understand is Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, with its infamous subtitle – *A Treatise on the Banality of Evil*. In an especially illuminating talk by Prof. Frisbee Sheffield, Associate Professor of Classics at Cambridge University, we came to Hannah Arendt by returning to Plato, through his dialogue, the *Gorgias*. Arendt uses Socrates's debate with a group of Sophists on the art of rhetoric as a way to engage with the question of what it is to truly think, which for her is ultimately a form of dialogue on equal terms. To not think or to be *thoughtless*, as she sees Eichmann – a key architect of the Holocaust, is to be utterly incapable of engaging in the practice of mutual respect and agency that is demanded of thinking, to never see another's point of view. If we are unable to think, not only are we then unfree, we are incapable of actions that emerge from our own inner ability to choose, to refuse, or resist.

It is with Arendt and with her contemporary, Hans Georg-Gadamer, that we break for the holidays. A full report on the intensive three-session seminar series on Gadamer held by Profs. Pol Vandeveld and Arun Iyer will be carried in the next issue of the *Quarterly*, as will the report of ACT sessions held through January and February 2023. – **A.T.**

## PAST PROGRAMMES

### **Ethics, Aesthetics and the Historical Dimension of Language**

A seminar series on the selected writings of Hans-Georg Gadamer

December 9<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST | Prof. Pol Vandeveld (Professor of Philosophy, Marquette University, USA) & Prof. Arun Iyer (Associate Professor of Philosophy, IIT Bombay)

Online Seminar Series | Platform: Zoom

Detailed reportage will be made available in our next *JPM Quarterly* (Apr - Jun 2023).



# FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

## Multiple Modernisms: Europe, Asia and Beyond

January 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, & 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM IST | Dr. Chaitanya Sambrani (Art Historian and Curator, Australian National University, Canberra)

Online Seminar Series | Platform: Zoom



S. Sudjojono, *Cap Go Meh*, c. 1940, Oil on canvas, 73 x 51 cm  
Coll: Galeri Nasional Indonesia (National Gallery of Indonesia), Jakarta

This series of four seminars will explore histories of modernism in the visual arts over a century-long span starting in the late 1860s. It will present an introduction to modernist trajectories in Euro-American art (primarily France, Italy, Germany and USA) in juxtaposition to coeval and contrapuntal developments in three Asian contexts (India, Indonesia and Japan). In doing this, the seminars will interrogate the originary mythologies of modernism including the privileged position usually ascribed to white heterosexual masculinity. Having first introduced the mainstream narrative of the 'heroic quarter' characterised by rapid experimentation and



Gulammohammed Sheikh, *Returning Home After Long Absence*, 1969-73, oil on canvas, 122 x 122 cm, Coll: Ram and Bharati Sharma, New Delhi

multiple '-isms' in European art, the seminars will consider differential developments in Asian art. The three Asian contexts selected for study will be analysed as instances of deep entanglement with the narrative of Euro-American modernity alongside the concomitant invention of tradition. The impact of colonisation and imperialism on artistic modernity will be discussed together with anti-colonial and nationalist aspirations, and impulses towards pan-Asianist solidarities. Students will be introduced to the careers of significant artists and theorists even as histories of art are explicated in light of political histories.

- Modernism and the (European) Metropolis 1850-1930
- Conditions of Contact; Colonial Visions 1850-1930
- Imag(in)ing Nationhood 1900-1960
- Affiliations, Experimentation and Contestation 1945-1975

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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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